The Scattered Pearls

The Author (photo autographed and presented by the author to Anton Kiraz on April 30, 1947, The Kiraz Private Collection)

ܡܪܓܢܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܓܢܝ

The Scattered Pearls

A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences

BY

IGNATIUS APHRAM I BARSOUM

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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FOREWORD

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The late Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem Barṣoum is regarded as the most illustrious twentieth-century scholar of the Syrian Orthodox Church and indeed one of its four pillars in recent times (the others being Mor Gregorios Bulos Bahnam, Mor Philoxenus Yuḥanon Dolabani and Patriarch Jacob III). He lived at a time that witnessed one of the most critical junctures in the life of the Church in recent history: as a monk, he witnessed the horrific,

barbaric massacres of hundreds of thousands of his church members and as a bishop and later as a Patriarch, he had the awesome task of healing the wounds of this devastated community. Yet, during these difficult times and amidst his numerous ecclesiastical duties, he dedicated much time and effort to scholarship and is now appreciated not only by his own Church, but also by the scholarly community. This was due to his passion for knowledge and scholarship that never ceased.

This book is the fruit of great labor on the part of the author. He had the privilege of inspecting many old manuscripts scattered at different churches and monasteries in the Ottoman Empire, which were later lost to the fires and destructions of the said massacres. He also visited many libraries in Europe and North America, reading the many Syriac manuscripts preserved there and researching the different components of Syriac art and science. The *Scattered Pearls* is indeed the pearl of all Syrian Orthodox literary productions of the twentieth century.

Western scholarship had been deprived of this monumental work for decades as it was available only in the original Arabic and later in a Syriac translation by Dolabani (1967). Only parts of its contents, particularly the later biographies, were made accessible indirectly through Rudolf Macuch's *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1976). We find it most rewarding indeed to make this valuable volume available in its entirety to Western scholarship, as well as the general English-speaking public, in a second revised edition, as the first edition, sponsored by members of the American Foundation for Syriac Studies, is now out-of-print.

We highly appreciate the enormous efforts of Dr. Matti Moosa who took upon himself the arduous task of translating the book from the original Arabic. We also extend our gratitude to Dr. George A. Kiraz of Gorgias Press for publishing the second revised edition of this essential work.

March 10, 2003
The Commencement of the Great Lent

Cyril Aphrem Karim

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The systematic study of Syriac literature and sciences and related subjects was a Western development, beginning in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. Curiously, the Syrians and other Eastern writers have only recently devoted themselves to the scholarly study of Syriac literature. Even the art of poetry, considered one of the Syrians' foremost literary achievements, has received only scant attention from Syrian writers. Now lost is a treatment of that subject by Severus Bar Shabbo, a metropolitan of the Monastery of St. Matthew, near Mosul, Iraq, in the early 13th century.

In 1875, Rev. Gabriel Cardahi published a treatise in Arabic on the meters of Syriac poetry, along with short biographies of some Syrian poets and specimens of their work, but he gave no historical account of its development. In 1896, the Syrian Roman Catholic bishop of Damascus, Monsignor Yusuf Dawood (David), treated Syrian poetry and prosody in the final chapter of his extensive grammar of the Aramaic language. The Rev. Bulos Bahnam, the late Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Iraq (d. 1969), wrote for his Arabic magazine *al-Mashriq* (1946-53) a series of articles on Syriac culture. In 1949, two Egyptian professors of Semitic studies at the University of Fu'ād I in Cairo published a history of Syriac literature, an unfortunate work derivative in character and lacking annotation.

The first Western study of Syriac literature, by the learned French scholar Eusebe Renaudot, who died in 1720, has been highly praised by J. B. Chabot.[1] This manuscript was never published, however, and was consequently overshadowed by Guiseppe Simone Assemani's four-volume *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, the first volume of which appeared in 1719. Later writers on the subject have been more than slightly indebted to this nearly exhaustive work. William Wright's *Syriac Literature* (London, 1894)

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[1] J. B. La Chabot, *Littérature Syriaque* (Paris: 1934), 9-10. Chabot also cites H. Omont, *Inventaire de la Collection Renaudot á la Bibliothèque Nationale.* See also by Chabot *Les Langes et la Littérature Araméenne* (Paris: 1910), translated into Arabic by Anton Shukri Lawrence (Jerusalem: 1930), 5.

originally appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1887 and was expanded for its posthumous publication in book form. *La Litterature Syriaque*, by Rubens Duval (Paris, 1889), provides a neatly organized, comprehensive history of Syriac literature down to the 13th century. Still another important work, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, by Anton Baumstark (Bonn, 1922), presents copious references and notes, but its information seems too compressed for the non-specialist. The second volume of Georg Graf's five-volume *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur* (Vatican City, 1944-53) is highly valuable for the study of the Christian literature of the Syrian Church following the Muslim conquest.

The study of Syriac literature, then, originated in the East, but was brought to its fullest development by Western writers. As Assemani, an Easterner by birth and tradition, used his important knowledge to shape Western ideas on Syriac literature, so today it is the Westerners following his lead who have formulated the views generally accepted in the East.

It is against this rather tenuous, uncertain background that Patriarch Barṣoum projects his *Scattered Pearls* (اللؤلؤ المنثور). We can justly appraise his historical account only by acknowledging its indebtedness to earlier scholarship, yet recognizing its uniqueness in an exaggerated nationalistic tone and in an unremitting accumulation of compendious, detailed information.

Bishop Gregorios Bahnam, in *Nafaḥāt al-Khuzām*,[1] has given us abundant information on the life of Patriarch Barṣoum. Born on June 15, 1887, in Mosul, Iraq, Barṣoum received his early education in a private Dominican school, studying French and Turkish as well as religious literature and history; later he learned Arabic under the training of Muslim scholars. At the Za'faran Monastery in Mardin, Turkey, where he started his theological training in 1905, he gave himself to the study of the Syriac language and literature. After his ordination as a priest in 1908, he remained at the monastery to teach and, in 1911, he assumed the additional responsibility of managing the monastery press. Later in that year he began a scientific journey to all the monasteries and churches of Mesopotamia and Turkey. Soon after his return in 1913, he made

[1] Bishop Gregorius Bulos Bahnam, *Nafaḥāt al-Khuzām 'aw Ḥayāt al-Baṭriyark Aphram* (*The Breath of Tulips or The Life of the Patriarch Aphrem*), in Arabic (Mosul: 1959).

another similar trip to examine the Syriac manuscripts in the great libraries of Europe.

On May 20, 1918, Patriarch Elias III named Barṣoum bishop of Syria and, after World War I, Barṣoum gained national recognition not only as a man of religion, but also as a man of learning. He championed the cause of Syrian unity, winning firm and popular support for his admonition to the French to regard themselves as liberators rather than conquerors. In 1919, he was chosen to represent the national rights of the Syrian Orthodox community in the peace settlement at Paris. He was disillusioned, however, by the atmosphere of self-interest which prevailed among the delegates representing the European powers and, at one stage of the conference, found himself defending not only the rights of the Syrian Orthodox but those of the Arab nations. Though Barṣoum did not succeed in protecting the Syrians' interests at Paris, the journey yet gave him ample opportunity for further study of Syriac literature before his return in May 1920. Two years later, the League of Nations' action making Syria a French mandate brought him the new responsibility of providing for refugees from Cilicia and he also undertook the building of many new churches in and near Aleppo.

Another journey took Barṣoum to Geneva and Lausanne as an apostolic delegate to the World Conference on Faith and Order (August 3-21, 1927). Soon afterwards he came as an emissary of the Patriarch to the United States, where he investigated the condition of the Syrian Orthodox Church, consecrated three new churches and ordained new priests. He also gave lectures on the Syriac language and literature at Providence University and the University of Chicago and served at the Oriental Institute of the latter institution until his return in 1929.

After the death of Patriarch Elias III in 1932, the Synod of Bishops named Barṣoum his acting successor. On January 30, 1933, he was formally elected Patriarch of Antioch, assuming the ecclesiastical name of Mar Ignatius Aphram I Barṣoum. The new Patriarch quickly showed himself to be an active church head, establishing new dioceses and founding a theological seminary at Zaḥle, Lebanon (later moved to Mosul and then to Beirut) and served as its leader until his death on June 23, 1957.

Despite the numerous responsibilities of his work in the church and frequent interruptions for travel, Barṣoum devoted

much of his time to writing. Chief among his published works are the following:

1) A treatise refuting *al-Zahra al-Dhakiyya fi al-Batriyarkiyya al-Suryāniyya al-Anṭākiyya*, written by Isḥaq Armala in 1909. After this refutation appeared in 1910, Armala apparently replied, for Barṣoum published another refutation in 1912.

2) *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-Rūḥiyya fi al-Ṣalat al-Farḍiyya* (*The Golden Key of the Obligatory Prayers*), 1911.

3) *al-Zahra al-Qudsiyya fi al-Taʿlīm al-Masīḥī* (*The Divine Flower of the Christian Catechism*), 1912.

4) *Nuzhat al-Adhhān fi Tārīkh Dayr al-Zaʿfarān* (*The Excursion of the Mind in the History of Zaʿfarān*), 1912.

