

Chapter 2. Palaeography

edited by Paola Buzi and Marilena Maniaci

1. Introduction (DB)

1.1. What is palaeography?

According to the traditional view, which favours the technical and formal aspects of the discipline, the writing material is the first element to delimit the research field of palaeography. Indeed, in a narrower sense palaeography is the science which critically inquires the ancient scripts written on soft writing materials. Only in ‘non-monumental documents’ (Schiaparelli et al. 1935, 34: ‘documenti di carattere non monumentale’)—i.e. basically made on papyrus, parchment and paper, where the writing tool can run without any obstacle and the writing can become cursive—it is possible to find out and follow the process of transformation of the individual letter-forms and of the overall graphic system evolving from the cursive developments of writing. The history of the writing is, indeed, a dynamic history of graphic manifestations that the palaeographer above all is called upon to decipher (i.e. to read correctly), to date and to localize, studying and understanding at the same time the material conditions of their production. Only in this perspective we can understand the palaeographic importance of the scripts written in ink on papyrus, parchment and paper: for a long time these have been considered the privileged, if not the unique, topic of palaeography. The cursive execution of the strokes of the letters—possible only on soft materials and made *currenti calamo*, that is without removing the writing tool from the writing surface—and the ligatures between letters—which are present when a letter (or its last stroke) turns, naturally and without interruption, into the next (or into its first stroke)—produce, as a consequence of a not always controlled and sometimes convulsive process, a series of new shapes and graphic variants, which are occasionally able to organize themselves in a new, organic and coherent writing system. The minimum, shared and essential requirement of palaeography is to follow and understand this process of transformation of the individual signs and of the overall graphic system. On this is based the traditional palaeographical method, which is analytical, formal and evidential, and the scientific status of the discipline.

At the same time, writing participates in the historical dimension of human activities, and as such it shares with them—as a specific and autonomous phenomenon—orientations, tensions and all their multifarious conjunctions (Pasquali 1931). This awareness, which emerged in the middle of the twentieth century in the field of Latin palaeography, has forced a redefinition of the subject of study of the discipline: it has been productively extended to ‘all kinds of graphical monuments’ (Mallon 1952, 11, translation DB), and it now also covers tablets, *ostraca*, engraved or painted inscriptions and graffiti. Therefore, the need of a unitary and integrated analysis, dealing with all graphical monuments, strengthens the historical dimension (in the broader sense) of palaeography. At first, again in the field of Latin palaeography, especially thanks to Armando Petrucci, but then also to other palaeographers, it was tried to link the study of writing—and of reading—to the history of society and culture. This process has been carried on in the awareness, fully and clearly theorized by Petrucci, that palaeography would be able to provide a social interpretation of written documents, instead of being limited to deciphering them and trying to give them a date and a localization: in this way palaeography claims to infer information about the social diffusion of writing and its function in a given environment from the study of the graphic witnesses of a precise geo-cultural context and historical period (see at least Petrucci 1969b and 1973, 1972, 1978, 1986b and 2002). The enlargement, one might almost say the reversal, of the traditional palaeographical method—which at any rate should be conducted, as Petrucci intended, without renouncing the crucial element of formal analysis (Petrucci 1996)—is taken today for granted. However it has raised some resistance, above all from scholars such as Alessandro Pratesi, who perceive a risk of transforming palaeography into something that it is not (Pratesi 1979). The risk would be that palaeography might be replaced by a ‘sociology of writing’ (Pratesi 1979, 336, translation DB), whose opportunity and importance Pratesi did not deny, but only on the condition that it would not be constituted ‘at the expense of a discipline—namely, palaeography—that has a specific and limited subject and keeps in its integrity, albeit with subsequent refinements, a method of investigation of its own’ (Pratesi 1979, 336), i.e. the formal and analytical method.

Another characteristic inherent in palaeography is the link with both documentary and literary texts. This connexion has placed the discipline from its beginning in an historical and philological dimension

(even if subordinate and subsidiary, compared with other disciplines). If, indeed, Latin palaeography was born in Europe of the Ancien Régime with the aim of providing tools for graphic analysis in order to assess the validity of documents (the foundational book by Jean Mabillon was entitled *De re diplomatica* and was published in 1681 in Paris), Greek palaeography, whose birth corresponds to the publication in 1708 in Paris of the *Palaeographia graeca* by Bernard de Montfaucon, dealt from the beginning with the study of scripts placed in their dynamic history and the cataloguing of manuscripts kept in European libraries. Besides the focus on a total history of writing (as far as the manuscripts, coins and inscriptions, which were available in Montfaucon's day, allowed him to reconstruct), the perspective chosen by Montfaucon was mainly a philological one, which still represents a typical, though not exclusive, aspect of palaeographical surveys: in this way the discipline has finally come to include, not without some confusion, topics which are typical of textual criticism and history of the texts.

Today, some tendencies have been maybe abandoned too early—such as, for example, the application of the models and paradigms of the structural linguistics to the study of the writing (Casamassima – Staraz 1977; Casamassima 1988)—and, on the other hand, other new guidelines are ignored by the most scholars or have yet to show convincing results—such as the so-called *métrologie paléographique*, which suggests the application of the quantitative-statistical method and of informatics with the promise (the mirage?) of giving the discipline a strong scientific status (see among others Rehbein et al. 2009; Fischer [F.] et al. 2010): but we may say that palaeography now lives on the dialectic between writing, texts and society (Cavallo 2012; Bianconi 2014).

1.2. Method and instruments of analysis in palaeography

The fundamental task of a palaeographer, once he has read and interpreted the text transmitted in a given written artefact, is to understand the date and the place of creation of that artefact on the basis of the script employed. It is not an easy task to find an orientation among graphic shapes, which, as products of human activity, do not develop uniformly. In order to date and to localize a manuscript—be it a papyrus fragment or a mediaeval codex—it is necessary to start with what is certain and to compare the manuscript with others which have a definite (or at least probable) date and localization, and so can be taken as terms of comparison (Supino Martini 1995). Some manuscripts, in different proportions depending on the periods and on the places, are dated and localized with certainty, since the scribe himself provides the indication of the year and the place of his activity. Other manuscripts bear a range of objective information, both internal and external, that allows us to ascertain their date and/or localization with a reasonable degree of precision. The documentary manuscripts are very useful for this, and not only because they are generally provided with a date and an indication of the place of writing. A comprehensive understanding of the different ways written culture was produced—and so a real global perception of the graphical phenomenon—may come only if we also study the production of documents, which sometimes interacted with the production of books. Moreover, in some palaeographies, because of the purely philological approach and interests of some scholarly traditions, the linguistic element (i.e. the specific language or its particular dialectal patina) plays a primary role in the possibility of attributing a date and, above all, a localization to a manuscript, often at the expense of the real palaeographical analysis.

The effectiveness of the palaeographical method based on the formal comparison between scripts (*Schriftvergleich*) is favoured by the availability of directories and catalogues of dated and datable manuscripts which can offer a comparison, and by their completeness. They are indispensable working tools, generally organized by textual and writing typology, age of the manuscripts, storage location, and scribes; their number is always increasing and their effectiveness is enhanced by the information technology.

The deeper and more systematic the critical reflection about the elements of graphical evaluation to be examined, the more reliable and objective are the proposals of dates and localizations based on palaeographical analysis. In conclusion, in enquiring writing it is necessary at first to know—and to define scientifically—what to look at, what to dwell on, what to give importance to, without forgetting that the elements of palaeographical analysis themselves change depending on the assumed perspective and they do not always have the same value.

In this regard, it can be useful to distinguish the synchronic from the diachronic analysis. In the synchronic analysis, carried out on a single manuscript or on a group of similar manuscripts, the structure, production and style of the script are the elements which should be considered. Among the structural ele-

ments of the script we find the shape of the letters (i.e. their formal/figurative aspect) and the *tratteggio* (i.e. the number, direction, and succession of their strokes), strictly linked to the *ductus* (i.e. the speed of their execution) which, influencing the *tratteggio*, can modify the shape of the letters. Elements related to the production are the writing angle (which measures the variable position of the writing tool relative to the base line), the ‘tracing’ (sequence of strokes), the form (the absolute or relative size of the signs) and the thickness of the strokes. Finally, aspects of the style are accessory elements of the graphic rendering, such as individual quirks (of an age or of a writer), decorations and even further para- and peri-graphical elements. These characteristics, even if not always together nor altogether, are essential if, for example, one wants to find the date and/or the localization of a manuscript, to follow the development of a writing rule or style, to distinguish contemporary hands, or even to demonstrate the identity of the same writer in different pieces of evidence.

In a diachronic perspective, aimed at the reconstruction of the origin, organization, diffusion, and transformation of different graphic systems, neither models nor universally valid interpretative paradigms exist. The comparison between the cursive and calligraphic levels can be very useful. In cursive writing, the quick execution modifies the basic model of the letters, generating new arrangements that slower scripts, whether or not they form a close and self-referential system, can select, implement and organize, creating new geographical, temporal and functional conjunctions. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that imitations and revisions of more ancient scripts are not rare, nor are scribes with an (at least) dual graphical education, both in cursive and in slow scripts. Such cases must be analysed from two perspectives: at first, with the help of interpretative models based on the dialectic between *tratteggio* and *ductus*, which, as factors of continuity and innovation of the graphic shapes, determine a field of tension between the informal and formal writing; and secondly with a careful expertise able to evaluate all aspects of style and realization, however minimal.

1.3. The description of writing and palaeographical terminology

An integral part of the palaeographic method is the description of scripts (Rück 1999; Cavallo 1999; Petrucci 1999). Although viewed with suspicion, since sometimes considered unnecessarily verbose and virtuosic, especially in the presence of plates and reproductions that could replace it, in fact it is an important cognitive process of conceptual abstraction: as such, reproductions can have a function of support and comparison for it. The description of a script is intended to catch its essential elements, in a clear and scientific way, and with an appropriate terminology, in order to communicate, compare and group them. The description has to be critical and carried out with the method and the terminology proper to the discipline. For example, though the analysis of the *tratteggio* can illuminate the comprehension of the global development of the script, this element will be completely irrelevant in the survey of a rule or a style: to follow their evolution, on the contrary, other factors are essential, such as the writing angle, or the quality of the execution. These last aspects are potentially negligible if one is trying to demonstrate the identity of a hand. In conclusion, the palaeographical description has to be not necessarily detailed, but functional (Cavallo 1999; Petrucci 1979): it must be limited to the essential elements for the selected aims and it must not be extended to all the aspects that can be considered, so becoming unnecessarily redundant or even misleading. This is to give voice to the application—sometimes instinctive and innate—of the palaeographical method, and above all to make it communicable: this is what can transform an art, an individual capacity neither mediated nor rational (the so-called ‘palaeographical eye’) into an autonomous discipline (Canart 2006; Bianconi 2014).

Moreover, in order fully to achieve this objective, it is necessary to find an appropriate, scientific and—last but not least—shared terminology. The terminological distance between different scholarly traditions is perhaps higher than that in other disciplines and it goes beyond the inevitable linguistic obstacles. Just a few examples: the term ‘uncial’, used in some languages as a synonym of ‘majuscule’—meaning by ‘majuscule’ a script which can be inscribed within a bilinear system—, may designate a Latin script, which is a mixture of minuscule forms (inscribed in a quadrilinear system) and majuscule forms (so in Italian, retaining the expression *uncialibus... litteris* used by St Jerome: see Cavallo 1967). As for the *ductus*, in the Italian palaeographic tradition it indicates the speed of the execution of a script, but in other languages corresponds rather to the *tratteggio*—a word moreover used only in Italian studies. Such use follows Bernard de Montfaucon, who had not yet reached an understanding of the *tratteggio* separated

from its dynamic aspect (i.e. the speed of execution, which influences the number, order and direction of the strokes and determines variations in the original shape of a letter); so the term *ductus* in Montfaucon has rather the meaning of ‘tracing’, which, with a minimum of approximation, can be considered almost equivalent to ‘shape’, the final formal and exterior result of the script, since it refers to a route taken by the writing instrument to pen a sign regardless of the distinction of each of the strokes (see Mastruzzo 1995; Bianconi 2012).

References

Bianconi 2012, 2014; Canart 2006; Casamassima 1988; Casamassima – Staraz 1977; Cavallo 1967, 1999, 2012; Fischer [F.] et al. 2010; Mallon 1952; Mastruzzo 1995; Pasquali 1931; Petrucci 1969b, 1972, 1973, 1978, 1979, 1986b, 1996, 1999, 2002; Pratesi 1979; Rehbein et al. 2009; Rück 1999; Schiaparelli et al. 1935; Supino Martini 1995.

2. Arabic palaeography (ADO)

Arabic, like Hebrew or Syriac, is written and read from right to left. It is a phonetic writing system based on syllables rather than a properly alphabetical system (Garbini 1979, 47). The Arabic alphabet (*abġad*) is the sequence of 28 letters with consonantal value, including the semiconsonants used to denote long vowels. It represents, after the Roman alphabet, ‘the second most frequent segmental script in the world’ (Gruendler 2006, 148) but the Arabic script never developed an opposition between capital and non-capital forms—despite some failed attempts, dating back to the beginning of the last century, to introduce capital letters. Arabic writing is considered to have been genetically derived from the Nabataean cursive variant of Aramaic, and Syriac influences can be traced in calligraphic and orthographic elements (Gruendler 2006). According to a recent hypothesis which in its attempts to individuate the *milieu* of the origins of the Arabic alphabet not only considers graphic factors but also the social context which led towards its creation, the elaboration of Arabic writing can be dated to the beginning of the sixth century CE due to the impetus, or to the help, given by the ecclesiastic authorities. The Arabic alphabet, according to this theory, answers the need of the Arabs in Syria for political and cultural affirmation (Robin 2006, 327–330). The passage from oral to written Arabic started, according to another theory, because of the interaction between some Arab tribes and the Late Roman Empire ‘in the Roman province of Arabia, which, in its original form ... stretched from the southern outskirts of Damascus to the Hījāz ...’ (Hoyland 2010, 35).

The graffito etched into the plaster of a wall in Jabal Ramm, tentatively dated to the early fourth century CE and considered ‘the oldest inscription in Arabic language *and* characters’ (Gruendler 1993, 13) is now regarded as written in the Nabataean Aramaic script (Hoyland 2010, 39). Therefore the most ancient inscription in Arabic language and writing known is, at present, a trilingual inscription from Zabad, circa 37.3 miles south of Aleppo. The Arabic part of this trilingual inscription—covering the lintel over the door of a *martyrion* dedicated to St Sergius—can be dated to the year 512 CE by the context provided via the Greek and Syriac texts.

The comparative study of writing materials of different kinds (inscriptions, coins, papyri, codices) seems to be one of the elements which define the field of research of Arabic palaeography which, even though by no means limited to the witness of books and documents, would otherwise concentrate its attention on written specimens executed with a pen (Sijpesteijn 2008, 513). From a different perspective, however, it would be more likely to reaffirm the vast field of Arabic palaeography interested in written material executed with diverse writing tools and on various writing materials which have given rise to a range of specialised disciplines (epigraphy, numismatics, papyrology, codicology). According to this perspective ‘la codicologie englobe la paléographie en tant qu’elle s’applique à l’écriture des manuscrits et lui apporte le soutien d’autres savoirs spécialisés que le codicologue met en œuvre’ (Déroche 1998, 366).

At any event the wide range and plurality of the Arabic palaeographic material investigated is already reflected in the first contributions which traditionally mark the birth of the discipline (Adler 1780; 1782 and 1792). Therefore, it is no surprise that the word ‘palaeography’ appears as early as at the beginning of the nineteenth century on the titles of publications that include works which are not only concerned with specimens of books but also with witnesses of an epigraphic and numismatic nature in a broad sense (Marcel 1828).

As far as book production is concerned, Arabic palaeography is not limited to the production of Arabic-Islamic manuscripts but includes Arabic-Christian materials as well. In the Arabic-Christian manuscript production, which already presents its own codicological traits (Orsatti 1994), it is also possible to detect a ‘characteristic manuscript hand’ (Griffith [S.] 2010, 50). In this sense the case of a *qāf* characterised by the diacritical point placed underneath the letter is meaningful, since it seems peculiar to the southern Palestinian Arabic-Christian production of the end of the eighth to the beginning of the ninth century (Monferrer-Sala 2010). Moreover the production of digraphic and bilingual texts rendered in Greek and Arabic and in Latin and Arabic offers an ideal meeting point for different linguistic and palaeographic competences to which the same level of scientific dignity should be accorded (D’Ottone 2014).

With the exception of Arabic pre-Islamic inscriptions, the Qur’ān may be called the first true Arabic text. Nonetheless, besides the inscriptions and ancient Qur’āns, materials such as papyri and coins are no less important as tools for the study of the development of Arabic writing and of its graphic forms. Inscriptions as well as documentary material—and the research should be extended ideally to include also the

vast amount of numismatic material—have, for example, so far constituted the *corpus* for a study dedicated to the presence of and to the selective use of diacritical dots (*i ʿġām*, *naqt*) as part of the written production in the Arabic script of the first two centuries of the Hegira (Kaplony 2008).

Apart from the punctuation (*fawāṣil*)—constituted by dots, small lines, circles and rosettes—employed to indicate the division into verses of the oldest Qurʾāns, a recent field of research is concerned with the punctuation of Arabic texts (Jaouhari 2009).

Islamic coinage, for the most part of epigraphic character, constitutes an important source of palaeographic information, which so far has not been sufficiently exploited for palaeographic purposes. The roundish shape of the first exemplars of the post-reform *dirham* and *dīnār* (fig. 2.2.1)—the monetary reform of ʿAbd al-Malik is dated to 77 AH/696 CE—has been interpreted as a legacy of die-engravers accustomed to Pahlavi writing (Heidemann 2010, 163). These rounded traits of the oldest post-reform coinage in gold and silver were adjusted over the course of the half century after the reform to those more angular shapes of the writing employed on papyri or for inscriptions.

Papyri dated or datable to the first century of the Hegira display, in fact, a rather angular writing—a particularly elegant example of angular script can be seen, for example, in the letters issued by the chancery of Qurra b. Šarīk, governor of Egypt from 90 to 96 AH (709–714 CE) (fig. 2.2.2)—which is akin to the writing of contemporaneous inscriptions and graffiti (Rāgib 1990). Despite the existence of some variants, attributable to the form of the letters, to the accuracy of the graphic execution or to the writing material employed, Arabic writing produced during the first century of the Hegira displays a certain fundamental uniformity (Grohmann 1952, 73).

Between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century the papyri start to offer proof of cursive tendencies. Taking into consideration the presence of structural ligatures between the Arabic letters, Arabic writing is by its very nature cursive and to describe it as such reveals itself to be in essence a case of tautology (Gacek 2009, 241–243).

In a papyrological context we speak therefore of ‘cursive tendencies’ which can be detected by one or more of the following elements: ‘1. The transformation of angles into curves; 2. The transformation of curves into straight strokes; 3. The elimination of the necessity to remove the pen from the surface of the papyrus; 4. The reduction of the distance covered by the pen’ (Khan 1992, 39–40). Recent studies have been devoted to the identification of dating criteria for undated papyri showing ‘cursive tendencies’ (Grob 2013). In the context of book production, scholars have preferred to speak about the ‘cursive character’ of Arabic (Déroche 1998). The concept of cursivity refers to the dynamic aspect of writing and, in particular, to its speed of graphic execution and to the economy of the movement necessary for its creation. The treatment of the ligatures between the letters (roundish rather than angular) as well as the presence of unconventional ligatures which do not conform to the orthographical rules, may be regarded as indicators of the cursivity of Arabic book writing. The *mise en ligne*, i.e. the angle formed by the base of the long letters, or by a sequence of letters, and by the line for writing, real or imagined, would represent, in conjunction with other details which necessitate a contextualization within the written page, a further characteristic element of the cursivity of Arabic script. Another distinction has to be made between *écritures composées*—in which the straight base of the writing line does not preserve, or at least not very clearly, traces



Fig. 2.2.1 *Dīnār* of ʿAbd al-Malik, 77 AH/996–697 CE, diameter: 19 mm, weight: 4.25 g; London, British Museum, CM 1874 7–6 1, © Trustees of the British Museum.

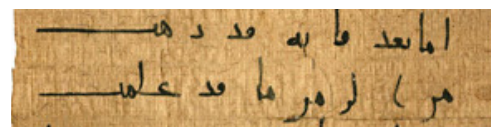


Fig. 2.2.2 Detail of a papyrus from the chancery of Qurra b. Šarīk, eighth century; Heidelberg, Institut für Papyrologie der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, P.Heid. inv. Arab. 1.



Fig. 2.2.3 Islamic seal, 2 lines of angular script, eighth/ninth century; London, British Museum, no. 1892,0328.94, © Trustees of the British Museum.

of the movement of the hand—and *écritures chirodiques*—the base of which registers highs and lows and therefore traces of the movement of the writer's hand (Déroche 1998 and 2003).

Even the field of numismatics has experienced these cursive tendencies, the first occurrence of which has been detected in a unique issue of a Fatimid *dīnār* dated 490 AH/1096–1097 CE (Balog 1949). However later exemplars of coins still display the transition from an angular script to a script of more rounded traits which was to become the norm from 571 AH/1175–1176 CE (Heidemann 2010, 167). An analogous process of transformation of graphic shapes, from angular traits to softer shapes, has also been recognised in the context of research into Islamic seals. In this field the terminology which defines the type of writing distinguishes between categories of 'angular scripts' and of 'cursive scripts' (Porter [V.] 2011, 14–16) (figs. 2.2.3–4a/b).

The recent numismatic literature as well as a long tradition of studies dedicated to papyri employ the term *nashī* or 'naskh script' in order 'to designate a script with rounded features in contrast to more angular monumental script' and this usage can be accepted for a general classification (Khan 1992, 45–46). Nonetheless, the definition of 'naskh script'—which denotes also what has been described as 'a bookhand, par excellence, of the Islamic East' (Gacek 2009, 162)—gathers together a wide range of categories of graphic expression.

Apart from sharing large categories of script definitions, or at least definitions that can evoke scripts with similar characteristics, it seems that each field (numismatics, epigraphy, papyrology, codicology) has a different chronology for the use of these scripts, as the *caveat* for dating Islamic seals according to epigraphic scripts recalls (Porter [V.] 2011, 22 note 39).

A further distinction, in the field of manuscript production, concerns the so-called 'formal scripts', in which the aesthetic value of the writing is relatively high, and the 'informal scripts' of average accuracy in their graphic design (Déroche 2003).

As far as the graphic competence of the writers is concerned, it had already become clear by the middle of the last century how important it was to understand their social background and level of schooling as well as to study 'specimens of addresses, writing exercises, pen trials (*probationes pennae*), etc.' (Grohmann 1952, 72–73). Nonetheless, research and studies dedicated to graphic education in the Arab world of the early Middle Ages are still rare (Sijpesteijn 2008, 516). Given that the practice of writing requires specific skills, it has been connected in the Arab world until recent times to the existence and the activity of professional copyists (*warrāqūn*). In the Middle Ages reading skills were considered as separate from writing skills and there are numerous cases of established scholars who were unable to write (Hirschler 2012, 16).

As regards the catalogues of manuscripts and the description of Arabic script included, it seems noteworthy to underline that in what might be the oldest known inventory of an Arabic library, i.e. the inventory of the library of the mosque of Qayrawān (Kairouan), the script (*ḥaṭṭ*) is already mentioned and described with a relatively articulate terminology: thirty exemplars are defined as in 'Kufic' script (*bi-ḥaṭṭ kūfī*), others were instead labelled as in 'oriental' script (*ṣarqī*), or in 'Sicilian' (*ṣiqillī*), *nubārī* (Šabbūḥ Ibrāhīm 1376 AH/1956 CE; Voguet 2003, 536 and 543; Déroche 2007, 149).



Fig. 2.2.4ab Engraved sapphire and its impression, cursive script, tenth to thirteenth century CE (and later); London, Derek Content collection.

The ancient Qur'ānic scripts, without doubt, have been those that have received particular attention since the end of the eighteenth century—i.e. from the very start of Arabic palaeography—and recent catalogues that gather together the fruits of the studies dedicated to the exploration of the scripts of the ancient Qur'ānic witnesses allow us to follow the development of palaeographic studies in this particular field.

For the scripts of Qur'ānic fragments which can be dated to the seventh/eighth century CE the qualification as *ḥiǧāzī* scripts is at present widely accepted: this is a geographical denomination derived from the name of that region in Arabia, *Ḥiǧāz*, where the cities of Mecca and Medina are located. Nonetheless, the expression '*ḥiǧāzī* scripts', at least according to some scholars, is nothing but 'a scholarly artifact' (Whelan (manuscript) n.d.).

Palaeographical, orthographic and codicological elements help to define the early production of Qur'āns in *Ḥiǧāzī* I script. For example, one of the few fragments that can be dated to the early eighth century CE (Vatican City, BAV, Vat. ar. 1605, fig. 2.2.5) shows a vertical format—though horizontal fragments are also known—, the absence of vowels and diacritics, the frequent use of *scriptio defectiva* (for example *qala* instead of *qāla*), and a peculiar shape for some letters. In particular, the letter *alif* is characteristic, with a short return at the base and a rather oblique vertical stroke (the oblique tendency occurs also in the strokes of the letters *ṭā* and *zā*), as well as the letter *kāf*, this latter assuming in final position the so-called 'hairpin' shape (Déroche 1992 and 1999; Levi Della Vida 1947). Some other fragments in *ḥiǧāzī* script (*Ḥiǧāzī* II, III and IV according to Déroche's system), datable to the end of the eighth and/or early ninth century CE, exhibit the same tendency of the script to be slightly slanted to the



Fig. 2.2.5 Qur'ān leaf, vellum, 288 × 203 mm, early eighth century; example of *Ḥiǧāzī* I script. Sūra X, 102–XI, 3; XI, 4–13; MS Vatican City, BAV, Vat. ar. 1605, f. 1v: Sūra XI, 4–13.



