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Constructing Monastic Landscapes of Southern Syria in Late Antiquity: Text and Context in the Letter of the "Archimandrites of Arabia"

ABSTRACT While monastic landscapes in arid surroundings can be more easily defined, interpreting the imprint of monks on rural arable landscapes is more challenging. In the current study, I face this challenge by examining a late antique rural landscape, the fertile Vulcanic plains of southwest Syria, in the light of the document known as "the letter of the archimandrites of Arabia." Analyzed by the distinguished orientalist Theodore Nöldeke in 1875, the letter is a declaration of faith, written in Syriac, dated to 570 and signed by 137 signatories, most of whom held the title of abbot (*resh dira* in Aramaic). Quite a few scholars have dealt with this letter and extracted valuable information out of its lines. In the following presentation, I will concisely review the various viewpoints from which they scrutinized the letter and offer an additional reading: a reading of a cultural landscape in which monasticism is a significant designer. Since archaeological records of monastic manifestations in this area are sparse and debated, I will use a comparative study of nearby rural landscapes that were surveyed during the last decades to facilitate a spatial interpretation of the monastic landscape encapsulated in and between the lines of the letter. KEYWORDS rural monasteries, Monophysites, Ghassanids, Hauran, Batanea, Jacob Baradaeus

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1. INTRODUCTION

The monastic signatures on late antique spatialities are well evident in various regions of the Levant. Joseph Patrich adds an important tier to the study of monasticism by classifying these signatures as *monastic landscapes*. By using this terminology, Patrich refers to the imprint of monastic activities on a physical space in a way that distinguishes it from the nonmonastic built environment. He adds that the definition of a space as a monastic landscape can be more certain in desert areas, where the remains of cells and

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compounds have been preserved in the most complete way.[1] Yet it is commonly accepted that monasteries were located in rural areas and that a monastic compound can occasionally be defined within the built environment of a surveyed village.[2] Nevertheless, it is still a challenge to reconstruct rural monasticism not only in its imprint on the physical landscape but also in its social and cultural manifestations.

However, before taking up this challenge, it is necessary to consider, albeit briefly, the use of the concept of landscape in the current context. I hold that landscape is both a medium and a process, as well as a text and a context, not merely a passive part of nature or a passive background to human activity. Therefore, as Yi-Fu Tuan puts it, it should not be studied solely as a natural phenomenon.[3] In his seminal work on the phenomenology of landscape, Christopher Tilley suggests an approach to space that contrasts its perspective simply as a surface for action.[4] Like Tilley, William Mitchell deciphers landscape as a concept that "covers relations, posed ideologically, between two series, one natural, the other cultural."[5]

The monastic landscape in Patrich's study is analyzed as a distinct human habitat, depicted in its architectural form, that is, in its imprint on the built environment of a defined space (desert, town, village). Following Tilley and Mitchell, I analyze a written document known as the "letter of the archimandrites of Arabia" as a basis for depicting the territory of southwest Syria as a cultural landscape, shaped by monks and monasteries. Although the material remnants of monastic activity in this space are meager, I would argue that the analysis of the letter makes it possible to reconstruct this area as a monastic landscape.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, travelers and scholars have toured the area and revealed its thriving past. The most comprehensive work was initiated by the expedition led by Howard Crosby Butler of Princeton

1. Joseph Patrich, "Monastic Landscape," in *Recent Research in Late Antique Countryside*, ed. W. Bowden, L. Lavan, and C. Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 413–45.

2. François Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes," in *Hauran I: Recherches archéologiques sur la Syrie du sud à l'époque hellénistique et romaine*, ed. J.-M. Dentzer, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1985–86), 119.

3. Yi-Fu Tuan, "Thought and Landscape," in *Interpretations of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographic Essays*, ed. D. W. Meinig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 89–102.

4. Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths, and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 9–10.

5. William John Thomas Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), 106.

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University, who, at the dawn of the 20th century, conducted an extensive survey of western Syria, much of which was devoted to the volcanic area in the southwest.[6] The expedition mapped the area and the sites, sorted and analyzed the architectural remains (most of which were scattered among modern houses), and collected and read the inscriptions in various languages.[7] One of the significant outcomes of their work was a thorough reconstruction of a rural society that flourished in the era that Butler called "the Christian period." The territory covered by the Princeton expedition included the Ledja (Trachonitis) and the Hauran (Auranitis), paying less attention to the western regions of the Golan (Gaulanitis) and the Bashan (Batanea).

The rural landscapes in these regions come to light through the letter of the archimandrites of Arabia, which was overlooked by Butler and his colleagues. Published and topographically analyzed by Theodore Nöldeke in 1875,[8] the letter is a declaration of faith dated to 570, with 137 signatories, most of whom led monastic communities located in villages in southwest Syria, and supported the struggle of the Monophysite bishops led by Jacob Baradaeus and Theodore of Bostra against the Tritheist doctrine espoused by the bishops Eugenius of Seleucia and Conon of Tarsus.[9] Quite a few scholars have dealt with this letter and extracted valuable information from it.

6. Howard Crosby Butler, *Syria: Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–5 and 1909,* division 2, *Ancient Architecture in Syria*, section A, *Southern Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1930).

7. Enno Littmann, *Syria: Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–5 and 1909,* division 3, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions*, and division 4, *Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1907–1949).

8. Theodor Nöldeke, "Zur Topographie und Geschichte des Damascenischen Gebietes und der Haurângegend," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1875): 419–45. A French translation of the letter was published by Thomas Joseph Lamy, "Profession de foi adressée par les abbés des couvents de la province d'Arabie à Jacques Baradée," in *Actes du onzième Congrès international des Orientalistes, quatrième section: Hébreu-Phénicien-Araméen-Éthiopien-Assyrien* (Paris: Imprimerie national, 1898), 117–37.

9. The compilation of the Monophysite texts, including the letter, was first published by W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2 (Piscataway: 1871), 701–15 at 709–14 (the letter of the archimandrites). It was edited by Jean-Baptiste Chabot, *Documenta ad origines Monophysitarum illustrandas*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri 2.37 (Louvain, 1907), 213–24 (the letter). English translations by Fergus Millar, "Christian Monasticism in Roman Arabia at the Birth of Mahomet," *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009): 97–115 at 109–13, and Leah Di Segni, Yoram Tzafrir, and Judith Green, *Onomasticon of Iudaea-Palaestina and Arabia in the Greek and Latin Sources*, vol. 1, *Introduction, Sources, Major Texts* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2015), 329–36, including the transliteration of the names in the letter.

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In the following study, I will concisely review the various viewpoints from which they scrutinized the letter, focusing on geopolitics, demography, ethnicity, and religion. I will then offer an additional reading—that of a monastic landscape. This reading will neither oppose nor contradict any other contextualization of the letter but rather display a spatial patchwork quilt in whose design monasticism played a significant part. This reading will be advanced through a comparative study of other rural landscapes in the Levant that have been surveyed in recent decades, and by reading some relevant anecdotes from hagiographic texts that shed light on the relations between monks and rural society.

2. GEOPOLITICS

Reading the letter of the archimandrites raises the question of identifying the locations and the administrative association of the villages and the monasteries mentioned therein, which is no easy task. Nöldeke raised the question of the boundaries of the Roman provinces in the Levant and their ethnic context. He identified the area as a territory ruled by the Ghassanid tribes, and more precisely by the Jafnid dynasty.[10] He used the term *Kirchenprovinz* ("ecclesiastical province") to distinguish between the ecclesiastical and the administrative boundaries of Arabia. He concluded that the locations mentioned in the letter extended over four administrative provinces: Arabia, Phoenice Prima (Maritima), Phoenice Secunda (Libanii), and Palaestina Secunda (see appendix). He postulated that the distinguishing characteristic of this ecclesiastical province was the Monophysite identity of the inhabitants.[11]

The term *Kirchenprovinz*, coined by Nöldeke, was accepted by some scholars and rejected by others. Irfan Shahîd claimed that the use of the title ܗܘܦܪܟܝܐ ܕܐܪܒܝܐ ("the province of Arabia") in the head of the letter indicates that the signatories saw themselves as part of one ecclesiastical body,[12] sharing

10. George Bevan, Greg Fisher, and Denis Genequand, "The Late Antique Church at Tall al-? Umayrī East: New Evidence for the Jafnid Family and the Cult of St. Sergius in Northern Jordan," *Bulletin of the American Society of Overseas Research* 373 (2015): 49–68 at 58. They prefer the use of Jafnids (as one familial dynasty) over Ghassanids since the latter indicates a unified and homogeneous Arab kingdom, which never existed. See also Maurice Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine* (Brussels: Latomus, 1982), 186.

11. Nöldeke, "Zur Topographie," 420.

12. Chabot, *Documenta ad origines Monophysitarum illustrandas*, 209.

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the Monophysite Christology under the auspices of the Jafnid phylarches.[13] The patronage of the Jafnids also emerges from the work of John of Ephesus, who describes how two orthodox (Monophysite) bishops, Theodore of Arabia and Jacob Baradaeus, were consecrated due to the involvement of Empress Theodora and how they appointed priests in all the eastern provinces.[14] The letter was addressed to Jacob and the other orthodox bishops, so it appears that an "orthodox" ecclesiastical hierarchy already existed and that the monks in this area, who enjoyed the protection of the Arab phylarches and were led by a Monophysite ecclesiastical hierarchy, could be considered representatives of the "*Kirchenprovinz*."

