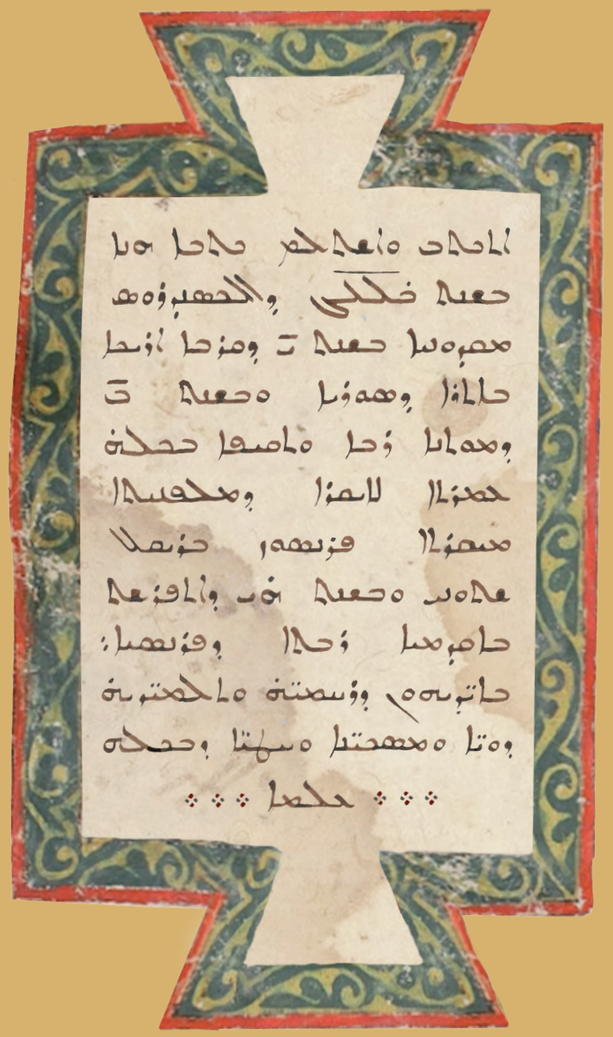


Ces mélanges sont offerts à Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, directrice de recherche au CNRS, par ses collègues et amis. Ils rassemblent des contributions portant sur le monde syriaque.

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Le calame et le ciseau
colophons syriaques offerts à Françoise Briquel Chatonnet

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Composition de la couverture
Chloé Heinis

A European "Syriac" Painting and Seventeenth-Century Humanism

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Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton
Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute, Piscataway

On a very cold December 28 in 1995, my friend Samira Boyzel, who belongs to the Syriac Orthodox immigrant community in Sweden, took me on a tour in Stockholm. One of the sightseeing destinations was Storkyrka, or "The Great Church," also known as Stockholm Cathedral. The first item that caught my attention was *Saint George and the Dragon*, a wooden sculpture depicting the legend of Saint George and the Dragon. The sculpture dated back to the late medieval period, probably around 1489, and had a personal connection to my patron saint, of course. While our tour continued, gazing at dozens of beautiful paintings, we came to the south altar and began to appreciate a painting of the Crucifixion. All of a sudden, I noticed a writing above the thief next to Christ that seemed like Syriac. I zoomed in with my personal camera—this was before cell phones—and was quite delighted to see, indeed, Syriac writing. There was also writing on top of Christ, which seemed to be in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—no surprise there. I took some pictures and went to the information desk to inquire further about the painting and its painter. I was given some tourist leaflets, which became the beginning of a side research project. Back in Cambridge, where I was doing my PhD studies at St. John's College at the time, I began to look further into the matter. Why did a seventeenth-century European painter write Syriac

1. The research behind this paper was conducted at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. Jetta Vinzent (then of St. John College, Cambridge, now of the University of Birmingham) kindly advised on the art history background back in 1996. Eleanor Coghill kindly edited a long translation from Swedish (from A. Sjöblom). Hannah Stork copy edited the text. Sebastian Kenoro Kiraz kindly typed Swedish source materials for me so that I could easily copy-and-paste them into Google's translation engine!

