

as a learned word (*PSm*, 298). The derivation from Syr. ܐܫܒܐ suggested by Nöldeke-Schwally, i, 16 n., is much more satisfactory. ܐܫܒܐ (cf. Aram. ܐܫܒܐ) is the equivalent of the Gk. χειρόγραφον,¹ and is a word commonly used in a sense in which it can have come into Arabic. It was doubtless borrowed in this sense in the pre-Islamic period,² for in a verse of the Meccan poet 'Abdallah b. az-Ziba'rā, quoted in 'Ainī, iv, 140, we read ألهى قصيًا عن المجد الاساطير "the stories have averted Quṣay from glory".

In S. Arabian, as D. H. Müller points out (*WZKM*, i, 29) we have 𐩦𐩣𐩪 meaning an *inscription*, and 𐩦𐩣𐩪 is the usual verb for *scripsit* (Rossini, *Glossarium*, 194), so it is not impossible that there was

S. Arabian influence on the form of the word. See further under سَطَر.

أَسْبَاطُ (*Asbāt*)

ii, 130, 134 ; iii, 78 ; iv, 161 ; vii, 160.

The Tribes. Plu. of سَبْط.

It occurs only in Madinan passages and always refers to the Children of Israel. In vii, 160, it is used normally of the Twelve Tribes, but in all the other passages the أَسْبَاطُ are spoken of as recipients of revelation, and one suspects that here Muḥammad is confusing the Jewish use of "the Twelve" for the Minor Prophets with that for the Twelve Tribes.³

The philologists derive it from سَبْط a *thistle*, their explanation thereof being interesting if not convincing (*LA*, ix, 182). Some, however, felt the difficulty, and Abū'l-Laith was constrained to admit that it was a Hebrew loan-word (as-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 318 ; *Mutaw*, 58). The ultimate source, of course, is the Heb. שִׁבְט, and Geiger 141, followed by many

¹ Cf. ܐܫܒܐ ܕܚܝܪܐ *cheirographum dubium*, as contrasted with ܐܫܒܐ ܕܚܝܪܐ *cheirographum validum*.

² So Mingana, *Syriac Influence*, 89.

³ Vide Sprenger, *Leben*, ii, 276, who thinks Muḥammad took it to be a proper name, which, however, is unlikely in view of vii. 160 (Hirschfeld, *Beiträge*, 41).