In contrast to Shahîd, Zvi Ma'oz claims that most of the signatories of the letter came from areas where the Ghassanids were less dominant, and he adds that even in the districts where their dominance was more pronounced, most of their settlements were temporary. Therefore, there is no definite correlation between the Jafnid phylarches and the local rural populace, monks included.[15] Bert de Vries also criticized Shahîd's view regarding the geopolitical reality of the area and claimed that he "imposed modern contrivance on ancient landscapes."[16] Fergus Millar stressed that all the monasteries mentioned in the letter were within the borders of the formal province of Arabia,[17] and that the letter reflects no alternative Monophysite ecclesiastical organization.[18] Robert Hoyland proposed a "compromise formula," according to which most of the signatories did come from the province of Arabia, but some Monophysite archimandrites from monasteries in neighboring provinces joined their declaration. Hoyland believes that the administrative boundaries between the provinces had no significance regarding ethnic or religious identity.[19] Bevan, Fisher, and Genequand agree that it was the religious identity that dictated the geopolitical interpretations of the letter, but they also emphasize Shahîd's view on the Ghassanid patronage of the

13. Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 1, part 2 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995), 792.

14. Ernest Walter Brooks, ed., *John of Ephesus: Lives of the Eastern Saints I*, Patrologia Orientalis 17 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923), 1–307.

15. Zvi Uri Ma'oz, *The Ghassānids and the Fall of the Golan Synagogues* (Qazrin: Archaeostyle, 2008), 42–43.

16. Bert de Vries, "Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, 2/1: Toponymy, Monuments, Historical Geography, and Frontier Studies*," *Speculum* 80, no. 1 (2005): 321–24.

17. Millar, "Christian Monasticism," 108.

18. Millar, 113.

19. Robert Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophysite Monks and Arab Tribes: A Problem of Center and Periphery," *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009): 117–39 at 125.

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Syrian Monophysite church in rural environs versus the Chalcedonian dominance in the cities,[20] as also put forward by Foss and Fowden.[21]

The contradiction between the administrative boundaries of Arabia and the location of the monasteries in this area also arises from the fact that in the Trachon (around and within the Ledja) and in the Hauran, areas included in that province,[22] there were hardly any archimandrites who signed the letter,[23] although it was a fertile and densely populated region in which many churches were discovered, and numerous complexes were identified as monasteries by the Princeton expedition (see section 2 in the appendix).

It seems therefore that the geopolitical reality that emerges from the letter is not unequivocal. While some scholars claim that the letter makes it possible to delineate the boundaries of the provinces in southwestern Syria according to the location of the villages mentioned in the letter, others believe that these are not administrative boundaries but rather theological ones; that is, the inter-provincial Monophysite rural countryside was a unifying entity. In a prudent comparison, one can refer to the official province of Palaestina Secunda, established at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. Lee I. Levine suggests that this province was established for ethnic and religious reasons, mainly due to the large concentration of Jews in the region.[24] There is no concrete evidence that a Monophysite province existed, certainly not officially, like Palaestina Secunda, but if we take into account the religious orientation of the populace and the formation of a Monophysite ecclesiastical hierarchy under Jacob Baradaeus, it may be suggested that the term given by Nöldeke, *ecclesiastical province*, may fit the geopolitical reality in this countryside from the second half of the sixth century.

20. Bevan et al., "Late Antique Church," 58–62. See also, on the sociogeographical division between urban Chalcedonians and rural Miaphysites, Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1982), 153–65, where he states his belief that this separation had no significant political effect.

21. Clive Foss, "Syria in Transition, A.D. 550–750: An Archaeological Approach," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 189–269 at 238; Elizabeth Key Fowden, "Des églises pour les Arabes, pour les nomades," in *Les églises en monde syriaqu*e, ed. Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, Etudes Syriaques 10 (Paris: Geuthner, 2013), 391–420 at 404.

22. For the inclusion of Batanea, Auranitis, and Trachonitis within the borders of the Roman province of Arabia, see Leah Di Segni, "Changing Borders in the Provinces of Palestina and Arabia in the fourth and fifth centuries," *Liber Annuus* 68 (2018): 247–67 at 248.

23. Maurice Sartre, *Trois études,* 186. See also the map in Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia," 122.

24. Lee I. Levine, "Palaestina Secunda: The Geohistorical Setting for Jewish Resilience and Creativity in Late Antiquity," in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Appreciation of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael L. Satlow (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 511–36.

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3. LANGUAGE, ETHNICITY, AND RELIGION

The manuscript that the letter of the archimandrites is part of is a corpus of several dozen Monophysite texts edited and translated, in part, from Greek to Aramaic.[25] The letter may have been originally composed in Greek, but it reflects a complex cultural-ethnic reality.[26] Of the archimandrites mentioned in the letter, 12 bore Arab names, 12 Aramaic-Syriac names, 59 biblical names, and 54 Christian martyr names. The analysis of these figures shows that the Semitic element in the onomasticon of the archimandrites is marginal. Nevertheless, the popular biblical names in the letter are Elias (15), John (14), and Job (5), and the more frequently mentioned martyr names are Sergius (10) and George (7), all of which were very common in the late antique onomasticon, both in the East and the West.

It seems challenging, therefore, to draw ethnic conclusions from the signatories' names. However, one can draw such conclusions by examining the languages they used to sign the letter: It appears that only 22 of the 137 signed in Greek.[27] The rest signed in Aramaic, but 52 of them stated that others had signed on their behalf. It should also be noted that all the villages mentioned in the letter were named in Aramaic. This somewhat contradicts the fact that the number of Aramaic inscriptions from the region is negligible and that most of the Christian inscriptions are in Greek.

What can be learned from this about the area's cultural landscape? Nöldeke stressed that its population was Arab, its Hellenization and Christianization notwithstanding.[28] Shahîd sees a diverse cultural picture, but he also emphasizes the dominance of the Arab element manifested in the involvement of the Ghassanids in the life of the villages and monasteries.[29]

A different view on the ethnicity of the region is that of Millar, who believes that, due to the lack of original Syriac texts from this period, it is difficult to reach clear ethnic conclusions regarding this landscape. In his opinion, a distinct "orthodox" identity was beginning to take shape in Syria toward the closing of the sixth century, and this is reflected in the significant

25. The compilation is dated to c. 580, and the texts were deliberately collected by a monk named Elias the Galilean in one of the monasteries in southwest Syria. See Albert Van Roey and Pauline Allen, *Monophysite Texts of the Sixth Century* (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 300–301.

26. Millar, "Christian Monasticism," 106.

27. Following his assumption that the document was originally written in Greek and translated into Syriac, Millar believes that in cases where the signatory does not specify the language of subscription, it was signed in Greek. See Millar, "Christian Monasticism," 108.

28. Nöldeke, "Zur Topographie," 442–43.

29. Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 835–38.

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increase of translations, mainly of Monophysite texts, into Aramaic, a process that reached its peak in the eighth to ninth centuries.[30] The letter of the archimandrites seems to be one of the earliest expressions of this process.

Like Millar, who tends to classify the cultural landscape of the area as Aramaic,[31] Robert Hoyland shows that Greek and Syriac sources that mention the Ghassanids, or the Jafnids, do not refer to the tribes or the communities that Al-Harith (529–69 CE) and Mondir (569–82 CE) headed.[32] Therefore he suggests that in these areas of Syria—Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis—the Ghassanid component was less dominant than it was in the eastern regions of Syria.[33] This suggestion is reinforced by recent studies on Arab identity prior to the rise of Islam. Through interpretation of newly discovered inscriptions from Saudi Arabia and the rereading of literary sources, some scholars have concluded that there was no defined Arab communal identity and that Arabian groups were engaged in opposing alliances and loyalties.[34] A slightly different opinion is presented by Fisher, who agrees with Webb regarding the lack of Arab collective identity but rejects his sweeping conclusion on the nonexistence of an Arab ethnos.[35] Thus, it seems that the use of the term *ethnos* in the context of the rural population in the area under discussion is quite problematic and that the "Arabness" of the Jafnid phylarches does not indicate the ethnic composition of the peasants and monks enjoying their patronage. However, it seems that one detail will be difficult to challenge, and that is the religious identity of the phylarches and their subjects.

The religious significance of southern Syria that emerges from the letter and from contemporary literary sources[36] seems to show the Monophysite

30. Fergus Millar, "The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21, no. 1 (2013): 43–92 esp. 84–85, in the context of the collection of the manuscripts that includes the letter dealt here.

31. Millar, "Christian Monasticism," 114.

32. Robert Hoyland, "Insider and Outsider Sources: Historiographical Reflections on Late Antique Arabia," in *Inside and Out: Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Greg Fisher (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 267–80 at 268–71.

33. Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia," 120. See also Ma'oz, *The Ghassānids*, 42–43.

34. Peter Webb, *Imaging the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 90–109.

35. Greg Fisher, *Rome, Persia, and Arabia: Shaping the Middle East from Pompey to Muhammad* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 176–78.

36. Bevan et al., "Late Antique Church," 60.

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rural countryside confronting the urban character of the Chalcedonians.[37] Jacob Baradaeus and Theodoros, the leaders of the Monophysite faction, did not physically occupy the thrones in the cities where they were appointed bishops (Bostra and Edessa respectively). This underscores the views that the main cities were Chalcedonian strongholds,[38] and that their loyal monks, who occupied the monasteries that were situated within the villages of the dioceses, reinforced this dichotomy.[39] The Trachon and the Hauran, which were thoroughly surveyed by the Princeton expedition, were densely populated with villages in which many compounds were identified by Butler as monasteries; yet only a few of the identified villages are mentioned in the letter.[40] Batanea, on the other hand, which was no less populated, is the territory in which most of the villages mentioned in the letter are located.

