In 1925 Mingana published a document concerning the conversion of a Turkish tribe in the time of the East Syrian Patriarch Acacius (485-495/6), a text which he found in the second part of a letter attributed to Philoxenus of Mabbug, and addressed to Abu ‘Afr, the governor (στρατηλάτης) of Ḥīrta d-Na‘man. The first half of this letter, with accounts of various heretics, was already known from the excerpt in Add. MS. 14529 of the British Museum (dated to the seventh or eighth century), published by Martin in his *Introductio practica ad studium linguae Arameae*. Since the British Museum manuscript is concerned only with doctrinal matters, it is not surprising that the excerpt from the letter of Philoxenus does not contain anything about the conversion of the Turkish tribe, and this second part of the letter only came to light when Mingana found a copy of the complete letter in a manuscript in the Rylands Library, Rylands Syr. 59. In his article Mingana gave an English translation of the whole of the letter, but printed the Syriac of the second half only.

The manuscript Mingana used, Rylands Syr. 59, is a modern one, copied by the assiduous scribe Mattai bar Paulos of Mosul, and completed on 29 January 1909. According to oral information given to Mingana by the copyist himself, the text had been transcribed from a vellum manuscript found in Ṭur ‘Abdin.

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4 Formerly no. 9 in Mingana’s own collection, cf. "Early Spread . . .", p. 346 [52].
6 "Early Spread . . .", p. 346 [52], cf. p. 349 [55].
which he [i.e. Mattai] would ascribe at the latest to the eleventh century ".

The document’s historicity was very quickly attacked1 by the Bollandist Paul Peeters,2 who hinted that the work was in fact a recent forgery: "le jacobite du IXe siecle [Mingana spoke of a Jacobite writer of about 760-790 . . . living in or near Baghdad’ as the author of the second half of the letter]3 parle comme s’il avait lu les ouvrages de Bethune Baker et de J. Lebon.” In 1930 Mingana countered Peeters’s attack by pointing out4 that he had found “two years previously” another copy of the whole letter in a manuscript he had bought in Persia. This second manuscript is Mingana Syr. 71 (fols. 40r-47r) in the Selly Oak Colleges Library, Birmingham, and is dated in Mingana’s Catalogue (vol. 1, col. 188) to “about 1600”.

Peeters, however, was unimpressed by this new evidence adduced by Mingana, and his original article was reprinted, with a few additions, in his Recherches d’Histoire et de Philologie Orientales (1951).5 There the matter rested, until in a recent article entitled “Auteur et date de la Chronique d’Arbèles”6 Father J.-M. Fiey, O.P., again took up the controversy. In this article Fiey suggests that Mingana’s “newly found” manuscript is in fact none other than his original manuscript copied by Mattai in 1909.7 This supposition, however, rests on a confusion between the Rylands Library (Manchester) and the Selly Oak Colleges Library (Birmingham), for, not finding “Mingana

1 “‘Un nouveau document sur l'histoire des Turcs”, Byzantion, iv (1927/8), 569-74.
2 Peeters had already crossed swords with Mingana over the latter’s edition of Ṭabari’s Kitab al-dīn wa ’l-dawla (Manchester, 1923), in Analecta Bollandiana, xli (1924), 200-2. The implications of both Peeters and Bougyes that this work was a forgery of Mingana’s are totally unfounded: the manuscript from which Mingana published the text was in the Rylands Library long before Mingana came to England, cf. H. Guppy, “The Genuineness of at-Ṭabari’s Apology . . .”, Bulletin, xiv (1930), 121-3; also L’Orient Syrien, xii (1967), 267.
3 “Early Spread . . .”, p. 349 [55].
6 L’Orient Syrien, xii (1967), 265-302. Fiey suspects that Mingana himself is the author of this notorious chronicle. His arguments that the work is a modern, rather than a medieval, compilation do not seem to me to be very convincing.
7 “Auteur et date . . .”, p. 270.
syriac 59 "1 of 1909 in the Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts [in the Selly Oak Colleges Library], Fiey assumes that the only copy of the Letter in that Catalogue, Syr. 71 of " about 1600 ", must be the " missing "2 one of 1909, redated by Mingana.