Fig. 2.2.6 Qur'ān leaf, vellum, 155 × 230 mm, ninth/tenth century; example of Group D of the Early Abbasid scripts. Sūra XC, 15–20; XCI, 1–5; MS Damascus, National Museum, Inv. 'ayn 350–351, verso.



Fig. 2.2.7 Qur'ān fragment, vellum, 100 × 85 mm, eleventh century. Example of New Style (NS) script. Sūra XXX, 50–53; XXXI, 25–30; MS Damascus, National Museum, Inv. 'ayn 344–345, verso.

right, but to a lesser extent than the earlier fragments, and the appearance of diacritical dots, vowels in red ink and simple decorative bands between the *sūras*.

The label of 'Kufic' or the definition of 'Kufic script'—and again this is a name derived from the geographical denomination of the city of Kufa in southern Iraq—in order to describe a certain graphic typology of the Arabic script has long stayed in use in manuscript catalogues: already Jacob Georg Christian Adler in his catalogue of the Qur'ānic manuscripts in the Royal Library of Copenhagen entitled a section 'De literis cuficis' (Adler 1780, 27). A new impulse to palaeographic studies came about only when it became necessary to fragment the mass of documents defined by the super-graphonym of 'Kufic' for the creation of more manageable series of manuscripts which can more easily be analysed (Déroche 1980). Such an impulse has been applied in detail for the catalogue of Qur'ānic manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Déroche 1983). The results of the palaeographic research dedicated to the ancient Qur'ānic codices in the catalogue mentioned above, which includes a contribution eloquently titled 'Éléments de paléographie coranique ancienne' (Déroche 1983, 14–53), have been successively illustrated with numerous examples by the publication of material from the Khalili Collection (Déroche 1992).

As far as the labelling of the scripts employed in the Qur'ānic fragments and codices from the second half of the eighth century to the end of the ninth century is concerned, that is for those scripts which are identified as 'Early Abbasid scripts', an alphanumeric classification system is now available (A.I-F.I), which is connected to an indicative chronological grid. According to this classification, the exemplar illustrated here (fig. 2.2.6: Damascus, National Museum, Inv. 'ayn 350–351), can be assigned to group D, which is attested from the third to the fourth century AH (ninth/tenth century CE). Group D comprehends various styles—it has up to five sub-categories (D.I-D.V)—to the first of which, D.I, pertains the fragment under discussion, considering the following distinctive letters: the independent form of *alif*; the form of *mīm* almost triangular and, in final position, with a short tail with bevelled edges; the form of *kāf* with parallels and symmetrical strokes. From a geographical and chronological point of view, it seems useful to point out that this graphic sub-type is attested from Cairo to Sanaa and from Kairouan to Damascus, and that it was elaborated at the beginning of the third century AH (ninth century CE) and continued to be in use, despite showing less elegant forms, until the beginning of the fourth century AH (tenth century CE). Among the codicological characteristics of this fragment it is worthy to note its horizontal format—employed until the fourth century CE/tenth century CE—and the vegetal-inspired motif, connected to the gold frame of the title of the *sūra*, that started to be in use since the second half of the eighth century CE (Bernus-Taylor – Bittar 2001). Following the chronological development of the scripts employed for the copy of the Qur'ān, the so-called 'New Style' should be mentioned. The 'New Style' group (NS) comprehends a number of scripts, traditionally employed for the copying of books or the writing of documents, that, since the beginning of the tenth century CE, started to be used also for copying the Qur'ān and is attested by *muṣḥaf*-s, in parchment and paper, until the twelfth century CE. The parchment fragment Damascus, National Museum, Inv. 'ayn 344–345 (fig. 2.2.7) can be ascribed to the group NS.I and dated to the sixth century AH (twelfth century CE). It shows a vertical, slender and rather angular script and its vertical format reflects the spread of the use of paper as a writing material, marking the return to the vertical format manuscript after two centuries (third to fourth AH/ninth to tenth CE) in which the oblong format was the common one.

Beyond these classifications, for the remaining graphic witnesses the catalogues often employ traditional terminologies which are tied to the names of calligraphic styles (*nashī*, *tuluṭ*, *rayḥānī*, *muḥaqqaq*,

riqāʿ, *tawqīʿ*), but it seems to be preferable to adopt descriptions referring to a regional character, such as, for example, ‘Yemeni script’—in reference to a script with a characteristic system of punctuation of the letters *dāl* and *ṭāʾ*—or ‘Maghrebi script’ which is also distinguishable by a characteristic punctuation of the letters *fāʾ* and *qāf* (Muzerelle et al. 2005, 98). However, an analogous punctuation to the so-called ‘Yemeni’ variety has also been found in



Fig. 2.2.8 Ishāq b. Sulaymān al-Isrāʾīlī, *Kitāb ma'rifat al-bawl* or *Liber de urinis*; vellum, dated *Rabīʿ* II 346 AH/2 June–1 July 957 CE; MS Vatican City, BAV, Vat. ar. 310, detail of f. 50v.

manuscripts of Javanese origin (Regourd 2002, 254), whereas the definition of a Maghrebi script refers to a vast area—since it includes the western Islamic regions (Spain and northern Africa) as well as western Sub-Saharan Africa—and groups together diverse varieties of writing used in the field of book and document production as well as employed for private use; it is ultimately generic and disconnected from any chronological reference (Gacek 2009, 147–150). However it seems useful to remember that the first dated codex in Maghrebi script goes back to the mid-fourth century AH/mid-tenth century CE, its copying having been completed during the month of *Rabīʿ* II 346 AH/2 June–1 July 957 CE (Vat. ar. 310, fig. 2.2.8). Moreover one of the most ancient examples of this script is a bilingual fragment, in Latin and Arabic, containing part of the Epistle to the Galatians, that Latin palaeographers attribute to the end of the ninth century CE (D'Ottone 2013).

The great necessity for additional studies dedicated to the immense quantity of Arabic evidence, not only Qurʾānic and not only of the first centuries of the Hegira—it is useful to remember that Arabic book production offers a quantity of manuscripts which is ‘so immense even from a merely statistical point of view that it cannot be compared to that in any other civilization, either classical or oriental, including the Islamic ones’ (Traini 1975, 1, translation ADO) and that exactly the spatial and chronological vastness of Arabic book production is one of the reasons for the ‘delay’ in palaeographic studies dedicated to this field (Piemontese 1994)—can be understood in the light of disclamatory choices like that of the catalogue of the private library of Zabīd in whose ‘Introduction’ the inapplicability of meaningful graphonyms is stated. ‘Afin de décrire l’écriture, nous avons adopté, faute de mieux, les grandes catégories habituelles qui, à force d’être éreintées, ne signifient plus grand-chose en termes de datation et de localisation de la copie. En cohérence avec cette observation, nous n’avons pas tenté plus de définition’ (Regourd 2006, 15). Therefore, the photographic reproductions have been given the task of illustrating the different scripts. However the idea of illustrating the scripts, rather than trying to describe them, is not new: it was employed in the *Fichier des manuscrits moyen-orientaux datés* (FiMMOD, 1992–2001), a publication intended to gather together manuscript specimens, explicitly dated earlier than the year 1500 CE, provided with a codicological description and other basic information, for the sake of comparison with other exemplars lacking any date.

The considerable progress made in the field of the study of Qurʾānic scripts provides us with a certain optimism for future research devoted to other fields of the vast Arabic written heritage. A renewed interest, for example, has recently focused on the study of the scripts of the western part of the *Dār al-Islām* (Jaouhari 2013).

References

- Adler 1780, 1782, 1792; Balog 1949; Bernus-Taylor – Bittar 2001; Déroche 1980, 1983, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2007; D'Ottone 2013, 2014; FiMMOD; Gacek 2009; Garbini 1979; Griffith [S.] 2010; Grob 2013; Grohmann 1952; Gruendler 1993, 2006; Heidemann 2010; Hirschler 2012; Hoyland 2010; Jaouhari 2009, 2013; Kaplony 2008; Khan 1992; Levi Della Vida 1947; Marcel 1828; Monferrer-Sala 2010; Muzerelle et al. 2005; Orsatti 1994; Piemontese 1994; Porter [V.] 2011; Rāgib 1990; Regourd 2002, 2006; Robin 2006; Šabbūh Ibrāhīm 1376 AH/1956 CE; Sijpesteijn 2008; Traini 1975; Voguet 2003; Whelan n.d.

3. Armenian palaeography (DK)

A historical dimension that Armenian writing shares with almost no other ancient language is the secure knowledge of just when and by whom the Armenian alphabet was invented: it was between 404 and 406 CE that Mesrop Maštoc', precocious monk with close ties to the catholicos and king of his time, both of whom encouraged him, conceived the letters. Much has been written about the creation of the original thirty-six letters, an invention intimately tied to Christianity and a source of pride to a people who have had a turbulent history (Mahé 2005–2007). This creation *ex nihilo* effectively eliminates any discussion of the evolution of Armenian from earlier proto scripts, a factor that complicates the study of early Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew writing (for a new study on the construction of the alphabet, see Mouraviev 2010). Armenian is not unique in this respect, since Georgian and the virtually vanished language of the Caucasian Albanians (Gippert et al. 2009) were invented shortly after by the same monk Maštoc', at least according to contemporary Armenian sources.

The theoretical result is a precise form for the letters of an alphabet conceptualized at a specific time and place by a religious scholar. Maštoc' made sure to design a letter for every discrete sound in the language, thus eliminating such combination as 'ch', 'sh', 'dj', 'dz', 'kh', 'th', since each is represented by a single sign. Armenian has its own branch in the eastern section of the Indo-European language group. The order of the letters follows closely that of the Greek alphabet with the extra letters sprinkled in. In the mediaeval period two new letters were added at the end, 'ō' and 'f'. The classical written language called *grabar* remained stable in literary texts until the late nineteenth century when a more popular spoken language was admitted as a viable instrument for writing and publishing. Palaeography and codicology are concerned mostly with *grabar* texts.

Methodologically one can hypothesize a process of gradual changes, perhaps an evolution, of the letters over centuries to produce an intelligible profile of the course of Armenian palaeography. Unfortunately, this is not possible in any linear way, at least for the earliest period, simply because no example of fifth-century Armenian manuscript writing has survived. There are undated stone inscriptions from the Holy Land and Armenia from the fifth century, innumerable graffiti from the Sinai of Armenian pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem in the same period, a couple of metal crosses which bear inscriptions of the sixth or seventh century, and the famous fifth- to seventh-century mosaics with Armenian inscriptions from greater Jerusalem. However, when it comes to manuscript writing, the only early example of Armenian is on a unique papyrus from Egypt now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris, BnF, Arménien 332, fig. 2.3.1), which probably dates from the sixth century, but in any case logically before the Arab invasion of 640 (Kouymjian 1996b and 1998a). The small document is precious but poses many questions, beginning with its text, which is entirely in Greek (Clackson 2000 for a textual analysis), though written with Armenian letters (Kouymjian 2002a). Furthermore, not only is it unique as the only existing Armenian papyrus, but also the form of its script has no parallel.

Scholars, mostly working in Armenia, have dated fragments and at least two manuscripts preserved there to the seventh and eighth centuries, some even to the fifth, but there is no unanimity on this matter, though recent palimpsest studies are providing a more precise way of dating some of these early fragments.

For the palaeographer neat classification and distinct periodization are easier to work with than a confused tradition. Armenian script types are neither neat nor clean-cut. Real standardization only occurs universally after the advent of printing, when the idiosyncrasies of the scribe are abandoned for total consistency in letter forms. The only other moment when there was a quasi uniformity was under the patronage of the aristocracy and the high clergy during the Cilician kingdom (1198–1375), which gave birth to a near print-like minuscule (*bolorgir*) (fig. 2.3.3); one might point out that Yakob Tašyan was correct in remarking that rounded *erkat'agir* (majuscule) (fig. 2.3.2) also had an extraordinary consistency in Gospel manuscripts of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries irrespective of the region where the manuscript was copied (Tašyan 1898). Yet, even after the start of printing in the sixteenth century making uniform the production of letters in books that reached remote monasteries, scribes continued to mix scripts right up to the nineteenth century. The most recent Armenian manuscript catalogues, those of the Matenadaran in Yerevan, the Catholicos collection in Antelias, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, have started the excellent habit of including a small photographic sample of the script of each manuscript, often of each scribe, as well as of older guard leaves.

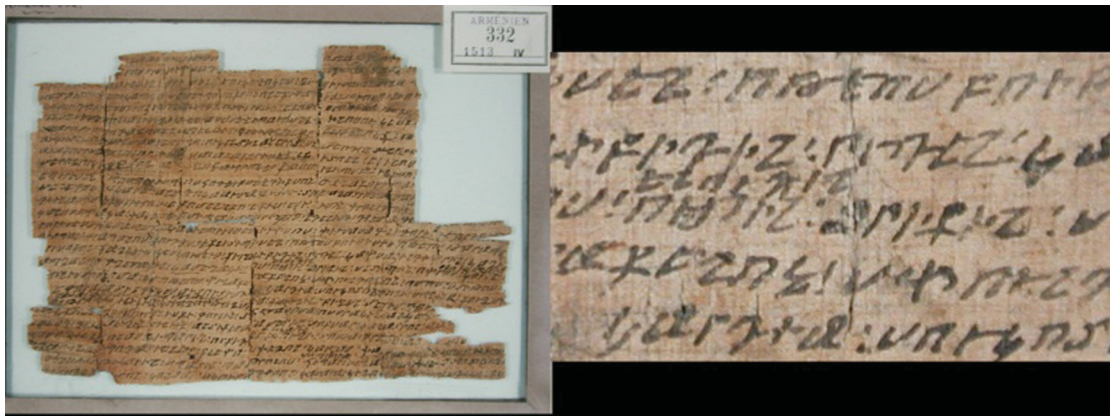


Fig. 2.3.1 Armeno-Greek papyrus, MS Paris, BnF, Arménien 332, pre-640 (Arab conquest of Egypt), recto and detail, photograph courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The first precisely dated manuscripts are two Gospels from the second half of the ninth century after which there is a steady and ever-increasing number of specifically dated codices. The challenge is to try to reconstruct what happened to Armenian writing in the more than four centuries that separate Maštoc' and his students from the Mlk'ē Gospel (Venice, Mekhitarist library, 1144; fig. 2.3.2) and Lazarian Gospels (Yerevan, Matenadaran, 6200) of 862 and 887. The script of all early dated or datable manuscripts, almost exclusively Gospels, is an upright majuscule called *erkat'agir*, literally iron letters. These were the ones used in the Jerusalem mosaics (Narkiss – Stone 1979, 21–28) and on a number of lapidary inscriptions preserved or recorded on palaeo-Christian Armenian churches (*Album* 2002, 14–15, figs. III. 2–3, 114–117, nos. 1–4) but they differ greatly from the script of the papyrus or the Sinai graffiti (Stone 1982).

If then we are to approach the history of Armenian palaeography from a theoretical point of view, our first step might be to determine or reconstruct the form of Mesrop's letters and their evolution into the writing we can view today on extant manuscripts. On the other hand if our excursion into palaeography is intended to aid the cataloguer of a disparate collection of manuscripts among which there are one or more Armenian specimens, then an overview of the types of scripts used over time and in different regions would allow for a preliminary classification by a non-specialist. For this perhaps the best approach would be to describe the major scripts found in Armenian manuscripts and comment on problems associated with assigning dates and perhaps even elucidating the text contained in the works.

As in most languages, over time a number of Armenian scripts came into being and were given names. These expressions can be placed into two categories: (1) those that were used by scribes in ancient and mediaeval times, perhaps this can be called the received tradition, and (2) those terms that were created by early modern scholars—palaeographers or proto-palaeographers—writing well after the manuscript tradition had given way to printing. In the first category, only three terms qualify: traditional *erkat'agir*, *bolorgir*, and *nōtrgir*. Each term has some textual (manuscript) pedigree. In the second group would be variants of the latter: *mijin* or *ullagic* (intermediate/semi or angular) *erkat'agir*, *p'ok'r* or *manr* (small) *erkat'agir*, *anc'man gir* (transitional script), and *šlagir* (modern cursive). Even terms like *bun* (original), *boloracev* (rounded), or Mesropian *erkat'agir* are analytical terms of palaeographers.

This second group represents expressions that clearly describe a script: its size, geometry of the ductus, thinness or slant or relationship to other scripts (i.e. transitional). Confounded by the contradiction between etymological meaning and the appearance of the letters themselves, Tašyan agreed with his eminent contemporary, the linguist Hugo Schuchardt that the terms *erkat'agir* and *bolorgir* did not conform to the letters as one would expect from their names (Kouymjian 2002a, 25). Ašot Abrahamyan went so far as to say that even certain terms used to describe scripts of other languages fail to invoke the look of the letters, thus reflecting a generalized situation in palaeographic terminology not unique to Armenian. Only the briefest attention has been given to the origin and exact meaning of the labels used to describe the various scripts, some of them going back many centuries (Kouymjian 2002b).

More than two decades ago Michael Stone, Dickran Kouymjian, and Henning Lehmann, set out to produce the *Album of Armenian Paleography* (2002) in order to present an up-to-date study-manual of the discipline. The large *folio* volume with 200 full-colour examples in actual size of an equal number of pre-

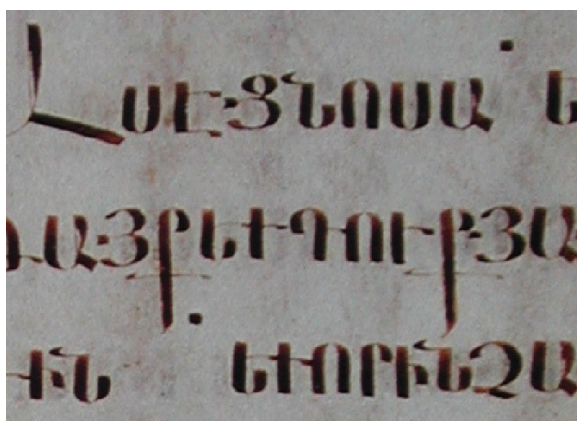


Fig. 2.3.2 Rounded upright or Mesropian *erkat'agir*, Queen Mlk'ē Gospels, 862; MS Venice, Mekhitarist library, 1144, f. 89 detail, photograph by DK.



Fig. 2.3.3 Cilician *bolorgir*, Gospels, Hromkla, 1268, painter T'oros Roslin; MS Yerevan, Matenadaran, 10675, formerly Jerusalem, Patriarchate, 627, f. 137: Entry into Jerusalem, photograph courtesy of Matenadaran.

cisely dated manuscripts from the earliest preserved dated Gospel to the twentieth century contains letter analyses for each sample and exhaustive tables showing the evolution of each letter over time. The authors used what was then new computer technology to extract the individual letters from high-resolution scans rather than reverting to traditional skilful drawings. The Armenian version of 2006 made it accessible to a target audience: researchers in Armenia.

The *Album* presented in elaborate detail almost everything important about the development of Armenian manuscript writing (Kouymjian 2002b), though there are still questions and problems. As an introduction to presenting the major scripts, note that the name of each is designated by *-gir*, 'letter', and preceded by a qualifying descriptive.

Erkat'agir

Erkat'agir, iron letters or writing, has perplexed almost all palaeographers (for a discussion, Kouymjian 2002b, 66–67). In its most majestic form (fig. 2.3.2), it is found in all early Gospels; it is a grand script in capitals similar to the imposing uncials of early Latin manuscripts. It is the form employed in most Armenian lapidary inscriptions through the tenth century. Statistical data (Kouymjian 2012a, 19, plate 1) show it was virtually the only script employed for the parchment codex until the mid-twelfth century, and the exceptions include no Gospel or Biblical texts.

Bolorgir

Bolorgir or minuscule, with compact and very regular shapes (fig. 2.3.3: Yerevan, Matenadaran, 10675) employing ascenders and descenders, dominated scribal hands from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, and continued on into the nineteenth. Ultimately it became the model for lowercase Armenian

type fonts just as *erkat'agir* became the prototype for capital letters in printed books. *Bolorgir's* use for short phrases and colophons and even for copying an entire manuscript is clearly attested in the oldest paper manuscript, Yerevan, Matenadaran, 2679, a *Miscellany* of 971 or 981 (*Album* 2002, nos. 10–11), which uses a mixed *erkat'agir-bolorgir* script. It appears even earlier, or at least some of the *bolorgir* letterforms are found in the early or pre-seventh century Armenian papyrus. Like mediaeval Latin and Greek minuscule, *bolorgir* uses majuscule or *erkat'agir* for capitals, resulting in quite different shapes for many upper and lower case letters. Most authorities argue that the spread of *bolorgir* was due to time and economics: it saved valuable parchment because many more words could be copied on a page, and it conserved time because letters could be formed with fewer pen strokes than the three, four, or even five needed for the ductus of *erkat'agir* (Mercier 1978–1979, 53).

A major question concerning Armenian palaeography is: What letters did Mesrop Maštoc' use? Most scholars hold that he conceived and used a large, upright rounded majuscule, similar to that found in early lapidary inscriptions, and thus they called it Mesropian *erkat'agir*. Indeed, Serge Mouraviev's scientific reconstruction of how Maštoc' proceeded systematically from a half a dozen basic forms (including two and their mirror images that produced four of the six) to which were added in a consistent manner descenders and ascenders and lateral strokes to the right and left, would in itself preclude any suggestion of evolution (Mouraviev 2010, 20–45). It has been argued that this script eventually went through vari-

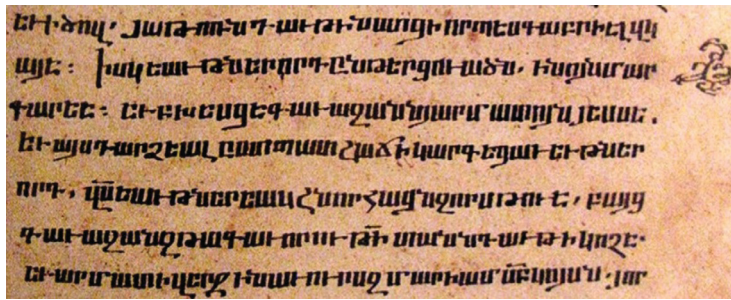


Fig. 2.3.4 Mixed *erkat'agir-bolorgir*, *Miscellany*, 1231–1234, Sanahin; MS Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1204, f. 129, from *Album* 2002.

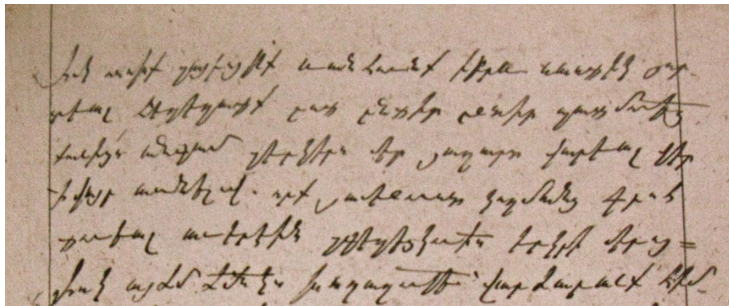


Fig. 2.3.5 *Šlagir*, *Miscellany*, 1853–1854, Tabriz and Salmast; MS Yerevan, Matenadaran, 5138, f. 19, from *Album* 2002.

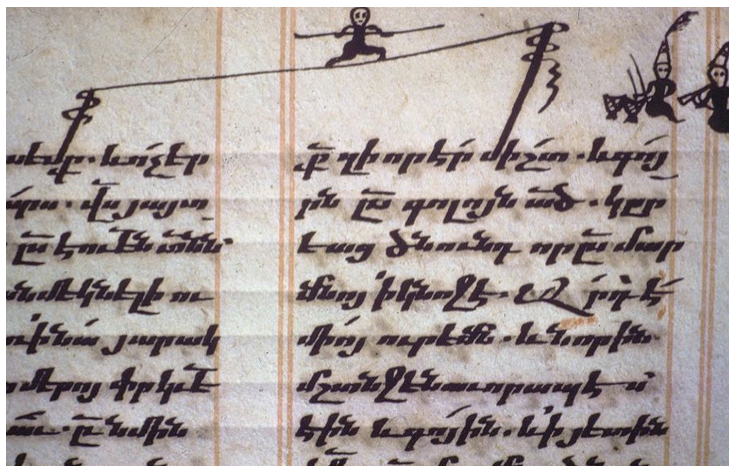


Fig. 2.3.6 Later *bolorgir*, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria*, 1688, Isfahān; MS Venice, Mekhitarist library, 1028, f. 95, photograph by DK.

ous changes—slanted, angular, small *erkat'agir*—and eventually evolved into *bolorgir*, and in time into *nōtrgir* and *šlagir*, the post sixteenth-century cursives. Doubt about such a theory started quite early; Yakob Tašyan (1898), the pioneer of the scientific study of Armenian palaeography, hesitated, but Karo Łafadaryan (1939, 71) even maintained that *bolorgir* already existed in the time of Maštoc' (Kouymjian 2002b, 70–71).

It was also once believed that minuscule gradually developed from earlier formal Latin and Greek majuscule found in inscriptions and the oldest manuscripts. But the late nineteenth-century discovery in Egypt of thousands of Ptolemaic Greek and Roman papyri forced scholars to abandon this notion. Some scholars trace the roots of Greek cursive of the ninth century back to the informal cursive of pre-Christian papyri. Latin minuscule is evident already in third-century papyri (Bischoff 1985, 70). Is it possible that along with majuscule *erkat'agir* some form of an informal cursive script, which later developed into *bolorgir*, was available in the fifth century as surmised by Mercier (1978–1979, 57)?

Uncial was used in the west for more formal writing: Gospels, important religious works, and luxury manuscripts. The data gathered for the *Album* point to a similar pattern. The earliest *bolorgir* manuscripts (tenth century) appear chronologi-

cally anomalous until one notes that they are philosophical or non-liturgical texts rather than Gospels.