Le calame et le ciseau : colophons syriaques offerts à Françoise Briquel Chatonnet, S. Brelaud, J. Daccache *et al.* (dir.), Paris 2021 (Cahiers d'études syriaques 8), p. 117-131.

on an otherwise European painting? What was the intellectual context that gave rise to this? My friend Nevert Töker looked things up for me in Swedish libraries—no Google Books or archive.org at the time—and summarized in English—no Google translate either!—some discussions about the painter and the painting. Her sister Handan took some further pictures for me. But as the PhD work took priority, the Stockholm painting receded to the background. As we celebrate Françoise Briquel Chatonnet's contributions to Syriac studies, especially her immense impact on our knowledge of inscriptions, I am happy to gather what I have on this painting and offer it as a humble *shukānā* to Françoise.

The painter

The painter in question is David Klöcker von Ehrenstråhl (1628-1698), whose name "is to be met with everywhere in Sweden[:] in palaces, castles, museums and churches, in the homes of the towns and the great houses of the country."[2] He was born David Klöcker in Hamburg, entered the Swedish secretariat at Osnabrück and Münster as a clerk at the young age of 18, and was active at the time of the negotiations of the Thirty Years' War. He studied painting in Amsterdam in 1648 and in Venice and Rome between 1654 and 1661. In 1652, after leaving Amsterdam and before going to Italy, he moved to Sweden and settled in Skokloster Castle on Lake Mälaren. After he returned from Italy, he was named *hovkonterfejare,* or "court painter," in 1661 by the king's mother Hedvig Eleonora (King Charles XI was only six years old); and three years later, he was admitted to the nobility and took the name Ehrenstråhl. He became known for painting portraits of kings and the members of the nobility. He also painted a number of ceilings and wall paintings. His *magnum opus* is *The Great Deeds of the Swedish Kings*, a huge hall ceiling fresco in Riddarhuspalatset (the Swedish House of Knights), which he completed in 1675.

Ehrenstråhl was not known for painting religious themes. But towards the end of his life, he was commissioned by the royal family to paint two religious items, originally for the Chapel in the Castle of the Three Crowns, the predecessor of the Royal Palace.[3] The first painting commissioned was a scene of the Crucifixion, which he signed in 1695, only three years before he died (dimensions: 3 × 7.4 meters). The second is a scene of the Last Judgment, which he signed the following year (dimensions 7.4 × 10.7 meters). He most

2. From "Summary in English" of Axel Adolf Sjöblom (Sjöblom 1947). See also Nisser 1932; Nisser [1948]; Johnsson *et al.* 1988, p. 48.

3. Brochure titled "Welcome to Stockholm Cathedral" (no date, picked up in Dec. 1995).

likely continued to work on them after he signed them as there is a record of him receiving a payment after those dates. On July 1, 1695, he wrote to Nils Bielke (1644-1716), a member of the High Council, reporting that he was indeed commissioned to paint the two paintings. Shortly after his death, in 1697, a fire consumed the Chapel where the paintings were hanging. Luckily, though, the two paintings were saved and are now hanging in Storkyrka.

The intellectual environment

Why would a seventeenth-century German painter, commissioned by the Swedish royal family, include two Syriac phrases in his painting? Was it his initiative or a request from members of the royal court or its staff? Who could have helped the painter—assuming he did not know Syriac—to gain access to the source material from which he drew the texts? What are the possible sources for the two Syriac snippets? In order to attempt to answer at least some of these questions, one needs to examine how Syriac came in contact with Europe in the early modern period and how it was transferred to the social and intellectual milieu of the Swedish nobility.

Syriac was brought to Europe by three Maronite priests in 1513. The Maronites were sent to represent their patriarch Simon ibn Dawud ibn Ḥassān at the Fifth Lateran Council.[4] Teseo Ambrosio (1469-1540), a gifted philologist who managed to learn how to compose in Italian, Latin, and Greek by the age of fifteen, had already studied the elements of Hebrew, Chaldee (which could have meant Aramaic, Syriac or even Ethiopic), and Arabic by the time of the Council. When the Maronite and Ethiopian delegates requested that they celebrate the liturgy in their own traditions, Teseo was asked to investigate the validity of their liturgical texts. Initially, Teseo communicated with the Arabic-speaking Maronites through a Jewish translator. He then took the opportunity to learn Syriac from the Maronite priests. Later, Teseo put together a polyglot grammar titled *Introductio in Chaldaicam linguam, Syriacam, atque Armeniacam, et decem alias linguas* (Pavia, 1539). Another early philologist was Angelo Canini (1521-1557), who wrote another grammar titled *Institutiones linguae Syriacae, Assyricae, atque Thalmudicae* (1554) in Hebrew characters.

