

Classical Syriac for Hebraists

Second, revised edition

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Takamitsu Muraoka

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Takamitsu Muraoka

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PREFACE

This is a corrected and slightly revised version of the work first published in 1987. I am grateful to Dr R.G. Lehmann and Dr R.M. Kerr for their invitation to prepare the volume for the series *SILLO* under their editorship. It is also gratifying to realise that there is still some demand for this introductory grammar among Orientalists and Bible students.

Since 1987 there have appeared a number of beginners' grammars for Syriac such as those penned by Healey, Thackston, Pazzini and the present author himself.¹ Whilst none of them assumes previous knowledge of any cognate language on the part of the intended student, we believe that many who take up the study of this rich and important Semitic tongue already have some acquaintance with Hebrew or Arabic, or perhaps both. By assuming such previous knowledge a study of Syriac can be made more interesting and efficient.

Currently available beginners' grammars of Syriac often contain an anthology of texts with a glossary. However, only in the present work and the other one by the present author the chosen texts are annotated. This makes these works suitable for self-study. As the principal aim of this grammar is to help students acquire a reasonable measure of facility in reading Syriac documents, whether pointed (vocalised) or not, we would make the practical suggestion that they should first study the asterisked paragraphs or parts of such paragraphs, and then proceed to the appended chrestomathy. As they read along, they will find, in footnotes, references to the grammar part, including unasterisked paragraphs which deal in greater detail with finer points of orthography, morphology, morphosyntax, and syntax. Having studied the first three or four pieces, the students would profitably commence a gradual study of the entire grammar as they continue to read the remaining pieces of the chrestomathy.

1 T. Muraoka, *Classical Syriac: A Basic Grammar with a Chrestomathy. With a Select Bibliography Compiled by S.P. Brock*, Porta Linguarum Orientalium, 19 (2nd edn, Wiesbaden, 2005).

It is only fair to acknowledge our debt to the standard reference grammars by Nöldeke and Duval. In spite of some advances made since their publication they still retain immense value. It ought to be stressed that every serious student of Syriac grammar would find it necessary and profitable to make constant reference to them, Nöldeke in particular. Yet the present writer would like to believe that his own study of Syriac documents over the years has enabled him to incorporate in this work and his other Syriac grammar some new insights and perhaps improvements on his predecessors' description of the language.

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by Dr G.R. Clark and Dr R.G. Jenkins, with whom I was associated in my time at the University of Melbourne. Both gentlemen improved the English style of the grammar and presentation of its materials, the former in particular worked under the most trying circumstances. I feel also obliged to put on record that my research in connection with the work was greatly facilitated by A. Bonus's concordance to the entire Peshitta New Testament, a manuscript which was in possession of the then Department of Middle Eastern Studies of Melbourne University, Australia.

Following the publisher's and the series editors' wish the Estrangela script used in the first edition has been largely replaced by the Jacobite Sertō. The composition of the book was entrusted to Mr Sven Grebenstein, Göttingen. He also took upon himself the arduous task of retyping all Syriac data and transliterations. He further enhanced the quality of this new edition by checking all citations and bibliographical data in their sources as well as offering a considerable number of suggestions and corrections. Dr Michael Waltisberg of Marburg kindly proof-read the work, offering a large number of valuable remarks and corrections. I am certain that all these efforts made by these two gentlemen have added to the scholarly and pedagogical value of the present work. For all this I am immensely grateful to these two scholars. I have much benefitted from reviews of the first edition and have further made grateful use of the lists of errata, queries, and observations sent

to me by Prof. Bruce Zuckerman and Dr O.J. Schrier on the first edition. I would also like to thank Dr Barbara Krauß, Director of Harrassowitz Verlag, and the editor-in-charge, Ms Julia Guthmüller, for their interest in the project.

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T. Muraoka