

MALANKARA TRADITION

The West Syrian or the Antiochene Rite originates in Jerusalem, the cradle of Christian worship. The same geographical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic milieu which provided space and time for the salvific event gave rise also to the West Syrian Rite. Gradually there was a shift of the emphasis on the liturgical tradition from Jerusalem to Antioch. Antioch's liturgy on the one hand was influenced by the Greek Byzantine, East Syrian and Egyptian liturgies, on the other it contributed liturgical elements lavishly to other traditions.

The West Syrian Rite is not purely Antiochene, but the result of a fusion of different traditions. In the case of anaphora, the Jerusalem anaphora of St. James has been adopted as the model to which all others have been made to conform. This conformity was not restricted to anaphora proper, but even to pre-anaphoral, and post-anaphoral elements. In the West Syrian Rite there is a synthesis of the native Syriac elements, especially hymns and other choral pieces, with material translated from Greek texts coming mainly from Antioch. This synthesis was the work of Syriac, non-Chalcedonian monastic communities in the Syriac-speaking hinterlands of Syria, Palestine, and parts of Mesopotamia. These Syriac-speaking Christians (monophysites) were organised into an independent Church by Jacob Baradai (+578), and they are called sometimes "Jacobites."

The Syriac-speaking communities, after the rupture with Constantinople, drew largely on customs of the Syriac communities, as well as on the rich resources provided at Edessa by St. Ephrem and by Jacob of Sarugh. The West Syrian liturgy of the Jacobites long remained open to new compositions not only as regards the hymns, which have a place in it not equalled elsewhere, but also for such important things as Eucharistic anaphoras and the rites of baptism and penance. In the 9th century Moses bar Kepha and in the 12th century Dionysius bar Salibi added prayers to the Taksa. In the 13th century Mar Gregorios bar Ebraya edited some prayers and gave a final shape to the West Syrian liturgy. All through this period the Jacobite liturgy went on adopting Byzantine customs, whether by direct contact after the empire re-conquered Syria in 968, or through Jerusalem, whose liturgy was more and more connected with that of the imperial capital. Those Syrians who came in union with Rome brought a certain Latinization in the celebration of the sacraments. However, the Council of Sharfeh in 1888 confirmed only few Latin usages. Thus the original purity of the Antiochene Rite is safeguarded to some extent.

The Antiochene liturgy is characterized by much splendour and by the large use of the non-biblical hymns. The homilies of St. John Chrysostom testify to the enthusiasm of the people of Antioch for processions, especially for those held at night. Vigils seem to have been exceptionally in favour.

The Antiochene liturgy was introduced in India in 1665 by Mar Gregorios the Antiochene Metropolitan who had won the dissident Thomas Christians after the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653. From the part of those who broke away from the Catholic communion there were various attempts of re-union under the leadership of Mar Dionysius I. Mar Joseph Cariattil, Fr. Thomas Paremakal, Fr. Nidhiri Mani etc. worked hard for the reunion of Dionysius I. But the reunion movement succeeded only in 1930 when under the leadership of Mar Ivanios, some Jacobites accepted Catholic faith. They were allowed to retain the Antiochene liturgy and tradition. That is the beginning of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in India.

West Syrian Liturgical Year

Starts with the Sunday of Qudoshetto (Dedication of the Church) (Oct. 30 or 31 if a Sunday. Otherwise the first Sunday of November)

There are 7 seasons

1. Annunciation (Suboro)
2. Nativity-Epiphany (Yaldo-Denho)
3. Lent: 50 days
4. Resurrection (Qyamto)
5. Pentecost (Sliha)
6. Transfiguration: Aug. 6-Sept.13
7. Cross (Sliba): Sept.14-Qudosh-etto

Structure and Theology of the Syro-Malankara Holy Qurbono

i. Tuyobo (Service of Preparation)

The service of preparation is called Tuyobo. It is also called prothesis. There is a twofold preparation for the Syro-Malankara Holy Qurbono.

1. Material preparation (preparing the bread and wine). This is called the preparation of the Table of Life (Tuyobo d poturhaye); Putting on vestments
2. Spiritual preparation by reciting the Canonical Prayers (Sapro and Third Hour) and by performing the service of repentance given in the preliminary part of the liturgy.

The service of Tuyobo consists of two services: the Service of Melchizedek and the Service of Aaron. These are the two services which are built upon the two proto-types of Christ in the OT namely, Melchizedek (Gen 14:18, Heb 6:20, 7:1) and Aaron (Ex 28:1, Lev 6:9, Heb 5:4). Melchizedek's was a natural priesthood. The natural priesthood was upgraded by the Aaronic priesthood of OT, and both were to be fulfilled in the Priesthood of Jesus.

a. Service of Melchizedek

This service consists mainly of the preparation of the offerings. The prayers of this service are of husoyo (absolution) nature, introduced by Ps 51. The prayers of the service of penitence consist of: Proemion (preface), Sedro (collect), Qolo (hymn), Ethro (incense), Ekbo (termination) and Huttomo (sealing prayer).

b. Service of Aaron

This service consists of a) washing of hands b) putting on vestments c) Husoyo Prayer d) Prayers of General commemoration and Special intentions e) incensing

At the time of the tuyobo there are readings (three readings) from the OT done by the deacon.

