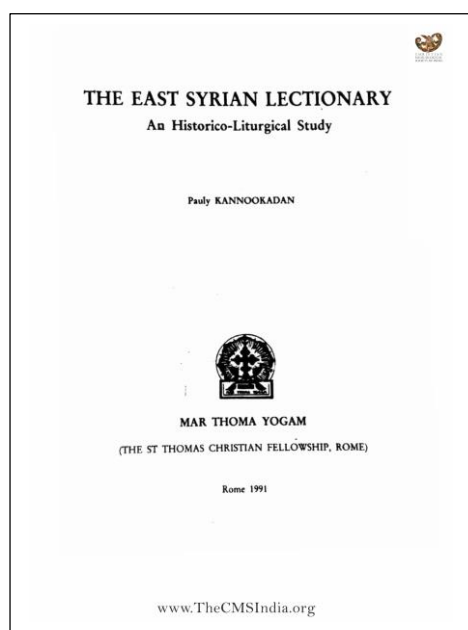


The East Syrian Lectionary

(An Historico-Liturgical study)



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THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY

An Historico-Liturgical Study

Pauly KANNOOKADAN



MAR THOMA YOGAM

(THE ST THOMAS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, ROME)

Rome 1991

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PREFACE

The shape of the current liturgy is the outcome of the structuring of individual elements of the anamnesis of the Christ event in the ecclesial tradition for the worshipping community through the centuries. The history of the liturgy provides a record of this anamnesis of the worshipping community in its peculiar tradition and culture. It shows us what function each part of the liturgy originally served, and how it got to what it is today. The proper understanding of liturgy demands, therefore, an understanding of its origins and development up to the present day.

This book, a doctoral dissertation defended in the liturgical section of the Oriental Ecclesiastical Sciences Faculty at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, on May 29, 1991, aims at a scientific study of the history and the meaning of the East Syrian lectionary. This lectionary is theologically rich and highly developed liturgically. However, it remains in the liturgical books and manuscripts, used but unexamined. Under the unending providence of God we offer this thesis as a service to the Churches of the East Syrian tradition, hoping that it may help them to know better and love more their heritage, and ease the future steps of necessary liturgical reform.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to all those who have collaborated with me in the completion of this work. First of all, I express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. Robert Taft, S.J., the director of this doctoral dissertation for his competent guidance and clear judgement coupled with his profound scholarship throughout the course of this study. The amount of time he spent and the interest he took in the preparation of this thesis were exceptional. His careful reading of my work word by word, saved me from many a careless error with regard to its content and its language. I thank with all my heart Prof. Pierre Yousif, the second director of this thesis for his creative suggestions, constant encouragement and genuine interest in my work. The insights drawn from my personal discussions with him have been a persistent source of inspiration. I also express my gratitude to Prof. Poggi for his evaluation as the relator of this thesis, to all my professors, especially those of liturgical section of the Oriental Sciences Faculty of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome and to Sr. Mary Randal for her suggestions to improve the language.

I take this occasion, finally, to express my indebtedness to Mar James Pazhayattil, Bishop of Irinjalakuda, who sent me to pursue my studies in Rome and encouraged me constantly; to the Pontifical Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which provided me with the necessary scholarship and to the Mar Thoma Yogam for their initiative to publish this work. I thank in a special way, Rev. Fr. Michael Angelo O. C. D. Rector of the Collegio Damasceno, and all my friends in that college and elsewhere for their support and friendship.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	xii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
ABBREVIATIONS	xv
BIBLIOGRAPHY	xix
INTRODUCTION	1
I. The Scope of This Study	1
II. Lectionary Systems	1
1. Some Antecedents	1
2. Early Christian Lectionary Systems	4
III. Previous Studies	6
IV. The Present Study	8
 CHAPTER ONE	
THE SOURCES OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS	10
I. The Liturgical Books of the East Syrian Lectionary Systems	10
1. Chaldean Editions	10
a. OT Lectionary (Qeryane)	10
b. Epistle Lectionary (Sliha)	10
c. Gospel Lectionary (Ewangaliyon)	11
2. Assyrian Editions	11
3. Malabar Editions	11
II. Known Manuscripts of East Syrian Lectionary System	12
1. Manuscripts of the Upper Monastery System	12
a. OT Lectionary	12
b. Epistle Lectionary	12
c. Gospel Lectionary	13
2. Extant Manuscripts of the Mosul System	16
a. Epistle Lectionary	16
b. Gospel Lectionary	17
3. Extant Manuscripts of Beth 'Abhe System	17
a. OT Lectionary	17
b. Gospel Lectionary	18
4. Extant Manuscripts of the Cathedral System	18
a. OT Lectionary	18
b. Epistle Lectionary	18

