WHAT IS SYRIAC? EXPLORATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF A NAME

JACK TANNOUS

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This article looks into various aspects of the history of the name "Syriac," arguing that this glottonym has had different meanings at different points in history. While scholars today use "Syriac" to refer to the Aramaic dialect of Edessa, historically, it has also been a word that referred more generally to the northwest Semitic language that today is commonly called "Aramaic." This is true for both "Syriac" as an English word and its various cognates and equivalents in other languages. "Syriac" was a language used by pagans, Jews, Manichees, and a variety of different Christian groups and its association with specific Christian confessions in the Middle East is also a historical development. The article ends by suggesting possible reasons that Edessene Aramaic—as opposed to some other type of Aramaic—became the linguistic vehicle of choice for many Middle Eastern Christian groups.

This century has seen a surge of interest in Syriac by scholars operating in several areas: Islamic studies and medieval Middle

Eastern history, Judaic Studies, Late Antiquity, church history, and even Classics. Scholars have, among other things, begun to see Syriac as important for understanding the late antique context of the Qur'an; for offering insight into Mesopotamian Jewish communities and the formation of the Talmud; for measuring the extent to which Greek was a language of power and culture in the Roman Near East and understanding local cultural identities; and for offering global perspectives on the history of early Christianity, ones which go beyond traditional narratives that focus heavily on Greek and Latin and events within the Roman Empire. All this, and more.[1]

But this increase in attention has sometimes not translated into an increase in actual understanding of what Syriac was and

---

[1] The literature in these areas is very extensive and one can only mention a few representative publications. For Judaic studies see e.g.: Becker 2007 (2003); Koltun-Fromm 2007 (2003); Secunda 2009:45n4; Becker 2010; Millar 2011; Becker 2013; Bar-Asher Siegal 2013; Vidas 2014; Butts and Gross 2016; Gross 2017; Rubenstein 2017; Rubenstein 2018; Bar-Asher Siegal 2019a; Bar-Asher Siegal 2019b; Butts and Gross 2020; Bar Asher-Siegal 2022; Gvaryahu 2022; and Gross 2024. For Islamic studies and medieval Middle Eastern history see, e.g.: Robinson 2000; Luxenberg 2007; Reynolds 2008; Simonsohn 2008; Witztum 2009; el-Badawi 2009; Anthony 2010, Reynolds 2010, Neuwirth, Sinai and Marx 2010; Borrut 2011; Reynolds 2011; Witztum 2011; Anthony 2014; el-Badawi 2014; Penn 2015; Carlson 2018; Reynolds 2018; Sahner 2018; Weitz 2018; Carlson 2019; Hoyland 2019; Penn 2019; Yarbrough 2019; Anthony 2020; Durmaz 2020; Hurvitz, Sahner, Simonsohn, and Yarbrough 2020; Carlson 2022; Anthony 2022; Debié 2022; Durmaz 2022; Rassi 2022; Carlson 2023; Durmaz 2023; Shoemaker 2023; Simonsohn 2023. For global visions of late antique and early medieval Christianity see, e.g.: Moffett 1998, Gillman and Klimkeit 1999, Irvin and Sunquist 2001, Brown 2013, and the more popular Jenkins 2008 and Bantu 2020. For Classics, Fergus Millar has written extensively on the question of Syriac and its place in the culture of the Greco-Roman Near East. See, e.g. Millar 1987a, Millar 1990, Millar 1993, Millar 1998, Millar 2007, Millar 2008a, Millar 2008b, Millar 2009, Millar 2011. See also Bowersock 1990 and cf. Butts 2016 and Butts 2018a. The importance of Syriac for Sasanian studies should be mentioned, too: see, e.g., Walker 2006, Payne 2015, Minov 2019, Gross 2021, Honarchian 2021, Minov 2021.

how it fit into the cultural mosaic of the Middle East: misconceptions about Syriac can regrettably still easily be found. First and foremost, there is confusion about the simple fact of its name: as a noun and adjective, "Syriac" can have a variety of meanings, some more expansive than others. Syriacists employ the term more narrowly, referring specifically to the Aramaic dialect of Edessa and the region around it. This dialect came over the course of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages to be used by many Christians in the Middle East, Central Asia, and South India, as a language of liturgy, theology, philosophy, medicine, poetry, monastic writings, spiritual writings, and literature.[2] Others outside the field of Syriac studies, by contrast, often use "Syriac" interchangeably with "Aramaic" and deploy it in ways which seem to suggest that the entire Middle East, from Palestine to Iraq, and even to points further east, was actually speaking the language of Edessa.

In what follows, I want to offer a series of explorations on the meaning of the word "Syriac" in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages that will, I hope, clear up some of the confusion and imprecision surrounding its use and give depth and nuance to how we think about the Syriac language and its role and importance in the Middle East (and beyond) in these periods.

SYRIAC AS A LITERARY LANGUAGE

Let me start with a basic point: Syriac, understood as the Aramaic language of Edessa, was a literary language, and many people who wrote or prayed in it did not speak it in everyday situations.[3] Here, an analogy can help: All ancient Greeks spoke Greek, and many of them spoke Attic, but not all ancient Greeks

---

[2] Baumstark 1922 is still the standard reference work for the history of Syriac literature. Brock et al. 2011 is the most important recent reference work on Syriac history and literature.

[3] See the comments in Van Rompay 1994: 72-73 and note the observations in Butts 2019:230-231 and Furman 2020: 241-242; cf. also Butts 2016: 6.

would have spoken Attic in their everyday lives. Homer and Herodotus both spoke and wrote in Greek, but Classicists do not, as a matter of course, refer to the language these writers employed as "Attic": they spoke Greek, but they all wrote in some version of the Ionic dialect of the language. An author in Alexandria in the third century AD or Constantinople in the fourth century AD may have written Attic Greek, but that person did not necessarily speak the language of Demosthenes when he or she spoke to their family or friends or to shopkeepers. The situation with Syriac was much the same. Inscriptions from places like Palmyra, Hatra, and Sefire, the various Mandaic scriptures, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, the different versions of the Targums, parts of the book of Daniel, portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, documents from the Jewish colony on Elephantine, and the writings of Ephrem the Syrian—all these things and many others over the course of thousands of years—were written in Aramaic; they were not, however, all written in the Aramaic dialect of Edessa.[4] Hesiod wrote in Greek, but did not compose, so far as we know, in Attic Greek.

But Ephrem, living in Edessa and Nisibis in the fourth century, Isho'dad of Merv, originally from Central Asia, in the ninth century, Isaac of Nineveh, Dadisho' Qaṭrāyā, Gabriel Qāṭrāyā and other authors from what is today northeast Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the sixth and seventh centuries, as well as John of Apamea, living in northwest Syria in the early part of the fifth century, in addition to an enormous number of other authors, all did set down works in the language of Edessa, in Syriac. Though they hailed from all over the Middle East (and

---

[4] On Aramaic, see Beyer 1966; Fitzmyer 1979 (cf. Butts 2019: 222-225); Heinrichs 1990a: x-xv; Arnold 2011; Briquel Chatonnet 2011; Burtea 2011; Fales 2011; Folmer 2011; Gzella 2011a; Gzella 2011b; Häberl 2011; Healey 2011; Jastrow 2011; Kapeliuk 2011; Khan 2011; Morgenstern 2011; Sokoloff 2011a; Sokoloff 2011b; Tal 2011; Weninger 2011a; Gzella 2015; Gzella 2021.

places even further afield), when they chose to write, it was one particular dialect of Aramaic in which they decided to compose.

By comparison, one can say that people throughout the Middle East today speak Arabic, but it would perhaps be more accurate to say that they speak many different types of Arabic. The traveler to Morocco from Egypt or the Levant may, in fact, find it easier to communicate with locals in French than in his or her dialect of Arabic; indeed, if French or some means of communication other than differing Arabic dialects is not used, mutual comprehension will be nearly impossible. Even the traveler to Egypt from the Levant will find a number of differences, at least at the lexical level: asking for yoghurt or *laban*, he or she might receive milk; speaking about a tire, or *dūlāb*, his or her interlocutor might think a wardrobe for clothing is the topic of conversation; referring to women generically as *niswān*, he or she might be told that such a way of speaking about women is not polite: here they are called *sittāt*. And so on.

For all these differences, great and small, however, when the Moroccan, the Egyptian, or the Syrian (or the Iraqi or Yemeni, as well), sits down to write something formal and important, he or she will typically write it out in *fuṣḥā*, or standard Arabic, an elevated literary language which differs significantly from the enormous number of dialects throughout the Arab world and which is remarkably uniform across space and time: a person with a knowledge of *fuṣḥā* can read, without too much difficulty, texts written in the language well over a thousand years ago, the primary difficulties being ones of vocabulary. *Fuṣḥā* is also a spoken language, albeit one that no one speaks natively, and the traveler from Lebanon to Morocco could communicate with locals there in *fuṣḥā*, provided that both the Lebanese visitor and the Moroccan had been trained in the language.

Such examples are instructive when considering the linguistic situation in the ancient world: not everyone who wrote Attic Greek necessarily spoke it at home and on the street on a day-to-day basis. Similarly, not everybody who wrote in Syriac would have necessarily spoken it on a day-to-day basis.[5] A modern example from Neo-Aramaic provides a parallel: The literary language that developed from the seventeenth century onward based on the Aramaic dialect of Alqosh in Northern Iraq came to be used by writers in villages which employed different dialects in their daily lives; for this reason (in addition to the fact that it also contained elements of classical Syriac), it has been suggested that rather than seeing the language as reflecting the every-day speech of its writers, it should be regarded as a "supra-dialectical literary language."[6] Classical Syriac, based on the language of Edessa but employed over an enormous geographical area, no doubt functioned in much the same way.

The distance between formal language and every-day spoken language is perhaps most evident when we move outside the Fertile Crescent to regions where the local populations never spoke Aramaic as a native language: errors in the Syriac written on a late seventh or early-eighth century ostracon found in Panjikant in modern Tajikistan suggest that the person writing the Syriac was a local Sogdian and not a native Aramaic speaker. Moreover, other orthographic errors and the fact that the ostracon contains passages from the Psalms have suggested that it represents the school exercise of a young person learning to write Syriac via dictation.[7] Likewise,

---

[5] See Geoffrey Khan's comments in Khan 2007a: 102-103.

[6] Khan 2007a: 103-104.

[7] See Paykova 1979: 165-166. The person who wrote the ostracon showed frequent confusion over the emphatic letters which are common in Semitic languages. Examples of evidence of being a non-Syriac speaker: ܣܠܐ for

the translation errors found in a Manichean Syriac-Coptic word list from Kellis in Upper Egypt, and indeed, the apparent inability of the scribe responsible for them to even attempt a Coptic rendering of some Syriac terms, have been taken to indicate that the list represented an exercise in translation undertaken by a non-native speaker.[8]   Even before the publication of these texts from Kellis, it had already been suggested that the spelling of certain lesser-known Middle Eastern place names in Manichaean Coptic texts could be explained by assuming that a translator had misunderstood similar letter forms in the Manichaean Syriac text before him.[9] In the Turfan Oasis, in Central Asia, the Syriac *napshā ḥayytā*, "Living Soul," a name for God, would appear in Manichaean Middle Persian as *gryw zyndg*, "Living Self," as a result of the translators having to choose between one of two possible and different meanings for the Syriac *napshā*[10]—yet another reminder that Syriac was being studied and written by people who had not grown up speaking it at home and on the street. The great Greco-Arabic translator Qusṭā b. Lūqā (d. ca. AD 912), from Baalbek in Lebanon, was, according to Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, of Greek origin, but could translate with skill into Syriac, in addition to Greek and Arabic.[11]   Similarly, Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, the greatest of all the Greco-Arabic translators, was an Arab from al-Ḥīra, but he knew Syriac as well, both writing and translating

---

ܘܠܡ; ܐܘܠܐ for ܐܠܡܐ; [ܐ]ܠܗܘܒ for [ܐ]ܠܗܘܒ and examples of evidence for dictation include ܐ[ܝ]ܢܘܒܝ for ܐܒܘܢܝܐ.

[8] T. Kell. Syr./Copt. 1: See Gardner 1996(vol.2): 110-111. T. Kell. Syr./Copt. 2 seems to have also been a translation exercise (p. 126). Franzmann 2005 contains additional discussion of the bilingual Syriac-Coptic wooden boards from Kellis.

[9] See Contini 1995: 81 for the example of the spelling of "Adiabene."

[10] For this example, and others from Coptic, see Contini 1995: 76. The same phenomenon happens in Parthian, where *napshā ḥayytā* is rendered *gryw jywndg*, "Living Self," as well. For this, see Boyce 1977: 42, s.v.

[11] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, p. 329.

into it.[12] Like the school child whose ostracon we have from
Panjikant, the errant scribe in Kellis, and Middle Persian and
Coptic Manichaean translators, both Qusṭā and Ḥunayn no
doubt had to be trained in the language of Edessa.

But even individuals who grew up speaking an Aramaic that
differed from the dialect of Edessa would have had to learn to
write properly in Syriac. "For when I had given myself studies
and exercises in the Syriac and Aramaic language," Elias of
Tirhan (d. 1049) wrote, at the beginning of his grammar of
Syriac,

> not in that childish and everyday language,[13] but rather
> in the study hall of schools, and attained for myself
> strength from the library of spiritual books, and came
> into possession of a certain amount of study of Arabic
> grammar and, also, [of] this Syriac [language], and
> indeed, when I myself had perfected the logical craft of
> the Aristotelians through great study and after both
> physical and mental labor and toil—[of] the *Organon*,
> that is, the "Instrument" leading towards the truth and
> precision of things, if natural and divine, then how
> much more logical and linguistic matters—and I
> created certain rules from Greek grammar (even if I am
> not conversant in Greek things, save those [Greek]
> traditions which are present in Syriac and various little
> hints from teachers who are adept and instructed in this
> language; I have also have investigated, from mouth to
> ear, the grammatical rules of the Greek language from

---

[12] See, e.g. the citation from Ḥunayn, in Syriac, preserved in Bar Bahlūl,
Lexicon, vol. 1, cols. 3-4. Most of Ḥunayn's Syriac translations have not
survived; for what remains, see Brock 1991; Degen 1981 can be used to learn
of Ḥunayn's attested medical translations into Syriac and Kessel 2016
provides an update to Degen's work and focuses on what is extant. Peters
1968 can be used to get a sense for Ḥunayn's attested philosophical
translations. Butts 2024: 382-388 argues that Ḥunayn was "'more fluent' in
Syriac than in Arabic when translating Greek texts" (385).

[13] On the meaning of *leshshānā atrāyā*, see Larsow 1841: 22-26.

clever persons): for I considered it necessary that I write out a treatise for beginning learners of this Syriac language, through precision of grammatical terms...[14]

It is unlikely that everyone who learned Edessene Aramaic went to the great lengths of studying Aristotle's *Organon* and other languages' grammatical traditions to learn this formal language, but Elias is nevertheless an interesting example of a person drawing a distinction between everyday Aramaic and the formal language he had to study and then took up the pen to write in. In the tenth-century, the Muslim writer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. AH 385/AD 995 or AH 388/AD 998) would note that the Aramaic of Harran and of Syria was the purest and that it was that which was used in writing and in reading; the "Nabatean" Aramaic that was spoken by the people of villages, by contrast, was "broken Syriac" (*suryānī maksūr*) with bad pronunciation.[15] As we will see below, in his grammar, Jacob of Edessa referred to "all the Westerners and others who live in other places and do not speak this Edessene language properly" and also glossed Edessenes as "those who speak this language correctly."[16] The diglossic and regional differences Jacob, Elias, and Ibn al-Nadīm alluded to can occasionally be found lurking in Syriac texts: linguists are able at times to detect non-Syriac Aramaic dialects exerting a subtle influence on the Syriac in which such authors were writing.[17]

---

[14] Elias of Tirhan, *Grammar*, p. ܚ (GT at 4-5.). This passage is also discussed in Farina 2020.

[15] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, p. 12. (see below, and cf. n. 40)

[16] Jacob of Edessa, *Grammar*, p. ܒ (cf. n. 58)

[17] See Furman 2020. Talay 2009 collects evidence of Aramaic vernacular interference in medieval Syriac inscriptions in Tur 'Abdin and its surroundings. Cf. also Khan 2007c: 5-6 and Khan 2007b: 14. Cf. also n. 23, below.

SYRIAC AS A LANGUAGE WITH A HISTORY

We should also remember that Syriac itself was not an entirely homogenous language—what passed for standard Syriac would evolve. One clear reflection of Syriac's development can be seen in contemporary scholarly discussions of the nature of the language itself. Edessene Aramaic has traditionally been classified as an Eastern Aramaic dialect,[18] but it has been strongly argued that it bears a special relationship to Western Aramaic as well, occupying a sort of linguistic middle ground between the two branches.[19] When examined closely, elements which are thought of as being characteristic of Western Aramaic have a habit of popping up in Syriac in a way that make it difficult to cleanly place it one category. Old Syriac inscriptions, for example, suggest that Syriac in its earliest attested phases was characterized by a linguistic diversity that it later lacked: two distinct phases of the language can even be identified.[20] In literary texts, this linguistic diversity of early Syriac has perhaps been concealed by later scribes, who may have altered earlier compositions to make them conform to later norms.[21] Examining the language of the oldest dated Syriac manuscripts reveals that, in its initial stages as a literary idiom, written Syriac exhibited orthographic, morphological, lexical,

---

[18] See e.g. Fitzmyer 1979: p.62 and Beyer 1986: 43.

[19] Boyarin 1981.

[20] The classic example is the presence of the prefix *n-* or *y-* in the 3rd person masculine singular imperfect of verbs; see Healey 2007; Healey 2008; and Healey 2011:641-642. On Old Syriac, see further Butts 2018b and Butts 2019: 225-227.

[21] See, e.g. the examples of Brock 2003: 104-105 and cf. the observations in Butts 2019: 227-230. On the basis of its non-Syriac elements, Beyer 1990: 237-238 argues that the *Hymn of the Pearl* was not originally written in Syriac but later Syriacized by copyists after being incorporated into the *Acts of Thomas*; Contini 1995: 91-92 offers an alternate interpretation.

and syntactic variations that it subsequently lacked.[22] Likewise, paying close attention to the geographic location of authors reveals evidence of differences in written Syriac, which may reflect variations in local dialect, scribal or school traditions, and slightly different regional standards.[23]

Varieties of Aramaic, varieties of Syriac

Resolving such problems is not my purpose here.[24] What is important to note is that not only was the Middle East characterized by a broad variety of Aramaic dialects, Syriac, or Edessene Aramaic being only one of them, but even Edessene Aramaic itself was characterized by a certain diversity of language. Syriac authors were, of course, aware of the diversity of Aramaic and the diversity of Syriac itself. In the thirteenth century, Bar Hebraeus spoke briefly about the different kinds of Aramaic when writing about the question of humanity's first language. "Among our spiritual authorities," he wrote,

> Basil and Ephrem claim that from Adam up till this 'Ābir,[25] people's language was one: Syriac [*al-suryāniyya*]; by it, God spoke to Adam. It is divided up into three dialects: the most eloquent of them is Aramaic [*al-ārāmiyya*], which is the language of the people of Edessa and Harran and Outer Syria [*al-shām*

---

[22] See Van Rompay 1994, e.g. p. 82: "Syriac in its earlier form may have been slightly closer to Western Aramaic than it was in its later period." Meehan 2007 is another example of a Western Aramaic element found in an early Syriac text. On linguistic variation in early Syriac manuscripts, see further Butts 2019: 227-230.

[23] Brock 2003: 102-103. Butts 2016: 142n9 suggests a possible geographic explanation for Simeon of Beth Arsham's Syriac using a certain adjectival form less frequently than other Syriac authors. Also cf. n. 17, above.

[24] Brock 2003 represents a learned and non-sensationalist perspective on many of the issues that arise from chronological and geographic differences in Syriac.

[25] i.e. 'Ābir b. Shāliḥ (sc. Eber son of Shelah [Gen. 11:14]).

al-khārija]. After it is Palestinian [*filasṭīniyya*], which is
the language of the people of Damascus and Mount
Lebanon, and the rest of Inner Syria [*al-shām al-
dākhila*]. The most dreadful of them is Chaldean
Nabatean [*al-kaldāniyya al-nabaṭiyya*], which is the
language of the people of the mountains of Mosul
[*āthūr*] and the Sawād of Iraq.[26]

In his grammar of Syriac, Bar Hebraeus would refer to
dialectical differences in other kinds of Aramaic, citing, for
instance, the usage of Palestinians,[27] of the people of
Samosata,[28] on Mount Lebanon,[29] and even "popular" practice.[30]

---

[26] Bar Hebraeus, *Ta'rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, pp. 16-17. FT in Fiey 1990: 86.
Slightly different text and LT available in Assemani 1719-1728(vol. 1): 476.

[27] They substitute *ālaf* for *qof*, for instance, in verbs and in nouns. See Bar
Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 205 (Moberg 1907-1913[vol.1]: 30-31 has a GT).
Interestingly enough, this substitution occurs in the colloquial Arabic
dialects of urban centers in the Levant and also in Cairene Arabic. In his
Book of Splendors, p. 67, speaking of Syriac diminutives, Bar Hebraeus notes:
"And in Palestine, I have heard they say....". On p. 32, he cites the reading of a
plural in the Palestinians' version of the Peshitta at Ps. 6:7 as being unique,
and different from that of the majority.