5) A translation of *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* ("The Training of Characters"), by Yaḥya Ibn ʿAdi, published in *Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*, 1928.

6) An edition of Bar Hebraeus's *Risāla fi ʿIlm al-Nafs al-Insāniyya* (*A Treatise on the Human Soul*), 1938.

7) A translation of Bar Hebraeus's *Kitāb Ḥadīth al-Ḥikma* (*The Speech of Wisdom*), 1940.

8) *al-Durar al-Nafisa fi Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh al-Kanīsa* (*The Precious Pearls of the Compendious History of the Church*), 1940.

9) *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* (*The Scattered Pearls*), 1943 [this book].

10) *al-Alfāẓ al-Suryāniyya fi al-Maʿājim al-ʿArabiyya* (*The Syriac Words in the Arabic Lexica*), 1951.

11) *Qīthār al-Qulub* (*The Harp of the Hearts*), a volume of collected poems, published in 1954.

Patriarch Barṣoum produced many other works, which have never been published. His Syriac-Arabic lexicon and his compendium of church history in the 20th century are written in both Syriac and Arabic. His history of Tur ʿAbdin, in Syriac, has been translated into Arabic by Bishop Bahnam. In Arabic, he also wrote a history of the Patriarchs of Antioch and the famous men of the Syrian Church, a history of Syrian dioceses, an index of Syriac manuscripts and translations of ten liturgies of the Syrian Church. Also, he translated into Arabic the second part of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Bar Hebraeus in 1909 when he was a monk at the Monastery of Zaʿfaran. The unique copy of this translation is now in the possession of this translator. *Al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* was not, then, the solitary work of an unlearned eastern Patriarch, but

part of the considerable output of a man thoroughly conversant with his subject.

What purpose did Barṣoum have in writing this book? We may begin to answer this question by considering its title. The French title, *Histoire des Sciences et de la Litterature Syriaque*, misleadingly suggests that the book resembles the Western studies of Syriac literature. We should prefer the Arabic title, *Kitāb al-Lu'lu' al-Manthūr fī Tārīkh al-ʿUlūm wal-Ādāb al-Suryāniyya* (*The Scattered Pearls of the History of Syriac Sciences and Literature*), which implies metaphorically that the work aims to present information that lies outside the scope of Western studies. The *Introduction*, written not only in Arabic but also in French and Syriac, indicates more exactly the nature of the work. Barṣoum states that he hopes to fill the existing gaps in the knowledge of Syriac literature and to pay tribute to the language of his church. He notes that at the beginning of the twentieth century, there commenced a revival of interest in the history of science and literature, but adds that "Aramaean science and literature" have received insufficient treatment from Western writers. Duval, Wright, Baumstark and Chabot, he says, have devoted their attention to what they recognize as "science and literature" in the general sense (but, it is implied, that they have passed over the extensive body of sacred literature in Syriac). Also, Barṣoum notes, of these writers only Baumstark gives any consideration to Syriac literature after the end of the thirteenth century. Barṣoum proposes to treat here several subjects omitted by earlier writers, including calligraphy, versification, the rites of the church, geographical sketches of Syrian cities, historical documents, the history of Syriac literature since 1290 and works and manuscripts previously unknown. In another chapter he summarizes the works of those Orientalists who have preserved Syrian culture and criticizes writers who have sought to lessen the influence of the Syrians' knowledge.

The immediate audience for which Barṣoum writes includes two groups: historiographers and philologists seeking further knowledge of Syriac literature and the faithful members of the Syrian Church, whose national feeling he hopes "may be reinvigorated in their ancestral spirit." Additional evidence of the restricted audience to which the book appeals lies in the assertion that it "treats only Western Syrian scholars and writers to the exclusion of the Eastern Syrians ('Nestorians') and what is known

of the meager culture of the Malkites and the Maronites." For Barṣoum, the prospect of a fruitful and beneficial "social result," the resurrection of the cultural heritage of the Syriac-speaking community, is full recompense for the difficulties and material expenses of preparing this work, which represents the "fruit of our untiring labor over a period covering nearly a third of a century of our episcopal and Patriarchal life."

Structurally, the book is divided into three distinct sections. The first, containing thirty-one chapters, concerns religious literature and other related writings extant in Syriac. After introductory chapters on the Syriac language and literature and expositions on Syrian centers of learning and libraries, Barṣoum treats in detail the Christian literature which has survived, including liturgies, the books of rituals used in the church and the lives of great men of the church. The second part presents biographies of 293 prominent Syrian writers; fifty-six of these have not been previously cited by Western writers. In the third part are appendices giving the names of Syrian calligraphers, meanings of foreign terms in the book, geographical names, lists of monasteries, an index of biographical references and lists of saints.

Judged in terms of its author's stated purpose, *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* must be considered highly successful. In fact, it was received enthusiastically not only by the members of the Syriac-speaking community for whom it was written, but also by Roman Catholic and Muslim scholars. Viscount Philip de Tarrazi, a Roman Catholic writer, offered this judgment:

> *Al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* is indeed a very valuable work which deserves respect and consideration. Its learned author has enumerated the compositions of the famous writers and scientists from ancient times down to the present, in greater detail than any author before his time. His opening chapters demonstrate his thorough knowledge of his subject and his precision… he has filled a great gap in the history of our literature and sciences, which have adorned the Christian East for many centuries…[1]

[1] Viscount Philip de Tarrazi, *Asdaq mā Kān ʿan Tārīkh Lubnān wa Ṣafḥa min Akhbār al-Suryān I* (Beirut, 1948), 432.

The widespread appeal of *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* to Eastern readers may readily be understood, for in approach and method it closely resembles other Eastern scholarly works on similar subjects. Especially, we may compare the work of Barṣoum with Jurji Zaydan's four-volume *Kitāb Tārīkh Adab al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya* (*The History of Arabic Literature*: Cairo, 1911) and K. L. Istarjian's *Tārīkh al-Thaqāfa wal-Adab al-Armanī* (*History of Armenian Culture and Literature*: Mosul, 1954). Zaydan, observing that no Eastern writer before him has undertaken such a task, seeks to relate the Arabs' literature to their political history; to depict the growth and decline of their sciences; to give biographies of the leading figures of Arabic sciences and literature, together with pertinent bibliographical material; and to categorize the books extant in Arabic according to their subjects. While Zaydan presents his material largely within a chronological framework, Barṣoum focuses on the types of Syriac literature, particularly compositions of religious character. Yet both works draw extensively on biographical material and both are primarily encyclopedic in nature, though Zaydan's is wider in scope. In general, Zaydan's straightforward style is more fluent than that of Barṣoum, whose syntax is sometimes involved and whose language is often metaphorical. Istarjian, in his history of Armenian literature, seems to have a purpose rather like that expressed by Barṣoum in the introduction to *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr*. Like Barṣoum, Istarjian is intensely proud of the cultural traditions of his people. The periods which the two men cover are nearly identical, but while Barṣoum limits his discussion to religious literature, Istarjian also deals with secular literature, approaching his subject through a consideration of literary genres. Istarjian too, however, is concerned primarily with presenting biographical material and his work, like *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr*, is factual rather than analytical.

Thus, the work of Patriarch Barṣoum is wholly consistent with the prevailing tradition of eastern scholarship. This is not to say, however, that eastern scholars concern themselves solely with the accumulation of factual evidence. Indeed, an excellent contemporary work by Anis al-Maqdisi, *al-Ittijāhāt al-Adabiyya fī al-ʿĀlam al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth* (*Literary Trends in the Modern Arab World*: Beirut, 1963), shows their growing interest in interpretive literary scholarship. Al-Maqdisi discusses the Arabic literature of the

twentieth century not in terms of its types, but in terms of its political, social and aesthetic significance.

From a Western viewpoint, it may be argued that Barṣoum writes in an unscholarly manner. Perhaps we can more readily comprehend the merits and defects of his work by comparing it with that of Rubens Duval, *La Litterature Syriaque*. Duval provides a historical account of the origins, development and decline of Syriac literature and adds brief biographical sketches of the leading Syrian writers. He takes his account only to the end of the thirteenth century, while Barṣoum offers much information on the writers from that time to the present. Duval, by adopting a chronological approach and by considering within the scope of his work the literary activity of both Eastern and Western Syrians, succeeds more fully in placing Syriac literature in its historical context. Neither writer attempts genuine criticism of Syriac literature; Duval turns his attention to its subjects and external forms, while Barṣoum enumerates but does not evaluate the works of Syrian writers. Finally, we may note, Duval quotes at length, but carefully, from the work of earlier scholars; Barṣoum too frequently presents evidence without identifying its source.