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c. Gospel Lectionary	19
5. Uncategorized Manuscripts	19
a. OT Lectionary	19
b. Epistle Lectionary	19
c. Gospel Lectionary	20
CHAPTER TWO	
THE UPPER MONASTERY LECTIONARY SYSTEM	23
I. The Upper Monastery <Daira 'Ellalta>	23
II. The Sources Under Study	25
1. Printed Texts	26
2. Selected Manuscripts of the Lectionary	26
a. OT Lectionary	26
b. Epistle Lectionary	27
c. Gospel Lectionary	28
3. Selected Manuscripts of the Hudra	28
III. Upper Monastery Church Year and its Lessons	29
1. The Period of Annunciation and Nativity (Subbara & Yalda)	30
a. The Lessons	30
b. Observations	32
2. The Period of Epiphany (Denha)	33
a. The Lessons	33
b. Observations	38
3. The Period of the Great Fast (Sauma Rabba)	39
a. The Lessons	39
b. Observations	44
4. The Period of Resurrection (Qiamata)	45
a. The Lessons	45
b. Observations	49
5. The Period of the Apostles (Slihe)	50
a. The lessons	50
b. Observations	52
6. The Period of Summer (Qaita)	53
a. The Lessons	53
b. Observations	56
7. The Period of Elijah, Cross and Moses (Elia, Slibha, Mose)	57
a. The Lessons	57
b. Observations	60
8. The Period of the Dedication of the Church (Qoodas Edta)	60

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a. The Lessons	60
b. Observations	62

CHAPTER THREE

COMPARISON OF THE UPPER MONASTERY LECTIONARY SYSTEM WITH THE OTHER EAST SYRIAN SYSTEMS

I. Lectionary System of Mosul	63
1. The Diocese of Mosul and its Lectionary System	63
2. The sources under Study	63
a. Epistle Lectionary	63
b. Gospel Lectionary	64
II. The Lectionary System of Beth 'Abhe	64
1. The Monastery of Beth 'Abhe and the Lectionary System	64
2. The Sources under Study	65
III. The Lectionary Usage of the Cathedral of Kokhe	65
1. The Cathedral of Kokhe and its Lectionary System	65
2. The Sources under Study	65
IV. Comparison of the Upper Monastery Lectionary System with the Other East Syrian Systems	66
1. The Period of Annunciation and Nativity	66
2. The Period of Epiphany	71
3. The Period of Great Lent	86
4. The Period of Resurrection	102
5. The Period of Apostles	110
6. The Period of Summer	114
7. The Periods of Elijah, Cross and Moses	118
8. The Period of the Dedication of the Church	124
Conclusion	128

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS WITH OTHER EXTANT EARLY LECTIONARY SYSTEMS

I. Extant Early Lectionary Systems	129
1. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	129
a. Codex British Library Add. 14528	129
b. The Lectionary System	130
2. The Early Jerusalem Lectionary System	131
a. Codex Jerusalem Armenian 121	131
b. The Lectionary System	131
II. Comparison of the East Syrian Lectionary Systems with	



Other Early Extant Systems	132
1. The Feast and Period of Nativity	132
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	132
b. Jerusalem Lectionary System	133
c. Table of Comparison	133
2. The Feast and Period of Epiphany	134
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	134
b. The Jerusalem Lectionary System	135
c. Table of Comparison	137
3. Great Lent and Holy Week	139
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	139
b. The Jerusalem Lectionary System	141
c. Table of Comparison	143
4. The Feasts of Resurrection, Ascension, and the Period of Resurrection	146
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	146
b. The Jerusalem Lectionary System	147
c. Table of Comparison	148
5. The Feast of Pentecost, the Period and Feast of the Apostles, and the Period of Summer	149
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary system	149
b. The Jerusalem Lectionary System	149
c. Table of Comparison	150
6. The Feast of the Cross and the Period of Elijah, Cross and Moses	151
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	151
b. The Jerusalem Lectionary System	151
c. Table of Comparison	152
7. The Feast and Period of the Dedication of the Church	152
a. The Early Syrian Lectionary System	152
b. The Jerusalem Lectionary System	153
c. Table of Comparison	154
Conclusion	154

