



PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The want of a complete Grammar of the Syro-Chaldaic language has long and keenly been felt by students and teachers alike in this country. The almost general neglect of this Sacred language by the Syrians of Malabar is to a great extent due to this want, and my aim in writing the following pages is to revive as far as it is in me, the study of Syro-Chaldaic in our country. The seriousness of the work I was to put my hands to, and my inability to perform it kept me long from undertaking it. Even after I had once begun the work, I have had to meet with several obstacles. One by one the obstacles were removed, and by the grace of God I am able now to present before the public the fruit of years of labour. I am fully confident that the indulgent public will patronize it. If this work in any way helps the student to acquire proficiency in the Syro-Chaldaic language I shall think my labours amply rewarded.

A word may be added about the method of treatment. The book is divided into four parts, each part treating on the four parts of Grammar, Orthography, Etymology, Syntax and Prosody. The Orthography of a dead language has necessarily to be long; and almost one eighth of the book had to be devoted to this part of Grammar. The distinctions between the Eastern and Western dialects are pointed out as occasion offered; and the errors, in pronunciation which have crept in among the Syro-Chaldeans of Malabar, have been noted in the observations as *peculiarities*. It is to be desired that these *peculiarities* would be suppressed.* In the treatise on Etymology it was ever my look out to be as brief and clear as possible. The never-ending paradigms, which occupied a major portion of old grammars, have been omitted as superfluous. The difficult parts of Etymology like *gender, number* and

* The present tendency is to keep up our tradition-



called the Gemara, was written in Aramaic. "The various Targums, or commentaries on the scriptures, which still exist, some in fragmentary form, others complete, show Aramaic as the Palestinian tongue. The Midrash, compiled after the fifth century, the Targum of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, the Aramaic fragments preserved in the Mishna, all prove definitely that Aramaic was the language of Palestine when Christ was born" (O'Brien, op. cit., p. 36). The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, originally wrote his "Jewish War" in Aramaic. The Gospel of St. Mathew was written in Aramaic. The other Evangelists who wrote their Gospels in Greek, make use of various Aramaic names, words and phrases. Kepa (Cephas), Bar-Jona, Bartholomew, Barabbas, Gabatha, Martha, etc., are Aramaic (Syriac) names. The words Abba, Raca, Gehenna, and Rabbi, are Aramaic. The word ephphathah or ephpheta (ܐܦܦܬܗܐ) and the two sentences, Thalitha Kumi (ܬܠܝܬܗܐ ܟܘܡܝ), and Eli, Eli, lamma sabcthani (ܐܠܝ ܐܠܝ ܠܡܢܐ ܨܒܥܬܢܝ), quoted in the Gospels (Mk. VII, 34; Mk. V, 41; Mt. XXVII, 46), are Aramaic (Syriac).

The Jews were not in the habit of giving a particular name to their mother tongue. It was called the "Jews' language" (ܐܠܘܢܐ ܕܝܗܘܕܐ) (IV Kings, XVIII, 26; II Esdras, XIII, 24); or the name of the sister language of Canaan, (ܐܠܘܢܐ ܕܩܢܐܢ) was applied to it (Isa. XIX, 18). The Jewish rabbis called it the sacred language. It was called Hebrew for the first time, only in the second century B. C., in the Prologue of Ecclesiasticus, written in 130 B. C. by Sirach of Jerusalem. The second Book of Machabees written about the same time, applies the name "Hebrews" to the Jewish people (II Mach. XV, 37).

The name Aramaic by which the language was known in Aram and Babylonia, did not find favour with the Jews of Palestine, probably because it seemed to them to connote paganism. They sometimes called it the profane language in opposition to the sacred Biblical Hebrew. Syriac and Syro-Chaldaic are only later designations. Hence Aramaic, in as much as it succeeded Hebrew as the every day speech of the Hebrew people, began to be known in Palestine as 'Hebrew'. It is in this sense that 'the Acts of the Apostles' says that St. Paul spoke to the Jews in Hebrew (Acts, XXI, 40; XXII, 2). "It was not the ancient Hebrew language, in which the greater part of the Old Testament books were written, that St. Paul spoke; the phrase is a general term for Aramaic" (O'Brien, op. cit. p. 36).



The names Aram, Aramaeans and Aramaic, were changed, in course of time, into Syria, Syrians and Syriac. The Greeks were responsible for such a change, and the Aramaean Christians gradually became reconciled with this change of names.

The Assyrians conquered Aram which, from the eighth century B. C. onwards, formed part of the Assyrian Empire. This empire extended from the borders of Armenia and the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and to Egypt.

The peoples of this empire, including the Aramaeans, were known to the Greeks as Assyrians, or in the abbreviated form "Syrians". Thus Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century B. C., speaks of "Syrians" as identical with Assyrians, and thinks that "Assyrian" is a barbarian form of "Syrian". Since Aramaic had become the spoken language of the whole Assyrian Empire, it might have been locally known also as Assyrian or Syrian language. Later on, the Greeks distinguished Syria from Assyria. The term "Syria" once applied to the whole Assyrian Empire, became restricted to the country between the lower Euphrates and the Mediterranean (ancient Aram). This region formed the most important province of the Greek Seleucid Kingdom, with Antioch as its capital (B. C. 300), and the Greeks called it the province of Syria. When the Romans conquered western Asia, they retained the name Syria, and in 64 B. C. made Syria into a province of the Roman Empire. Roman Syria included the land west of the Euphrates, between Egypt and the Taurus Mountains. In 70 A. D. Palestine was separated from the province of Syria. The region between the upper Euphrates and the upper Tigris was, in ancient times, called *Aram Naharaim* (i. e. Aram of the rivers). The Greek geographers Grecized this name into *Mesopotamia* (i. e. between rivers).