4. TOWN AND VILLAGE

Although A. H. M. Jones does not refer to the letter of the archimandrites in his book on the Greek city in the East, he sees Batanea, Trachonitis, and the Hauran as dominantly rural. The cities in this area, apart from the provincial capital of Bostra, were, in his view, villages with urban status and not cities. Inscriptions from the first to the fourth centuries CE show that the countryside in these regions was organized in the form of three (*trikomia*), five (*pentekomia*), and six (*hexakomia*) villages, bound together under some sort of administrative pattern.[41] In an article he wrote a few years before the publication of his book, Jones argued that the villages in these areas were autonomous, with councils and shared assets.[42] John Granger agrees with Jones that the villages enjoyed some autonomy, but he stresses that in the Hauran, large villages referred to as *metrokomiae* (mother villages) were promoted to the status of cities, not *poleis* in the full sense of the term but

37. Greg Fisher and Philip Wood, "Arabs and Christianity," in *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, ed. Greg Fisher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 276–372 at 320–23.

38. Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia," 128; Clive Foss, "Syria in Transition," 189–269 at 238.

39. Key Fowden, "Des églises pour les Arabes," 404.

40. Sartre, *Trois études*, 186.

41. Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1937), 290–91.

42. Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, "The Urbanization of the Ituraean Principality," *Journal of Roman Studies* 21 (1931): 265–75 at 270.

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rather large villages with the informal status of a city.[43] He is followed by Maurice Sartre, who also claims that *metrokomiae* were more than villages but less than cities and that they maintained their autonomous status at least until the middle of the fifth century.[44]

This reality emerges also from the examination of the lists of the bishops from Arabia and the two provinces of Phoenice: in the areas of the Trachon (Ledja) and the Hauran, bishops sat in Maximianopolis (Shak'a),[45] Kanta (Kenawat),[46] Dionysias (Sweida),[47] Philipopolis (Shaba),[48] and in Constantina (Burak).[49] In Batanea, bishops sat in Nawa and Neapolis (Sheikh Miskin),[50] and perhaps in Zaruye (Ezra).[51] Bishops also sat in Paneas (in the fourth century),[52] which belonged to Phoenice Prima, and in Damascus, the metropolis of Phoenice Secunda.[53] These cities are mentioned as bishoprics in the lists of Hierocles and Georgios Cyprius from the sixth century,[54] but except for Damascus, Philipopolis, and the metropolis of Arabia, Bostra,[55] none of them were represented in any synod later than Chalcedon.

The facts that Batanea was diluted of urban centers toward the end of the sixth century and none of the few cities in this area (Neapolis, Nawa, Paneas) nor the nearby cities in Palestina Secunda (Gadara and Hippos) are hinted at in the letter of the archimandrites may indicate that the villages mentioned in it, monasteries included, were not dependent on or subordinate to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the *poleis* and could have developed autonomous

43. John D. Grainger, "'Village Government' in Roman Syria and Arabia," *Levant* 27 (1995): 179–95 at 181–82.

44. Maurice Sartre, "Les Metrokomiai de Syrie du sud," *Syria* 76 (1999): 197–222 at 221–22.

45. Giorgio Fedalto, *Hierarchia ecclesiastica Orientalis*, vol. 2, *Patriarchatus Alexandrinus, Antiochenus, Hierosolymitanus*, Episcoporum ecclesiarum Christianarum Orientalium (Padua: Messaggero, 1988), 750.

46. Fedalto, *Hierarchia*, 748.

47. Fedalto, 748–49.

48. Fedalto, 753.

49. Fedalto, 748.

50. Fedalto, 751–52.

51. Fedalto, 753.

52. Fedalto, 722.

53. Fedalto, 729–30.

54. Hierocles, *Synecdemus,* ed. A. Burkhardt (Leipzig: Teubner, 1893), 41–46; Georgius Cyprius, *Description orbis Romani,* 997–1093, ed. H. Gelzer (Leipzig: B. G. Teubneri, 1890), 54–55 (Arabia), 49–51 (Phoenice I and II).

55. Fedalto, *Hierarchia*, 744–45.

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ecclesiastical status.[56] Consequently, it may be assumed that the monks who lived in this area enjoyed their status as holy men with little interference from the church hierarchy of the diocese, while relying on and thus strengthening the growing status of the alternative Monophysite church.[57] Though, according to John of Ephesus, it was John of Tella and John of Hephaestopolis who preceded Jacob Baradaeus in consecrating Monophysite clergy earlier in the sixth century.[58] The hagiographer in this case tends to portray the two as exemplars of Monophysite saints, and details in their lives, such as the consecration of 140,000 priests by John of Tella, should be taken with a grain of salt.[59] Nevertheless, it seems that Jacob Baradaeus was more active as an ecclesiastical leader and that the letter, together with the other Monophysite documents, may serve as evidence for his creation of a Monophysite network that included the signatories of the letter.

The areas in Mesopotamia ruled by the Sasanian rulers were a parallel landscape where local monks took a stand in establishing an independent Monophysite clergy in rural landscapes with Arab populations. The activities of Bishop Ahudemmeh around Tikrit and Mosul (Nineveh) in the sixth century included the foundation of monastic communities,[60] ordination of bishops and priests, construction of churches, and philanthropic activities among "barbarian" tribes that adopted Christianity in its Monophysite form.[61]

5. MONASTIC LANDSCAPE

After reviewing the various contextual readings of the letter, I now turn to the reading of the letter as a manifestation of a monastic landscape.

All but three of the monasteries mentioned in the letter were in villages. Eighteen villages hosted more than one monastic community. The record

56. It is possible, though, that Zaruye, in no. 53 in the letter is Ezra, which makes it an exception due to the significant rural character of the letter.

57. Philippe Escolan, *Monachisme et Église: Le monachisme syrien du IVe au VIIe siècle: Un monachisme charismatique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999), 379.

58. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 100–104.

59. Jeanne-Nicole Mellon Saint-Laurent, *Missionary Stories and the Formation of the Syriac Churches* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 74–75.

60. For the monasteries, see François Nau, "Histoires de Mar Ahoudemmeh apôtre des Arabes de Mésopotamie (VIe siecle)," in Patrologia Orientalis 3 (Paris, 1909), 7–51 at 12.

61. Mellon Saint-Laurent, *Missionary Stories*, 111–22.

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holder was Dareiyya (ܕܪܝܐ), nowadays a suburb on the southwestern outskirts of Damascus, with eleven signatories, six of whom headed named monasteries.[62] Nöldeke suggested that Dareiyya was a meeting place for the Monophysite abbots rather than a permanent dwelling place and that the signatories stationed in this village convened there.[63] Yet given that at least six different monasteries were located there, it seems that Dareiyya, due to its unusually large number of abbots, can be counted as a "monastic village" rather than a convention center.

Following Dareiyya are the villages of Qurdaye (ܩܘܪܕܝܐ) with seven signatories and six named monasteries,[64] Hina (ܚܝܢܐ) with six signatories and five monasteries,[65] Gashmin (ܓܫܡܝܢ) with four signatories and five monasteries,[66] Almath (ܥܠ)[67] and Gabtil (ܓܒܬܠ)[68] with four monasteries, Busa' (ܒܘܣܥ)[69] and Makir (ܡܟܝܪ)[70] with three monasteries, and seven more villages with two monasteries each.

Ten of the signatories did not hold the title of abbot (ܪܝܫ ܕܝܪܐ); four of these were monks with no ecclesiastical rank. The first was a "significant member" (ܒܝܪܬ) of a monastic community, the second a stylite (ܥܡܘܕܐ), the third a penitent (ܐܒܝܠܐ), and the fourth a recluse (ܚܒܝܫܐ).[71]

Forty-seven of the signatories dwelled in named monasteries, and the rest resided in nameless monastic communities. Since most of the signatories bear the title abbot, they presumably headed monasteries in or near the village. However, there is another possibility—that they headed monastic communities whose members lived in dwellings in the village and not necessarily in a specific compound. This cannot be proven unambiguously from the letter;

62. Nos. 86, 87, 91, 103–7, 110–12, in the letter. The pilgrim from Piacenza locates the place two miles from the gates of Damascus. See Antonini Placentini, *Itinerarium* 46, in *Itineraria et alia geographica*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 175–76, ed. P. Geyer (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 152–53.

63. Nöldeke, "Zur Topographie," 442, followed by Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia," 125.

64. Nos. 8, 85, 88, 90, 92, 95, 99.

65. Nos. 19, 72–78.

66. No. 2 (Anastasius, a monk from Gashmin), 23, 31, 35, 36.

67. Nos. 54, 55, 60, 61.

68. Nos. 113–15, 117.

69. Nos. 96–98, 101.

70. Nos. 11, 65, 73.

71. Nos. 2, 17, 77, 123. The penitent (7) is Julian, a priest who came from the city of Edessa and is the sole signatory who seems to be a foreigner to the region.

