



CHRISTIAN
MUSICOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF INDIA

Syro-Chaldaic

(ARAMAIC)

GRAMMAR



By

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The want of a complete Grammar of the Syro-Chaldaic language has long and keenly been felt by students and teachers alike in this country. The almost general neglect of this Sacred language by the Syrians of Malabar is to a great extent due to this want, and my aim in writing the following pages is to revive as far as it is in me, the study of Syro-Chaldaic in our country. The seriousness of the work I was to put my hands to, and my inability to perform it kept me long from undertaking it. Even after I had once begun the work, I have had to meet with several obstacles. One by one the obstacles were removed, and by the grace of God I am able now to present before the public the fruit of years of labour. I am fully confident that the indulgent public will patronize it. If this work in any way helps the student to acquire proficiency in the Syro-Chaldaic language I shall think my labours amply rewarded.

A word may be added about the method of treatment. The book is divided into four parts, each part treating on the four parts of Grammar, Orthography, Etymology, Syntax and Prosody. The Orthography of a dead language has necessarily to be long; and almost one eighth of the book had to be devoted to this part of Grammar. The distinctions between the Eastern and Western dialects are pointed out as occasion offered; and the errors, in pronunciation which have crept in among the Syro-Chaldeans of Malabar, have been noted in the observations as *peculiarities*. It is to be desired that these *peculiarities* would be suppressed.* In the treatise on Etymology it was ever my look out to be as brief and clear as possible. The never-ending paradigms, which occupied a major portion of old grammars, have been omitted as superfluous. The difficult parts of Etymology like *gender*, *number* and

* The present tendency is to keep up our tradition-



THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

(*Fr. Romeo Thomas, C. M. I. M. A., L. T.*)

I. THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE.

Syriac, called Aramaic in ancient times, was one of the most important languages of the ancient world. It was the official language of the Chaldean (VII - VI centuries B. C.) and Persian (VI - IV centuries B. C.) Empires. Aramaic is one of the three languages in which the books or the parts thereof, of the Holy Bible, were originally written. Above all, Aramaic was the mother tongue of our Lord Jesus Christ, the language in which He made manifest to mankind His Holy Gospel—the truths, precepts and counsels of the Christian Revelation.

Aramaic is a member of the western Asian family of languages, called the Semitic group. The languages of this group are classified into a) East Semitic (Assyro-Babylonian or Accadian), b) South West Semitic (Arabic and Ethiopic), and c) North West Semitic (Canaanite or Phoenician, Amorite, Hebrew, and Aramaic or Syriac).

Aramaic was the mother tongue of the region comprising present eastern Syria and northern Iraq. This region was in ancient times called Aram (ܐܪܡ), probably after Aram, Sem's fifth son, to whom the Aramaeans trace their origin (Gen. X, 22; I Par. I, 17). The names Aram and Aramaean, appear in the ancient Cuneiform inscriptions (XI century B. C.) and in the Hebrew Old Testament. Homer, the ancient Greek Poet (IX century B. C.) calls the inhabitants of Aram as Arimoi.

The countries bordering Aram were Assyria to the east and north, Canaan to the west, and Israel to the south. Though ethnically one, Aram was divided into several independent states. The Hebrew Old Testament distinguished the following five Aramaean states:— Aram Naharaim, also called Paddan Aram or simply Paddan (Gen. XXIV, 10; XXV, 20); Aram Soba (II Sam. X, 6); Aram of Damascus (II Sam. VIII, 5); Aram Beth Rohob (II Sam. X, 6; Num. XIII, 22); and Aram Maacha (I Par. XIX, 6; II Sam. X, 6). Aram Naharaim (Aram of the rivers, Aram of the plains) was the territory between the upper Tigris and the upper Euphrates, later called Mesopotamia; Aram Soba was the region between the Euphrates and the Orontes; Aram Damascus is the same as the region of present Damascus; Aram Rohob and Aram Maacha were in north east Palestine.



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