[28] Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 66.

[29] Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 55: ܠܐ ܐܢܫ ܡܢ ܣܘ̈ܪܝܝܐ ܐܠܐ ܗܢܘܢ ܡܢ
ܛܘܪ ܕܠܒܢܢ "No one of the Syrians apart from those of Mt.
Lebanon." For a Syriac manuscript (BL Add. 17,236) written near Tripoli in
AD 1284, see Wright 1870-1872(vol.1): 320. Add. 17,983 was written in Syriac
in the village of 'Aqurtā "on blessed Mount Lebanon" in AD 1438 (Wright
1870-1872[vol. 1]): 61; Add. 14,681 contains a note in Syriac from a man named
John who was "from Mount Lebanon, near the cedars, which are planted in
the house of the Lord' (Wright 1870-1872[vol.1]: 79); Add. 14,542 contains a
note in Syriac which asks that two different men from Mt Lebanon (Leontios
and Alphaios) be remembered in prayer (Wright 1870-1872[vol.2]: 417-418).

[30] Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 67. See also his *Scholia on Kings*, p.
33 where Bar Hebraeus notes the colloquial (*'ammāyā*) pronunciation of
"urine" *tunē* (ܬܘܢܐ), which contrasts with the more standard *ṭyānē* (ܛܝܢܐ).
Note, too, the similarity between Bar Hebraeus' use of *'ammāyā* to refer to
the vernacular and the practice in Modern Arabic of referring to the demotic
as *al-'āmmiyya*.

He would also refer to the linguistic usages of "Easterners" and "Westerners," even at one point make disapproving reference to non-Syriac (i.e., non-Edessene) practices among "Easterners;" the particular Aramaic usage Bar Hebraeus frowned on is in fact found in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud and is even characteristic of modern Neo-Aramaic dialects.[31] In his *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, Bar Hebraeus traced differences in Eastern and Western Syriac reading traditions[32] to the school of Nisibis in the sixth century. "After a bit," he wrote,

> Narsai died, after he had been in the school of Nisibis fifty years; he was in Edessa twenty other years before these. Joseph Huzaya, his student, took his place in Nisibis and he changed the Edessene style of reading to this eastern one which the Nestorians adhere to, but in the entire time of Narsai, they were reading like we Westerners do.[33]

We have just seen that Bar Hebraeus spoke disparagingly of Nabatean, considering it the most undesirable of Aramaic dialects and Edessene Aramaic the most eloquent of the dialects of Aramaic (*afṣaḥuhā*). He did so while addressing the question of the first language humans spoke, a popular subject

---

[31] Khan 2007b: 10; cf. Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 205. See Khan 2009: 230 for another example of Bar Hebraeus noting a medieval linguistic phenomenon (the pronunciation of a spirantized *b* as *w*) which appears in modern Aramaic dialects.

[32] In this instance, he was probably referring not to Aramaic dialects, but rather to things like the use of *o* for long *ā* in words—e.g. *ktobo* vs. *ktābā*. Khan 2008: 97 cites a passage from a medieval Muslim scholar transliterating Syriac into Arabic which reflects the West Syrian use of *o* for long *ā*. Wright 1870-1872(vol. 3): 1169, note †, offered evidence that this change in pronunciation was already happening before the time of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708).

[33] Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 2, col. 77. Text and LT can also be found in Assemani 1719- 1728(vol.3.2): 379.

of debate and speculation.[34] Interestingly enough, Ibn al-Nadīm, in a passage I have already referred to, would speak about the same issue, citing Theodore of Mopsuestia's authority, and taking a different position.[35] "Theodore the Interpreter," Ibn al-Nadīm would write,

> said in his commentary on the first book of the Torah that God, may he be blessed and exalted, spoke to Adam in the Nabatean tongue,[36] and it is more eloquent (*afṣaḥ*) than the Syriac language (*al-lisān al-suryānī*). The people of Babel spoke in it and when God confused the languages, the nations were dispersed to regions and localities, but the language of the people of Babel remained in its state. Now, as for the Nabatean that the people of the villages speak, it is broken Syriac, whose pronunciation is not correct.

But Ibn al-Nadīm was also aware of the views of others. Bar Hebraeus regarded the language of Edessa and Harran as the best Aramaic, and Ibn al-Nadīm knew of others who did as well; Ibn al-Nadīm was also aware of differences in the Syriac script. "Someone else said," he continued,

> The language which is used in books and reading and which is pure (*faṣīḥ*) is the language of the people of Syria and Harran. As for the Syriac script (*al-khaṭṭ al-suryānī*), scholars developed it and agreed upon it— just as it is with other writing systems. Another [writer] said that in one of the Gospels or in another one of the

---

[34] See, e.g., Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon*, vol.1, col. 982, where he gives as a definition of *Leshshānā qadmāyā* ("first language") "Hebrew and it is beloved by God, as the Fathers say." On this question of humanity's first language, which occupied authors across religious and cultural divides in the Late Antique and Islamic periods, see Rubin 1998b, Moss 2010, and Briquel Chatonnet 2018.

[35] For Theodore of Mopsuestia in the *Fihrist* see Samir 1977.

[36] Also noted by Ishoʿdad of Merv (fl. 9th century). See Ishoʿdad of Merv, *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 135 (FT in Van den Eynde 1955: 147).

books of the Christians an angel called SYMWRS taught
Adam Syriac writing[37] (*al-kitāba al-suryāniyya*) along
the lines of what the Christians possess in this our own
time. The Syrians (*al-suryāniyyīn*) have three ways of
writing: [first,] 'the open'[38] which is named
'Estrangela'—it is the most sublime and most excellent
and is called the 'large script' and it corresponds to a
Qur'anic book hand;[39] [second,] 'small letter,' called
σχολική [sc. 'scholastic']: it is also called 'the rounded
form' and it corresponds to a regular book hand; and
[third,] Serṭā, in which they write correspondence and
its equivalent in Arabic is *riqāʿ* script...[40]

A simple reading of Ibn al-Nadīm leaves one unclear whether
Syriac or Nabatean was the purest and best dialect of the
language; the apparent variation in the meaning of glottonyms
in this passage becomes more understandable if we assume that
Ibn al-Nadīm is relying on several different sources for his
information and reporting their judgments. The conflict
between these sources highlights a fundamental fact: Aramaic
was a topic of discussion and even disagreement. Edessa and
Harran are typically considered to have the best quality

---

[37] Ibn Waḥshiyya, *Shawq al-mustahām fī maʿrifat rumūz al-aqlām*, p. 116
(ET p. 42) speaks of the "ancient Syriac script" (*al-qalam al-suryānī al-
qadīm*), humanity's first script, which God himself taught Adam; p. 117 has a
reproduction of the ancient Syriac script, which resembles a deformed
Estrangela, or even CPA; p. 118 reproduces the script as it was in Ibn
Waḥshiyya's day, which is a more much recognizable Syriac alphabet, again,
similar to Estrangela.

[38] *Al-maftūḥ*: in the sense of having open/not-filled-in "eyes" or "counters."
See Gacek 2001, s.vv. *fatḥ, ṭams, maṭmūs,* and *ʿuqdah,* for explanation of the
phenomenon picked out by this name.

[39] Cp. the remarks of Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon,* cols. 225-226, s.v., who identifies
Estrangelo as *khaṭṭ injīlī*, a Gospel script or Gospel hand.

[40] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist,* vol. 1, p. 12. An ET is also available in Dodge
1970(vol.1): 22, but it is problematic and Gacek 2001 is essential for
understanding the technical Arabic scribal terms found in this passage;
Bahnassi 1995 is also helpful.

Aramaic, but this should come as no surprise: we usually read
about such things in authors who were writing in Edessene
Aramaic. Ibn al-Nadīm, however, must have been drawing on
authors operating in other Aramaic linguistic traditions. All
parties involved, it should be pointed out, saw their languages
as being related; from his description of the three different
scripts used by the Syrians, however, it is seems that Ibn al-
Nadīm had in mind the Aramaic of Edessa[41]—he had, after all,
grouped his information under the heading "Discussion of the
Syriac script" (*al-qalam al-suryānī*).[42]

Both Bar Hebraeus and Ibn al-Nadīm spoke of "Nabatean."
Nabaṭī, or "Nabatean," is a term that appears frequently in
medieval Arabic and often refers to a type of Aramaic spoken in
Iraq or to the people who spoke it.[43] In the tenth century, for
example, Ibn Waḥshiyya claimed to have translated his *Filāḥa
al-nabaṭiyya*, or *Nabatean Agriculture*, from Syriac into Arabic.
Ibn Waḥshiyya would comment on the diversity of this
language and the challenge it presented to the translator:

---

[41] Since the early modern period, scholars in the West have traditionally
spoken of there being three Syriac scripts, commonly referred to as
Estrangela, Serto, and East Syrian; on the different kinds of Syriac scripts see
Assemani 1719- 1728(vol. 3.2): CCCLXXVIII, Hatch 1946: 24-30; Wright 1870-
1872(vol.3): xxx-xxxii. A fourth Syriac script, which scholars refer to as the
"Melkite" script, is found in Chalcedonian Syriac manuscripts; on the Melkite
script, see Hatch 1946: 28-30 and Desreumaux 2004. Recent studies have
called into question this typology, however: see Bush, Penn, Crouser, Howe,
and Wu 2018. Borbone 2021 is an important study of the early modern origins
of referring to three different Syriac scripts and the variety of ways that
various Syriac scripts were referred to in the medieval period.

[42] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, p. 12.

[43] Fiey 1990 is an excellent discussion of the meanings of this word and is
rich with evidence of its usage in medieval authors; see also the pioneering
work of Quatremère 1835. In the contemporary Middle East, especially in
Saudi Arabia, *shiʿr nabaṭī*, "Nabatean poetry," refers to a popular genre of
poetry written in colloquial dialects. I am grateful to Professor Irfan Shahid
for this point.

> The dialects of the Nabateans differ very much from each other despite the fact that they live close together. Yet the Nabatean inhabitants of one region call things with a name different from that used by the inhabitants of another region. Thus, the translator has to know all their dialects and their differences. Some people think that translating into Arabic would be easy, since the language (of the Nabateans) is closely related to Arabic, but this is not so because they (i.e., the dialects) differ from each other and because the expressions of their speakers differ between each other. The differences between the words which they use in their speech are indeed considerable.[44]

Before Bar Hebraeus and contemporary with Ibn al-Nadīm and Ibn Waḥshiyya, Bar Bahlūl in the tenth century would cite at least sixteen different Aramaic dialects, ranging from the region of Beth Qatraye—modern Qatar and NE Saudi Arabia[45]—to Syria and Palestine, in his *Lexicon*.[46] An anonymous Syriac commentary on parts of Genesis and Exodus, dating perhaps to the first half of the eighth century, also cited the language of

---

[44] Ibn Waḥshiyya, *al-Filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya*, vol. 1, p. 124. English translation taken from Hämeen-Anttila 2006: 89.

[45] That is, the region known as "Beth Qatraye" in Syriac sources. See Brock 1999-2000: 85 for a definition and see further Kozah 2021a: 2-3.

[46] See Duval 1888-1901 (vol. 3): xxiv-xxv.

Beth Qatraye,[47] as did Aḥob Qaṭrāyā in the sixth century,[48] and Isho'dad of Merv in the ninth.[49]

In the late eighth century, Theodore bar Koni would take up the question of why humanity's languages were confused at the Tower of Babel in his *Book of Scholia*, a discussion which would provide him with the opportunity to put forward the claim that Syriac, not Hebrew, was the first language spoken. What is interesting for us here is that in making his argument, Theodore would speak about the nature of the Aramaic of his day. The key to Theodore's argument was that Abraham did not speak Hebrew, but rather Aramaic, the language of his place of origin; Abraham was called a Hebrew not for linguistic reasons, but rather because he crossed over the Euphrates—it was a play on the verb *'bar*, to cross over.

---

[47] See Van Rompay 1986 (v.206): LII-LIII for the date of the anonymous commentary and p. XXIIn81 for four references to the language of Beth Qatraye. Kozah 2021b collects and analyzes 50 words from the language of Beth Qatraye, most of which he discovered in the *Anonymous Commentary on Genesis and Exodus* and the *Diyarbakir Commentary*—see his comments in Kozah 2021a:9 and see further, p. 10-18.

[48] Preserved in a note in Vandenhoff's edition of Aḥob's *Elucidations on the Psalms*, p. 38, ln. 15 (LT, p. 41; see also p. 5n1) And compare, too, with Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, col. 223. For all this, see Van Rompay 1986 (v.206): XLIIInn.16, 19. For Aḥob's references to the language of Beth Qatraye, see now also Stadel 2023: 75, 243, 294, 404.

[49] For a list and discussion of Isho'dad's citations of words from Beth Qatraye, see Schall 1989: 277-282. Brock 1999-2000: 93n40 discusses these various authors and the language of Beth Qatraye. Van Rompay 1986 (v.206):XXXII suggests that this language had both Persian and Aramaic vocabulary; Schall 1953: 435-436 suggests that words preserved in the language of Beth Qatraye have a north Arabic character. Contini 2003 investigates 12 more words attested in Syriac texts from the language of Beth Qatraye and agrees with Schall 1989 that the language represented a southeastern dialect of Aramaic; Kozah 2021b: 10, by contrast, suggests that "the weight of the present data suggests that *Qaṭrāyīth* is Arabic." For discussion of this claim with reference to Aḥob Qatraya, see Stadel 2023: 385-388.

For Abraham was called a Hebrew because of the Euphrates River. If, therefore, Uruk, the village of Abraham,[50] is in Babylon, and Babylonians are Aramaeans, as their language bears witness, how can Abraham have used another language, save that of his fathers, and in which he was brought up? It is, rather, obvious that he was a Syrian (*suryāyā*) and while this one language remained in one place—which [language] was not moved away from its home—the rest of the people fled and moved to their [current] regions. It does not merit wonder that Hebrew was established from the mass of languages: we find that Syriac (*suryāyā*), with the changing of time and the length of generations, has been debased and corrupted by foreign words and has very nearly fled from where it was living and settled in other regions. If a person, therefore, compares the language of the Babylonians with proper Syriac, one in a hundred parts does not have Syriac in it—even though it remained in Babylon [i.e., it changed, even though it did not move from its point of origin]. Its proper form is to be found in Homs and in Apamea and in the places which are around them. Perhaps the rest of the languages have acquired corruption in this way, especially from proximity to other languages which are nearby. Now, the Scriptures were handed down in Hebrew, not on account of its excellence or its breadth—for, look now, it is very poor—but rather because it was not appropriate that it be given to them in another [language], the vocabulary of whose texts they were not trained in and they be forcibly held back from meditating on it: for it is not hidden how much the difficulty of [translating] words

---

[50] On Abraham and Erekh/Uruk and the association between Edessa/Urhay and Erekh, see Segal 1970: 1-3.

>from language to language places toilsome labor upon
>those desiring to learn another idiom.[51]

Theodore's words about the debased nature of the Aramaic of
Babylon take on added significance when one realizes that he
was from Kashkar,[52] a town in Babylonia on the banks of the
Tigris River.[53] It was the Aramaic of this area that Bar Hebraeus
regarded as the worst of all; it was the Aramaic of this region,
too, which Ibn al-Nadīm had referred to as "broken Syriac"
which had an incorrect pronunciation. And here, in Theodore,
we have an author from the area, writing in Edessene Syriac,
who also speaks of the corruption that the Aramaic of his home
region has undergone—yet he, like Bar Hebraeus and Ibn al-
Nadīm, regards it as fundamentally the same language as that
spoken more properly in areas further west.

Isho'dad of Merv, an East Syrian exegete active in the middle
of the ninth century tells much the same story about Abraham
and Aramaic. An encyclopedist who drew extensively on the
exegetical tradition which preceded him, comparing his work
with that of Theodore suggests that they were drawing on a
common source for some of their interpretations.[54] The two
authors' respective views on Abraham are therefore quite
similar, but not identical. "Now, indeed, Abraham was from
Kashkar of Babylon," Isho'dad wrote,

>And the Babylonians are Aramaeans and Abraham
>must have spoken the language of his region and of his
>father when he was in his village of Uruk, which is in
>Babylon, and when he departed from there, he and his
>father, and lived in Harran of Mesopotamia. For it was
>after he crossed over the Euphrates that he lived for a

---

[51] Scher 1910-1912 (v.65): 113-114. Rubin 1998: 325 discusses this passage but
does not quote from it directly.

[52] See Baumstark 1922: 218.

[53] See M. Streck and J. Lassner's article, "Kaskar," in *EI²*, vol. 4, pp. 724-725.

[54] See Van den Eynde 1955: XX-XXI.

period in the land of Canaan; his language and that of his children was mixed with Canaanite. Indeed, Hebrew also resembled Syriac (*suryāyā*) and was not distinct from Canaanite....Now, Hebrew was given its name from Abraham, who crossed the Euphrates, [heading] towards the Canaanites and it is not a marvel if Hebrew is a conglomeration from [other] languages, just as we also find in the case of Syriac, that from the changing of time and the length of generations, it was corrupted and confused, and nearly fled from where it was dwelling and settled in other regions, that is, in Homs and Apamea and Edessa, etc. It is somewhat true that the Syriac language (*suryāyā*) has been confused, especially in Babylon, on account of kings who were taking captives of one another—the language of an alien and a stranger is not polished at all. Aramaic was also confused on account of its proximity to languages that were near it, just as this happened to the rest of the languages. Now, it was not on account of its excellence and breadth that the Scriptures were transmitted in Hebrew—for it is very poor—but rather because it was not fitting that they not be using and reading that which they had been educated in; otherwise, that stiff and hardened people would have been hindered in the contemplation of the of Scriptures.[55]

Once again, the Aramaic of Babylon was singled out for being particularly confused, but Isho'dad, being from Central Asia and not actually from the region, omitted Theodore's more detailed comments about the decay of the Aramaic language there. To Theodore's list of places where Aramaic is spoken further west—Homs and Apamea—Isho'dad adds Edessa, the excellence of whose language is a common point of reference in Syriac authors. In Theodore and Isho'dad we have two more

---

[55] Isho'dad of Merv, *Commentary on Genesis*, pp. 135-136. FT in Van den Eynde 1955: 147-148.

authors, East Syrians in this case, who write in Edessene
Aramaic and see their language as being the same, not only as
the Aramaic spoken all over the Middle East, including areas
outside of Edessa, but also as the language that was spoken in
the ancient Near East as well.

   And so it goes. In the late seventh or early eighth century,
Jacob of Edessa would refer to different pronunciations of
Syriac, in one instance, pointing out something "the Edessenes
alone say."[56]   But even Edessenes were occasionally not
pronouncing their language properly—orthography had
corrupted their speech. "Now, there are times," Jacob would also
observe,

> when earlier authors placed in nouns extra letters when
> they wrote them out for the sake of distinguishing
> different words which have the same consonants as
> each other. For instance, I am speaking of "man"
> (ܓܒܪܐ *gabrā*)   and   "strong   man" (ܓܒܪܐ
> *ga(n)bārā*)—for it was not because [ܓܒܪܐ
> *ga(n)bārā*] has an "N" that [the "N"] was written down
> in it, for it had no need of it, nor does it show up in the
> pronunciation. Instead, [the "N" was written down] for
> the sake of distinguishing the word from "man"
> (ܓܒܪܐ *gabrā*), which has the same consonants as
> "strong man" (ܓܒܪܐ *ga(n)bārā*).   But afterwards,
> many people, when they saw this "N" which was
> written—and other letters which were similarly set
> down in words for the same reason (I am speaking of all
> the Westerners and of other people who live in other
> places and who do not speak this Edessene language
> correctly)—not having understood the reason on
> account of which [the "N"] was set down in the word
> and in others like it, also pronounce them in speech. It
> was not only they who did this afterwards, even though
> it was known, but even people among whom are

---

[56] Jacob of Edessa, *Grammar*, p. ܗ : ܐܡܪܝܢ ܐܘܪ̈ܗܝܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ.

Edessans, that is, some who speak this Mesopotamian language correctly.   And it is not only foreign expressions and things which are [from] outside the language in which they use them that they are unable to read properly, but also even things which are native. Indeed, they have many things in their writings—both from the Hebrew language and from the Greek language. They even have a few things in their speech from the language of the Romans on account of the rule that the Kingdom of the Romans had in this region: in the same way, there are even [things] from the Persian language. And, as I just said, no one among them speaks or reads properly on account of the lack of letters [in the alphabet to represent sounds]. On account of this, many scholars[57] who [worked] in this language and saw the difficulty of the Syrians in reading wanted to add those letters which were lacking from this script, according to the need of this language's usage, with a view towards us reading correctly and without labor.[58]

In the fifth century, Theodoret made reference to the various types of Aramaic that were spoken in the Middle East when explaining the famous passage in Judges 12:6, where captured men were asked to say "Shibboleth" to see whether they were Ephraimites: "Just as the people of Osrhoene and Syria and Euphratensis and Palestine and Phoenicia make use of the language of the Syrians, but their dialect has great difference, in the same way the Hebrews were twelve tribes, but they likely had certain peculiarities [of speech], just as this one no doubt did."[59]

---

[57] Lit., "lovers of labor" (sc. φιλόπονοι).