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ORIGIN AND THE DEVELOPMENT

OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS . 156

I. Some Antecedents 156

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

xiii

II. Early East Syrian Lectionary System	159
III. The Origin of the Monastic and Cathedral Systems	160
1. The Liturgical Reform of Iso 'Yahb III	160
2. The Origin of the Monastic Lectionary Systems	161
a. The Earliest Known Manuscript of the Monastic Systems	162
b. The Origin of the Monastic Lectionary Systems	163
3. The Origin of the Cathedral Lectionary System	163
a. The Earliest Known Manuscript of the Cathedral Lectionary System	163
b. The Origin of the Cathedral Lectionary System	163
IV. The Evolution of the East Syrian Lectionary Systems	164
1. The Early Structure of the East Syrian Lectionary Systems	164
2. The Pentecontad Calendar and the East Syrian Lectionary System	166
3. The Development of the East Syrian Lectionary System	166
V. Fixation of the Present Usage in the East Syrian Churches	167
1. The Chaldean Church	167
2. The Assyrian Church	168
3. The Malabar Church	168
Conclusion	169

CHAPTER SIX

LITURGICO-THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS	170
I. Period of Annunciation-Nativity	171
1. Content of the Lessons	172
2. Themes of the Lessons	174
a. Coming of the Promised Messiah	174
b. Beginning of the New Era of Salvation	175
II. Period of Epiphany	176
1. Content of the Lessons	177
2. Themes of the Lessons	179
a. Divine Manifestation in Christ	179
b. Rebirth by the Spirit	180
III. Period of Great Lent	181
1. Content of the Lessons	182
2. Themes of the Lessons	188
a. Christ, the Revealed Word of God	188

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b. New Life in Christ	190
IV. Period of Resurrection	190
1. Content of the Lessons	191
2. Themes of the Lessons	194
a. Glorification of Christ	194
b. Beginning of the Messianic Community ...	194
V. Periods of Apostles and Summer	196
1. Content of the Lessons	196
2. Themes of the Lessons	200
a. Universal Call for Discipleship of Christ ...	200
b. Spirit Guided Messianic Community	201
VI. Period of Elijah, Cross and Moses	202
1. Content of the Lessons	202
2. Themes of the Lessons	205
a. Kingdom of God	205
b. Church the Redeemed Community	207
VII Period of the Dedication of the Church	207
1. Content of the Lessons	208
2. Themes of the Lessons	209
a. Christ the Son of the Living God	209
b. Eschatological Realization of the Church in the Heavenly Jerusalem	210
Conclusion	210
GENERAL CONCLUSION	212

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ABBREVIATIONS

Ang	<i>Angelicum</i>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
BA1	Beth 'Abhe Gospel lectionary ms British Library 248
BA2	Beth 'Abhe Gospel lectionary ms Harvard Syriac 141
BLE	<i>Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique</i>
BO	J. S. ASSEMANI, <i>Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticanae de Scriptoribus Syris</i> , 3 vols, Rome 1719-1728.
Camb	Cambridge
CE	Chaldean Epistle Lectionary
CG	Chaldean Gospel Lectionary
CO	Chaldean OT Lectionary
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain
EL	<i>Ephemerides Liturgicae</i>
ET	English Translation
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JLW	<i>Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft</i>

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JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
M1	Mosul lectionary Epistle ms Leningrad XXII
M2	Mosul lectionary Epistle ms Vatican Arabic 29
M3	Mosul lectionary Gospel ms Cambridge 1975
M4	Mosul lectionary Gospel ms British Library 29
LMD	<i>La Maison-Dieu</i>
ML	Malabar Lectionary
Mus	<i>Le Muséon</i>
NL	Nestorian Lectionary
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OIRSI	Oriental Institute of Religious Studies in India
OKS	<i>Ostkirchliche Studien</i>
One Ch.	<i>One Church</i>
OrSyr	<i>L'Orient Syrien</i>
PIOL	Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain
PIO	Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Rome
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PS	Patrologia Syriaca
PUSTA	Pontificia Università S. Tommaso d'Aquino, Rome