Now to another patriarch and another priest. The Syriac Orthodox patriarch ʿAbdullāh I bar Ṣtephanos (patriarch 1520-1557) heard of the new possibilities of printing in Europe and desired to have the New Testament published with this new technology. He dispatched one of his pupils, a

4. Brock 1994.

priest-monk named Mushe, to fulfill this task, arming him with two New Testament manuscripts. Mushe arrived in Europe sometime before 1549. There, he met Andreas Masius (1514-1573), a Catholic priest and humanist who had already studied the basics of Arabic. Sometime around 1553, Mushe taught Masius Syriac and helped him advance in Arabic. When Mushe and Masius corresponded, they wrote to each other in Syriac, which indicates Masius's abilities in composition.[5] Another early humanist to learn Syriac was Guillaume Postel (1510-1581). Postel was a diplomat who was sent to the Ottoman Empire as an interpreter of the Franco-Ottoman alliance delegation in 1536. Postel brought back with him a copy of the Syriac New Testament. The close proximity of Syriac to Aramaic—the language of Christ—gave Syriac a certain degree of sacredness for the early European humanists. It was as close as they could get to Christ himself.

Mushe was able to succeed in fulfilling the wishes of his patriarch only by collaborating with a German humanist and statesman: Johann Albrecht Widmanstadt (1506-1557). Together, they published the New Testament in 1555. Widmanstadt, with help from Mushe, also put together a small Syriac primer titled *...Syriacæ linguæ... prima elementa...*, published between November 1555 and February 1556 and sometimes bound with some copies of the New Testament as a guide. Mushe was also appointed as teacher of Syriac at the college of the Neophytes in Rome in 1581, but we do not know any of his students.[6]

Another major Middle Eastern traveler to have contact with the Europeans is Patriarch ʿAbdullāh's successor Ignatius Niʿmatullāh (patr. 1557-1576). In fact, Niʿmatullāh abdicated for peculiar reasons and fled to Europe. He arrived in Rome, coming via Venice, in 1578.[7] On account of his knowledge in astronomy and mathematics, he was invited by Pope Gregory to join the commission on calendar reform and was a signatory to its final report on September 14, 1580. His signature appeared in Syriac and Arabic.[8] We do not know if Niʿmatullāh had any European pupils.

While the early humanists came across Syriac through direct contact with Middle Eastern clergy, by the second half of the sixteenth century, one was able to learn Syriac from the mentioned European grammars. We also know that some had access to traditional Syriac grammars. For instance,

5. Wesselius 1990.

6. Brock 1994, pp. 94-113, esp. 97.

7. See Borbone 2013, p. 29 and 39 n. 7; Borbone 2017, p. 278 n. 9.

8. Kiraz 2011.

Widmanstadt seems to have read the Syriac *Grammar* of the thirteenth-century polymath Gregory Bar ʿEbroyo.[9]

One can then summarize the avenues by which a European had access to Syriac in sixteenth-century Europe: 1) direct contact with the Syriac-using Eastern Christians who visited Europe, which intensified after the establishment of the Maronite College in Rome in 1584; 2) grammars and lexica written by the early European humanists, mostly describing the language of the Syriac *Pšiṭta*; and 3) possibly reading native Syriac grammars such as the one by Bar ʿEbroyo.

The spread of Syriac in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can also be gaged by the number of publications which must have had some market share. By the end of the sixteenth century, at least eight editions of the New Testament had been issued.[10] While the first edition of Mushe and Widmanstadt was targeted at Middle Eastern and European readership—its format is really that of a Middle Eastern manuscript—, the other publications were clearly the works of European humanists for a European readership. The seventeenth-century publications of the Syriac New Testament were rooted in deep European erudition: about ten editions were issued. The scholars behind them began to write dictionaries and grammars and introduced a new age of Orientalism (the study of the Orient). Syriac entered the curricula of a number of esteemed universities. Even the newly established Harvard in the United States began to require Aramaic and Syriac "from all its sons."[11] The same applied to many universities in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is, then, no surprise that Syriac was known at the Swedish court during the end of the seventeenth century.