Thus, it is clear that the Western reader must accept *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* on its own terms, as the work of an Eastern scholar writing for an Eastern audience. He must also bear in mind that Barṣoum is the Patriarch of Antioch, the head of the Syrian Church and that his dominant attitude is one of pride in the literary achievements of the church fathers; indeed, this must be his attitude if he is to fulfill his purpose. To be sure, this pride often leads to undue exaggeration, particularly of the antiquity of the Syrians' language and the greatness of their literature. Barṣoum does not document convincingly his identification of Syriac with Aramaic, nor does he furnish sufficient proof that Christ and the Apostles spoke Syriac. His dogmatic assertion that Syriac literature rivals that of the Greeks seems all the more unpalatable because it is made without reference to any clear standard of judgment. One finds it difficult to accept the statement that the Syriac books now extant are the oldest in the world and impossible to believe that the library of the monastery of the Syrians in Egypt is the most ancient in the world. In other instances, Barṣoum gives us good reason to call into question his reliability both as a scholar and as a judge of literature. His declaration that the Pshiṭto was produced by

Christianized Jews in the first century, for example, may be sound, but surely needs substantiation. In his discussion of early Syriac literature, he quite erroneously assigns the composition of the Book of Tobit to the fifth century B.C. and again offers no evidence to support his contention. He praises St. Ephraim at the expense of other important writers such as Bar Daysan and Aphrahat. His treatment of the main themes of Syriac poetry is somewhat marred by his vague definition of satire. Finally, by centering his discussion largely upon the Christian literature which the Syrians produced, Barṣoum minimizes the importance of their role as translators.

Despite these faults, the work of Patriarch Barṣoum has significant value for students of Syriac literature. Unlike his Western predecessors, he does not depend heavily on the work of Assemani, but draws much information from the Syriac manuscripts surviving in churches and monasteries throughout the Middle East and from other original sources. The wider range of first-hand material available to Barṣoum generally does not lead him to conclusions at odds with those drawn by Western scholars, but frequently enriches his presentation of factual information. Wright, for example, in his biographical sketch of Bar Hebraeus, cites only the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* and Bar Hebraeus' own writings; Barṣoum furnishes additional evidence from the metrical biography of Bar Hebraeus and his brother, by Gabriel of Barṭelli.

The chief significance of *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr*, however, lies not in its additions to our knowledge concerning major figures in Syriac literature, but in its treatment of topics which Western writers have not considered. Barṣoum has given us here a thorough and illuminating exposition of the art of calligraphy. His discussion of the rites of the church takes us into an area that has not been explored in other studies of Syriac literature. The consideration of the various types of church music gives us an all too brief insight into what may quite properly be regarded as one of the highest forms of literary expression sought by the Syrians. This part of the work is clearly derived in part from ancient sources, about which Barṣoum is unfortunately not explicit. The informative discussion of Syriac liturgies appears to be original rather than derivative; Barṣoum indicates in this section that he has read both Renaudot and Michael the Great, but because of his life in the church he is thoroughly familiar with the practice of the liturgy and in fact has

even read seventy-four of these liturgies himself. His catalogue of liturgies is far more extensive than any compiled by Western scholars; to Philoxenus of Mabug, for example, he attributes certainly two liturgies and tentatively another, whereas Wright[1] cites only one and that on the authority of Renaudot and Assemani.

The second part of the book, comprising biographies of Syrian writers, should be of great historical and literary importance to both general readers and Syrian scholars. Many of these biographies, particularly those covering the period after the tenth century, are little known to Western scholars and even those known to scholars have not been put in proper historical perspective. These biographies contain much indispensable information for writers concerned with the history of the Syrian Church during this period.

Because of his ecclesiastical position, the author had exceptional opportunities to gather important and hitherto little known information for these biographies from various Syriac prayer books, lectionaries, liturgical books and Gospels in Syrian churches throughout the East, particularly in Tur ʿAbdin. He was also able to discover manuscripts unknown to other Orientalists, who were compelled to rely on those available in Western libraries. In 1927, for example, F. S. Marsh translated and published *The Book of the Holy Hierothios* from three manuscripts, two in the British Museum and one in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. But he was unaware of another copy in the Monastery of Zaʿfaran, MS. 213, which Barṣoum tells us, includes Patriarch Theodosius' detailed commentary on the text.

Moreover, Barṣoum's profound knowledge of and feeling for the Syriac language placed him in a supreme position to judge the lapses and prejudicial observations of some Orientalists against the Syrian Church and its learned men. Yet he freely gave his opinions and judgments regarding Syriac literature and sciences to scholars who sought them and he must be commended for the invaluable assistance he rendered many Western Syriacists, among them J. B. Chabot, in locating, photographing and providing Syriac texts of manuscripts.

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[1] William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London, 1894; Piscataway, 2002), 74, where the author mentions an anaphora by Philoxenus of Mabug.

The reader's attention should be drawn to some editorial revisions and reorganizations made in the original text. The errata which the author appended at the end of Part One have been corrected in the translation. The section on the Diatessaron has been moved from the end of the book to its proper place after Chapter Ten (but not given a chapter number to maintain the numbering of chapters between the original text and the translation). Similarly the biography of Dionysius Ṣalība, bishop of Claudia, has been moved to its proper place in Part Two and marked with '*'. This translator has deleted names of Orientalists at the end of Section One of the Epilogue, as these have no significance to the text, but has indicated their position in the text. Likewise, the list of foreign words and usages comprising Section Four of the original Epilogue has been deleted, because these terms have been translated and explained as they occurred throughout the text. In the last Section of the Epilogue (now Section Four), this editor has placed in separate lists geographical names, followed by the names of monasteries; in the original text these were commingled in a single list.

This Second Revised Edition differs in several respects from the paperback First Edition issued earlier by Passeggiata Press in 2000. Here, the transcription system has been thoroughly revised to reflect the following guidelines: A simple system has been adopted in order not to clutter proper nouns with many diacritics (e.g., *sedro*, not *sedrô*). Well known proper nouns are given minimal or no diacritics (e.g., Tur ʿAbdin, not Ṭūr ʿAbdīn), but less familiar ones a fuller treatment (e.g., Salṭ, not Salt; Beth Bātīn, not Beth Batin). When an ambiguity might arise, especially in the case of Arabic names, enough diacritics are given to disambiguate (e.g., Sālim or Salīm, not Salim). Further, Syriac terms appear in their Syriac, not original Arabic, form (e.g., *memro*, not *maymar*). Plurals of Syriac terms take the English plural mark, -s (e.g., *sedros*, not *sedre*), with the exception of a few terms whose plurals are now standards (e.g., *memre*). English forms have been used, whenever possible, for names, with the exception of modern personalities (e.g., John Bar Wahbun, but Yuḥanon Dolabani). Attributes of place to designate people have been replaced by the full name (e.g., Daniel of Ṣalaḥ, not the Ṣalaḥite). Bar/bar and Ibn/ibn are used interchangeably.

The editorial changes of the Second Revised Edition were kindly prepared by Dr. George A. Kiraz.[1]

The reader should be informed that the manuscripts cited by Barṣoum as MSS. Boston are now at the Houghton Library of Harvard University. Similarly, the MSS. cited as being in the British Museum are now in the British Library. The reader should also note that when the author refers to manuscripts deposited at "Our Library," he means the Patriarchal Library, which in his lifetime was located at Ḥomṣ but is now at Damascus, the seat of the present Patriarch. Finally, in the biographical section, some of the dates cited by the author after the names of Syrian learned men signify not the year of their death, but some outstanding deed by the individual mentioned, or perhaps merely the fact that he was still living in that year.

The late Mar Philoxenus Yuḥanon Dolabani, bishop of Mardin and its environs (d. November 2, 1969), published a Syriac translation of *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* (Qamishli, Syria: 1967). To this translation, Bishop Dolabani added a few new biographies and he included new information in some of the biographies written by Barṣoum. But there is little in Bishop Dolabani's translation that merits inclusion here.

Western writers seem accustomed to remark disparagingly that the Syrians devoted themselves largely to the writing of Christian literature and to pass over this literature rather quickly; as a consequence, their view of Syriac literature is incomplete. Yet it is equally true that *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr*, on account of its preoccupation with the Christian writings, gives an inaccurate view of the whole of Syriac literature. Those who wish general knowledge of the Syriac language and literature will no doubt profit most from the treatments of these subjects by Duval and Baumstark. Those who seek more detailed information will find the work of Patriarch Barṣoum of immeasurable importance.

The book should be of great interest to students of Syriac literature and of common readers interested in the history of the Syrian Church and its religious and literary traditions. Furthermore, it contains information about the interaction of the early Arab

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[1] Kiraz would like to thank the assistance of Dr. Thomas Joseph of Syriac Orthodox Resources in copy editing and proofing the penultimate version.

Muslims with their subjects the Syrian Christians and the role these Syrians played in transmitting Greek philosophy to the Arabs. Of great significance to the students of peripatetic philosophy is the importance the Syrians placed on the works of Aristotle. Indeed, without Syrian translators the Muslims would not have known Aristotle whom they reverently described as the First Master.

