

## MITTEILUNGEN

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### An Update on the Syriac MSS Collections in South India

During November and December, 1985, with the aid of Prof. J. P. M. Van der Ploeg's *The Syriac Manuscript of St. Thomas Christians* (Bangalore, 1983) and the help of many Keralite Christians, with special thanks to Dr. Jacob Thekeparampil of the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, Kottayam, the author of this article was able to inspect almost all the known Syriac MSS in Kerala. In the process, approximately fifty unregistered MSS were found, including the recently formed collection at the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, which was not mentioned by Prof. Van der Ploeg.

Though the relatively private libraries such as those of the Konat family in Pampakuda or the Chaldean Syrian Metropolitan's Palace, Trichur, have not changed, it appears that over the last decade or less, there has been an effort by the larger ecclesiastical institutions to acquire Syriac MSS in the possession of individuals and churches. This resulted in the author's finding many MSS not mentioned by Prof. Van der Ploeg.

Not all the approximately fifty Syriac MSS not registered by Prof. Van der Ploeg will be mentioned. Many are service books of recent date, and it is these that will not be mentioned individually.

#### *Catholic Bishop's House, Trichur*

There are several service books here not mentioned by Prof. Van der Ploeg, possibly due to their minimal importance. However, one needs to be mentioned as there seemed to be special interest in it at the Bishop's House. There was a comment written in it "very precious". This is an 18th century copy of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari followed by a selection of *pushakê* on passages from the New Testament.



*The Monastery of St. Joseph, Mannanam*

Here the author found six Biblical and exegetical MSS.

- 1) Ser. No. 59. *Commentary on the Apocalypse*.  $6'' \times 7\frac{1}{2}''$ ; 18 lines/pg.; 90 ff. plus one blank page at each end; 19th cent. Translated from Latin.
- 2) Ser. No. 2094. *Scholia on the Readings in the Books in the Holy Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John from the Blessed Dionysius* (Bar Salibi).  $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8''$ ; 19 lines/pg.; 386 pp.; 18th/19th cent.
- 3) Ser. No. 2095. *Acts and Commentary on the Apocalypse*.  $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{7}{8}''$ ; 18 lines/pg.; 208 pp. Acts: pp. 1-134; Commentary: pp. 139-195; 18th/19th cent. Colophon: "This book was written by the hands of the youth Thomas, a son of the flock of the church of Pali (*d<sup>e</sup>ply*)."
- 4) Ser. No. 2096. *Catechism and The Book of the Blessed Tobit*. 285 ff.; 18th cent. Catechism: ff. 1-114; Tobit: ff. 115-285.
- 5) Ser. No. 2527. *Catholic and Pauline Epistles and Commentary on the Psalms of the Blessed David*.  $3\frac{3}{4}'' \times 5\frac{3}{4}''$ ; 15 lines/pg.; 414 ff. Epistles: ff. 1-346; Commentary: ff. 347-414. Colophon: "Written by Philip, the priest, on January 7, 1730, Wednesday."
- 6) *Books of the Old Testament*.  $5\frac{3}{4}'' \times 8''$ ; 19-20 lines/pg.; 336 ff.; 17th/18th cent. Contains Tobit; Jesus ben Sira; I, II Samuel; Proverbs; Joshua; Qohelet, and Ruth. The MS has no library number. Though there are different hands, the paper is the same throughout.

*Syrian Orthodox Seminary Kottayam*

Here the author was happy to find over thirty MSS, most of which are service books of recent date. There are four worthy of mention here.

- 1) MS #224. *Four Gospels*.  $6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{5}{8}''$ ; 17 lines/pg.; 266 ff.; 18th cent. From the Church of St. George in Perthuppally. Appears older than MS 294 below.
- 2) MS #226. *Various exegetical works*.  $6\frac{1}{4}'' \times 7\frac{5}{8}''$ ; 14-15 lines/pg., in different hands; 19th/20th cent. Contents:
  - 1) Fol. 1a. *Nuhara* on the Gospel.
  - 2) Fol. 4a. "A little from the living words of every sort."
  - 3) Fol. 5a. "A little from the Interpretation of the Gospel." Ephrem, Dionysius bar Salibi, Mar Jacob (of Edessa), John Chrysostom, and Moshe bar Kepha are quoted.
  - 4) Fol. 77a. "A little from the Interpretations of Mark the Evangelist."