[58] Jacob of Edessa, *Grammar*, p. ܒ

[59] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Questions on Judges* 19 (Greek in Petruccione and Hill 2007[vol.2]: 342; ET at 343). Bar Hebraeus brought up the example of Judges 12:6; see his reference to the "Ephraimites" "who at times speak with a *semkath* in the place of a *shin*" in Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 205. Phoenicians were speaking Aramaic in Theodoret's day, but Meleager, in the

The evidence can be multiplied, not just for Syriac, but for other kinds of Aramaic: "Thy speech betrayeth thee," they said to Peter at the high priest's residence after Jesus had been arrested, presumably referring to his Galilean pronunciation (Mt. 26:73), which must have marked him off as a non-local in Jerusalem. An oft-cited passage in the Babylonian Talmud highlights the humorous and confusing aspects of Galilean Aramaic's loss of a distinction between various guttural letters;[60] it also observes that Judeans were more precise in their speech than Galileans were.[61]

The dialects we know about from ancient and medieval sources must have only been the tip of the iceberg: studies of modern neo-Aramaic dialects have shown that they differ by village and even by religion; indeed, Christians and Jews in the same village might speak mutually unintelligible kinds of Aramaic.[62] It is also worth pointing out that none of the many modern neo-Aramaic dialects has as its direct forebear any one of the many written Aramaic dialects we have attested from antiquity: the linguistic descendants of Syriac, Christian

---

first century BC, seems to suggest that at least some of them were still speaking Phoenecian. See *Anth. Pal.* 7.419: ""If you are a Syrian, Salam! If you are a Phoenician, Naidios! If you are a Greek, Chaire!" Translation taken from Paton 1925-1927(vol.2): 227 (with slight alteration). Text in Gow and Page 1965(vol.1): 217: ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν Σύρος ἐσσί, Σαλάμ, εἰ δ᾽ οὖν σύ γε Φοῖνιξ, Ναίδιος, εἰ δ᾽ Ἕλλην, Χαῖρε. Gow and Page 1965(vol.2): 608-609 note that "Salam" occurs "here only in Greek literature," and also that Scaliger read Αὐδονίς and Herwerden read αὐδονί for the Phoenician greeting Ναίδιος. On this passage, see Nöldeke 1871a: 462.

[60] Erubin 53b, where there is a confusion between the words for "donkey," "wine," "wool," and "lambskin." See e.g. Casey 1998: 90; Sabar 2002: 26; Taylor 2002: 303n11; and Hirshman 2009: 55.

[61] Erubin 53a-b.

[62] Khan 2007b: 6.

Palestinian, and the various Jewish dialects of Aramaic have all
perished.[63]

---

[63] See Nöldeke 1868b: xxxv-xxxvi (p. xxxvi: "Das Neusyrische ist also als
Tochter eines Dialects zu betrachten, der zum Altsyr. in einem
schwesterlichen Verhältnis stand."); Macuch 1965: lv; Fox 1994: 154; Khan
2007b: 2, 8-10; Khan 2007c; Khan 2009: 29; Furman 2020: 241n5. The spoken
Mandaic of Ahvāz in Iran apparently is a descendant of Classical Mandaic;
see Khan 2007a: 106 and note Häberl 2009: "Just as Mandaic represents the
only classical Aramaic dialect to survive to the present day, the Mandaean
religion is the only surviving member of the pre-Islamic Gnostic sects from
late antiquity" and Häberl 2011: 726: "Of all the dialects [of Neo-Aramaic] that
have thus far been documented, only Neo-Mandaic can be described with
any certainty as the modern reflex of any classical dialect of Aramaic"; see
further Häberl 2009: 13. Despite statements such as these, Morgenstern 2010
argued there are linguistic elements in Neo-Mandaic that have no precedent
in Classical Mandaic but which can be seen in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic;
"a number of features that distinguish NM [Neo-Mandaic] from CM
[Classical Mandaic] have deep historical roots for which evidence can be
found in the Jewish Aramaic sources" (523).

Despite what its title might seem to suggest, Hasse 1787 is more of a
discussion of different kinds of literary Aramaic than different vernacular
dialects, but this confusion points to an ambiguity in the meaning of "Syriac"
which will be discussed further below. The nineteenth century witnessed
quite an interest and awareness in the question of medieval Aramaic
dialects; Hoffmann 1827: 1-16 offers an overview of Syriac and Aramaic and
the question of Late Antique dialects which is still valuable. Uhlemann 1829:
xv-xvi was aware of a diversity of Aramaic dialects, but cites no medieval
evidence for the various dialects he mentions. Larsow 1841 remains a very
useful work which is in many respects unsurpassed; Martin 1872 is primarily
concerned with questions of the Eastern ("Nestorian") and Western
("Jacobite") variations of Syriac (i.e., Edessene Aramaic), but he is also very
aware that there are non-Edessene Aramaics. Nöldeke 1867 dealt with the
neo-Aramaic dialect found in Maʿlūlā and Nöldeke 1868a dealt with
Christian Palestinian Aramaic. Other relevant studies include Quatremère
1835 and Martin 1872. Taylor 2002 is the best modern study I am aware of
dealing with late antique and early medieval Syriac/Aramaic dialects. Breuer
2006 focuses on Jewish Aramaic. Ricardo Contini has, in a series of studies,
looked at questions relating to various late antique and medieval Aramaic
dialects as well as the issue of the Aramaic substrate influence on modern
Lebanese Arabic. See Contini 1987, Contini 1995, Contini 1999, Contini 2003.

Linguistic evidence, (Il)legitimate inferences, and Everyday Language

Part of the challenge when speaking about the linguistic situation in the Middle East in the late antique and medieval periods is that our evidence is based on either texts or inscriptions, but both can be misleading, especially in situations where a strong diglossia exists.[64] The connection between the language individuals speak on a daily basis and the language they choose to use for writing a text or an inscription, or which they put on coins, can often be a tenuous one. Operating solely on the basis of the evidence of building inscriptions and coins, historians several thousand years from now might very well argue that Latin was still widely spoken in parts of the US, the UK, and Europe into the twentieth century;[65] they might also argue that English and Classical Arabic were the major spoken languages spoken of Egypt, or that French and Classical Arabic were the dominant languages spoken in Lebanon. In all these cases, their conclusions would be off the mark, often disastrously so. In a society where there is a difference, perhaps marked, between the spoken language and the language employed in formal settings—that is, in a place such as the Middle East, much of which has been characterized by a diglossia since at least Late Antiquity—even relying on texts to infer what was taking place on the streets and in the market places can be a tricky enterprise.

The situation in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages with Aramaic must have been very much as it is in churches throughout the Middle East today, where liturgies are said in

Schall 1953 and Schall 1989 also deal with the question of medieval Aramaic dialectology.

[64] The suggestion that diglossia existed in Syriac-using contexts can be found in Butts 2019: 230; Furman 2020: 242; and Butts 2024: 378-379.

[65] This point is inspired by a similar example once made to me by Maria Mavroudi.

standard Arabic, or *fuṣḥā*, but the parishioners and clergy speak one of an enormous number of different Arabic dialects in their daily lives. In the case of the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of the East, which have preserved the use of Syriac in their liturgies up till the present, the vernacular Aramaic dialects that their members speak have influenced the pronunciation of Edessene Syriac, which is used in the churches.[66]

Maʿlūlā in modern Syria is famous for being a place where Aramaic can be found spoken as a living language, and its history can provide another illustration of the point I am attempting to make. Not only is Maʿlūlā one of the westernmost places Aramaic is still spoken as a living language in the Middle East,[67] the Aramaic spoken there (and in two other nearby villages), represents the only surviving examples of the Western branch of the Aramaic family.[68] Despite this, Edessene Aramaic, Syriac, was the liturgical language of the Aramaic-speaking Christians of Maʿlūlā until the early nineteenth century.[69] Going from the language of liturgy to the language of the people in the pews, so to speak, would be a mistake.

Near Maʿlūlā is Saidnaya, historically an important pilgrimage site for Christians (and even Muslims) from all over Greater Syria. When the orientalist Ḥabīb Zayyāt visited Saidnaya at some point in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, most of the manuscripts he found in the library of Dayr al-Shāghūra, a Chalcedonian monastery there, were in Arabic;

---

[66] See Khan 2007a: 103; Khan 2007b: 10-11; Khan 2007c: 3-4.

[67] There are places in Lebanon and the West Bank where Aramaic is also spoken as a living language, but the Aramaic spoken there will be by members of Christian communities which hail originally from southeastern Turkey and who moved to the Levant in the early 20th century as a result of the dislocations caused by the *Sayfo*.

[68] On Western Neo-Aramaic, see Arnold 2011.

[69] See Nasrallah 1979-1989 (v.4.1): 257.

some were in Greek, and two were in Syriac.[70] A historian might take the contents of the library's monastery as strong evidence for the overwhelming predominance of Arabic (and Greek) in that monastery's official life. But such a move would be misleading make, for the library's evidence for the monastery's linguistic history was incomplete: in 1840, its Chalcedonian monks, fearing that the Syrian Orthodox would use the presence of a very large number of Syriac manuscripts in the monastery's library to put forth a claim of ownership to the property, made the decision to burn those manuscripts. On his visit to Dayr al-Shāghūra, Zayyāt spoke with a woman who had witnessed the destruction of the manuscripts nearly half a century before. The fire had lasted four days.[71]

Many Christians of Maʿlūlā were of course Chalcedonians and one only need point to the history of this church to further show that liturgical language in a Middle Eastern context does not reflect the language of day-to-day life: in this church, usually regarded as the most Arabophile and Hellenophile and least Syriac of all the Christian communities of Greater Syria and the Fertile Crescent, Syriac was still in use liturgically until the seventeenth century. Indeed, Korolevsky suggested that, apart from international centers like Jerusalem, Alexandria, and the Sinai, places which received a constant-influx of Greek speakers from outside the Middle East, all Chalcedonian liturgical manuscripts from the ninth to seventeenth centuries

---

[70] Zayyāt 1902: 118-119.

[71] Zayyāt 1902: 117 contains a description of the burning, which Zayyāt heard from a woman in Maʿlūlā who witnessed it as a young girl, some fifty years before; on p. 118, he mentions that the fire burned for four days. Korolevsky 1998-2001 (v.3.1): 154, dates the incident to 1840. Examples of Chalcedonian Syriac manuscripts from the area include BL Add. 21,031, a manuscript which seems to have been written at Maʿlūlā in AD 1213 (Wright 1870-1872(vol.1): 327-328) and Baghdad MS 15646A, an undated Chalcedonian Gospel lectionary from Maʿlūlā (Harrak 2011: 24-27).

throughout the region were in fact Syriac ones.[72] St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai, an institution whose Chalcedonian credentials are impeccable, has one of the most precious collections in existence of Christian Greek manuscripts; it is perhaps less well-known that its collection of Syriac manuscripts is regarded as one of the "ten most important collections in the language in the world."[73]

Syriac as a Sectarian Language?

The mention of Chalcedonian Syriac brings up another important point: Syriac was not a sectarian language—one that only members of one confession used. Though nearly all extant Syriac is Christian Syriac, Pagans, Jews, and Manicheans also used it.[74] In a Christian context, it is the Chalcedonian use of Syriac that that is typically overlooked, yet we have a variety of types of evidence for just this.[75] In addition to what we have just seen, one can point out that there are more dated Melkite manuscripts from the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, than there are dated manuscripts from the Church of the East.[76] Syriac was also, as Peter Brown has put it, a language one could disagree in.[77] In the eighth-century letters of the

---

[72] Korolevsky 1998-2001 (v.3.1): 158. Nasrallah (v.4.1): 257, notes that Syriac continued, with Arabic, until being abandoned for good in the early eighteenth century. Nasrallah gives a list of early modern Syriac liturgical manuscripts (pp. 261-264) as well as Syro-Arabic ones (pp. 264-272); these vastly outnumber his list of Greco-Arabic manuscripts (pp. 272-273).

[73] Brock 1995: xvii.

[74] On Syriac written by pagans, see the evidence assembled in Brock and Taylor 2001(vol. 2): 102. On Syriac and Jews, see Weitzmann 1999: 121-122, 244-247; Bhayro 2012; Bhayro 2014; Bhayro 2016; Stadel 2016; Bhayro 2017; and Stadel 2020. On Syriac and Manicheans, see Pedersen and Larsen 2013 and cf. Burkitt 1925: 111-119 and Rosenthal 1939: 207-211.

[75] See Brock 2022.

[76] Brock 2012: 43 (9 vs. 2 [eleventh century]; 9 vs. 8 [twelfth century]; 79 vs. 49 [thirteenth century]).

[77] A point made to me in conversation.

Miaphysite George, Bishop of the Arab tribes (d. AD 724), for instance, we have an example of a leader in the Miaphysite church responding, in Syriac, to Chalcedonian theological polemics which were put forth in Syriac.[78]

"SYRIAC" VS. "ARAMAIC"

Authors writing in Edessene Aramaic could refer to their language in a number of different ways:[79] it was the *leshshānā urhāyā*,[80] Edessene language, the *ḥshaḥtā urhāytā*,[81] the Edessene usage, or language, the *leshshānā nahrāya*, the Mesopotamian (lit. "Riverine") language,[82] the *leshshānā d-bēt nahrin*, the language of Mesopotamia,[83] even the *leshshānā kaldāyā*, the Chaldean language,[84] to name only a few.[85] It was, of course, also called the *leshshānā Ārāmāyā*, the Aramaic language.[86]

The earliest authors in this dialect would refer to the language as "Edessene," reflecting perhaps its geographic origin;[87] Syriac even had a word, *dmusutā*, which referred to the

---

[78] See Tannous 2008.

[79] See the excellent Farina 2020 for an examination of this question in Syriac grammatical works.

[80] See e.g. Jacob of Edessa, *Grammar*, p. ܒ (cf. n. 58, above).

[81] See Bar Bahlul, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, col. 579, s.v. ܐܘܪܗܝܘܬܐ and Payne Smith 1879-1901 (v.1): col. 1400, s.v. ܚܫܚܬܐ

[82] Payne Smith 1879-1901 (v.2): col. 2301, s.v. ܢܗܪܐ

[83] Ps.-Eusebius of Caesarea, *On the Star*, p. ܝ (=130). (See Nöldeke 1871b: 116n4).

[84] Bar Bahlul, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, col. 982: ܐܪܡ ܡܡܠܠܐ ܣܘܪܝܐ: ܐܘܪ ܠܫܢ ܟܠܕܝܐ. ("Chaldean Language: Syrian speech")

[85] For examples of Syriac being called ܒܪ ܩܠܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ, "the Syriac language" or the "Syriac idiom," (*ba(r)t qālā* is literally "daughter of a sound" or "daughter of a voice" and ܒܪ ܩܠܐ ܐܘܪܗܝܬܐ, "the Edessene language" or the "Edessene idiom," see nn. 140 and 89, respectively.

[86] Payne Smith 1879-1901 (v.1): col. 389, s.v. ܐܪܡܝܐ

[87] Brock 1980: 13.

Edessene way of speaking.[88] Eventually, however, when writers
in Edessene Aramaic chose to speak of their language, they
most commonly opted to refer to it as the *leshshānā suryāyā*,
the "Syriac" or "Syrian" language.[89] Writers would at times
identify their language by more than one of these names: "Three
men were authors," Jacob of Edessa would write to John of
Litarb, "in this Syriac, or Aramaic, language who were called by
the name of Isaac..."[90] In another place, Jacob noted that Paul
of Edessa's translation of the hymns of Severus was from "the
Greek language to the Edessene, that is, Syriac idiom."[91] Elias of
Tirhan, in the passage quoted above, spoke of his studies in "the
Syriac and Aramaic language."[92] This language could be the
basis for making claims of precedence and even superiority for
some: before the Tower of Babel, the author of the *Cave of
Treasures* wrote, everybody spoke Syriac:

---

[88] See Payne Smith 1879-1901 (v.1): col. 917, s.v. ܪܡܘܣܘܬܐ , though this is
only attested in medieval lexica.

[89] See Jacob of Edessa, quoted in Payne Smith (v.2): col. 2301, s.v. ܣܘܪܝܐ,
where he speaks about "The Mesopotamian script, that is, the Edessene or,
to put it more precisely, the Syriac." ܟܬܒܐ ܣܘܪܝܐ ܐܘܪܗܝܐ ܐܘܟܝܬ ܢܗܪܝܢܝܐ
ܣܘܪܝܐ ܐܝܬ ܡܕܢܚܝܐܝܬ ܠܡܐܡܪ. It might also be called ܡܡܠܠܐ
ܣܘܪܝܐ *mam(l)lā suryāyā*, "Syriac speech" (see Payne Smith 1879-1901[vol.2]:
col. 2115, s.v. ܡܡܠܠܐ also, vol. 1, col. 93, s.v. ܐܪܡܝܐ) or ܣܘܕ ܣܘܪܝܐ *swād
suryāyā*, "Syriac dialect," or "Syriac colloquial" (see Payne Smith 1879-
1902[vol.2]: col. 2544 [s.v. ܣܘܕ] and n. 84 above), or perhaps also *seprā
suryāyā*, "Syriac language" (See Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 2,
col. 90), though in this context, *seprā* might also be construed as "writing."

[90] Jacob of Edessa, *Letter to John the Stylite*, p. ܝܗ. ܬܠܬܐ ܓܒܪܝܢ ܗܘܘ
ܟܬܘܒܐ ܒܗܢܐ ܠܫܢܐ ܗܢܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܐܘ ܐܪܡܝܐ.ܕܡܬܩܪܝܢ ܒܫܡܐ ܗܢܐ
ܐܝܣܚܩ

[91] Wright 1870-1872 (vol.1): 336 (Add. 17,134): ܦܩܥܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܠܥܠ ܕܐܝܠ ܣܘܐܪ
ܠܬܢܝ ܡܠܦ ܡܠ ܐܘܪܗܝܐ ܐܘ ܟܝܬ ܣܘܪܝܐ NB: This manuscript is an
autograph of Jacob of Edessa. Jacob is a particularly rich source of these
"double identifications," so to speak, because of his fondness for using the
expression *aw kith*, "that is," when writing in order to offer synonyms for a
word he has just used.

[92] Elias of Tirhan, *Grammar*, p. ܚ. See note 14, above.

And all the tribes and descendants of Noah and his sons
were gathered together and they went up from the east
and they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled
in it; and they all of one speech and one language.[93]
There was one language from Adam up until that point;
it was in this broad and spacious language that they
were speaking, all of them in the Syriac language, which
is Aramaic.   For this language is the king of all of
languages.   Ancient authors, however, have erred
because they have written that Hebrew was first; but
here, they mixed a mistake in with their work, for all the
languages which exist on the earth are derived from
Syriac and they are mixed with it in language...[94]

Jacob of Edessa, Elias of Tirhan, the author of the *Cave
of Treasures* (and other authors, too),[95] were all well aware that

---

[93] Cp. Genesis 11:1-2

[94] *Cave of Treasures* 22.9, 11 (Text in Ri 1987= [v.207]: 186; FT in Ri 1987
[v.208]: 70, 72).

[95] See, e.g., the mid-sixth century letter of Paphnutius to Moses of Aggel,
asking Moses to translate the *Glaphyra* of Cyril of Alexandria into Syriac,
where Paphnutius uses "Syriac" and "Aramaic" interchangeably over the
course of several lines: "...I am speaking about the book which is called the
Glaphyra of Cyril, the skilled and worthy of blessings patriarch of
Alexandria, whose contents are a teacher of profit for believers—like the
book, *Worship in the Spirit* [cf. CPG 5200], which was composed by him and
translated into the Syriac language. But as for this *Glaphyra*, which I am
unable to translate into Aramaic, I urge your zeal to labor and translate it..."
(see Guidi 1886: 401; on Moses of Aggel, see Baumstark 1922: 160-161). See,
also, the second letter prefaced to the late fifth/early sixth-century
translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, where
the author uses "Aramaic" and "Syriac" interchangeably: Van den Eynde 1939:
73-75; a partial ET of these passages can be found in Tannous 2010: 143-146.
One can also point to the Syriac version of Titus of Bostra's *Against the
Manichaeans* (preserved in BL Add. 12,154, from AD 411), whose final line
notes that the work's four *memrē* were "translated from Greek to Aramaic"
(ed. Lagarde 1859: 186). For these three references, I am grateful to an
anonymous reviewer who pointed me to Payne Smith 1879-1901 (vol. 1), col.
389, s.v. ܐܪܡܝܐ, where they can be found.