The present work would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance of my colleague and friend Professor George Welch, Jr., in correcting the manuscript and offering many suggestions concerning Latin and Greek terms used in the text and to the late eminent Orientalist, Professor D. M. Dunlop (d. 1987) of Columbia University, for reading the first part of the book, which was presented to him as part of the editor's doctoral dissertation. I would like also to thank Abd al-Ahad Hannawi for typing the final copy of the manuscript and John Eulaiano, Inter-Library Loan Coordinator of the Library of Gannon University, for his indefatigable effort and patience in locating the names of Western writers and the titles of their works on Syriac literature. I should mention with gratitude the effort and patience of my late sister Fadila Moosa, a grammarian and philologist, who helped in explaining the intrinsic meaning of many involved Arabic passages in the original text. The editor also appreciates the great interest of Don Herdeck in this book and in producing it in its final form. He also commends Dr. Admer Gouryh for his incentive in pressing forward the publication of this book and Hanna Isa for his assistance. Finally, the editor would like to thank the dignitaries and foundations for their support. Of these it is worthy to mention Archbishop Mar Cyril Aphrem Karim, head of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Eastern United States, The American Foundation for Syriac Studies, Samir, Lyla and Gabriel Shirazi of the Shirazi Foundation, Archbishop Yeshu Samuel Trust Fund, The Very Rev. Numan Aydin, Mr. Sulayman Abd al-Nur, Mr. Said Samuel and the editor's sister Adeeba Moosa.

Last but not least, the translator is indebted to his wife for her exemplary patience and understanding during the whole process of translating and preparing this book for the press.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Praise be to God, who has adorned the intellect of man with the crown of knowledge and embellished his speech with the charm of eloquence. The dawn of our epoch was ushered by the appearance of interesting works dealing with the history of sciences and literatures in various languages. The field of knowledge extended far and wide before the knights (stalwart champions) of eloquence, who went forth on their valiant adventures, each setting his eyes upon his particular goal. While some achieved their objective, others continued the search. Thus, they helped to reawaken the spirits and rouse the minds from the state of slumber and lethargy that had enveloped them for far too long a time. Presently, the noble souls are eagerly seeking the pure springs of knowledge and the luminous minds are settling with determination for the rich realms of literature.

Since Western scholars have drawn only an incomplete picture of Syriac Sciences and Literature, these seemed, by the very nature of their (sad) state, to be calling for a fair historical exposition, in the Arabic language, that would give them the publicity they deserved in the Eastern world and reveal their merits to all those endowed with sound reason and understanding. Therefore, we undertook to compile this detailed work, which covers eighteen centuries of the history of Syriac Sciences and Literature. It took more than thirty years to carry out the extensive research needed for this study; the necessary material was sought in the most likely and unlikely sources, the bulk of them being manuscripts scattered by the vicissitudes of fate all over the world (in the four corners of the world) and, apart from scanty references to them in historical works, all but neglected by scholars and compilers.

If we leave aside the biographies of thirty famous scholars and prominent ascetics, we find that the Syrians, unlike the Arabs, left no work dealing with the history of their learned men either in outline or in detail. During the period in question, all the time we could spare from our episcopal and Patriarchal work was devoted to this task, until God Almighty (may He be exalted) helped us achieve this task.

We were undeterred by the great pains and the assiduous efforts we had to exert by day and by night, or by the substantial

sums of money we voluntarily contributed for this purpose. Nay, all this was a cause of pleasure and delight. We were only trying to give to worthy ancestors who had crowned our nation and our language with laurels of splendor their due; who had left for us, both in the East and West, an immortal name and a noble glory; and who had enriched our minds with true knowledge, thereby bestowing upon us the gift of fluent speech and clear expression. Meanwhile, we propose to spread out before the scholars and students of the East and West a (sumptuous) table on which we hope they will find what should delight the heart and give satisfaction to the mind. We also hope that this work will help to fill a gap in the history of an (important) Semitic language that has long clothed the Christian East with a beautiful garment, rendering to it such services as had been gratefully recognized by all fair-minded scholars, who well know that its sister languages vainly seek to (rival) the sweetness of its fruits.

To accomplish our task, we have had to make extensive travels. In addition to Mosul and its surrounding villages, we have visited the Monastery of St. Matthew; Jazirat Ibn ʿUmar; Tur ʿAbdin (with its forty five localities rich in Syriac lore, especially Basibrina, Mardin and its villages, the Zaʿfaran Monastery, Diyarbakir and its villages and Wayranshahr; Edessa; Aleppo, Ḥamā, Ḥomṣ and their villages; Damascus and Beirut; as well as the Monastery of St. Mark and the Armenian and Greek Monasteries in Jerusalem. We have also made various trips to Egypt and Constantinople, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Paris, Florence, Rome, Berlin, New York and Boston.

We have consulted several manuscripts found in private collections and, for a period of time, worked on compiling extensive catalogues of our more famous Syriac libraries. As for (the collections of) the Monastery of St. Quryaqos, Beshayriyya, Kharput, Ḥiṣn Manṣur, Swayrik, Seʿert, Sharwan, Gharzan, Mount Sinai and the Library of the Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo, we were helped to have access to them through the good offices of certain high-minded clerics, to all of whom we now express our deepest gratitude. We have also consulted the printed catalogues of Eastern and Western Syriac libraries.

Apart from the Holy Scriptures, we have examined some two hundred different volumes, covering a wide range of arts and sciences. Thus, no work is described or criticized here without

having been the subject of the closest scrutiny, with the exception of a few rare instances. In fact, we have had access to all the known locations of Syriac documents.

Among other works, we have consulted the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* of Assemani, the four histories–some fairly comprehensive, some brief–of William Wright (in English), Rubens Duval (in French), A. Baumstark (in German) and J. B. Chabot (1894-1938) (in French). While the best of these works is Duval's, Baumstark's is more thorough and richer in reference material. The main objective of these authors is to acquaint the community of Orientalists with the source-references of Syriac literature which, according to their conception, includes sciences and literature in general. They are less adequate in their description and critique of the creativity of the Syriac intellect. Besides, they all carry their studies, which cover both the Western and Eastern (Schools) of Syriac Literature, no further than the thirteenth century, with the exception of Baumstark, who makes a few references to more modern writers as well as to a number of Malkite and Maronite manuscripts.

The present work is confined to discussing our Western Syrian men of letters and scholars, to the exclusion of the Eastern (followers of the Eastern rite, i.e., the Nestorians) and the meager literary output of the Malkites and Maronites.

You will find in this book some of the subjects and studies overlooked by the above-mentioned historians of literature, including calligraphy, verse and ecclesiastical rites with all their characteristic diversity and complexity. It reviews the history of literature from 1290 until the present time and gives brief geographical accounts of all the localities cited, as well as precise historical information on seventy-two monasteries. In addition, it contains lists of schools, ancient Syriac libraries (book collections), physicians, authors of liturgies and *sedros* (*ḥusoyos*), calligraphers, as well as a number of lost (unknown) manuscripts and various useful items of historical information.

An attempt is made to rectify a number of errors thoughtlessly copied from each other by contemporary writers, while making sure to remain throughout, within the strict bounds of judicious criticism.

In a separate chapter, the reader will find a summary of the work done by distinguished orientalists who have rendered valuable

services to Syriac Studies. Some of them, however, are taken to task for a pitiful lack of moderation and propagandistic prejudices contrary to the scientific spirit and the worth of scientific achievement.

The book is published under the title, *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr fī Tārīkh al-ʿUlūm wal-Ādāb al-Suryāniyya*. May it find acceptance in the eyes of God Almighty as a service to science and to the seekers of knowledge; surely God is a sufficient Guide and Helper.

At our Patriarchate in Ḥomṣ, Syria.
14 February, 1943, the 11th year of our Patriarchate and the anniversary of our Episcopal Silver Jubilee.

AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

To my venerable mother Mrs. Susan ʿAbd al-Nūr
to whom I owe my good upbringing.
May God reward and sustain her!

TRANSLATOR'S DEDICATION

In loving memory of Bishop Gregorius Bulos Bahnam (d. 1969)
A luminary of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

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PART I

ON SYRIAC SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

CHAPTER ONE

THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE

The Aramaic (Syriac) language is one of the Semitic tongues in which parts of the Holy Bible, such as the prophecy of Daniel and the Gospel according to St. Matthew, were revealed.[1] Some scholars consider it the most ancient of the languages of the world; even the more moderate ones consider it one of the oldest.[2] The first established evidence of its ancient use is the passage in Genesis 37:47 about 1750 B.C.[3] The Syriac language consists of twenty-two letters, six of which have double sounds, hard and soft,[4] which according to our terminology, are identified by certain signs.

Syriac is a graceful and rich language. It is adequate for the expression of ideas and portrayal of feelings, besides the comprehension of all types of ancient knowledge. Syriac was the

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[1] The parts of the Old Testament written in Aramaic are Jeremiah 10:11, Ezra 4:6-7, 6:18 and 7:12, and Daniel 2:4. (tr.)

[2] See Abu al-Qāsim Saʿīd ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd al-Andalusi, *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*, Arabic, edited by Rev. L. Cheikho, S. J. (Beirut, 1912); Bar Hebraeus, *Tārikh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal.* (*Compendious History of Dynasties*), in Arabic, edited by Rev. A. Salhani (Beirut: 1890), 18. See also Bar , *Makhthbonuth Zabne* (*Chronography*), edited and translated into English by Ernest A. Wallis Budge I (Oxford, 1932), 8. (tr.)