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RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
SBF	<i>Studium Biblicum Franciscanum</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SCEO	Sacra Congregatio pro Ecclesia Orientali, Rome
SE	<i>Sacris Erudiri</i>
SI	<i>Studia Iranica</i>
SS	Scriptores Syri
StPat	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
SVNC	Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio
UM	Upper Monastery
UM1	Upper Monastery OT lectionary ms British Library 243 <Add.14492>
UM2	Upper Monastery OT lectionary ms Vatican Syriac 24
UM3	Upper Monastery OT lectionary ms Cambridge 1976
UM4	Upper Monastery Epistle lectionary ms Vatican Syriac 23
UM5	Upper Monastery Epistle lectionary ms British Library 247
UM6	Upper Monastery Epistle lectionary ms Harvard Syriac 3
UM7	Upper Monastery Epistle lectionary ms Cambridge 3291
UM8	Upper Monastery Epistle lectionary ms Cambridge Add. 2035
UM9	Upper Monastery Epistle lectionary ms Leningrad XXI
UM10	Upper Monastery Gospel lectionary ms Bodleian Library Auct. E. 4. 22

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UM11	Upper Monastery Gospel lectionary ms British Library 246
UM12	Upper Monastery Hudra ms British Library Add.7177
UM13	Upper Monastery Hudra ms Berlin Or. Quarto 1160
UM14	Upper Monastery Hudra ms Athens, National Library 1802
Vat.Syr	Vatican Syriac
VSH	Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften

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BARSOTTI, *Parole de Dieu* - D. BARSOTTI, *La parole de Dieu dans le mystère chrétien*, Lex Orandi 17, Paris 1954.

BAUMSTARK, "Altchristliche Perikopenordnung" - A. BAUMSTARK, "Neuerschossene Urkunden altchristlicher Perikopenordnung des ostaramäischen Sprachgebietes", OC 3.1 (1927) 1-22.

BAUMSTARK, "Heiligenkalender" - BAUMSTARK A., "Ausstrahlungen des vorbyzantinischen Heiligenkalenders von Jerusalem, OCP 2 (1936) 129-144

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Scope of This Study

The present work aims at a historico-liturgical analysis of the East Syrian lectionary systems on the basis of the available manuscripts and printed texts. The historical study will be made by examining the early lectionary systems of the East Syrian tradition by comparing them with one another, with the other Syriac lectionary systems, and with other extant early sources. The last part of this work will attempt to present a liturgical and theological synthesis of the East Syrian lectionary systems. In this process the distinct nature of these systems will be described and its peculiarities highlighted.

II. Lectionary Systems

A lectionary system is a fixed order of selected scriptural lessons appointed for liturgical use on specific occasions of the Church year. The determining factors of the lectionary system are the particular order of the scriptural lessons, the specific use of the scriptural lessons in the liturgy and their appropriateness for specific occasions and periods of the Church year¹.

1. Some Antecedents

The use of a lectionary system is an ancient practice common to both Jewish and Christian worship. In Jewish liturgy the lessons² seem

¹ Cf. FULLER, "Lectionary" 297-299; BARSOTTI, *Parole de Dieu* 241-249; DALMAIS, "Bible vivante" 7-23; KUNZ, "Lektionar" 934-936; JUNGSMANN, *Mass* 174-183; DIX, *Shape* 39-40, 360-362; BAUMSTARK, *Comparative Liturgy* 39-41, 115-129.

² Cf. McKINNON, "Question of Psalmody" 167-169; HEINEMANN, "Triennial Lectionary" 41-48; HEINEMANN, "Jewish Liturgy" 33-34; SANDMEL, "L'écriture" 31-38; IDELSOHN, *Jewish Liturgy and its Development* 137-140; OESTERLY, *Jewish Background* 38-42; WERNER, *Sacred Bridge* 50-55.



to have been established between 444–250 B.C.¹, but we know very little about the system, which comes to us from sources as late as the third to sixth century A. D. There were explicit instructions for the reading of the Pentateuch, including proper readings for the three great pilgrimage festivals, minor festivals, fast days, days of the new moon and the four Sabbaths preceding the month of Nisan⁴. For ordinary Sabbath days the Pentateuch was read according to the regular order⁵. In Palestine, the entire Pentateuch was read through in the synagogue service on Sabbath days⁶ once every three years. In Babylonia the reading was completed in one year⁷.