"Syriac" was the same as "Aramaic": which brings us to an important point: for authors writing in the language of Edessa, *suryāyā*, "Syriac" or "Syrian," frequently meant not necessarily Edessene Aramaic, or Edessene, but rather, "Aramaic" or "Aramaean" more generally, and *Suriyā*, "Syria," meant more than just Edessa and its environs. Thus, we might find in Bar Hebraeus a comment like, "no one among the Syrians, apart from those on Mount Lebanon...", putting in the category of "Syrians," or *suryāyē*, even people living in Lebanon, a place whose Aramaic would have hardly qualified as Edessene.[96] And Edessa and Syria might be spoken of in ways that made them overlap: "In Syria and in Edessa," Philip, the student of Bardaisan (d. 222 AD) would write, "people would cut off their manhood for Taratha, but when Abgar the King believed, he ordered that everyone who cut off his genitals should have his hand cut off. And from that day until now, no one cuts off his sexual organs in the region of Edessa."[97] At times, explicit discussion of what "Syria" included can be found: "From ancient times," Bar Bahlūl (fl. 10th century) noted, "the Syrians (*suryāyē*) were called Aramaeans (*ārāmāyē*)," and then proceeded to give several geographic definitions of Syria, including one which identified it as "all the region from Antioch to Edessa" and another which listed cities in Syria, including Antioch, Aleppo, Latakiya, Hama, and Shayzar,[98] all places which would have had Aramaic which was certainly non-Edessene. Similarly, in a list of all the Patriarchs of Antioch up

---

[96] Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 55: ܠܐ ܐܢܫ ܡܢ ܣܘܪ̈ܝܝܐ ܣܛܪ ܡܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܛܘܪܐ ܕܠܒܢܢ "No one of the Syrians apart from those of Mt. Lebanon) (see above, n. 29). Recall, also, Theodoret's distinction between the Aramaic of Phoenicians and that of the people of Osrhoene, n. 59, above.

[97] *Book of the Laws of the Countries* 45 (Text in Nau 1907: col. 607)

[98] Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon*, vol. 2, col. 1324. ܡܢ ܩܕܝܡ ܣܘܪ̈ܝܝܐ ܐܪ̈ܡܝܐ ܡܬܩܪܝܢ ܗܘܘ...ܣܘܪܝܐ ܟܠܗ ܐܬܪܐ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܛܝܟܝܐ ܘܥܕܡܐ ܠܐܘܪܗܝ. An anonymous reviewer observes about this quotation: "this passage is probably a later interpolation by a West Syriac scribe" (cf. n. 166, below).

until his day, Dionysios Bar Salibi (d. 1171) would mention a certain Jacob, "who was from the region of Syria, that is, Damascus."[99]

Michael Rabo (d. 1199) included a remarkable appendix to his great *Chronicle,* which dealt with the history of the Aramaeans, whom he identified with "Syrians," and whom he considered the forbears of his readers.[100] "Now with the help of God," he prefaced this appendix, "We will write a record of the kingdoms that existed in ancient times from our own people, the Aramaeans, that is, the children of Aram; they have been called the "Syrians," that is, the children of Syria."[101] Relying on the Bible, Michael would claim Chaldean and Assyrian kings as ancestors because they, too, were Aramaic speakers. A key passage was 2 Kings 18:26: "Speak to your servants in Aramaic, so we can understand; do not speak in Judean":[102] in it, "the Chaldean and Assyrian kings were shown to be from the Aramaean language and script."[103] Evidence from Alexander Polyhistor, Abydenus, and Josephus leads to a similar conclusion: "When we find testimonies like these in expert sources, we state on their basis that all the kings who existed in this land, who were called 'Assyrians' and 'Chaldeans' were from our language and their names were changed by the Greeks who

---

[99] Assemani 1719-1728 (vol.2): 324n (col. 2.26-27): ܩܘܒܐ ܗܘ ܗܢܐ ܐܝܬܘ ܣܘܪܝܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܕܡܫܩܘܣ. Compare this to how in modern Levantine Arabic *al-Shām* can refer to both "Syria" and "Damascus."

[100] On this appendix, see Weltecke 2009: 119-122 and Weltecke 2019: 207-213.

[101] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Text in Ibrahim 2009: 751; FT in Chabot 1899-1910 [vol.3]: 442). On this passage, see Weltecke 2009: 119; and Weltecke 2021: 207 (pp. 207-213 contains translations of significant portions of Michael's Appendix 2); cf. also Butts 2017: 608n3.

[102] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Text in Ibrahim 2009: 751).

[103] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Ibrahim 2009: 751; FT in Chabot 1899-1910 [vol.3]: 443).

afterwards ruled over Asia."[104]   Nebuchadnezzar, for example, belonged to the same group as Michael and his readers; indeed, Michael notes, he could continue with his point, but "so that we do not wander, these small things from the books of Polyhistor and of Josephus will suffice; our purpose is to demonstrate that until the time of Cyrus the Persian there continued a kingdom that was in our language and script."[105]

In fact, for Michael, calling the Aramaic-speaking people who lived West of the Euphrates "Syrians" was an unfortunate historical development. The reality was that people on both sides of the Euphrates spoke Aramaic, even if only those living to the west of it were living in what was properly known as "Syria." Referring to people on one side of the Euphrates by a different name than those on the other was misleading. They all spoke the same language. Dionysius of Tellmahre (d. 845) gave Michael the opportunity to discuss the question of the geographic extent of Syria and the unity of Aramaic speakers:

> Dionysius of Tellmahre shows this when he speaks in this way: 'At the time the Children of Israel were dwelling in Egypt, two brothers, Syros[106] and Cilikos, came into conflict and Cilikos moved to the land which is to the interior of the mountain that is today called "The Black"; and Cilicia was named for him. Syros, however, remained in the land to the west of the Euphrates; Syria was named for him. It was divided up for many people and a number of kings, who are called "of the Syrians," rose up in it: kings of the Romans[107] are called 'kings of the Syrians,' just as it is written in the

---

[104] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Text in Ibrahim 2009: 751; FT in Chabot 1899-1910 [vol.3]: 443).

[105] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Text in Ibrahim 2009: 752; FT in Chabot 1899-1910 [vol.3]: 445).

[106] Following Chabot 1899-1910 (vol.3): 445n11 in reading ܣܘܪܘܣ for ܣܘܪܝܘܣ

[107] Chabot 1899-1910(vol.3): 445 reads "Idumeans" rather than "Romans."

Septuagint translation: "Bar Hadad, king of the Syrians, laid siege against Samaria";[108] and, 'the servants of the king of Syria said to their master: "The god of the mountains is the God of Israel";[109] and, "the [King][110] of Israel said to his servants: do you not know that Gilead is ours? And that we are keeping quiet about taking it from the hand of the king of Syria?"'[111] Look! It has been shown that Syria is to the West of the Euphrates and it is misleadingly that those Aramaeans who speak our language are called 'Syrians,' insofar as they are only a part [of the group who speaks this language]—all of the rest lived from the Euphrates, eastward, that is, from the banks of the Euphrates to Persia, and there were many kings from the banks of the Euphrates eastward. In Assyria, there was Bel and Ninus and many others who were after them; in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, who spoke to the magicians who had been sought out for the sake of interpreting his dream; in Edessa, those of the House of Abgar; in Araba, those of the house of Sanatruq. We have said these things to demonstrate powerfully that the inhabitants of Syria are those who are to the west of the Euphrates; that the root and foundation of the language is Edessa; and that those who hold that a king has never risen up from this people are not correct. Instead, it has been shown that the Chaldean and Assyrian kings are from this people which has been called "Syrians." All together, they total 194: 10 before the Flood; those after the Flood are 76; and after the Medes another 40 Chaldeans; those who are after Ninus are 45; and after the Persians of the house of Sennacharib and Nebuchadnezzar, 23.[112]

---

[108] 2 Kings 6:24; lit. 'camped against.'

[109] Cp. 1 Kings 20:23

[110] Following Chabot 1899-1910(vol.3): 445 in supplying ܡܠܟܐ

[111] 1 Kings 22:3

[112] Ibrahim 2009: 752-753. FT in Chabot 1899-1910(vol. 3): 445-446.

Having collected these things, as much as possible, from many books, we will proceed to explain what we have previously promised to show: on account of what cause did their names vanish from this literature[113] of ours? [The reason] is as follows: When indeed these ancient kingdoms came to an end at the hands of the kingdom of the Persians—which began with Cyrus and ended with Darius, who was killed by Alexander—for the period of 231 years of the kingdom of the Persians, all the people of the regions of Asia were subdued under the hand of the Persians. After Alexander, you should combine the time of the family of Seleucus and Antiochus, those who were called "Kings of Syria": their era extended 220 years, until the beginning of the kingdom of the Romans, which came from Gaius and Augustus, in which period the Savior of All, Christ, the Son of God, appeared. Our people, therefore, had an era of 450 years bereft of kings. Consequently, when the life-giving teaching of the Gospel shined forth and this people joyfully followed it and received instruction, they had a total contempt and rejection for all the rest of the books that had in them records of their ancient kings. With the hot zeal of the fear of God, they burned all the books which had collected in them record of these kings, insofar as interwoven with the names of kings and with the chronology of their eras were also demonic stories of their paganism. For this reason, it was as if from a putrid smell that they turned their faces away from all these books and burned them with fire, so that their memory might not be preserved for their children and for coming generations. The book, the *Acts of the Apostles*, makes mentions this in the passage where it says: 'Those who believed were bringing the

---

[113] *Seprā* (sg): could also mean "book(s)," "writings," "letters," "script," or even "language."

books of their fathers and burning them at the feet of
the Apostles; their value was calculated to be a very
great quantity of silver."[114] The forefathers were doing
this with zeal in many regions and for a number of
generations after the salvific appearance of the Gospel:
everywhere a document was found which had mention
in it of pagan stories and tales of their gods, it would be
handed over to the fire. Therefore, the chronicles of
pagan kings were wiped out of our literature because
our fathers completely followed Christ who is God and
they denied the entirety of pagan error. On account of
this, after Christ, they proclaimed Constantine, the
Victorious, the king who believed and was baptized in
the name of Christ, and by this one [sc. Constantine],
all the believing and orthodox kings, one after another.
In the case of those, however, who afterwards turned
away from orthodoxy, they considered them strangers.
In consequence, it is not for us to take pride in a worldly
kingdom, but rather in Christ, whose Kingdom is not of
this world.[115]

According to Michael, Aramaic speakers had gone centuries
without rulers who spoke their language and, in the meantime,
converted to Christianity. This religious change meant a
different attitude towards the past: no longer identifying with
pagan forbears and appalled by their idolatry, they actively
destroyed books that contained what they regarded as literally
demonic narratives. Destroying their literary connection with
these ancient Aramaic-speaking rulers had left later Aramaic
speakers open to the charge that they had never produced a
king or a kingdom.

The defensive note throughout Michael's appendix on the
history of the Aramaeans makes it a doubly interesting

---

[114] Cp. Acts 19:19.

[115] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Text in Ibrahim 2009: 753. FT in
Chabot 1899-1910 [vol.3]: 446-447).

document: he is, it turns out, claiming these ancient Mesopotamian rulers for himself as a move against "Greeks" who have apparently belittled Aramaic speakers for never having produced the same sort of political hegemony Greek speakers have. Michael has been prompted to action by condescension. "Now, we have gathered these things together in this book," he wrote

> to satisfy the vainglorious Greeks, whose boasting is their shame.[116] For when they have seen our holy fathers, whom they distance themselves from because they have distanced themselves from Christ, they babble on in order to lead the simple astray, saying that no king has risen up from our people and reckoning that we have no leader like they do; "we are distant from them," they say. As a result, we have compiled these things from their books because it is they who have not completely distanced themselves from paganism. The holy Gregory the Theologian bears witness that the stories of their pagan forebears are to be found in the books of the Greeks; Eusebios, too, likewise makes our literature known from their books. Abba Mar Jacob of Edessa has shown us from their books that from our people there were kingdoms that were stronger than all their kingdoms in their time. And today, having rejected their error, we cling to Christ, the King of All.[117]

For Michael, the lack of evidence of previous Aramaic-speaking rulers is actually something to be proud of: it means that they, unlike the Greeks, who are critical of them, have fully severed ties with the pagan errors of their ancestors. Not only are the Aramaeans more thoroughly Christianized, but they also, judging by the Greek's own, still partially pagan literature, had

---

[116] Cf. Phil. 3:19

[117] Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*, Appendix 2 (Text in Ibrahim 2009: 753-754; FT in Chabot 1899-1910 [vol. 3]: 447).

rulers superior to anything the Greeks might have to offer. So, the Aramaeans were in reality superior on two fronts: they were more Christian and they had been greater kings.

Michael's views about continuity between Aramaic and Semitic-speaking peoples' in the Near East were not unique; before him, in 662, the learned (and bilingual) Miaphysite Severus Sebokht (d. 666/7) wrote a letter about astronomy from which only a portion now survives in a manuscript in Paris. "Concerning," Severus would tell the recipient, whose name is now lost,

> the matter of people from among the Greeks saying to you, as your brotherhood has written, that it is not at all possible that the Syrians know anything like this—I am speaking of reckoning the stars, or solar and lunar eclipses—while supposing that the Greeks alone possess all the knowledge because of the fact that they speak Greek: It made sense that the first to know these things were Babylonian sages, since Babylonians were the first discoverers of this science, not the Greeks, as all the chroniclers of the Greeks bear witness. Then, after the Babylonians, were the Egyptians and then next were the Greeks. Now as regards the Babylonians, they are Syrians—I don't think that anyone will disagree. Therefore, in the case of those who are saying that it is not at all possible that the Syrians should know anything in this manner when the Syrians are the discoverers and first teachers of these things, they are greatly mistaken.[118]

Like Michael, Severus invoked this continuity as a prophylactic against claims of cultural superiority that Greek-speakers were making against Aramaic speakers. But this was not the only context in which such identifications might be made. Even

---

[118] Paris Syriaque 346, fols. 168b-169a. The letter is partially published in Nau 1910: 248-252.

before Severos Sebokht, the earliest extant Syriac Bible translations show an understanding that Syrians and Aramaeans are equivalent: "Naaman the Syrian" (Ναιμὰν ὁ Σύρος), for example, in Luke 4:27 became, in both the Old Syriac (Sinaiticus) and the Peshitta, an *armāyā*, an "Aramaean."[119] This was a world with a long memory: the earliest name for Edessa, "Adme," found in Akkadian in the second millennium BC and at Mari in the eighteenth century BC, was still known more than three thousand years later in the tenth century by Bar Bahlūl and other lexicographers.[120]

A sense of continuity between the Aramaic and Semitic-speaking peoples of the ancient Near East and those of the Late Antique and medieval Near East would also continue after Michael. In the thirteenth century, Bar Hebraeus (d. AD 1286) would offer a list of the first ten kings in history in his *Chronicon Syriacum*. "All these are Chaldeans," he observed,

> That is, ancient Syrians (*suryāyē*), according to the tradition of the early chronicles; but because most of the authors [of the chronicles] are Greeks, they changed the Chaldean names to their manner of speaking and did not pronounce them in the Chaldean way at all. Indeed, look now: the name 'Noah,' [*Noḥ*] which is plainly a Syriac name and is taken from *nāwḥā* ["rest"], they call 'Noachos.' And not only the ancients, but also these who in our own day who are used to changing words, calling Jacob [*Ya'qob*], which is from

---

[119] The Peshitta has ܐܪܡܝܐ ܢܥܡܢ ("Naaman the Aramaean", the Sinaiticus has only ܐܪܡܝܐ ("Aramaen") without Naaman's name. The extremely-literal Harklean, however, makes him into a proper Syrian: ܢܥܡܢ ܗܘ ܣܘܪܝܐ ("Naaman the/that Syrian"). See Kiraz 2002 (v.3): 73.

[120] See Brock and Taylor 2001 (v.1): 154 and see Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, col. 39 where ܐܪܗܝ is defined as *ism madīna wa-hiya al-Ruhā* ("the name of a city: namely, Edessa"). In general, for this point, see Harrak 1992. Compare this to the survival of Akkadian words in the neo-Aramaic of Qaraqosh, discussed in Khan 2007a: 110 and Khan 2007b: 11-12.

'eqbā ['heel'], Ayāqobos, and Bar Ṣawmā 'Bar Somos,' and many other things as well.[121]

The witness of Michael, like that of Jacob of Edessa, Elias of Tirhan, and others, raises an interesting issue: writers in Syriac knew their language was also called "Aramaic" and considered themselves and their forbearers to be Aramaeans. But did they not, as a matter of course, use this adjective to refer to themselves or their language? What happened? The simple answer to this question is that for writers in Syriac, the word "Syrian" meant the same thing as "Aramaic." The two words were synonyms.

Because authors writing in the dialect of Edessa usually called their language simply *suryāyā*, "Syrian" or "Syriac," it is easy to assume that by this they meant "Edessene Aramaic," or, to put it another way, the language that we find in dictionaries like that of Jessie Payne Smith[122] or Carl Brockelmann,[123] or described in the classic grammars of Nöldeke[124] and Duval.[125] Such an assumption would, however, be overly hasty.

A moment's reflection suggests why: the American or Australian will typically say he or she speaks "English" without specifying their particular dialect; similarly, the Egyptian or Lebanese might identify their spoken language as *'arabī*, Arabic, without giving a regional specification. And so on with Spanish speakers and with French speakers and with anything speakers. Individuals will often identify their language by its most general designation when describing what they are speaking or writing and will only descend from the more universal to the particular, identifying precise dialects rather than the broader category of the language they are speaking (American English rather than

---

[121] See Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicle*, p. 5.
[122] Payne Smith 1903.
[123] Brockelman 1928.
[124] Nöldeke 1904.
[125] Duval 1881.

English, Lebanese Arabic rather than Arabic), in contexts where they bump up against other, different varieties of their language and a need to differentiate the two types arises—an adjective "American," "British," "Canadian," "Iraqi," "Tunisian," etc., is inserted to qualify what had previously been a perfectly satisfactory descriptor: "English" or "Arabic."

In precisely such contexts, we catch glimpses of authors writing in Edessene Aramaic using the word "Syriac" to mean "Aramaic" more broadly and not necessarily their particular dialect. When a difference arose, they, too, would retreat into more specific adjectives to describe their language. Discussing the word *yātā*, for example, Jacob of Edessa noted that it was more commonly used in some kinds of Aramaic than others. "Now as for this word *yātā*," he observed, "so far as this Syriac, that is, Mesopotamian, language is concerned, it is not very common or in use. But as regards the Syriac Palestinian [language], it is very common and beloved. It is, however, to the ancient Hebrew language that the usage of this word belongs most of all."[126] In Syriac—or Mesopotamian, as Jacob called it— the usage was one way, but in Syriac, or Palestinian, it was another. "Syriac" here obviously meant "Aramaic" more generally, not "Edessene Aramaic." Similarly, for Bar Bahlūl, the *leshshānā knaʿnāyā*, the Canaanite language, was *suryāyā*

---

[126] Jacob of Edessa, *Enchiridion*, p. 236. Jacob speaks of *yātā* in terms of its meaning ὕπαρξις or "nature" (see Brockelmann 1928: 311, s.v.), but he is also presumably speaking about the direct object marker את here as well, which is ubiquitous in Hebrew, but only occurs a handful of times in Syriac. See Weitzman 1999: 253 for the occurrence of ܝܬ in Peshitta Genesis 1:1 and Ephrem's not understanding its meaning already in the fourth century. Jacob's understanding of ܝܬ was not unique. See, e.g., the anonymous Diyarbakir *Commentary on Genesis and Exodus*, written perhaps around the year 800 (Van Rompay 1986 [v.205]: 7): ܘܗܘ ܐܦ ܐܝܟ ܗܘ ܕܒܟܬܒܐ ܗܠܢ. ܗܘ ܕܝܬ ("as for that [word] *yāt*, as it is in our book—that is, "essence of heaven"—*yāt* is translated 'essence.'" FT in Van Rompay 1986 (v.206): 10, who notes, n28 that this interpretation went back to Ephrem.

palesṭyānāyā, Palestinian Syriac.[127] "Syriac" here could not have meant "Edessene." We have already seen above a passage, in Arabic, in which Bar Hebraeus spoke of the "Syriac" (*suryāniyya*) language being divided more broadly into three classes, "Aramaic," "Palestinian," and "Nabatean."[128] "Syriac" here was the genus, so to speak, these latter three, the species.[129]

This Palestinian Syriac that Bar Hebraeus, Bar Bahlūl, and Jacob spoke of was almost certainly something akin to what scholars today commonly refer to as "Christian Palestinian Aramaic" (or CPA), a Western dialect of Aramaic used by Chalcedonian communities on in the areas around Amman and Jerusalem (and perhaps even in Egypt), into the fourteenth century.[130] Medieval Arabic manuscripts originating from communities which had a CPA heritage would speak about the local Aramaic in ways similar to these three Syriac authors: one colophon of a twelfth-century Arabic manuscript at the Sinai speaks of *al-khaṭṭ al-suryānī al-filasṭīnī*, the "Syrian Palestinian script," in brief remarks which claim the Syrian Palestinian language, i.e., the Aramaic of Palestine, as not only the language

---

[127] Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, col. 982.

[128] Bar Hebraeus, *Ta'rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, pp. 16-17: see n. 26, above.

[129] One can also find examples where 'Syriac' seems to refer to a specific dialect of Aramaic. BL Oriental 1017 (written in AD 1364), contains a note that describes the languages spoken by various apostles. According to this note, Andrew spoke Palestinian (*plēshtā'it*) whereas James, son of Alphaeus, spoke Syriac (*suriyā'it*). See Wright 1870-1872 (v.2): 901.

