

CHAPTER 6

LEXICA AND GRAMMARS IN THE LATE SYRIAC TRADITION: THE THREE BISHOPS: AUDO, MANNA, AND DAVID

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*Indeed, a single word, or one syllable only of a noun or a verb,
gives no pleasure to the soul because it shows no meaning...
but when we add nouns to verbs,
and noun and verb have thus been joined together,
then the soul is pleased.*

Job of Edessa (760–835?)
Book of Treasures

This paper describes the lexical and grammatical works of eastern scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. Three authors and their works are examined: Toma Audo and his *simtā*, Awgen Manna and his Syriac-Arabic lexicon, and Clemens Joseph David and his lexicon.

1. INTRODUCTION

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a number of lexicographers and grammarians from within the Syriac tradition. The best known amongst the lexicographers is Toma Audo (1853–1918), a bishop of the Chaldean Church, whose Syriac-Syriac *simtā* is not unknown to many western scholars. Next to Audo comes Awgen Manna (1867–1928), also a bishop of the Chaldean Church, who composed a Syriac-Arabic lexicon. The grammarians are less well known in the west. Worth mentioning is Mor Clemens Joseph David (1829–1890),¹ Syrian Catholic bishop of Damascus, whose *al-lum'a al-shahiyya fi nahw al-lugha al-suryaniyya*, first published in 1879 with a second revised edition in 1896, is the largest grammar produced in the east after the time of Bar 'Ebroyo. David's grammar is hardly found in libraries in the west, but is available in the *eBethArke: The Syriac Digital Library*.² David's *Grammar* is not included in Moss's *Catalogue*,³ but neither is Nöldeke's.

¹ See Vosté, "Clément-Joseph David."

² Online: <http://www.hmml.org/vivarium/BethArke.htm>.

³ Cyril Moss, ed., *Catalogue of Syriac Printed Books and Related Literature in the British Museum*.

Swadaya particular to the region of Urmia; and he did not neglect to list the usages of the Greek words which are scattered, here and there, in ancient writings. We can say that in notable skill this work is most perfect, complete and full [in comparison] with all those before it. Woe for the laborious and weary *malpanâ* for he passed away from the temporal life before he completed his valuable work.

The *simtâ* is 1,128 pages long, with approximately 7,000 root-type entries and 28,000 total entries (root-type and lexeme-type entries).⁷ In fact, one of the unique features of the *simtâ* is the large coverage of derived lexical forms, not to be found in any other lexicon. To illustrate, the following table lists the forms under the root **سَه** given by Audo, Smith, and Brockelmann.

Entry	Audo	Payne Smith	Brockelmann
سَه	✓	✓	✓
سَهَا	✓	✓	✓
سَهَا		✓	
سَهَا سَهَا	✓	✓	
سَهَا	✓		
سَهَا	✓		
سَهَا	✓	✓	✓
سَهَا	✓	✓	
سَهَا	✓		✓
سَهَا	✓	✓	✓
سَهَا	✓		
سَهَا	✓		
سَهَا	✓		
سَهَا	✓		✓
سَهَا	✓		
سَهَا	✓	✓	✓

⁷ Estimated based on a random sampling of 15 pages; totals rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Manna then gives a sample of what he perceives are mistakes by other lexicographers including Qardahi, Audo, and Payne Smith. These are mostly rare nouns.

The order of lemmata under each root differs from Audo. Manna first lists all the verbal forms, followed by the nominal ones. Within each category, he begins with the simple *p'al* forms, moving to *pa'el*, *af'el*, etc. The arrangement of meanings under each lemma follows western dictionaries. Manna uses the Arabic numerals to separate senses. While he gives a number of Arabic glosses per Syriac word, the lack of citations makes it difficult to get the right meaning of the word, especially in cases when the Arabic is not familiar from Modern Standard Arabic.

Yet, Manna's *Lexicon* can be very useful for any future lexicographical project. It is rich in entries, as well as idioms and usages within each entry. For instance, one finds under *فٲٲ* "to fly" the usage *فٲٲ ٲٲٲٲ ٲٲٲٲٲٲ* "the poison spread in the body." Other examples abound.

4. DAVID'S GRAMMAR

David's *al-lum'a al-shahiyya fi nahw al-lugha al-suryaniyya* first appeared in 1879 in one volume. A second revised edition was published posthumously in 1896 in two volumes, exactly nine years after David had already *ٲٲٲٲ ٲٲٲٲ ٲٲٲٲ* "passed away from the temporal life," to borrow the words of Audo. It is not clear if David had left a manuscript of revisions or not, or if he embarked on a revision before his death. A footnote in the introduction to the first volume (page 14) states "Know that whenever the beginning of a paragraph is preceded with this sign (*), it indicates that the comment is not from the writing of the author, but from the overseer of the printing of this book." No name is provided either on any of the title pages, or elsewhere. It is most likely that the second edition was prepared and expanded upon by Rahmani (1849–1929), a pupil of David, who also produced a Latin translation of *al-lum'a* that same year.⁹

Being the most extensive grammar produced in the East after the works of Bar 'Ebroyo, all later grammars built on David's *al-lum'a*, including Diryan,¹⁰ al-Kfarnissy,¹¹ Armalah,¹² Dolabani,¹³ and others.

