



A Beginner's Syriac-Aramaic Bibliography

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Here is a selection of printed books which, at the time of compilation, are available from one or more of the listed vendors. Entries preceded by a bullet are works which I own or have had the opportunity to review. Those preceded by an asterisk are works which I have not seen.

Grammars:

- Healey, John F. *First Studies in Syriac*. Birmingham, U.K: University Semitic Study Aids, 1980. Pages: vi + 186. ISBN 0-7044-0390-0

Comments: This is a complete beginner's course which will take you from learning the serto alphabet to reading sizable selections of Biblical and patristic literature in a relatively nontechnical format. The only caveat is there are no answers to the exercises. Handwritten serto script

- * Joosten, Jan. *The Syriac Language of the Peshitta and Old Syriac Versions of Matthew: syntactic structure, inner-Syriac developments, and translation technique*. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996. Pages: xii, 223. ISBN 9004100369

- Kiraz, George Anton. *The Syriac Primer: Reading, Writing, Vocabulary, and Grammar. With Exercises and Cassette Activities*. JSOT Manuals 5. Sheffield, 1998 (reprint of 1985 edition.). Pages: xii + 273 + cassette. ISBN 0262-1754-5

Comments: If the other grammars in this bibliography are too fast paced or too technical for you, try this one. This book takes an accessible “reader” approach, and is suitable for anyone from high school on up. The only two warnings are that the book doesn't go far enough for you to read lengthy passages of Syriac literature, and that, in the first edition, the vowel symbols collide with the ascending letters, making things very confusing for the beginner. Serto script

- * Muraoka, Takamitsu. *Classical Syriac. A Basic Grammar*. Harrassowitz, 1997. Pages: 250.
- * Muraoka, Takamitsu. *Classical Syriac for Hebraists*. Harrassowitz, 1987. Pages: xv + 131.
- * Nöldeke, Theodor. *Compendious Syriac Grammar*. Translated by James A. Crichton. Eisenbrauns 2000 [reprint of 1904 ed.]. Pages: xxxiv + 365 + 1 foldout table. ISBN 1-57506-050-7

- Robinson, Theodore Henry, *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962. Pages: viii, 158. ISBN: 0199254095

Comments: This book is a good reference volume, but presumes some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. It is best used by those who have already learned the basics of Syriac grammar. Serto script.

- Thackston, Wheeler M. *An Introduction to Syriac: An Elementary Grammar with Readings from Syriac Literature*. Ibex, 1999. Pages: xxvii + 228. ISBN 0-936347-98-8

Comments: This book is also a complete introduction which will enable you to read significant portions of Syriac literature. While it uses a bit more technical jargon than Healey's, and its' pace is faster, it is also more complete. My only caveat is that, once again, there are no answer keys to the exercises beyond the alphabet section. Voweless Estrangela script with voweled English transliteration.

Dictionaries and Lexical Tools:

- * Brockelmann, Karl. *Lexicon Syriacum*. Olms, 1995 (reprint of 1928 ed.). Pages: xvii + 930. (In Latin)
- * Costaz, Louis. *Dictionnaire Syriaque-Français/ Syriac-English Dictionary*. 2d edition. Darel-Machreq, Pages: xxviii + 421.
- * Goshen-Gottstein, M. H. *A Syriac-English Glossary with Etymological Notes*. Based on Brockelmann's Syriac Chrestomathy. Harrassowitz, 1970. Pages: x + 95.
- Jennings, William. *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament (Peshitta); with copious*

references, dictions, names of persons and places, and some various readings found in the Curetonian, Sinaitic palimpsest, Pholoxenian & other MSS. / Rev. by Ulric Gantillon. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926. Pages: 243

Comments: This is a concise reference which, as the title implies, is limited to the vocabulary of the Syriac New Testament. It offers helpful explanations for the beginner, and is useful to anyone who can parse the Syriac noun and verb inflections back to their lexeme and root forms. Serto script.

* Kiraz, George Anton. *Lexical Tools to the Syriac New Testament*. Sheffield, 1994. Pages: v + 136.

- Payne Smith, R. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith. Edited by J. Payne Smith. Eisenbrauns, 1998 (Reprint of 1903 edition). Pages: vi + 626.

Comments: This is the defacto standard, and largest, of the Syriac - English dictionaries. It is not quite as beginner friendly as the Jennings's Lexicon, but deserves a place on every Aramaic enthusiast's bookshelf. Serto script.

Peshittä Texts:

- Anonymous, *The Book of the New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. New York, 1982 (reprint of 1927 edition) Pages: 637 + 151 pages of Psalms.

Comments: This eastern Peshitta text is reprinted by the Assyrian Church of the East, 7201 North Ashland, Chicago, IL 60626. Note that this is a 27 book New Testament that follows the western readings in the disputed verses of Acts 20:28 and Hebrews 2:9. In the copy I have, someone wrote the C.O.E. variant in the margin of Acts 20:28. The typeface is Swadaya, printed on thin "Bible" paper with a fair amount of ink bleeding.

Pusey and Gwilliam, *Tetraeuangelium sanctum; juxta simplicem Syrorum versionem ad fidem codicum Massorae, editionum denuo recognitum. /Lectioinum supellectilem quam conquisiverat Philippus Edwardus Pusey. Auxit, digessit, edidit Georgius Henricus Gwilliam. Accedunt capitulorum notatio, concordiarum tabulae translatio latina, annotationes*. Oxonii: e Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1901. Pages: xvi,608. (Reprinted by Gorgias Press)

Comments: This is a critical edition of the four Gospels of the Peshitta New Testament based on the readings of forty-one manuscripts from the fifth century

onwards, both “Nestorian” and “Jacobite.” It also includes the Eusebian canon tables, notes from the Qarkafta (the Syriac equivalent of the Hebrew Massora) and a translation of the Gospels into Latin. While all the notes are in Latin, the non-Latin reader with some knowledge of Syriac can still make use of this book. The typeface is Serto, and the original 1901 edition I reviewed had clean printing on heavy paper.

- Ed. Aramaic Scriptures Research Society. *The New Covenant Commonly Called the New Testament: Peshitta Aramaic Text with a Hebrew Translation*. Jerusalem: The Bible Society, 1986. Pages: v (English) iv (Hebrew) + 383.

Comments: This book contains the New Testament text of the eastern Peshitta, including the five disputed books drawn from the Philoxene version. The Syriac text is on the right page with a Hebrew translation on the left facing page. It is printed in a Hebrew square typeface on thin “Bible” paper, but there is little bleeding, and the text is quite readable. It should be noted that the editors take a few liberties with the reading and change a few Greek loan words into their Syriac cognates.

- Anonymous. *Syriac Bible 63DC*. United Bible Societies, 1979. Pages: 704 (Old Testament) + 345 (New Testament). ISBN 0-564-03212-3

Comments: This is the complete Bible of the western Peshito text printed in a Serto typeface on thin “Bible” paper with a fair amount of bleeding and smudging of ink.

Booksellers:

Most of the above books are available from one or more of the major book vendors: Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Borders Books, ect. For the hard to find books try the following specialty vendors:

Eisenbrauns at: <http://www.eisenbrauns.com/> carries many books on Syriac-Aramaic and the ancient near east.

Gorgias Press at: <http://www.gorgiaspress.com/> reprints many books on Syriac-Aramaic from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also carries a few new books on this subject.

Aramaic Books at: <http://www.e-web-presence.com/aramaicbooks/> specializes in the East Syrian and Jewish Traditions, and carries many products of interest.