[130] On CPA among other Aramaic dialects, see Beyer 1986: 51-53. For CPA more generally, see Burkitt 1901, Müller-Kessler 1991: 1-26, Brock and Taylor 2001(vol.2): 95-98; and Morgenstern 2011. For CPA palimpsests in the Cairo Geniza, see Sokoloff and Yahalom 1979 (cf., too, Rustow 2020: 42-43) and for the CPA "Liturgy of the Nile," see Margoliouth 1896. Apart from inscriptions, almost all extant CPA is scripture, patristic literature, or liturgy translated from Greek; exceptions include a brief letter (Milik 1953) and two amulets (Baillet 1963 and Puech 2007).

of Christ but also the language of Adam and his children.[131]   A thirteenth-century note, written in Arabic, near Cairo, but using the CPA script, refers to the contents of the manuscript as being *suryānī ruhāwī*, Edessene Syriac, canons;[132] this phrase presumably was meant to contrast with Palestinian Syriac, i.e., Palestinian Aramaic, which the author, given his use of the CPA script, must have been aware of.   Another thirteenth-century Arabic manuscript at the Sinai manuscript described the holy man Hilarion, who was originally from near Gaza and bilingual in Aramaic and Greek, as *al-suryānī al-filasṭīnī*, "the Syrian Palestinian."[133]   In all these instances, *suryānī* clearly meant something like "Aramaic-speaking," or even "Aramaean." The communities that produced these manuscripts had been originally comprised of Aramaic-speaking Christians, and though they would eventually adopt Arabic as their language, they would retain a memory of their "Syrian" (that is, Aramaic) past: Crusader sources, in fact, still referred to these Palestinian Christians as "Syri," or "Syrians."[134]   The *Cave of Treasures*

---

[131] Rubin 1998a: 158n48 reproduces the Arabic of the colophon, taken from Sinai Arabic 391, fol. 51.

[132] BL Add. 14,510, written originally on the Black Mountain in AD 1056. See Wright 1870-1872 (v.1): 378-379 for a description of the ms., with the Karshūnī note transcribed into Arabic characters on p. 379. Wright suggests that the author of the note, Surūr, was originally from Palestine, given his knowledge of the CPA script. The Karshūnī reads ܣܘܪܝܐ ܪܗܘܡ ("Edessene Syriac") and the expression occurs twice in Surūr's note; Land 1862-1875 (v.1): 90-91 first published the text, in both Karshūnī and with an Arabic transliteration, and reproduced an image of it as well (Table XVIII). Land's edition was corrected in Wright 1863: 124.

[133] Rubin 1998a: 158n49 reproduces the Arabic text, from Sinai Arabic 537, fol. 146b.

[134] Rubin 1998a: 159-161. In general, Rubin 1998a is an excellent resource on the history of the speakers of CPA. On *suryānī* and *syri* in Crusader Palestine as "Orthodoxe, deren Umgangssprache Arabisch war und die ihre Liturgie auf Griechisch oder Syrisch feierten," see Pahlitzsch 2001: 14-15 and see further Pahlitzsch 2015 on the use of Greek, Syriac, and Arabic by these communities. For Michael Rabo and these groups, see Weltecke 2009: 121.

regarded the Aramaic-speakers of Palestine as *suryāyē* as well:
the *titulus* above the Cross, it argued, did not contain any
Aramaic because Syrians were not involved in killing Christ:

> When Christ was crucified in the land of the Gentiles,
> Pilate did not write out the name of the Syrians
> (*suryāyē*): on account of what, O brother? Because
> Pilate was a wise man, and loved truth, he did not want
> to write falsehood like wicked judges do. Instead, he
> wrote it as it is written in the Law of Moses: 'Those who
> are blameless in judgement are those who set their
> hand to it first.'[135] Now Pilate wrote the names of the
> killers of Christ and hung it over he who was killed:
> Herod, a Greek, Pilate, a Roman, and Caiaphas, a
> Hebrew. For the Syrians had no part in the killing of
> Christ. Abgar, King of Edessa, bears witness [to this], for
> he sought to go up and lay waste to Jerusalem because
> the Jews had crucified Christ.[136]

Although Abgar, being from Edessa, would have been familiar
with a different dialect of Aramaic from the "Syrians" in
Palestine,[137] he was nevertheless regarded as falling into the
same category as they. Bar Hebraeus, as we have already seen,
when discussing Syriac grammar, would include the Aramaic-
speakers of Mt. Lebanon as *suryāyē*, or Syrians, as well.[138] Not
only the Aramaic-speaking people of Northern, Southern, and
Eastern Mesopotamia were regarded as Syrians; the people of
the Levant were, too.

The Arabic colophons I have just cited point to the fact that
the double signification of the word *suryāyā* in Syriac—
meaning both 'Edessene Aramaic' and 'Aramaic' more

---

[135] Deuteronomy 17:7

[136] *Cave of Treasures* 53.21-27 (Text in Ri 1987 [v.207]: 450, 452; FT in Ri 1987 [v.208]: 174, 176).

[137] Note that the Abgarids have also been considered to be Arabs. See, e.g. Shahid 1984: 3-4 and, succinctly, Butts 2024: 369.

[138] Bar Hebraeus, *Book of Splendors*, p. 55; see note 29, above.

broadly—was not unique to Edessene Aramaic alone; other languages shared this polyvalence, including, of course, Arabic. In contemporary usage among Levantine Christians, *suryānī* has a definite sectarian meaning: it refers to someone who is one of the *suryān*, the Syrian Orthodox, as opposed to *suryān kathūlīk* (Syrian Catholic), *latīn* (Roman Catholic), *rūm* (Greek Orthodox), *rūm kathūlīk* (Greek Catholic), *marūnī* (Maronite), *ashūrī* (Nestorian), *kaldānī* (Chaldean), *injīlī* (evangelical), and so on. But this sectarian denotation is a modern development:[139] the evidence from medieval Arabic suggests that *suryānī*, "Syrian" or "Syriac," had the same range of ecumenical meanings (in both a confessional and geographic sense) as it did in Edessene Aramaic. When an eleventh-century medical work from Spain, for example, gives the non-Arabic equivalents of various medicinal components, what it labels *al-suryāniyya* will at times not correspond to Edessene Aramaic at all, but instead will match up with modern neo-Aramaic usage: the implication seems to be that the author, Ibn Baklarish, or one of his sources, was relying on a knowledge of a colloquial Aramaic that was not

---

[139] The early eighth-century Syriac text the *Life* of Theodota of Amid, written by Shemʿūn of Samosata, contains the earliest-attested usage of the phrase "Syrian Orthodox" of which I am aware (Mardin 275, fol. 261b: ܣܘܪ̈ܝܝܐ ܐܪܬܕܘܟܣܘ ; see now Hoyland and Palmer 2023: 175 for the text as well). In the context of its usage the adjective *suryāyē* should here be understood to have a strictly geographic referent: while in the region of Baioulous, in the mountainous area north of Diyarbakir, Theodota wants his disciple Joseph to come with him to visit Orthodox (i.e., Miaphysite) Christians who are refugees from Syria, further to the south. The word "orthodox" occurs several other times in the *Life* yet it contains the adjective "Syrian" only this once; here is would perhaps be best to render the expression "Orthodox Syrians" rather than "Syrian Orthodox" (though Hoyland and Palmer 2023: 174 renders the passage "…let us go and visit those Syrian Orthodox who are refugees..") "Syrian" *sūryāyā* or *sūryāyē* only occurs two times in the entire text (at 115.2 [p. 175] and 115.5 [p. 177] in Hoyland and Palmer 2023), both in this particular section, and both times when referring to these Christian refugees from geographic Syria.

the same as the language of Edessa and its region.[140] In other words, for Ibn Baklarish, *al-suryāniyya* was not Edessene Aramaic specifically; it was, rather, simply Aramaic.

Indeed, assuming that *suryānī,* "Syrian" or "Syriac", referred to Edessene specifically rather than Aramaic more generally, or even that it meant "Syrian Orthodox" or "Miaphysite" can lead to a host of confusions. For instance, a number of medieval Arabic manuscripts preserved at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai contain notes referring to Syriac-speaking (Melkite) monks as *suryānī*;[141] in the eleventh century, the Monothelete Thomas of Kafarṭāb spoke in the first person about *naḥnu al-suryān*, "We Syrians."[142] Not just Chalcedonians were referred to with this adjective, either. In his important biographical dictionary on doctors, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (d. 668 AH/AD 1269) included a long chapter on doctors from among the "Syrians" (*suryāniyyīn*) of the early Abbasid period.[143] Almost all of these doctors were East Syrian Christians from parts of the Middle East that had never been under Roman rule;[144] two of them, Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq and his son,

---

[140] The work is *al-Kitāb al-Mustaʿīnī*. For all this, see Khan 2007b: 11. See also Khan 2007c: 4-5 and Khan 2008.

[141] See Nasrallah 1979-1989(vol. 3.1): 362–363 for examples. Though not Arabic, one might also point to the appearance in Syriac Chalcedonian liturgical manuscripts of the expression 'according to the rite of the Syrians' (*suryāyā*), to refer to certain Chalcedonian liturgical usages: see, e.g., BL Add. 14,488, fol. 116a, which is dated AD 1023 (Syriac text printed in Wright 1870-1872[vol. 1]: 197). On this expression, see further examples in Husmann 1976: 157.

[142] Thomas of Kafarṭāb, *'Ashara maqālāt*, p. 28 (ed. Chartouni 1986).

[143] Ibn Abī 'Uṣaybiʿa, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, pp. 183-278.

[144] But members of the Church of the East of course also referred to the Edessene Aramaic they wrote in as *suryāyā*, or Syriac. See, e.g., its use in the *History* of Mar Aba (d. 552) in Bedjan 1895: 214: ܐ̇ܡܪܝܢ ܠܗ ܝܘ̈ܢܝܐ ܡܫܚܐ ܗܘ . ܕܝܢܐ: ܐܟܪܟܝܗ̇, ܡܘܫܚܬܐ ܕܟܪܣܛܝܢܐ ܡܫܝܚܝܐ. "For 'Christian' is a Greek word; the translation of 'Christian' in Syriac is *mshiḥāyā*." Ishoʿbokht of Rev-ardashir wrote a book of canon law in Middle Persian in

Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, hailed from the Christian Arab tribes of al-Ḥīra; one of them, Jirjis b. Gabriel, greeted the Caliph al-Manṣūr in Persian and in Arabic after having been summoned to Baghdad from Jundīsābūr.[145] *Suryānī* here cannot have been a way of referring to a person who was from the part of the Fertile Crescent west of the Euphrates, nor can it have indicated that a person belonged to the Miaphysite Church; "Syrian," when applied to these individuals probably meant that they belonged to a church which used Edessene Aramaic in its liturgy; or that they, or their forbears, had spoken Aramaic—or perhaps some combination of these. When, therefore, we read Ḥunayn write in his famous *Risāla* that a "man from among the Syrians" (*rajulan min al-suryāniyyīn*) had asked him to write a book that gathered together what was known of ancient medical writings and their contents, we should not make an assumption about the unnamed person's confession based on the use of the word 'Syrian.'[146]

Similarly, Masʿūdī (d. AH 346/AD 956) included a section in his *Murūj al-dhahab* on "the Kings of the Syrians" (*al-suryāniyyīn*), stating the first kings in human history were in fact the Syrian kings who ruled after the Flood.[147] He was dealing with an understanding of *suryānī*, "Syrian," of which Michael

---

what was probably the late eighth century. The opening lines of the Syriac translation note that it was "transferred from the Persian language to Syriac utterance at the command and through the concern" of the Catholicos of the Church of the East, Timothy I (d. AD 823): ܘܐܬܟܬܒܬ ܡܢ ܠܥܠ ܩܘܢܝ ܠܫܢ ܦܪܣܝܐ ܠܥܠ ܟܬܒܬ ܘܐܬܝ, ܡܢ ܦܪܣܝܐ ܘܐܬ ܝܕܥ ܘܐܬܟܬܒ ܠܫܢ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܥܠ ܦܘܩܕܢܐ ܦܘܠܟܢܐ ܕܡܪܢ (Sachau 1907-1914 [v.3]: 2). Though they are not the same as the doctors I am referring to, Troupeau 1991: 4-5 gives an ethnic and confessional breakdown of the translators listed in the works of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa and Ibn al-Nadīm which is nevertheless interesting.

[145] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, p. 184. On Jirjis, see Ullmann 1970: 108 (where his name is vocalized "Jurjis").

[146] Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, *Risāla*, p. 1 (ed. Bergsträsser 1925).

[147] Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādīn al-jawhar* 18 (Text in de Meynard and Courteille 1861-1877 [v. 2]: 78-92; reference to the Flood on p. 78).

Rabo would have approved. Likewise, the great medieval geographer Yāqūt (d. 626 AH/AD 1229) had a broad understanding of where Syrians dwelt: they took their name from *Sūrastān*, a place which various authorities understood as Iraq, or Iraq and Greater Syria (*Bilād al-Shām*), or as the land which stretched from Khuzistan to Greater Syria. The Syrians (*al-suryāniyyūn*) who took their name from *Sūrastān*, Yāqūt reported, "are the Nabateans and their language is called Syriac (*al-suryāniyya*).[148] A thirteenth-century Miaphysite catena on Genesis noted that Noah's language was the "Syriac of the Targum," (*suryāniyya bi-'l-tarjūm*) which it identified this idiom as "the language of the Chaldeans";[149] later, speaking about the division of languages at Babel, the commentary stated that the language of humanity had been Syriac (*suryāniyya*), noting that "the Hebrews call it the language of the Targum."[150] As Nöldeke observed in an important article, *suryānī*, "Syriac," in this particular text meant simply "Aramaic."[151]

What all this means, I would like to suggest, is that in late antique Edessene Aramaic as well as in Arabic, "Syrian" and "Syriac"—*suryāyā* and *suryānī*—did the job that the word "Aramaic" does in contemporary English. It was the default term used to characterize the Northwest Semitic language which first appeared in written form in Syria around the

---

[148] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 3, p. 279. (Cp. Nöldeke 1871b: 114).

[149] *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 81. For the date of this work, see Graf 1944-1953 (v.2): 285, and pp. 284-292 for information about it.

[150] *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 91. It also notes (ln. 23) that people from Adam up until Noah spoke the Syriac Targum language (*bi-lisān al-suryānī al-tarjūm*) and nothing else. The expression "Syriac of the Targum" occurs on p. 72.2 as well, and is followed by a sentence in Syriac/Edessene Aramaic. Note, however, that the *Commentary* also affirms that the language God revealed the Torah to Moses in was *al-suryānī al-tarjūm* and that Seventy translated it into Hebrew (p. 2); for the exact same language, see the rubricated beginning of Sinai Arabic 3, fol. 2v, and cf. Graf 1944-1953 (v. 1): 108.

[151] See Nöldeke 1871b: 129 for discussion.

beginning of the first millennium BC, which became the language of administration for the Achaemenids around 500 BC, the language which was most likely used by Jesus, and a language which would come to be widely spoken in a number of dialects throughout the Middle East and would, throughout Late Antiquity, come to be written down in a variety of scripts, by pagans, Jews, Christians, Manichaeans, Mandaeans, and others.

FROM 'ARAMAIC' TO 'SYRIAC'

What explains the semantic vagaries and confusion that we have encountered? Bar Hebraeus pinpointed the root of the issue when he complained about Aramaic names being altered in the Bible to accommodate foreign pronunciation: the responsibility for this ambiguity throughout the millennia seems to lie with the translations to and from Greek.[152] Greek speakers had known that the people of the western half of the Fertile Crescent called themselves "Aramaeans": according to Strabo, Poseidonius interpreted the "Arimi" of Iliad II.783 as referring to "not some place in Syria or in Cilicia or in some other land, but Syria itself; for the people of Syria are Aramaeans, though perhaps the Greeks called them Arimaeans or Arimi." But like Bar Hebraeus, Strabo acknowledged that things got lost in translation: "The changes in names, and particularly in those of the barbarians, are numerous."[153]

---

[152] Cf. Nöldeke 1871b: 115; more generally, Nöldeke 1871a and Nöldeke 1871b are rich with evidence from classical sources.

[153] Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.4.27. οὕς φησι Ποσειδώνιος δέχεσθαι δεῖν μὴ τόπον τινὰ τῆς Συρίας ἢ τῆς Κιλικίας ἢ ἄλλης τινὸς γῆς, ἀλλὰ τὴν Συρίαν αὐτήν· Ἀραμαῖοι γὰρ οἱ ἐν αὐτῇ· τάχα δ' οἱ Ἕλληνες Ἀριμαίους ἐκάλουν ἢ Ἀρίμους. αἱ δὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων μεταπτώσεις καὶ μάλιστα τῶν βαρβαρικῶν πολλαί· Translation taken from Jones 1917-1933 (v. 7): 373. On this passage, see Nöldeke 1871b: 115; cf., too, Nöldeke 1871a: 461.

They were indeed. One of these changes was to call "Syria" the area which had been referred to in the Bible as "Aram." The fourth or fifth century *Commentary on the Hexaemeron* of Pseudo-Eusthatius of Antioch would note that Shem had five children, among whom was Aram, "from whom come the Aramaeans, who are now the Syrians."[154] Equating "Aram" with "Syria" was a practice that went back at least to the Septuagint and was followed by the Vulgate.[155] And "Syria," as scholars have suggested since at least the time of Selden, probably represented a shortened form of "Assyria."[156]   Nearly a millennium before Pseudo-Eustathius, Herodotus had described Assyrians in the Persian army, noting, "These are called by Greeks Syrians, but the foreigners called them Assyrians."[157] Meleager was from Gadara, located southeast of the Sea of Galilee. In one of his epigrams, he would note that Gadara was situated in Assyria: "If I am a Syrian," he would ask, "What wonder?"[158] Syrians, it seems, came from Assyria. We

---

[154] Ἀράμ, ἀφ᾽ οὗ Ἀραμαῖοι, οἱ νῦν Σύροι. PG 18, col. 757. NB: He distinguishes between the Syrians and the Assyrians: Ἀσοὺρ, ἀφ᾽ οὗ Ἀσσύριοι· For Bardayṣan described as both a Syrian and an Aramaean in the translation of Eusebius's *Church History*, see Butts 2017: 600.

[155] See Selden 1629: 2 for examples. The Vulgate followed the practice of the LXX: compare, e.g., 1 Chronicles (Paralipomenon) 19:6: ארם = Συρίας = *Syria*

[156] Selden 1629: 3-6, Nöldeke 1871b: 115; Cardahi 1906: *hā'-wāw*; and most of all Nöldeke 1871a; Heinrichs 1993: 103-104, and 104n9 summarizes the different views on this derivation nicely.

[157] *Histories* 7.63. Οὗτοι δὲ ὑπὸ μὲν Ἑλλήνων ἐκαλέοντο Σύριοι, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν βαρβάρων Ἀσσύριοι ἐκλήθησαν. Translation taken from A.D. Godley, in Godley 1920-1924(vol. 3): 379. For this, see Nöldeke 1871a: 452.

[158] Anth. Pal. 7.417. Text in Gow and Page 1965(vol.1): 216: Ἀτθὶς ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις ναιομένα Γαδάροις· Εὐκράτεω δ᾽ ἔβλαστον ὁ σὺν Μούσαις Μελέαγρος πρῶτα Μενιππείοις συντροχάσας Χάρισιν. εἰ δὲ Σύρος, τί τὸ θαῦμα; Translation in Paton 1925-1927 (v.2): 225: "Island Tyre was my nurse, and Gadara, which is Attic, but lies in Assyria, gave birth to me. From Eucrates I sprung, Meleager, who first by the help of the Muses ran abreast of the Graces of Menippus. If I am

have seen that writers in Edessene Aramaic were aware that "Syrian," "Syriac," and "Syrian" could all be synonyms for "Aramaic," "Aramaean," and "Aram." But there could also be an awareness that "Assyria" and "Aram" were the same as well: Tobit 14:4's "upon/against Ashur and Ninevah" (ἐπὶ Ἀθουρ καὶ Νινευη) would become in the Peshitta, "against Aramaeans and against Ninevah," and the same verse's ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις, "in Assyria," would be translated as *Bēth Ārāmāyē* in Syriac, "in the region of the Aramaeans."[159] This equation between Aramaeans, Syrians, and Assyrians was a point that Michael Rabo had argued strenuously for in the appendix he wrote against the "vainglorious" Greeks, which we saw above.[160]

Why would Aramaic speakers choose to call their language "Syrian," especially if they knew it was also called "Aramaic"? Why would they come to call themselves by a foreign designation? Their preference perhaps had something to do with the fact that "Aramaean" had taken on the connotation of "Gentile," and even "pagan" or "heathen" in their language.[161] Paul's ἐθνικῶς, for example, in Galatians 2:14, "like a Gentile," would come into the Peshitta as *armā'it*, "like an Aramaean." In the same way, a "Greek" would become an "Aramaean" and the "Gentiles" would become "Aramaeans" throughout the New

---

a Syrian, what wonder?" (slightly altered). On this passage, cf. Nöldeke 1871a: 466.

[159] ܒܫܡ ܡܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ...ܐܪܡܝܐ ܥܠ ܐܝܟܢ ܕܐܪܡܝܐ ܡܢ ܗܫ ... ܐܪܡܝܐ: ܘܥܠ ܢܝܢܘܐ ("...which he spoke in the name of the Lord against Aramaeans and against Nineveh. A word from them will not be wanting and the truth will especially be in Media, more than in what is in Nineveh and more than Bēt Ārāmāyē and more than what is in Babel"). Cf. Payne-Smith 1879-1901 (v.1): col. 389. On this passage, see Nöldeke 1871b: 113. NB: I have followed Tobit in the version of the Mosul Bible; the text in de Lagarde 1861: 87 lacks *syāmē* over ܐܪܡܝܐ.