Examination of pre-Christian Latin papyri shows the origins of Caroline script, which is similar to Armenian *bolorgir*, in earlier cursive minuscule found in them. But the invention of the Armenian alphabet in the early fifth century precludes any pre-Christian antecedents. Greek and Syriac, the languages that most influenced Mesrop Maštoc' in creating the letters, used both cursive and majuscule in that period. It is difficult to imagine that Mesrop and his pupils, as they translated the Bible, a task that took decades, would have used the laborious original *erkat'agir* for drafts as they went along. The use of the faster-to-write intermediate *erkat'agir* seems more than probable, yet it was not a minuscule script nor cursive. Unfortunately, except for the papyrus, no such informal documents in Armenian have survived before the thirteenth century. The earliest preserved Armenian chancellery documents are from the Cilician court of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century (Kouymjian 2002b, figs. III. 17, 18, 20; Mutařian 2007b, 149–152) and by then minuscule *bolorgir* was already the standard bookhand. Deciding between a theory of evolution to *bolorgir* versus the notion that *erkat'agir* and more cursive scripts co-existed from the fifth century is still an open question.

Mixed erkat'agir-bolorgir script

From the mid-eleventh to the end of the thirteenth century a somewhat bastardized script was used for certain manuscripts (fig. 2.3.4: Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1204), mostly from Greater Armenia to the northeast, employing both uncials and minuscule letters—*erkat'agir* and *bolorgir*—in the same document. It was named ‘transitional script’ by early palaeographers. However, Michael Stone, during the preparation of the *Album*, proposed it was a separate script (Stone 1998). Kouymjian has not fully accepted his argumentation basing his scepticism on what seems to be a trend showing the use of more *erkat'agir* letters in the earlier mixed script manuscripts, while toward the end, when *erkat'agir* is disappearing as a manuscript hand, the majority of the letters seem to be *bolorgir*, suggesting a transition.

Nōtrgir and šlagir: the cursive scripts.

The secretary working as a scribe (in Latin *notarius*) at the Armenian royal court or the Catholicosate by necessity employed timesaving cursive versions of *bolorgir* and even smaller *nōtrgir* letters (fig. 2.3.7: Yerevan, Matenadaran, 101). The latter term could have entered Armenian from either late Byzantine Greek or Latin. Łafadaryan felt there was no convincing antecedent to the script and, therefore, he assumed that it must have had its origins in the early centuries, even in the time of Maštoc' (Kouymjian 2002b, 74 for discussion). The script when it became formalized in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was composed of small, but thick, unattached letters fashioned of dots and short lines making those without ascenders or descenders hard to distinguish one from the other, though *nōtrgir* is not a cursive script. *Šlagir* (fig. 2.3.5: Yerevan, Matenadaran, 5138), which is modern handwriting with attached letters, usually thin in ductus (it derives from ‘fine’ and not ‘slanted’ as some believe), is easy to identify; its beginnings are probably at the end of the eighteenth century (for a longer discussion, Kouymjian 2002b, 73–75).

By the last quarter of the twelfth century minuscule *bolorgir* supplanted majuscule, which was to disappear as a regularly used script about a half-century later. According to the data presented in a sampling of 455 dated manuscripts to 1400, tabulating parchment versus paper and majuscule versus minuscule, this did not coincide exactly with the disappearance of parchment, which followed nearly a century later (Kouymjian 2013, 24 plate 1). By the end of the thirteenth century, one can say fairly safely that the Armenian manuscript was a paper codex made up of senions and written in minuscule *bolorgir*. The only change to be observed in the later period from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century was the gradual addition of the two cursive scripts, *nōtrgir* (fig. 2.3.7), the so-called notary script, and *šlagir* (fig. 2.3.5), the modern cursive.

A guide for cataloguers

Palaeography has not been used much as a productive tool by cataloguers of Armenian manuscripts, because of the ever-prevalent phenomenon of dated colophons in them. It is used, however, to distinguish between scribes when more than one was involved in the copying. Also, it sometimes served to reinforce the supposition that the person who copied the Canon Tables and the Eusebian Letter in the Gospels (the most copied work) was not the same as the scribe of the text. This would also apply for emendations, whether corrections or marginal additions. Of course, many manuscripts had lost their colophons or that part of the colophon with the date, thus if there was no other evidence, it would be an aid to dating similar to whether parchment or paper was used, or, majuscule or minuscule. At times palaeography could also serve to localize geographically a production centre, even though little work has been done on identifying regional styles of the major scripts.



Fig. 2.3.7 Decorative *nōtrgir*, Religious miscellany, 1740, Constantinople; MS Yerevan, Matenadaran, 101, f. 301, from *Album* 2002.

Below are some basic rules on Armenian manuscripts that can help in supplying rough dating, if the principal colophon is lacking or there is no one who reads Armenian. For a text written on paper, nine chances out of ten the script is not *erkat'agir* and the text dates to after 1200. Guard leaves in parchment are almost always from manuscripts dating before that year, thus written in *erkat'agir* (fig. 2.3.2). Paper manuscripts exist in abundance in three other scripts, *bolorgir*, *nōtrgir*, and *šlagir*. In general the last of these would only be found for modern writing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, usually letters or documents rather than texts, but if texts, they would be unique items, diaries, dictionaries, practical manuals, memoirs, novels, poetry, and other modern literature. A manuscript in *bolorgir* (fig. 2.3.6: Venice, Mekhitarist library, 1028) would almost certainly date from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century after which scribal manuscript copying stops; it is hard for the non-specialist to be more precise in dating *bolorgir* with this broad expanse of more than 500 years, without consulting a resource like the *Album of Armenian Paleography*. Finally, a codex in *nōtrgir* would most likely be of the seventeenth or eighteenth (fig. 2.3.7) century. Though these are very approximate guidelines, they would be accurate in more than 85% of cases and could be controlled by comparing an unknown item with the plates or charts in the *Album*, or, if one needs a minimalist guide, four or five good photos, one each of the principal scripts discussed above.

References

Album = Stone et al. 2002; Bischoff 1985; Clackson 2000; Gippert et al. 2009; Kouymjian 1996b, 1998a, 2002a, 2002b, 2007f, 2012a, 2013; Lafadaryan 1939; Mahé 2005–2007; Mercier 1978–1979; Mouraviev 2010; Mutaſian 2007b; Narkiss – Stone 1979; Stone 1982, 1998; Tašyan 1898.

4. Coptic palaeography (PB*)

The Coptic alphabet developed out of a history of attempts to write the Egyptian language using the Greek alphabet, beginning soon after Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt toward the end of the fourth century BCE. Various selections of characters from the Demotic writing system (which was the last of the native Egyptian writing systems, after the Hieroglyphic and Hieratic systems) were used in addition to the Greek character set in order to represent Egyptian phonemes that were not represented there, and eight of these Demotic characters eventually became a standard part of the Coptic writing system, graphically conformed to the Greek alphabet as written in literary manuscripts around the turn of the third century CE: ϖ [š], φ [f], ϱ [h], ϑ [x], ϑ [x], χ [č], σ [ky], and also τ [ti] (Kasser 1991b). In addition to the alphabet, the creators (or: standardizers) of the Coptic writing system also borrowed some conventions for line division, abbreviation, punctuation and so on, and they introduced a diacritical sign that was to be written above any consonant or series of consonants that formed a syllable, syllabic consonants being a common phenomenon in Coptic (see also General introduction § 3.6).

To the extent that the Coptic alphabet plus the syllable-marking 'superlinear stroke' was a system for the phonetic transcription of spoken Coptic, it was inevitable that some degree of dialectal variation would be represented in written Coptic, and in fact Coptic manuscripts can be sorted according to phonological features—plus some other criteria—into groups that most likely represent contemporaneous varieties of Coptic from different regions of Egypt (Funk 1988). Broadly speaking, Coptologists distinguish the dialects of northern Egypt, mainly 'Bohairic', of Middle Egypt, mainly 'Fayyumic' and 'Mesokemic', and of southern Egypt, mainly 'Sahidic', among others. In the earliest manuscripts, from around the end of the third century CE until some time after the Arab Conquest of 641, it is rare that we can observe fundamentally distinct styles of script, despite the occurrence of clearly distinct dialect norms in the language as such. But over time, Bohairic (and Fayyumic) came to be written in styles that were quite distinct from the usual appearance of Sahidic. After the fourteenth century, by which time Arabic had replaced Coptic as the medium of spoken communication for nearly all purposes (except in the Church), Coptic manuscripts were almost always written in the Bohairic dialect (often with an accompanying Arabic translation) and in an easily recognizable Bohairic style of script.

Up until the last decades of the eighteenth century, the Coptic manuscripts known in Europe were Bohairic (or bilingual Bohairic-Arabic) codices, with but few exceptions. The first extensive collection of leaves from Sahidic (and a few Fayyumic) codices was assembled towards the end of the eighteenth century by Stefano Borgia at his home in Velletri (Buzi 2009, 15–75). The Danish Egyptologist and Coptologist Georg Zoëga, who catalogued Borgia's Coptic collection, undertook a palaeographical analysis of the fragments and distinguished nine types (*classes*) of script (Zoëga 1810, 169–171 and plates 1–7 after page 663). In order to facilitate further palaeographical study, he included at the end of his catalogue a set of thirty-nine numbered specimens of scripts, grouped according to type (from three to nine specimens per type), which Zoëga himself had prepared by means of laying translucent paper over each selected manuscript page and tracing the letters of a selected passage of text. For each item in his catalogue, Zoëga referred to one or more of his types or specimens: for example, 'characteres ut in specimine n. xi', 'characteres classis viii', 'characteres classis v ad vi transeuntis'. He was reasonably confident that his class I represented the oldest Coptic manuscripts, for this type of script is very close to that of the oldest Greek codices known at the time, by which Zoëga presumably meant manuscripts thought to be from the fourth and fifth centuries. He was similarly confident that the other extreme of his typology represented the latest Coptic codices, because there he would also place the script of a scholarly Coptic priest, Raphael Tuki, who worked in Rome in the middle of the eighteenth century and some of whose manuscripts were in Borgia's collection. But as for the types between the two extremes, Zoëga explicitly disavowed any knowledge about even their relative chronology. The nine types fall into two distinct groups, which we would now distinguish as 'unimodular' (classes i–iv: 'robustas ... et velut quadratas') and 'bimodular' (classes v–ix: 'velut cursivis affines et exiles'), but within these groups Zoëga's distinctions are merely aesthetic, the order of the classes in each group being marked by a perceived decline in quality. There is only one dated manuscript among the Sahidic fragments in the collection catalogued by Zoëga, who used it to illustrate his classes vi (main text, specimen 24) and ix (colophon, specimen 37), giving the date as 519 AM = 802/803 CE, which he found surprisingly early. Later scholars revised the interpretation of the

* I am indebted to Stephen Emmel for his kind suggestions.

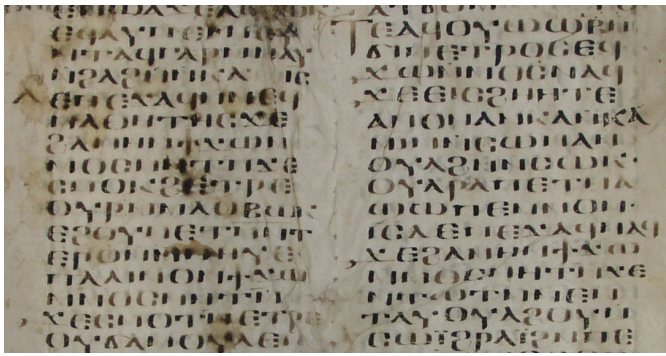


Fig. 2.4.1 Unimodular script; MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. fol. 1605, f. 5v (detail).

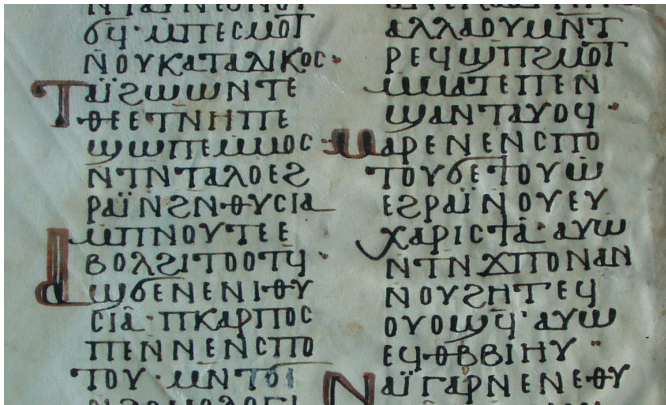


Fig. 2.4.2 Bimodular script; MS Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, IB 3, f. 59v (detail).

date to 719 AM = 1002/1003 CE (Buzi 2009, 119–121).

Zoëga's system of classification was used, although less accurately, also by Agostino Ciasca and Giuseppe Balestri in their edition of Sahidic biblical fragments from the Borgia collection (Ciasca – Balestri 1885–1904, with plates showing entire pages of selected manuscripts), and later by Adolf Hebbelynck and Arnold van Lantschoot in their catalogue of Coptic manuscripts in the Vatican Library, where they applied it mainly to Bohairic and Bohairic-Arabic manuscripts and tried to introduce some more 'technical' terms ('*Librarius duplici illa usus est scripturae uncialis specie quam Adolphus Hebbelynck descripsit ..., altera nempe quam vocamus rotunda, in ipso textu biblico, altera quam oblongam appellamus, in titulis, subscriptionibus, emendationibus et notis*'; Hebbelynck – van Lantschoot 1937, 4). Zoëga's classes of script remained a point of reference for Coptic palaeography for over a century. For example, Walter Ewing Crum, in landmark catalogues of Coptic manuscripts in two British collections early in the twentieth century, made com-

parative references either to published plates or else to Zoëga's classes and specimens, for example, 'cf. Zoëga, cl. iv., no. xix' (Crum 1905b, 67); 'Script of Zoëga's 9th class' (Crum 1909, 43); or he made very basic statements such as 'uncial, early type'. But Crum was careful to state clearly that he had intentionally 'scarcely ever made [a suggestion] as to the age of the manuscripts described' (Crum 1905b, xviii) or did so only 'with the utmost diffidence' (Crum 1909, xii), because he was convinced that 'suspended judgment is indeed still imperative on this fundamental question' of the age of the surviving Coptic manuscripts, the vast majority of which are without any recorded date, and his remarks in this connexion still merit consideration even now, a century later (Crum 1905b, xviii–xix).

Henry Hyvernât was the first scholar to publish a Coptic palaeographical album, based largely on Bohairic hagiographical manuscripts that he was editing together with Balestri, without any attempt to define the different typologies encountered (Hyvernât 1888). In this respect, the work undertaken by Viktor Stegemann, who took into consideration both literary and documentary scripts from the beginning of Coptic textual production (third century) to the eleventh century and beyond, represented significant progress (Stegemann 1936). Although Stegemann proposed a chronology of Coptic palaeography largely dependent on the Greek script typologies—an approach which turned out to be, at least in part, misleading—he gave due attention to manuscripts whose dates are known because of the presence of dated colophons. Unfortunately, since then there has been little further progress in the systematic study of Coptic writing, a Coptic palaeography published by Maria Cramer about thirty years after Stegemann representing in this respect a missed opportunity (Cramer 1964b)—being nothing more than a collections of samples of scripts—although increasing attention is now being paid to Coptic documentary scripts (for example, a first classification of Coptic cursive writing has been proposed by Alain Delattre on the basis of the study of the documents from Bawit: see Delattre 2007).

Although Coptic studies have experienced significant improvements in codicology in the last decades (see Ch. 1 § 5)—a manual of Coptic codicology is still a desideratum, but increasing attention has been devoted to the physical description of manuscripts by editors of the texts (see surveys by Emmel 1993;

Emmel 1999; Boud'hors 2006)—up to now, Coptologists cannot depend on a reliable palaeographic classification and on a shared terminology. In 1985, taking as a model what at that time had already been done for Hebrew palaeography, Bentley Layton expressed the need for ‘a chronological album of sample photographs of all known dated and datable Coptic manuscripts ... sorted according to date and (so far as possible) locality’ (Layton 1985, 155). Such a study—which has been accomplished recently now also for Armenian palaeography—has not yet been realized.

Despite the worthy efforts of individual editors who have not neglected the codicological and palaeographical aspects of an editor's task, as well as increased attention to diacritical signs and the like (for example, Kasser 2001) and some recent systematic attempts at reaching a unified view of some (older) Coptic writings (Gardner – Choat 2004; Orsini 2008a; Orsini 2008b; Orsini forthcoming), ‘this science is still far from reaching the maturity needed to satisfy the most demanding among specialized users’ (Kasser 1991c, 176; see also Boud'hors 2006, 95). A scarcity of dated manuscripts, or of manuscripts which may be attributed to a sure archaeological context, and the marked taste for the imitation of older scripts—Coptic writings which used the same graphic characteristics as a Greek typology might be much later than their model—represent only two of the several causes of the difficulty in tracing a reliable palaeographic chronology.

It is a well established fact, however, that the scripts of most of the older literary manuscripts (third to eleventh centuries), and also of some official documents, may be described as belonging to only two fundamentally different types, namely the types of Zoëga's classes I–IV and V–IX: (1) the ‘Biblical majuscule’, according to Guglielmo Cavallo's terminology (Cavallo 1967, 1975)—a round, ‘unimodular’, bilinear, and slowly written calligraphic style of writing, often exhibiting a marked contrast in thickness between vertical and horizontal or diagonal strokes (‘thick-and-thin style’)—and (2) the ‘Coptic uncial’ or ‘Alexandrian majuscule’—an upright, bilinear style of writing, executed with a thick pen and characterized by more sinuous glyphs, with a marked contrast between broad letters and narrow letters (especially ε [e], θ [th], ο [o], c [s]), whose extremities could be decorated with round dots and loops (figs. 2.4.1, 2). One of the few certainties in the history of Coptic writing is that between the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth century, a ‘bimodular’ variant of the Coptic uncial script came progressively to replace the unimodular type, which came more and more to be reserved for specific kinds of literature, such as biblical texts and works from the monastic tradition of Shenoute and Pachomius. There are reasons to suppose that the emergence of this new writing fashion is to be attributed to the monastic centres of the Fayyum oasis.

As a consequence of the situation delineated above, it is not surprising that the palaeographic descriptions included in catalogues of Coptic manuscripts are rarely satisfactory, although since the beginning of Coptic studies, scholars have been aware of the importance of including them.

The first Coptologist to give explicit systematic attention to the problem of palaeography in the context of catalogue descriptions was Bentley Layton, who in the paragraph entitled ‘Descriptive Method’ in his *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906* explained clearly the criteria that he had applied in describing the ‘hand’ of a given manuscript that he was cataloguing (Layton 1987, lxiii–lxiv). Avoiding cautiously any categorization and specific terminology, Layton concentrated his attention on the hands rather than on any script typology and noted only ‘the minimal number of characteristics needed to identify a given hand in a more or less specific way’. According to this choice, the following palaeographic elements were described: orientation of vertical strokes (upright, left-sloping, right-sloping), types and shapes of some specific and ‘revealing’ letters (tall, short, wide, narrow, 4-stroke, 3-stroke, etc.), possible presence of superlineation and punctuation, possible use of thick-and-thin style, and the height of ten lines of text together with their ten interlinear spaces. He did not include in his descriptions any explicit statements about the classification of the script as either bimodular or unimodular, but he supplied his catalogue with thirty-two plates containing specimens (consisting in little portions of pages) representing many of the hands described.

The same system was used in the *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York* by Leo Depuydt, who, however, specified that the ‘script most commonly found in the Morgan Coptic literary manuscripts is known to Greek palaeographers as the ‘Coptic uncial’ (Depuydt 1993, ci). He listed all the characteristics of this script, including the narrow shape of some letters, although he did not use the term ‘bimodular’ to describe it. The second volume of Depuydt's catalogue is

dedicated wholly to plates (entire pages are reproduced). Several series of plates are dedicated to frontispieces, headpieces and tailpieces, but the main attention is given to the scripts, where again—as in Layton’s catalogue—the term is to be meant more as a *specimen* of hands than as a typology. Both scholars clearly considered premature any more detailed and categorized classification.

To conclude, what Rodolphe Kasser declared almost twenty-five years ago is unfortunately for the most part still valid: ‘Coptic palaeography is still a new field’ (Kasser 1991c, 176). It is a field which is still to be explored, and also by means of that coveted, but until now neglected, systematic and critical collection and analysis of all available dated Coptic manuscripts, which would also benefit philological studies.

Unexpected help might come from the recent attempt to apply radiocarbon dating technique, to Coptic parchments (Schüssler forthcoming).

References

Boud’hors 2006; Buzi 2009; Cavallo 1967, 1975; Ciasca – Balestri 1885–1904; Cramer 1964b; Crum 1905b, 1909; Delattre 2007; Depuydt 1993; Emmel 1993, 1999; Funk 1988; Gardner – Choat 2004; Hebbelynck – van Lantschoot 1937; Hyvernât 1888; Kasser 1991b, 1991c, 2001; Layton 1985, 1987; Orsini 2008a, 2008b, forthcoming; Schüssler forthcoming; Stegemann 1936; Zoëga 1810.

5. Ethiopic palaeography (ABa–DN)

A few inscriptions dating to the second/third centuries CE (cf. the metal object of ‘Addi Galamo, *RIÉ* no. 180, issued by a GDR, king of Aksum, or the inscription on the obelisk at Maṭarā, *RIÉ* no. 223) are the earliest, at least approximately datable evidence of the Ethiopic language (or Ge‘ez, Geez, Ancient Ethiopic, Classical Ethiopic). These inscriptions already attest the appearance of a clearly defined script, rigorously left-to-right (with a few right-to-left exceptions in the very early period, cf. *RIÉ* no. 181), in purely consonantal form. It included originally twenty four consonants and semivowels, i.e. all those of the subsequent period except *p̄* and *p* (see below). It mainly consisted of one or more vertical lines, smaller horizontal strokes, circles, and circles and strokes. Enriched and implemented from the fourth century CE at the latest, with an original notation system for seven vowel orders (*a u i ā ē e o*, with the sixth order also used for zero vowel), the resulting syllabary was used for centuries, with very minor changes and additions, for writing Ethiopic and is still used for Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, as well as for other vernacular languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is known with the traditional name of *fidal*, of obscure etymology. It is traditionally arranged in the so-called Ge‘ez sequence (*h, l, ḥ, m, ś, r, s*, etc.) of South Semitic origin, or in the Hebrew- and Arabic-like so-called *abugidā* sequence (*‘, b, g, d, h, w, ḥ*, etc.), following a tradition closer to the Phoenician alphabet and derived ones.

The vocalization system was probably adopted following an Indian syllabic script system and is tangible evidence of South-Asian influences in the area in ancient times. It is the only syllabary used by a Semitic language. The basic form of the first *a*-order are modified in each consonant for the other six orders by the addition of horizontal and vertical short lines, rings and half rings. The earliest vocalized inscriptions were issued by king ‘Ēzānā in his pagan period, and are therefore datable to the first half of the fourth century CE (*RIÉ* nos. 187, 188). It can not to be excluded that vocalization was used at earlier times, as legends on coins provide clues in this sense (Schneider 1995). The occasional use and status of *matres lectionis* in inscriptions and coins is controversial (cf. Frantsouzoff 2005).

The Ethiopic script does not mark the beginning of literacy in the area, since a South Arabian script (Sabaean) was used from the eighth/seventh centuries to the fifth/fourth centuries BCE, as attested by a corpus of little less than two hundred inscriptions in Sabaean language. In the Aksumite period (since the first century CE) the use of the Greek alphabet and language is attested, with a series of royal inscriptions datable to the second/third century CE (*RIÉ* nos. 269–286) and legends on coins. The Greek script might be responsible for the left-to-right direction of the Ethiopic script, and Greek capital letters were used since then on to write the numerals (one character each for the numerals from 1 to 9, for the tens from 10 to 90, and for 100). A special revival of the Sabaean script—but not of the language, apart from a few superficial sabaesisms—is attested from the fourth to the sixth centuries CE, when some royal inscriptions were written in Ethiopic language in Sabaean script. The inscriptions were bilingual, in Ethiopic (in Sabaean script) and Greek (*RIÉ* nos. 190 and 271), and pseudo-trilingual, in Ethiopic (in Ethiopic non-vocalized script), Ethiopic (in Sabaean script), and Greek—the latter in two sets for a total of six inscriptions (*RIÉ* nos. 185 I, 185 II, 270 and 185 I bis, 185 II bis, 270 bis).

The Ethiopic script, like the Sabaean, belongs to the South Semitic branch, but its direct relationship and dependence upon the South Arabian script (bustrophedon or right-to-left) was disputed, since non-Sabaean scripts used for pre-Islamic North-Arabian languages attested in Arabia (especially Thamudic) have also been invoked as a possible parallel. The question seems to be probably outdated now, since growing documentation of palm sticks with carved South Arabian cursive writing has emerged, that provides a wide range of possible parallels for the Ethiopian script within the South Arabian scripts (see, for example, Stein 2010). The Ethiopic script uses a smaller set of characters than that used by the Sabaean, since some Semitic phonemes have merged in Ethiopic (*ḏ > z, ṭ > s, ṣ > š, ḡ > ḥ*). Conversely, an additional set of labiovelars (*k^w, g^w, ḥ^w, q^w*, yet only with vowels *a, i, ā, ē, e*) and an extended set of labials (*b, f < p, p, p̄*) was developed, bringing the total number of letters to 30 and that of syllabic characters to 202. According to the Ge‘ez sequence, the letters are the following: *h, l, ḥ, m, ś, r, s, q, q^w, b, t, n, ḥ, ḥ^w, ‘, k, k^w, w, ‘, z, y, d, g, g^w, ṭ, ṭ̄, ṣ, ḏ, f, p*.