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nevertheless, monks living within villages with no designated dwellings are well known from literary sources and papyri.[72]

In Syria, some of the heroes of Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa*, who were active at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries, lived in villages among the peasants. Thus, Abraham rented a house in a village in which he also served as the local priest,[73] Salamanes resided in the village of Capersona north of Zeugma,[74] and Zebinas and his disciples lived in the village of Cittica near Cyrrhus. No monasteries are mentioned in their brief biographies.[75]

A similar situation seems to have prevailed also in Egypt and in Mesopotamia in some of the areas that were part of the Persian Empire. John of Ephesus tells the story of some ascetic leaders in Mesopotamia and their struggle to maintain the region as a Monophysite stronghold. Monastic figures such as Addai the country bishop, who lived in a monastery in the village of Fardasia (on the Armenian frontier), are depicted as active members of rural society, living in monasteries that were situated in or near villages, seeing to both the spiritual and material needs of the peasants.[76] Roger S. Bagnall classified the monastic phenomenon in Egypt into four groups, one of which consisted of men and women practicing a celibate life, yet still living with their families in the midst of secular society and not in separate communities.[77] James Goehring, in his study on Egyptian monasticism, concludes: "The persons involved (monks) remained within the village community. An ascetic life, whether practiced alone or in common with like-minded individuals, involved withdrawal from certain social patterns of human existence (family and sex), but not a physical separation from the

72. For Syria and Palestine, see Jacob Ashkenazi, "Holy Man versus Monk—Village and Monastery in the Late Antique Levant: Between Hagiography and Archaeology," *Journal for the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57 (2014): 745–65. For Egypt, see James E. Goehring, "Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 267–85.

73. Theodoretus Cyrrhensis, *Philotheos historia*, 17 (Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des moines de Syrie*, t. 2, ed. Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen, Sources Chrétiennes 257 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 35–51.

74. Theodoretus Cyrrhensis, *Philotheos historia*, 19, 60–63.

75. Theodoretus Cyrrhensis, 24, 139–53.

76. Philip Wood, "The Chorepiscopoi and Controversies over Orthopraxy in Sixth-Century Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 63, no. 3 (2012): 446–57 at 450–52.

77. Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 297.

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community."[78] A similar view of monastic manifestations was also made by Ewa Wipszycka, who studied the economy of monasticism in late antique Egypt.[79]

Rural monasticism, within a defined or undefined coenobium, is also well depicted in Palestine and in Phoenice Prima. John of Beth Rufina in his *Life of Peter the Iberian* mentions two monasteries, one for men and the other for women, in the village of Aphthonia in the vicinity of Caesarea,[80] and in the villages of Turban,[81] Sheartha,[82]and Beth Tafsha.[83] Peter himself lived in the villages of Migdal Palaea[84] and Migdal Tutha[85] for extended periods. He was invited to dwell in these villages by the locals who sought his charisma and his blessing as a holy man.[86] Though it is plausible that Peter lived in a monastic compound inside these villages, no monastery is mentioned explicitly. Such a situation—of a holy man dwelling within a village with no designated compound—can also be deduced from an anecdote by John Moschus in his *Pratum spirituale*, where he relates that an elder named John lived with his disciple in a village named Parasema in the territory of Ptolemais. No monastery is mentioned in this instance either.[87]

In the village of Nessana in the Negev, monks, soldiers, and peasants created a thriving community, as attested by inscriptions and papyri. Giovanni Ruffini has shown that the driving force in this prosperous village

78. James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 21.

79. Ewa Wipszycka, "Resources and Economic Activities of Egyptian Monastic Communities (4th–8th Century)," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 41 (2011): 159–263 at 197.

80. Ioannes Rufus, *Vita Petri Iberi* 160, in *Petrus der Iberer*, ed. R. Raabe (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1895), 120.

81. Ioannes Rufus, *De obitu Theodosii* 9, in *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 7, Scriptores Syri 3.25 (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1907), 26.

82. *Vita Petri Iberii*, 73, 50.

83. *Vita Petri Iberii* 133, 98.

84. *Vita Petri Iberii* 103, 77.

85. *Vita Petri Iberii* 137, 100–101.

86. On the intense interaction of monks and laymen in the vicinity of Gaza—the region where most of the villages mentioned in Peter the Iberian biography are located—see Lorenzo Perrone, "Byzantine Monasticism in Gaza and in the Judean Desert: A Comparison of Their Spiritual Traditions," *Proche Orient Chrétien* 62 (2012): 6–22 at 13.

87. Joannes Moschus, *Pratum spirituale* 56, in Patrologia Graeca 87, vol. 3, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1863), 2909–12; J. Wortley, trans., *The Spiritual Meadow* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publication Services, 1992), 44–45. See also Jacob Ashkenazi and Mordechai Aviam, "Monasteries, Monks, and Villages in Western Galilee in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5 (2012): 269–97 at 292.

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in Late Antiquity was the family,[88] and in this respect it is striking to see how family and monastic lives were woven together in this remote settlement. One of the prominent families in the village community was that of Patricius. Three members of this family were abbots,[89] and the family was involved not only in heading the monastery (dedicated to the soldier saints Sergius and Bacchus)[90] but also in military matters and in local civil matters.[91]

Following these examples, it can be suggested that some of the signatories of the letter and their fellow monks were regular residents of the village, not to be significantly distinguished from their lay neighbors or sometimes even from their own families. This is a compelling phenomenon but still, 47 of the signatories did live in defined monasteries, named after local martyrs or saintly monastic fathers, which raises questions regarding their imprint on the built environment of the village. The challenges of identifying a monastery within remains of ancient villages in the countryside of southern Syria are illustrated in Francois Villeneuve's study on the rural economy in the Hauran.[92] He analyzed the remains of complexes he assumed to have been monastic compounds, for example, in Zabira on the western border of the Ledja (identified with Zabirath [ܙܒܝܪܬ], no. 42 in the letter),[93] in Deirhahīr and in Um Uweini near Khazme in southwestern Jabal Hauran. Still, the state of preservation at these sites prevented Villeneuve from determining whether the monastery was a detached structure or located within the village boundaries.

Another effort to reconstruct rural landscapes of Late Antiquity in the area was made by Pascale Clauss-Balty in the village of Sharah (El-Sharayeh), on the northwestern edge of the Ledja.[94] In no. 41 in the letter of the archimandrites, the abbot Paul from Shuru (ܫܘܪܘ) signed the letter, and he also signed on behalf of Stephen from Zabirath in no. 42). Ma'oz identifies

88. Giovanni Ruffini, "Village Life and Family Power in Late Antique Nessana," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 141 (2011): 201–25 at 207.

89. Ruffini, "Village Life and Family Power," 212.

90. Casper J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. 3: *Non-Literary Papyri* (Princeton: Colt Archaeological Institute, Princeton University Press, 1956), 5, 29.

91. See for instance papyri nos. 44 and 57 in Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. 3: *Non-Literary Papyri,* 132–33, 161–67. For the relations between monks and villagers in Nessana, see Pau Figueras, "Monks and Monasteries in the Negev Desert," *Liber Annuus* 45 (1995): 401–50 at 430.

92. Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 118–21.

93. René Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et Médiévale* (Paris: Presses de l'Ifpo, 1927), 266; Ma'oz, *The Ghassānids*, 16.

94. The name of the village in no. 41 in the letter is Shuru (ܫܘܪܘ).

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the village of Shuru with Shura near Sa'sa, based on toponomy.[95] However, the proximity between Zabirath and El-Sharayeh makes the latter a better candidate for identification as Shuru in the letter. Clauss-Balty drew a detailed map of the village,[96] identifying three churches within its boundaries and suggesting that at least one of these was a monastery church.[97]

Some of the villages that were surveyed by Villeneuve were also surveyed by Butler and the Princeton University expedition almost a century earlier. In the southern plains of the Hauran, today northern Jordan, Butler identified and drew plans of village monasteries in Samma, north of Mafraq in Jordan,[98] Umm al Surab,[99] Id Der,[100] Deir il-Meshquq,[101] and Umm al Quttayn (possibly two).[102] In Umm al-Jimal, considered to be a town rather than a large village, 15 churches were identified, at least half of which Butler concluded were connected to monasteries.[103]

Moving north to Jabal Hauran and the territory of Sweida, Butler identified monasteries in Al-Karis[104] and Nimreh[105] and an isolated coenobium in Deir in Al-Nasrani on the eastern fringes of the area, facing the desert.[106] In the Ledja (Trachonitis), he traced village monasteries in Il Uber and in

95. Ma'oz, *The Ghassānids*, 16.

96. Pascale Clauss-Balty, "Les villages et l'habitat rural à l'époque romano-byzantine: Le cas de Sharah, sur le rebord nord-ouest du Leja," in *Hauran* V*: la Syrie du sud du neolithique a l'antiquite tardive: Recherché recants* (Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2010), 207.

97. Clauss-Balty, "Les villages et l'habitat rural," 200. The compound under discussion was already identified in 1986 as a monastery by Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 119.

98. Butler, *Syria,* division 2, section A, 83–87.

99. Butler, *Syria,* 95–99; see the more recent identification by Nabil Bader, *Inscriptions de la Jordanie*, Inscriptions grecques et latin de la Syrie 21, t. 5, *La Jordanie du Nord-Est* (Beyrouth: Institute français du Proche-Orient, 2009), 41. On the function of the monastery as a multiple social and economic center for the inhabitants of the region, see Beat Brenk, "Monasteries as Rural Settlements: Patron-Dependence or Self-Sufficiency?" in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, ed. W. Bowden, L. Lavan, and C. Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 467.

100. Butler, *Syria,* division 2, section A, 101–102.

101. Butler, 130.

102. Butler, 137–40. On more recent research on the site, see David Kennedy and Philip Freeman, "Southern Hauran Survey 1992," *Levant* 27 (1995): 57–58.

