



Guide to Syriac Transliteration

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Vowels

ܐ a

ܐܐ ā

ܐܝ e

ܐܝܐ ē

ܐܘ u

ܐܘܐ ū

ܐܘܐܐ o

ܐܘܐܐܐ ō

ܐܝܝ i

ܐܝܝܐ ī

Consonants

ܐܠܦ ālap - `ā. ē

ܒܝܬ bēt - b, b̄

ܓܡܠ gāmal - g, ḡ

ܕܠܘܕ dālad - d, d̄

ܚܝܗܗ hē - h

ܘܘܘ wāw - o

ܙܝܢ zain - z

ܚܝܬ heṭ - ḥ

ܚܝܬ ṭēt - ṭ



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ܝ yōd – y, i, ē

ܟ kāp – k, k̄

ܠ lāmad – l

ܡ mīm – m

ܢ nūn – n

ܣ semakat – s

ܝ ē - ‘

ܦ pē – p

ܫ ṣādē – ṣ

ܩ qōp – q

ܪ reš – r

ܫ šīn – š

ܬ tāw – t, t̄

Note on Transliteration

The sound of the Syriac language has taken a life of its own in Kerala. There are several phonetic peculiarities among the various Syriac Churches of the St.

Thomas Christians. For example, instead of doubling dalaṭ, the Syro Malabar Catholics add a nasal sound. Thus, Qaddīšā is pronounced as Qandīšā. The finer distinction among *Zayn*, *semakaṭ* and *sādē* are not discernible.

Similarly, *hē* and *hēt̄* often sound the same. Also, the finer distinction between the velar fricative *hē* and voiced velar fricative *hēt̄* is not distinct. Whereas the Syro-Malabar Catholics treat the soft form of *tāw* almost like *s*, the Assyrian Church of the East treats it similar to *th* in *think*; thus, the Syriac word *kārōzūtā* appears in print in the Malayalam missal of the Assyrian Church of the East as *kārōsūthā*.



In view of the differences in the vocalization of several syllables among the Syriac churches, we decided to adapt certain aspects of the transliteration system that Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Ronald E. Murphy used in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Bangalore: The Theological Publications in India, ([1990] 1997). The attempt here is to represent, as far as possible, the syllables as they appear in print. For example, in the case of doubling, the doubled letter appears in italics (*qaddiš*). The “d” in parenthesis means that the *dālad* gets doubled in pronunciation, without a change in the meaning of the word. The letter that is silent in a word appears in parenthesis; for example, *yōd* in *mār(with yod)*. The letter in parenthesis, in this particular case, changes the meaning of the word from “Lord” (*Mār*) to “my Lord” (*mār[with yod]*). Similarly, in the word *talmīdāw(hy)*, the two letters, *hē* and *yōd*, in parenthesis change the meaning from “disciples” to “his disciples.”

A macron below the letters b g d k p t indicates the soft, aspirated forms of those letters: *b̄ ḡ d̄ k̄ p̄ t̄*. For example, *ābā* (pronounced as *āwā*, meaning “father”).