The forms of the Ethiopic letters are more rounded in comparison to the Sabaean monumental characters and must have been developed while using softer text-carriers—which one, however, is difficult to say, since no positive evidence has emerged so far (but see Ch. 1 § 6.1.1)—as attested also for cursive

South-Arabian palm-sticks inscriptions (cf. Stein 2010). The Ethiopic script has never to this day developed either any opposition between capital and non-capital letter forms, or any extensive use of ligatures: it has always retained the basic, uncial-like appearance attested in the Aksumite inscriptions and each character is written separately, with very few isolated exceptions. Word units were separated by a vertical bar (as in the Sabaean script), that still appears in a late Aksumite inscription (inscription of Ham, *RIĒ* no. 232, variously dated from the ninth to the thirteenth century). Yet horizontal double strokes (=), which turned into the two-dot mark, or ‘colon’, separating words in manuscripts, were already used in the sixth century inscription of king Kālēb at Mārib (*RIĒ* no. 195, early decades of the sixth century).

Apart from the Aksumite inscriptions, attested not later than the ninth/tenth centuries, the earliest much debated manuscript evidence is that of two Abbā Garimā Four Gospels manuscripts, likely to be dated to around the sixth century CE (see Ch. 1 § 6.2.3). It is actually in these manuscripts that the two additional plosive characters for two labial phonemes *p* and *p̣* (*p* probably borrowed from the Greek alphabet and developed earlier than *p̣*, that was easily obtained from the modification of *s*) are attested for the first time. These characters are mainly used to render Greek loanwords (typically, Greek π), a need which immediately occurred during the process of translating the Bible and other Christian writings starting from the fourth century CE. For example, the original lengthening of the vertical strokes by the addition of a short line for the formation of the vowel orders by modification of the basic shape turned in the course of time into a symmetric shortening of the opposite vertical stroke(s), with the apparent search for an harmonious, more regular and stable shape of the character. The ancient way of prolonging the legs of the letters under the base-line, however, can still be observed in some ancient manuscripts (cf. Sergew Hable Selassie 1991, for EML no. 8509; also attested in the Abbā Garimā Four Gospels manuscripts, the manuscript of the ‘Aksumite Collection’ (for which see Ch. 3 § 3.2), and EML no. 6907). Generally, this small corpus of very archaic manuscripts attests that many vowel markers appear to be shaped after different principles, dissimilar to those of the apparently ‘standard mediaeval Ethiopic’.

Sources not yet fully exploited for palaeographic research are captions on mural inscriptions of mediaeval churches (the best known are those of Gannata Māryām, some of them dating to the thirteenth century at the latest), and the carved inscriptions on wooden altar-tablet chairs (the so-called *manāberta tābot*, the best known are those preserved in the churches of Lālibalā and dated to the twelfth/thirteenth century).

The writing system remained stable in the better known mediaeval manuscript tradition (from the thirteenth century on), notwithstanding the vanishing of Ethiopic as a spoken language. The interference with the vernacular languages had palaeographic consequences which are attested *without exception* in all extant manuscripts, such as the interchangeability in the script of graphic pairs and triplets due to the eventual phonetic merging of phonemes in the spoken language (*s/š*, *ʾ/ṣ*, *ṣ/d*, *h/h̄/h̄*, and in the vocalism, laryngeals-*a*/laryngeals-*ā*), only partially balanced by the persistence of some traditional spellings (for example *neguś* and not *negus*, etc.). A noteworthy innovation was the introduction of additional characters for the new phonemes of the Amharic (palatals, and later also fricatives in Tigrinya, for loanwords etc.). The palatals are already attested (according to Ullendorff 1951, 209) at the end of the fifteenth century (cf. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. E. D. Clarke Or. 39). These additions—namely, of *š*, *č*, *ñ*, *ž*, *ǧ*, *č*—brought the number of basic letters of the Amharic syllabary to 251, and of Tigrinya—also with *k*, *q̄*—to 265, yet without considering additional further combinations (for example, with the labial appendix frequently occurring in Amharic, *hʷā*, *lʷā*, etc., and others).

Only occasionally attempts were made at correcting the heaviest shortcomings of the Ethiopic script, i.e. the missing mark of gemination (Conti Rossini 1914, 16–17, 161–162 (no. 142), on BnF d’Abbadie 53, where the Arabic *tašdīd* is used for this), and the ambiguity of the sixth order, that indicates either vowel *e* or zero vowel.

The main features of Ethiopic palaeography have been examined by Siegbert Uhlig (1988, 1990; this still remains the only reliable starting point for further research, to be strictly carried out only on the basis of dated manuscripts; see also Uhlig – Bausi 2010). From the early period to approximately the fourteenth century, the context for the development of Ethiopic script can be only described on the basis of a few centres of writing activities that have preserved relevant evidence in the most northern area, namely, Endā Abbā Garimā, Dabra Libānos of Ham and nearby areas, Ger’āltā, Lāstā and Lālibalā, Dabra Ḥayq Estifānos, and a few others, some of which must have already existed during the Aksumite time. Multiplication of the local scribal traditions must have taken place in the fourteenth century, possibly with local

styles influencing each other through migration of books and scribes. For the moment, there is no clear evidence that any political authority—even in the period of King Zar’a Yā’qob (1434–1468), who was mostly engaged in manuscript production and dissemination, both as ‘author and editor’—tried officially to enforce the use of a specific script and limit the use of others, even though some scripts might have been considered more influential than others. The picture of the subsequent centuries might be defined by coexistence and interference of numerous local styles, some of them represented by single scribes, some by the book production in monastic centres, within a relatively small area of the Christian Kingdom.

The study of Ethiopic palaeography by Uhlig (1988, 1990) established a broad frame for the history of Ethiopic script, with its periods and general features; but it is still not possible to understand how they relate to regional styles and idiosyncrasies of individual scribes. No strictly *palaeographic* regional or scriptorial styles could be clearly identified so far (despite occasional general references to ‘the style of Gunda Gunde’; cf. also a first attempt by Nosnitsin 2013a, 2013b). Uhlig 1988 and Uhlig 1990 defined the following stages and respective traits:

1. Monumental script: the earliest manuscripts (including the Abbā Garimā Four Gospels) until the second half of the fourteenth century. The characters resemble much the style of the inscriptions, with very angular shapes. The proportions are tall and slender, with some strictness and rigidity. The distinctive marks of the characters are centred around their upper half, while the strokes placed in the upper half tend to descend to the base line. Punctuation marks seem disproportionately large. The decorative elements are minimal.

In the light of the newly acquired evidence for an earlier dating of the two Abbā Garimā Four Gospels (c. fourth–sixth century) and a not very much later dating of the third Abbā Garimā Four Gospels book, as well as a probable twelfth/thirteenth century dating of the ‘Aksumite Collection’, it appears necessary today to introduce new distinctions. The notion of ‘monumental script’—currently used to refer to the very long period of early use and existence of the Ethiopic script, of which only scanty evidence has survived—must be subdivided into at least two typologies of scripts, that show a different degree of ‘monumentality’: 1a. script with vowel markers shaped according to principles that appear different from those typical for the mediaeval time, including significant deviations in vocalization (fig. 1.6.8); 1b. script which shows mostly the normal shapes of vowel markers. Some distinctive letter forms: ‘a of triangular downwards oriented shape, set upon the base line in all orders; *te* with lateral strokes reaching the base line, the central one with articulated kink in the upper part; *se* with the marker of the sixth order composed of two short strokes: the vertical one and a perpendicular horizontal one to the left; ‘e has the left leg drawn high up to the headline, kinked vowel marker tending to horizontal position; *lo* has the ring marking the vowel set close to the top of the letter, without a linking line; archaic forms of numerals (see below) (fig. 1.6.4).

2. Second half of the fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century (the definition of ‘square script’ given by Uhlig 1990, 43, 72 is probably not the most appropriate). The script shows more variability and appears less monumental and somehow irregular in size, slant and space between characters. The basic forms show departure from ‘monumentality’ and become, to one or another extent, wider and more rounded, the curvatures and crosses go beyond the letter limit, and the distinctive marks of the characters move towards their middle. The number of punctuation marks grows, and the *crux ansata* is also used, probably as a mark to distinguish main sections. Some distinctive letter forms: the triangular body of the ‘a letter forms with vowel markers (‘ā, ‘ē, etc.) is raised; the lateral strokes of *te* are also raised, the kink on the central stroke moves to the middle; the left leg of ‘e is shorter, the vowel marker is set at it at bigger angle; the vowel marker of *lo* is sometimes set on a link line; the loops of *ma*, with small ‘counters’ are set tightly together, sometimes one upon another; the horizontal lines of *ne* are short (fig. 1.6.3).

3. Rounded script: mid-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century. There appears a deliberate tendency for standardization and regularity (for example, in the slant of both the vertical and/or horizontal strokes), with more stable shapes. The letters become rounded and wider. The fifth order loops (half-ring) are open. Some distinctive letter forms: the loops of *ma* are not separated, but are set very closely together; the markers of the vowel ē for some letters (‘ē, ‘ē, mē, sē, bē, etc.) as well as the ‘counter’ of *le* frequently remain open; the vowel marker of *lo* is mostly set on a link line (fig. 1.6.6 recto).

4. Compressed slender script: mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century. The proportions change again, and the letters tend to become smaller and taller, and broadly spaced; however, the lines are even and dense, often drawn with pointed pens. The characters are of uniform height, and the strokes run par-

allel. Some distinctive letter forms: the loops of *ma* in all forms are always separated; vowel markers and ‘counters’ of more letters remain unclosed; the end of the upper horizontal stroke of *ne* is directed downward.

5. *G^welh* script: mid-seventeenth to the second half of the eighteenth century. This script is considered the most elegant. The characters are evenly shaped and clear. It is the script typical for the period of the Gondarine Kingdom (1632–1769); it probably originated in Gondar, the capital city (in this sense, it represents a regional script). It is sometimes called ‘the script of kings’, and is frequently associated with the large luxury manuscript production of that time. Some distinctive letter forms: the bodies or parts of the letters set under the headline (*mā, mi, šā, pa, qa, wā*, etc.) are raised high and appear smaller; the vowel marker *-ā* of the letters which is drawn downwards to the left (*tā, qā, yā*, also *wo*, etc.) is strongly articulated; the vowel marker *-ē* and ‘counters’ of various letters are usually closed; the modern form of *pe* appears, to substitute various older forms.

6. *Raqiq* script: mid-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century. This class runs partly parallel to the previous one. It is characterized by smaller size and less regularity, a lower-quality realization and sometimes also a careless hand. Punctuation marks tend to disappear.

7. Bulky and cursive script: nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The characteristics of different periods gradually disappear; along with irregular (clumsy) handwriting cursive forms with a right slant appear.

The definitions ‘*raqiq*-script’ and ‘bulky and cursive script of the nineteenth/twentieth century’ currently cover a large variety of local scripts, poorly known and hardly studied.

The general quality of the script depends on the status of the text (the highest reserved, for example, for the Four Gospels), and is clearly inferior in marginal notes. A peculiar palaeographic development is represented by the ‘micro-script’ of chant manuscripts (not earlier than the sixteenth century), where each line accommodates both the main text line and tiny notation signs above.

The absence of cursive forms, the extreme rarity of monograms (attested on coins, seals and rock inscriptions), abbreviations (rarely on the margins of manuscripts, such as the *qom*-sign, probably from Greek *komma*, cf. Zuurmond 1989, Part I, 34) and tachygraphic forms (essentially limited to the use of the monogram *-gzi-* in *Egzi’abḥēr*, ‘Lord’, of the graphic form 20’*ēl* for *Esrā’ēl*, ‘Israel’ (that is ‘20’ *esrā* plus *-’ēl*), and of the first one or two letters in words such as *qeddus* (*qe*) ‘holy, saint’, *salām* (*sa*) ‘salutation’, and proper names, including *nomina sacra*, while a more extensive use is to be found in the *andemtā* commentaries and liturgical literature in dialogic sections) severely limit palaeographic variations that can be observed in Ethiopian manuscripts to very few phenomena. The limits of the periods as described above are not clearly cut, the hands as attested in the manuscripts frequently show the ‘progressive’ or ‘traditionalist’ attitudes of the scribes, with both ‘new’ and ‘old features’ mixed, the latter still retained in much later times than their respective periods of origin. The palaeographical dating of the manuscripts is in many cases difficult if not assisted by internal and codicological evidence.

Among the most conspicuous features that provide clear and precise evidence of diachronical development, one may mention the archaic forms of numerals ‘one’ (narrow and slightly downwards-oriented triangular) and ‘four’ (also triangular, but larger and upwards-oriented); numerals ‘six’ (compressed and lower, with no ring) and ‘seven’ (narrow and higher, also with no ring); second and sixth order of *w* (second order with horizontal stroke by the side in the middle, not in the lower end as in later manuscripts; sixth order with stroke at the top, not in the middle). In very archaic manuscripts (such as the Abbā Garimā Four Gospels manuscripts) the real value of these signs can sometimes not be exactly perceived in terms of shape, neither rightly understood but in the context and within an opposition system; the same happens for other signs (*s, t, h*) in first, fourth and sixth orders opposing correlations (cf. Zuurmond 1989, Part I, 303). Numeral ‘ten’ also occasionally exhibits a peculiar rare archaic form with a ring on the right side of the leg (cf. Dillmann 1907, 33, n. 1; Leroy [Jules] et al. 1961, 20ff., esp. 25; Uhlig 1988, 212).

The study of normal punctuation is also part of Palaeography, yet, in the absence of reliable editions which also take punctuation into consideration, no correlation has been consistently established with manuscript dating (cf. Bausi 2008a, 537, n. 105).

In Ethiopian manuscript studies, palaeography has essentially been applied in its strict sense of establishing correlations between graphic shapes of signs, and dates (see Bausi 2004a, 12–14). As such, it was already employed for dating manuscripts by the authors of the first catalogues of Ethiopian manuscripts (cf. Bausi 2007), when the text itself provided no hint (a colophon, additional notes, etc.) as to the time

of writing (for this purpose, facsimiles plates were often included in the catalogues, cf. Wright 1877, Grébaut – Tisserant 1935, 1936, etc.). Cataloguing offered at times an important occasion for palaeographic reflection: such is the case of the catalogue by Carlo Conti Rossini of the d’Abbadie collection in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where a short treatise of Ethiopic palaeography precedes the description (Conti Rossini 1914, 9–19). Apart from this, one cannot say that there exists any standardized palaeographic terminology or any accepted periodization which is applied in the manuscripts catalogues.

References

Bausi 2004a, 2007, 2008a; Conti Rossini 1914; Dillmann 1907; Frantsouzoff 2005, 2010; Grébaut – Tisserant 1935, 1936; Leroy [Jules] et al. 1961; Nosnitsin 2013a, 2013b; *RIÉ* = Bernard et al. 1991–2000; Schneider 1995; Sergew Hable Selassie 1991; Stein 2010; Uhlig 1988, 1990; Uhlig – Bausi 2010; Ullendorff 1951; Wright 1877; Zuurmond 1989.

6. Georgian palaeography (TP)

The history of Georgian writing: basic considerations

For the study of Georgian manuscripts, palaeography is crucial indeed, given that Georgian codices are much less frequently provided with colophons indicating the date and place of their origin than are codices of comparable traditions. This is especially true for the early period of Georgian literacy (fifth to ninth centuries), the first dated codex being the Sinai *Mravaltavi* of 863–864 CE (Sinai, St Catherine, georg. 32-57-33+N89; see General introduction § 3.8), but the problem persists up to the nineteenth century; for instance, among the fifteen post-fourteenth-century codices used in the edition of the chronicle *Kartlis Cxovreba* ('The Life of Kartli'; Metreveli 2008, 23), only seven show an explicit dating (between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries). Scholars investigating Georgian manuscripts and their history have therefore to rely upon external criteria that enable them to provide at least a relative chronology. For the early period, there is a clear-cut linguistic criterion in the occurrence of the so-called *xanmeṭi* and *haemeṭi* forms, which are characterized by special verbal and nominal affixes consisting of the letters *x* (*kh*) and *h* and which admit of assigning the manuscripts in which they appear (mostly palimpsests) to approximately the fifth to eighth centuries (see General introduction § 3.8) in accordance with contemporaneous epigraphical monuments that show the same features. Linguistic features can also be taken into account for later periods, for example the transition from Old to Middle Georgian by about the eleventh century when, among other changes, the nominative ending, *-i*, started to be omitted after vocalic stems due to the reduction of diphthongs (*-e + i = -ey > -e* etc.), with a concomitant increase of confusion concerning the distribution of the letters *e* and *ē* (*= ey*) and the use of the letter *y* in general (Danelia – Saržvelaṣe 1997, 241–246).

In the case of Georgian, the interrelation with epigraphic sources is also crucial for palaeography proper, in the sense of an historical analysis of the elements and the style of writing used in manuscripts. The most prominent phenomenon that has to be dealt with in this context is the internal development and chronological succession of the three script styles known as *mrglovani* (or *asomtavruli*), *nusxuri* (or *nusxa-xucuri*), and *mxedruli*. The first of them, an 'uncial' majuscule, was the sole script attested between the fifth and the eighth centuries. The oldest witnesses available, stone inscriptions of the fifth century discovered in the Monastery of the Cross near Jerusalem and in the cathedral of Bolnisi in Lower Kartli (South-East Georgia, fig. 2.6.1), still exhibit a near-to 'square' layout of the spaces occupied by individual characters (see the images in Gippert – Tandaschwili 1999–2002 and 2002; see also the General introduction § 3.8), while even the most ancient manuscripts we have at hand (palimpsest undertexts with *xanmeṭi* forms) show at least five characters with a long descender (Ⴀ = *z*, Ⴁ = *p*, Ⴃ = *k*, Ⴄ = *q*, Ⴅ = *c*, probably also Ⴆ = *g*). Another distinctive feature that changed over time in the use of the *mrglovani* majuscules, is the loop to the left in the characters *b* (Ⴇ), *z* (Ⴀ), *q* (Ⴄ), and *w* (Ⴉ), which was closed in the early centuries but tended to be more and more opened at its top in later times (see the table provided in Gippert et al. 2007a, xxvii, for specimens taken from the twelve different *mrglovani* hands underlying the palimpsest Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2). Whether the shorter descenders appearing in the inscriptions represent the initial shape of the letters in question or whether they were the result of vertical compression in adapting the necessities of epigraphical layout, is related to the question of the emergence of the Georgian script in general and cannot be argued with palaeographically for lack of further evidence.

Nusxuri script (fig. 2.6.2), the minuscule deriving of the older *mrglovani* majuscules, is first attested in an inscription of 835 CE found in the *Sioni* church at Aṭeni (on the bank of the river Kura near Gori; Abramišvili 1976); it is also represented in the scribe's colophon of the Sinai *Mravaltavi* (f. 274rb; see image 279 online at <<http://www.e-corpus.org/notices/101436/gallery>> and Gippert forthcoming for details). Inversely, the colophons of the Gospel manuscript Sin. georg. 15 written by the scribe Ioane Zos-



Fig. 2.6.1 Inscription from the *Sioni* church of Bolnisi, c.493–495 CE, from Mačavariani 2008, 34.



Fig. 2.6.2 Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-1335 (Vani Gospels), twelfth–thirteenth centuries, f. 10r, photo courtesy of the National Centre of Manuscripts.

tenth century; see Šaniže – Martirosovi 1977, 216). Whenever codices exhibit contiguous texts in both scripts side by side, they are likely to have been merged from separate original manuscripts; this is true, for example, for the *Mravaltavi* of Svanetia (A-19, tenth century), which, in a total of 242 folia, contains 12 folia written in *nuxxuri* (ff. 95–106) obviously substituting the contents of three quires that had been lost (Gorgaże 1927, 2 and 19), or the Sinai codex georg. 34 (tenth century), a compilation by Ioane Zosime, the twenty-second quire of which (ff. 196–203) is in majuscules and which also contains four quires on paper (Garitte 1958, 17–18; see images 152 ff. on <<http://www.e-corpus.org/notices/112554/gallery>>).

An early usage of the third Georgian script, *mxedruli* (fig. 2.6.3), in its turn a cursive variant of the *nuxxuri* minuscules, is attested in another inscription of the *Sioni* of Ateni, of the late tenth century (982–986 CE; Abramišvili – Aleksizze 1978). Among manuscripts, the Sinai Gospel codex georg. 30 of 979 CE is likely to be the first to contain a contemporary scribe's note in *mxedruli* script (f. 75rb; Garitte 1956, 71; see image 78 on <<http://www.e-corpus.org/notices/101435/gallery>>). The late tenth-century codex S-1141 (the so-called 'Collective codex of Šatberdi', *Šatberdis krebuli*) contains a note in *mxedruli* script that was added by a hand allegedly of the eleventh century (Gigineišvili – Giunašvili 1979, 22). We may thus conclude that the tenth century marks the beginning of the cohabitation of all three Georgian scripts, which came to an end with the decline of manuscript production in the nineteenth century.

The first publications that focused on the palaeographical development of the Georgian scripts date from the end of the nineteenth century. They comprised lithographic copies of many specimens taken from manuscripts in order to elaborate a first historical overview (Marr 1901; Šaniže 1924; Čikobava 1927–1930).

ime (see Ch. 1 § 7.6.2) in 978 CE are, at least partly, in *mrglovani* script (ff. 84r, 224v), while the main text is in *nuxxuri* minuscules (see images 87 and 242 on <<http://www.e-corpus.org/notices/98066/gallery>>). From the tenth century onward, the number of manuscripts that are written in *nuxxuri* script throughout increases notably; we may mention, among others, the Sinai codices georg. 26 (954 CE; <<http://www.e-corpus.org/notices/112553/gallery>>) and 19 (1074 CE; <<http://www.e-corpus.org/notices/98067/gallery>>), the *Mravaltavi* of Klaržeti (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-144, tenth century), or a manuscript containing the Georgian translation of the *Revelation of John* by the Athonite Eptwme (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, H-1346, 978 CE; see Imnaišvili 1961). However, it is important to note that in all *nuxxuri* manuscripts, majuscules continue to be used in headers, as initials, and the like, which is why they are also called *asomtavruli* (lit. 'capital letters'). An intermediate stage between 'plain' majuscule and minuscule script styles may be seen in the hand of the so-called 'Hymnary of papyrus and parchment' (*čil-eṭraṭis iadgari*) from Jerusalem (Tbilisi, H-2123,

The most systematical effort in this field was undertaken by Ilia Abulaze who published a palaeographical album (Abulaze 1973) with reproductions of all three types of Georgian scripts as used in epigraphic monuments and, especially, in manuscripts (both dated and undated), arranged in chronological order in tabular form. More exhaustive research into this is the object of an ongoing project of the National Centre of Manuscripts, Tbilisi, which aims at the preparation of a palaeographic album to be published online, based on a larger amount of dated Georgian manuscripts.

Georgian palaeography as represented in catalogues: scripts and hands

In spite of differences between their styles, the many catalogues that have been produced for the various collections of Georgian manuscripts (see Ch. 4 § 2.5) show quite a homogeneous picture concerning their palaeographical content. Usually these catalogues restrict themselves to naming the type of script (*asomtavruli*, *nusxuri*, *mxedruli*) used in a given manuscript, sometimes further characterized according to its visual appearance ('*nusxuri* in small letters': Bregaze et al. 1985, 16; 'slightly inclined *nusxuri* of medium size': Axobaze et al. 1986, 28; 'beautiful *nusxuri*': Taqaišvili 1933, 24). Another detail that may be mentioned in the catalogues is the number of hands. Of course, information on the type of script might be considered as helpful—if only in a very general way—when it comes to the task of determining a manuscript's production

date. For example, we would not expect a *mxedruli* manuscript to be older than the tenth century, but on the other hand, it might theoretically have been written between the tenth and the twentieth centuries. What could be useful here is the possibility of identification of the time to which a given hand belongs, as well as the identification of the literary centre from where a given style of writing originates. It should be noted, however, that Georgian palaeography lacks researches characterizing the peculiarities of the individual scriptoria, and no explicit explanations are available about how and on what basis a given hand can be identified as belonging to a concrete epoch or literary centre. Despite this methodological lack, some cataloguers have nevertheless attempted to date manuscripts on the base of the hands at work, but without giving any explicit argumentation for it. For instance, the catalogue of the 'New Finds' of Georgian manuscripts in St Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai (Aleksiže et al. 2005) states that whenever an exact date of a manuscript could not be found, a tentative dating is given (in square brackets) on the basis of palaeographical evidence. The same is true for many other catalogues as well. Only in very rare cases, more developed explanations can be found as in Ekvtime Taqaišvili's catalogue of the Georgian manuscripts of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Taqaišvili 1933), which states, for example, that a given manuscript (Paris, BnF, Géorgien 2) must have been copied in the second half of the eighteenth century as proven 'with no doubt' by its hand and orthographical peculiarities (Taqaišvili 1933, 23). Taqaišvili was especially eager to provide datings on the basis of the comparison of hands because he considered the previous catalogue of the Paris manuscripts (Macler 1908) to be very imprecise in that respect.

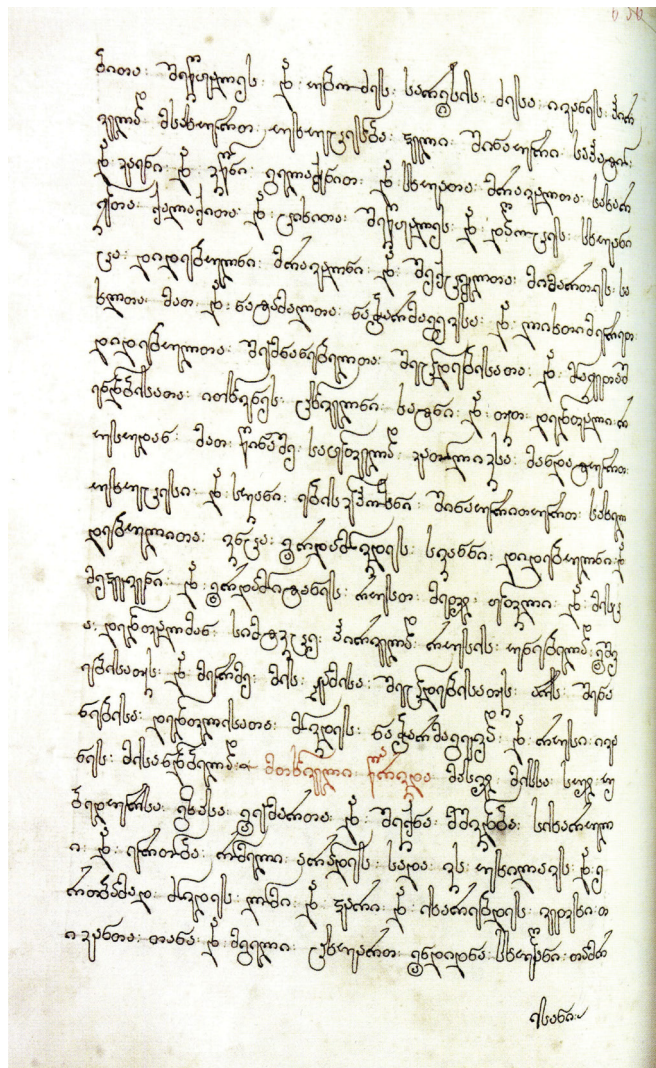


Fig. 2.6.3 'Life of Kartli', Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-30, 1633–1646, f. 470v, from Karanaze et al. 2010, 114.