103. Butler, *Syria,* division 2, section A, 172–91. See the town plan in Bert de Vries, "The Umm al Jimal Project, 1981–1992," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 37 (1993): 433–60 at 434. On the outstanding number of churches in Umm al-Jimal, see Bert de Vries, "Continuity and Change in the Urban Character of the Southern Hauran from the 5th to the 9th Century: The Archaeological Evidence at Umm al Jimal," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 13 (2000): 39–45 at 41–43. See also the map and section 2 in the appendix.

104. Butler, *Syria*, division 2, section A, 331–32.

105. Butler, 342–43.

106. Butler, 334–35.

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Deir Idj Djuwani,[107] but not in villages mentioned in the letter of the archimandrites, where he identified churches with no indication of monastic compounds attached to them, as in the villages of Lubin-Agraina (Luwon, ܠܘܘܢ, in the letter) or Rimat al Lahf (Lahaf—ܠܗܦ).[108]

Reading the report of the expedition, one may receive the impression that Butler and his team were a bit hasty in their identification of monasteries, given that they had limited options for comparative study.[109] Nevertheless, the expedition gives detailed information, including photos and plans, about the compounds they concluded were monasteries, and even if only some of their classifications are reliable, it may be assumed that monasteries were found in many villages in the Hauran. It can also be argued that the fact that Butler identified churches in villages mentioned in the letter but not monasteries is indicative of the possibility, discussed previously, that village monks did not necessarily live in designated compounds.

Some information regarding the place of monasticism in the area under study may be found in inscriptions discovered in the Hauran. Some of the inscriptions were published by Waddington in 1870,[110] and some were read by the Princeton expedition,[111] but the most inclusive and thorough epigraphic research was done by the Institut français du Proche-Orient (Ifpo) and was published in the multivolume work *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (*IGLS*). The volumes most relevant to the current study are 14 (*La Batanée et le Jawlān oriental*) and 15 (*Le plateau du Trachon et ses bordures*), both by Annie Sartre-Fauriat and Maurice Sartre.[112] There are some monastic manifestations in the inscriptions, like an abbot and priest

107. Butler, 426–27, 436.

108. Butler, 419. Nos. 22 and 45 in the letter.

109. The works of archaeologists in the limestone massif in Syria produced various criteria for identifying monastic compounds. For Syria, see Hull, "Spatial and Morphological Analysis," 100–103. Hull points to some characteristics that are common in most of the compounds, like a surrounding wall, a tower, cisterns, presses, living quarters, and a church or a chapel. Most of these characteristics are also presented by Butler's expedition when identifying a compound as a monastery. For a suggested plan of a rural monastery in the limestone massif, see for instance the plan of the monasteries of Kharab Shams and of Qasr al-Brad (Hull, 98, 102).

110. William Henry Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie, recueilles et expliquees* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1870).

111. Enno Littmann, David Magie Jr., and Duane Reed Stuart, *Syria* III, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions*, section A, *Southern Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1921).

112. Unfortunately, *IGLS,* vol. 16, *L'auranitide*, also edited by A. Sartre-Fauriat and M. Sartre, which was published in 2020, was not available to me at the time of preparing this manuscript.

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(πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἡγούμενος) from Heit[113] and another abbot and priest from Deir Eyub (Sheikh Saʿad).[114] Yet none of the monasteries or the archimandrites mentioned in the letter are alluded to in this large repertoire of inscriptions.[115] In Gashmin four monasteries (and five signatories) are mentioned in the letter (nos. 2, 23, 31, 35, 36), but none of the inscriptions found and read in the village of Jasem can be proven to have been connected to a monastery.[116] In Aqraba, two churches were surveyed, both with inscriptions but with no indication of a monastic community, although two named monasteries, Mar Stephanos (no. 6) and Aba Titos (no. 26), appear in the letter.[117]

Recently, Maurice Sartre published an inscription allegedly found in the village of Majdal Anjar, located on the road from Sweida to Ezra.[118] In the inscription he read the name Netira from the monastery of Ato (ܐܛܘ), who is mentioned in the letter of the archimandrites (no. 3). Further epigraphic evidence of a name mentioned in the letter (no. 119) may be found in Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, identified with Haliyorum (ܚܠܝܘܪܘܡ).[119] The abbot Sergius is mentioned in an inscription found in secondary use at the site, and this may plausibly have been the same abbot mentioned in the letter.[120] The physical remains at the site also indicate the existence of a compound that was probably a coenobium.[121]

Given the sparsity of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for monasteries in the area under study, it can be beneficial to look for monastic built environments in other regions of Syria. In Kapropera (modern Al-Bara),

113. Annie Sartre-Fauriat and Maurice Sartre, *IGLS*, vol. 14.1, *La Batanée et le Jawlān oriental* (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2016), 299, no. 331d.

114. Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, *IGLS*, vol. 14.1, nos. 326, 344.

115. See Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, *IGLS*, vol. 15.1, *Le plateau du Trachôn et ses bordures* (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2014), 22.

116. Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, *IGLS*, vol. 14.2, *La Batanée et le Jawlān oriental* (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2016), 433–37.

117. Nos. 6 and 26. For the inscriptions, see Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre, *IGLS*, vol. 14.2, 490–91.

118. Maurice Sartre, "Le monastère de 'Aṭō en Arabie," *Syria* 91 (2014): 377–88.

119. Dussaud, *Topographie historique,* 264.

120. Denis Genequand, "Some Thoughts on Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, Its Dam, Its Monastery and the Ghassanids," *Levant* 38 (2006): 63–83 esp. 72.

121. Schlumberger discussed the remains and suggested reluctantly that some of the structures in the Umayyad fortress may belong to the sixth-century monastery whose abbot is mentioned in the letter. See Daniel Schlumberger, "Les fouilles de Qasr el-Heir el-Gharbi (1936–1938): Rapport préliminaire," *Syria* 20, no. 4 (1939): 363. See also Denis Genequand, "The Archaeological Evidence for the Jafnids and the Naṣrid." in *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, ed. Greg Fisher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 172–213 at 201–202.

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a large village north of Apamea, at least four monasteries were identified within and attached to the village,[122] and Clive Foss claims that almost every village in the territory surrounding modern Hama contained at least one monastery.[123]

In the limestone massif between Aleppo and Antioch, Daniel Hull collected information from surveys conducted over recent decades and identified 141 sites that met some characteristics of a monastery; 61 of them met all the characteristics and can be defined as monasteries with a high degree of certainty. Of the securely identified monasteries, 80 percent were in a radius of no more than one mile from a village, and 50 percent stood within less than half a mile from the village limits or within its residential quarters.[124]

Looking at the plans of some villages in northwestern Syria, one may perceive a pattern of coexistence between village and monastery. In Harab Shams, where the monumental village church still stands in its original dimensions, a monastery was built on a hilltop just 100 m north of the village, in what seems to have been an integral part of the village and not a detached, secluded monastic establishment.[125] In Deir Sima'an (Telanissus), in addition to a monastery attached to the celebrated pilgrimage center in the nearby memorial church of St. Simeon Stylites at Qalaat Sima'an, three monastic compounds were found inside the boundaries of the ancient village.[126]

This evidence shows that village monasticism was a widespread phenomenon in Syria. However, an important comment by Clive Foss in his comprehensive study on Syria in Late Antiquity that "monastic architecture (in Syria) hardly differed from domestic" emphasizes the importance of the letter of the archimandrites in reconstructing the monk's place in rural landscapes.

We now turn back to the letter to analyze its data against the backdrop of these examples of monastic manifestations in rural environs: Most of the signatories (112) held the dual title of priest and abbot (ܩܫܝܫܐ ܘܪܝܫܕܝܪܐ). The exceptions are 13 abbots who held the rank of deacon (ܫܡܫܐ), six who were

122. Georges Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord: Le Massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 3 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1953), 33.

123. Foss, "Syria in Transition," 232–33.

124. Daniel Hull, "A Spatial and Morphological Analysis of Monastic Sites in the Northern Limestone Massif, Syria," *Levant* 40 (2008): 91–95, 105–6; see also Georges Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du nord* (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 1992), 66–73.

125. Hull, "Spatial and Morphological Analysis," 98–102, and see there a plan of the village and the monastic compound.

126. Tchalenko, *Villages Antiques*, vol. 2, plate 67.

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priests but not abbots and may have served both the lay and the monastic communities, four monks without any ecclesiastical rank or office, one monk who served as an abbot but had no rank, and one abbot that had neither rank nor title. These exceptions attest to the overall picture of the integration of the monks in the rural community. The dual title of priest and abbot, usually in Greek (πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἡγούμενος), is well known from inscriptions in the Levant, and with less frequency the dual title of deacon and abbot.[127] In some cases, the combination appears in pilgrim churches and in holy destinations, such as the church at Kursi and the Nea church in Jerusalem, but there is also evidence in inscriptions from rural monasteries.[128] In any case, the letter provides an important addition by emphasizing the liturgical duty that the abbot may have taken upon himself as a priest in the village community.

A mirror image of the abbot's commitment to the rural community can be seen in the signature of five rural priests on the letter.[129] These priests were not monks, or at least the letter does not state that they were, but they were nevertheless called upon to add their signature to a distinctly monastic document. This reinforces the impression that emerges from the letter and from the sources reviewed previously regarding the close relationship between peasants and monks in rural landscapes.