[3] The Biblical quotation given here does not seem to be correct. The author must have had in mind the Aramaic words "Jegarsahdutha," the monument of covenant, Genesis 31:47. (tr.)

[4] The Syriac alphabet contains six letters each of which has two sounds, hard and soft. These letters are sometimes indicated by the mnemonic (b, g, d, k, f, t). The soft form may be an aspirated form and the hard one unaspirated. In the Nestorian or Eastern script, black dots are placed over the letter to indicate its hard form and under it to denote its soft form. The Western Syrians use a big red dot for the same. See Msgr. David, *Grammaire de la Langue Araméenne*, Arabic, (Mosul, 1896), 21. (tr.)

vernacular of the inhabitants of Iraq, the Jazira of Mesopotamia and Syria. It penetrated into inner Persia and spread among the peoples neighboring the Syrians.[1] For many years it remained the official language of the states which occupied the Near East. It also extended to Egypt, Asia Minor and northern Arabia,[2] and reached southern China and the Malabar coast in India, where it is still used. It was widely spoken until rivaled by Arabic at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century, at which time it retreated from the towns and found refuge in the villages and mountains. It was, nevertheless, still used by writers and scholars.

The homeland of classical Syriac included Edessa, Ḥarran, Ḥomṣ, Apamea and the rest of the country of al-Sham (Syria).[3] The Sabeans of Ḥarran used it in their writings until the end of the ninth century.[4] The language also remained in this high state in many parts of the Jazira and Armenia until the end of the thirteenth century and in some other places until the fifteenth century. This language may rightfully be considered superior to other languages of the world, as it was the spoken language of Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Apostles. It was the first language in which the Christian Church celebrated the liturgy. Furthermore, the Syrians had great excellence in translating Greek writings into Syriac and in turn into Arabic. It has also remained our ritual language to this day and, to a small extent, the means of communication among our clergy.

At the beginning of the sixth century A.D., Syriac was divided according to its pronunciation and script into two dialects, known as the Western and the Eastern "traditions". Each of these traditions was attributed to the homeland of the people who spoke it, i.e., Western for those who inhabited al-Sham [Syria] and Eastern for those living in Mesopotamia, Iraq and Azerbayjan.

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[1] J. B. Chabot in his treatise *Les Langues et les Littératures Araméennes* (Paris: 1910), maintains that Aramaic spread from Nisibin to Raphia and from the shores of the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and was about to supersede all other Semitic languages spoken at that time. (tr.)

[2] M. Mapsero, *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, 6th ed., 775-776.

[3] Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*, 18; [Bar Hebraeus,] *The Metrical Grammar*; and Theodorus bar Kuni, *Scholion*, 1: 113.

[4] Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, 168.

However, the Syrian Orthodox community in Iraq is excluded from the Eastern part.

The most important writings in this language that reached us are the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Pshiṭto translation. If we accept some of the changes in the dialects into which it was subdivided, Syriac did not undergo change after it became settled. The Old Testament passages in this language and what remains of the poetry of the philosopher Wafā indicate that this language is the same that we use today. However, some of its terminology was forgotten through time and became unattractive to some, as observed by Anton of Takrit.[1] On the other hand, others were lost through negligence, but were preserved in Arabic, as has been asserted by Jacob of Barṭelli.[2]

Syriac had neither grammar nor philological books, because the native Syrians spoke it with instinctive eloquence as the Arabs spoke their tongue. The first grammatical rules for Syriac were set at the end of the seventh century, as shall be seen later.

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[1] *The Book of Rhetorics*, treatise 1, chapter 26.

[2] *The Dialogue*, treatise 4, question 12.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SYRIAC LITERATURE

In the beginning, the Syrian-Aramaeans had a refined language adorned with literature comprising both prose and poetry. They were also concerned with the sciences. However, nothing of their literary works has reached us except the book of Aḥiqar, the minister of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (681 B.C.). This book, to which many other tales were added later, contains counsel and wisdom.[1] It is presumed that the book of Aḥiqar was composed either at this time or about the fifth century B.C., when the book of Tobit was written.[2] A few lines of poetry by Wafā, the Aramaean philosopher and poet who lived long before the Christian era, also survived together with a few legends inscribed on the tombs of some of the Abgarite kings of Edessa. To these should be added the fine and edifying letter of the philosopher Mara Bar Seraphion to his son, written in the middle of the second century A.D. However, these surviving sources are too insignificant to be taken as a basis for evaluating pre-Christian Syriac literature.

The Syriac literature known to us, therefore, is of Christian and ecclesiastical origin. It is the intellectual product of Christian clerical authors and learned men. When embracing Christianity, our forefathers, inflamed by their ardent zeal for the new faith, burned

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[1] The most extensive treatment of the story of Aḥiqar was made by J. Rendel Harris in his introduction to *The Story of Ahiqar from the Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Old Turkish, Greek and Slavonic Versions* By F. C. Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris and Agnes Smith Lewis, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1913). For an Arabic translation of the original Aramaic text see Gregorios Bulos Bahnam, *Aḥiqār al-Ḥakīm* (Ahiqar the Sage), (Baghdad, 1976), published posthumously. (tr.)

[2] The date of composition of the book of Tobit is uncertain, but from internal evidence seems to be much later than that which Barṣoum assigns. (tr.)

all books and destroyed every trace of pagan scholarly works, lest they entice their posterity back into the snares of heathenism. When most of their progeny embraced Christianity in the first and second centuries, followed by the rest at the close of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth, they pursued the path of their forefathers in their love for learning. They mastered the art of literature and produced magnificent literary masterpieces.

The Syrian scholars exerted their efforts in translating, punctuating and commenting on the Holy Bible. They concentrated their attention on the philological sciences such as morphology, grammar, rhetoric, speech and poetry. They also pursued logic, philosophy, natural science, mathematics, astronomy, geodesy and medicine. They immersed themselves deeply in theoretical theology, ethics and ecclesiastical and civil jurisprudence. They dealt at great length with civil and religious history and church music and touched also upon geography and the art of storytelling. In general, they covered the commonly known fields of human learning without exception.

Among the Syrians flourished many savants and scholars who carried the torches of knowledge to the utmost parts of the Eastern world. They surpassed the learned men of most Christian nations in number as well as in output; their fame, as we shall see later, spread east and west. The Greek literary works, despite their abundance, excellence and precedence and despite their being a model for Syriac and Latin literature, nevertheless, taken as a whole, did not excel over Syriac literature in its entirety. Despite the disparity between the Coptic, Armenian, Christian-Arabic, Georgian and Abyssinian literatures, meticulous scholars are aware of the limitations and narrow scope of these literatures. If the Greek culture is considered philosophical and that of the Arabs rhetorical, then the culture of the Syrians is considered religious.

The characteristics of the Syriac literature, therefore, are Biblical, ritualistic, polemical, theological, historical and traditional. The Syrians' concern with producing translations and commentaries on the Scripture, as well as other related writings, speaks for their excellence in preserving and spreading the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, the books of religious services and prayers which they composed over many generations testify to their superior taste, high-mindedness and pre-eminence in the theological disputes which long endured among the Christian sects.

Their deep penetration into the secrets of Christianity yielded many theological and polemical works which reveal their literary ability. Their histories encompassed the episodes of Christianity and the life stories of saints and martyrs, as well as the most accurate historical documents of Asia in the time of the Romans, Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. When the fourth century swelled with the writings of the Christian scholars who wrote in Greek, the school of Edessa spared no effort in translating the best of these writings into its language. The School of Edessa also initiated the teaching of Greek and was followed by most of our well-known schools until the end of the twelfth century.

On the other hand, the Syrian scholars devoted their efforts to translating the books of philosophy and science first into Syriac and then into Arabic, thus becoming teachers of the Arabs.

In time, matters took a different course, however and the Greek philosophy was transmitted from the East to Europe through Arabic books of science whose influence began to appear in Spain in the Middle Ages.[1]

[1] What the Eastern Syrians translated from the Pahlavi was very little, such as *Kalila and Dimna* and the Pseudo-story of Alexander the Great. [The author must mean the translation of Pahlavi writings into Syriac and not into Arabic because *Kalila and Dimna* was translated into Arabic by ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. On the transmission of Arab sciences in Spain, see Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Sciences*, 2nd edition (New York, 1960). (tr.)]

CHAPTER THREE

CENTERS OF LEARNING

The luminaries of Syrian culture, both the ones of the first class and those of the second, shone in the long period between the fourth century and the end of the thirteenth. The centers of learning were on the whole theological, although some of them were distinguished for the teaching of philosophy and other sciences. The most famous of these schools were the following:

1. The theological school of Edessa, which most likely was established in the middle of the third century, but flourished and became very popular in 363 through the care of St. Ephraim the Syrian. It was closed down in 489 after it had survived for 126 years.[1]

2. The Monastery of Zuqnin, known as St. John's Monastery, was established in the fourth century near Diyarbakir. It became a center of learning in the middle of the same century and existed until the tenth century. It had skillful teachers on its staff.