Among the catalogues of Georgian manuscripts, those compiled by Robert Pierpont Blake (1932a, 1932b, 1933) prove to be the most exhaustive in terms of palaeographical descriptions. In his catalogue of the Georgian manuscripts in Cambridge, Blake states with respect to the famous Georgian-Hebrew palimpsest (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schlechter 12,741; no. 1 in his catalogue): ‘The script is large, bold and striking, traced by the hand of a skilled scribe, but I should hardly call it elegant’, and he even provides ‘a careful tracing of the actual letters in addition to the facsimile reproduction of the leaf’ to support the palaeographical analysis (Blake 1932b, 210). Blake was also the first to identify the literary centres where Georgian manuscripts were copied, styling a script a ‘small asomt’avruli of Sinai-Palestinian type’ (Blake 1932b, 213: Cambridge, Add. 1890,1 / no. 3) or describing manuscripts as being ‘written in Sinaitic nusxuri’ (Blake 1932b, 214: MS Cambridge, Add. 1890,8 / no. 4), ‘en nuskhuri assez grand, incliné, angulaire, d’un type non-athonite’ (Blake 1932a, 302: Athos, Iviron, no. 4), ‘en nuskhuri grand droit arrondi, du type d’Iskhan’ (Blake 1932a, 312: Athos, Iviron, no. 5), etc. The same scholar proposed a more systematical classification of manuscripts on the basis of the different writing styles that were linked to different scriptoria of various epochs; for instance, he identified two distinct layers among the Georgian manuscripts kept in the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, an older one stemming from Tao-Klaržeti (in eastern Anatolia) and a more recent one representing the properly Athonite production (Blake 1932a, 291–292).

Other palaeographical criteria: punctuation and abbreviations

Of course, there are some other criteria beyond scripts and hands that may prove useful for the dating of Georgian manuscripts. This is true, first of all, for punctuation. Investigations into this topic (Kažaia 1963, 1969a, 1969b; Gippert et al. 2007a) have proven that punctuation was a common feature of manuscripts since the fifth century even though it remained absent from epigraphic monuments throughout the early period (fifth to seventh centuries). In the oldest palimpsests, two points were usually deployed to express the end of sentences or paragraphs. The end of a section or longer passage was sometimes denoted by an arrow flying to the right, while a minor break (between clauses or phrases) was noted by a single dot (see Gippert et al. 2007a, xxviii for a survey of the punctuation marks appearing in the palimpsest Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Vind.georg. 2). Later codices, such as the Sinai *Mravaltavi* of 863/864, the Tetraevangelium of Adiši (897 CE, see Taqaišvili 1916), or manuscripts Tbilisi, A-38, S-29 and S-42 (all ninth to tenth centuries) are characterized by less systematic rules, using a single dot or a group of three dots to express the meaning of a minor break, two dots for a major break, or groups of three or four dots for the end of a paragraph (Kažaia 1969a; Danelia – Saržvelaze 1997, 318–323). The scribe Ioane Zosime, who worked in the tenth century first in the Laura of St Sabas and then on Mount Sinai, used one dot for a minor break, two at the end of sentences, and four at the end of a paragraph (Danelia – Saržvelaze 1997, 322). Eprem Mcire, a famous Georgian translator of the eleventh century, proposed yet another system, using one dot for a minor break, two at the end of sentences, three for major breaks, and six at the end of a paragraph; however, his system was only used by himself and in manuscripts originating from the Black Mountain near Antioch such as, for example, MSS Tbilisi, Q-1158 (eleventh century), A-677 (eleventh or twelfth century), Q-37 (1091 CE), A-162 (eleventh century), A-115 (twelfth century; Danelia – Saržvelaze 1997, 324). From the twelfth century on, a semicolon-like sign (;) was introduced with the function of an interrogation mark.

It should be noted that marks with the function of separating words or narrow phrases are also known in the Georgian tradition. While the oldest (*xanmeṭi*) palimpsests were still written in plain *scriptio continua* (words were not split), the so-called ‘Sinai Lectionary’ of the Universitätsbibliothek in Graz (Austria), a codex allegedly of the eighth century mixing *xanmeṭi* and *haemeṭi* forms, exhibits a small apostrophe-like mark (‘) denoting the end of words (on top of the respective line; see the images and the transcripts provided in Gippert et al. 2007b). The use of a single dot for this function is also known. According to Lamara Kažaia, the use of *scriptio continua* first gave way to the use of breaking marks in the seventh century. Spaces between words appeared subsequently, but the process of transition from marks to spaces was not yet accomplished in the tenth century, given that the Sinai *Mravaltavi* of 863/864 CE and other codices such as Tbilisi A-509, Q-209, or Q-211 (all tenth century) still show the non-systematical usage of separating dots. Some manuscripts of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries still used two or three dots as separation marks (Kažaia 1965).

Apart from punctuation marks proper, Georgian manuscripts typically use an abbreviation sign in form of an overbar, which is called *karagma* (from Greek *charagma*). The abbreviations marked by this can be of different types, comprising suspension, contraction, abbreviation by *litera singularis*, and consonantic abbreviation (see Boeder 1987 for a linguistic analysis of the methods involved). An analysis of the most ancient (*xanmeṭi* and post-*xanmeṭi*) manuscripts shows that it was first the *nomina sacra* (Jesus and Christ, God and Lord, Israel and Jerusalem) but also the stem of the relative pronoun (*romel-*) and some conjunctions that were regularly abbreviated. The list was then extended by some postpositions and preverbs (Gippert et al. 2007a, xxix–xxxi where a frequency list of the abbreviated elements in the different undertexts of the Vienna palimpsest is given). The general impression is that in comparison with *xanmeṭi* and *haemeṭi* codices, the number of abbreviated words increased steadily from the eighth century onwards. Good examples for the extended use of abbreviations are the Sinai *Mravaltavi* of 863/864 CE, where almost all frequent words (pronouns, conjunctions, frequent verb forms) are abbreviated, or the ‘Hymnary on papyrus and parchment’ (tenth century), which goes even beyond this. In general it is assumed that the abundant use of abbreviations was characteristic for manuscripts of private usage as well as liturgical manuscripts whose contents were mostly known by heart (Danelia – Saržvelaṣe 1997, 305–318).

References

Abramišvili 1976; Abramišvili – Aleksize 1978; Abulaṣe 1949, 1973; Aleksize et al. 2005; Axobaṣe et al. 1986; Blake 1932a, 1932b, 1933; Boeder 1987; Bregaṣe et al. 1985; Čikobava 1927–1930; Danelia 2009; Danelia – Saržvelaṣe 1997; Garitte 1956; Gigneišvili – Giunašvili 1979; Gippert forthcoming; Gippert et al. 2007a; Gorgaṣe 1927; Imnaišvili 1961; Karaṇaṣe et al. 2010; Kaṣaia 1963, 1965, 1969a, 1969b; Mačavariani 2008; Macler 1908; Marr 1901; Meṭreveli 2008; Šaniṣe 1924; Šaniṣe – Martirosovi 1977; Surgulaṣe 1978; Taqaišvili 1916, 1933. Web sources: *e-corpus* <<http://www.e-corpus.org>>, last access May 2014; Gippert et al. 2007b; Gippert – Tandaschwili 1999–2002 and 2002.

7. Greek palaeography (DB)

Field of study

The objects of study of Greek palaeography are all the handwritten expressions in Greek characters, regardless of their support or their language (in specific areas, indeed, the Greek alphabet has sometimes been used for texts written in other languages, as for example Latin or the dialects of Southern Italy). The discipline covers a wide temporal span. It starts with the first evidences of Greek script, which are inscriptions engraved or painted on different materials—such as the cup of Nestor found in Pithecusa (Ischia) and the Dipylon vase—ascribed to the eighth century BCE, that is a period shortly after the introduction of the alphabet in Greece, a phenomenon of uncertain dating, but that is now believed to refer to the late ninth or the early eighth century BCE. If limiting oneself to the scripts written on soft materials, Greek palaeography covers a period that goes from the fifth century BCE until at least the sixteenth century, when the print, already used for the Greek texts from the last quarter of the previous century, spread more and more (the first incunabulum with a certain date fully written in Greek, the Grammar by Konstantinos Laskaris, was printed in Milan on 30 January 1476 by Dionysius Paravisinus). It is also necessary to consider that Greek handwriting was used for a long time after that date, even in book production, and that, if one looks at correspondence and Modern Greek documents, it seems impossible to identify precisely its end.

The location and extent of the cultural area of reference varies over time and is not easy to circumscribe. For the ancient period, the majority of papyri and parchments comes from Egypt, while a small number comes from Sinai, Palestine and Syria (but it is worth remembering also at least the centres of Dura Europos in Mesopotamia, Petra in Jordan and Herculaneum). For the mediaeval period, the coordinates for manuscripts kept in archives and libraries become those of Byzantium: besides Egypt, Syria and Palestine (at least until the seventh century, but sometimes far beyond the Arab conquest of those regions), this is mainly the rest of the empire, with its centre in Constantinople and its provincial areas in the east (Asia Minor, Crete, Cyprus) and in the west (continental Greece and, above all, South Italy and Sicily), where Greek handwriting continued to be employed also after the end of the political control of Byzantium and its fall in 1453: in this period a production of Greek books is attested also in Italy and in other main European centres.

A short history of Greek writing

The recent publication of the materials from two tombs excavated at Daphnē (Athens) in May 1981—including some fragments of wooden tablets and of a literary roll (now kept in the Piraeus Museum as MII 7452–7455 and MII 7449, 8517–8523)—allows us to put the beginning of the history of the Greek book as early as in the fifth century BCE (Pöhlmann – West 2012, cp. Ch. 1 § 8.2.2). Indeed all these materials are to be dated to before 430/420 BCE, a date which is proposed for the two tombs on an archaeological basis and, therefore, is a *terminus ante quem* for all the items inside them. But it is above all from the Hellenistic period that it is possible to follow with more precision the written production on papyrus. Indeed, although the surviving documentation continues to be poor and fragmentary, it is possible to refer to the fourth century BCE—no later than the period of Alexander the Great—*P.Derveni* (a comment to an orphic theogony found at Derveni in Macedonia and now kept in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki) and *P.Berol.* inv. 9875 (a fragment of the *Persae* of Timotheus, from Abusir, near the necropolis of Saqqara, in Egypt); the most ancient documents are slightly later, but still datable to the fourth century BCE: UPZ I 1 (*P.Vindob.* G 1), a *defixio* known as the ‘curse of Artemisia’, SB XIV 11942 (*P.Saqqara* inv. 1972 GP 3), a short order by Peucestas, one of the officers of Alexander (331–323 BCE), and *P.Eleph.* 1 (*P.Berol.* inv. 13500), a marriage contract concluded in 310 BCE and found at the island of Elephantine, which is the most ancient document with a certain date. From what we can infer from such a partial and desultory outline, there are no substantial formal differences between the Greek hands used for documents and those employed for books: they are majuscule scripts, i.e. inscribed in a bilinear system, overall rigid and angular; the strokes are horizontally oriented and the letters are detached and of the same dimensions; only the papyrus from Elephantine shows a contrast between larger and narrower or smaller letters, so anticipating a characteristic which will be typical above all of the third century BCE.

From this century the differentiations between scripts for documents and scripts for books can be more clearly perceived, and they are due in particular to the speed of their execution (*ductus*, in the Italian meaning of the term, see Ch. 2 § 1): hands employed for books are slower and still marked by a

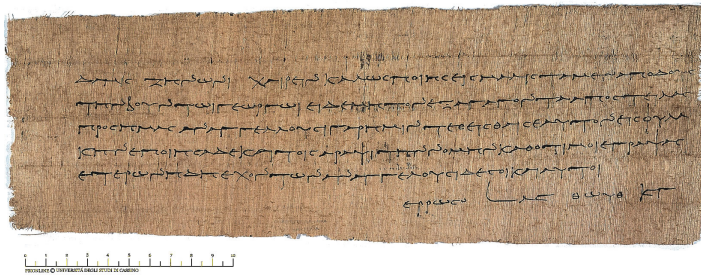


Fig. 2.7.1 Florence, BML, inv. 10720 = PSI IV 367, recto.

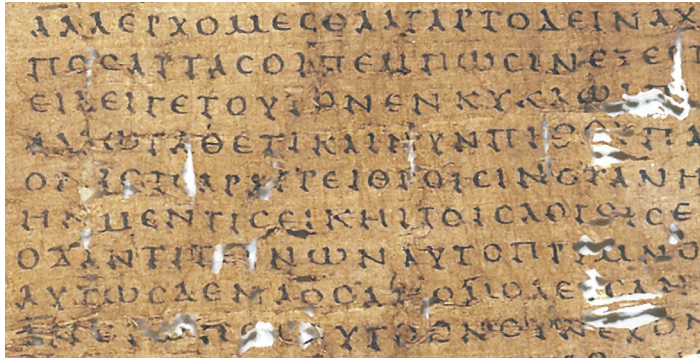


Fig. 2.7.2 Florence, BML, inv. 20949 = PSI XI 1213, recto, detail.

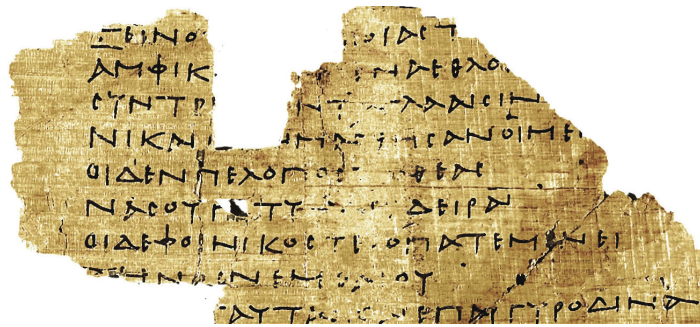


Fig. 2.7.3 Florence, BML, PSI XII 1278, recto, detail.

(the so-called ‘writings of esteem’, used above all for requests to high authorities or for important acts).

In second-century BCE book hands two fundamental trends can be identified: accurate but fluid scripts and more elaborate and elegant scripts, enhanced at the ends by decorative *apices*. In both tendencies the contrast in size—which up to that period was a rather frequent characteristic in Greek handwritings—fades or disappears, and is replaced by rounded and unimodular shapes. More radical changes start from the first century BCE and during all the Roman period. On the side of documentary scripts, the development of cursive trends reaches full maturity, with a variety of results—sometimes more rounded and sinuous, sometimes slender and sloping towards the right—and of morphologically new solutions, due to the speed of execution; on the side of book hands, round unimodular scripts have a larger and more systematic diffusion. From the first century BCE to the first century CE, such scripts are sometimes bilinear, and show serifs and contrast in the thickness of strokes, sometimes soft, thin and looped, sometimes fluid and regular; some of them can be fixed in a style, as the so-called ‘epsilon-thêta style’, from the name of the letters that are its peculiar element, showing the middle stroke reduced, isolated in the centre and with the shape of a point (this style is used, among others, in some papyri of Herculaneum, as the *P.Herc.* 1044 (= Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Gr. class. c. 4 0823-0832) which contains the *Life of Philodemus*). But there is also a trend towards rigid, angled scripts with contrast in size, that, even if with a touch of archaism, acquire a new look, more stylistically characterized on the basis of a selection and a revision of different, ancient and new, elements.

During the second and the third centuries CE—a period of widespread literacy—on the side of slow writings, basically used for book production, the two previously identified trends—round and unimodular

sort of ‘archaism’, even if they are in part square and unimodular and in part angular and characterized by a contrast in size between broader and narrower letters (as, for example, *P.Petrie* II 50 = Dublin, Trinity College, Pap. F 8 A + Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Gr. class. d. 22 (P) and *P.Petrie* I 5–8 = London, BL, Pap. 488, containing respectively the *Laches* and the *Phaedo* by Plato); documentary hands assume a more or less fast tendency, with soft strokes and some incipient joins between consecutive letters and a more or less marked contrast in letter-size. In this context an elegant and fine stylization stands out with deliberately contrived strokes: the so-called ‘Alexandrian chancery writing’ (e.g. Florence, BML, inv. 10720 = PSI IV 367, fig. 2.7.1), well documented from the Zenon archive. It represents the script *par excellence* of the central offices of the Ptolemaic administration for almost all the third century BCE. The transition from the third to the second century BCE does not mark radical transformations for Greek handwriting. There is always a more pronounced distinction among scripts with a more or less fast *ductus*, semi-cursive or properly cursive (mostly used for documents), and slow scripts, typical of book production but used also to write specific documents

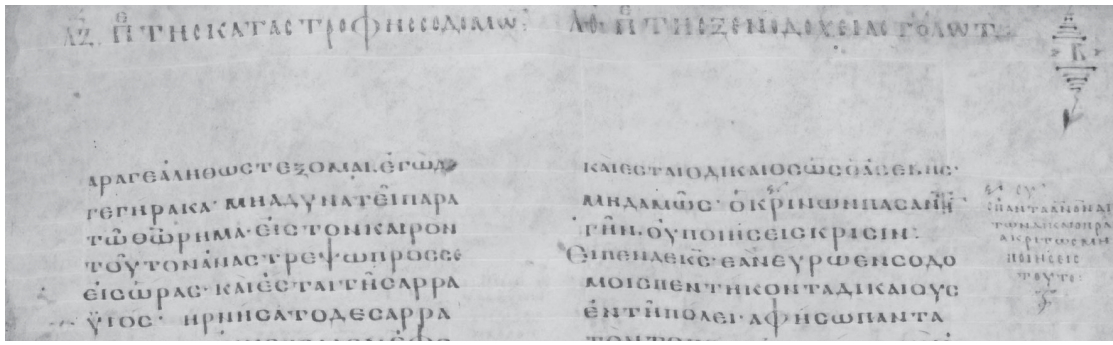


Fig. 2.7.4 Paris, BnF, Coislin 1, f. 15r, detail.

or angular and with contrast in size—are organized in graphical paradigms, that are formally stable and characterized by a strong normative impact. On one hand, we find the ‘round majuscule’ (Florence, BML, inv. 20949 = PSI XI 1213, fig. 2.7.2; also known as ‘Roman uncial’: on the limits and the incorrectness of the word ‘uncial’, see Ch. 2 § 1), one of the peaks of Greek calligraphy, as it is shown by one of the most famous manuscripts written in this script, the Hawara Homer (*P.Haw.* 24–28 = Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Gr. class. a 1). The ‘round majuscule’ was used until the end of the second or beginning of the third century and was intrinsically connected with the secular culture, even if employed in a period of increasing diffusion of Christianity, and mimetically recovered, in the late fifth century, perhaps in the pagan circles of Alexandria, in order to prepare the Ambrosian *Iliad* (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, F 205 inf.). On the other hand, there is the ‘Severe style’ (e.g. Florence, BML, PSI XII 1278, fig. 2.7.3) which is very well attested during the second and third centuries. Its manifestations are not always homogeneous: they are sometimes upright, sometimes sloped to the right, but all are marked by a sober and rigorous taste and by the respect of a rigid contrast in size (in particular, *epsilon*, *thēta* and *sigma* are narrow, *omikron* is rather small and suspended above the base line). A famous manuscript showing such handwriting is the Bacchylides *P.Lond.Lit.* 46 (London, BL, Pap. 733) + PSI XII 1278 (Florence, BML, fig. 2.7.3): from this papyrus, the writing is also called ‘Bacchylidean uncial’.

Within the slow and calligraphic scripts employed for the production of books, starting from the different graphical tendencies developed in the second and third centuries, in the following period some normative scripts developed: they continued to be used for centuries, structured in frameworks more or less rigidly iterated, until minuscule handwriting started to be used for books, in the eighth and ninth centuries. Among them, there is, at first, the ‘Biblical majuscule’ (e.g. Paris, BnF, Coislin 1, fig. 2.7.4), a script characterized by an extreme regularity and by an elegant contrast between thinner and thicker strokes: although used also for writing secular manuscripts, this handwriting is linked above all to the sumptuous codices of the Bible of the fourth (the *Codex Vaticanus* and the *Codex Sinaiticus*) and fifth (the *Codex Alexandrinus*) centuries, and continued to be used until the eighth/ninth century in many cases, both on papyrus and on parchment, both secular and, above all, Christian. The ‘Alexandrian majuscule’ (e.g. Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 10295), employed for the production both of books and documents, has an Egyptian origin; it originates from the graphical experience of the second/third century, characterized by curvilinear and fluent strokes; in the fifth and sixth centuries it presents two typologies: one is unimodular, another shows a contrast between larger and narrower letters (the narrow letters being *epsilon*, *thēta*, *omikron* and *sigma*). This latter prevailed in the Greek world and was used until the eighth century, and, as distinctive writing, even much further. From extant evidence, it seems to have reached its calligraphic perfection inside the patriarchal chancery of Alexandria, perhaps already at the time of Athanasius (328–373), as has been suggested by the recent publication of PSI XVI 1576, containing Festal Letter 9 of Cyril, written in 420/421: here the Alexandrian majuscule is already perfectly realized (Bastianini – Cavallo 2011).

A new rigid and angular script appeared in the fourth and fifth centuries, perhaps a development of the second/third century ‘Severe style’: the ‘pointed majuscule’. It is characterized by a strong contrast in letter-size, angular strokes, and broken curves (hence the name). It presents two styles, upright and sloping. The first one, which at that period was rarely employed, was much more frequent in the Middle Byzantine period, from the ninth to the eleventh century (when the minuscule was already the standard script for book writing) for copying liturgical books, especially the Gospels. The sloping style (e.g. Florence, BML, 10005 = PSI II 126, fig. 2.7.5) was widely diffused from the fourth until the ninth/tenth century. It

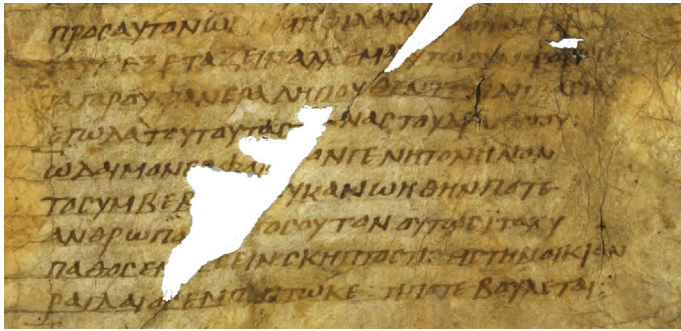


Fig. 2.7.5 Florence, BML, inv. 10005 = PSI II 126, recto, detail.

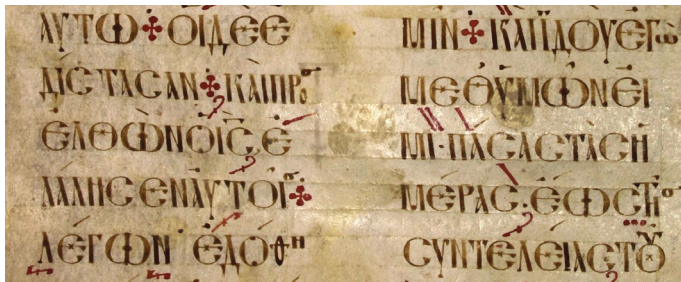


Fig. 2.7.6 Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, B II 22, f. 199r, detail.

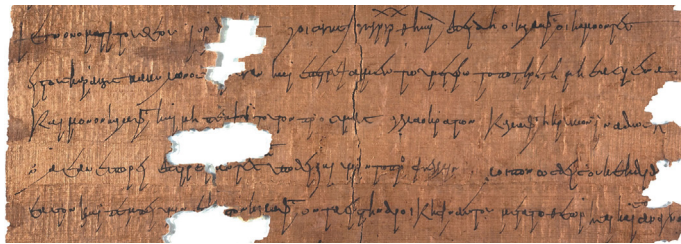


Fig. 2.7.7 Florence, BML, inv. 22015 = PSI XII 1266, recto, detail.

tion. Employed especially in the ninth and tenth centuries, this script exhausted the residual potentialities of majuscules in book production (Orsini 2013).

In the field of informal scripts, of books and above all of documents, a series of changes took place, starting from the third/fourth century. In administration and in law, where since the time of Diocletian Latin entered the oriental regions and imposed itself as the language of the State, the meeting between a Latin script, the ‘new cursive’ minuscule (i.e. inscribed in a tetralinear system), and Greek bureaucratic writings, still majuscule, led to the birth of the so-called graphic Greek-Latin *koinē*, which provided a series of graphically equivalent but phonetically different signs for Latin and Greek. The *koinē* triggered a quick process of transformation of Greek scripts: between the fifth and the sixth century a new writing appeared, the ‘Byzantine cursive’, now clearly minuscule and in two different types, one upright (e.g. Florence, BML, 22015 = PSI XII 1266, fig. 2.7.7), the other sloping. Therefore, Greek minuscule was born in the field of documentary writings, and only later, between the eighth and the ninth century, was promoted and normalized as book writing. Indeed until this time a certain decline in book production meant that the old normative majuscules—even if clearly separated from ordinary writing and no longer sustained by its vivid contribution—could satisfy the demand for books. But the radical change between the eighth and the ninth century, at first with the iconoclastic controversy and then with the so-called ‘Macedonian Renaissance’, and the resulting increase of book production imposed, as a necessity, the use of upright Byzantine cursive—minuscule and documentary, and until that period used to write especially acts and notarial or bureaucratic-administrative documents (the adaptation of sloping cursive to book production resulted in the abovementioned ‘Hagiopolitan minuscule’).