The strong bond between the villagers and the monks is evidenced also in the appearance of two abbots who were also visitors (ܣܥܘܪܐ, *periodeutes* in Greek),[130] a function that is known from inscriptions in Palestine and Phoenicia I. Unlike the *chorepiskopos* (country bishop), who was the rural right hand of the bishop, the visitor, though appointed by the bishop, was more attached to the local village population and more involved in mundane liturgical duties within the rural community.[131]

127. Yanis Meimaris, *Sacred Names, Saints, Martyrs and Church Officials in the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Pertaining to the Christian Church of Palestine* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1986), 239–46.

128. For the combination of priest and abbot in inscriptions from Palestine, see Meimaris, *Sacred Names*, 241–46; for Arabia, see Basema Hamarneh, "Monasteries in Rural Context in Byzantine Arabia and Palaestina Tertia: A Reassessment," in *Christ Is Here, Studies in Biblical and Christian Archaeology in Memory of Fr Michele Piccirillo ofm*, ed. L. Daniel Chrupcała (Milano: Edizioni Terra Santa, 2012), 275–96 at 275.

129. The village priests that signed the letter are those in nos. 29, 38, 46, 55, 65.

130. Stephen the abbot and visitor of the monastery of Mar Salman in Qurdaye (no. 93 in the letter) and George the abbot and visitor of the monastery of Harimaia (no. 84 in the letter).

131. Leah Di Segni and Jacob Ashkenazi, "Newly Discovered Inscriptions from Three Churches in Upper Western Galilee," in *Holy Land: Archaeology on Either Side. Archaeological Essays in*

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Another significant issue that arises from the letter and deserves attention is the literacy of the signatories. Fifty-six of the priests were illiterate and were assisted by a literate colleague. Some were helped by a monk from their own monastery, like Theodoros from Baruqiya (no. 34) who used the skill of Abraham "our brother" (ܐܚܐ ܕܝܠܢ); others sought the aid of "our priest" (ܩܫܝܫܐ ܕܝܠܢ), such as Peter the abbot from Lakhf (no. 45). Only in one case (no. 47) was the reason for using an assistant scribe distinctly illiteracy. However, I would not draw an overall assumption regarding the literacy of the others who used assistants, since illiteracy in rural environs is not to be considered unusual,[132] although one may expect the monasteries in a rural context to have functioned as educational centers. The great Monophysite centers of learning in Edessa and Nisibis flourished during the sixth and the seventh centuries,[133] and although Shahîd stresses that the Ghassanid monks could not have escaped the influence of these schools,[134] the Hauran and its environs were quite a detached rural area, which may explain the level of literacy reflected in the letter.

6. MONKS AND HOLY MEN

The letter of the archimandrites of Arabia shows that the monks, even if they appear to have been remote from society, were an integral part of the rural communities.[135] Does their involvement in village life indicate their patronage over the peasants? Were the peasants a devoted clientele enchanted by the aura of the monks living among them? Is it justifiable to crown every monk with the title "holy man"? Relying on hagiographic literature, it seems that the answer to these questions is positive and that these were the reasons for the influx of monasteries in the Levantine countryside.

In the first and groundbreaking article of his trilogy on the holy man, presented in 1971, Peter Brown depicted the monk as a rural patron and the

Honour of Eugenio Alliata, ofm, ed. A. Coniglio and A. Ricco, SBF Collectio Maior 57 (Milan: Edizioni Terra Santa, 2020), 309–21.

132. Millar, "Christian Monasticism," 113 hints at this possibility.

133. Jan Willem Drijvers, "The School of Edessa: Greek Learning and Local Culture," in *Centres of Learning*, ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and A. A. MacDonald (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 49–62; Gerrit J. Reinink, "'Edessa grew dim and Nisibis shone forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the Sixth–Seventh Century," in *Centres of Learning*, ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and A. A. MacDonald (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 49–62.

134. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, vol. 2, part 1, 291.

135. Cam Grey, *Constructing Communities in the Late Roman Countryside* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 46, 131.

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peasants as his dependents.[136] In the second article, published in 1983, Brown added another dimension to the holy man's status in society by emphasizing his charismatic leadership.[137] Other scholars have challenged his assumption, depicting the monk as a more "down-to-earth" persona and as an integrated element in society. Susan Ashbrook-Harvey, for instance, in her study on the Stylite monks, suggested that the holy man, as Brown stressed, was indeed a symbol of the collective identity for the rural community, but at the same time, he was an integral part of the community's everyday liturgical order.[138] Peter Brown revised his outlook in a third paper in which he analyzed the advances in the study of the holy man since the publication of his first contribution. Accordingly, he saw fit to adjust this depiction of the holy man in late antique society: "The astute and self-confident farmers of late Roman Syria and Egypt and not the holy men were the heroes of that [1971] article. They were the creators and clients of the holy men."[139] In these words, Brown moved his focus from the holy man as a charismatic exemplar to a more balanced view on the interrelations between the monks and the lay village population. Given that most of the monks came from the same rural vicinity, and that sometimes the biological family of the monk in the village became involved with the spiritual family of the monastic community,[140] they were simultaneously perceived as saintly exemplars due to their ascetic lifestyle and as active participants in strengthening and nurturing the rural community.[141] In this context, it is interesting to point to six of the signatories in the letter of the archimandrites who were recluses, living in villages and holding no official ecclesiastic title. It seems that they would have had a significant status as holy men, if the initiators of the letter found it appropriate to add their names to it.[142]

According to the letter, it may be assumed that the question of whether every monk was a holy man can be cautiously answered in the affirmative. It

136. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101 at 85–87.

137. Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity," *Representations* 2 (1983): 1–25.

138. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "The Stylite's Liturgy: Ritual and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 3 (1998): 523–39 at 524.

139. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 353–76 at 356.

140. Rapp, "'For Next to God, You Are My Salvation,'" 66. See also Rebecca Krawiec, "'From the Womb of the Church': Monastic Families," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 283–307 at 286.

141. Brenk, "Monasteries as Rural Settlements," 456, 472–73.

142. These signatories appear in nos. 2, 17, 51, 77, 82, 123 in the letter.

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is not that every monk in the Levant was a subject of admiration for hagiographers, but they were venerated by the peasants as "holy men" and simultaneously joined forces with the peasants in maintaining the village community, both spiritually and economically.[143]

In this respect, it is well worth mentioning the more recent studies on the economy of monasteries with emphasis on rural environs. Michael Decker points to the influence of monasticism on soil cultivation in villages in northern Mesopotamia. He also notes the significant involvement of monks in wine production, which is well manifested in the large number of winepresses in monastic compounds throughout the Levant. Some of these winepresses are so large that it is obvious that most of the production was sold to consumers outside the monastery and probably even beyond the rural community.[144] In Palestine and in Transjordan, almost all the identified rural monasteries maintained large olive oil presses, and in some monasteries more than one installation was discovered.[145]

As stressed previously, material finds from identified villages mentioned in the letter are meager. Nevertheless, wine production was very widespread in the fertile volcanic soils of the Bashan and the Hauran, so it may certainly be assumed that the economic structure of both monasteries and villages in these areas relied strongly on viticulture.[146] Thus the monks living in the villages played a dual role: They were perceived by the villagers simultaneously as exemplars and as a driving force of empowerment for society, both in the liturgical aspect, as Ashbrook Harvey argued, and in the utilitarian-economic aspect by contributing to increased agricultural production of the village.[147]

143. Ashkenazi, "Holy Man versus Monk," 748, 761.

144. Michael Decker, *Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50–51. See also Banaji Jairus, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity: Gold, Labour, and Aristocratic Dominance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 61

145. Jacob Ashkenazi and Mordechai Aviam, "Monasteries and Villages: Rural Economy and Religious Interdependency in Late Antique Palestine," *Vigiliae Christianae* 71 (2017): 117–33 at 125; Hamarneh, "Monasteries in Rural Context," 284.

146. Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 123–25. Unlike Palestine and Transjordan, as well as the limestone massif in northwest Syria, olive oil production is rare in the Hauran and the Bashan due to the high altitude.

147. Philip Rousseau, "Monasticism," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 14, *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors A.D. 425–600*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 745–80 at 755; Ashkenazi and Aviam, "Monasteries and Villages," 133.

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7. CONCLUSION

As argued by the theorists mentioned in the introduction, landscape should not necessarily be studied as a neutral phenomenon or as a surface for action but rather as a concept that covers relations between the natural and the cultural. The integration of monasticism within rural society, as it emerges from the letter of the archimandrites of Arabia, allows the region discussed in this article to be defined as a monastic landscape even if the surface for its action cannot be fully reconstructed.

The villages mentioned in the letter, at least those that can be identified with a high degree of likelihood (see the appendix), were located mostly in Batanea, with a few on the western fringes of the Trachonitis (Ledja) and the Hauran. The rural settlements in these areas enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and were less dependent on the urban-provincial hierarchy. This picture contrasts with the villages on the eastern fringes of the fertile soils of the Trachonitis and Hauran, where cities and larger villages were more dominant. Most of the villages in these areas seem to have been left out of the frame. It is evident that by the end of the sixth century, the time of the Christological discourse reflected in the letter, is the time by which the Monophysite organized church began to take shape in parts of the Orient and became dominant in the area discussed in the current study.