A visit to the libraries concerned, however, confirms the correctness of Mingana's statements about the two manuscripts: Mattai's manuscript of 1909 still exists as Ry lands Syr. 59 (the Letter occupying fols. 105r-113v),3 and Mingana Syr. 71 in the Selly Oak Colleges Library is genuinely a second copy of the text, and, to judge from the script, Mingana's date of c. 1600 seems a reasonable one.

Mingana Syr. 71, containing as it does the complete Letter, with the second section on the conversion of the Turkish tribe, thus by its date shows that neither Mattai nor Mingana can be its author, and that any imputations to this effect are quite unjustified.

The Syriac text printed by Mingana comes from fols. 110v-113v of Rylands Syr. 59, and a collation of the two reveals that the printed text has on two occasions lost several words through homoiooteleuton (Mingana's English translation, however, presupposes the presence of these missing words). These are:

p. 368 [77] line 6 pr.ms. $\text{ܐܒܪ ܕܝܫܡܐ}_1$ $\text{ܒܡ}^3_3 \text{ܠܠܚܒ}$

p. 369 [78] line 14 pr.ms. $\text{ܠܠܐ} \text{ܡܘܬܡܐ}$ $\text{ܡܘܬܡܐ}$ $\text{ܡܘܬܡܐ}$

Apart from these omissions the printed text contains three misprints: p. 369 [78], line 9 ms. $\text{ܦܢܐ}$ $\text{ܦܢܐ}$ $\text{ܦܢܐ}$

1 Mingana himself called it " Syriac MS. 59 of the John Rylands Library . . . formerly . . . part of the writer's collection of Syriac MSS. where it was numbered: Mingana 9 " (" Early Spread . . .", p. 346 [52]).

2 " Auteur et date . . .", p. 268, n. 14: " . . . ce manuscrit n'a jamais été vu par personne et a disparu mystérieusement." Unseen only because no one took the trouble to look at it !

3 This is the foliation now to be found in the manuscript: Mingana, however, gave it as fols. 99-107v, evidently counting from the beginning, on fol. 6v, of the main work contained in this manuscript (Bar Šalibi, Penitential Canons). Fols. 1-5 are filled up with miscellaneous short texts.
and at p. 371 [80], line 8, a word has been omitted:

Mingana Syr. 71 not surprisingly agrees with Rylands Syr. 59 against the printed text. But Mingana Syr. 71 also exhibits a small number of variants, which, incidentally, show that it can hardly have been the Vorlage of Rylands Syr. 59. Apart from abbreviations, I give a complete list of these variants (Mingana Syr. 71 to the right of the bracket):

Rylands Syr. 59 in fact has here written in a second hand above a very thorough erasure, which may well have once contained This anachronistic slip must, of course, have originated at a time when the Patriarchate was still seated at Baghdad, and thus it usefully shows that the text itself cannot postdate the thirteenth century, for Denha I (†1281) was the last Patriarch resident at Baghdad until 1830 (Ioḥannan VIII Hormez). 1

The first letter is perhaps designedly ambiguous. In Rylands Syr. 59 there is an erasure immediately after the second riš.

In Rylands Syr. 59 there is not even a space left.

1 The date of Mingana Syr. 71, of course, precludes the possibility that the slip belongs to the nineteenth century.
In Rylands Syr. 59 Mattai seems to have written first, but then changed this to .

ibid.

In Rylands Syr. 59 Mattai appears to have written first of all, and then altered this to . Mingana's suggestion that Arabic sanim "big-humped" is meant is thus probably correct.

Thus far it has been possible, thanks to an anachronistic slip, to take the document back to at least the thirteenth century. According to Mattai, the copyist of Rylands Syr. 59, the text of the letter was taken from an eleventh-century manuscript from Tur 'Abdin. Now while, of course, it is impossible to verify the first half of Mattai's statement, about the date of the Vorlage, it is possible to show that the second half, about its provenance, is extremely plausible. This can be done by an examination of the contents of both Rylands Syr. 59 and Mingana Syr. 71.