In the original Hebrew books of the Old Testament, the name Aram is invariably used. The name Syria is not found even in the Hebrew Old Testament books, written after the Babylonian Exile. The first Book of Paralipomenon, written during the later part of the Persian period (i. e. about 350 B. C., or more probably during the Hellenistic period, i. e. about 200 B. C.), uses the name Aram and not Syria or Mesopotamia (I Paralip. XIX, 6).

During the period between B. C. 250 and 100, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by the Greek speaking Jews of Alexandria in Egypt. This version, called the Septuagint, adopted the name "Syria", used by the Greeks in the place of the original Aramaic name *Aram*.

Though the Greek and Roman governments of Aram, designated it as "Syria", the Aramaeans accepted the name "Syria" only much later. The Aramaic (Syriac) version of the



Old Testament, called Pshitta, begun at least about the first century A. D. and completed before the fourth century, uses only the names אַרַם Aram, (Num. XXIII, 7), אַרַמַיִת Aramaean (Gen. XXV, 20), and אַרַמַיִת in Aramaic (IV Kings, XVIII, 26; Isa. XXXVI, 11; I Esdras. IV, 7; and Dan. II, 4). Even in the Aramaic (Syriac) translation of the Second Book of Machabees, originally written in Greek in the second century B. C., the term אַרַמַיִת אַרַמַיִת Aramaean language (II Mach., XV, 36), is used in the place of "Syrian language."

The change of 'Aram', 'Aramaean' and 'Aramaic', into 'Syria', 'Syrian' and 'Syriac', came into vogue among the Aramaeans in the period between the second and sixth centuries A. D. Instead of אַרַם (Aram), found in the Syriac Pshitha version of the Old Testament, made about the first or second century A. D., the name "Syria" is found in the Syriac Pshitha version of the New Testament, made about the fifth century A. D. St. Luke (II, 2) uses the name "Syria" (ܫܝܪܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢܐ), (ܫܝܪܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢܐ) though in IV. 27, he designates Naaman the Syrian as אַרַמַיִת אַרַמַיִת (Naamnn the Aramaean).

The occasion for the Aramaeans to accept the names 'Syria', 'Syrian', and 'Syriac', in the place of the pristine names 'Aram', 'Aramaean' and 'Aramaic', was their conversion to Christianity. As already mentioned, the name "Aramaean" was not popular among the Aramaic speaking Jews. To them it connoted heathenism. Hence they used the term "Aramaean" as a synonym for "non-Jew" or "unbeliever". The converted Aramaeans also began to entertain a similar feeling. Christianity was introduced into the Aramaean kingdom of Osrhoene at least as early as the second century A. D. With the conversion of its king, Abgar, Osrhoene became a Christian kingdom. "The dialect of Edessa, its famous capital, became the literary and liturgical language of the Aramaic Christians; most of them gave up their name "Aramaean" and called themselves "Syrians" and their language "Syriac" or "Syrian", to distinguish themselves from the reputedly heathen "Aramaean" (Vander Ploeg, in his Introduction to Fr. T. Arayathinal's "Aramaic Grammar").

The term "Aramaean" (אַרַמַיִת), thus became equivalent to the Syriac word אַרַמַיִת which means "heathen". In the



Greek original of the New Testament, the term "Greek" is used to denote a heathen as distinguished from a Jew (Rom. I, 16; II, 9-10; III, 9; X, 12; I Cor. I, 22-24; Gal. III, 28). In the Syriac version of the Acts, XVIII, 4, the term "Greek", used in the sense of "heathen", is translated by the word ܩܪܝܝܢܐ. But in the several other passages, referred to above, the term "Greek" is translated by the Syriac term ܩܪܝܝܢܐ (Armayā, Aramaean). Both ܩܪܝܝܢܐ and ܩܪܝܝܢܐ originally signify the same ("Syrian"), as Dr. Smith says in his Syriac Latin Dictionary. In I Cor., I, 22-24, where St. Paul speaks of the wisdom of the heathen, the Syriac Pshitta version uses the term ܩܪܝܝܢܐ to translate the term "Greek".

The official Latin version of the Bible, called the "Vulgate", was completed by St. Jerome in the beginning of the fifth century A. D. By this time, the names "Aram", "Aramaean" and "Aramaic", had been supplanted by the names "Syria", "Syrian" and "Syriac". The name "Aram" in the Hebrew Bible, the Vulgate translates "Syria", except in the story of Balaam, where "Aram" is retained (Num. XXIII, 7), and the Hebrew names "Aram Naharaim", "Paddan Aram" and "Paddan", the Vulgate usually translates "Mesopotamia."

With the change of the name "Aramic" into "Syriac", certain progressive changes took place in the language. The form of the letters of the alphabet was modified, uniformity and fixity in the pronunciation of words by the common people, was secured by the introduction of signs to represent the vowels, improvements were effected in certain grammatical forms, and above all, through the efforts of numerous Christian writers, Syriac developed into a great literary language. The Aramaic speaking peoples of Syria, Babylonia and Assyria, who had already become Christians, welcomed the above developments in the language. But the non-Christian Jews kept aloof. They did not accept the changes brought about in the name or the structure of Aramaic. They continued to speak and write Aramaic in the old way until the Arab Muslim conquest in the seventh century, displaced Aramaic by Arabic. Even after Aramaic ceased to be a spoken language, the Jews have continued, even to the present day, to use Aramaic, along with Hebrew, in their religious services. Aramaic chiefly serves as the language of the rubrics of their service books.

Mandaic and Samaritan were two dialects of spoken Aramaic. Mandaic is still the religious language of the sect, called Sabaeans, who are found in south-east Mesopotamia.