The rural communities in Southwest Syria were dynamic and vibrant societies characterized by greater freedom and equality than they had had in earlier times, an atmosphere in which monks and peasants were incorporated into the mundane life of the villages and enjoyed the patronage of the local elite, who were involved in establishing and maintaining the monasteries. This is well manifested in the patronage of the Jafnid phylarches, as recorded in the writings of John of Ephesus,[148] and in an inscription from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, mentioning Al-Harith.[149] This reality has been most aptly described by Peter Brown as an outcome of "the quiet power of what one might call the 'collective representations' that the Christian holy man shared with the average believer."[150] The analysis of the human landscape that emerges from the letter enables a deeper look at the imprint of monasticism on late antique rural society. Average believers are not mentioned in the letter of the archimandrites of Arabia, but a "collective representation" of monks and peasants is silently present in and between every line. ■

148. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, PO 19, 153–54.
149. Genequand, "Some Thoughts," 69–70.
150. Brown, "Rise and Function1971–1997," 373–74.

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APPENDIX: MAP OF THE MONASTERIES IN SOUTHWESTERN SYRIA ACCORDING TO THE LETTER OF THE ARCHIMANDRITES OF ARABIA, THE SURVEY OF THE PRINCETON EXPEDITION AND RELEVANT INSCRIPTIONS PUBLISHED IN *IGLS*

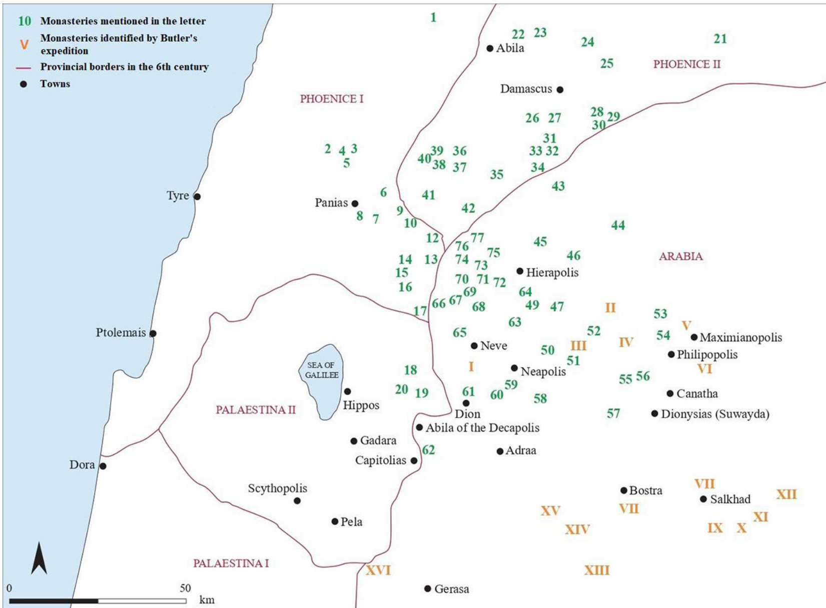

FIGURE 1. The monastic landscape of southwestern Syria in Late Antiquity. Map courtesy of the author.

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Section 1. The letter.

APPENDIX

# on Map	# in Letter	Monastery Name	Village Name: Syriac	Village Name: Trans- literation	Modern Identification*	Province	Region
1	80	No name**	ܥܝܢ ܓܪܐ	Ayn Gara	Majdal Anjar	Phoenice I	Tyre
2	136	No name	ܥܝܘܢ	Ayun	Marj Ayun	Phoenice I	Tyre
3	84	Parsidin	ܦܪܣܝܕܝܢ	Parsidin	Pardis	Phoenice I	Tyre
4	74	No name	ܠܒܘܢܬܐ	Libonta	Hilwet al Bayadah	Phoenice I	Tyre
5	137	No name	ܪܫܝܐ	Rishaye	Rashayya al Fuhar	Phoenice I	Tyre
6	29	None***	ܡܓܕܘܠܐ	Magdula	Majdal Shams (?)	Phoenice I	Paneas
7	134	No name	ܐܪܥܒܢܝܐ	Ara'bnaye	Kh. Ra'abaneh	Phoenice I	Paneas
8	135	No name	ܟܦܪܐ ܙܥܘܪܐ	Kafr Za'ura	Zaura	Phoenice I	Paneas
9	113	No name	ܓܒܬܝܠ	Gabtil	Jubatha al Hashab	Phoenice I	Paneas
9	114	No name	ܓܒܬܝܠ	Gabtil	Jubatha al Hashab	Phoenice I	Paneas
9	115	No name	ܓܒܬܝܠ	Gabtil	Jubatha al Hashab	Phoenice I	Paneas
10	66	Beit Mar Philippos	ܐܘܦܢܝܐ	Ufania	Ufania	Phoenice I	Paneas
12	117	No name	ܓܒܝܠ	Gubail	Jaba	Phoenice I	Paneas
13	132	No name	ܡܝܣܦܪ	Misfar	Misayfira	Phoenice I	Paneas
13	133	No name	ܡܝܣܦܪ	Misfar	Misayfira	Phoenice I	Paneas
14	38	None	ܣܘܪܡܢܝܢ	Surmanin	Surman	Phoenice I	Paneas
15	129	Ghassanides	ܥܣܢܝܐ	Issaniya	Al-Ghassaniyya	Phoenice I	Paneas
16	68	No name	ܟܦܪ ܓܘܙܐ	Kafr Guza	Juweiza	Phoenice I	Paneas
17	128	No name	ܟܦܪ ܐܘܫܝ	Kafr Aushay	Ashsheh	Phoenice I	Paneas
18	67	None	ܓܘܛܪ	Gutar	Tell Abu Gheitar	Palaestina II	Gaulanitis
19	4	Barthara	ܒܝܬܐܪܐ	Bayt Ara	Byt Ara	Palaestina II	Gaulanitis
20	57	No name	ܓܕܝܪܬܐ	Gadirtha	Ghadir al Bustan	Palaestina II	Gaulanitis
21	119	No name	ܚܠܝܘܪܡ	Haliyorum	Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi	Phoenice II	Palmyrene
22	116	No name	ܥܘܝܪܐ	'Awira	Afra	Phoenice II	Damascene
23	12	None	ܡܛܠܠܐ	Matalle	Al-Matalle	Phoenice II	Damascene
23	108	No name	ܚܠܒܘܢ	Hulbun	Halbun	Phoenice II	Damascene
24	39	None	ܢܗܪܐ ܕܩܣܛܪܐ	Nahra d'Qastra	Al-Qusayr	Phoenice II	Damascene

(continued)

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# on Map	# in Letter	Monastery Name	Village Name: Syriac	Village Name: Trans- literation	Modern Identification*	Province	Region
24	46	None	ܢܗܪܐ ܕܩܣܛܪܐ	Nahra d'Qastra	Al-Qusayr	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	8	Mar Shalman	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	85	Awdin	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	88	Talla	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	90	Bet Mar Elias	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	92	Nusa	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	95	Gubaye	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
25	99	No name	ܩܘܪܕܝܐ	Qurdaye	Tell al Kurdi	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	86	Beth Ilana	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	87	No name	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	91	Kafa	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	103	No name	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	104	No name	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	105	Luze	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	106	No name	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	107	Rish Ilana	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	110	Haqal (The Field)	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	111	No name	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
26	112	Mar Yunan	ܕܪܝܐ	Dareiyya	Dareiyya	Phoenice II	Damascene
27	89	New Monastery	ܟܦܪ ܣܘܣܝܐ	Kafr Susaya	Susa	Phoenice II	Damascene
27	109	No name	ܟܦܪ ܣܘܣܝܐ	Kafr Susaya	Susa	Phoenice II	Damascene
28	102	No name	ܨܦܪܝܢ	Safrin	Dayr al Asafir	Phoenice II	Damascene
29	81	No name	ܟܦܪ ܚܘܪ	Kafr Hawar	Kafr Hawwar	Phoenice II	Damascene
29	93	Mar Paulos	ܣܟܝܐ	Sakkaya	Sakka (Maximianopolis)	Phoenice II	Damascene
30	118	No name	ܚܕܬܐ	Haditha	Hathitha al Turkeman	Phoenice II	Damascene
31	96	No name	ܒܘܨܥ	Busa'	Al-Busay	Phoenice II	Damascene
32	97	Mar Sergios	ܒܘܨܥ	Busa'	Al-Busay	Phoenice II	Damascene
32	98	No name	ܒܘܨܥ	Busa'	Al-Busay	Phoenice II	Damascene
32	101	No name	ܒܘܨܥ	Busa'	Al-Busay	Phoenice II	Damascene

(continued)