So the minuscule was elevated to the status of book writing in the eighth or ninth century—the most ancient dated codex in minuscule is the Uspenskij Gospel Book, St Petersburg, RNB, Gr. 219, copied in 835 by the monk Nicholas (fig. 2.7.8). During the ninth century, and continuing into the tenth century, minuscule writings show a wide range of articulations, that differ above all in their general appearance,

was less compact and monolithic in realization, if compared with other normative scripts, and it was open to local variations, detectable, above all in late periods, from the different inclination of the writing. Beside Constantinopolitan and Italo-Greek styles, we find a characteristic type of it in Sinai and Palestine. The latter area was particularly active in graphical experimentation, as is evident from the elaboration of a ‘mixed script’—a sort of sloping pointed majuscule, which is provided with minuscule forms of *alpha* and *mi*—and from some attempts at adapting cursive writings, now minuscule, to book production, resulting in such scripts as the ‘Sinaitic minuscule’, and, above all, the ‘Hagiopolitan minuscule’. The latter can be seen, in its most characteristic shapes, in the manuscript Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 2200 (cp. Ch. 1 § 8.1.3; see Crisci 2012). By contrast, the ‘liturgical majuscule’ (e.g. Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, B II 22, fig. 2.7.6) was an expression of the monumentality and of the artificiality typical of later majuscules—especially the biblical and the pointed majuscules—as well as evidence of a decorative taste whose background was more ancient, and not necessarily related to book produc-

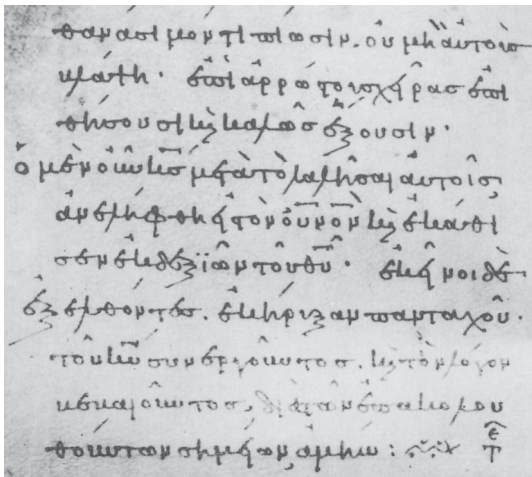


Fig. 2.7.8 St Petersburg, RNB, Gr. 219, f. 158v, detail.

whereas the way letters are executed (*tratteggio*, according to the Italian terminology, see Ch. 2 § 1) is essentially unchanged: we find the ‘ancient round minuscule’ (or ‘Studite minuscule’, from the name of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Stoudios, where cursive is thought to have been adopted as book writing, or ‘Nicholas type’, from the name of the copyist of the Uspenskij Gospel Book); the ‘ancient oblong minuscule’ (or ‘Eustathius type’, from the name of the copyist of MS Meteora, *Metamorphosis*, 591 dated to the year 862/863); the ‘square minuscule’, upright or inclined; the ‘Anastasius type’, from the name of the copyist who in 890 copied MS Paris, BnF, Grec 1470 + 1476, a script well attested in Southern Italy although it is not known if it was also born there or if it was widespread there as a more rigid evolution of the ‘Eustathius type’; the so-called ‘minuscule of the philosophical

collection’ (e.g. Paris, BnF, Grec 1807, fig. 2.7.9), named after the group of manuscripts, containing philosophical and especially Platonic works, made around the years 850/875; the ‘*bouletée* minuscule’ (e.g. Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 26, fig. 2.7.10), from the thickenings added at the beginning and at the end of the strokes, that represented the most calligraphic writing, almost by definition, of the tenth century. Beside these elegant manifestations, there were many informal, more or less cursive, writings that were used mostly for secular texts, often meant for scholars (cf. Paris, BnF, Grec 1741, fig. 2.7.11).

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the need to reconcile formal care and speed of execution developed a script conventionally defined as ‘*Perlschrift*’ (e.g. Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, gr. 123, fig. 2.7.12), for its curvilinear appearance and the roundness of the central part of the letters, running on the line like a string of pearls: it soon became the ‘normal’ writing model for copying parchment, high level books, mostly with religious and sacred texts.

In the provincial areas and above all in Southern Italy peculiar writing styles emerged: the ‘ace-of-spades minuscule’, named after the typical cursive ligature *epsilon-rho* similar to the ace of spades, used in Calabria and Campania in the tenth and eleventh centuries; the ‘minuscule of the Nilian school’, widespread in the same period along the route of St Nilus and his brethren from Calabria to Rome; the so-called ‘Rossano minuscule’, which could represent the evolution of the Nilian script in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; the ‘Reggio style’, diffused in the area of the Strait of Messina for all the twelfth century and with some forms of persistence until the fourteenth century.

However the passage from the Macedonian age to the Comnenian epoch marked a turning point in the Orient. Beside the ‘*Perlschrift*’, different informal scripts emerged, so that in Greek handwriting a process of substantial and progressive simplification—if compared with the past—was realized. On one side, there was the strand of curvilinear, slow and formal scripts, which were linked to the tradition of the ‘*Perlschrift*’ and were used principally for copying religious books; on the other, there was a strand of informal—more or less cursive and of bureaucratic inspiration—scripts, that were typical of books of secular contents (more and more on paper, from this period) and of (public and private) documents (e.g. Florence, BML, plut. 57.40, fig. 2.7.13).

In the following centuries, until the fall of Byzantium, leaving aside other provincial, more or less ephemeral, stylizations (i.e. the ‘epsilon-with-low-pseudo-ligatures style’, widespread in the Palestinian-Cypriot area from the twelfth to the thirteenth/fourteenth century, the ‘*carrée*’ and ‘*bouclée*’ Cypriot scripts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or for Salento the ‘rectangular’ (‘*aplatie*’) script in the twelfth century, and the ‘baroque’ script in the thirteenth and fourteenth century), it is necessary to frame the evolution of Greek minuscule writings considering the perspective of the dialectic opposition of formal scripts linked to the ‘*Perlschrift*’ versus informal scripts. Indeed in the formal strand there was a substantial conservation of the curvilinear model of ‘*Perlschrift*’ ancestry and when this, because of changed political-economic and socio-cultural conditions, proved inadequate—as for example during the age of the Palaiologi (1261–1453)—archaizing attempts were introduced (e.g. Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 1158), in

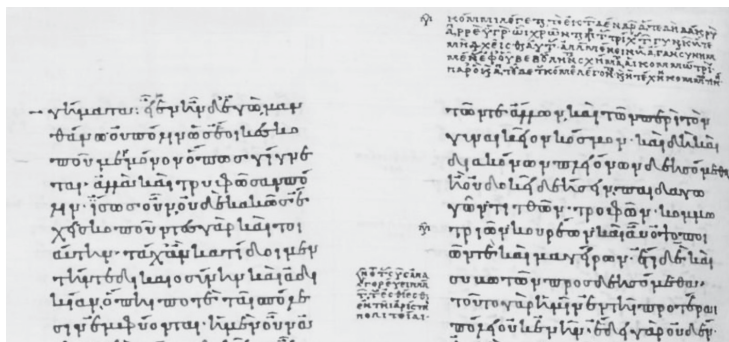


Fig. 2.7.9 Paris, BnF, Grec 1807, f. 20v, detail.

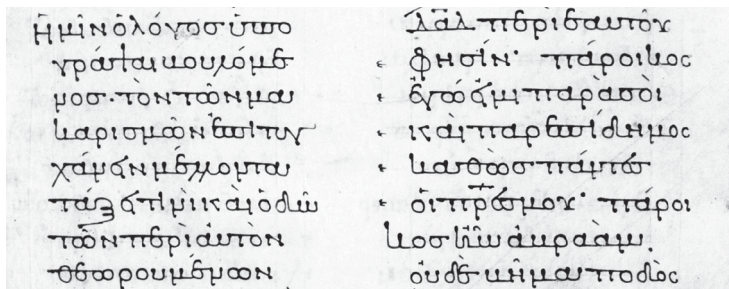


Fig. 2.7.10 Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 26, f. 20r, detail.

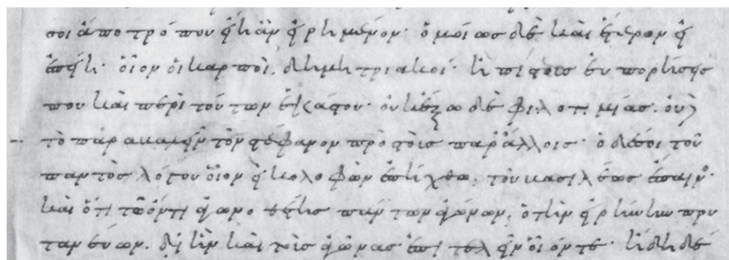


Fig. 2.7.11 Paris, BnF, Grec 1741, f. 2r, detail.

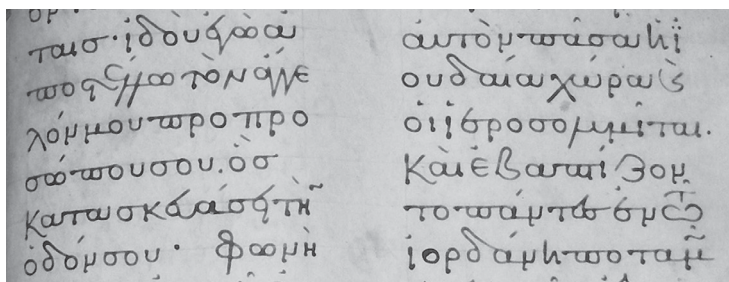


Fig. 2.7.12 Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, gr. 123, f. 5r, detail.

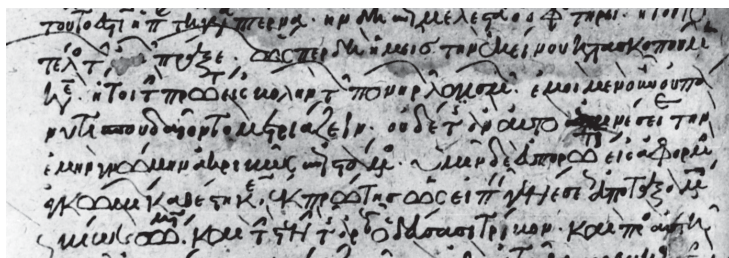


Fig. 2.7.13 Florence, BML, plut. 57.40, f. 19v, detail.

order to imitate the best expressions of the ‘*Perlschrift*’ of the tenth/eleventh centuries and new styles were elaborated, although influenced by the tradition (as e.g. the style ‘*tōn Hodēgōn*’, which was created in the monastery of the same name in Constantinople during the fourteenth century; cp. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Barocci 11, fig. 2.7.14).

On the contrary, the informal scripts are the ideal *humus* for the birth of the ‘*Fettaugen-Mode*’ (e.g. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Barocci 18, fig. 2.7.15), a frantic and messy writing fashion, used above all for copying secular texts in the thirteenth century; in the following century as a sort of reaction we find a recovery of order, regularity and balance by anonymous scribes and prominent scholars (such as Maximos Planudēs and, above all, Dēmētrios Triklinios; e.g. Venice, BNM, gr. 464, fig. 2.7.16). In their individual scripts, they were able to balance the need for speed with aesthetic care (the same need is responsible for the origin and the diffusion, in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, of the ‘*Metochitesstil*’, a script used, often by the same hands, both in the imperial chancellery and for copying books). During the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, such scripts, the so-called Triclinian writings—traditionally linked to secular and classical texts—arrived in the west, following the new demand for learning the Greek language: following their model, directly or by the mediation of teachers as Manouēl Chrysolōras (fig. 2.7.17), ranks of western humanists learned to write, the first printed editions were published and, in a certain way, we continue to write even now. On the contrary, in the east, where the link with the classical tradition (and with the scripts which referred to it) had been lost and where the Greek element was shut up in Orthodox mon-

asteries during the Ottoman rule, scripts that repeated the model ‘*tōn Hodēgōn*’ in more and more sclerotic and tired shapes, continued to be used at least until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, beside the usual cursive writings.

For specialized bibliography, the two recent manuals of Greek palaeography, one more detailed (Crisci – Degni 2011), the other more synthetic (Perria 2011), can be recommended, alongside a few studies not quoted there for chronological reasons (Bastianini – Cavallo 2011; Crisci 2012; Orsini 2013; Pöhlmann – West 2012).

Palaeography and Greek manuscripts cataloguing

In order to investigate the contribution of palaeography to Greek manuscripts cataloguing, we should start from the very beginning. Just after publishing, in 1708, his *Palaeographia graeca*—which first introduces the term ‘palaeography’—Bernard de Montfaucon turned to cataloguing the Greek manuscripts of the library of Henry-Charles Coislin (see also Ch. 4 § 2.6). Thus, in his *Bibliotheca Coisliniana olim Segueriana* (1715) the Maurist could apply the methodology of the discipline he had just founded, and he could achieve the first practical results. Therefore, while Latin palaeography, as Ludwig Traube wrote, ‘was born among quarrels’ (Traube 1909, 3)—that is quarrels concerning *chartae*, the documents, and the founding book by Jean Mabillon had the title *De re diplomatica*—Greek palaeography was born with manuscript cataloguing or, at least, it was in manuscript cataloguing that Greek palaeography found its first and most concrete application.

Nevertheless, if we define palaeography as the formal study of a script, we may say that Montfaucon’s *Bibliotheca Coisliniana* lacks real palaeographical analysis. Notices on writing, when present, are usually very short and limited to some brief remark of a mostly impressionistic and subjective character (for instance, the John Chrysostom in Paris, BnF, Coislin 79, of the eleventh century, is said ‘*grandi pulchroque caractere descriptus*’). Sometimes the palaeographical analysis is only apparently more scientific, and in these cases the *Palaeographia graeca* gives the critical and probative basis to the analysis, as for the bilingual, Greek and Latin, Psalter Paris, BnF, Coislin 186, of the seventh century, written ‘*unciali quadrato & rotundo caractere*’. In conclusion, even if Montfaucon’s importance has been recently confirmed (Irigoin 1996 and 1998; Cavallo 2001b; Bianconi 2012; Mondrain 2012a), his palaeography is still a *savoir-faire*, a practical experience useful for dating and, in some cases, localizing manuscripts. Montfaucon does not consider it necessary to describe the script of the manuscript that he is cataloguing. He uses palaeography but, at least when cataloguing the Coislin library, he only offers, so to speak, the finished product of his expertise which in substance is a proposal of dating.

As an example, let us take the catalogue of the Greek manuscripts of Corpus Christi College in Oxford (Wilson [N.] 2011). In accordance with the British cataloguing tradition, the format of descriptions is very short and, consequently, writing occupies only a few lines. For example, concerning the manuscript Cor-

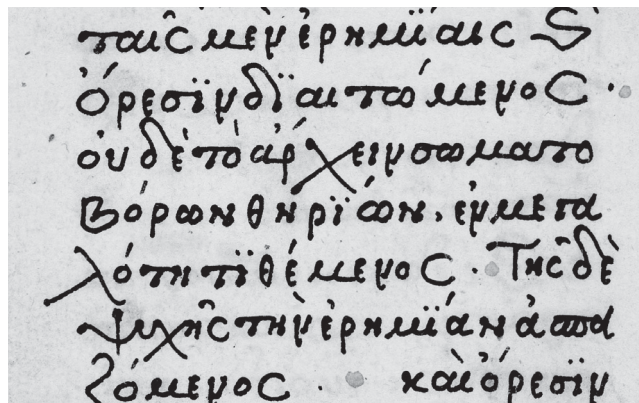


Fig. 2.7.14 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Barocci 11, f. 10v, detail.

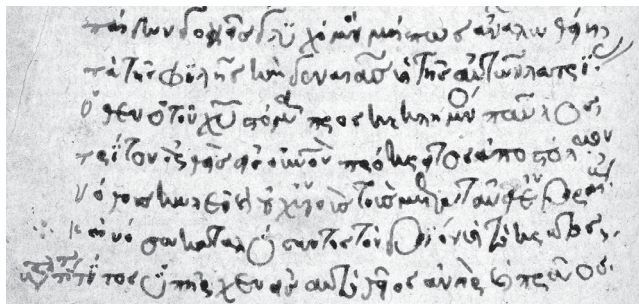


Fig. 2.7.15 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Barocci 18, f. 46b, detail.

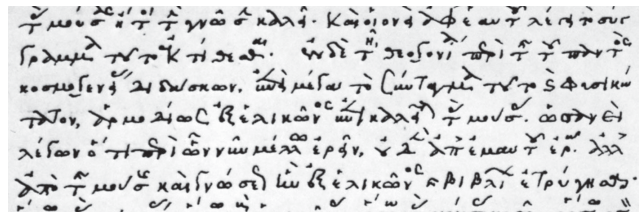


Fig. 2.7.16 Venice, BNM, gr. 464, f. 88r, detail.

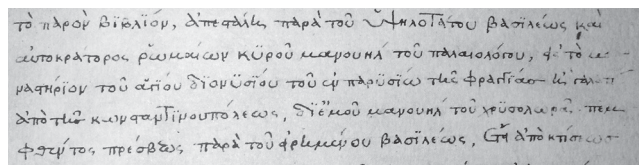


Fig. 2.7.17 Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d'Art, MR 416 (Ivoires A 53; A 100), f. 237v, detail.

pus Christi College 26 (fig. 2.7.10), a very elegant codex of St Basil, dated to the tenth century, the reader has to consult the quoted bibliography in order to find the indication of the script—the beautiful *minuscule bouletée* which was used for copying it, the basis for the dating and, moreover, for the localizing the manuscript in Constantinople. In particular, Agati (1992, 21, 65–69 and 315, with plate 33) attributes the manuscript to ‘scribe N’, who also copied London, BL, Add. 11300. The descriptions of later manuscripts, forming the bulk of the collection of Corpus Christi College, are also very short. For the manuscript 19, a Psalter of the third quarter of the fifteenth century, the palaeographical analysis is limited to ‘Written by Emmanuel of Constantinople, not signed; cf. RGK I, p. 78 (scribe no. 115)’ (Wilson [N.] 2011, 3). There is no further word to demonstrate or discuss the identification.

While the dating and identifications in the catalogue are all correct, it does not do justice to the palaeographic method which consists in comparing the uncertain against the certain—the latter being for palaeographers a manuscript provided with a certain (or at least probable) date and hopefully a certain (or at least probable) localization—and cannot be reduced to reproducing the sumptuous plates that are added to the catalogue. Only in this way what seems to be nothing more than an art, an innate and unmediated skill (the so-called ‘palaeographical eye’) can turn into a real science which aims at reconstructing the history of writing. Within this science, the formal and stylistic comparison has to be followed by the description of the script. Even if sometimes description is—or seems to be—a mere literary exhibition, nevertheless it is a very important heuristic process of conceptual abstraction, where the palaeographer tries to communicate, by using his own terminology and protocols, what he has already guessed. Indeed not only do palaeographers study and describe writing, but so also do teachers, calligraphers, designers, psychologists, and graphologists, each according to his own categories. Thus, a palaeographer has to describe a script, especially in a catalogue, which is, as it were, one of the most natural products for a palaeographer. Certainly, the description does not have to be excessive or redundant; on the contrary, it has to be functional and its function is to understand and make others understand. There must be description. Plates can be a good term of comparison and a useful checking tool, but they can not take the place of the description. A palaeographical description which, if critical and functional, represents a milestone in the process of typological, formal and stylistic comparison, leads on to creating a scientific, common and shared terminology. And such a terminology is still a *desideratum* in Greek palaeography.

The recent catalogue of Greek palimpsests kept in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (Grusková 2010) pays much greater attention to writing. Because of the complexity of the manuscripts and because of a very different cataloguing tradition, the notices are very rich. Both the upper and the lower scripts are fully described and the reader may judge the analysis and observations by using the beautiful plates which are provided in profusion. Nevertheless, the fact that the section concerning writing is introduced by the lemma *Paläographie und Datierung* reveals that Grusková’s attitude towards palaeography, *mutatis mutandis*, is not so far from Wilson’s. In short, the palaeographic analysis may occupy a few lines or many pages, but its main goal, *ex silentio* or *apertis verbis*, is to provide a dating.

Palaeography is far more than a dating tool: the script is a feature that deserves to be studied and described, like the parchment, the composition of the quires, and the binding. The two recent catalogues of dated Greek manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries kept in French libraries (Astruc 1989; Géhin et al. 2005) reserve a large space for palaeographical analysis, even if the manuscripts are dated.

The history of the cataloguing and study of Greek manuscripts is marked by many ambiguous cases that only palaeography has been able to solve. Probably the most famous one is represented by the so-called mimetic or archaizing script of the Palaiologan period (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), that is to say a writing that programmatically imitates a previous one, of the tenth and eleventh centuries, which is taken as a model within a sort of restoration at the same time ideological, political, cultural, and graphical. It is only after a close palaeographical analysis considering both structural elements and stylistic features, that you may recognize the archaizing character of this script which represents a particularly insidious test for palaeographers (Prato 1979).

Sometimes, in order to unravel a particularly tangled skein, palaeographic analysis, even if well informed, may not be enough. In these cases, the palaeographer has to resort to other tools, especially to those of philology and codicology. Thus, in the Byzantine textual transmission of Plato, two manuscripts stand out: Vienna, ÖNB, Cod.Suppl.gr. 7 (W), of the eleventh century, and the *Lobcovicianus* of Prague, Prague University Library, VI.Fa.1 (L), whose dating is uncertain: it has been variously dated from the

eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. In Lidia Perria and Paul Canart's opinion, the *Lobcovicianus* should be dated to the eleventh century since it was written by the same scribe as the manuscript in Vienna. However, on the basis of textual evidence, the *Lobcovicianus* must be assigned to the Palaiologan era (see *Studi* 1992). We are faced with another case of graphical mimesis whose aporia only philology was able to solve.

Another example comes from the catalogue of Greek manuscripts of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana by Angelo Maria Bandini (1764, 1768, 1770). On the basis of the paper used as writing support, Bandini divides manuscripts into *papyracei* (or *bombycini*)—manuscripts on paper without watermarks (that is to say by using Arabic paper)—and *chartacei*—manuscripts produced by using paper with watermarks (that is to say Italian paper). In Bandini's catalogue several manuscripts described as *papyracei* (or *bombycini*) are surprisingly dated to the fifteenth century. In Byzantium, however, Italian paper spread from the very beginning of the fourteenth century. Now we know that the *papyracei* manuscripts dated by Bandini to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries should be rather assigned to the eleventh or twelfth centuries since their writing is typical of the late Macedonian–first Comnenian period. Thus, by combining palaeography and codicology a manuscript may be assigned an earlier date by a couple of centuries and even more. This is also the case with the manuscripts belonging to the so-called 'scriptorium' of Iōannikios—which in spite of previous but erroneous dating are now assigned to the twelfth century (see now Degni 2008)—or with a famous manuscript that transmits Michaēl Psellos (Florence, BML, plut. 57.40, see fig. 2.7.13), previously dated to the fifteenth century and more recently assigned to the eleventh century, just after Psellos' death (Bianconi 2010). The philological implications from such revised datings are obvious.

To summarize: in cataloguing manuscripts we must not forget that a manuscript is a complex entity since it is, at the same time, at least text, material and writing. The palaeographer has to study the script, which is not only a dating tool, but represents a feature, like the text and the material, to be studied and described. Since there are problems, not disciplines, the palaeographer should also be something of a philologist and codicologist. Palaeography, codicology and philology must be, as Jean Irigoin wrote, 'servantes maîtresses en alternance' (Irigoin 2000): when describing a manuscript, we do not have to photograph it—that is to say that we do not give a fixed and iconic image of it—but we have to sketch out the relationship between dialectic tensions (material, textual and graphical ones) and to bring out the genetic dynamics that led a manuscript to be as it is.

It is a hard task, trying to preserve the relationship between (at least) palaeography, codicology and philology, and to connect the book, as a whole of script, material and text, with the social *milieu* and the cultural practices that produced it. Challenging as it is, this is the only way cataloguing could be transformed from an almost technical and instrumental activity into an operation both historical and critical.

References

Agati 1992; Astruc 1989; Bandini 1764, 1768, 1770; Bastianini – Cavallo 2011; Bianconi 2010, 2012; Canart 1992; Cavallo 2001b; Crisci 2012; Crisci – Degni 2011; Degni 2008; Géhin et al. 2005; Grusková 2010; Irigoin 1996, 1998, 2000; Mondrain 2012a; Montfaucon 1715; Orsini 2013; Perria 1992, 2011; Pöhlmann – West 2012; Prato 1979; *Studi* 1992; Traube 1909; Wilson [N.] 2011.

8. (Mediaeval) Hebrew palaeography (EE)

Since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, mediaeval Hebrew palaeography has endeavoured to study the form and evolution of the Hebrew script, examining the major changes that the script has undergone, since its emergence from the Aramaic script up to its manifestation in the late mediaeval and Renaissance period. By analysing both the texture and the individual letters of a written text, it aims to determine the date, provenance and hands by which all kinds of Hebrew texts were written.

Dated Hebrew manuscripts and Geniza documents, as well as inscriptions made on various kinds of materials, are authentic evidence for the state of the mediaeval Hebrew script. Copied by professional scribes, written by scholars, or penned by laymen, these remnants reflect the types, modes, and styles of the script. Inspired by cultural phenomena and by various styles of calligraphy, such as those coming from the surrounding Islamic and Christian cultures, the evolution of mediaeval Hebrew script was intimately connected with Jewish cultural and spiritual life.