Syriac at the Swedish court

As to how, exactly, Syriac managed to arrive at the Swedish court during this early period, it is still not clear. Sweden had a number of humanists who knew Syriac during the seventeenth century. In fact, Uppsala University had a post for a *professor linguarum* who was a professor of Biblical languages. A royal decree from July 1621 mentions a *professor linguae Hebraicae, Chaldaicae et Syriacae*. In fact, the constitution of 1626 states that "the Professor of Hebrew will work with the Hebrew language, as well as the basics of Chaldaic (i.e. Biblical Aramaic), Arabic and Syriac"

9. Wilkinson 2007a, p. 152 n. 61.

10. Darlow & Moule 1903.

11. Turner 2014, p. 52.

(Hebreae Linguae professor hebream linguam una cum initijs Chaldaicae, Arabicae et Syriacae linguae tradet). The 1655 constitutions also listed the teaching of Syriac as part of the duties of a *linguarum orientalium professor.*[12]

Indeed, Syriac made its way to a number of European royal courts. The first person to have an indirect connection to a royal court was no one other than Mushe of Mardin. When he was seeking Widmanstadt, he needed safe passage from Italy to German lands; and an opportunity presented itself when Queen Mary Tudor ascended the throne of England in June 1553. Mushe applied to join the train of Mary's cousin, Reginald Pole (1500-1558). Pole, at the time, was residing at the Lago di Garda, some 150 km west of Venice, were Mushe was residing. The journey to Germany must have given Mushe and Pole ample time to chat, and Pole may have brought news of this encounter to the British court.

A more clear and direct contact between Syriac and European royal courts is the introduction of Mushe's project to Ferdinand, King of Hungary and Bohemia, Archduke of Austria, and Duke of Burgundy—who would later become emperor in 1558. Widmanstadt was a statesman at Ferdinand's court and secured from the king all the necessary finances to carry out the New Testament project. Later in the sixteenth century, another royal court became involved with Syriac: between 1569 and 1572, Christophe Plantin, a printer in Antwerp, embarked on the task of publishing an eight-volume polyglot Bible that included Syriac.[13] This came to be known as "the King's Bible"—"the king" being Philip II of Spain (r. 1556-1598), who sponsored the project.

Even in Dublin, there was contact between Syriac and statesmen. Dudley Loftus (1619-1695) was a jurist who served four times as a Member of the Irish House of Commons, a judge of the Prerogative Court of Ireland, and a Senior Master in Chancery. In 1686, Loftus published a Syriac edition of an account of the finding of the true Cross and worked on the biblical commentaries of Dionysius bar Ṣalibi.[14]

One can see how Syriac made its way to the various courts and state establishments of Europe. While we do not know how Ehrenstråhl—our painter—came across Syriac, we do know that his birthplace did indeed have contact with Syriac. Ægidius Gutbier (1617-1667) was a professor in Hamburg, the birthplace of Ehrenstråhl, in 1652. At the time, Ehrenstråhl

12. Malmberg 2007. Thanks to a number of hugoye-list members who answered my inquiry on February 11, 2020 regarding Swedish Syriac scholars, especially David Taylor and Jan van Ginkel.

13. For a recent study of the Antwerp Polyglot, see Brekka 2012.

14. Brock 1994, p. 95.

was studying painting in Amsterdam and later went to Venice. More importantly to our story, Gutbier (1617-1667) published for the very first time the entire Syriac New Testament (including elements not found in the *Pšiṭta* canon) in 1664 in Hamburg. The edition must have been widespread as copies of it keep popping up in the antiquarian market today (I personally have two copies, one purchased from an antiquarian and the other gifted by Sebastian Brock). If Ehrenstråhl visited his birth town, he may have come across Gutbier's edition.