3. Dayr al-ʿUmr, or Qarṭmin, properly known as the Monastery of St. Gabriel, in Tur ʿAbdin. It was established in 397 and became the goal of the seekers of knowledge and asceticism from the middle of the fifth century onwards. Scholars continued graduating from it until the eleventh or twelfth century.

4. The Monastery of Ousebuna in the province of Antioch.

5. The great Monastery of Talʿada, near Ousebuna. These two monasteries were established in the middle of the fourth century, when they became centers of learning. They achieved more fame, however, in the last decade of the seventh century, through the excellence of Jacob of Edessa. Benjamin, metropolitan of Edessa, also taught in Talʿada shortly before 837. Both monasteries were

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[1] The author does not seem to count the 126 years from the establishment of this school in the middle of the third century, but from 363 when it became famous. (tr.)

still populated in the middle, or possibly the end, of the tenth century.

6. The Monastery of Mar Zakka, near al-Raqqa (Callinicus), established in the fifth century. Teaching did not start there, however, until the beginning of the sixth century and it remained until the tenth century.

7. Qenneshrin (The Eagle's Nest) stands on the right bank of the Euphrates opposite what is now Jarabulus. Established around 530, it indulged more actively in learning than the rest of the monasteries and thus achieved wide fame. It remained the greatest school of theology and science until the beginning of the ninth century. Then, however, it suffered a period of decline, but was soon revived until the middle of the eleventh century and was probably maintained to the middle of the thirteenth.

8. The Gubba Baraya, between Aleppo and Samosata, which became known in the sixth century, but achieved broader fame in the ninth century.

9. The Monastery of St. Matthew, east of Mosul, built in the mountain of Alphaph (the thousands), established in the late fourth century. Teaching did not begin in it before the third decade of the seventh century and remained until the end of the thirteenth century.

10. Al-ʿAmud (the Pillar) Monastery, near Rish ʿAyna in al-Jazira, the center of study from the seventh to the ninth centuries.

11. The Monastery of Qarqafta (the Skull), between Rish ʿAyna and Ḥasaka near the village of Magdal, was famous for philological studies in the beginning of the ninth century.

12. The Monastery of Mar Ḥananya, properly known as Dayr al-Zaʿfaran, near Mardin. Built in the last decade of the ninth century, it became the center of learning for a long time. After a period of decline, teaching was resumed there in later times, though in a primitive method.

13. The Monastery of Mar Sergius, in the Qāḥil (barren) mountain between Sinjar and Balad. Learning is presumed to have begun in it in the eighth century; however, it became famous in the ninth century.

14. The Sacred Mountain of Edessa, which was crowded with monasteries from the fifth and sixth centuries onwards. Some of these monasteries existed as centers of learning up to the beginning of the thirteenth century.

15. The Monastery of Mar Barṣoum, near Melitene. Built in the middle of the fifth century, it was a center of learning from the ninth century to the middle of the fourteenth.

16. The Monastery of Mar John Qurdis, in the city of Dara, a great and well-known monastery. We have its history from 800 to 1002. Among its scholars was the Metropolitan Lazarus Bar Sobto.

17. The Monastery of Elijah Bar Jaji in the province of Melitene, which was established around 960 and became a center of studies.

18. Al-Bārid Monastery, in the province of Melitene and Anazete; built in 969, it became a center of learning until 1243. The Turkomans killed fifteen of its monks, most of whom were men of learning.

19. The Monastery of Sarjisiyya, in the same province, founded about 980, when it began to breathe the perfume of knowledge. This monastery and that of al-Bārid remained as centers of knowledge to the twelfth century.

20. The Cathedral of the city of Melitene, known as the Church of al-Sā'i, a center of religion and philological studies in the beginning of the eleventh century. Its importance declined at the end of the thirteenth century.

21. The Monastery of Mar Aaron al-Shaghr, in Qallisura, an ancient monastery, presumably established in the fifth century. It became a center of learning in the eleventh century; from it graduated Ignatius III, metropolitan of Melitene.

We have overlooked mentioning the Patriarchal and episcopal seats, in which great numbers of the clergy were educated.

CHAPTER FOUR

SYRIAC LIBRARIES

Following are the most famous Syrian libraries known to us:

1. The library of the Monastery of Qarṭmin. This library contained many books, to which Mar Simon d-beth Zayte (d. 734) added one hundred and eighty volumes.[1] Following his steps, his nephew David and then John, the metropolitan of Qarṭmin's Monastery (998-1034), as well as his nephew, the monk Emmanuel, adorned it with seventy volumes of parchments written in his own hand. In 1169, two monks, Gabriel Bar Baṭriq and his brother Elisha, together with Moses of Kafr Salṭ, restored two hundred and seventy volumes.[2]

2. The library of Zuqnin Monastery. This contained many MSS., as has been mentioned in the life story of Matthew the ascetic.

3. The library of the Church of Amid (Diyarbakir). Mar Mari III, metropolitan of Amid, collected significant volumes which were moved to Amid after his death in 529.[3]

4. The library of Tal'ada's Monastery. Some of its books are preserved in the British Museum numbering 740 books, including the selected hymns of Mar Isaac, transcribed about 570. The monks of this monastery took possession of the books of Jacob of Edessa after his death in 708.

5. The library of Mar David Monastery. We had two monasteries of this name, one situated south of Damascus near Buṣra, also called the Monastery of Ḥina, the second, in the city of Qenneshrin, mentioned in the second half of the sixth century. Both monasteries are mentioned in the *Syriac Documents*[4] (pp. 164,

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[1] The unpublished biography of Mar Simon d-beth Zayte.

[2] *The Book of Life* in Basibrina. See Chapter 15 on this topic.

[3] See his life-story in the *Biographies of the Eastern Ascetics*, by John of Ephesus, no. 35.

[4] The reference is to J. B. Chabot, *Documenta ad Oirgines Monophysitarum Illustranda*, (Paris, 1907-1933). (tr.)

171 and 440). The library in question belongs to one of them. Among its books, it contained the book of *Philalethes*, by St. Severus of Antioch, completed in the time of its abbot Daniel in the sixth or the seventh century. This work is preserved in the Vatican Library (MS. 139).

6. The library of St. John's Monastery in Beth Zaghba, mentioned three times in the *Syriac Documents* (pp. 163, 171 and 182) in the time of Paul the Abbot. Of its books, only an old copy of the New Testament, written in 586, survives, at the Bibliotheca Laurenziana.

7. The library of St. John of Nayrab, believed to be one of the monasteries near Aleppo. One of its volumes, in the British Museum (MS. 730), contains the letters and discourses of Mar Philoxenus of Mabug; their transcription was completed in 569.

8. The library of St. Moses in al-Nabak's mountain. British Museum MS. 585 contains the last volume of the writings of John Chrysostom, finished in the middle of the sixth century.

9. The library of Mar Daniel in Kfarbil, in the province of Antioch; the transcription of its works, done by a priest named Moses in 599, is preserved in the British Museum (MS. 71).

10. The library of Mar Quryaqos near Tell al-Maqlub. Of its manuscripts only three survived, two in the British Museum (MSS. 52 and 53), transcribed in 616 and 617 and the third in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, MS. 72, finished in 720.

11. The library of al-ʿAmud's Monastery, mentioned in 638 in the *Book of the Memre* of Mar Jacob of Sarug, in the time of Abbot Simon. Its contents survive in the Vatican (MS. 251).

12. The library of the Monastery of St. Matthew. Its manuscripts were increased in the seventh century, particularly the valuable ones which gained fame around the year 800. One of these manuscripts contained the Jacob of Edessa's *Hexameron*, copied in 822, now extant at the Chaldean library in Mosul, transferred from the library at Diyarbakir. In 1298, this library contained the complete writings of Bar Hebraeus, as is mentioned in the Berlin MS. 326. But it was pillaged by the Kurds in the middle of the fourteenth century. Only a portion of it remained in the middle of the sixteenth century and its contents were again scattered in 1845; after that date it possessed only about sixty manuscripts.

13. The library of the Monastery of the Syrians in Egypt. This monastery, which became widely famous in the seventh century,

harbored a library to which its abbot, Moses of Nisibin (907-944), added two hundred and fifty of the most valuable books and the rarest and oldest manuscripts after his trip from Egypt to Baghdad, which took six years and ended in 932. Among those who took care of the arrangements of this library and the binding of its books was the eminently learned monk Barṣoum of Mar'ash, some time after 1084. Barṣoum was still living as a priest in 1122 (cf. British Museum MS. 323, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. 27). I have read in some commentaries that fifteen camel-loads of books were found in this monastery after the pillage of Edessa, Amid, Melitene, and other cities. In 1624, the priest Thomas of Mardin counted the books of this Monastery, which amounted to four hundred and three volumes (cf. British Museum MS. 374). So this was the most famous of all the Syrian libraries, as well as the most ancient of the libraries of the world.[1] From the middle of the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, its books found their way into the libraries of the Vatican, Paris, Petersburg and especially London, which was enriched by these books and so vaunted its stock of Syriac manuscripts over that of the other libraries.[2] Also, there was a library of Syriac books in the Monastery of Anba Būla, mentioned after the time when Constantine I was the abbot of Dayr al-Suryan in the eleventh century (cf. book of Isaac of Nineveh, British Museum MS. 695).