[160] On the meaning and use of the adjective "Assyrian" in premodern Syriac, see Butts 2017: 600-601.

[161] See the remarks of Heinrichs 1993: 103.

Testament.[162] The Syro-Phoenician woman of Mark 7:26 was, according to the Peshitta and Harklean translations of the NT, a "pagan" (*ḥanptā*), but according to the Old Syriac translation, she was actually a "widow" (*armaltā*).[163] Looking at the Greek offers an explanation: Ἑλληνίς "Greek," or "Gentile," in the original became ܐܪܡܝܬܐ, "Aramaean" in the Old Syriac, but a scribe mistook ܐܪܡܝܬܐ, "Aramaean," for ܐܪܡܠܬܐ, "widow."[164]

   This usage of "Aramaean" to mean "Gentile" and "pagan" would have a life well beyond the pages of the NT in Syriac. In fact, to distinguish between a pagan and an Aramaean, Syriac developed two different vocalizations of the same consonantal skeleton of letters: an *āramāyā* was an Aramaean or a Syrian, but an *armāyā* was a heathen.[165] In choosing "Syrian" as a way

---

[162] See, e.g. Acts 16:1 Ἕλληνος = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Acts 16:3 Ἕλλην =ܐܪܡܝܐ; Acts 19:10 Ἕλληνας = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Acts 19:17 Ἕλλησιν = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Acts 20:21 Ἕλλησιν = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Acts 21:28 Ἕλληνας = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Romans 1:16 Ἕλληνι =ܐܪܡܝܐ ; Romans 2:9 Ἕλληνος = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Romans 2:10 Ἕλληνι =ܐܪܡܝܐ ; Romans 10:12 Ἕλληνος = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Galatians 2:3 Ἕλλην = ܐܪܡܝܐ; Galatians 3:28 Ἕλλην =ܐܪܡܝܐ ; Colossians 3:11 Ἕλλην =ܐܪܡܝܐ; 1 Corinthians 1:22 Ἕλληνες =ܐܪܡܝܐ ; 1 Corinthians 10:32 = ܐܪܡܝܐ; 1 Corinthians 12:13 =ܐܪܡܝܐ . Note how the Ἕλληνές of John 12:20 are ܐܪܡܝܐ, "Aramaeans" in the Old Syriac (Siniaticus), "nations," ܥܡܡܐ, in the Peshitta, and "pagans," ܚܢܦܐ in the Harklean (see Kiraz 2002 [v.4]: 235). The same occurs at 7:35 (Kiraz 2002 [v.4]: 142).

[163] See Kiraz 2002 (v.2): 98.

[164] For this, see Weitzman 1999: 251n118.

[165] See Payne Smith 1879-1901: cols. 388-389. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out to me that the disctinction between *ārāmāyā* ("Aramaic") and *armāyā* ("pagan", "Gentile") was a development of the West Syrian tradition: see Nöldeke 1904: 81n1.

   It was not all bad in Syriac: Jacob of Sarugh in fact would declare no less than Ephrem the "crown of all Aramaicity," (*Memra on Mar Ephrem,* p. 677: ܗܢܐ ܗܘܐ ܟܠܠܐ ܠܟܠܗ ܐܪܡܝܘܬܐ). NB: Brockelmann 1928: s.v. [p.50] defines the term ܐܪܡܝܘܬܐ as "natio Syrorum" and Amar 1995: 65 translates this passage "This man was the crown of the entire Syrian Nation." Depending on the vocalization of the word here, however (*ārāmāyutā* or *ārmāyutā*, see Bedjan 1890-1897 [v.3]: 677n.1 for Bedjan's uncertainty) Jacob could be referring to Ephrem as either the "crown of Aramaicity" or

to identify themselves and their language rather than "Aramaean" and "Aramaic," speakers of Edessene Aramaic helped distance themselves from their pagan past in precisely the way Michael Rabo described in the appendix to his Chronicle. In modern Aramaic dialects, "Syrian," or *suryāyā*, would actually come to mean "Christian."[166]

Equating "Aramaean" with Gentile would have a life, too, outside the world of Edessene Aramaic: aside from the fact that Greek had done a similar thing, making Hellene the same as "pagan,"[167] Aramaic dialects throughout the Middle East would equate "Aramaean" with "pagan": Judean Aramaic,[168] Jewish Palestinian Aramaic,[169] Jewish Babylonian Aramaic,[170] Samaritan Aramaic,[171] and Christian Palestinian Aramaic[172] would all use "Aramaean" with the meaning "Gentile" or "heathen."[173] Targum Onkelos would distinguish between an

---

something like the "crown of Gentileness," that is, of the non-Jewish church, and the meter would seem to require the latter reading (I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on this passage). The fifth-century East Syrian Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Dadishōʿ I, was also referred to as "Dadishōʿ the Aramaean" (See L. van Rompay's article "Dadishoʿ I" in Brock, Butts, et al. 2011: 110).

[166] Khan 2007a: 96. An anonymous reviewer points out that "Modern Aramaic languages spoken by Christians are called Surayt or Sureth, which means 'in the way of the Syrians, of the Christians.'" Cf. also Maclean 1901: 223, s.v. ܣܘܪܝܐ.

[167] See Lampe 1961: s.vv. Ἕλλην, Ἑλληνίζω, Ἑλληνικός, Ἑλληνίς, etc.

[168] Sokoloff 2003: 33, s.v. ארמי

[169] Sokoloff 1990: 76, s.vv. ארמיי and ארמייה

[170] Sokoloff 2002: 169, s.v. ארמאה

[171] Tal 2000 (v.1): 63, s.v. ארמאי

[172] Schulthess 1903: 18, s.vv. ܐܪܡܝܐ and ܐܪܡܐܝܬ and Sokoloff 2014: 29, s.vv.

[173] For Targum Onkelos specifically, see Cook 2008: 23, s.v. ארמי. Cook very helpfully cites all the available comparative material for other Aramaic dialects.

arāmāy, an Aramean, and an *armay*, a heathen, just as Syriac did.[174]

"SYRIAC" IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Edessene Aramaic and Arabic were not unique in choosing the word "Syriac" or "Syrian" to refer to this language: Greek and Latin had done the same.[175] When Paula died in January of 404, Jerome reported to Eustochium, "The whole population of the cities of Palestine came to her funeral." The service was held in Bethlehem, and all the major linguistic communities of the region were present in the liturgy: "One after another they chanted the psalms, now in Greek, now in Latin, now in Syrian (*Graeco, Latino Syroque*)."[176] A few decades earlier, when the pilgrim Egeria visited Jerusalem in the early 380s, she also experienced the phenomenon of multilingual liturgy. "In this province," she wrote,

> There are some people who know both Greek and Syriac (*siriste*), but others know only one or the other. The bishop may know Syriac, but he never uses it. He always speaks in Greek, and has a presbyter beside him who translates the Greek into Syriac, so that everyone can understand what he means. Similarly the lessons read in church have to be read in Greek, but there is always someone in attendance to translate into Syriac so that the people understand. Of course there are also people here who speak neither Greek nor Syriac, but Latin. But there is no need for them to be discouraged,

---

[174] Cook 2008: s.vv. (p. 23). Sokoloff 2002: 169 suggests a similar distinction in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic but admits that the evidence is not definitive.

[175] See the evidence from a variety of Late Antique authors in Baasten 2003: 64-65.

[176] *Letters* 108.29. Translation from Greenslade 1956: 380. Text in Hilberg 1996 (v.2): 348.

> since some of the brothers or sisters who speak Latin as
> well as Greek will explain things to them.[177]

Egeria, like Jerome, referred to the Aramaic that was spoken in
Palestine as simply "Syrian" or "Syriac." They were not referring
to Edessene Aramaic; the dialect they were encountering would
have been a relative of Jewish Palestinian or Christian
Palestinian Aramaic. And calling this language "Palestinian
Syriac" was, as we have seen, how members of the Aramaic-
speaking Christian communities of the area would refer to their
language centuries later, when writing in Arabic. It is also how
Jews might also refer to the language of Palestine: in the
Babylonian Talmud the question was asked, "In the Land of
Israel, the Syrian (*sūrsī*) language—why? Instead, either the
Holy Language or the Greek language."[178] One wonders whether
Egeria's *siriste*, "in Syriac" or "in Syrian," was an echo of a
description she was given of the language she heard in Palestine
which sounded something like the *sūrsī*, סורסי, ("Syrian") used
in this text.

Both the Vulgate and the Septuagint would play a significant
role in determining the names these languages would later be
known by in European languages. Three of the four times
ארמית (*aramīt*) or, "in Aramaic," occured in the Hebrew Bible,
Jerome rendered the phrase as *syriace* "in Syriac;"[179] in the fourth
instance, he gave it as *syra lingua*, "in the Syrian language."[180]
Like Egeria, Jerome's characterization of the language very
possibly reflected contemporary usage in Palestine. What is
more, he had not been an innovator in rendering *aramīt* as

---

[177] 47.3-4. Translation from Wilkinson 1999: 163. Latin in Maraval 2002: 314.

[178] BT *Sotah* 49b The text continues: And Rav Joseph said: 'In Babylon, the
Aramaic language—why? Instead, either the Holy Language or the Persian
language.'" For "Syrian" used by Jews to describe Aramaic, see Nöldeke 1871b:
116-117 (on this passage, see p. 117).

[179] Compare the MT and Vulgate of 2 Kings (4 Kings) 18:26, Ezra 4:7, and
Daniel 2:4.

[180] Compare MT and Vulgate Isaiah 36:11.

syriace: he was following a practice which already existed. Centuries before Jerome, the translators of the Septuagint gave Συριστί, "in Syrian," at 2 Kings 18:26, Ezra 4:7, Isaiah 36:11, Daniel 2:4.[181] The τῇ Συριακῇ φωνῇ, "in the Syriac language," of 2 Maccabees 15:36 was for Jerome *voce syriaca*, "in the Syriac language."[182] The Greek Συριστί, meaning "in Syrian," would even find its way transliterated into Jewish Palestinian Aramaic as סוריסטון, with the same meaning: speaking in Aramaic.[183]

For English speakers, these Biblical passages are very important. "Aramaic" and "Aramaean" are first attested in English in only 1834,[184] but "Syriac" has a much older history. Like Jerome and the LXX before them, the translators of the King James Version of the Bible rendered Daniel 2:4's *aramīt* as "in Syriacke," in 1611, but the word had been in use before then in English[185] and indeed, the Wycliffite translation of 1388 had the Chaldeans of Daniel 2:4 speaking to the king "bi Sirik langage."[186]

---

[181] Ezra 4:7, Isaiah 36:11, Daniel 2:4, but note that the Peshitta has 'in Aramaic,' ܐܳܪܳܡܳܐܝܺܬ at 2 Kings 18:26 whereas the Syro-Hexapla has ܣܘܪܳܝܳܐܝܺܬ, "in Syriac" (See Payne Smith 1879-1901: col. 388, s.v. ܐܳܪܳܡܳܐܝܺܬ).

[182] 2 Maccabees 15:37 in the Vulgate.

[183] See Sokoloff 2002: s.v. (p. 372).

[184] *OED*, s.vv. But NB: The Geneva Bible of 1560 has the Chaldeans speak to the king at Daniel 2:4 in "the Aramites language," which it glosses, "That is, the Syrian tongue which differed not much from the Caldeans, save it seemed to be more eloquent, and therefore the learned used to speak it; as the Jewish writers doe to this day" (Geneva Bible 1560: 349). "Aramitic" is first attested in 1678 (*OED*, s.v.).

[185] *OED*, s.v. "Syriac."

[186] *OED*, s.v. "Syric." Brerewood 1614: 62-66 is an early modern discussion of the meaning of "Syriaque", which Edward Brerewood essentially understood to be Jewish Aramaic as it appeared in the Targums. Michaelis 1772 is an example of how Syriac was understood by one of the most important European Syriacists of the eighteenth century; for Michaelis, Syriac was the same as Chaldean, only differing in script (p. 4). The difference between Syriac and Chaldean was geographic: Chaldean was spoken in Chaldea and Assyria and what most now call "Syriac," Michaelis

CONCLUSION: WHY DID EDESSENE ARAMAIC WIN?

Examining the history of the word "Syriac" in modern European languages would be of the great interest, but it would also be the task of a different study. By way of conclusion, let me raise one more issue: The gradual diffusion of Edessene Aramaic can be traced, perhaps imperfectly, by its spread in inscriptions and literature: by the fourth century, it was being written in stone west of the Euphrates, and by the fifth century, authors living west of the Euphrates were choosing to compose works in it.[187] It would eventually be used in places as far away as northern Syria, southern India, Central Asia, and even China. The spread of Edessene Aramaic to areas beyond Edessa raises a final question: why did this particular variety of Aramaic, rather than some other Aramaic dialect, become the prestige language of choice for many Christians in the Middle East and indeed for Christians across Asia?

The answer is not exactly clear. There were certainly other options on the table: compared to other Middle Aramaic dialects, for example, the number of Syriac inscriptions is rather unimpressive: Nabatean, Palmyrene, and Hatran, all have a great deal many more inscriptions than what exists in Old Syriac. What is more, whereas Palmyrene inscriptions can be found as far west as northern England and as far south as Soqotra, and Nabatean turns up over a geographic wide area,

---

wrote, was spoken in Syria on the Orontes and northen Mesopotamia near Edessa. The difference between the two dialects was very narrow, he noted: Chaldean as it appears in Daniel "becomes Syriac when a German or Polish Jew reads it and pronounces the kamets like O, the cholem like au, and so forth" (p. 6-7, quote from 7).

[187] See Brock 2009: 291. But NB: the oldest Syriac inscription, dating from 6 AD, comes from Birecik, which is located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates (p. 298).

almost all Old Syriac inscriptions are confined to Osrhoene.[188] It can be pointed out that to speakers of Aramaic, the language of area of Edessa and Harran seems to have been regarded as a particularly fine and pure form of the language; this at least, is an inference than can be made based on the witness of Bar Hebraeus and at least the unnamed sources of Ibn al-Nadīm.[189]

John Healey has speculated that a number of factors led to Syriac being adopted throughout the Middle East: it had been the language of administration of the Abgarid Dynasty in Edessa, which ruled from the second century BC until the third century AD; Syriac had also been the language of coinage and inscriptions during this period; what is more, it seems to have been a language that was put to use for pagan religious purposes. Finally, translations from Greek (by pagans) and of the Hebrew Bible (by Jews) gave Syriac an added religious importance and prestige.[190]

To the existence of an Old Testament in Syriac should also be added the existence of Tatian's widely influential and very popular Gospel harmony, the *Diatessaron*, in Syriac from perhaps as early as the late second century. The modern period provides a suggestive parallel: in the 19th century, Protestant missionaries operating in what is now northeastern Iran translated the Bible into the Neo-Aramaic dialect of the Urmia region. This dialect, called *swadaya*, soon became a literary language, one which was used for much more than Biblical translation. What started out as literary language developed for Christian purposes took on a life of its own.[191]

---

[188] For all this information, see Brock 2009: 289.

[189] But by the time these authors were writing, however, the dialect of this region had already been adopted as a literary and prestige language among Aramaic speakers for centuries, so such a suggestion runs the risk of circularity.

[190] Healey 2008: 226-227.

[191] See Khan 2007a: 99.

The choice by Christians to use Syriac, rather than some other dialect of Aramaic, may also have been influenced by the existence in the archives of Edessa of a letter, purportedly written by Jesus himself in Syriac, to King Abgar the Black.[192] The correspondence between King Abgar and Jesus enjoyed tremendous prestige and fame throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The correspondence is found on amulets, ostraca, and in stone, among other media, and these versions usually include a final clause in which Jesus promises that Edessa will be blessed and will never be taken by an enemy.[193] Already by the time of Egeria in the late fourth century, the apotropaic powers of the correspondence were being extolled to Christian visitors to the Blessed City: Egeria herself heard their story from Eulogius, Bishop of Edessa, who read the actual letters to her when she passed through the city. Eulogius even gave her copies of them, which contained a longer version of the text than what she already possessed back home.[194] The belief that Christ himself had chosen to write in the language of Edessa, coupled with the existence of the Bible in that language, may have contributed to Aramaic-speaking Christians in the Middle East choosing this language as their preferred means of written expression.

Because they did, we have an enormously rich literature preserved in Edessene Aramaic. And I hope that by exploring the history of the "word" Syriac and how some of the people who used the language in the late antique and medieval period spoke about it, I have been able to convey some of the enormous

---

[192] Brock 1980: 13 makes this suggestion. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13 for the reference to the Syriac text in the archives of Edessa. On the archives of Edessa, see Debié 2000 and Adler 2012.

[193] Segal 1970: 73-75; Brock and Taylor 2001(vol.2): 103.

[194] Wilkinson 1999: 135-136.

interest of the subject of Syriac and the satisfaction and benefit that accrues to those who study it.[195]

---

[195] This article is based on a talk I first gave at Beth Mardutho around 2014; the talk itself was based on material I had been collecting and writing the previous several years as part of a book I was (and still am) working on. I gave the talk several times for Beth Mardutho Syriac summer school students over subsequent years and prepared and expanded it for publication when a friend asked me about what "Syriac" meant in my own area of research. The publication of this piece has been delayed for years due to a number of complicated circumstances, the Covid-19 pandemic among them.

In the time since its earliest version was first written, a great deal of excellent scholarship has been published on the various subjects it touches on and I am deeply grateful to two anonymous reviewers from *Hugoye* whose thorough and insightful comments helped correct a number of embarrassing oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies in the piece, and whose generous bibliographic suggestions greatly enriched it (and helped bring it more firmly into this century). It goes without saying that neither one of these reviewers is in any way responsible for the many faults which remain.

One reviewer asked whether the title of the article was inspired by Retsö 2013—it was not. I was shamefully unaware Retsö's piece when I was writing this article—indeed, Retsö's piece may not have in fact been published when the earliest draft was written (the precise date I first started writing this material now escapes me). I became aware of Farina in 2020 several years after the longer, expanded version of this article was finished and the piece was written before her study—a marvelous piece of scholarship which addresses some of the same questions and looks at some of the same evidence as this present article more expertly than I have done here—appeared.

Because of the length of time that elapsed since this piece was originally written, I was unsure as to whether I should publish it and should express my gratitude to Jeanne-Nicole Mellon Saint-Laurent for encouraging me to do so and giving me the chance to update and improve it. She should not be blamed for its manifold deficiencies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aḥob Qaṭrāyā, *Elucidations on the Psalms.* Ed. and trans. Vandenhoff, B. 1899. *Exegesis psalmorum imprimis messianicorum apud Syros Nestorianos e codice usque adhuc inedito illustrata.* Rheine.

Bar Bahlūl, *Lexicon.* Ed. Duval, R. 1888-1901. *Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano Bar Bahlule.* 3 vols. Paris.

Bar Hebraeus. *Book of Splendors.* Ed. And trans. Moberg, A. Ed. and trans. Moberg, A. 1922. *Le Livre des Splendeurs : la grande grammaire de Grégoire Barhebraeus. Text syriaque édité d'après les manuscrits avec une introduction et des notes.* Lund and London. Ed. and trans. Moberg, A. 1907-1913. *Buch der Strahlen : die grössere Grammatik des Barhebräus : Übersetzung nach einem Kritisch Berichtigten Texte mit Textkritischem Apparat und einem Anhang, Zur Terminologie.* 2 vols. Leipzig.

---. *Ecclesiastical History.* Ed. Abbeloos, J.-B. and Lamy, T.J. 1872-1877. *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum: quod e Musei britannici descriptum conjuncta opera ediderunt, Latinitate donarunt annotationibusque...illustrarunt Joannes baptista Abbeloos et Thomas Josephus Lamy.* 3 vols. Louvain.

---. *Chronicle.* Ed. Bedjan, P. 1890. *Gregorii Barhebræi Chronicon Syriacum e codd. mss. emendatum ac punctis vocalibus adnotationibusque locupletatum.* Paris.

---. *Ta'rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal.* Ed. Ṣāliḥānī, A. 1890. *Ta'rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal.* Beirut.

---. *Scholia on Kings.* Morgenstern, A. 1895. *Die Scholien des Gregorius Abulfarag Barhebraeus genannt zum Buch der Könige (I und II).* Berlin.

Book of the Laws of the Countries. Ed. and trans. Nau, F. 1907. "Bardesanes. Liber legum regionum." In *Patrologia Syriaca* 2: cols. 490-658. Paris.

Cave of Treasures. Ed. and trans. Ri, S.-M.. ed. 1987. *La Caverne des Trésors : les deux recensions syriaques*. (CSCO 486-487, Syr. 207-208). Louvain.

Commentary on Genesis. Ed. de Lagarde, P. Lagarde, 1867. *Materialien zur Kritik und Geschichte des Pentateuchs*. vol. 2. Leipzig.

Commentary on Genesis and Exodus. Ed. Van Rompay, L. 1986. *Le commentaire sur Genèse–Exode 9,32 du manuscrit (olim) Diyarbakir 22*. (CSCO 483-484, Syr. 205-206). Louvain.

