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Learning Syriac and Garshuni in Early Modern Egypt

Evidence from the Cairo Genizah

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Abstract

The fragments published here consist of a pupil's exercise sheets. The contents are alphabet exercises as well as repetitive phrases from hymnals. As such, the material sheds light on the pedagogical environment of the Syriac settlement in Early Modern Egypt and helps us connect the received liturgical tradition of the Syriac Orthodox Church with the middle of the second millennium.

Keywords

Syriac Christians in Egypt – Cairo Genizah – alphabets – liturgy – Beth Gazo – Barekhor

Our knowledge of Syriac education in Late Antiquity is confined to the surviving canons of the School of Nisibis and Barhadbeshabba's treatise on the cause of schools.¹ The lack of sufficient surviving material, such as school exercise notebooks, makes it difficult to broach the subject further. (Compare with the survival of Greek material which allowed for such investigations, e.g. by Raffaella Cribiore for Graeco-Roman Egypt.²) We know of an ancient alpha-

1 Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*; Becker, *Revival and Awakening*; Barhadbeshabba, *Cause of the Schools* (*Patrologia Orientalis* 4.4, 1907), p. 349 (English Translation in Becker, *Sources for the School of Nisibis*, pp. 118 ff.).

2 Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*.

bet drawing on the wall of Dura Europos from around the third century.³ We also know of two alphabet ostraka from Egypt dating to the second half of the sixth century.⁴ (Instances of *probatio calami* are also found in a number of manuscripts, especially as end-leaves, but these belong to a different genre.)

A few fragments on paper from the Cairo Genizah, belonging to the shelf mark Or.1081.2.75, might be our first real examples of elementary schooling activities in a Syriac environment, at least in Early Modern Egypt (16th or 17th century). These fragments were first mentioned by S.P. Brock, by way of an appendix to his edition of two East Syriac liturgical fragments, as “a number of disparate fragments in Serto containing either jottings or liturgical materials in Carshuni or Syriac.”⁵ Since then, S. Bhayro has edited one of the more complete liturgical items from this shelf mark, a *Mimro* on Palm Sunday.⁶ J.F. Coakley, in his recent catalog of Syriac MSS in Cambridge acquired since 1901, provides a brief description of the Cairo Genizah shelf mark Or.1081.2.75,

These are mostly Garshuni and mostly scraps too small or carelessly written to warrant attempts at description here. They contain snatches of prayers, Psalms, liturgical texts, and alphabets.⁷

The “jottings,” “scraps” and “snatches” that seem at a first glance to be “carelessly written” (all valid descriptions) are invaluable for a number of reasons: 1) they take us to the world of a pupil, whether a child or an adult, learning Syriac outside of the homeland of Syriac Christianity of Syria and Mesopotamia, 2) the material gives us an insight into the pedagogical methodologies for teaching the Syriac language in what was probably an informal schooling environment, and 3) we learn of the important phraseology and liturgical material used by the Syriac Orthodox Christians residing in Egypt which may reflect even earlier realities in their native homelands of Syria and Upper Mesopotamia.

I intend to provide here an ‘edition’ (to the extent possible given the nature of the material) of the schooling fragments and—also by the way of an appendix—a brief description of the remaining Syriac and Garshuni material suffi-

3 Bertolino, *Corpus des inscriptions sémitiques de Doura-Europos*, p. 57.

4 For one ostrakon, see: van Ginkel and Van der Vliet, “A Syriac Alphabet from Qasr Ibrim”. For the other ostrakon, see: Тураевъ, “Коптские тексты, приобретенные экспедицией пок. В.Г. Бока в Египт”.

5 Brock, “East Syrian Liturgical Fragments from the Cairo Genizah”; and idem, “Some Further East Syrian Liturgical Fragments from the Cairo Genizah”.

6 Bhayro, “A Syriac fragment from the Cairo Genizah”.

7 Coakley, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts*, p. 30.

cient enough to allow us to understand the linguistic ecosystem of the Syriac Orthodox community of Egypt during this period.

The fragments can be divided into the following categories:

1. Practice scribbles of the alphabet and key phrases.
2. Jottings of liturgical hymns, usually in a repetitive manner that indicates an educational setting.
3. Portions from the book of Anaphora.
4. Garshuni sermons and prayers.