14. The library of the Monastery of Ouspholis in Rish 'Ayna, to which Constantine, the bishop of this monastery, as well as the city of Mardin, donated books in the year 724 (British Museum MS. 24).

15. The library of the Monastery of Mar Barṣoum, collected after the monastery became a patriarchal seat at the end of the eighth century. Athanasius VI (1129), a collector of the most valuable books, used to carry with him loads of them wherever he traveled. Michael the Great adorned this library with his numerous and magnificent manuscripts. Further, Joseph of Amid,

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[1] Unfortunately, Barṣoum does not indicate the date at which this monastery and its library were established; in any case, they can hardly have antedated the libraries of ancient Egyptian monarchs. (tr.)

[2] For more information on how books were acquired from this library for the British Museum, see preface to William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts at the British Museum*, vol. 3 (London, 1872). (tr.)

metropolitan of Ḥomṣ, mentioned in the *Lives of Saints*, which he completed in 1196, that this library lacked nothing except this book (British Museum MS. 960).

16. The library of the Monastery of Atanos; this monastery was established by Athanasius al-Naʿʿal (the cobbler), metropolitan of Miyapharqin, near Tālbsam in the province of Rish ʿAyna in the middle of the eighth century. This monastery produced fifteen bishops from 740 to 1042. A certain Anastas has been mentioned as its librarian (British Museum MS. 943).

17. The library of the Monastery of St. John Qurdis, in the city of Dara. To this library, Lazarus, bishop of Baghdad, donated the book attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, shortly after the year 824 (British Museum MS. 625).

18. The library of Mar Ḥananya (known as Dayr al-Zaʿfaran) Monastery, situated east of Mardin. Its books were collected by Mar Ḥananya, metropolitan of Mardin, in the last decade of the eighth century. It was renewed and reorganized by John, bishop of Mardin (d. 1165). After the monastery became a patriarchal seat, its books were increased to over three hundred in number.

19. The library of the Monastery of Bar Jaji. Since its establishment the Anba John, disciple of Marun, undertook to have many of its books transcribed by skillful scribes and monks and thus enriched this library from 990 onwards.

20. The library of the Cathedral of Melitene. To this library John X Bar Shushan (d. 1072) added his valuable manuscripts.

21. The library of St. Mark's Monastery, known as Dayr al-Suryan, in Jerusalem. Its books were collected at the end of the fifteenth century. A good number of them are remnants of the library of the Monastery of Magdalene (which existed from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries). The number of its Syriac manuscripts was increased to more than three hundred and fifty volumes.

22. The library of Qanqart's Monastery, near Diyarbakir, collected in the second half of the twelfth century. Its books were increased by John, bishop of Amid in 1203 (cf. The Churches of Basibrina and St. Thomas in Mosul).

23. The library of the Church of the Two Apostles in Edessa was collected in later times and contained a group of the books which had belonged to the Monastery of Mar Abḥai in Karkar,

after it was deserted. These books, which are presently at Aleppo, number about one hundred and thirty.

CHAPTER FIVE

SYRIAC CALLIGRAPHY

Since the art of calligraphy is obviously connected with the language and literature, we have chosen to devote an earlier chapter to this question, which has been neglected by historians. Some scholars are of the opinion that Syriac writing antedates that of the other peoples of the world and that the Syrians taught mankind the early method of writing, from which the Phoenicians and other nations borrowed their scripts. Although we cannot positively assert such a belief, because of the seriousness of the question and the conflicting arguments of scholars and because it is impossible to present a conclusive discussion, we can, however, briefly state that our Syriac script is one of the most ancient scripts. The form of the characters of our Syriac script has changed throughout the ages and there are no vestiges of its existence in the pre-Christian era, except a few insignificant lines found inscribed on stones in Edessa and other places. They were published separately by J. B. Chabot and Henri Pognon.[1]

In the Christian era, we have the Estrangelo, which is the best and noblest of the Syriac scripts. Also called the "open" or the "heavy" or the "Edessene", it was invented by Paul Bar ʿArqa or ʿAnqa of Edessa at the beginning of the third century, as shall be seen later. The Estrangelo is considered the source of the Arabic Kufi script. Most of our oldest manuscripts surviving today are written in this script, which was in continuous use until the fourteenth century.

The second type is the Western Syriac script, devised in the ninth century and mixed with Estrangelo for the simplicity of its use. The Syrians kept modifying it until it became distinct from the Estrangelo during the twelfth century. I believe that it is the same script, called "Serto," which was used in writing prose and is still

[1] See Henri Pognon, *Inscriptions Semitiques de la Syrie*. (Paris, 1908). (tr.)

used for this purpose, while the Estrangelo was strictly used for decorating the title heads.[1]

Among us there flourished a great number of calligraphers who perfected and beautified their art. All of them were monks, hermits or clerics whose works were an adornment of knowledge. They undertook the copying of the most voluminous works with great patience and perpetuated many types of sciences and arts in their works.

To be sure, ancient Syriac books preserved today in the libraries of the Orient and Europe are the oldest books in the world.[2] We have personally seen and studied most of them. However, the quantity which has reached us is very little, in comparison with the great number that has been lost through time. Even among these surviving works, we have found a considerable number either mutilated or lacking the name of the scribe. We have counted nearly one hundred and thirty skilled scribes from 462 to 1264 who used three types of Estrangelo, the thick, the medium and the fine, with slight difference in beauty among them. In many manuscripts which they copied, there is found a creative embellishment and

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[1] Among the Syriac scripts which had been specifically used in some countries are the following: 1) The *Escholitha*, which is the light script of books and composition. It is also called the circular. Its counterpart is the script of the Warrāqīn (copyists), according to Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 987), *al-Fihrist*, p. 18. 2) The fine. 3) The disjoined. 4) The Ukary or Ughary, used by Zebīna the monk in 1227, as mentioned in a historical treatise (preserved in our library) written in the fourteenth century. 5) The doubled, or dual. 6) The Jamary, attributed to the Jamrā Monastery, built by a Nestorian ascetic about the year 670. It is mentioned in the *Book of Chastity* by Yesho'dnaḥ of Baṣra, ed. Bedjan, p. 506. See also the anonymous history which has been discovered in Se'ert, pp. 550, 586 and 587. These scripts have been mentioned in a book preserved in the library of the Chaldean Patriarchate in Mosul (No. 111). Both Chaldean and Nestorian communities have today a special script known as the Eastern script. The Greek Malkites in Syria and Palestine had a script distinct from both the Western and Eastern scripts, but close to the Estrangelo. It has been out of use for three centuries, since they translated their ritual books into Arabic and renounced Syriac.

[2] One can accept this statement only with reservations, for the earlier Roman codices extant in Martial's time may likewise be classified as "books." (tr.)

elegance and an overwhelming degree of perfection and uniformity. They usually wrote on special glossy parchments and seldom on thick paper, whose manufacture began in Baghdad at the end of the eighth century, shortly after the establishment of this city; this process was introduced from China and spread to other countries. The last known manufacturing of paper was in Damascus in the middle of the sixteenth century.[1]

From these calligraphers we exclude a group mentioned in some of the biographies of the saints of Tur ʿAbdin, none of whose works were found, due to the lapse of time, the successive tribulations which afflicted their countries and catastrophes and destructive invasions. These scribes are Samuel and Jonathan, the ascetics, who flourished in the first quarter of the fifth century;[2] Daniel the Kundayraybi, the chief copyist of Tur ʿAbdin and his pupils in the middle of the ninth century; and a few others.

In his *Ecclesiastical History*, the most learned Bar Hebraeus stated that "John of Basibrina, metropolitan of the Monastery of Qarṭmin (998-1034), restored the use of the Estrangelo script in Tur ʿAbdin and its neighborhood almost a hundred years after the destruction of the monastery. He taught this art to his nephews, the monks Emmanuel, Peter and Yaʿīsh, after he had learned it himself by careful study of books. The first of them, the deacon-monk Emmanuel, copied seventy volumes of both Testaments according to the Pshiṭto, the Syro-Hexapla and the Harklean versions. He also transcribed homilies in three columns and thus adorned the monastery of Qarṭmin with books which have no equal in the world."[3] A copy of one of the Gospels belonging to the Patriarchal seat is preserved at our St. Mark's library in Jerusalem, under number 1.

Also famous in the art of calligraphy was Patriarch John XII, known as Yeshuʿ the scribe (d. 1220), who, during his monastic life,

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[1] According to another theory, paper was manufactured under the Umayyads. See *al-Fihrist*, p. 32.

[2] John of Ephesus, *Biographies of Eastern Saints*, ed. Land in *Anecdota Syriaca*, 2: 209-210. [Also translated into Latin by Van Douwen and Land, *Commentarii de beatis Orientalibus et Historiae eccles. fragmenta*, Amsterdam: 1889. (tr.)]