Elias of Tirhan, *Grammar*. Ed. and trans. Baethgen, F.W.A. 1880. *Turāṣ mamlelā suryāyā, oder Syrische Grammatik des Mar Elias von Tirhan*. Leipzig.

Geneva Bible. 1560. *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament : translated according to the Ebrue and Greke and conferred with the best translations in divers langages; with moste profitable annotations upon all the hard places. and other things of great importance as may appear in the Epistle to the Reader*. Geneva.

Herodotus, *Histories*. Ed. and trans. Godley, A.H. 1920-1924. *Herodotus. History*. London/New York.

Ps.-Eusebius of Caesarea, *On the Star*. Ed. Wright, W. 1866. "Eusebius of Caesarea on the Star." *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* NS (9): 117-136.

Ps.-Eustathius of Antioch, *Commentary on the Hexaemeron*. PG 18, col. 708-793.

History of Mar Aba. Ed. Bedjan, P. 1895. *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et de deux laïques nestoriens*. Paris.

Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿa. 1965. *ʿUyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*. Ed. Riḍā, N. 1965. *ʿUyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*. Beirut.

Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*. Ed. Flügel, G. 1871-1872. *Kitâb al-Fihrist mit anmerkungen herausgegeben von Gustav Flügel*. 2 vols. Leipzig. ET in Dodge, B. 1970. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: a tenth-century survey of Muslim Culture*. 2 vols. New York.

Ibn Waḥshiyya. *al-Filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya*. Ed. Fahd, T. 1993-1995. *Al-Filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya*. 2 vols. Damascus.

---. *Shawq al-mustahām fī maʿrifat rumūz al-aqlām*. Ed. trans. Hammer-Purgstall, J. 1806. *Ancient alphabets and hieroglyphic characters explained; with an account of the Egyptian priests, their classes, initiation, and sacrifices, in the Arabic language by Ahmad bin Abubekr bin Wahshih; and in English by Joseph Hammer*. London.

Ishoʿdad of Merv, *Commentary on Genesis*. Ed. Vosté, J.-M. and Van den Eynde, C. 1950. *Commentaire d'Išoʿdad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament, I: Genèse*. (CSCO 126, Syr. 67). Louvain. FT in Van den Eynde, C. 1955. *Commentaire d'Išoʿdad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament, I: Genèse*. (CSCO 156, Syr. 75).

Jacob of Edessa, *Enchiridion*. Ed. Furlani, G. 1928. "L'Εγχειρίδιον di Giacomo d'Edessa nel testo siriaco." *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* VI, 4: 222-249.

---. *Grammar*. Ed. Wright, W. 1871. *Fragments of the Turrāṣ mamllā nahrāyā or Syriac Grammar of Jacob of Edessa, Edited from MSS. in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library*. London.

Jacob of Edessa, *Letter to John the Stylite*. Ed. Rahmani 1904-1909 (vol.1): ܡܗ-ܠܒ.

Jacob of Sarugh, *Memra on Mar Ephrem*. Ed. Bedjan 1890-1897 [v.3]: 665-679. See also Amar 1995.

Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*. Ed. de Meynard, C.B. and de Courteille, P.V. 1861-1877. *Les praries d'or*. 9 vols. Paris.

Michael Rabo, *Chronicle*. Ed. Ibrahim, G.Y., ed. 2009. *The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex of the* Chronicle of Michael the Great. Piscataway, New Jersey. Ed. and trans. Chabot, J.-B. 1899-1910. *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*. Paris.

Paphnutius, *Letter from Paphnutius to Moses of Aggel*. Ed. Guidi 1886: 399-401.

Severus Sebokht, *Chapter on the Primacy of Syrians' Knowledge of the Science of Astronomy*. Paris Syriaque 346, fols. 168b-171b. Partially edited (and translated) in Nau 1910: 248-252.

Shem'ūn of Samosata, *Life of Theodota of Amid*. Mardin 275, fols. 237a-296b (= pp. 481-600).

Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Questions on Judges*. Ed. and trans. Petruccione, J.F. and Hill, R.C. 2007. *The Questions on the Octateuch*. 2 vols. Washington, DC: vol. 2, 308-361.

Thomas of Kafarṭāb, *'Ashara maqālāt*. Ed. and trans. in Chartouni 1986.

Titus of Bostra, *Against the Manichaeans*. Ed. de Lagarde, P.A. 1859. *Titi Bostreni contra manichaeos libri quatuor syriace*. Berlin.

Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*. 1957-1995. 7 vols. Beirut.

Secondary Sources

Adams, J.N., Janse, M., and Swain, S., eds. 2002. *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*. Oxford.

Adler, W. "Christians and the Public Archive." In Mason, Thomas, Schofield, and Ulrich 2012(v.2): 917-937.

Amar, J. 1995. *A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug: Critical Edition of the Syriac Text, Translation and Introduction.* (PO 47.1). Turnhout.

Amirav, H. and ter Haar Romeny, R.B., eds. 2007. *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron.* Leuven /Paris/Dudley, MA.

Anthony, S.W. 2010. "The Syriac Account of Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē concerning the Assassination of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69: 209-224.

---. 2014. "Further Notes on the Word *Ṣibgha* in Qurʾān 2:138." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 58: 117-129.

---. 2020. *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam.* Oakland, California.

---. 2022. "The Virgin Annunciate in the Meccan Qurʾan: Q. Maryam 19:19 in Context." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 81: 363-385.

Arnold, W. 2011. "Western Neo-Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 685-696.

Arnold, W., Jursa, M, Müller, W.W., and Procházka, S., eds. 2002. *Philologisches und Historisches zwischen Anatolien und Sokotra: Analecta Semitica In Memoriam Alexander Sima.* Wiesbaden.

Assemani, J.S. 1719-1728. *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, 3 vols. in four parts. Rome.

Baasten, M.F.J. 2003. "A Note on the History of ʿSemitic.'" In Baasten and Peursen 2003: 57-72.

Baasten, M.F.J., and Peursen, W.T., eds. 2003. *Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday.* Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA.

Bahnassi, A. 1995. *Muʿjam muṣṭalaḥāt al-khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī wa-ʾl-khaṭṭāṭīn.* Beirut.

Baillet, M. 1963. "Un livret magique en christo-palestinien à l'Université de Louvain." *Le Muséon* 76: 375-401.

Bantu, V.L. 2020. *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity*. Downer's Grove, Illinois.

Bar-Asher Siegal, M. 2013. *Early Christian monastic literature and the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge.

---. 2019a. *Jewish-Christian Dialogues on Scripture in Late antiquity: Heretic Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge.

---. 2019b. "Judaism and Syriac Christianity." In King 2019: 146-156.

---. 2022. "From West to East: Christian Traditions and the Babylonian Talmud" in Hayes 2022: 374-400.

Bar-Asher Siegal, M., Novick, T. and Hayes, C., eds. 2017. *The faces of Torah: studies in the texts and contexts of ancient Judaism in honor of Steven Fraade*. Göttingen.

Baumstark, A. 1922. *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen texte*. Bonn.

Becker, A.H. 2007 (2003). "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*: Questioning the 'Parting of the Ways' Outside the Roman Empire." In Becker and Reed 2007 (2003): 373-392.

---. 2010. "The Comparative Study of "Scholasticism" in Late Antique Mesopotamia: Rabbis and East Syrians." *AJS Review* 34:91-113.

---. 2013. "Polishing the Mirror: Some Thoughts on Syriac Sources and Early Judaism." In Boustan, Herrmann, Leicht, Reed, and Veltri 2013 (vol. 2): 897-915.

Becker, A.H. and Reed, A.Y. 2007 (2003). *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Minneapolis. (reprint of 2003 edition).

Bedjan, P., ed. 1890-1897: *Acta Martyrum et sanctorum syriace*. 7 vols. Paris and Leipzig. (reprinted Piscatway 2008).

Bergsträsser, G. 1925. *Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen* Leipzig.

Beyer, K. 1966. "Der reichsaramäische Einschlag in der ältesten syrischen Literatur." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 116: 242-254.

---. 1986. *The Aramaic Language: Its Distribution and Subdivisions*. Trans. J.F. Healey. Göttingen.

Bhayro, S. 2012. "A Judaeo-Syriac Medical Fragment from the Cairo Genizah." *Aramaic Studies* 10: 153-172.

---. 2014. "Remarks on the Genizah Judaeo-Syriac Fragment." *Aramaic Studies* 12: 143-153.

---. 2016. "Judeo-Syriac." In Kahn and Rubin 2016: 630-633.

---. 2017. "The Judaeo-Syriac Medical Fragment from the Cairo Genizah: A New Edition and Analysis." In Lehmhaus and Martelli 2017: 273-300.

Bitton-Ashkelony, B., Hjälm, M.L., and Kitchen, R.A., eds., 2023. *The Third Lung: New Trajectories in Syriac Studies. In Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*. Leiden.

Bockmuehl, M. and Stroumsa, G.G. 2010. *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*. Cambridge.

Borbone, P.G. 2021. "A Tale of Three Scripts: Syriac Writing from a Syriac Perspective." In Brelaud, Daccache, Debié, Farina, Ruani, and Villey 2021: 207-223.

Borrut, A. *Entre memoire et pouvoir : l'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72-193/692-809)*. Leiden/Boston.

Boustan, R.S., Herrmann, R.L, Leicht, R., Reed, A.Y., and Veltri, G., *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*. 2 vols. Tübingen.

Bowersock, G.W. 1990. *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*. Ann Arbor.

Boyarin, D. 1981. "An Inquiry into the Formation of the Middle Aramaic Dialects." In Arbeitman and Bomhard 1981: 613-649.

Boyce, M. 1977. *A Word-List of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian.* Leiden and Teheran.

Breulaud, S., Daccache, J., Debié, M., Farina, M., Ruani, F., and Villey, É., eds. 2021. *Le calame et le ciseau : colophons syriaques offerts à Françoise Briquel Chatonnet.* Paris.

Breuer, Y. 2006. "Aramaic in Late Antiquity." In Katz 2006: 457-491.

Brerewood, E. 1614. *Enquiries touching the diuersity of languages, and religions through the cheife parts of the world. Written by Edw. Brerewood lately professor of astronomy in Gresham Colledge in London.* London.

Briquel Chatonnet 2011. "Syriac as the Language of Eastern Christianity." In Weninger 2011b: 652-559.

---. 2018. "La langue du Paradis, la langue comme patrie." In Farina 2018: 9-25.

Brock, S.P. 1980. "An Introduction to Syriac Studies." In Eaton 1980: 1-33.

---. 1991. "The Syriac background to Ḥunayn's translation techniques." *Aram* 3: 139-162.

---. 1995. *Catalogue of Syriac Fragments (New Finds) in the Library of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai.* Athens.

---. 1999-2000. "Syriac Writers from Beth Qaṭraye." *Aram* 11-12: 85-96.

---. 2003. "Some Diachronic Features of Classical Syriac." In Baasten and Peursen 2003: 95-111.

---. 2009. "Edessene Syriac Inscriptions in Late Antique Syria." In Cotton, Hoyland, Price, and Wasserstein 2009: 289-302.

---. 2012. "A Tentative Checklist of Dated Syriac Manuscripts up to 1300." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 15: 21-48.

---. 2022. "Malkite Writings in Syriac: A Neglected Field." In Vergani and Chialà 2022: 13-28.

Brock, S.P. and Taylor, D.G.K. 2001. *The Hidden Pearl: the Syrian Orthodox Church and its Ancient Aramaic heritage*. 3 vols. Rome.

Brock, S.P. Butts, A.M., Kiraz, G.A. and Van Rompay, L., eds. 2011. *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*. Piscataway, New Jersey.

Brockelmann, C. 1928. *Lexicon syriacum*. 2nd ed. Halle.

Brown, P.R.L. 2013. *The Rise of Western Christendom: triumph and diversity, AD 200-1000*. Revised 2nd ed. Chicester/Malden, MA.

Burkitt, F.C. 1901. "Christian Palestinian Literature." *Journal of Theological Studies* 2: 174-183.

---. 1925. *The Religion of the Manichees: Donnellan Lectures for 1924*. Cambridge.

Burtea, B. "Mandaic." In Weninger 2011b: 670-685.

Bush, K., Penn, M.P.P., Crouser, R.J., Howe, N.R., Wu, Shuangxia 2018. "Challenging the Estrangela/Serto Divide: Why the Standard Model of Syriac Scripts Just Doesn't Work." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 21: 43-80.

Butts, A.M. 2016. *Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context*. Winona Lake, Indiana.

---. 2017. "Assyrian Christians." In Frahm 2017: 599-612.

---. 2018a. "The Greco-Roman Context of the Syriac Language." In Farina 2018: 137-165.

---. 2018b. "Old Syriac." *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*. https://doi-org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00002452.

---. 2019. "The Classical Syriac Language." In King 2019: 222-242.

Butts, A.M. and Gross, S. 2016. *The History of the 'Slave of Christ': From Jewish Child to Christian Martyr*. Piscataway, New Jersey.

Butts, A.M. and Gross, S. 2020. *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium*. Tübingen.

Butts, A.M. and Young, R.D. 2020. *Syriac Christian Culture: Beginnings to Renaissance*. Washington, D.C.

Cabouret, B., Gatier, P.-L., and Saliou, C., eds. 2004. *Antioche de Syrie : histoire, images et traces de la ville antique. Colloque organisé par B. Cabouret, P.-L. Gatier et C. Saliou, Lyon, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranee, 4, 5, 6 octobre 2001*. Lyon.

Cardahi, G. 1906. *Kitāb al-Manāhegh seu syntaxis et rhetoricae syrorum institutions*. 2nd ed. Rome.

Carlson, Thomas A. 2018. *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq*. Cambridge.

---. 2019. "Syriac in a Diverse Middle East: From the Mongol Ilkhanate to Ottoman Dominance, 1286–1517," In King 2019: 718-730.

---. 2022. "'The Garden of the Reasonable': Religious Diversity among Middle Eastern Physicians, AD 1000–1500." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 81: 99-118.

---. 2023. "Who Says? A Social History of Syriac Use in the Medieval Islamic Period." In Bitton-Ashkelony, Hjälm, and Kitchen 2023: 348-362.

Casey, M. 1998. *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*. Cambridge.

Chartouni 1986. *Le traité des dix chapitres de Thomas de Kfarṭāb: un document sur les origines de l'Église maronite*. Beirut.

Contini, R. 1987. "Il Ḥawrān preislamico: ipotesi di storia linguistica." *Felix Ravenna* 4: 25-79.

---. 1995. "Hypothèses sur l'araméen manichéen." *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 34: 65-107.

---. 1999. "Le substrat araméen en néo-arabe libanais: preliminaires à une enquête systématique." In Lamberti and Tonelli 1999: 101-122.

---. 2003. "La lingua del Bēt Qaṭrāyē." In Lentin and Lonnet 2003: 173-181.

Cook, E.M. 2008. *A Glossary of Targum Onkelos according to Alexander Sperber's Edition*. Leiden/Boston.

Cotton, H.M., Hoyland, R.G., Price, J.J. and Wasserstein, D.J. 2009. *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*. Oxford.

Debié, M. 2000. "Record Keeping and Chronicle Writing in Antioch and Edessa." *ARAM* 12:409-417.

---. 2022. "L'*Histoire d'Alexandre* syriaque et le Coran : re-datation et histoire des textes." *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 1 (janviers-mars): 207-235.

Degen, R. 1981. "Galen im Syrischen. Eine Übersicht über die syrische Überlieferung der Werke Galens." In Nutton: 1981: 131-166.

De Lagarde, P.A. 1861. *Libri Veteris Testamenti apocryphi syriace*. Leipzig/London.

Desreumaux, A. 2004. "La paléographie des manuscrits syriaques et araméens melkites: le rôle d'Antioche." In Cabouret, Gatier, and Saliou 2004: 555-571.

Durmaz, R. 2020. "Stories, Saints, and Sanctity between Christianity and Islam: The Conversion of Najrān to Christianity in the *Sīra* of Muhammad." In Butts and Young 2020: 174-197.

---. 2022. *Stories between Christianity and Islam: Saints, Memory, and Cultural Exchange in Late Antiquity and Beyond*. Oakland, California.

---. 2023. "Religious Diversity in the Early Medieval Middle East through the Lens of the Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*." *Church History and Religious Culture* 103: 158-179.

Duval, R. 1881. *Traité de grammaire syriaque*. Paris.

---. 1888-1901. *Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano Bar Bahlule*. 3 vols. Paris.

Eaton, J.H., ed. 1980. *Horizons in Semitic Studies: Articles for the Student*. Birmingham.

El-Badawi, E. 2009. 'Divine Kingdom in Syriac Matthew and the Qur'ān.' *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 61: 1-42.

---. 2014. *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*. Abingdon, Oxon.

Fales, F.M. 2011. "Old Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 555-573.

Farina, M., ed. 2018. *Les auteurs syriaques et leur langue*. Paris.

---. 2020. "What is Syriac and what is Aramaic according to Syriac grammarians (8th-16th cent.)." *History and Philosophy of the Language Sciences*. https://hiphilangsci.net/2020/03/07/what-is-syriac.

Fiey, J.-M. 1990. "Les "Nabaṭ" de Kaskar-Wāsiṭ dans les premiers siècles de l'Islam." *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 51: 49-88.

Fitzmyer, J.A. 1979. "The Phases of the Aramaic Language." In J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean*: 57-84. Missoula, Mont. (reprinted in J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, 1997]).

Folmer, M. 2011. "Imperial Aramaic as an Administrative Language of the Achaemenid Period." In Weninger 2011b: 587-598.

Fox, S.E. 1994. "The Relationships of the Eastern Neo-Aramaic Dialects." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114: 154-162.

Frahm, E., ed. 2017. *A Companion to Assyria*. Hoboken, New Jersey.

Franzmann, M. 2005. "The Syriac-Coptic Bilinguals from Ismant el-Kharab (Roman Kellis): Translation Process and Manichaean Missionary Practice." In van Tongerloo 2005: 115-122.

Furman, J. 2020. "The Zuqnin Chronicle as Evidence of Vernacular Aramaic in Eighth-Century Northern Mesopotamia." *Aramaic Studies* 18: 240-267.

Gacek, A. 2001. *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition: a Glossary of Technical Terms and Bibliography*. Leiden/Boston/Cologne.

Gardner, I., ed. 1996. *Kellis Literary Texts*. 2 vols. Oxford.

Gilman, I. and Klimkeit, H.-J. 1999. *Christians in Asia before 1500*. Ann Arbor.

Goldenberg, G. and Raz, S. eds. 1994. *Semitic and Cushitic Studies*. Wiesbaden. 1994.

Gow, A.S.F. and Page, D.L. 1965. *The Greek Anthology. Hellenistic Epigrams*. 2 vols. Cambridge.

Graf, G. 1944-1953. *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*. 5 vols. Città del Vaticano.

Greenslade, S.L. 1956. *Early Latin Theology: selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome*. London.

Gross, S. 2017. "When the Jews Greeted Ali: Sherira Gaon's Epistle in Light of Arabic and Syriac Historiography." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24: 122-144.

---. 2021. "Being Roman in the Sasanian Empire: Revisiting the Great Persecution of Christians under Shapur II." *Studies in Late Antiquity* 5: 361-402.

---. 2024. *Babylonian Jews and Sasanian imperialism in late antiquity*. Cambridge.

Gvaryahu, A. 2022. "Asking for Trouble: Two Reading Traditions of פללים (Exodus 21:22) in Antiquity." *JBL* 141:403-425.

Guidi, I. 1886. "Mosè di Aghel e Simeone Abbate." *Atti della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Serie Quarta: Rendiconti publicati per cura dei segretari* 2:396-416, 545-557.

Gzella, H. 2011a. "Imperial Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 574-586.

---. 2011b. "Late Imperial Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 598-609.

---. 2015. *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*. Boston.

---. 2021. *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language*. Grand Rapids.

Häberl, C. 2009. *The Neo-Mandaic Dialect of Khorramshahr*. Wiesbaden.

---. 2011. "Neo-Mandaic." In Weninger 2011b: 725-737.

Hämeen-Anttila, J. 2006. *The Last Pagans of Iraq. Ibn Waḥshiyya and his* Nabatean Agriculture. Leiden/Boston.

Harrak, A. 1992. "The Ancient Name of Edessa." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51: 209-214.

---. 2011. *Catalogue of Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts: Manuscripts Owned by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage*. Louvain.

Hasse, M.J.G. 1787. *De dialectis linguae syriacae: Dissertatio philologico-historica*. Königsberg.

Hatch, W.H.P. 1946. *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*. Boston.

Hayes, C. 2022. *The Literature of the Sages: a Re-Visioning*. Leiden/Boston.

Healey, J.F. 2007. "The Edessan Milieu and the Birth of Syriac." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 10:2: 115-127.

---. 2008. "Variety in Early Syriac: The Context in Contemporary Aramaic." In Gzella and Folmer 2008: 221-229.

---. 2011. "Syriac." In Weninger 2011b: 637-652.

Heinrichs, W. 1990a. "Introduction." In Heinrichs 1990b: ix-xvii.

---., ed. 1990b. *Studies in Neo-Aramaic*. Atlanta, Georgia.

---. 1993. "The Modern Assyrians: Name and Nation." In Contini, Pennacchietti, and Tosco 1993: 99-11.

Herman, G. and Rubenstein, J.L., eds. 2018. *The Aggada of the Bavli and its Cultural World*. Providence, Rhode Island.