- 5) Fol. 93a. "A little from the Interpretations of Luke the Preacher."
- 6) Fol. 117a. "A little from the Interpretations of John the Evangelist."
- 7) Fol. 136a. "The Interpretation of the names of the Prophets."
- 8) Fol. 137a. "From the Canons of the Apostles and the Holy Fathers."
- 9) Fol. 139a. "Questions from the Book of the Law."
- 3) MS #294. *Acts*.  $6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{5}{8}''$ ; 15 lines/pg.; 150 ff.; 1771 A.D. From the Church of St. George in Perthuppally (cf. MS 224 above).
- 4) MS #5861. *Various works by Moshe bar Kepha*.  $5\frac{3}{4}'' \times 7\frac{3}{4}''$ ; 15 lines/pg.; 536 pp.; 19th/20th cent. Contents:
  - 1) p. 1. "Concerning Baptism."
  - 2) p. 28. "Concerning the *Qurbana*."
  - 3) p. 163. "Concerning the Holy Feast of Our Incarnate Lord."
  - 4) p. 183. "Concerning the History of the Coming of the Magi."
  - 5) p. 200. "Concerning the Feast of Light."
  - 6) p. 242. "Concerning the Feast of the Resurrection."
  - 7) p. 277. "Concerning the Day of Sunday."
  - 8) p. 280. "Concerning the Brass Censer."
  - 9) p. 282. "Concerning Jonah the Prophet."
  - 10) p. 285. "Concerning Simon the Aged who Received Our Lord upon his Arms in the Temple."
  - 11) p. 290. "Concerning Melchisedec the Priest."
  - 12) p. 295. "The History of Moshe bar Kepha."
  - 13) p. 298. "The Cause of the Feast of the Consecration of the Church."
  - 14) p. 303. "Concerning the Agreement of the Evangelists." This section ends with "The end of the *nuhara* concerning the five mysteries," yet there seems to be no break in the text.
  - 15) p. 338. "Concerning the Washing of the Sacramental Mysteries."
  - 16) p. 355. "Concerning the Eve of the Crucifixion."
  - 17) p. 420. "*Memra* concerning (the holy feast of) Palm Sunday."

*St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam*

Here the author found 33 well cared for Syriac manuscripts in the library. All of these have been collected in the last several years, and thus escaped notice by Prof. Van der Ploeg, whose extensive travels were made in the 1960's and 1970's. Here only the more significant books will be mentioned<sup>1</sup>. There are comments on slips by Prof. J. Saunders and others in some of the mss.

- 1) MS 003. *The Four Gospels* in the Peshitta Version.  $5\frac{1}{4}'' \times 8''$ ; 16 lines/pg.; 326 ff.; 18th/19th cent. No colophon - the end of MS is damaged. Nice clear E. Syrian hand.