The 'edition' provided here covers items 1 and 2. In some cases, a single leaf or bifolium will have more than one of the above items on the recto and verso (e.g. Items 24 and 27) which makes it clear that our collection is composed of scrap papers, nothing that was intended to be bound as a professional manuscript (this is true at least for groups 1 and 2 above). I use the designation ^f for 'front' and ^b for 'back' as provided by the Genizah file naming system (i.e. the way the leaves were photographed). In many cases, it is not possible to tell which side was intended to be the recto or verso, a moot point since the papers were most likely not intended to be bound. In the following descriptions, it is sometimes difficult to give the number of lines as the lines are not straight and there is much interlinear writing, another support for the 'scrap' paper theory. In such cases, the accompanying images are given with a map-like grid.

1 Alphabets and Phrases

The leaves in this section fall under language learning. They are mostly alphabet practice sheets but contain other phraseology.

1.1 *Item 6^b*

This item is a bifolium. The right side has approximately five lines followed by a line separator. Above the separator line, the isolated forms of the alphabet are written in sequence. The letter ܓ (g) (starting at 2W) kerns under ܒ (b) (1X), something that will be repeated. There is semi-erased writing above the alphabet on top of the page (1W) which may be the word ܐܠܗܐ 'God'. One can also read the Garshuni word ܐܠܗܐ / ܐܠܗܐ / ܐܠܗܐ 'Christ' or ܐܠܗܐ / ܐܠܗܐ / ܐܠܗܐ 'Christianity' (4W). All of these words begin with the initial ligature ܐܠ (1), where the initial *Olaph* tilts at an angle similar to the angle of *Lomadh*,⁸ which may be part of the writing exercise.

8 Kiraz, *Tūrāṣ Mamllā: A Grammar of the Syriac Language, Volume 1*, §389.



FIGURE 1 Or.1081.002.075.6^b

The pupil repeats the alphabet twice under the separator line (starting at 5Z and 8Z), but the second set is incomplete. Towards the middle of the page (10Y), the name of the first letter of the alphabet, **ا** ‘*Olaph*’ (which also begins with the initial ⟨l⟩ ligature) is repeated several times. That the writer is quite a novice is clear from how **ا** ⟨f⟩ is sometimes confused with **ق** ⟨q⟩ in the word **ا** ‘*Olaph*’ (10X & 11U). The alphabet is then repeated three more times (starting at 11R, 13T, and 14Z). The letters for *k* and *n* are always written doubled in a cursive manner, **كك** ⟨kk⟩ and **نن** ⟨nn⟩, first in initial form and then in isolated form. This way of writing *k* and *n* is known from much earlier quire numbers found in professional manuscripts of the first millennium.⁹

The left side of the bifolium begins with the Lord’s Prayer as follows (lines 1–3):

ا	و	1
ب	و	2
ج	و	3

⁹ Kiraz, *Orthography*, §60.

The first line of the left side begins with an attempt to write **ܡܥ ܡܢܠܐ** “from the Lord” (1L) followed by a fuller **ܡܥ ܡܢܠܐ ܕܥܠܐ** “from the Lord God” (1J). Then follows a block of exercises that is repeated three times which consists of both Syriac and Garshuni phrases. The following can be deciphered:

1. Garshuni **ܐܠܐܕ ܕܥܠܐ / ܡܥܡ ܕܥܠܐ** / **ܐܒ ܐܠܗܐ** “in the name of God the father” (lines 2, 6, and 10).
2. **ܐܘܨܡ ܕܡܢܐ** “have mercy upon us, O Lord” followed by the sequence **ܡܚܚܐܐܐܐ** (?) which I am unable to decipher (lines 3, 7, and 11).
3. Garshuni **ܡܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܪܐܝܠ / ܡܥ ܡܢ ܡܢܐ** “from the Israelites” followed by what may be Garshuni **ܡܢ ܡܢܐ** (?), the first word might also be **ܡܢ ܒܢܝ** (lines 4 and 8).
4. The sequence of the alphabet from **ܐ** (<’>) to **ܐܠ** (<l>)

The last two lines complete the alphabet from line 12 and end with **ܡܢܠܐ ܡܢܠܐ** “bless my Lord” (13C). The last line begins with another set of the alphabet. The alphabet practices on the entire sheet are in isolated forms.