Hilberg. I. 1996. *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*. (CSEL 54-56). 3 vols. Vienna.

Hirshman, M.G. 2009. *The stabilization of rabbinic culture, 100 C.E.-350 C.E.: texts on education and their late antique context*. Oxford/New York.

Hoffmann, A.G. 1827. *Grammaticae syriacae libri 3; cum tribus tabulis varia scripturae aramaicae exhibentibus*. Halle.

Honarchian, A. 2021. "Relics and Their Movement from Sasanian Iran to the Eastern Roman Empire: The Case of Martyropolis and Singar." *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 21: 55-77.

Hoyland, R.G. 2019. *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam.* 2nd ed. Piscataway, New Jersey.

Hoyland, R.G. and Palmer, A. 2023. *The Life of Theodotus of Amida: Syriac Christianity under the Umayyad Caliphate.* Piscataway, New Jersey.

Hunter, E.C.D. 2009. *The Christian Heritage of Iraq: Collected Papers from the Christianity of Iraq I-V Seminar Days.* Piscataway, New Jersey.

Hurvitz, N., Sahner, C.C., Simonsohn, U., and Yarbrough, L. 2020. *Conversion to Islam in the Premodern Age: A Sourcebook.* Oakland, California.

Husmann, H. 1976. "Eine alte orientalische christliche Liturgie: Altsyrisch-Melkitisch." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 42: 156-196.

Irvin, D. and Sunquist S.W. 2001. *History of the World Christian Movement. Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453.* Maryknoll, NY.

Jastrow, O. 2011. "Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥsô." In Weninger 2011b: 697-707.

Jenkins, P. 2008. *The Lost History of Christianity. The thousand-year golden age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and how it died.* New York.

Johnson, S.F., ed. 2015. *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek.* Surrey, England.

Jones, H.L. 1917-1930. *The Geography of Strabo.* 8 vols. London and New York.

Kahn, L., and Rubin, A.D., eds. 2016. *Handbook of Jewish Languages.* Leiden.

Kapeliuk, O. "Language Contact between Aramaic Dialects and Iranian." In Weninger 2011b: 738-474.

Katz, S.T. 2006. *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume IV: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*. Cambridge.

Kessel 2016. "Inventory of Galen's Extant Works in Syriac." In Lamoreaux 2016: 168-192.

Khan, G. 2007a. "Aramaic in the Medieval and Modern Periods." In Postgate 2007: 95-114.

---. 2007b. "The North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Dialects." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 52: 1-20.

---. 2007c. "Remarks on the historical background of the Modern Assyrian language." *The Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 21: 3-8.

---. 2008. "The Syriac Words in the *Kitāb al-Mustaʿīnī* in the Arcadian Library Manuscript." In Burnett 2008: 95-104.

---. 2009. "The Neo-Aramaic Dialects of Iraq." In Hunter 2009: 226-236.

---. 2011. "North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 708-724.

King, D. 2019. *The Syriac World*. Abingdon, Oxon./New York.

Kiraz, G.A. 2002. *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels*. 4 vols. 2nd ed. Piscataway, New Jersey.

---. ed. 2008. *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone*: *Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*. Piscataway, New Jersey.

Kofsky, A. and Stroumsa, G.G., eds. 1998: *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land. First-Fifteenth Centuries CE.* Jerusalem.

Koltun-Fromm, N. 2007 (2003). "Zipporah's Complaint: Moses is Not Conscientious in the Deed! Exegetical Traditions of Moses' Celibacy." In Becker and Reed 2007 (2003): 283-306.

Korolevsky, C. 1998-2001: *History of the Melkite Patriarchs, (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem): from the sixth century*

Monophysite schism until the present (*1910*). Trans. J. Collorafi. 4 vols. Fairfax, VA.

Kozah, M. 2021a. "Introduction." In Kozah, Kiraz, Abu-Husayn, Al-Thani, and Al-Murikhi 2021: 1-22.

---. 2021b. "A Lexical Survey of Qaṭrāyīth." In Kozah, Kiraz, Abu-Husayn, Al-Thani, and Al-Murikhi 2021: 23-106.

Kozah, M., Kiraz, G., Abu-Husayn, A., Al Thani, H., Al-Murikhi, S. (eds), 2021. *Beth Qaṭraye: A Lexical and Toponymical Survey*. Piscataway, New Jersey.

Lamberti, M., and Tonelli, L., eds. 1999. *Afroasiatica Tergestina*. Padova.

Lamoreaux, J.C. 2016. *Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq on his Galen Translations: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*. Provo, Utah.

Lampe, G.W.H. 1961. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford.

Land, J.P.N. 1862-1875. *Anecdota syriaca, collegit, edidit, explicavit*. 4 vols. Leiden.

Larsow, F. 1841. *De dialectorum linguae Syriacae reliquiis*. Berlin.

Lemhaus, L., and Martelli, M., eds. 2017. *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*. Berlin.

Lentin, J. and Lonnet, A. 2003. *Mélanges David Cohen. Etudes sur le langage, les langues, les dialectes, les littératures offertes par ses élèves, ses collègues, ses amis présentées à l'occasion de son quatre-vingtième anniversaire*. Paris.

Maclean, A.J. 1901. *A Dictionary of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac as Spoken by the Eastern Syrians of Kurdistan, Northwest Persia, and the Plain of Moṣul, with Illustrations from the Dialects of the Jews of Zakhu and Azerbaijan, and of the Western Syrians of Ṭur 'Abdin and Ma'lula*. Oxford.

Macuch, R. 1965. *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic*. Berlin.

Macuch, M., Müller-Kessler, C. and Fragner, B.G. eds. 1989. *Hkmwt bnth byth: Studia semitica necnon iranica Rudolpho*

Macuch septuagenario ab amicis et discipulis dedicata. Wiesbaden.

Maman, A., Fassberg, S.E. and Breuer, Y., eds. 2007. *Sha'arei Lashon: Studies in Hebrew, Aramaic and Jewish Languages Presented to Moshe Bar-Asher.* 3 vols. Jerusalem.

Maraval, P. 2002. Égérie: *Journal de voyage (Itinéraire). Introduction, texte critique, notes, et cartes.* Paris.

Margoliouth, G. 1896. "The Liturgy of the Nile." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*: 677-731.

Martin, J.-P. P. 1872. "Syriens orientaux et occidentaux. Essai sur les deux principaux dialectes araméens." *Journal asiatique* 6: 305-483.

Mason, E.F., Thomas, S.I., Schofield, A., and Ulrich, E. 2012. *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam.* 2 vols. Leiden.

Michaelis, J.D. 1772. *Abhandlung von der Syrischen Sprache, und ihrem Gebrauch: nebst dem ersten Theil einer Syrischen Chrestomathie.* Göttingen.

Milik, J.T. 1953. "Une inscription et une lettre en araméen christo-palestinien." *Revue biblique* 60: 526-539.

Millar, F. 1971. "Paul of Samosata, Zenobia and Aurelian: The Church, Local Culture and Political Allegiance in Third-Century Syria." *Journal of Roman Studies* 61: 1-17.

---. 1987a. "Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38: 143-164.

---. 1987b. "The Problem of Hellenistic Syria." In Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987: 110-133.

---. 1990. "The Roman Coloniae of the Near East: A Study of Cultural Relations." In Solin and Kavaja 1990: 7-58.

---. 1993. *The Roman Near East: 31 BC-AD 337.* Cambridge, Mass. and London.

---. 1998. "Il ruolo delle lingue semitiche nel Vicino Oriente tardo-romano (V-VI secolo)." *Mediterraneo Antico* 1: 71-94.

---. 2007. "Theodoret of Cyrrhus: A Syrian in Greek Dress?." In Amirav and ter Haar Romeny 2007: 105-125.

---. 2008a. "Community, Religion and Language in the Middle-Euphrates Zone in Late Antiquity." *Scripta Classica Israelica* 27: 67-93.

---. 2008b. "Rome, Constantinople and the Near Eastern Church under Justinian: Two Synods of C.E. 536." *Journal of Roman Studies* 98: 62-82.

---. 2009. "Linguistic Co-existence in Constantinople: Greek and Latin (and Syriac) in the Acts of the Synod of 536 C.E." *Journal of Roman Studies* 99: 92-103.

---. 2011. "Greek and Syriac in Edessa: From Ephrem to Rabbula (CE 363-435)." Semitica et Classica 4: 99-114.

Minov, S. 2019. Jews and Christians in Late Sasanian Nisibis: The Evidence of the *Life of Mār Yāreth the Alexandrian*. In Rubanovich and Herman 2019: 473-505.

---. 2021. The Syriac *Life of Mār Yāret the Alexandrian*: Promoting the Cult of a Monastic Holy Man in Early Medieval Mesopotamia." In Minov and Ruani 2021: 106-222.

Minov, S. and Ruani, F., eds. 2021. *Syriac Hagiography: Texts and Beyond*. Leiden.

Moffett, S.H. 1998. *A history of Christianity in Asia. Volume I: Beginnings to 1500*. 2nd ed. Maryknoll, NY.

Moberg, A. 1907-1913. *Buch der Strahlen: die grössere Grammatik des Barhebräus : Übersetzung nach einem kritisch berichtigten Texte mit textkritischem Apparat und einem Anhang Zur Terminologie*. 2 vols. Leipzig.

Morgenstern, M. "Diachronic Studies in Mandaic." *Orientalia* 79: 505-525.

---. 2011. "Christian Palestinian Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 628-637.

Moss, Y. 2010. "The Language of Paradise: Hebrew or Syriac? Linguistic Speculations and Linguistic Realities in Late Antiquity." In Bockmuehl and Stroumsa 2010: 120-137.

Müller-Kessler, C. 1991. *Grammatik des Christlich-Palästinisch-Aramäischen*. Hildesheim/Zurich/New York.

Nasrallah, J. 1979-1989: *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle*. 5 vols. Louvain, Paris, and Damascus.

Nau, F. 1907. "Bardesanes. Liber legum regionum." In *Patrologia Syriaca* 2: cols. 490-658. Paris.

Neuwirth, A., Sinai, N. and Marx, M., eds. 2010: *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic milieu*. Leiden/Boston.

Nöldeke, T. 1867. "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der aramäischen Dialecte." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 21: 183-200.

---. 1868a. "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der aramäischen Dialecte. II. Über den christlich-palästinischen Dialekt." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 21 (1867): 183-200.

---. 1868b. *Grammatik der neusyrischen Sprache am Urmia-See und in Kurdistan*. Leipzig.

Nöldeke, T. 1871a. "ΑΣΣΥΡΙΟΣ ΣΥΡΙΟΣ ΣΥΡΟΣ." *Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie* 5: 443-468.

---. 1871b. "Die Namen der aramäischen Nation und Sprache." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 25: 113-131.

---. 1904. *Compendious Syriac Grammar*. Trans. J.A. Crichton. London.

Nutton, V. 1981. *Galen: Problems and Prospects*. London.

Ownes, J. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*. Oxford.

Pahlitzsch, J. 2001. *Graeci und Suriani im Palästina der Kreuzfahrerzeit. Beiträge und Quellen zur Geschichte des griechisch-orthodoxen Patriarchats von Jerusalem*. Berlin.

---. 2015. "Greek – Syriac – Arabic: The Relationship between Liturgical and Colloquial Languages in Melkite Palestine in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." In Johnson 2015: 495-505.

Paton, W.R. 1925-1927. *The Greek Anthology*. 5 vols. London and New York.

Payne, R.E. 2015. *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity*. Oakland, California.

Payne Smith, J., ed. 1903. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary Founded on the* Thesaurus Syriacus *of R. Payne Smith*. Oxford.

Payne Smith, R. 1879-1901. *Thesaurus Syriacus*. 2 vols. Oxford.

Paykova, A.V. 1979. "The Syrian Ostracon from Panjikant." *Le Muséon* 92: 159-169.

Pedersen, N.A. and Larsen, J.M. 2013. *Manichean Texts in Syriac: First Editions, New Editions, and Studies*. Turnhout.

Penn, M.P.P. 2015. *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World*. Philadelphia.

---. 2019. "Early Syriac Reactions to the Rise of Islam." In King 2019: 175-188.

Peters, F.E. 1968. *Aristoteles Arabus. The Oriental Translations and Commentaries of the Aristotelian Corpus*. Leiden.

Postgate, J.N. 2007. *Languages of Iraq: Ancient and Modern*. Cambridge.

Puech, E. 2007. "Une nouvelle amulette en araméen christo-palestinien." In Maman, Fassberg, and Breuer 2007: *71-*84.

Quatremère, M. 1835. *Mémoire sur les Nabatéens*. Extrait du Nouveau Journal Asiatique. Paris.

Rahmani, I.E. 1904-1909. *Studia Syriaca, seu collectio documentorum hactenus ineditorum ex codicibus Syriacis*. Charfeh.

Rassi, S. 2022. *Christian Thought in the Medieval Islamicate world: 'Abdīshō' of Nisibis and the Apologetic Tradition*. Oxford.

Retsö, J. 2013. "What is Arabic?" In Owens 2013: 433-450.

Reynolds, G.S., ed. 2008. *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*. London/New York.

---., ed. 2010. *The Qur'ān and its biblical subtext*. London/New York.

---., ed. 2011. *New perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in its historical context 2*. New York.

---. 2018. *The Qur'ān and the Bible: Text and Commentary*. New Haven/London.

Ri, S.-M.. ed. 1987. *La Caverne des Trésors : les deux recensions syriaques*. (CSCO 486-487, Syr. 207-208). Louvain.

Robinson, C.F. 2000. *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: the Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge.

Rosenthal, F. 1939. *Die aramaistische Forschung seit T. Nöldeke's Veröffentlichungen*. Leiden.

Rubanovich, J. and Herman, G., eds. 2019. *Irano-Judaica VII: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*. Jerusalem.

Rubenstein, J.L. 2017. "Hero, Saint, and Sage: The Life of R. Elazar b. R. Shimon in Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 11." In Bar-Asher Siegal, Novick, and Hayes 2017: 509-528.

Rubenstein, J.L. 2018. "Martyrdom in the Persian Martyr Acts and in the Babylonian Talmud." In Herman and Rubenstein 2018: 175-210.

Rubin, M. 1998a. "Arabization versus Islamization in the Palestinian Melkite Community during the early Muslim Period." In Kofsky and Stroumsa 1998: 149-162.

---. 1998b. "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49: 306-333.

Rustow, M. 2020. *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*. Princeton.

Sabar, Y. 2002. *A Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dictionary: Dialects of Amidya, Dihok, Nerwa and Zakho, Northwestern Iraq: based on Old and New manuscripts, Oral and Written Bible Translations, Folkloric Texts, and Diverse Spoken Registers, with an Introduction to Grammar and Semantics, and an Index of Talmudic Words which have Reflexes in Jewish Neo-Aramaic*. Wiesbaden.

Sachau, E. ed. 1907-1914. *Syrische Rechtsbücher*. 3 vols. in 2. Berlin.

Samir, S.K. 1977. "Théodore de Mopsueste dans le «Fihrist» d'Ibn an-Nadīm." *Le Muséon* 90: 355-363.

Schall, A. 1953. Review. "ABRAHAM LEVENE: *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis from a Syriac Ms. on the Pentateuch in the Mingana Collection*. The first eighteen chapters of the Ms. edited with introduction, translation and notes; and including a study in comparative exegesis." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 103: 433-437.

---. 1989. "Der nestorianische Bibelexeget Išoʻdad von Merw (9. Jh. n. Chr.) in seiner Bedeutung für die orientalische Philologie." In Macuch, Müller-Kessler, and Fragner 1989: 271-282.

Scher, A., ed. 1910-1912. *Theodorus bar Kōnī. Liber Scholiorum*. (CSCO Syr. II.65-66). Paris.

Secunda, S. 2009. "Talmudic Text and Iranian Context: On the Development of Two Talmudic Narratives." *AJS Review* 33: 45-69.

Segal, J.B. 1970. *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'*. Oxford.

Selden, J. 1629. *De Dis Syris Syntagmata II*. Leiden.

Shahid, I. 1984. *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs*. Washington, DC.

Shoemaker, S.J. 2023. "Syriac Apocalypticism and the Rise of Islam." In Bitton-Ashkelony, Hjälm, and Kitchen 2023: 325-338.

Simonsohn, U.I. 2011. A Common Justice: the Legal Allegiances of Christians and Jews under Early Islam. Philadelphia.

---. 2023. *Female Power and Religious Change in the Medieval Near East*. Oxford/New York.

Sokoloff, M. 1990. *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine period*. 2nd ed. Ramat-Gan/Baltimore.

---. 2002. *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Ramat-Gan/Baltimore/London.

---. 2003. *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*. Ramat-Gan.

---. 2011a. "Jewish Babylonian Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 660-670.

---. 2011b. "Jewish Palestinian Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 610-619.

---. 2014. *A Dictionary of Christian Palestinian Aramaic*. Leuven/Paris/Walpole, Massachusetts.

Sokoloff, M. and Yahalom, J. 1979. "Christian Palimpsests from the Cairo Geniza." *Revue d'histoire des textes* 8: 109-132.

Solin, H., and Kavaja, M., eds. 1990. *Roman Eastern Policy and Other Studies in Roman History: Proceedings of a Colloquium at Tvärminne, 2-3 October, 1987*. Helsinki.

Stadel, C. 2016. "The Judaeo-Syriac Version of Bel and the Dragon: An Edition with Linguistic Comments." *Mediterranean Language Review* 23: 1-31.

---. 2020. "Judaeo-Syriac: Syriac Texts in Jewish Square Script." In Butts and Gross 2020:281-290.

Stadel, S.M. 2023. *The Heirs of Theodore. Aḥob of Qatar and the Development of the East Syriac Exegetical Tradition*. Leiden/Boston.

Tal, A. 2000. *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic*. 2 vols. Leiden.

---. 2011. "Samaritan Aramaic." In Weninger 2011b: 619-628.

Talay, S. 2009. "Spuren des Neuaramäischen in syrischen Inschriften aus dem Tur Abdin und Umgebung." In Arnold, Jursa, and Müller 2002: 373-382.

Tannous, J. 2008. "Between Christology and Kalām? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of

the Arab Tribes." In Kiraz 2008: 671-716. Reprinted as Jack Tannous, *Between Christology and Kalam? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes* (*Analecta Gorgiana* 128) (Piscataway, New Jersey, Gorgias Press, 2009).

---. 2010. "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak." PhD dissertation, Princeton.

Taylor, D.G.K. 2002. "Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia." In Adams, Janse, and Swain 2002: 298-331.

Troupeau, G. 1991. "Le rôle des syriaques dans la transmission et l'exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique grec." *Arabica* 38: 1-10.

Uhlemann, F. 1829. *Elementarlehre der syrischen Sprache, mit vollständigen Paradigmen, syrischen Lesestücken und dem dazu gehörenden Wörterbuche, für akademische Vorlesungen*. Berlin.

Ullmann, M. 1970. *Die Medizin im Islam*. Leiden.

Van den Eynde, C. 1939. *La version syriaque du Commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des Cantiques*. Louvain.

Van Rompay, L. 1986. *Le commentaire sur Genèse–Exode 9,32 du manuscrit (olim) Diyarbakir 22*. (CSCO 483-484, Syr. 205-206). Louvain.

---. 1994. "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Origins of Classical Syriac as a Standard Language: The Syriac Version of Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History." In Goldenberg and Raz 1994: 70-89.

Van Tongerloo, A., ed. 2005. *Il manicheismo: nuove prospettive della richerca. Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale."* Napoli, 2-8 Settembre 2001. Louvain and Naples.

Vergani, E., and Chialà, S., eds. 2022. *Symposium Syriacum XII: Held at St Lawrence College, Rome 19–21 August 2016. Organized by the Pontifical Oriental Institute on the Occasion of the Centenary Celebration (1917–2017)*. Rome.

Vidas, M. 2014. *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*. Princeton/Oxford.

Walker, J.T. 2006. *The legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*. Berkeley.

Weitzman, M.P. 1999. *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: an Introduction*. Cambridge/New York.

Weltecke, D. 2009. "Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity." *Church History and Religious Culture* 89:115-125.

---. 2021. *The "Description of the Times" by Mōr Michael the Great (1126–1199): A Study on its Historical and its Historiographical Context*. Trans. Anthony Runia. Leuven.

Weninger, S. "Aramaic-Arabic Language Contact." In Weninger 2011b: 747-755.

---., ed. 2011b. *Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*. Berlin/Boston.

Wilkinson, J. 1999. *Egeria's Travels*. 3rd ed. Warminster, England.

Witztum, J. 2011. 'The Syriac Millieu of the Quran: The Recasting of Biblical Narratives.' PhD, diss., Princeton.

Wright, W. 1863. "Anecdota Syriaca." *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* NS (3): 115-130.

---. 1870-1872. *Catalogue of Syriac manuscripts in the British museum acquired since the year 1838.* 3 vols. London.

Yarbrough, L.B. 2019. *Friends of the Emir: Non-Muslim State Officials in Premodern Islamic Thought.* Cambridge.

Young, F., Ayres, L., and Louth, A., eds. 2004. *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature.* Cambridge.

Zayyāt, Ḥ. 1902. *Khazā'in al-kutub fī Dimashq wa-ḍawāḥīhā.* Cairo.