First mystical hour: The first two services of tuyobo are hidden from the view of the congregation by a curtain at the Holy Door. These services constitute the *first mystical hour* of the Holy Qurbono because 1) the ceremonies at this part of the Holy Qurbono have mysterious dimensions. 2) It is the time when portions of the tuyobo service are read in silence and corresponding manual acts are performed within the Holy of Holies with the Holy Door closed. 3) At this time, the holy table is mystically conceived as the "heavenly thronos" upon which the King of Glory sits, so as to enable us to offer our homages to his Majesty.

The first mystical hour commemorates a) the eternal pre-existence of the Son of God in the immanent Trinity, namely the eternal generation of the Logos from God the Father (Jn 1:1-2) b) the eternal self-oblation of the Son of God in the mystery of Holy Trinity c) the self-manifestation of God in creation and in history d) the supreme revelation of the Son of God in the sublime mystery of incarnation.

ii. Public Service and Liturgy of the Word

When the first mystical hour is over, the sanctuary curtain is drawn aside to signify that the time of expectation is over and the promised Messianic king has now appeared in the river Jordan for baptism. The celebrant begins the public celebration of the Holy Qurbono commemorating the manifestations of Christ.

The public service commemorates the public life of Jesus; His birth, baptism and preaching in Palestine.

a. The solemn procession around the altar. The deacon who goes in front represents John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for Jesus (here represented by the priest) while the others represent the other disciples. This procession is in the place of the original procession from sanctuary to bema in the middle of the church.

b. The Trisagion: “Holy are You, O God; Holy are you Mighty, Holy are you Immortal; O You, who were crucified for us, have mercy upon us”. The phrase ‘crucified for us’ is an Antiochene feature of the Trisagion.

c. *Kurieeleison* three times. Kurie (kyrie) eleison literally means “Lord have mercy.’

d. Service of the Word of God: (Officially there are 6 readings. 3 OT readings and 3 NT readings.) The NT readings are one from the Catholic epistles, one from St. Paul and then the Evangelion (gospel). Liturgy of the word reminds us of the public ministry of Christ who went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of kingdom and healing every disease and infirmities (Mt 9:35).

iii. Preparation for the Anaphora

Just after the readings and the sermon the deacon utters “Staumenkalos” (let us stand well and be attentive). Then there are:

a. Prayer of entrance: Promeon (introduction), Husoyo (Prayer of absolution) and Sedro (chain). Of these the first and last are variable while the Husoyo is the same for all masses. Sedros are prolonged theological meditation on the various events of salvation history.

b. Blessing of the Thurible: Through this the whole universe is blessed and sanctified symbolically. The four chains of the censer have 18 hooks each and a total of 72 symbolising the disciples. The 12 bells stand for the apostles. The lower plate where the fire is kept represents the praying church on the earth, the smoke shows the prayer and the upper plate the heaven. Thus the whole church is represented here.

c. The Nicene creed

d. Washing of the hands

e. Incensing: The deacon goes till the entrance of the church and incenses the whole church and the faithful. It is the time for the catechumens to go out.

iv. Anaphora

Here the celebrant as the minister of the church sends up the eucharistic oblation to heaven. He also climbs up the Dargo (the elevated step). The most important anaphora of the Antiochene tradition is Anaphora of St. James. According to Louis Bouyer, this anaphora remains the most accomplished literary monument of the whole of liturgical literature. (Bouyer, *Eucharist*, 268). Malankara Catholic Church has in its Taksa (1987) 8 anaphoras besides the anaphora of St. James. The Orthodox have two more added to them: Anaphora of MathaiRoyo and of Julius. According to modern research there are 100 extant anaphoras in the West Syrian tradition.