Description of the painting (fig. 1)

The painting of the Crucifixion in question is hanging on the south altar of Storkyrka (The Great Church or Stockholm Cathedral). The only description that is available (at least known to me) is given from an art-historical perspective by A. Sjöblom:[15]

> "The Crucifixion painting [...] consists of two parts, an upper, which is segment-shaped, and a lower, which is rectangular, the form as a whole being designed to fit the place in the Royal Chapel for which it was intended. As regards the representation of the Calvary scene, Ehrenstrahl has given it a positively symphonic composition. In contrast to what is the case in the *Last Judgment*, the movement in this image is structured with such rhythmical beauty that it conveys a sense of moving devotion. In its original color it must have made a grave and powerful impression. Christ has given up the spirit and, hanging from the nails through his hands, has sunk down the stake of the cross. His knees have been forced forward by the resistance of the nails in his feet. From the sky above him, a beam of light falls upon his dead body and the light casts its reflections on the robbers who hang on the cross at his side. It also reaches the women at the foot of the cross, but leaves the soldiers, casting lots for the mantle, in darkness. Angels move over the head of Christ in submissive expectation, because the Most High is so predetermined until all is completed. One seems to hear them singing as if in a mass: 'Sic Deus dilexit mundum' (God so loved the world). One also hears the words: 'Peccata mundi' (the sins of the world). The text is on a speech scroll, which the angels carry between them.
>
> So expressive is the movement in this picture that it evokes a symphonic performance. The composition is typical Baroque, asymmetrical but also capricious and free for artistic imagination. The Calvary scene in

15. Sjöblom 1947, pp. 67-68. Draft translation by Google's deep learning neural networks, later edited for accuracy by Eleanor Coghill.



Fig. 1 – The Crucifixion by Ehrenstråhl (1695) at Storkyrka, Stockholm.
Photo © Tatyana Azarova.

> the lower picture also allows us to feel the artistic intent of the Cross's dramatic positioning in the picture. We also experience the same artistic intent in the well-balanced placing of the other figures.
> The picture is a synthesis of observations from the artist's travels in Italy, France and the Netherlands, but certainly also from later years' studies of copper engraving in the style of the great foreign masters. We are inclined to see in this Crucifixion a creation of Ehrenstrahl's own imagination, but can also make observations, such as the light on Mary Magdalene's orange skirt evoking a quite powerful body, which call to mind expressive values that Rubens worked with. The Christ figure in his submissive sensitivity leads our thoughts once more to van Dyck.
> While the painting is signed and dated to 1695 on the stake of the cross, it is not unlikely that the whole picture was only finished some time later, since Ehrenstrahl himself says in a letter the same year that he will probably keep working on it and the *Last Judgment* another couple of years. The upper section of the Crucifixion, when it hung in the Royal Chapel, was separated from the lower part by a molding. With the move to the Storkyrkan, however, the two parts were joined, and the missing central part was regrettably replaced by a canvas strip made by Ehrenstrahl's favorite student, David von Krafft."

While the presence of two Syriac snippets in the painting is quite clear—and unusual in depictions of the Crucifixion across European art—, Sjöblom is completely silent about them. The other brief mentions of the painting that I am aware of appear in encyclopedic entries about the painter in various Swedish encyclopedias, none of which mention the Syriac writing.

The Syriac in the painting (fig. 2)

There are two Syriac phrases in our painting, representing the script traditions of European Syriac publishing in Early Modern Europe: one in *Serṭo* (West Syriac) and the other in the Hebrew script. The dominance of *Serṭo* writing in European circles is a result of the initial contacts of Europeans with Syriac users; these contacts were first with the Maronites (beginning in 1513) and then with the Syriac Orthodox (beginning in 1549), both users of the *Serṭo* script. During the sixteenth century, seven *Serṭo* printing types were designed in various European printing houses. During the seventeenth century, twenty further *Serṭo* printing types were produced. Compare this with only seven *Estrangela* printing types produced in both centuries and used only for headings and samples (i.e. not running

texts) and the East Syriac printing type produced by the Propaganda Fide in 1633 to publish a catechism for the Chaldeans.[16]