1.3 Item 24^b

This is also a bifolium. The right side has a grid with the alphabet written twice, first in a cursive manner (**ܐܘܨܡ ܕܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ**). The arrangement of the alphabet in this mnemonic is known from classical grammars,¹¹ but one would expect in the middle **ܡܢܐ** <klmn> and not **ܡܢܐ** <kly mn>. We know from the received tradition that this mnemonic is read as follows: *’abgad hawwaz ḥaṭṭī kalamān sa’faṣ qarṣat* (with doubling and an [a] sound between letters). But it is possible that earlier pronunciations had different vowels from the presence of **ܐ** (presumably for the vowel [ī]) in **ܡܢܐ** <kly mn>. Another fragment, from the Jewish Theological Seminary’s Genizah collection, JTS ENA 3846.2, gives **ܡܢܐ** <klmn>. The alphabet in our fragment is followed by **ܡܢܠܐ ܡܢܠܐ** “bless my Lord.”

The second alphabet set is given in isolated forms with the first nine or ten letters marked with the vowel [a]: **ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ ܐ** (the paper is torn and it cannot be determined whether **ܐ** had a vowel or not). The following line continues with **ܡ ܡ ܡ** <k l m>. Then **ܡ** <m> is repeated 22 times.

11 For a list of grammars and ancient grammarians who give this mnemonic, see Kiraz, *Orthography*, § 62 ff.



FIGURE 3 Or.1081.002.075.24^b

1.4 *Item 027^f*

The folio contains two sets of the alphabet in isolated forms, each followed by the phrase *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* “bless my Lord.” As before, *k* and *n* are given doubled: *كك* (kk) and *نن* (nn). There appears interlineal repetitions of either *ش* (šw) or some sort of a decoration. If the former, these may be exercises for the difficult-to-write letter *ش* (š).

1.5 *Analysis*

Our pupil(s) begin their education with the alphabet in isolated forms. The ancient practice of doubled *كك* (kk) and *نن* (nn) in quire numbers seems to be taught from the start. Note that *ز* (z) is not doubled (to distinguish it from *ذ* (z)) as the context is clear. The mnemonic *أ ب ج د ه و ز ح ط ي ك ل م ن هـ و ز*, known from classical grammars, is used to illustrate the sequence of the alphabet.

It is interesting to see the prominence of the phrase *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* “bless my Lord.” This phrase originated as a liturgical instruction by the deacon addressing the celebrant: the deacon says, “bless my Lord,” and then the celebrant gives a blessing. At some point in history, the phrase attained usage outside of the liturgy. It is known from the received tradition as a greeting to priests: when one encoun-

ters a priest, one says ܩܒܠܝܢ “bless my Lord” (i.e. instead of “Good morning/evening/day”) and the priest replies ܠܗܘܢ ܒܘܠܝܢ “God shall bless.” The phrase is also known from archival material from the nineteenth century: When writing to the Patriarch, scribes end their letters with ܩܒܠܝܢ ܠܗܘܢ ܩܒܠܝܢ “bless my Lord, for forgiveness”. The transformation of the phrase from liturgical to one of greeting is attested in a letter from the Mongol King Hülegü to King Louis IX of France dated 1262 which survives only in Latin and appears as *Barachmar*. Meyvaert assumed that it is an Arabic > Persian corruption of ܒܪܚܡܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܘܢ *birahmatallah* (with *h* becoming Latin *ch*).¹² Borbone, however, correctly interpreted the reading as Syriac ܩܒܠܝܢ /barek^hmar/ “bless my Lord” (where *k^h* became Latin *ch*) and found a historical corroboration in *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh al-Duwal* by the contemporary Bar ‘Ebroyo (d. 1286):¹³

والعام من المغول وغيرهم ممن هو بينهم ان يقولوا في السلام برنجر وهو لفظ مركب سرياني
معناه بارك مالكي.

The general Mongol public, and those who are amongst them, say in greetings *barek^hmar* which is a compound Syriac phrase that means “bless my Lord.”

