the meaning of a definite article down to a tolerably late period.

As early as the 7th century the conquests of the Moslems greatly circumscribed the domain of Aramaic and a few centuries later it was almost completely supplanted in the west by Arabic. For the Christians of those countries, who, like every one else, spoke Arabic, the Palestinian dialect was no longer of importance, and they adopted as their ecclesiastical language the dialect of the other Aramæan Christians, the Syriac (or Edessene). The only localities where a Western Aramaic dialect still survives are a few villages in Anti-Libanus. Our information upon this subject is but slight and fragmentary; but it is hoped that Professors Prym and Socin will soon be able to furnish more ample details.

The popular Aramaic dialect of Babylonia from the 4th to the 6th century of our era is exhibited in the Babylonian Talmud, in which, however, as in the Jeru­salem Talmud, there is a constant mingling of Aramaic and Hebrew passages. To a somewhat later period, and probably not to exactly the same district of Babylonia, belong the writings of the Mandæans (q.v.), a strange sect, half Christian and half heathen, who from a linguistic point of view possess the peculiar advantage of having remained almost entirely free from the influence of Hebrew, which is so perceptible in the Aramaic writings of Jews as well as of Christians. The orthography of the Man- dæans comes nearer than that of the Talmud to the real pronunciation, and in it the softening of the gutturals is most clearly seen. In other respects there is a close resem­blance between Mandæan and the language of the Babylon­ian Talmud. The forms of the imperfect which we have enumerated above take in these dialects *n* or *l*. @@1 In Babylonia, as in Syria, the language of the Arabic con­querors rapidly drove out that of the country. The latter has long been totally extinct, unless possibly a few surviv­ing Mandæans still speak among themselves a more modern form of their dialect.

At Edessa, in the west of Mesopotamia, the native dialect had already been used for some time as a literary ' language, and had been reduced to rule through the influ­ence of the schools (as is proved by the fixity of the grammar and orthography) even before Christianity acquired power in the country in the 2d century. At an early period the Old and New Testaments were here translated, with the help of Jewish tradition. This version (the so-called Peshíṭta or Peshito) became the Bible of Aramæan Chris­tendom, and Edessa became its capital. Thus the Aramæan Christians of the neighbouring countries, even those who were subjects of the Persian empire, adopted the Edessan dialect as the language of the church, of literature, and of cultivated intercourse. Since the ancient name of the inhabitants, “ Aramæans,” just like that of "*Eλλνϵς*, had acquired in the minds of Jews and Christians the un­pleasant signification of “ heathens,” it was generally avoided, and in its place the Greek terms “ Syrians ” and “ Syriac ” were used. But “ Syriac ” was also the name given by the Jews and Christians of Palestine to their own language, and both Greeks and Persians designated the Aramæans of Babylonia as “Syrians.” It is therefore, properly speaking, incorrect to employ the word “ Syriac ” as meaning the language of Edessa alone ; but, since it was the most important of these dialects, it has the best claim to this generally received appellation. It has, as we have said, a shape very definitely fixed ; and in it the above-mentioned forms of the imperfect take an *n.* As in the Babylonian dialects, the termination *á* has become so completely a part of the substantive to which it is added that it has wholly lost the meaning of the definite

article, whereby the clearness of the language is perceptibly impaired. The influence exercised by Greek is very appa­rent in Syriac. From the 3d to the 7th century an exten­sive literature was produced in this language, consisting chiefly, but not entirely, of ecclesiastical works. In the development of this literature the Syrians of the Persian empire took an eager part. In the Eastern Roman empire Syriac was, after Greek, by far the most important lan­guage ; and under the Persian kings it virtually occupied a more prominent position as an organ of culture than the Persian language itself. The conquests of the Arabs totally changed this state of things. But meanwhile, even in Edessa, a considerable difference had arisen between the written language and the popular speech, in which the pro­cess of modification was still going on. About the year 700 it became a matter of absolute necessity to systematize the grammar of the language and to introduce some means of clearly expressing the vowels. The principal object aimed at was that the text of the Syriac Bible should be recited in a correct manner. But, as it happened, the eastern pronunciation differed in many respects from that of the west. The local dialects had to some extent exer­cised an influence over the pronunciation of the literary tongue; and, on the other hand, the political separation between Rome and Persia, and yet more the ecclesiastical schism—since the Syrians of the east were mostly Nesto- rians, those of the west Monophysites and Catholics—had produced divergencies between the traditions of the various schools. Starting, therefore, from a common source, two distinct systems of punctuation were formed, of which the western is the more convenient, but the eastern the more exact and generally the more in accordance with the ancient pronunciation ; it has, for example, *ci* in place of the western ό, and ó in many cases where the western Syrians pronounce *ú.* In later times the two systems have been intermingled in various ways.

Arabic everywhere put a speedy end to the predomi­nance of Aramaic—a predominance which had lasted for more than a thousand years—and soon began to drive Syriac out of use. At the beginning of the 11th century the learned metropolitan of Nisibis, Elias bar Shinnáyá, wrote his books intended for Christians either entirely in Arabic or in Arabic and Syriac arranged in parallel columns, that is, in the spoken and in the learned language. Thus, too, it became necessary to have Syriac-Arabic glossaries. Up to the present day Syriac has remained in use for literary and ecclesiastical purposes, and may perhaps be even spoken in some monasteries and schools ; but it has long been a dead language. When Syriac became ex­tinct in Edessa and its neighbourhood is not known with certainty.

This language, called Syriac *par excellence,* is not the immediate source whence are derived the Aramaic dialects still surviving in the northern districts. In the mountains known as the Túr 'Abdín in Mesopotamia, in certain districts east and north of Mosul, in the neighbouring- mountains of Kurdistan, and again beyond them on the western coast of Lake Urmia, Aramaic dialects are spoken by Christians and occasionally by Jews, and some of these dialects we know with tolerable precision. The dialect of Túr 'Abdín seems to differ considerably from all the rest ; the country beyond the Tigris is, however, divided, as regards language, amongst a multitude of local dialects. Among these, that of Urmia has become the most import­ant, since American missionaries have formed a new literary language out of it. Moreover, the Roman Propaganda has printed books in two of the Neo-Syriac dialects. All these dialects exhibit a complete transformation of the ancient type, to a degree incomparably greater than is the case, for example, with Mandæan. In particular, the ancient

@@@1 See Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* (Halle, 1875).