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# on Map	# in Letter	Monastery Name	Village Name: Syriac	Village Name: Trans- literation	Modern Identification*	Province	Region
33	100	No name	ܩܘܣܝܬܐ	Kusitha	Kiswa	Phoenice II	Damascene
34	28	No name	ܥܠܩܝܢ	‘Alqin	Alqin	Phoenice II	Damascene
35	122	No name	ܐܦܐ	Afa	Ein al ‘Afa	Phoenice II	Damascene
36	82	No name	ܒܝܬܝܡܢ	Bythimn	Bythima	Phoenice II	Damascene
36	83	The Column	ܒܝܬܝܡܢ	Bythimn	Bythima	Phoenice II	Damascene
37	49	No name	ܒܪ ܣܦܪܐ	Bar Sapra	Bayt Saber	Phoenice II	Damascene
38	19	Mar David	ܚܝܢܐ	Hina	Hina	Phoenice II	Damascene
38	72	Pumeh d’Daba (The Wolf’s Mouth)	ܚܝܢܐ	Hina	Hina	Phoenice II	Damascene
38	75	Beth Salma	ܚܝܢܐ	Hina	Hina	Phoenice II	Damascene
38	76	Mar Cyriacos	ܚܝܢܐ	Hina	Hina	Phoenice II	Damascene
38	77	No name	ܚܝܢܐ	Hina	Hina	Phoenice II	Damascene
38	78	Mar Elias	ܚܝܢܐ	Hina	Hina	Phoenice II	Damascene
39	15	None	ܒܘܪܓܐ ܚܘܪܐ	Burga Hawra	Ayn al Burj (near Hawar)	Phoenice II	Damascene
40	79	Halphy	ܕܘܪܒܝܠ	Durbil	Durbul	Phoenice II	Damascene
41	59	No name	ܒܘܪܓܐ ܕܚܪܦ	Burga d’Haraf	Harfa	Phoenice II	Damascene
42	11	None	ܡܟܝܪ	Makir	Dayr Makker	Phoenice II	Damascene
42	65	None	ܡܟܝܪ	Makir	Dayr Makker	Phoenice II	Damascene
42	73	No name	ܡܟܝܪ	Makir	Dayr Makker	Phoenice II	Damascene
43	125	Bet Mar Isaac	ܠܘܒܝܒ	Lubib	Dayr Ali (Lubabah)	Arabia	Trachonitis
44	34	Martyrion of Mar Theodoros	ܒܪܘܩܝܐ	Baruqiya	Berocca, Borechat (?)	Arabia	Trachonitis
44	127b	No name	ܓܕܝܐ	Gadaya	Jdiyeh (Simlin?)	Arabia	Trachonitis
45	124	No name	ܡܝܬܒܝܢ	Mithabin	Mutabin (west of the Leja)	Arabia	Trachonitis
46	41	No name	ܫܘܪܘ	Shuru	Sahura	Arabia	Trachonitis
47	42	No name	ܙܒܝܪܬ	Zabirath	Zabira	Arabia	Trachonitis
49	18	None	ܬܘܒܢܝܢ	Thubnin	Tibneh	Arabia	Trachonitis
50	53	Mar Conon	ܙܘܪܝܐ	Zaruye	Ezra	Arabia	Trachonitis

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# on Map	# in Letter	Monastery Name	Village Name: Syriac	Village Name: Trans- literation	Modern Identification*	Province	Region
51	51	No name	ܒܘܨܪܐܝܠ	Busra'il	Busr al Harīr	Arabia	Trachonitis
52	22	None	ܠܘܘܢ	Luwon	Lubin	Arabia	Trachonitis
53	33	No name	ܡܬܢܐ	Mathana	Methuneh	Arabia	Trachonitis
54	58	No name	ܥܚܝܪܬ	'Ahirath	Ahireh	Arabia	Trachonitis
55	45	None	ܠܗܦ	Lahaf	Rimat al Lahf	Arabia	Auranitis
56	3	Abba Mar Maximos	ܐܛܘ	Ato	Ato, אטו, Sahl al Wati	Arabia	Auranitis
57	40	New Monastery	ܟܦܪܬܘܥܠܬ	Kafr Thu'alat	Al-Tha'ala	Arabia	Auranitis
58	54	No name	ܥܠܡܬ	'Almath	Alamah	Arabia	Batanea
58	55	Martyrion (Beth Shahda) of Mar Sergios	ܥܠܡܬ	'Almath	Alamah	Arabia	Batanea
58	60	No name	ܥܠܡܬ	'Almath	Alamah	Arabia	Batanea
58	61	No name	ܥܠܡܬ	'Almath	Alamah	Arabia	Batanea
59	47	Mar Ioseph	ܒܘܛܥ	Buta'	Ubta	Arabia	Batanea
60	62	No name	ܪܘܥܦ	Ru'af	Ra'afa	Arabia	Batanea
60	63	No name	ܪܘܥܦ	Ru'af	Ra'afa	Arabia	Batanea
61	56	No name	ܣܥܪܝܥܐܝܠ	Sa'ari'a'il	Tel shaar	Arabia	Batanea
62	5	None	ܚܪܝܡܝܐ	Harimaye	Al-Hurime—Jarimaiyah	Arabia	Adraa
63	43	Mountain of Mahagga	ܛܘܪܐ ܕܡܚܓܐ	Tura d'Mahagga	Mahja	Arabia	Batanea
63	44	No name	ܦܐܕܝܢ	Fadin	Ein Fada	Arabia	Batanea
64	52	No name	ܩܘܢܝܬܐ	Qunitha	Al-Qanayya	Arabia	Batanea
65	24	Beth Mar Sergios	ܓܒܝܬܐ	Gabitha	Al-Jabiya	Arabia	Batanea
66	37	Beth Mar Phoca	ܫܘܫܢܐ	Shushana	Swisah	Arabia	Batanea
67	9	None	ܟܦܪ ܒܣܛܣ	Kfar Bastas	Bastas	Arabia	Batanea
68	2	Great Monastery	ܓܫܡܝܢ	Gashmin	Jasem	Arabia	Batanea

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# on Map	# in Letter	Monastery Name	Village Name: Syriac	Village Name: Trans- literation	Modern Identification*	Province	Region
68	23	Beth Sabinianos	ܓܫܡܝܢ	Gashmin	Jasem	Arabia	Batanea
68	31	No name	ܓܫܡܝܢ	Gashmin	Jasem	Arabia	Batanea
68	35	No name	ܓܫܡܝܢ	Gashmin	Jasem	Arabia	Batanea
68	36	No name	ܓܫܡܝܢ	Gashmin	Jasem	Arabia	Batanea
69	30	No name	ܢܡܪ	Namar	Namara	Arabia	Batanea
69	94	No name	ܣܟܝܐ	Sakkaya	Sakka	Arabia	Batanea
70	1	Abba Markellinos	ܛܘܪܐ ܕܚܪܬܐ	Tura d'Hartha	Al-Hara (Eutimia)	Arabia	Batanea
70	64	No name	ܛܘܪܐ ܕܚܪܬܐ	Tura d'Hartha	Al-Hara (Eutimia)	Arabia	Batanea
71	32	No name	ܙܡܪܘܢ	Zimrun	Zimrin	Arabia	Batanea
72	127b	Shamnil	ܓܕܝܐ	Gadaya	Jdiyeh (Simlin?)	Arabia	Batanea
73	7	None	ܟܦܪ ܣܘܓܐ	Kfar Suga	Umm al Usij	Arabia	Batanea
74	6	Beth Mar Stephanos	ܥܩܪܒ	Aqraba	Aqraba	Arabia	Batanea
74	26	Aba Titos	ܥܩܪܒ	Aqraba	Aqraba	Arabia	Batanea
74	130	Lady Mary	ܐܦܪܐ	Afra	Ifra	Arabia	Batanea
75	25	None	ܟܦܪ ܫܡܫ	Kafr Shemesh	Kafr Shams	Arabia	Batanea
75	48	No name	ܟܦܪ ܫܡܫ	Kafr Shemesh	Kafr Shams	Arabia	Batanea
76	69	No name	ܢܡܘܠ	Namul	Tell al Mal	Arabia	Batanea
77	70	Amuda	ܟܦܪ ܢܣܓ	Kafr Nasig	Kafr Nasij	Arabia	Batanea
	10	None	ܓܘܦܢܬ	Gufnath	Al-Jefna	Unidentified	Unidentified
	13	None	ܒܝܬ ܚܠܐ	Beth Hala	Dayr al Khall	Unidentified	Unidentified
	14	None	ܒܝܬܠܝܐ	Bytlya	?	Unidentified	Unidentified
	16	Artemis	ܐܪܛܡܝܣ	Tarmis	Tarmis (near Damascus)	Unidentified	Unidentified
	17	None	ܐܘܪܗܝ	Edessa (The City)	Nomadic	Unidentified	Unidentified
	20	None	ܠܘܩܕ	Luqad	?	Unidentified	Unidentified
	21	None	ܐܡܝܢ	Amyn	?	Unidentified	Unidentified
	27	None	ܟܦܪ ܟܘܡܪܐ	Kafr Kumre	Jan Kumra (Mount Nuseiri)	Unidentified	Unidentified
	50	No name	ܓܠܫܐ	Galasha	?	Unidentified	Unidentified

(continued)

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# on Map	# in Letter	Monastery Name	Village Name: Syriac	Village Name: Trans- literation	Modern Identification*	Province	Region
	71	No name	ܐܡܘܢܝܢ	Amunin	?	Unidentified	Unidentified
	120	No name	ܓܝܓܠܐ	Gigle	?	Unidentified	Unidentified
	121	No name	ܥܩܘܒܬܐ	Uqbata	Aqabath al Shurah near Kiswa	Unidentified	Unidentified
	123	Clolumn	ܚܓܘܢ	Hagun	Bly Hijana	Unidentified	Unidentified
	126	No name	ܡܨܪܝܢ	Masrin	?	Unidentified	Unidentified
	131	Holy Shalman	ܩܕܝܫܐ ܫܠܡܢ		?	Unidentified	Unidentified

* Following Nöldeke, with additions and adjustments by Dussaud, Ma'oz, and Hoyland.
**No name = Unnamed monastery
***None = No monastery
? = questionable identification

Section 2. Princeton's survey and inscriptions in *IGLS*, vols. 14–15.

I. Deir Ayoub
II. Deir Idj Djuwani
III. Il Uber
IV. Ariqah
V. Eitha
VI. Nimreh
VII. Al-Karis
VIII. Id Der
IX. Deir il-Meshquq
X. Mothana-Itman
XI. Khazme
XII. Al-Nasrani
XIII. Umm al-Jimal
XIV. Umm al Surab
XV. Samma
XVI. Mar Liyas

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