The general structure of the anaphora is as follows:

a. Kiss of Peace: It is an adaptation of Rom 16:16. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” It is to be noted that in the Malankara Church the kiss of peace is passed down to the faithful from the altar through the thurible by the deacon.

b. Prayer of imposition of hands (Ex 29:10, 15:19, Lev 1:4, 3:2, 8:13)

c. The lifting up of the veil from the Mysteries. This symbolises the self-revelation of God in incarnation and in the Eucharist. Fluttering of the Shushupo (small veil) and of the hands of the celebrant symbolises the fluttering action of the Holy Spirit and his descent.

d. Preface Dialogue

e. Prayer before Sanctus; Sanctus (holy, holy, holy)

f. Words of Institution

g. Anamnesis: 1Cor 11:26, Lk 22:20. As the celebrant says “Do this in memory of me until I come” he takes the spoon with his right hand and raises abruptly over the head and places it over the right hand side signifying the second coming of Jesus in the sky like a lightning (Mt 24:27).

h. Epiclesis: During this prayer the priest waves his hands over the gifts in a fluttering motion signifying the descent of the Holy Spirit. The words which are peculiar to the Syrian Liturgy, ‘Hear me, Lord’ repeated three times, recall the cry of Elijah, which brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice which he had prepared (1Kgs 18:37).

i. Great Intercessions: The deacons come to the centre and lead the prayer. There are six intercessory prayers that are fixed; the first three for the living and the next for the dead.

- the first is for the Church and its leaders.

- the second is for the faithful and the fellow beings who are suffering.

- the third is for the secular leaders.

- in the fourth Bl. Virgin Mary, Apostles, martyrs and all the other saints are remembered

 - and their intercession is sought.

- the fifth one remembers the Fathers of the Church.

- in the last one we pray for the departed.

v. Preparation for the Communion

a. Fraction. After the blessing the veil is drawn across the sanctuary and priest performs the fraction. This is the second mystical hour when the people wait for the resurrection of Jesus. The rite of fraction symbolises the passion and death of Jesus. The Church dares not commemorate these dreadful and sublime mysteries in public. The veil now stands for the darkness that spread at the death of Jesus and the rock by which the tomb of Jesus was covered. During this time the community sings. After the fraction the sanctuary is opened symbolising the resurrection.

b. The Lord’s Prayer: Having been reconciled with God, we have confidence to address him as our Father. The expressions like ‘the bread we need,’ ‘as we have forgiven’ and ‘from the evil one’ are distinctive of the Syriac version which the Malankarites follow.

c. Elevation and Sancta Sanctis (Holy things to the holy): At this time we remember resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is also remembered.

d. The Kulkions (commemoration) of the Mother of God (Ps 45:9-11), Saints (Ps 92:12-14) and the departed (Ps 103:13-15).

vi. Holy Communion

Then the curtain of the holy door is shut. This is the third mystical hour when the people wait for the second coming of Jesus.

a. The priest receives the Holy Communion

After that the deacon cries aloud “let us praise aloud and say” and the people reply, “worshipped and glorified be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”..... halleluiah. This signifies the loud trumpet call ‘behold the bridegroom; come out to meet him’ (Mt 25:6). The curtain is drawn

b. Procession of the Mysteries. It was originally a procession through the church, accompanied by candles, ringing of bells, seraphic disks (*Marwahtho*) and incense. This procession represents the glorious second coming of Jesus and the judgement.

c. The communion of the faithful.

The Malankarite believes that the holy Qurbono is:

- Not only a sacrament or sacrifice but also the sacrificial banquet with Christ in heaven (Lk 22:10).
- The marriage supper of the Lamb prepared for the bride by the bridegroom (Christ) (Rev 19:9)
- The banquet prepared by the father for the prodigal son at the home-coming (Lk 15:22-24).
- The live-coal given to Isaiah by the Seraph which enabled him to preach (Is 6:6-7).

The priest while distributing the communion says ‘the propitiatory live-coal of the body and blood of Jesus...forgiveness of sins.’ The communion is given under both kinds in the Eastern Churches. People receive it on the tongue, standing (no kneeling down even after communion) symbolising hope in the risen Lord.

vii. The Concluding service

a. The prayer of thanksgiving: The first one is for the power to lead a righteous life while the second is addressed to Christ the Son of God that at his second coming we may receive mercy.

b. Huttomo: Final blessing (huttomo means sealing)

c. The dismissal

Now after a hymn the priest solemnly dismisses the people with blessings. He says “we commit you to the grace and mercy of the Holy Trinity with the ‘food for the way’ and blessings which you have received from the propitiatory altar of the Lord”. This shows that the pilgrim community is nourished with the Eucharist on its way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore the holy Qurbono does not come to an end in the church. It continues till the pilgrimage is over. The second blessing shows that the participants of the holy Qurbono includes those who are far as well as near, living and departed, redeemed by the ‘victorious cross’ of the Lord. Then the sanctuary is closed. The concluding rituals are performed within the veiled sanctuary by the celebrant and the assistants. Finally the celebrant takes leave of the altar with a striking ceremony. He kisses the altar and says:

Remain in peace, holy altar of the Lord for I do not know whether I shall return to you or not. May the Lord make me worthy of the vision of you in the assembly of the first-born in heaven; in this covenant I trust.

After this the curtain is drawn and the priest comes out and the congregation kisses his (Christ) hands and go home.