

**A MODERN
SYRIAC-ENGLISH
DICTIONARY; PART 1**

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ABRAHAM YOHANNAN

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Modern Syriac-English Dictionary

BY

Abraham Yohannan A. M.

PART I.

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
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PREFACE.

The difficulties which confronted me in compiling this dictionary were numerous. There was no previous work of which I could avail myself as a guide. Of modern Syriac literature beyond a number of books on religious subjects which have been translated chiefly from English and printed by the missionaries, there is almost nothing that is worth the name; and the religious literature scarcely touches upon the vernacular and idiom of a people of whom a great majority are illiterate. This illiteracy has fostered the division of modern Syriac into numerous dialects. The religious books have issued from the presses of three different missions, the American, the English and the French. All of these being stationed in Urmi have, it is true, taken the dialect of that place for their standard; but while the American mission has kept more strictly to this dialect, the English and the French show a tendency to admit peculiarities of other dialects. They therefore differ from each other considerably in orthography and pronunciation. Each mission has its own peculiar way of spelling certain classes of words. The French Catholic missionaries have been influenced to some extent by the Salamas dialect, for one of their fields of work lies in that region. Missionaries of the Church of England, on the other hand, are trying to introduce more of the mountain dialects, which show a tendency to recur to the

classical Syriac. A great confusion has naturally resulted from this.

My interest in the Modern Syriac vocabulary has greatly increased since 1886, when I engaged in the revision of the Scriptures in Modern Syriac, under the auspices of the American Bible Society. My work began to assume shape in 1893 and 1894 after I had received my appointment at Columbia University, New York. Here I had almost all the apparatus that was needed. In its library are represented almost all of the modern Syriac dialects.

I desire to make grateful acknowledgement of my deep indebtedness to Professor E. J. H. Gottheil for his valuable suggestions, and his assistance in reading the manuscript and proof. He placed at my disposal the books in his library referring to the subject, and has given me much encouragement to continue the work. My cordial thanks are also due to my friend and colleague Prof. A. V. W. Jackson for the personal interest he has taken in the work from the beginning, and for reading the manuscript and proof sheets. I am greatly indebted to Dean Maclean's *Grammar of the Vernacular Syriac*, (Cambridge, 1895), which has been indispensable in compiling this dictionary, and whose method I have often adopted. Of other works which I have used, I can only mention Duval's *Les Dialectes Néo-Araméens de Salamas* (Paris, 1883), and Socin's *Neu-Aramäische Dialekte von Urmia bis Mosul*, (Tübingen, 1882) as well as Lidzbarski's *Neu-Aramäische Handschriften in the Semitistische Studien*, (Weimar, 1894) and Prym and Socin, *Der Neu-Aramäische Dialekt des Tur Abdin* (Göttingen, 1881). Nöldeke's *Grammatik der Neusyrischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1868), and Stoddard's *Grammar of Modern Syriac Language* (New York, 1856) have been of great help in the work. To determine the origin of a few loan-words I have occasionally had recourse to Paul de Lagarde's *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Leipzig, 1866).

I obtained lately the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Chaldéenne*, by Mgr. J. Audo (Mossoul, 1897), and *Grammaire de la Langue Araméenne* by Mgr. David, archbishop of Damascus, and have availed myself of the help they could afford me; and I owe my thanks also to the printing office of Mr. W. Drugulin, Leipzig, for the careful and prompt despatch of the work.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Syriac speaking community is found today in the district which lies between Lake Urmi¹, Lake Van, the River Tigris and the city of Mosul².

The question as to the origin of the Syrians is one difficult to answer. Certain European travelers have held that the Nestorians have a Jewish type of countenance, and have tried to identify them with the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel³. They have been led to this because of certain points of similarity which Nestorians and Jews seem to have in common — physiognomy, language⁴, religious observances and social customs.

¹ It is written in various forms, as ܐܘܪܡܝܐ, ܐܘܪܡܝܐ, ܐܘܪܡܝܐ, ܐܘܪܡܝܐ, ܐܘܪܡܝܐ and in Persian, ارمیه, ارمیه, اورمیه, اورمیه, ارمی, ارمی. The Nestorians etymologise the word as meaning 'place of water'. See Nöldeke's *Grammatik der Neusyrischen Sprache*, Einleitung, p. XXII. Urmi is sometimes called ܐܘܪܡܝܐ ܕܥܘܪܡܝܐ, 'the place of pleasure'. The Eastern Syrians write it ܐܘܪܡܝܐ invariably. The name ܐܘܪܡܝܐ might have some relation to the word Ormazd, the adjective of it in Mountain dialects is, ܐܘܪܡܝܐ, perhaps a corruption of ܐܘܪܡܝܐ 'a man of Urmi.' ܐܘܪܡܝܐ it used now as a man's name.