- 2) MS 007. *Miscellaneous scholia on Psalms and extracts from Daniel of Tella on Psalms*.  $5\frac{3}{4}'' \times 8''$ ; 24 lines/pg.; 111 ff.; 19th cent. Cf. MS 4 of Trivandrum Archbishop's house (see Van der Ploeg, *Syriac MSS*, p. 91).
- 3) MS 014. *Psalms* as in the Chaldean breviary.  $3\frac{3}{4}'' \times 5\frac{1}{2}''$ ; 13 lines/pg.; 154 ff.; 18th/19th cent. Incomplete and pages improperly arranged. Comment: "Since some *qanoni* show differences with the existing ones, it seems to be rather old."
- 4) MS 016. *Short treatises on various Christian topics*. 18 lines/pg.; 291 ff.; 18th cent. Comment: "likely a translation from some Latin work-at least an adaptation from it." Belonged to Fr. Arayathinal.
- 5) MS 017. *Various works*.  $5\frac{1}{4}'' \times 8''$ ; 18 lines pg.; 207 ff.; 19th cent. Beginning from folio 10v: selected questions on the NT from Ishodad of Merv, the Interpreter, Mar Aha, Dadisho, etc.; questions from Genesis; poetry; canons from Jacobite patriarch to Mar Sabrisho and the reply; extracts from letters of Mar Ishojahb, metropolitan of Arbil; "On the Seven Sacraments" by Petrus Qumis; misc. theological works.
- 6) MS 018. *Book of Paradise* by Abdisho of Soba.  $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{3}{4}''$ ; 18 lines/pg.; 158 ff.; 19th century. Belonged to Fr. Arayathinal.
- 7) MS 019. *Syriac Grammar* copied from the text published in 1636 at the Maronite College of Rome (cf. J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 1:552,3) and *Fifteen Madrashe on Humility* by Mar Ephrem, the Syrian, our holy Father.  $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8''$ ; 99 ff.; 19th cent. First part is 19 ff. and second part, 20 ff. is in a later hand. Belonged to Fr. Arayathinal.
- 8) MS 020. *Commentary on the Four Gospels* by Ishodad of Merv.  $5\frac{3}{4}'' \times 7\frac{3}{4}''$ ; 19 lines/pg.; 194 ff.; 18th cent. Belonged to Fr. Arayathinal. This MS is probably referred to by Van der Ploeg (*Syriac MSS*, p. 180).
- 9) MS 022. *Grammar in Ephrem-like Poetry for Young Men Pure of Mind*.  $3\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5\frac{1}{2}''$ ; 14 lines/pg.; 94 ff.; 18th/19th cent.
- 10) MS 027. *Book of the Explanations of Christian Doctrine* (Catechism) by Joseph Audo.  $7\frac{1}{2}'' \times 10\frac{1}{2}''$ ; 26 lines/pg.; 695 pp. Copied by Joseph of Thurthipalli, Pali, in 1890. Translated by Joseph Audo from Arabic to Syriac in 1843.
- 11) MS 104. *Psalms of David and Canons*.  $5'' \times 7''$ ; 18 lines/pg.; 19th cent. Colophon: "This book was written and completed in Ayway (Alwaye?) by the hands of the Elder Kuriakos, called 'Manna', a member of the parish church of Cherpunkal."
- 12) Accession No. 40298. *Grammar of the Syriac Language* by Isaac of Shidroun, a Maronite from Lebanon.  $4\frac{3}{4}'' \times 7\frac{1}{4}''$ ; 19 lines/pg.; 130 ff.; 19th cent. Copied from text printed in Rome in 1636.

Because of the interest in collecting MSS by the larger institutions and the resulting fact that here is a list of many more manuscripts than were seen by



Prof. Van der Ploeg, in all probability there will surface even more Syriac manuscripts from places and individuals unknown at the present. Dr. Thekeparampil, of the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, told the author that he would like to microfilm all the Keralite Syriac MSS and thus be able to make them available to the scholarly world at large. This would be a great contribution. With a few notable exceptions<sup>2</sup>, the Syriac MSS are not old; however, anyone doing a thorough study on the text of the Bible or any patristic work must consult these MSS. Only a thorough study of these monuments to indigenous Indian Syrian Christianity will reveal their secrets.

1 For more detailed information on this collection, see: D. L. McConaughy, "Syriac Manuscripts in South India: The Library of the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary," *OCP* 52,2 (1986) 432-434.

2 In Trichur, there is a copy of the *Nomocanon* of Abdisho of Soba dated May 19, 1302 A.D. in the library of Mar Aprem. In the Konat library in Pampakuda there is the oldest MS of Barhebraeus' *Nomocanon*, copied in 1290 A.D. See Van der Ploeg, *Syriac MSS*, pp. 139, 163.