[3] Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1: 417. [About the translation and publication of this book see Chapter 21 on *Books of General History*. (tr.)]

transcribed about eighteen books; one of these was a Gospel, decorated with aqua aurum, which had been in the Monastery of the Cross. I have seen three copies of the Gospels in Aleppo and in Paris (MS. 40). Of the more than fourteen *Phanqithos* (service books of prayer) transcribed by the monk-priest Zebina of Shabaldīn (d. 1227), only three survived at our Church of Diyarbakir. Also, an illuminated Bible is found in the Jerusalem library[1] (MS. 28) and another copy of the Bible in Paris, transcribed by the monk-priest Bacchus of Beth Khudayda al-Ṭawwaf ("wanderer"), 1213-1257. Further, Patriarch Michael the Great (d. 1199) had beautifully transcribed a valuable copy of the Bible, adorned each page with gold and silver and bound it with a silver cover. In the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, MSS. 113 and 167 are also in Michael's own handwriting.

John Yeshuʿ, metropolitan of Raʿbān (1210), whose handwriting was extremely good, transcribed many books, of which a Bible is found at St. Thomas Catholic Church in Mosul. Also, Dioscorus Theodorus Bar Basil, metropolitan of Ḥiṣn Ziyad (d. 1273), transcribed books which are now preserved at the libraries of al-Zaʿfaran Monastery, Diyarbakir and Kharput. The deacon ʿAbd Allah of Barṭelli transcribed three books which are in the libraries of Jerusalem, Aleppo and al-Sharfeh.[2]

Bar Hebraeus relates that "an Edessan monk-priest named Kasrun retreated to the town of Maragha, in Persia, together with people from al-Sham (Syria), who had been transported there by the Persians. He adorned our church at Maragha with books in his own handwriting, which remain preserved until this time in Nineveh.[3] He was a skillful calligrapher who spent most of his days at St. Bahnam's Monastery. He died in 1139."[4] The surviving work in his handwriting is the Book of Psalms in the Estrangelo and the Western script, copied according to the Pshiṭto version and the variant readings of the Syro-Hexapla, with his commentaries on it,

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[1] The library of the Syrian Monastery of St. Mark. (tr.)

[2] A monastery in Lebanon which belongs to the Roman Catholic Syrians (tr.)

[3] By Nineveh, Bar Hebraeus does not mean the ancient capital of the Assyrians, but the diocese of Nineveh, which since the sixth century, covered the present city of Mosul and its environs. (tr.)

[4] Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2: 329.

which he completed at Maragha in 1127. This volume is preserved at the Chaldean Patriarchate in Mosul, under No. 4.

Distinguished for their art of engraving and decorating, apart from their calligraphy, were the deacon Joseph of Melitene (d. 997), the monk Yaʿīsh of Basibrina (formerly mentioned), the monk-priest Peter, son of the deacon Abu al-Faraj Saba of Basibrina, the monk-priest Sahdo Thomas of Tur ʿAbdin (1241), the monk Mubarak Bar David of Barṭelli (1239), the monk-priest Bacchus of Beth Khudayda (formerly mentioned), the monk-priest Joseph of ʿUrnus (d. 1449) and the monk Daniel of Qusur (d. 1577). Of lesser taLent was Dioscorus, metropolitan of Ḥiṣn Ziyad.

From the thirteenth century until our time, about one hundred and seventy calligraphers improved the Western script and used three types of it, the thick, the medium and the fine. The latter is exceptionally elegant, especially the type known as the Karkarite, after the town or the citadel of Karkar, situated between Diyarkakir and Edessa and their neighboring villages. From 1577 to 1820 the calligraphers of these districts developed a fine script of extreme beauty and brilliant lines.

Of those who perfected the Western script, we would like to mention specifically the monk Yeshuʿ al-Shini of Bedlis (1298), the monk-priest Ṣaliba Bar Khayrun of Ḥaḥ (1340), the monk-priest Jacob of Manʿim (1404), the monk Joseph of the Nāṭif Monastery (1443), the Metropolitan Simon of ʿAynward (d. 1490), George Bar Qarman, metropolitan of Mardin (1504), the Metropolitan Sergius of Ḥaḥ (1508), the Patriarch Nuḥ the Lebanese (d. 1509), Moses ʿUbayd of Ṣadad, metropolitan of Ḥomṣ (d. 1510), the monk-priest Abraham Zunbur of Basibrina, who transcribed nearly twenty volumes (d. 1512), Joseph, metropolitan of Kafr Hawwār (1513), the Patriarch Jacob I (d. 1517), the Maphryono Sulayman of Mardin (d. 1518), the priest Simon of Ḥirrin (d. 1523), Yusuf the Iberian, metropolitan of Jerusalem (d. 1537), the Patriarch Pilate (d. 1597), the monk-priest Abraham Bar Ghazwi of Qusur (1607), Bahnam of Arbo, metropolitan of Jerusalem (d. 1614), the monk-priest ʿAbd al-ʿAzim of Klaybin (1612), the Metropolitan Dionysius ʿAbd al-Ḥayy of Mardin(1621), the monk-priest ʿAbd Allah al-Mashlul of Mardin (1621), the Metropolitan John of Beth Khudayda (d. 1625), the Maphryono Isaiah of Anḥil (d. 1635), the Maphryono Bahnam Bati (d. 1655), Aṣlan, metropolitan of Amid (d. 1741), the Metropolitan John Shahin of Amid (d. 1755),

Chorepiscopus Jacob of Quṭrubul (d. 1783), Elijah Shlaḥ of Mardin, metropolitan of Bushayriyya (d. 1805), the Metropolitan ʿAbd al-Nur of Arbo (d. 1841), Metropolitan Ṣaliba of Basibrina (d. 1885), George Kassab of Ṣadad, metropolitan of Jerusalem (d. 1896), the monk-priest Yeshuʿ of Manʿim (d. 1916) and the deacon Matthew Paul of Mosul. Deacon Matthew Paul transcribed more than forty volumes of different subjects, including commentaries on the Pentateuch, theology, ecclesiastical jurisprudence, history, literature and asceticism. They are preserved in different libraries. He is still living and has passed his eighty-sixth year of age.[1] Moreover, a number of our clerics still perfect Syriac calligraphy.

The first calligrapher known to have embellished the fine Karkarite script was Gregory John Najjar of Wank, metropolitan of Cappadocia and then Edessa (1577-1607). He transcribed about twenty volumes of different writings. He also transcribed with extreme precision several copies of the Gospels and the Psalms, in an extremely fine and compact handwriting, each copy not more than seven centimeters long. Three of these copies are preserved– one in the library of St. Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem, another in the Boston Library,[2] and the third in the possession of one of the priests in Mosul. From the artistic point of view, these manuscripts are considered a marvel.

Other calligraphers are Michael Barṣoum of ʿUrbish, metropolitan of Karkar (1590-1630), who transcribed the history of Michael the Great; his uncle, the monk Pilate Mukhtar (1584); the two monks Sahdo of Karkar (1599) and Micah of Wank (1606).

At the end of this book the reader will find a chronological catalogue of the names of these excellent men which were extracted from the invaluable manuscripts they copied. These manuscripts which survived destruction attest to their excellence. We have arranged them according to their dates of transcription beginning with the oldest dates.

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[1] Died February 27, 1947. (tr.)

[2] The translator labored long and hard to locate this MS. at the Boston Museum, but to no avail. Contacting the Boston Museum as well as the Public Library of Boston through a friend, he could find no trace of Syriac manuscripts. Finally, he discovered that this and many other Syriac manuscripts are preserved in the Houghton Library of Harvard University. (tr.)

CHAPTER SIX

MORPHOLOGY AND GRAMMAR

The Syrians mastered the speaking and writing of their language by instinct and by custom. They did not need rules to guide them into eloquence or protect them from error. They remained in this state for an exceedingly long time. But when they familiarized themselves with the principles of Greek grammar written by Dionysius of Corinth,[1] they translated it into their own language. According to Bar Zuʿbi,[2] the oldest Syriac grammar is attributed to Aḥudemeh, metropolitan of Takrit and all the East (d. 575), who based it on the principles of Greek grammar.

To Jacob of Edessa, however, belongs the credit for delineating the path of Syriac grammar and explaining its methods. Jacob wrote the first systematic book on grammar. Bar Hebraeus cited significant parts from it, which indicate the voluminousness of the original which has been lost to us. There remained only fragments of it, in which the author alluded to the defects of Syriac writing because of its concern with the consonants rather than vowels. And when the priest Paul of Antioch requested him to correct this faulty method, he answered that he had given some thought to this question. In fact, it had occurred to his predecessors, but their fear of the loss of these ancient books prevented them from attempting to do it. However, Jacob invented seven vowels to eliminate the deficiency. But the Syrians kept using the five vowels known to us

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[1] In the erratum on p. 231 of the Arabic text, the author corrected the name into Dionysius Thrax (fl. 100 B.C.), the author of the first Greek grammar. (tr.)

[2] Jacob Bar Zuʿbi, a Nestorian monk of Beth Ququ, Ḥidyab (near the present site of Arbil, in Iraq). He flourished about the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th. He was a grammarian and wrote small and large books of grammar. He also wrote metrical homilies. He was the teacher of Severus Jacob Bar Shabbo. See W. Wright, *Syriac Literature*, 258-259. (tr.)