There are two known instances of ܩܒܠܝܢ /barek^hmar/ that go back to the twelfth century written in Rus’ at St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorad: парехъ мари /parex mar(i)/.¹⁴ The sequence of the alphabet followed directly by the phrase ܩܒܠܝܢ “bless my Lord” is also attested in binding sheets of known manuscripts. For instance, the back pastedown of Yale Syriac MS 9, dated by Y. Dolabāni¹⁵ to the seventeenth century, has precisely this sequence. Our fragment is an additional witness to the continuous usage of the phrase within and outside of the liturgical environment.

Language switching, between Syriac and Garshuni, seems to be taking place early on in education. This is quite different from the later tradition, at least among the Maronites of Mount Lebanon, where the two languages were taught separately. It has been noted by Y. Daryān¹⁶ that, during the nineteenth cen-

12 Meyvaert, “An Unknown Letter of Hulagu, Il-Khan of Persia, to King Louis IX of France”.

13 Giorgio Borbone, “Syro-Mongolian Greetings for the King of France. A Note About the Letter of Hülegü to King Louis IX (1262)”.

14 Gippius et al., “The Oldest Traces of Semitic (Hebrew and Syriac) in Early Rus”.

15 Dolabāni, *Mḥawwono da-kthobe sriṭe d-botay ’arke d-dayrotho wa-d-’idotho suryoyotho da-b-madnho*, pp. 1–21.

16 Daryān, “aṣl lafḏat karšūnī,” no. 17.

ture, pupils first learned to read Syriac. Then they were taught to read Arabic in Garshuni form. Finally, they were taught to read Arabic in the Arabic script. Apparently, students who did not make it to the third level only knew Arabic through garshunographic writing. Our pupil in Early Modern Egypt seems to be practicing Syriac and Garshuni at the same time.

2 Psalms and Hymns

The items in this section are liturgical. They include both Psalms and hymns.

2.1 Item 3^r (Ps 1)

The right side of the folio is torn. What survive are portions of Psalm 1:1–2a. The following gives the readings of the fragment on the right and the vocalized text from the Antioch Bible¹⁷ on the left:

ܘܗܘ ܥܘܕ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܘܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ	ܘܗܘ ܥܘܕ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܘܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ	ܘܗܘ ܥܘܕ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܘܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ	1 2 3 4
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The plural Syāme dots are noticeably missing from *ܥܝܢܐ* (ln 3) and *ܥܥܥܥܥܐ* (ln 4), something that our pupil often misses.

2.2 Item 24^r (Ps. 1)

This is a bifolium. The right side is blank, and the left side contains Ps. 1:6(b)–2:3(a) as follows:

ܘܗܘ ܥܘܕ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܘܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ	ܘܗܘ ܥܘܕ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܘܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ	ܘܗܘ ܥܘܕ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܘܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ	1 1 2 3 4 5 7
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17 Taylor (tr.) and Kiraz and Bali (eds.), *The Syriac Peshitta Bible with English Translation, Psalms*.



FIGURE 5 Or.1081.002.075.31^f



FIGURE 6 Or.1081.002.075.24^f

ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ: ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ	ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ. ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ	8
ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ: ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ	ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ. ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ	9
ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ. ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ	ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ. ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ	10
	ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ.	11

In addition to Syāme dots absent on ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ (ln 2), ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ (ln 5) and ܘܥܢܢܗܘܢ (ln 8), there are a number of variant readings:

1. Line 3: ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ, for ܘܠܡܚܚܝܗ. The variant is unknown from the manuscripts cited in the Leiden edition.¹⁸ If this variant is absent in second millennium manuscripts (Leiden stops at the 12th century), it could be an indication that the pupil was not writing from a text but rather from an oral recitation by his teacher or a fellow pupil as the inclusion or exclusion of the prefix ܘ before a ܠ is not particularly audible.

18 *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshiṭta Version, Part II Fasc. 3. The Book of Psalms*, edited on Behalf of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament by the Peshiṭta Institute, Leiden: Brill, 1980.

