



[AP 245 - ܐܠܡܘܢܐ - Syriac East Meets Latin West. Intercultural Music during Syriac Qurbana.](#)

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Call Number	AP 245
Part Number	Part I – Syro Malabar Church
Title	ܐܠܡܘܢܐ - Syriac East Meets Latin West. Intercultural Music during Syriac Qurbana.
Duration	11:32
Place of Recording	Old Cathedral Church, Pala
Date of Recording	7 August 2006
YouTube URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe2BiM5mT_c
Video Segment(s)	

Notes

ܐܠܡܘܢܐ - Syriac East Meets Latin West. Intercultural Music during Syriac Qurbana

Syriac East meets Latin West in Kerala. Part 3. Lisam [leson/listen]:

Secular music in Sacred Space in the Syro Malabar Church. An intercultural, interreligious musical phenomenon in Kerala. Note: This video shows an interesting musical phenomenon from the Syriac period in the Syro Malabar Church. During the solemn celebration of Qurbana, church musicians played incidental music on the violin or harmonium to fill in silent periods during the liturgy. The melodies were not from the Syriac tradition. The violin player chose the tunes from such varied sources as South Indian classical music, film music, popular devotional songs, or even practice lessons intended for violin students. Thus, the 'lisam' melodies represented both Eastern and Western cultural traditions and were truly intercultural music. The tunes were referred to in Malayalam as 'lisam', which may have derived from two English words, "listen" or "lesson." The performance context of the melodies ranged from an overture-like introduction before the Qurbana, distribution of communion, or any period of silence that extends more than a few minutes. Generally, the melodies had a fast tempo in contrast to the medium and slow tempo of the Syriac melodies. Each performer had his repertory of tunes that he cherished as his private property and would teach only to his favorite students. Violin used to be the favored solo instrument for 'lisam'. In this video, we have one example of a melody played on the harmonium. We do not know if any other Christian community in the world played an overture before the Eucharistic celebration. In retrospect, it is difficult to believe that the community allowed the musicians to erase the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, prayer and performance during Eucharistic liturgy. We have no records of either the clergy or the laity objecting to this practice. On the contrary, a musician's fame depended on the number of lisam-s that he could perform. We hope this video will inspire a conversation among sociologists and musicologists, especially prospective Indian Christian musicologists.

Dr. Joseph J. Palackal, CMI
New York
11 August 2021



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