Printing Syriac texts in the Hebrew script was primarily due to the lack of print type in some print shops. But there are certainly cases, especially during the sixteenth century, when Syriac was printed in the Hebrew script because of Kabalistic and evangelization purposes: the Europeans hoped to convert Jews to Christianity via the Syriac Gospels! The first Syriac New Testament to be produced in the Hebrew script was edited by Emmanuel Tremellius (1510-1580) in 1569; there was no Syriac type at that press. The Antwerp Polyglot included both the *Serṭo* text and a transliteration into the Hebrew script. During the sixteenth century, the text from the Antwerp Polyglot was reproduced three times, always in Hebrew characters—although the printers did have Syriac type—for the purpose of evangelizing Jews.[17]

The painting contains two signs: the typical sign above Christ in three languages reflecting John 19:20 and a second sign above the thief to the left of Jesus. (The thief to the right is painted at an angle so that his back is against the left frame and hence there is no visible sign.) The sign on top of the thief is in the *Serṭo* script and consists of three words in two lines:

1. ܝܫܘܥ ܢܨܪܝܐ
2. ܡܠܟܐ

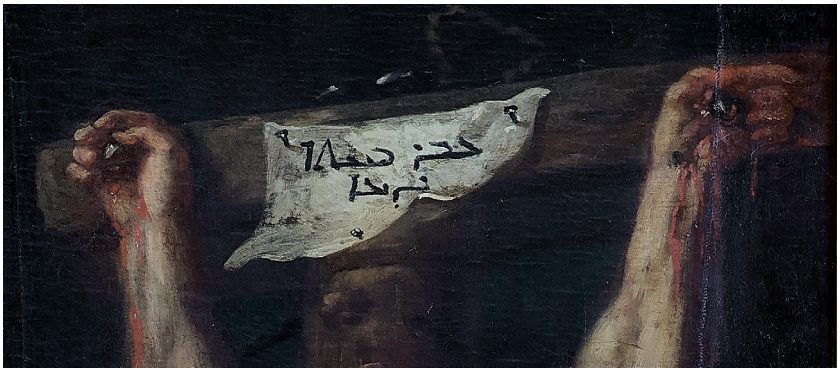


Fig. 2 – Details of the Syriac phrase above the thief. Photo © Tatyana Azarova.

16. Coakley 2006. For the first East Syriac printing type, produced in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century, see Borbone 2014.

17. Wilkinson 2007b.

Line 1 most likely contains the expression ܥܒܕ ܚܛܝܐ "evildoer" which is derived from *Pšiṭta* Luke 23:33, where the two thieves are called ܚܛܝܐ ܥܩܠܝ "evildoers." But the dots surrounding the final graph ܝ in the first word poses questions. Is the first word ܚܛ̈ܝ giving the expression ܥܒܕ ܚܛ̈ܝ "passer of evil"? The expression is syntactically correct but unattested and this reading would free the sublinear dot to be part of the first graph of the second line: ܕ or ܕ̲. Or is the supralinear dot a diacritic dot that indicates the active participle ܚܛܝ (as opposed to perfect)? This actually would solve our problem, though having this dot all the way to the end is a bit strange.

The second line contains one word which most likely reads ܡܝܕܥ "is known." However, the word also poses questions. The first ـ is hardly visible and ܕ̲ are too close to each other.

My initial photos and especially more recent ones taken by Katia Aslan showed some shades of a circle around the initial ـ and remnants of strokes closing the upper gaps between ܕ̲. This led to the reading ܡܢܐ giving the expression ܡܢܐ ܥܒܕ ܚܛܝ "the first evildoer" which made perfect sense. The second evildoer would be the other thief. However, even more recent photos of far higher resolution by Tatyana Azarova introduce further complications to this assumption.

Azarova, who was kindly given a ladder by the Church staff to get closer to the image, noticed that there are underlying Hebrew letters. Indeed, what initially seemed to me shades of earlier strokes that can support the reading ܡܢܐ are but remnants of the earlier Hebrew writing. Marina Rustow recognized the following sequence לדיתל to the right of the second line. There is also an א on the far left followed by another letter.