Renewed by Malachi Beit-Arié in the latter part of the twentieth century, contemporary Hebrew palaeography classifies the script according to geo-cultural entities and graphical groups, dividing the regional types of writing into two broad branches—the ‘Islamic’ branch, which includes the oriental, Sephardic, and Yemenite types of script; and the ‘Christian’ branch, which includes the Italian, Ashkenazic, and Byzantine types.

The *oriental type* was employed in the east: in Palestine, Iraq, Persia, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Egypt, and eastern Turkey. Some of its features can already be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls—evidence that the roots of the oriental script lie in the ancient script that was in use during the first millennium. The oriental script adopted some characteristics of Arabic calligraphy, mainly due to the similar technique of employing a reed calamus as a pen. Writing with a reed contributed to the distinctive texture formed from letters drawn by homogeneous wide strokes, ending always with some tags or heads. Departing from the same characteristics as its oriental ancestor, the *Yemenite type*, employed only in Yemen, became a distinct type only in the thirteenth century. The widespread *Sephardic type*, despite its name, was not limited to the Iberian Peninsula. Imported to the Maghreb by immigrants from the Middle East, it made its way to the Iberian Peninsula, Provence and Languedoc, to the southern parts of Italy, and to Sicily. At the end of the fourteenth century, when Sephardic Jews settled in the northern parts of Italy, the Sephardic script became one of the main scripts in use there. The Sephardic script was transported to western Turkey and the Balkans by Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal. There it served the local scribes in addition to their regular scripts. In the so-called ‘Christian’ branch of Hebrew script, the *Ashkenazic type* was used in various western European countries, mainly in Germany, northern France, and England. Exported by emigrants from those countries to the northern parts of Italy, it became employed there alongside the Sephardic script. Inspired by Gothic Latin, the Ashkenazic script is characterized by its elegant impression and unique calligraphic texture. The use of a flexible quill contributed to the fine decorations adorning its letters, such as hairlines and shading (the contrast between wide horizontal lines and thin verticals). The *Italian type*, which crystallized as a unique script around the thirteenth century, was mainly in use in central and northern Italy. Its first writing tool was the reed, though the quill gradually came into use as well. A distinctive *Byzantine type* evolved mainly in western Turkey and the Balkan regions. Influenced by the various cultures of the Byzantine Empire, the Byzantine type displays contrasting features that might have served as a bridge between the two broad branches of script—the Islamic and the Christian.

According to graphical criteria, each of the geo-cultural script types is divided into three principal modes: square, semi-cursive, and cursive. When it diverged from the Aramaic script, the ‘Jewish’ script was also named *merubba* ‘square’. The term ‘square’ in the Middle Ages referred to letters made in a square pattern, demonstrating features such as erect vertical lines, horizontals that are aligned on the ruled line, and a right-angled connexion between horizontals and verticals. Letters of the *cursive* mode are executed with minimal lifting of the scribe’s hand from the writing surface. Letters are reduced to their basic components, rendering a crowded texture with joined-up letters. Beit-Arié revived the Hebrew term *ketav beinoni*, in reference to a middle mode between the square and the cursive. Lacking the squarish pattern, the lines of its letters are more inclined and curved than those of the square.

By analysing the evolutionary process of the Hebrew script up to late Middle Ages, it is apparent that due to the dissemination of Hebrew writing throughout Jewish communities all over the mediaeval world, the Hebrew script in all its geographical regions—either that of the Islamic branch or the Christian

branch—evolved in a similar manner, pointing to four chronological stages, always retaining the basic character of each type.

The script up to the tenth century

Most of the written texts antedating the tenth century—either calamus writings or stone inscriptions—reflect writing traditions that preceded the square and functioned as a primordial script for all mediaeval geo-cultural types. While they still exhibit some characteristics found already in the Judaeen desert scrolls, these writing traditions have an affinity with the oriental square script of the tenth and eleventh centuries, as well. Accordingly, features of the pre-tenth-century letters and lack of the definite square pattern allow its description as a ‘proto-square’ sub-mode.

Growth and transition: tenth and eleventh centuries

The tenth-eleventh century was the period of origin for many of the oriental script styles. Owing to the new development of the *Masora* in Palestine, the calligraphic square mode emerged as an impressive writing, manifesting a new stage in the oriental script.

The oriental script—in all its modes—carried on the massive waves of Babylonian emigrations to the Maghreb, brought with it a local script that would subsequently be defined as the Sephardic script. Indeed, during the ‘growth period’ of the tenth to eleventh centuries, all known remnants of Sephardic writings bear many oriental features.

Lack of sufficient dated remnants of the tenth to eleventh centuries from European countries challenges our ability to distinguish their regional script’s styles at this period. However, the few which were preserved bear evidence to an anachronistic proto-square style of eleventh-century Italian and Byzantine script. All the same, a tenth-century’s square Byzantine mode is discernible in letters written in Jerusalem at the first half of the eleventh century by a Byzantine immigrant in Palestine, indicating an exclusive square Byzantine mode as well.

The crystallization of script styles: twelfth to fourteenth centuries

During the second half of the eleventh century the oriental square script began to vanish, marking a scarcity of square writing in manuscripts written later than the eleventh century. Mainly in Egypt and Palestine, most of the square writings dated to the twelfth century or later exhibit the individual features of the scribe rather than conventional calligraphic square script. Nevertheless, at about the same time, the semi-cursive mode manifested itself in a new formal script. Probably replacing a cursive mode, most semi-cursive writings from the thirteenth century onwards were written in current or careless hands.

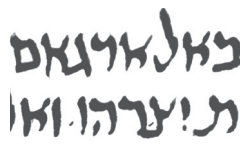
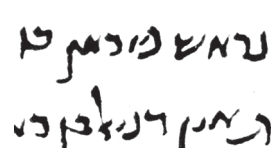
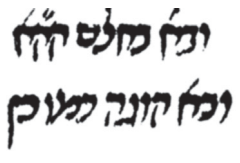
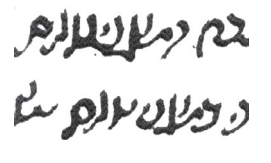
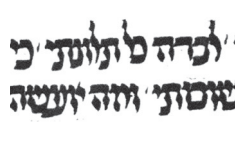
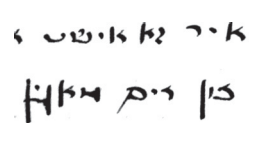
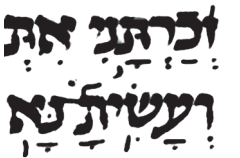
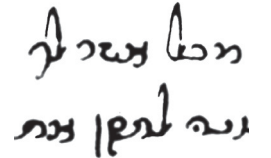
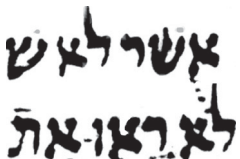
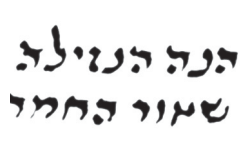
The thirteenth century was a period of increasing social and cultural activity within the Sephardic communities. It was at this time, with the fading of the oriental traces in its square script that a unique, fully formed Sephardic script developed. Owing to its oriental origin, some similarity between the oriental square and the Sephardic square still remained. However, a distinction between the two is expressed in the quality of the letters’ basic lines and in their additives. While the lines of the oriental letters are mainly characterized by their tags and heads, the thinner lines of the Sephardic letters, in all their modes are usually more stretched, virtually lacking any additional elements.

The earliest appearance of the Ashkenazic script in dated manuscripts is from the end of the twelfth century. A manuscript copied at the end of the twelfth century, and contemporary remnants of tombstones in Germany, display features of a proto-square Ashkenazic script, lagging behind the accelerated development in the east. Only in the thirteenth century did the Ashkenazic script crystallize into a full-fledged square writing. The calligraphy of the Ashkenazic script reached its peak in the final third of the thirteenth century, when Gothic art—in architecture, sculpture, and other arts—flourished in Germany and in France.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the development of the Ashkenazic square was marked by a clear distinction between two major styles—French and German—manifested in various modes and styles. Displaying a homogeneous appearance, letters of the German style are strictly made in an elongated squarish pattern, with stretched lines and a large space inside the letter. Letters of the French style exhibit a wavering, unsteady appearance. They have a wider pattern in which most lines are inclined, soft, and undulating. The basic appearance of the thirteenth-century Ashkenazic square is maintained in the fourteenth-century script as well. But, probably due to the expulsions of the Jews from France, the elegant German style remained the sole regional style from the fourteenth century onwards.

The impact of non-Jewish scripts on each of the local mediaeval Hebrew script types is evident, but the most striking resemblance is that between the Ashkenazic script and the Latin Gothic scripts. From as

Table 2.8.1 Hebrew script types and models

	<i>Square</i>	<i>Semi-cursive</i>	<i>Cursive</i>
<i>Oriental</i>			
<i>Sephardic</i>			
<i>Ashkenazic</i>			
<i>Italian</i>			
<i>Byzantine</i>			
<i>Yemenite</i>			

early as the thirteenth century, the Ashkenazic calligraphic semi-cursive displays some Latin Gothic features and gradually develops a similar texture to that of the Latin. There are several techniques of employing Gothic features in the semi-cursive script, including small internal spaces and a compressed vertical pattern of letters, and heavy shading, all resulting in a general increase in the blackness of the texture. That being said, whereas Gothic features are conspicuous in the semi-cursive, the square still retains its traditional character and features.

More than 200 Jewish families lived in Rome in the thirteenth century, contributing to the accelerated development of Italian script. Most known Italian manuscripts of this period were copied there. Those manuscripts manifest various modes and styles of script, reflecting the highly dynamic development of the Italian script. The primordial styles of the twelfth century gained a new prestige and became formal calligraphic styles in the thirteenth century. The Italian scribes who, until the end of the thirteenth century, used the reed calamus, started to write with a quill, which served to accentuate the decorative elements of letters.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, also the Yemenite script crystallized into its classic square form. This script continued to be employed alongside some other square styles and variants, as the most widespread Yemenite style.

Decline versus progress: fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

The gradual decline of the calligraphic oriental square script, which had already begun in the twelfth century, was probably an incentive for the emergence of distinct regional modes. Originating as early as the thirteenth century, these reached their peak in the fifteenth century. While most of the oriental non-square styles from the thirteenth century onwards were written in a current or careless semi-cursive, a particular style that commenced in the mid-thirteenth century as a distinctive style in Persia, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Afghanistan, ultimately became a prominent script, functioning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a calligraphic book script. This script developed a close affinity with the square, replacing it as the formal mode of most oriental books.

Both the square and the non-square Sephardic scripts had deteriorated in their calligraphic quality by the end of the fifteenth century. Current writings lacking the accuracy of the calligraphic letters became frequent, introducing new, non-homogeneous, and irregular styles of script at the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth century. Notwithstanding, the increasing number of Sephardic immigrants in fifteenth-century northern Italy contributed to a new Sephardic style of both square and semi-cursive modes that owe their characteristics to the adoption of Italian and Ashkenazic features.

Unlike other regional types of script, the Sephardic script is the only one to have developed a real fluency in its cursive script, probably due to the influence of Arabic calligraphy. The Sephardic cursive script abounds with connexions between letters and demonstrates a high level of simplification of the parts of various letters and the omission of calamus strokes.

While the Ashkenazic semi-cursive script of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries preserved its calligraphic appearance, the square Ashkenazic script was radically changed. Very few professional Ashkenazic scribes retained the aesthetic quality of the old square script. Most manuscripts of this time reveal a common square script in which letters are built mostly of bare lines, lacking many of the decorative elements.

The end of the fourteenth century witnessed the accelerated progress of cursiveness in the Ashkenazic script, while several letters formed a cursive shape. The increase in the number of those cursive letters came to a climax in the cursive script of the sixteenth century. Due to a new flexibility of the texture and simplification of all letters, the cursive script became a fully-fledged script, combining all the various features of a cursive script.

Inspired by the Latin 'rotunda', an Italian calligraphic semi-cursive mode started its development already in the fourteenth century and reached its calligraphic peak in the fifteenth century. Becoming the formal Hebrew script in northern Italy, this script was used by local scribes as well as by Sephardic or Ashkenazic immigrant scribes. Most likely in response to the vast development of semi-cursive, the Italian square almost completely vanished, giving way to the Ashkenazic and Sephardic square letters in use by immigrant as well as Italian scribes.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the tendency to write in a careless style dominated the calligraphic semi-cursive of most script types. An essential part of this process was the conversion of the elegant semi-cursive mode into current and cursive styles of script.

The expulsion from Spain and the accelerated development of print in the sixteenth century may be the main reasons for the decline of the mediaeval Hebrew scripts. Starting at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the spread of the Sephardic script throughout the Ottoman Empire led to the fading of local distinctions between the various mediaeval scripts. Sephardic semi-cursive careless scripts, together with cursive Ashkenazic scripts, overshadowed the distinctive script types of the Middle Ages. Yet, provincial and remote centres such as Yemen and Persia retained their mediaeval character. In the same vein, the eclectic Byzantine script was also preserved. Several variants of the square and semi-cursive Byzantine modes continued to be employed in countries of the Byzantine Empire after the fifteenth century as well.

From all the mediaeval script styles, it is the Ashkenazic cursive script that has continued its development up to the present day. Furthermore, Ashkenazic square letters as well as Sephardic square letters are the source for many fonts in modern Hebrew typography.

References

Beit-Arié 1993; Beit-Arié – Engel 2002; Beit-Arié et al. 1987; Birnbaum 1954–1971; Engel 1999, 2013; Engel – Beit-Arié [2015]; Yardeni 2002.

9. Slavonic palaeography (RMC)

On ne discute pas avec un paléographe; on le laisse parler.

Gérard de Nerval, *Angélique*

It should be stated at the outset that there is no such thing as Slavonic palaeography, since there is no single Slavonic writing system. The Slavs who adopted Latin Christianity (i.e. all the West Slavs, and also the Croats and Slovenes) also adopted the Latin alphabet and tradition of literacy, so that their palaeographic history is part of the wider cultural development of western Christendom as a whole. Amongst those Slavs whose religious orientation was towards Constantinople, two native Slavonic writing systems existed, both dating from the ninth century, Glagolitic and Cyrillic.

The earlier alphabet, known as Glagolitic, was the first writing system invented for a Slavonic language by the Byzantine missionary St Cyril in 863 (see also General introduction § 3.11). While deriving from Greek in its phonetic sequence, Glagolitic features letter forms that appear fully original. Glagolitic exists in two forms, round and square, of which the former is the earlier and the latter is a later development (fig. 2.9.1; see also figs. 1.10.4–6). Square Glagolitic was used in Croatia from the middle of the thirteenth century onward (Vajs 1932, 135–136), that is to say, in a milieu which from a cultural, religious and literary point of view belongs entirely to Western Europe, and thus lies outside the scope of this volume. There is, moreover, not a single dated round Glagolitic manuscript, nor any which can be ascribed with confidence to a particular locale. There can, therefore, be no palaeography of round Glagolitic in the accepted sense: it is possible to trace the differences in the writing of the various manuscripts, but not to assign any chronological or geographical meaning to them, or, therefore, to use them to date or localise manuscripts. This chapter will therefore deal with Cyrillic palaeography.

Cyrillic is dependent on Glagolitic as far as the order and phonetic value of its letters are concerned, but their shapes are (with one or two exceptions) derived not from Glagolitic but from Greek (see General introduction § 3.11; cp. the Greek uncial in Ch. 2 § 7, fig. 2.7.6). The Cyrillic alphabet came into being in eastern Bulgaria at the end of the ninth century, though the earliest surviving examples are a hundred years later. Even amongst the earliest examples there is some variation in the type of hands used, from the extremely formal and monumental to smaller and less carefully formed, but it is generally accepted that with the passage of time, and especially after the middle of the fourteenth century, a much greater range of scripts evolved, and continued in use into the eighteenth century and in certain specific contexts (such as Old Believer communities) even later.

Scholars first began to turn their attention to the hands represented in Cyrillic manuscript books and documents in the first half of the nineteenth century in Russia (compare the brief histories of Cyrillic ‘palaeography’—understood as meaning more or less what we would now describe as ‘manuscript studies’—in Sreznevskij 1885, 5–41 and Karskij 1928, 66–80), and classified them broadly as *ustav*, *poluustav* and *skoropis*, terms which are still in use today and traditionally translated as ‘uncial’, ‘semiuncial’

N ^{os} .	Valor.	Prag. I.	Prag. II.	Assem.	Croat.	N ^{os} .	Valor.	Prag. I.	Prag. II.	Assem.	Croat.
1	a	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	22	y	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	
2	b	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	23	u	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
3	v	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	24	ph			Ɑ	
4	g	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	25	ch	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
5	d	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	26	o		Ɑ	Ɑ	
6	e	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	27	st			Ɑ	Ɑ
7	z	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	28	c	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
8	z	(Ɑ)	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	29	č	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
9	z	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	30	s	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
10	i	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	31	e	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
11	i	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	32	y	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
12	dj		Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	33	i	Ɑ		Ɑ	Ɑ
13	k	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	34	e	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
14	l	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	35	ju	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ
15	m	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	36	e	(Ɑ)		Ɑ	
16	n	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	37	a		Ɑ	Ɑ	
17	o	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	38	je	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	
18	p	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	39	ja	Ɑ		Ɑ	
19	r	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	40	x				
20	s	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	41	ps				
21	t	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	Ɑ	42	th			Ɑ	
										Ligatura	Ɑ

Fig. 2.9.1 Glagolitic alphabet, from Höfler – Šafařík 1857, table II.

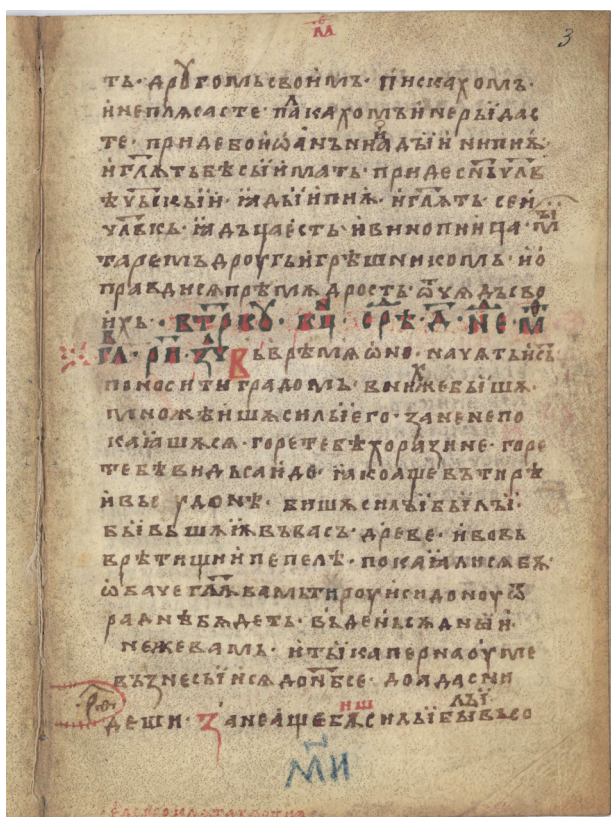


Fig. 2.9.2 Small *ustav*, thirteenth century: Dobrejsho Gospels (MS Sofia, NBKM, 17), f. 3r. By permission of the Bulgarian National Library.

and ‘cursive’. It would in fact be more historically accurate to say that it was the latter terms that were so translated into Russian: the earliest Russian palaeographers had some knowledge of the discipline as applied to Latin and Greek writing, and inheriting a terminological triad that goes back to Montfaucon himself, found equivalents for it in the existing vocabulary of the Russian manuscript book.

The consequences of this have not been entirely fortunate, and the foreign scholar must be aware that these three terms, as used in Cyrillic palaeography from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present day, are identical neither with their supposed equivalents as applied to Latin and Greek, nor with their own meanings in earlier usage. The term *ustav*, used to mean a type of handwriting, first appears in the seventeenth century; in this sense it appears to be a back formation from the adjective *ustavnyj*, which means, among other things, ‘canonical’, so that *ustavnoe pis'mo* is an exact semantic equivalent of such expressions as a *scriptura canonizzata*. The earliest attested use of this phrase may be that quoted by Karskij in a document issued by Vilno city council in 1605 (Karskij 1928, 169; his decidedly unclear footnote has misled later researchers, for

example Eckhardt 1955, 131 and Mošin 1965, 155, into dating the document to 1476), provided that *ustavnym* here really does qualify the preceding noun *pismom*, and not the following noun-phrase, which might be a more natural reading. However, when the term *ustav* was used in the seventeenth century, it was used to describe those hands which modern palaeographers call *poluustav*; the latter term first began to be used in the middle of the seventeenth century, at which time it denoted a type of book hand similar in appearance to printed books (Kukuškina 1977, 119–122).

This is not to say that the translation of *ustav* as *uncial* is unjustified. *Unciala* is the term used by Rumanian palaeographers for this type of hand in their own Cyrillic tradition (Bogdan 1978, 196; cf. the analogous use of *semiunciala* and *cursiva*), and scholars writing in Russian or Bulgarian have traditionally called Greek uncials *ustav* (though some more recent writers prefer the Russian term *uncial* for Greek, for example Uchanova 2007, or *majuskul* in Bulgarian). Most importantly, there is no doubt that the earliest Cyrillic letters were derived from Greek uncial hands, and there seems to have been quite a close community of Greek and Slavonic scribal practice at this early period, since several types of Greek uncial current at this time find analogous hands in Cyrillic (Lomagistro 2008a, 156–164; Uchanova 2007), the most immediately obvious to the eye being the existence of both upright and slanting hands. Certainly the application of the term *uncial* to these early Cyrillic hands is entirely unproblematic, since they constitute a relatively formal, regular script largely confined between two lines (cf. figs. 1.10.1–2); nor is there any difficulty in applying the term to many of the much smaller hands used from the eleventh century on (Kukuškina 1977, 122, cf. fig. 2.9.2), since despite the difference in size the proportions of the letters are much the same. However, the term *ustav* is applied to a much wider range of hands than these. In particular—and this is the most significant divergence from Greek or Latin uncials—it is not necessarily a two-line script (Mošin 1965, 152, Eckhardt 1989, 62–64), and the degree of variation in this respect among Cyrillic hands is at least as great as that which in Latin palaeography embraces both uncials and semiuncials. Indeed, it is more or less axiomatic nowadays that all Cyrillic manuscript books up to the middle of the fourteenth century are written in *ustav*, which somewhat limits its usefulness as a descriptive term.

This was not always the case: nineteenth-century catalogues (for example Viktorov 1879) use both *ustav* and *poluustav* to designate twelfth- and thirteenth-century hands. Unfortunately the authors do

not define their terms, and have thus failed to provide us either with a basis for a full understanding of their own usage or with criteria which might have been used by later palaeographers. It has indeed been a constant complaint of Cyrillic palaeographers that there is no clear distinction between *ustav* and *poluustav* (for example Ščepkin 1918, 93; Mošin 1965, 155–156); it is generally agreed that *poluustav* is a quadrilinear script, less regular and ‘geometrical’ than *ustav*, with many more ligatures and superscripts, but there is no unanimity among scholars about precisely where the line should be drawn between the two (for a summary of the various definitions see Eckhardt 1955, 132).

According to received opinion, the less formal, more flexible semiuncial (*poluustav*; see figs. 1.10.7, 3.3.20.1) evolved from the older *ustav*, and, after a brief period of co-existence, superseded it. This process is generally placed around the end of the fourteenth century. Russian palaeographers (for example Kostjuchina 1999, 6–10) have tended to connect it with the expansion of book production due to the introduction of paper, which undoubtedly did take place about this time, and the consequent need for a quicker, less labour-intensive style of writing. Historians of Balkan Cyrillic (while admitting that similar processes also took place amongst the South Slavs) are more inclined to see the emergence of *poluustav* as the result of a synthesis between chancery hands and book hands as a result of which the ‘minuscule’ elements which had established themselves in the former were absorbed into the latter (for example Lomagistro 2008b, 134). Hands of this type evidently evolved more or less simultaneously and more or less independently among the Southern and Eastern Slavs, but it was the Balkan hands that were to have a more important history, as the ‘Second South Slavonic Influence’ of the fifteenth century saw the Eastern Slavs acquire not only a large number of texts from the Balkans, but also the orthography and style of hand in which they were written. In the Russian context these hands of Balkan origin are known as ‘younger *poluustav*’, to distinguish them from the native styles which they rapidly superseded.

It is evident from this that there was never any functional differentiation between *ustav* and *poluustav*: the one simply took over from the other within a relatively short space of time. *Ustav* (or ‘Cyrillic uncial’) is moreover the ancestor of all other types of hand within the tradition (Eckhardt 1955, 141). This must be connected with one of the most striking differences between the Cyrillic tradition and its neighbours, namely the absence of a minuscule book hand. Though Greek minuscule was already well established (at least in Constantinople) by the time Cyrillic was invented, the latter adhered rigorously to letter-forms derived from Greek uncial, so that the Cyrillic manuscript represented, from the Byzantine point of view, an archaic approach to book production. The transition from *ustav* to *poluustav* was a far less radical shift than that from uncial to minuscule in Greek, and there is nothing among Cyrillic book hands equivalent to Greek minuscule. The nearest approach is the so-called *popgerasimovo pismo* (Koceva 1972, see fig. 2.9.3), named after its best-known practitioner, the priest and scribe Gerasim, that was used for a few manuscripts in fourteenth-century Bulgaria; even this, however, is essentially a semi-uncial hand that has adopted the *ductus* of Greek minuscules, and with few exceptions retains the letter-forms of Cyrillic *ustav* and *poluustav*.

