Introduction to Syriac

W. M. Thackston

www.TheCMSIndia.org

Introduction to Syriac

An Elementary Grammar with Readings from Syriac Literature

Wheeler M. Thackston

IBEX Publishers
Bethesda, Maryland

www.TheCMSIndia.org

Introduction to Syriac
An Elementary Grammar with
Readings from Syriac Literature
by Wheeler M. Thackston

Copyright © 1999 Ibex Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or retransmitted in any manner whatsoever, except in the form of a review, without written permission from the publisher.

Manufactured in the United States of America

The paper used in this book meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Services—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984

IBEX Publishers
Post Office Box 30087
Bethesda, Maryland 20824 U.S.A.
Telephone: 301-718-8188
Facsimile: 301-907-8707
www.ibexpub.com

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Thackston, W.M. (Wheeler McIntosh), 1944-
Introduction to Syriac : an elementary grammar with readings from Syriac literature / by W. M. Thackston.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-936347-98-8
1. Syriac language --Grammar. I. Title.
PJ5423T53 1999
492'.382421--dc21 99-39576
CIP

3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

www.TheCMSIndia.org

Contents

PREFACE vii

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

I. The Sounds of Syriac: Consonants and Vowels x

II. *Begadkepat* and the Schwa xii

III. Syllabification xiv

IV. Stress xv

V. Vocalic Reduction and Prosthesis xv

VI. The Syriac Alphabet xvii

VII. Other Orthographic Devices xxi

VIII. Alphabetic Numerals xxiii

IX. Comparative Chart of Semitic Consonants xxiv

X. Preliminary Exercise xxvi

LESSON ONE 3

§1.1 The Emphatic State §1.2 Gender §1.3 The Perfect of the Simple Verb §1.4 The Proclitics

LESSON TWO 9

§2.1 The Perfect: Full Inflection §2.2 Direct Objects

LESSON THREE 14

§3.1 Pronominal Enclitics I §3.2 Predication of Existence

www.TheCMSIndia.org

and the Expression of Possession §3.3 Relative Clauses

LESSON FOUR 19

§4.1 Possessive Pronouns §4.2 Noun-Noun Possession §4.3 The Pronoun *Koll* §4.4 Pronominal Anticipation with Prepositions

LESSON FIVE 24

§5.1 Noun Plurals: Emphatic State

LESSON SIX 28

§6.1 Independent Pronouns §6.2 The Short Pronouns as Copulas §6.3 Demonstratives

LESSON SEVEN 33

§7.1 Inflection of III-Weak Verbs §7.2 The Perfect of *Hwā* §7.3 The Perfect with Object Suffixes

LESSON EIGHT 38

§8.1 The Active Participles §8.2 Uses of the Participle §8.3 Object Suffixes with the Third-Person Plural Verb

LESSON NINE 44

§9.1 Adjectives §9.2 Pronominal Enclitics II §9.3 Possessive Suffixes with Plural Nouns §9.4 Paradigm of *ya(h)b*

LESSON TEN 51

§10.1 Paradigm of I-*y* Verbs §10.2 Object Suffixes with the Remaining Persons (Perfect) §10.3 The Construct Singular §10.4 The Construct Plural §10.5 Adjectives in the Construct State §10.6 Adverbs

LESSON ELEVEN 57

§11.1 Paradigm of Hollow Verbs: Perfect §11.2 Paradigm of Geminate Verbs: Perfect §11.3 Paradigm of II-*ālap* Verbs: Perfect §11.4 The Pleonastic Dative

www.TheCMSIndia.org

CONTENTS

LESSON TWELVE 62

§12.1 Passive Participles §12.2 III-Weak Verbs with Pronominal Objects §12.3 *Abâ, Aḥâ,* and *Ḥmâ* with Pronominal Possessives.

LESSON THIRTEEN 68

§13.1 The Absolute State §13.2 Numbers §13.3 Ordinals. §13.4 The Infinitive: G-Verbs §13.5 Infinitives with Pronominal Objects

LESSON FOURTEEN 77

§14.1 Imperfect and Imperative of G-Verbs: Sound Roots §14.2 Imperfect Inflection of I-*n* Verbs §14.3 Imperfect of I-*ālap* Verbs §14.4 Imperfect of I-*y* Verbs §14.5 Imperfect of III-Weak Verbs §14.6 Imperfect of Hollow Verbs §14.7 Imperfect of Geminate Verbs §14.8 Imperfect of II-*ālap* Verbs

LESSON FIFTEEN 86

§15.1 Uses of the Imperfect §15.2 The Imperfect with Enclitic Objects §15.3 Suffix Pronouns with III-Weak Imperfect §15.4 Imperatives with Suffix Pronouns §15.5 Imperatives of III-Weak Roots with Suffix Pronouns §15.6 Nouns in *-u* and *-i*

LESSON SIXTEEN 94

§16.1 The Pael Conjugation §16.2 Pael Conjugation: Various Verb Types

LESSON SEVENTEEN 100

§17.1 The Aphel Conjugation 17.2 Aphel Conjugation: Various Verb Types

LESSON EIGHTEEN 106

§18.1 Medio-passive Verbs: Ethpeel, Ethpaal & Ettaphal

www.TheCMSIndia.org

Conjugations §18.2 The Ethpeel Conjugation §18.3 Metathesis in Ethpeel §18.4 Ethpeel with Various Verb Types

LESSON NINETEEN 113

§19.1 The Ethpaal Conjugation §19.2 Metathesis in Ethpaal §19.3 III-Weak Verbs in Ethpaal

LESSON TWENTY 119

§20.1 The Ettaphal Conjugation §20.2 Adjectives/Nouns in *-ānā* §20.3 Substantivation of Participles §20.4 Abstraction of Substantivized Participles §20.5 Other Verbal Forms

APPENDIX A: Verbal Inflections 128

APPENDIX B: States of the Noun 142

APPENDIX C: Verbs with Enclitic Objects 144

READINGS

From the *Pšiṭṭā* 151
From Pseudo-Callisthenes' Legend of Alexander 154
The First Discovery of the True Cross 157
The Teaching of the Apostle Thaddeus 162
The Martyrdom of St. Barbara 169
From *The Tale of Sindban the Wise* 173
From *The Cave of Treasures* 179
From *Kalilag and Demnag* 181
From a Metrical Sermon by Ephraem Syrus 182
From *The Syriac Book of Medicines* 184
A Flood in Edessa 186
From the *Chronicon Syriacum* of Barhebraeus 188

SYRIAC-ENGLISH VOCABULARY 193

INDEX 227

www.TheCMSIndia.org

CHRISTIAN
MUSICOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF INDIA
REG. NO. 118/IV/2016

For further information
regarding this text Please contact:
info@thecmsindia.org
library@thecmsindia.org

Please join the
'CMSI Benefactors Club'
and support the ongoing projects of
Christian Musicological Society Of India

- DIGITAL LIBRARY
- ARAMAIC PROJECT
- DIRECTORY OF CHRISTIAN SONGS
- ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SYRIAC CHANTS
- MUSIC ICONOGRAPHY
- CHRISTIAN ART