Numerous items in these two manuscripts also occur in Mingana Syr. 369, a manuscript written over a period of a number of years, 1474-81, by at least three (contemporaneous) scribes of the famous Jacobite monastery, Deir ez Za 'faran, a few miles South East of Mardin, and at the South West extremity of Tur 'Abdin. I list the items concerned in tabular form (the letters for the Mingana manuscripts are those of the Catalogue):

1 In Rylands Syr. 59, from fol. 86 onwards: the colophon to the main work contained in the manuscript (entitled, fol. 69, ) is to be found on fol. 84v-85r, where the date, 29th Kanun II 1909, is given. In this colophon Mattai, the scribe, mentions the visit of Patriarch Ignatius II to England, and his audience with the "king of the English, Edward", before travelling on to India and Malabar. The remainder of the manuscript (fols. 86v-118v) is also written by Mattai, but the contents of these pages, discussed here, are totally unrelated to the earlier (main) part of the manuscript.
Evidently there is a very close relationship between these three manuscripts, but what is the precise nature of this relationship? On internal evidence, it is very unlikely that the later of the two Mingana manuscripts, 71, is copied from the earlier, 369;
rather, both manuscripts probably derive from a common Vorlage, and since Mingana Syr. 369 was written at Deir ez Za'faran, it is extremely likely that Mingana Syr. 71\(^1\) was either itself written in that region, or was copied from a manuscript deriving from that region. Again, it has already been seen that the textual relationship between Mingana Syr. 71 and Rylands Syr. 59 in the Letter of Philoxenus makes it very improbable that the latter is a transcript of the former: rather, both manuscripts will derive from a common Vorlage. Whether this Vorlage for the Letter of Philoxenus (i.e. Mattai’s “eleventh-century” manuscript) was the same Turk ‘Abdin manuscript which provided the items common to all three manuscripts Mingana Syr. 369, 71 and Rylands Syr. 59, is unfortunately uncertain, due to the absence of the letter from Mingana Syr. 369.\(^2\) All that can be said with certainty is that the items common to all three manuscripts will derive from a common Turk ‘Abdin manuscript, and this manuscript may also have contained matter common to the pairs, Mingana Syr. 71 and Rylands Syr. 59, and Mingana Syr. 369 and Mingana Syr. 71.

While the texts of the two manuscripts are very close, their few variants are best explained by supposing that the two texts derive from a common Vorlage, rather than the one from the other. Dioecles is also found in Rylands Syr. 59, which shows especially close affinities with the text of Mingana Syr. 71. I hope to re-edit this work.

\(^1\) While the manuscript seems to have been written by two scribes, they must have belonged to the same time and place, since the division of labour occurs, in medias res, between fol. 76v and 76r.

\(^2\) Fiey (“Auteur et date . . .”, pp. 269-70) points out that Mattai’s Turk ‘Abdin manuscript must have been brought to Mosul, for Mattai, according to the testimony of his widow and friends, never went to Turk ‘Abdin himself. In fact several parallels to this situation can be found in other manuscripts written by Mattai: Mingana Syr. 8 [of 1911], fol. 247v (Catalogue I, col. 37), Mattai states that his Vorlage was a vellum manuscript brought from Deir ez Za’faran by the monk Ephrem Barsaum; Mingana Syr. 67 [of 1911], fol. 181v, he states that his Vorlage was about 1,100 years old, and had been brought from Deir ez Za’faran by (the same) Ephrem Barsaum, and had been returned thither by him; Mingana Syr. 152 [of 1889], fol. 293v (Catalogue I, cols. 354-5), he states that his Vorlage was a very old manuscript from Deir ez Za’faran, for the time being housed in the church of St. Thomas at Mosul (the present Jacobite cathedral, see Fiey, Mossoul Chrétienne (Beyrouth, 1959), pp. 147 ff.).
Criticism and comment on the actual contents of this interesting letter are beyond the scope of this article, which is primarily intended to vindicate Mingana's integrity and reputation as far as this particular document is concerned. So far from being a twentieth-century forgery, the Letter of Philoxenus has turned out to date from at least the end of the thirteenth century, and may well be considerably earlier.