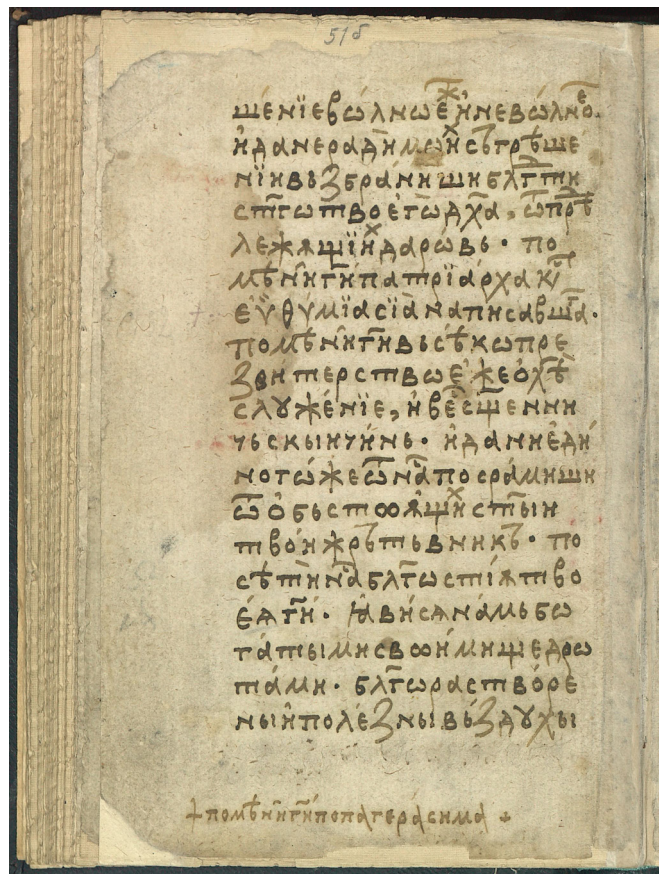


Fig. 2.9.3 Service Book of Patriarch Euthymius (MS Sofia, NBKM, 231), f. 51v, written by the priest Gerasim. By permission of the Bulgarian National Library

With the invention of Cyrillic the Slavs had adopted not only the letter-forms, *typoi grammatōn*, of the Greek uncial manuscript, but its entire *mise en page*, including its titles in larger, typically red, frequently outline majuscule letters. This persisted throughout the whole uncial period, and with the advent of *poluustav* the contrast between title and text became more marked, and the form of the letters of the titles came to resemble even more closely that of the majuscule titles of Greek minuscule manuscripts (see, for example, fig. 1.10.8). This form of Cyrillic, which in manuscripts is hardly ever used except for titles (though one also sees very similar letters in inscriptions on other media, such as silver), has been termed *Majuskel* by Thorvi Eckhardt (Eckhardt 1989, 110–116; she also sees in it the origins of the upper-case letters of early-printed Cyrillic books).

Over the course of time the scribes, especially in Russia, came to exploit the decorative potential of the majuscule titles more and more, and after the end of the fourteenth century—in other words, once *poluustav* had become the norm—the use of ligatures, hitherto only an occasional feature of such writing, became more and more extensively exploited for decorative purposes. These take the form principally of shared vertical strokes in adjacent letters (for which the Cyrillic alphabet offers considerable opportunities), which may become more and more elongated, while their round or curved elements are proportionally reduced. This type of decorative script is known as *vjaz'* (Ščepkin 1903, Eckhardt 1989, 117–122; cp. fig. 1.10.8), and reaches its greatest degree of development in seventeenth-century Russia; Bulgarian and Serbian examples remain relatively restrained.

In all the countries where Cyrillic was used, there was at first no essential difference between the hands used in writing books and those used in documents: both are *ustav*. However, from the thirteenth century—or perhaps even from the end of the twelfth—a distinct diplomatic style begins to develop (Lomagistro 2008b, 124–125). This is broadly characterised in its early stages by a simplified ductus and elongated ascenders and descenders, and is the beginning of the style of hand known in Russian as *skoropis'*, in Serbian as *brzopis* and in Bulgarian as *bǎrzopis* or *skoropis*, the latter term being preferred by modern writers; all represent loan-translations of *tachygraphia* (though unlike it they never refer to shorthand) and reflect the greater speed with which this more fluent script could be written in comparison with the monumental book hands of the period. The translation of this as 'cursive' is highly problematic, not least because *kursiv* in the languages concerned has a different meaning and denotes the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hands derived from Western European (Latin) cursive, which do not continue earlier Cyrillic traditions, and equally because by no means all the hands traditionally designated as *brzopis*/*skoropis* are what one usually thinks of as cursive in a mediaeval context. The hands used in the Serbian and Bulgarian chanceries of the thirteenth century are a case in point: quite distinct, with their flowing ductus and relatively simplified, sloping and elongated letter-forms, from book hands, but not yet a ligated script (Lomagistro 2008a, 166; 2008b, 130). For this reason they have been described as minuscule hands (Čremošnik 1959, 1963), a definition which, while initially meeting some resistance, has more recently found a greater acceptance (Lomagistro 2008b, 111).

Balkan *brzopis*/*skoropis* continued to evolve throughout the manuscript period, becoming progressively more cursive in character, but Russian *skoropis'*, according to the generally accepted opinion, emerges at the same time as *poluustav*, i.e. at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries (Šul'gina 2000, 16) as a practical hand ('*delovoe pis'mo*', so designated by Čaev – Čerepnin 1946, 89, 145), in which function it continued to develop, in various forms and local variants, into the eighteenth century. There thus arose an opposition between *skoropis'* and *knižnoe pis'mo* ('book hand'), the latter being, in the seventeenth century, another term for *poluustav*; paper could also be described as either *knižnyj*—suitable for books—or *skoropisnyj*—suitable for documents, the latter being cheaper (Kukuškina 1977, 121). This was, however, not an absolute opposition, and it was quite possible for books to be written in *skoropis'*. Thus in contemporary inventories of manuscript books (published, for example, in Zabelin 1915, 595–596) books may be described as *ustavnnye*, *poluustavnnye* or *skoropisnye*, and there is no correlation between the type of hand and the form or contents of the books. These terms evidently describe book hands of different degrees of formality, quite possibly all falling within the modern understanding of *poluustav*. Some of the books listed in the old inventories can be identified with extant volumes (see, for example, the lists provided by Kukuškina 1977, 103–117), and it may be possible, with further research, to establish how precisely these terms were used in the seventeenth century, and what types of hands they designated. It may be perfectly correct, therefore, for Šul'gina to call certain fifteenth-century book hands

skoropis', even though for other scholars the very same hands are *poluustav* (compare, for example, the treatment of Moscow, Gosudarstvennyj istoričeskij muzej, Syn. 213, or Eparch. 937, to name but two manuscripts, in Šul'gina 2000 and Kostjuchina 1999). The distinction between *poluustav* and *skoropis'*, in the usage of modern palaeographers, is thus just as unclear as that between *ustav* and *poluustav*.

This may well be because this has not, historically, been the sort of problem that the discipline has set itself to solve. In the nineteenth century palaeography was an auxiliary discipline, confined to providing the skills necessary for students of other subjects to cope with their sources; Nerval's *paléographe* was, it seems, not a palaeographer in the modern sense, but simply a scholar who knew how to read old manuscripts. Thus it is that the standard handbooks (for example Sreznevskij 1885, Ščepkin 1918, Karskij 1928, Čaev – Čerepnin 1946, Đorđić 1971) are more concerned with tracing the development of individual letters across the centuries with a view to providing a set of diagnostic features to allow the reader to date a manuscript. An exception is Lavrov's contribution to the *Encyclopaedia of Slavonic Philology* (Lavrov 1914), which is still useful for its breadth of coverage (including all Cyrillic traditions) and wealth of illustration, but it is written in the style of an encyclopaedia, without footnotes, and is mostly devoted to analysis of individual manuscripts as exemplars, and not to the theory or history of writing. It is only recently that the history of Cyrillic writing has emerged as a subject in its own right.

This situation is not a helpful one for the cataloguer who wants to include palaeographic information in his description of a manuscript. In the majority of cases, a catalogue description is intended to define rather than describe the hand of a manuscript, in much the same way that it may define its language or textual tradition. The lack of a precise terminology is therefore a handicap, and has always been so. Early catalogues of Slavonic manuscripts, even those which include very complete descriptions of their contents, give only sparse codicological or palaeographical details; Ljubomir Stojanović's catalogue of the National Library of Serbia, published in 1903, provides no palaeographical information at all. In the course of the twentieth century, manuscript descriptions have come to include more and more physical detail, and some description of the hand is now *de rigueur*, but even today it may be no more than a laconic and uninformative '*ustav*'. It may well be that this reflects the difficulty of conveying comprehensive information in a limited space without a well-defined set of terms, but though palaeographical information in catalogue descriptions is rarely very extensive, most cataloguers nowadays make some attempt to define a manuscript's palaeographical features in a little more detail, even if this is necessarily somewhat impressionistic. The other possible response to this dilemma is not to attempt to define, but to describe, and this is the approach which has been taken in the Serbian tradition in recent decades. In this tradition a catalogue description may include quite an extensive paragraph devoted to palaeography, even to the extent of describing individual letter-forms. This trend has been taken to its furthest extent in the ongoing catalogue of the manuscripts of Matica Srpska (Jerković et al. 1988–2009), in which not only does each catalogue entry include a full palaeographical description, but a volume may also include articles or appendices on palaeographical, codicological, liturgical, linguistic or other subjects relevant to the manuscripts described therein. This amount of detail may change the very concept of a catalogue quite radically: the introduction to the sixth volume is entitled 'A book about one book, again', and the volume includes individual articles on this one book's scribe, contents, palaeography, decoration, etc., but nothing resembling a conventional catalogue entry.

Technical developments in recent years have inevitably been reflected in the cataloguing of Slavonic manuscripts. In particular, the ability to include many more illustrations than was previously possible has meant that catalogues published within the last few years may include at least one image from every manuscript described. This may seem to provide a solution to some of the terminological problems described, to the extent that the reader who is unsure what the cataloguer means can turn to the image and find out. However, this is only a temporary relief, as the advance of technology means that catalogues will increasingly be presented in digital, searchable form, which will increase the need for standardised, unambiguous search terms. This points the direction for one strand of research which will be of great importance in the immediate future, and if it is to produce satisfactory results, it should be undertaken in a spirit of co-operation between the various national traditions, and in awareness of progress being made in other scripts. Immediate results cannot be looked for, given the vast body of material which has not been catalogued, or which has been catalogued inadequately by modern standards; however, it is to be hoped that cataloguers will continue to strive for best practice, and that their endeavours will be informed both

by the advance of palaeographical scholarship and by the new technological possibilities that are being opened up.

References

Bogdan 1978; Čaev – Čerepnin 1946; Čremošnik 1959, 1963; Đorđić 1971; Eckhardt 1955, 1989; Höfler – Šafařík 1857; Jerković et al. 1988–2009; Karskij 1928; Koceva 1972; Kostjuchina 1999; Kukuškina 1977; Lavrov 1914; Lomagistro 2008a, 2008b; Mošin 1965; Ščepkin 1918; Sreznevskij 1885; Stojanović 1903; Šul'gina 2000; Uchanova 2007; Vajs 1932; Viktorov 1879; Zabelin 1915.

10. Syriac palaeography (AS)

Syriac belongs to the northwest Semitic scripts with 22 consonant letters. It is a right-to-left script and its writing direction is in a horizontal or occasionally vertical line (Voigt 1997, 61–69). Syriac shares a common origin with the Palmyrene script (Pirenne 1963; Brock et al. 2001, 37), whereas some others suggest that the roots of the Syriac script are further to the east, along the northern reaches of the Tigris in the Parthian region of Adiabene, Hatra and Assur (Aggoula 2005). Originally it was the local type of Aramaic script used in Edessa, the capital of the kingdom of Osrohoene. The script gained more importance when the Aramaic dialect of Edessa slowly emerged as the standard literary language of the Aramaic speaking Christians. Thus Syriac script is sometimes called ‘Old Edessenian’ or ‘Osrohoenian writing’ (Aggoula 2005). From Osrohoene it spread eastward of the Euphrates and westward to the region of Antioch, Aleppo and Apamea, where inscriptions in that script have been found dating from the first half of the fifth century CE onwards (Briquel-Chatonnet – Desreumaux 2011).

The earliest witnesses to the old Syriac or Edessenian script are pre-Christian inscriptions from the first three centuries CE on tombs, memorial stones and mosaics, found in the area of Edessa. The oldest extant examples are the inscriptions from Bireçik at the Euphrates (Syr.: BIRTHA, 60 km south-west of Edessa, an important halt on the Silk Road) from 6 CE (fig. 2.10.1) (Drijvers – Healey 1999, 140–145, plate 40: the year 6 is debated, see the palaeographical analysis by Briquel-Chatonnet 2013a who prefers to read an additional stroke hence dating it to 106 CE; for a profound graphotactic analysis see Kiraz 2012, 234–241, 245–246), and that of Serrin from 73 CE further south of Bireçik. The inscriptions are written in monumental letters of angular shape with numerous straight lines. The letters nevertheless recognize certain variations of shape and in particular in their ductus and ligatures depending on their material support (stones, mosaics). There is even tendency towards cursive forms of letters (Kiraz 2012, 243–244). This Edessenian script of the inscriptions show the earliest features to what is later called *ʿestrangēlā* and used in Syriac manuscripts.

The oldest Syriac documents are commercial and juridical; they are written on parchment (for the limited quantity of Syriac papyri, see Brock et al. 2001, 35, and Butts 2011, 320–321) and date from the middle of the third century CE. They are mainly from the regions of Edessa and Dura-Europos; they are written in a Syriac semi-cursive type, a forerunner of the later *serṭā* script (for the characteristics of the cursive employed in Syriac documents from the third to the sixth century CE, see Brock 1991a, 259–267; Healey 2000, 59–63; Briquel-Chatonnet 2000, 84–88; Briquel-Chatonnet 2005, 174–176; Kiraz 2012, 241–244). This less regular cursive writing was used mainly for everyday purposes like business con-

tracts, but it was also associated with the formal monumental script of stone and mosaic inscriptions. These earliest witnesses up to the fourth century had as yet no diacritical mark (a dot over or below the letters) to distinguish the similar letter forms of *daleth* (*d*) and *resh* (*r*) (see fig. 2.10.3).

Literary texts in the Syriac language can be dated to the second century CE at the earliest, but the oldest extant parchment codex (London, BL, Add. 12150, see fig. 2.10.2, for a description, see Wright 1870–1872, II, 631–633, no. DCCXXVI; for an analysis see Kaplan 2008, 201–219) is dated 411 CE. The manuscript was written in Edessa. The Syriac writing is a regular and beautiful professional *ʿestrangēlā*. The very decorative script shows a high stage of maturity and bears witness to how the script evolved from the third to the fifth century. It is in this shape that *ʿestrangēlā* henceforth became

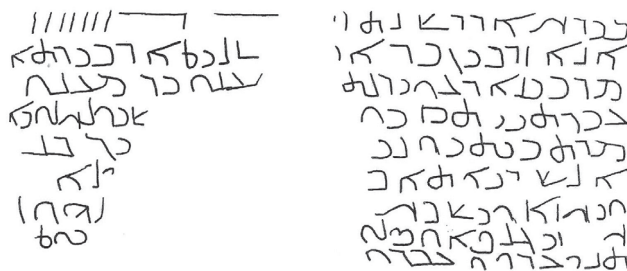
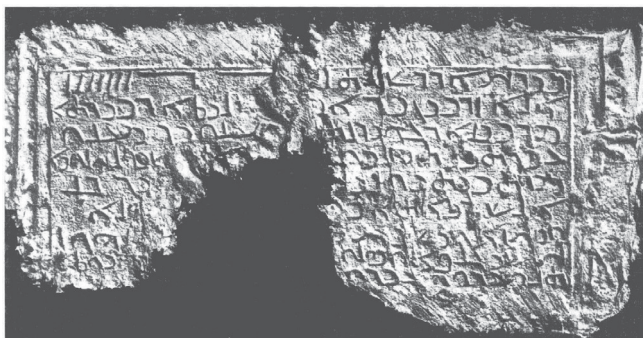


Fig. 2.10.1 Inscription of Bireçik (6 (106) CE), from Drijvers – Healey 1999, pl. 40.

authoritative for the Syrian Christians especially for writing biblical and theological texts. The etymology of the term *ʿeṣṭrangēlā*, which was certainly coined later, is debated. The most probable meaning is ‘Gospel writing’ (Brock et al. 2001, 244); others think of a relationship to Greek *strongylos* ‘round, spherical [script]’.

At the same time as the formal *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* a cursive variant was in use. Initially employed for daily practice in ordinary documents (administrative and business texts, or in third-to-sixth-century colophons), cursive writing developed further and was standardized in the course of the eighth-ninth century as a distinct script called *serṭā* ‘line, scratch’ (fig. 2.10.3). Its letters are smaller, rounder and its *ductus* is quite fluent aligning the letters to each other (for its main characteristics see Healey 2000, 64; Briquel-Chatonnet 2000, 88–89 and 2005, 176). Scribes wrote *serṭā* in many individual ways. Studies on its variants and regional particularities are still lacking (See Kiraz 2012 on the variations of cursive letters in the pre-Christian documents of the second and third centuries). During the ninth century, *serṭā* was to replace *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* especially in the Western Syriac Orthodox and Maronite communities (fig. 2.10.4). However the formal writing of *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* never went completely out of use. At the turn of the eleventh century in some regions (Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, Melitene) it saw a revival as an alternative to *serṭā* and continued to be employed mostly in sacred and liturgical books as a high representative script for public use.

The ancient ‘Nestorian’ Church of the East (East Syriac Church of the present-day Assyrian and Chaldean communities in Iraq and Iran) wrote *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* for a much longer period than the West Syriac churches. On the basis of *ʿeṣṭrangēlā*, the East Syriac scribes developed their own cursive style during the seventh century. The *Syro-oriental* or East Syriac (‘Nestorian’) script evolved in several stages; the most distinctive examples emerged in the thirteenth century when it was standardized as a regular script (Brock et al. 2001, 39; Briquel-Chatonnet 2005, 177). The letters are a small angular but fluent variation of *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* (fig. 2.10.5). In general the Western and Eastern Syriac types of cursive are not very different from each other; they go back to the same Edessene origin; their differences subsist primarily in the ligatures, the open or closed shape of letters, the system of vocalization, and the pronunciation of words.

To denote vowels, the Syro-oriental writing developed in the seventh to eighth centuries a system of dots placed above and below the letters. West Syriac script on the other hand used an adaptation of small Greek majuscules for vowel signs. They first appear in dated manuscripts in the tenth and eleventh centuries (Coakley 2011). Both Eastern and Western vocalization systems can be found employed in the same document especially in West Syriac manuscripts. Fully vocalized manuscripts remain rare in both traditions. According to the modern standard it is now inappropriate to denote the scripts and vowel systems of the Western and Eastern Syriac traditions by the confessional terms ‘Jacobite’ and ‘Nestorian’. The attribution and use of these two main writing traditions is regional in nature and not confessional (Briquel-Chatonnet 2000, 90, and 2005, 177).

Two minor branches of Syriac script developed in the Christian Palestinian and Melkite communities. On the basis of *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* there appeared in the fifth century a ‘Christian- or Syro-Palestinian’ type used by the Melkites in Palestine and Transjordan; it disappeared in the thirteenth century (Desreumaux 1987b, 102, 105); and on the basis of *serṭā* another ‘Melkite’ type of script came into use in the regions of Antioch, Damascus and Sinai in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries (Desreumaux 2004, 561–563, 566–571). These variants of cursive writing were of less importance than the West and East Syriac scripts; the literary documentation is quite limited.

The development of Syriac writing was geographically quite diversified and cannot be explained by a linear palaeographical improvement. Variations of the three main scripts, *ʿeṣṭrangēlā*, *serṭā*, and Syro-oriental could be used at the same time; they were often mixed by local customs or individual idiosyncrasies of the scribes. A standardization of Syriac writing did not exist before the appearance of printed books; *ʿeṣṭrangēlā* and *serṭā* are mainly used for typography.

The role of palaeography applied to catalogues

Palaeographic analysis did not receive much attention in Syriac manuscript catalogues. The catalogues from the eighteenth to the second half of the twentieth century reflect the state of knowledge of the time. Cataloguers of manuscript collections classify the script by six main categories: ‘*ʿeṣṭrangēlā*’ (Assemani 1758–1759 uses ‘stronghyliis’, that is the allegedly Greek etymology for *ʿeṣṭrangēlā*), ‘*serṭā*/Jacobite’, ‘Nestorian/Chaldean’, ‘Melkite’, ‘Palestinian’, and ‘karšūnī’ (Arabic texts written in Syriac letters, in

general in the *serṭā* script to which are applied special signs; see for this widespread allographic practice among Arabic speaking Syriac churches den Heijer et al. 2014). Other features are given concerning the shape of the letters ('large, small, round, neat, bold, regular, irregular') and about diacritical points and vowels, often supplemented by aesthetical remarks such as: the hand of the scribe is 'good, fine, beautiful, elegant, rough, ugly' etc.: 'stronghylis sive rotundis uncialibus Syrorum literis elegantissime exaratus' (Assemani 1758–1759); 'a good regular, though by no means elegant *'eṣṭrangēlā*', 'an inelegant though tolerably regular current hand' (Wright 1870); 'a clean though somewhat irregular Jacobite *serta*', 'an inelegant Nestorian hand with occasional points' (Wright 1901); 'a negligent and rather ugly West Syrian hand' (Mingana 1933). It is needless to say that this palaeographic description is the outcome of individual impressions, because a specialized analysis of Syriac handwriting and a scientific terminology were still missing. Up to recent times, palaeographic research in Syriac is in its infancy. Moreover the cataloguer's interest was focused on the texts or on codicological problems of a manuscript. This is for example apparent in the catalogue of Sachau (1899) which takes no notice of the hands of the Syriac collection in Berlin.

To compensate for the lack of palaeographic analysis, plates and images were occasionally added to the catalogues. Wright's monumental catalogue of Syriac manuscripts in the British Library (1870–1872) incorporates twenty colour plates with samples of *'eṣṭrangēlā*, *serṭā*, Syro-oriental, Melkite and Palestinian handwriting from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries; whereas later in his catalogue of Syriac manuscripts in Cambridge (1901), Wright adds no plates. Next to him, Sachau's Berlin catalogue (1899) incorporates nine photos of dated codices in *'eṣṭrangēlā*, *serṭā*, and Syro-oriental from the fifth to the ninth, and the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Some other catalogues follow Sachau's model (see Assfalg 1963b). The recent catalogues of the new Syriac finds in the monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai (Philotée 2008) and the catalogue of the Syriac manuscripts and fragments in the library of Dayr al-Suryān in Egypt (Brock – Van Rompay 2014) provide for almost each manuscript a full-page figure. However, the majority of Syriac catalogues, especially those printed in the Orient, do not provide illustrations. The recently established database *e-ktobe* (<<http://www.mss-syriaques.org>>) intends to cover this lack by offering photos as well as updated descriptions of Syriac manuscripts from a textual, codicological and palaeographic point of view.

In 1946 the *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* by Paine Hatch made an essential contribution to the field of Syriac palaeography. The *Album* contains 200 facsimile-plates of dated Syriac manuscripts from the fifth to the sixteenth centuries. It gives a broad overview of the varieties of the five Syriac types (*'eṣṭrangēlā*, *serṭā*, Syro-oriental, Melkite, Palestinian) and attempts for the first time at a periodization of the history of Syriac writing. The *Album* is still an essential tool for everybody dealing with Syriac manuscripts, and in particular for those confronted with the question of dating undated codices more accurately. However, Hatch's typology of the evolution of the Syriac scripts needs to be redefined on the basis of the larger evidence of manuscripts that have become known to us since the publication of the *Album* (see the introduction by Lucas Van Rompay to the reprint of the *Album*, Hatch 2002, iv).

In present-day research, a broader Syriac script typology as well as a refined methodology is increasingly considered in a systematic way (Briquel-Chatonnet 2000; Healey 2000; Desreumaux 2004; Kaplan 2008; Kiraz 2012). It includes aspects of a methodological character, like joinings, shapes (open, closed...) and measures of letters, their arrangement according to their position in the word as well as towards the baseline of writing, intra-word and inter-word spacing, the degree of curving of strokes, the kerning of final letters, the whole *ductus* of the script etc. (see Kaplan 2008, I, 161–165; Kiraz 2012, 231–234). A comprehensive monograph on Syriac palaeography has yet to be written.

The catalogue of new acquisitions in the Bibliothèque nationale de France pays special attention to these aspects; it distinguishes for each manuscript the system of vocalization and palaeographical variations (Briquel-Chatonnet 1997; see the new term 'half cursive *'eṣṭrangēlā*' for a variant from the eighth century on, Briquel-Chatonnet 1997, 12). The catalogue of the Syriac fragments from the 'New Finds' on Mount Sinai (Brock 1995a) likewise pays much attention to particular palaeographic features and the script in general, and even more so the catalogue of the new finds of Dayr al-Suryān (Brock – Van Rompay 2014). Each fragment is documented through a sample picture of its script. This supplementary photo documentation should become a standard in Syriac cataloguing, although it might be questioned whether an explicit palaeographic description is still necessary in the era of electronic cataloguing and digitized images. Above all, fragments, which are the most difficult to date and identify, should always be accom-

panied by both a detailed palaeographic analysis and photos. The above mentioned catalogue of the new finds in Dayr al-Suryān (Brock – Van Rompay 2014) is an exemplary model.

References

Aggoula 2005; Assemani 1758–1759; Assfalg 1963b; Briquel-Chatonnet 1997, 2000, 2005, 2013a; Briquel-Chatonnet – Desreumaux 2011; Brock 1991a, 1995a; Brock et al. 2001; Brock – Van Rompay 2014; Coakley 2011; den Heijer et al. 2014; Desreumaux 1987b, 1991, 2004; Drijvers – Healey 1999; Hatch 1946, 2002; Healey 2000; Kaplan 2008; Kiraz 2012; Mingana 1933; Philothée 2008; Pirenne 1963; Sachau 1899; *Syriac Heritage* = Brock et al. 2011; Voigt 1997; Wright 1870–1872, 1901. Web sources: *e-ktobe* <<http://www.mss-syriaques.org>>, last access October 2014.