The Haftara lectionary system of pericopes from the Prophets is considered to be a result of the prohibition against the reading of the Pentateuch issued by Antiochus Epiphanes⁸. Later it became obligatory in the synagogue service (Lk 4:17), where the Pentateuch had primary importance and the Prophets an auxiliary character. Haftara lessons are theoretically supposed to be connected with the specific Pentateuch lesson

¹ Moses and Ezra are regarded as the ones who introduced the custom of readings in Judaism (Dt 31:10–12; Neh 8:7–8; 9:3; 2 Kg 22:8–13; 23:1–3). The scriptural lessons were obligatory in the temple only on feasts and special occasions, and it seems that the temple cult contained non-continuous lessons. Concerning the actual systems in the temple we do not have any specific information. On the other hand, the synagogue was more an institution of learning than of prayer. Continuous and regular lessons from the Pentateuch had an important part in the synagogue service. Cf. WERNER, *Sacred Bridge* 51.

⁴ McKINNON, "Question of Psalmody" 168.

⁵ McKINNON, "Question of Psalmody" 168.

⁶ When in Jerusalem many synagogues were erected as the houses of worship, the lessons were read not only on Sabbaths but also on market days (Thursdays and Mondays). Cf. WERNER, *Sacred Bridge* 54.

⁷ WERNER, *Sacred Bridge* 51.

⁸ IDELSOHN, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* 139.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOURCES OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS

The East Syrian lectionary system is the order of the scriptural lessons used by the Churches of the East Syrian ecclesial family, namely the Assyrian Church of the East ("Nestorian Church"), and the Chaldean Catholic and the Malabar Catholic Churches. Today this system is presented in three books, the OT lectionary (Qeryane), the Epistle lectionary (Sliha) and the Gospel lectionary (Ewangaliyon)¹. But the known manuscripts reveal the existence of four distinct early usages: 1) of the Upper Monastery, 2) of Mosul, 3) of Beth-'Abhe and 4) the Cathedral usage. Although the manuscripts imply that there are four different systems, in fact a major conclusion of this study is the fact that the first three are actually just slightly varying usages of the same system. The distinguishing characteristics determining each usage are more evident in the Gospel lectionary, because of the greater number of its extant manuscripts. The following categorization is based on the above mentioned divisions².

I. The Liturgical Books of the East Syrian Lectionary Systems³

1. Chaldean Editions

a. OT Lectionary (Qeryane)

Lectiones quae per totum anni decursum ab Ecclesia Syrorum orientalium id est Chaldeorum in Missa adhiberi solent, Mosul 1901.

b. Epistle Lectionary (Sliha)

Epistolae Apostoli Pauli quae per totum anni decursum ab Ecclesia Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum in Missa leguntur, Mosul 1900.

¹ BADGER, *Nestorians* II, 19.

² Hereafter the days of the week, when indicated with the numbers of the period, are abbreviated according to the standard English forms followed by the period number in Roman numerals, eg. first Monday - MonI.

³ Cf. MOUSSESS, *Livres liturgiques* 9-85; MOOLAN, *Annunciation-Nativity* 6-8; PODIPARA, *Libri Liturgici* 12-63.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UPPER MONASTERY LECTIONARY SYSTEM

The printed texts of the present East Syrian lectionary have uniform contents and all follow the Upper Monastery system. The Upper Monastery Church year and its lessons are found in the East Syrian liturgical books¹, Upper Monastery lectionary manuscripts² and Hudra manuscripts³. The Hudra manuscripts are liturgical books which contain the variable prayers of the divine office as well as of the eucharistic liturgy for the whole year⁴.