David's *Grammar* illustrates his knowledge in various Semitic languages. Not a few footnotes throughout the work, especially in the second volume, provide comparisons with the Aramaic dialect of Ma'lulah. For instance, we are told that the Ma'lolites put the *taw* of the passive form after the first radical, for example, *ٲٲٲٲ* for Syriac *ٲٲٲٲ*. Some notes cover Mandaic, and much of the discussion on verbs contains comparisons with Arabic and

⁹ David, *Grammatica Aramaica seu Syriaca*.

¹⁰ Diryan, *kitab al-'uqan*.

¹¹ al-Kfarnissy, *Grammar of the Aramaic Syriac language*.

¹² Armalah, *kitab al-'uṣul al-'ibtida'iyyah*.

¹³ Dolabani, *kitab al-'asās*, vol. 1.

Hebrew. When comparison is needed with a western language, David uses Greek and Latin as examples.

The presentation of the grammatical material itself differs substantially from western grammars in style, arrangement, and methodology. In general, eastern grammarians are influenced by the Arabic grammatical tradition, and this goes back to Bar ʿEbroyo, who, for example, applies the notion of *الخبر* and *المبتدأ* to Syriac. David follows this tradition very closely. Western grammars, on the other hand, follow the philological approaches of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, while Nöldeke acknowledges that he makes use of the earlier “Jacobite” and “Nestorian” grammarians and lexicographers, he distances himself from the eastern approach which was brought to Europe by the Maronites. “I have taken my material from the best sources within reach,” he tells us, “entirely disregarding Amira and the other Maronites.” As a result, both western and eastern readers of grammars who are not familiar with the opposite tradition will need some time of adjustment to get used to the other approach. To illustrate this, consider the following two examples:

With regard to the masculine and plural forms of the noun, Nöldeke gives “formations” for different classes of nouns, for example, the most “usual formations” *حَنَفَا-حُمَا* “wicked” (§70), and the older *ayâ* ending in *حُمَا-حُمَا* “hard” (§72). In modern linguistics, one can describe this approach with a templatic formalism, for example, *CiCâ—CiCê* and *CaCyâ—CCayâ*, respectively (where C stands for a consonant). David’s approach is radically different. He applies transformational processes in order to “derive” the plural from the singular. For instance, the plural of *حُمَا* is achieved by turning *â* into *ê*, and the plural of *حُمَا* by moving *a* from *qāḫ* to *shīn* (which amounts to metathesis of *a* and *š*). In order to implement David’s approach with a modern formalism, one needs to apply a regular rule with a context that describes the templatic type of the noun. For example, the first transformation translates into

$$\hat{a} \rightarrow \hat{e} / CiC _ \#$$

read *â* becomes *ê* when preceded by *CiC* and followed by the end marker (#).

Also note that Nöldeke’s approach to the plural *حُمَا* implies the plural morpheme *-ayâ*, while David’s approach results in the morpheme *-yâ*. This transformational approach is ubiquitous in eastern grammars.

The second example is of concern to lexicographers and concordance compilers. Does one list nouns under their absolute state, or emphatic state? Which form is the original one? While we, in the west, are accustomed to consider the absolute, by virtue of the term itself, as the original and derive the emphatic by suffixation, eastern grammars invariably give copious rules whose purpose is to derive the absolute from the emphatic subtractively. (Subtractive morphology, where one form is derived from another by the removal of morphemes, is known to exist in a number of languages.) This approach is implicit in the Syriac term equivalent to “absolute,” *حَبُحَا* “apocopated.” The process itself is called *حَبُحَا* “aphaeresis” or “contraction.” Surprisingly, David’s view on this matter is similar to the western one; he explains at great length (§94),

You should consider here that **ܘܢܘܢܐ** “aphaeresis” is more archaic than non-**ܘܢܘܢܐ** both in time and rank. But because of the ubiquitous usage of nouns with the [emphatic] Olaph, which western scholars believe was placed for definiteness, later [eastern] grammarians considered **ܘܢܘܢܐ** a subtype of the noun which has the Olaph, and they began compiling rules to derive the **ܘܢܘܢܐ** from the non-**ܘܢܘܢܐ**, while the truth is the opposite, that is, the noun with *Olaph* ought to be derived from the **ܘܢܘܢܐ**.

Yet, the next 25 pages of David’s *Grammar* are filled up with rules that derive the absolute from the emphatic. Graduates of eastern schools, even today, follow this approach.

The modern grammarian can benefit from David’s *Grammar* in a number of ways. First, it provides another way of looking at word formation which already has a following. Secondly, the discussion on orthography and the comparative data between east and west Syriac is unmatched in any other work. Thirdly, it provides long lists of data with regard to irregular forms, nominal types, and verbal types. It would be worthwhile consulting if one is to embark on writing a new extensive grammar.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper gives a brief overview of the lexical and grammatical works of three eastern bishops: Audo and his Syriac-Syriac *simtâ*, Manna and his Syriac-Arabic *Lexicon*, and David and his *Grammar*. The lexica provide unique entries and complement their western counterparts. Any future lexicon ought to make use of them.

The grammars, exemplified in this paper with David’s *Grammar*, primarily give a different approach for Syriac word formation. While this approach may not fit well in a modern description of grammar, the modern grammarian is encouraged to understand how grammar is viewed in the Syriac world today, especially if that grammarian wishes to address a larger audience. ❖ܘܢܘܢܐ❖

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