Transforming the plural construct phrase in Luke to the singular phrase in the painting would require someone who knew Syriac reasonably well. This leads one to conclude that there were at least two actions (which could have been undertaken by the same person): the linguistic action, which involved constructing the phrase on the sign from Luke grammatically; and the painting of the phrase, done by Ehrenstråhl or an assistant. Considering the two somewhat silly mistakes in the phrase, one can easily conclude that the painter did not know Syriac; and hence the first action (constructing the phrase) was carried out by a separate person.

While we may never know who the involved linguist was, there are a number of possibilities. Johannes Buskagrius (1629-1698) was a Professor of Oriental Languages at Uppsala, known for his knowledge in Syriac. While we do know that he could no longer teach after 1671 due to depression ("melancholy"), he was still alive when the painting was made. Another scholar who held the same position and was close to the royal court is Michael Eneman (1676-1714), who served as a clerk at the court of Carl XII.

But we do not know if he knew Syriac at the time the painting was made; he obtained his master's degree from Uppsala only in 1703. Regardless, one can assume that with all these activities, someone at the court knew Syriac well enough to form the above phrase.

Which New Testament edition served as the model of the above phrase? The painter's hand shows a number of characteristics: 1) a somewhat thick baseline, 2) the left vertical line of ܐ in ܨܥܐ is thin and quite slanted to the left at an angle, 3) the bottom stroke of this same letter is much thicker, 4) and the final *Olaph* in the same word is notched, ܐ. These are all characteristics of the printing type Coakley W23, produced by Bartholomeus Voskens for Ægidius Gutbier in Hamburg, Ehrenstråhl's hometown (fig. 3). Gutbier had this font made for his New Testament publication of 1664, which is very likely to have been the source for the phrase.

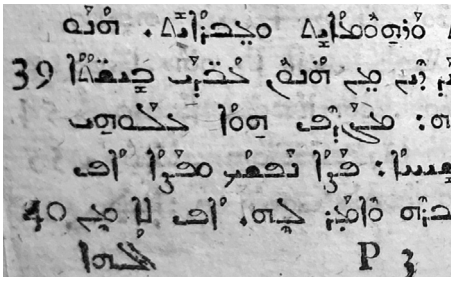


Fig. 3 – Details of the phrase from Ægidius Gutbier's New Testament edition (printing type Coakley W23).

The second phrase appears on the sign above Christ in three languages (fig. 4):

1. הנא ישוע נציא
2. מלכא דיהודיא
3. ΙΗΣΟΥΣ Ο ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ
4. Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ
5. ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ
6. JESUS NAZARENUS
7. REX JUDAEORUM

What seems to be Hebrew in the first two lines is actually Syriac in Judeo-Syriac garshunographic form and reads:

1. ܗܢܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܢ<ܨ>ܝܐ
2. ܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܘܕܝܐ



Fig. 4 – Details of the Syriac phrase in Hebrew garshunographic form above Christ. Photo © Tatyana Azarova.

Here, the painter made another error, omitting the ;/ר in נצי/ܢܨܝ. It was typical to omit the two-dot *syome* in Judeo-Syriac garshunography. As mentioned earlier, by the end of the seventeenth century, four editions of the New Testament in the Hebrew script appeared, and any of them could have been the source of the above writing: Tremellius' 1569 edition and the three publications that derived from the Antwerp Polyglot. The Greek and Latin texts are straightforward.

Conclusion

By the end of the seventeenth century, Syriac had made its way to a number of royal courts. It is in this context that a painting commissioned by the Swedish royal family in the 1690s bears two Syriac phrases that represent the two main scripts used in printing during the early modern period: *Serṭo* (West Syriac) and the Hebrew script used for Jewish texts. The court had access to a linguist who knew Syriac reasonably well and who was able to transform a biblical plural expression into a singular one and adapt it with an ordinal number that agrees in number and gender.

A question that remains unanswered is whether there was a model that Ehrenstråhl followed or whether his painting was the first in Europe to have Syriac texts. Another question is whether a sign above the thief—in any language—appears in other European paintings. These questions are left for an art historian with the necessary research tools, which I do not possess.

Ehrenstråhl's painting brought Syriac to Stockholm about 300 years before the city and its surrounding towns became the home of the largest Syriac diaspora communities. ܐܡܝܗ ܐܟܝ ܟܬܝܒܗ܀

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