I. The Upper Monastery <Daira 'Ellaita>

The Upper Monastery⁵ was situated on the bank of the Tigris river at the northwest part of Mosul. It was located just outside or even inside the city walls of Mosul⁶. Today the church in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary called <'at-tahra> (the Church of the Pure One), restored in 1705 and in 1744, is found in its place⁷. However the date⁸ of its

¹ See Liturgical Books of the East Syrian Lectionary Systems, Chapter One, 10-11.

² Cf. Manuscripts of the Upper Monastery System, Chapter One, nos 1-40, 12-16.

³ MACOMBER, "Chaldean Hudra" 120-134.

⁴ See the following section on the sources under study, 25.

⁵ ISO YAHB IV, *Nestorian Questions* 148-149; FIEY, *Mossoul chrétienne* 127-132; RÜCKER "Obere Kloster" 180-187; BADGER, *Nestorians* II, 17; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra* 27; MATEOS, *Office divin* 255; TAFT, *Liturgy of Hours* 227; KURUTHUKULANGARA, *Feast of the Nativity* 79, n.7; MOOLAN, *Annunciation-Nativity* 154, n.9; MERIGOUX, *Chrétiens de Mossoul* 131-138.

⁶ FIEY, *Mossoul chrétienne* 130-131

⁷ TAFT, *Liturgy of Hours* 227

CHAPTER THREE

COMPARISON OF THE UPPER MONASTERY LECTIONARY SYSTEM WITH THE OTHER EAST SYRIAN SYSTEMS

I. Lectionary System of Mosul

1. The Diocese of Mosul and its Lectionary System

The first historical evidence about the city of Mosul as a Christian center in East Syrian history concerns the construction of the great temple and a convent at Hesna Ebraya¹ by Isoyabh bar Qusré in 570 A.D. This convent later became the church of Mar Isaya². Isoyabh III (580–659)³, the bishop of Nineveh, transferred that see to Mosul before his patriarchate (647/48).

The manuscripts of the East Syrian lectionary ascribe the existence of a lectionary usage of Mosul. The colophons of the manuscripts Leningrad XXII, British Library 7174, British Library 29 assert that the usage of Mosul is according to the Upper Monastery system.

2. The sources under Study

The sources for the study of the lectionary usage of Mosul are the manuscripts of the Epistle and Gospel lessons. No sources of the OT lessons are extant. We have four manuscripts at our disposal for the present study. Among them two are of Gospel lectionary of 15–16th century and two are of Epistle lectionary of 13–14th century. The accessible manuscripts are the following, with their abbreviations.

a. Epistle Lectionary

M1 = Leningrad XXII (1243 AD) <ms list n. 41>

The manuscript, written in East Syrian script, contains 127 leaves. It is the earliest known manuscript of this usage. The colophon on fol. 121, states that the lessons read in the Church are known as the usage of Mosul according to the system of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham.

¹ SCHER, *Histoire Nestorienne* II, 108, n.2.

² FIEY, *Mossoul chrétienne* 12–13.

³ FIEY, "Iso Yaw le Grand" 35, 305–333; 36, 5–46.

OF EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS 79

†	†	†	†
Leut 18:9- 1d			Ex 4:6-18
48:12-21			Jer 23:6- 8,29:11- 13,30:9,19- 20
eph 6:9- 4 th	+		Heb 2:5- 18
3:1-23	Jn 2:23- 3:22	+	Jn 1:43-51

ogation of inevites	+		+
63:17- 1end ^{ss}			
ab 3:1- 1d ^{ss}			
im 2:1- 10 th	+		Eph 6:10- 18,23-24
t 18:23- 1d ^{ss}	+		Lk 1:1b- 4,Mt6:13b, Lk 12:1a, 19:11b- 12a,11:5b-

COMPARISON OF EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS 79

SunV	+	+	+	+
A (1)	Deut 18:9- end			Ex 4:6-18
A (2)	Is 48:12-21			Jer 23:6- 8,29:11- 13,30:9,19- 20
B	Heb 6:9- 7:4 ⁵⁴	+		Heb 2:5- 18
C	Jn 3:1-23	Jn 2:23- 3:22	+	Jn 1:43-51

MonVI	Rogation of Ninevites	+		+
A (1)	Is 63:17- 64:end ⁵⁵			
A (2)	Hab 3:1- end ⁵⁶			
B	1Tim 2:1- 3:10 ⁵⁷	+		Eph 6:10- 18,23-24
C	Mt 18:23- end ⁵⁸	+		Lk 1:1b- 4,Mt6:13b, Lk 12:1a, 19:11b- 12a,11:5b- 13

⁵⁴ UM8 gives the Cathedral reading. UM9 has Heb 1:1-2:5.