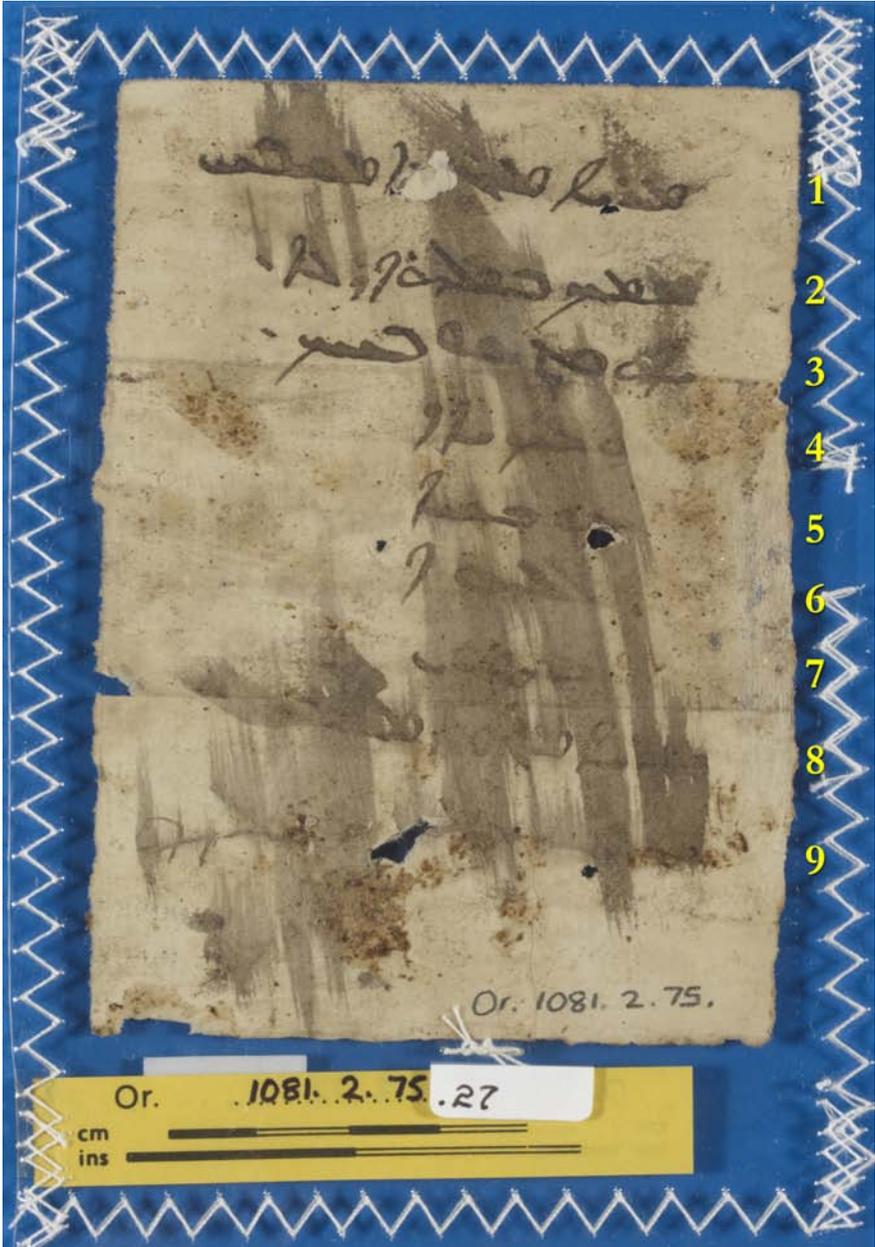


FIGURE 7 Or.1081.002.075.27^b

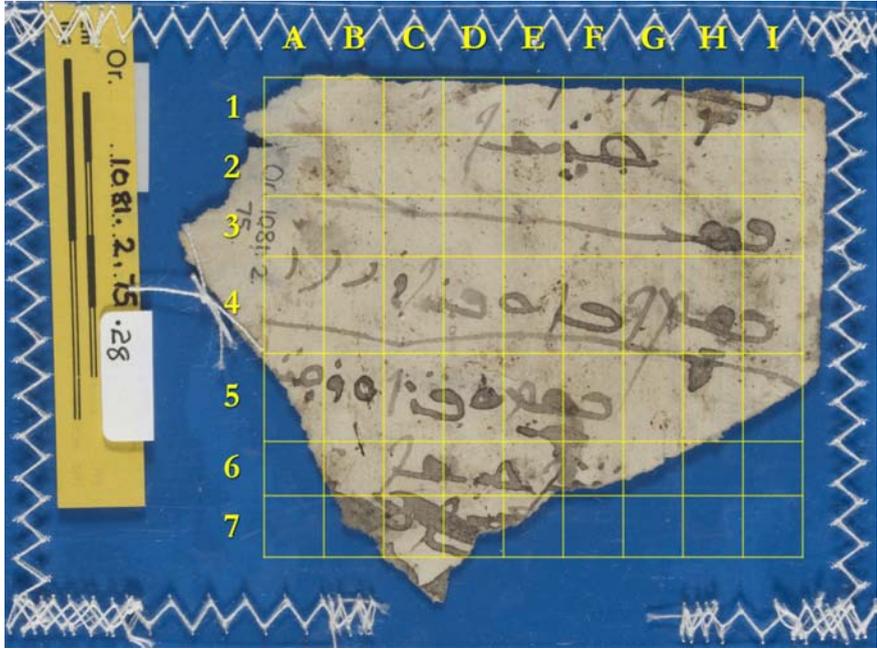


FIGURE 8 Or.1081.002.075.28^b

ܩܘܣܘܠܐ	1
ܦܢܝܢܐ	2
ܦܢܝܢܐ ܐܘܠܐ ܫܘܠܐ ܘ	3
ܦܢܝܢܐ ܫܘܠܐ ܫܘܠܐ	4
ܫܘܠܐ ܩܘܣܘܠܐ	5

Since line 1 ends in ܩܘܣܘܠܐ “spirit” and line 2 begins with ܦܢܝܢܐ “in the name,” it is clear that the additional ܫܘܠܐ ܐܘܠܐ ܫܘܠܐ “one true God,” so prominently found in the received liturgical tradition, most likely added to counter Muslim charges of *shirk*, was not part of our pupil’s exercise.

The dotted vowel *.* for /ā/ (West Syriac [o]) is used twice on this page: once correctly on ܫܘܠܐ (line 4), which also has the dotted vowel under ܫ for /u/, and once prematurely on ܩܘܣܘܠܐ (line 1). One sees here the application of dotted vowels at an early stage of learning. This, along with manuscript evidence, suggests that the assumption by European (and sometimes Middle Eastern) grammars that the dotted system belongs to the East Syriac tradition is false. The dotted system of vocalization remains the primary vocalization system in both East and West Syriac with West Syriac employing the additional ‘Greek’ vowels.



FIGURE 9 Or.1081.002.075.3^b

2.5 *Item 3^b* (ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ)

This is a bifolium repeating the hymn ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ “the Virgin gave birth to a wonder.” The right side begins with what may be the word ܘܡܢܐ “in the name” on line 1 which is not part of the hymn (the pupil may have started the same text as 28^b but then switched to the current hymn). Then the hymn follows on the right side:

ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	1
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	2
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	3
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	4
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	5
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	6
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	7
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	8
ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܐ	9