² Comp. Maclean. *Grammar of Vernacular Syriac*, Introduction p. IX, *Map of the Assyrian or Chaldean Country*, in the Annual Reports of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians.

³ Grant. *The Nestorians; or, the Lost Tribes*, pp. 192—253.

⁴ Gottheil. *The Judeo-Aramaean Dialect of Salamas*, JAOS. XV, pp. 297—310. New York, 1892; Löwy in *Trans. Soc. Bibl. Arc.* IV, p. 98; VI,

This identity has, however, in no measure been proven, for the very reason, if for no other, that the diversity of types among the Eastern Syrians makes it hard to presuppose a common ancestry for them all. The people of Tiari, for instance, seem to be an entirely different type from most of the other Syrians. Their complexion is generally ruddy brown and their features are small and sharply defined. The most that can be said is that the Nestorians of Jêlu¹ have a more Jewish type of countenance than any of the other Nestorians.

According to the generally accepted view the Syrians were first known as ܐܪܡܝܐ or ܐܪܡܝܐ², that is Arameans, and their language is spoken of as ܐܪܡܝܐ or ܐܪܡܝܐ, that is Aramaic. The language of the New Testament seems to make a distinction between ܐܪܡܝܐ and ܫܘܪܝܐ, and Syriac grammarians, lexicographers and commentators agree as regards this distinction. The former expression is used to designate the Hellenists or Pagans and the latter is applied to Syriac Christians. In course of time, however, the designation, ܫܘܪܝܐ or ܫܘܪܝܐ or ܫܘܪܝܐ 'Syrian' came to be substituted for Aramean because the latter expression seemed to smack of heathenism³. So far, indeed, did this dislike of things Aramean go, that the Syrian Christians despised even their early Aramaic literature

p. 600, London, 1878. J. Perkins. *JAOS.* II, p. 91, New York, 1849—50. Nöldeke. *ZDMG.* XXXVII, p. 602, Leipzig, 1883. Duval. *Les Dialectes Neo-Araméens de Salamas*, Paris 1883. Maclean. *Grammar of Vernacular Syriac*, Cambridge, 1895. Wright. *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, p. 20, Cambridge, 1890. Socin. *Die Neo-Aramäischen Dialekte von Urmia bis Mosul*, Einleitung, p. V., Tübingen, 1882.

¹ Maclean. *Grammar of Vernacular Syriac*, Introduction, p. XIII.

² Payne Smith. *Thesaurus Syriacus*, under ܫܘܪܝܐ and ܫܘܪܝܐ. Audo. *Dictionnaire de la Langue Chaldéenne*, Introduction, p. 9. Mosul, 1896. David. *Grammaire de la Langue Araméenne*, Introduction, p. 10. Mosul, 1896.

³ Wright. *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, p. 15. Nöldeke in *Hermes*, 1871, p. 443 and *ZDMG.* XXV, p. 113. David. *Grammaire de la Langue Araméenne*. Introduction p. 11. Audo. *Dictionnaire de la Langue Chaldéenne*. Introduction, p. 9.

and probably destroyed it because it was heathenish. The term ܣܘܪܝܝܐ is generally admitted to have been given to the people by the Greeks, although Syrian national tradition holds that it was in use long before the designation Aramean, and that the Greeks got it from the Arameans. The Nestorians claim further that in reality they should be called ܣܘܪܝܝܐ, that is Assyrians, and that the word ܣܘܪܝܝܐ is merely a Christian adaptation of the original. In this connection it may be worth noting that the Armenians call the Syrians Athori, and the country Athorestan¹, and there is in truth a certain similarity in the shape of the head and the physiognomy of the old Assyrians as engraved upon their ancient monuments with the features of the Syrians of today, especially in Mosul, Albag, etc. Nöldeke has long ago proven that the word Syria is merely a shortened form of Assyria. Furthermore the Syrians insist that the term ܣܘܪܝܝܐ was a misnomer given by the Jews to all who were outside the pale of Judaism.

There is still another designation for the Syrians. In recent times the name ܫܘܪܝܝܐ 'Chaldeans' has been adopted by Latin missionaries for them², though its use is confined almost exclusively to those Syrians who have joined the Catholic church. This appellation is quite inexact, as the Syrians themselves use this word to designate astrologers.

The Syrians of Persia probably number about sixty thousand souls. They are located in the plains of Urmi, Salamas and Sulduz;—plains which lie to the West of Lake Urmi. Salamas is near the northern end of the lake, Sulduz near the southern, and Urmi between the two. From the diversity seen

¹ Aucher. *A Dictionary, Armenian and English*, V. II, Venice, 1821.

² Badger. *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, I, p. 179. Grant. *The Nestorians*, p. 170. Smith and Dwight *Missionary Researches* V. II, p. 186. Duval. *Les Dialectes Néo-Araméens de Salamas*, p. II.