⁵⁵ UM2,UM3, give here Gen 18:20-33.

⁵⁶ NL, UM12, UM13, UM14 give here Amos 5:3-16; UM2, UM3 give Is 63:17-64:12.

⁵⁷ According to NL, UM12, UM13, UM14 2Tim 2:1-11.

⁵⁸ According to NL, Mt 5:17-38.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS WITH OTHER EXTANT EARLY LECTIONARY SYSTEMS

The extant early lectionary systems which, for the present study, might be considered related to the East Syrian lectionary systems, are the Early Syrian lectionary system in codex British Library Add 14528¹, and the Jerusalem lectionary system in Codex Jerusalem Armenian 121, in comparison with Codex Armenian Paris 44 and Codex Armenian Erevan 985 as edited and translated by A Renoux². Actually, however, we shall see that the Palestinian Syriac lectionary system of the Melkite Church does not show any rapport with the East Syrian lectionary system³, whereas such an affinity with the Jerusalem system is clearly manifest⁴.

I. Extant Early Lectionary Systems

1. The Early Syrian Lectionary System

a. Codex British Library Add. 14528

The Early Syrian lectionary system is known to us from Codex British Library Add. 14528⁵. This manuscript written in Estrangelo script, contains an index of the lessons proper to the festivals of the whole year as well as other occasions, and the secular laws and enactments of the

¹ BURKITT, *Syrian Lectionary* 6-14.

² RENOUX, *Codex arménien* 71-235.

³ For the editions see LEWIS, *Lectionary* 2-135; LEWIS, *Lectionary of the Gospels* 1-320.

⁴ BURKITT, "Old Lectionary" 416-424; BAUMSTARK, *Perikopenordnung* 131-167.

⁵ BURKITT, *Syrian Lectionary* 6-14.

⁶ BURKITT, *Syrian Lectionary* 5.

⁷ Fol. 152-191; see BURKITT, *Syrian Lectionary* 5.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE ORIGIN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS

I. Some Antecedents

The common tradition of feasts and commemorations which prevailed in the Syriac speaking Churches during the first four centuries was a significant factor in shaping the distinctive lectionary usage of the East Syrian Church. The Doctrine of the Apostles, a fourth century pseudo-Apostolic work, is the earliest Syriac document to provide adequate evidence of the liturgical feasts and commemorations¹. The Doctrine of the Apostles² 4-9, order the following:

1. to commemorate uniformly the feast of the Epiphany on January³,
2. a fast for forty days before the day of the Passion,
3. the feast of the Resurrection⁴
4. the feast of the Ascension fifty days following the Resurrection⁴.

¹ Cf. Introduction, 3, n. 17; for the edition see CURETON 26-27; trans. 26-27; see also Vööbus, 200-211, trans. 187-197; for the East Syrian version see MAI, SVNC 10, 3-5.

² Doctrine of the Apostles canon 6 orders: "Celebrate the day of the Epiphany of our saviour which is the chief of the festivals of the Church on the sixth day of the latter canon, in the long number of the Greeks. Ed. CURETON, 26; trans. 26; VööBUS, 202, trans 189-190.

³ Doctrine of the Apostles canon 7 orders: "Again the Apostles appointed forty days before the day of Passion of Our Saviour fast, and then celebrate the day of the Passion and the day of Resurrection, because Our Lord himself also, the Lord of the festival, fasted forty days, and Moses and Elias, who were invested with this mystery, also fasted forty days each, and then they were glorified". Ed. CURETON, 26-27; trans. 26-27; VööBUS, 202, trans 190.

⁴ Doctrine of the Apostles canon 9 orders: "Again the Apostles appointed, at the completion of fifty days after his Resurrection, make commemoration of Ascension to his glorious father. Ed. CURETON, 27, trans. 27; VööBUS, 202-203, trans. 190.