FIGURE 10 Or.1081.002.075.28^f

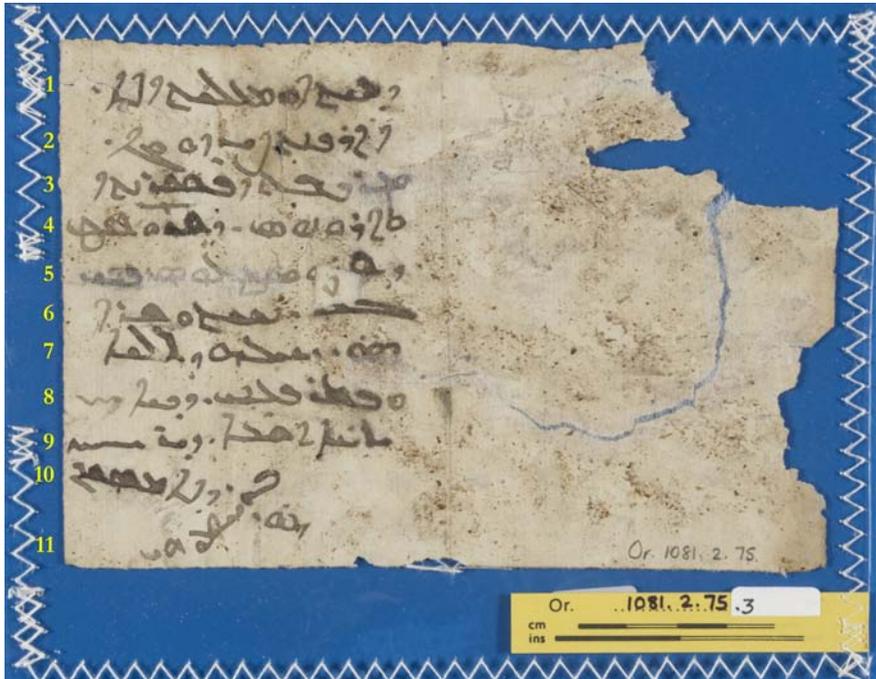


FIGURE 11 Or.1081.002.075.3^f

The hymn can also be found in the Book of Beth Gazo under the genre *ܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܪܒܘܠܐ* / Supplications of Rabula, melody no. 2. The full text reads:

ܘܒܝܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܘܠܐ ܕܠܘܩܘܨܝܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ
 ܘܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܘܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ
 ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ
 ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ
 ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ

The text in the fragment has two minor variant readings: line 1 reads *ܠܐ* (l') instead of *ܕܠܐ* (dl') and *ܥܥ* is missing between lines 5 and 6. Additionally, *ܥܘܨܩܘܠܐ* is misspelled in line 3 and omits the *ܥ* (y).

As indicated above, all three hymns appear in the modern editions of the Book of Beth Gazo. Unlike the first two, the melody of this particular hymn is presumed lost (i.e. no one today knows how to chant it). Various chanters, starting with Patriarch Jacob III in 1960, recorded the Beth Gazo and these recordings are now collected digitally in the mobile app *Beth Gazo Portal* (downloadable from Google Play for Android or Apple's App Store for iOS). So far, no

chanter has recorded this hymn. In fact, this hymn is one of 14 (out of a total of 40) hymns in the genre of the Supplications of Rabula whose melodies are presumed lost. It is not known when these melodies were lost, but we can safely assume from our Genizah fragment that the melody must have been known in Early Modern Egypt.

2.8 *Analysis*

The liturgical material in this Genizah collection provides a link between the received tradition practiced today and the Early Modern period. All the texts found in our fragments can be readily found in the modern editions of the Book of Beth Gazo. As the Syriac presence in Fustât is a diaspora community and thus would have tended to more closely adhere to earlier traditions, the date for this liturgical material may be pushed back further. This is significant, as liturgical material belonging to the first half of the second millennium is rare.

The variant readings found in the Psalms and the absence of Syome dots point to an oral pedagogical method. The Malphono, or a more experienced fellow student, may have been reciting the text to our pupil to write down, rather than the student copying it from an exemplar. The existence of a few homophonic errors supports this theory.

The hymns also demonstrate that chants were taught by repetition, possibly beginning with the first phrase, then moving to the next, then repeating the first two phrases before moving to the third, etc. It seems that pupils were immediately thrown into practicing and memorizing liturgical material, be it Psalms or hymns, even before their calligraphy was perfected.

3 Index of Fragments

- 2^f 2 leaves (bifolium), 15.7 × 21.8 cm
Garshuni sermon beginning with **صهف / كسوف** and ending with **حببه / عنده**.
- 3 2 leaves (bifolium), 15.5 × 10.5 cm
3^b Syriac hymn: **وهو من اجل محبته** described above; 3^f Syriac hymn: **وصلا** **وصلا** described above.
- 6 2 leaves (bifolium), 15.7 × 21.8 cm
Alphabet exercises described above.
- 12 1 leaf, 15.5 × 10.4 cm
Garshuni Palm Sunday sermon titled **ترجم عيد / لوقام حسب الاهداسم** beginning with **الله / السعدين** **الله** / **الحمد لله** that is written on both sides. 12^f has **لح** **عصر** (cf. Item 28^b).

- 13^f 1 leaf, 15.5×10.7 cm
Garshuni small fragment with two lines: 1) الر / الر (presumably الرب “the Lord”) and 2) جميع البلاد / جميع البلاد “all the countries.”
- 16 1 leaf, 9.7×6.7 cm
Front: Garshuni sermon (?) of about 16 lines. Back: Garshuni small fragment with five lines, quoting John Chrysostom.
- 19^f 1 leaf, 15.8×11.3 cm
Syriac Memro of 14 lines with a catchword at the bottom and the Garshuni heading *يقرا ترجم عيد السعائين / هذا لفصل حب الهدام*. This was edited by S. Bhayro (the last word in the penultimate line is *حصف* with a final Estrangela *ل*).
- 20 1 leaf, 15.3×10.8 cm
Garshuni sermon (?) and/or supplication to the Virgin Mary of 18 lines on ^b and 17 lines on ^f.
- 21 2 leaves (bifolium), 11.1×15.5 cm
Syriac pre-Anaphora rite with rubrics in Garshuni.
- 23 2 leaves (bifolium), 11.2×15.2 cm
Garshuni sermon (the flood, Gomorrah and Moses are mentioned).
- 24 2 leaves (bifolium), 10.7×15.7 cm
Alphabet exercises and a hymn, described above.
- 26 1 leaf, 10.1×7.9 cm
Garshuni sermon (?) of 10/11 lines.
- 27 1 leaf, 10.7×7.6 cm
Alphabet exercises and a hymn, described above.
- 28 1 leaf, 8.9×7.2 cm
Liturgical exercises described above.
- 30 2 leaves (bifolium), 7.6×10.5 cm
Book of Anaphora, pre-Anaphora preparatory rite and Liturgy of the Word (with a Gospel reading from Mt, Ch. 1).
- 31^f 1 leaf, 8×5.1 cm
Syriac psalm described above.
- 35^f 1 leaf, 5.7×8.9 cm
Garshuni small fragment with three lines, sermon (?).
- Minute fragment, 1.9×1.2 cm
The lower left fragment of on the front has a decorated *ل* and may belong to Item 6^b.

JTS ENA 3846.2 contains two lines of *ܐܝܫܐ ܘܝܫܐܥ* (’bgd hwz) and a third line with *ܐܝܫܐ ܘܝܫܐܥ* “Isaac, Jacob.”

4 Concluding Remarks

The scrap papers produced by our pupil(s) provide us with a window into aspects of the pedagogical life of Syriac Christians in Early Modern Egypt. It is unknown whether the pupils were children or adults, and whether the schooling took place at churches or in a home setting.

Syriac Orthodox Christians during this period used various languages: Tur-oyo Aramaic in the Tur 'Abdin, Swādāya Aramaic (=NENA) in the Nineveh plains, Kurdish in various areas of today's southeast Turkey, and Turkish in Diyarbakır, Kharput, Edessa and the Malatya regions. In most regions, people would have been bi- or multilingual (e.g. Turkish and Armenian in Kharput and Urfa). Although the Syriac presence in Egypt can be traced back to the pre-Islamic period, it has always been a—more-or-less—diaspora community with continuous contact with Syria and Mesopotamia. We know of a strong connection with Takrit from the ninth century onward, but Syriac Christians from various locations must have settled in Egypt. Our fragments clearly show that the community in Egypt is Arabic-speaking. All the sermon material is in Garshuni. The rubrics in the otherwise Syriac Anaphora texts are in Garshuni and even the Gospel reading in Item 30^b is in Garshuni.

The material presented here helps us to date the received liturgical traditions of the Syriac Orthodox Church. As the fragmentary liturgical texts are found in modern editions of the Book of Beth Gazo, we now know that today's hymns were practiced as far back as the Early Modern period. This is significant, as liturgical manuscripts belonging to the first half of the second millennium are not very common. This connection and dating is in line with the first published liturgical material by Mushe of Mardin that is found in Widmanstadt's *Syriacæ linguæ prima elementa* (1555), published as a supplement to the *editio princeps* of the Syriac New Testament.



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