CHAPTER SIX

LITURGICO-THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE EAST SYRIAN LECTIONARY SYSTEMS

The divine dispensation (*mdabbranuta*)¹ accomplished in Jesus Christ is reenacted coherently and liturgically in the entire span of the lectionary system during the East Syrian Church year. The theologically developed and liturgically well organized East Syrian lectionary usage celebrates the divine dispensation within the framework of various units (*saboe*)² of the system. The lectionary system begins with the coming of the Messiah underlined in the Period of Annunciation-Nativity, and concludes with the eternal union of the redeemed community, the Church, with its Lord in the heavenly Jerusalem. Today it presents in the Church year the same mystery of salvation, in anamnesis, as a continual sign to us not of a past history, but of a present reality of our lives in Jesus Christ³.

Similar to theology of the liturgy, the theology of a particular lectionary system cannot be limited to individual lessons detached from the entire structure⁴. It must be found above all in the continual interaction of the structured elements. The internal programming of the vital structure of a particular day, of an individual unit and of the whole system is in continual connection with the theological elements.

The dynamic structure of the East Syrian lectionary system contains a series of commemorative (*anamnetical*) and invocational (*epicletic*) lessons. The commemorative lessons comprise a sequence of typological recall and real or historical recall of the Christ event. Since the real recall is the anamnesis of a particular Christ event of the mystery of salvation from the Gospels for a particular celebration, the OT recall is the typological foreshadowing of the Christ event from the Law. The invocational lessons, for this part, consist of the presentation of prophetic

¹ The word '*mdabbranuta*' means the divine dispensation, the providence, government or economy of God. For the concept and content of the term see CHITTILAPPILLY, *Mdabbranuta* 1-79.

² The word '*saboe*', originates from the root '*sba*' (seven, a week), and means septenary, a division of seven weeks: see PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus* 4036. See also above 171.

³ TAFT, *Beyond East and West* 10.

⁴ Cf. GIRAUDO, *Struttura letteraria* 271-366.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The East Syrian lectionary system for the Church year is a fixed order of Scriptural lessons to commemorate liturgically the divine dispensation in a particular ecclesial tradition. Thereby the Church receives the divine revelation imparted throughout the history of salvation and accomplished in Christ, and invokes graciously the transformation of the present liturgical community into the fullness of the redeemed state. Although the divine dispensation is liturgically and fully reenacted in every eucharistic celebration, the fixed order of the lessons makes anamnesis and entreats for this transformation into Christ, and furthermore specifies particular significance each eucharistic celebration.

The lectionary system for the East Syrian church Year, seen in the lectionary manuscripts, goes back to the time of the reform of Iso Yahb III, who assigned norms for a distinctive and developed lectionary usage. The manuscripts of the East Syrian lectionary reveal the existence of four distinct usages: 1) of the Upper Monastery, 2) of Mosul, 3) of Beth Abhe and 4) the Cathedral usage. All the four lectionary usages have in common the division of the Church year into different periods. The lessons read on the days of celebration in each system are not uniform, however. The variants are more evident between the Cathedral and Upper Monastery systems, whereas the first three systems, namely Upper Monastery, Mosul and Beth 'Abhe show greater agreement in the selection of lessons. On the basis of the selection of the lessons and agreement in their arrangement, they represent, as a unit, the monastic usage. There are continuous and non-continuous lessons, composite and non-composite lessons in both monastic and Cathedral usages. None of these can be seen as particular features of any single usage.

The origins of the East Syrian monastic lectionary systems go back to the norms put forward by Iso Yahb III (650/651-658), the catholicos of Seleucia Ctesiphon. The manuscript evidence allows us to assume that the monastic systems originated immediately after his liturgical reform. The manuscript witnesses show that these systems had been established in the Monastery of Beth 'Abhe in connection with a monk Hnaniso, the collaborator of the liturgical reform of the Catholicos. Meanwhile, the large number of extant manuscripts of the Upper Monastery lectionary system reflects the fact that the Upper Monastery, the liturgical center which played a great role in the history of East Syrian rite, remained the chief proponent of this lectionary system. The usage of Mosul, as its manuscripts state, is but a version of the Upper monastery system as practiced in the city of Mosul.

The structural evidence proves that the Cathedral lectionary system originated with the monastic systems in accordance with the norms

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