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The Shhimto

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THE SHĤIMTO

*Officium simplex septem dierum hebdomadae, ad usum Ecclesiae Maronitarum. Romae ... In Collegio Maronitarum. Excudebat Stephanus Paulinus. 1625. xlv + 888 pp., printed in red and black. 42 cm. Acquired in 1999 on the William Henry Bond Book Fund (1982); De Cuevas, Deknatel, Loring, Nordell, Rheault and Vershbow Purchase Fund (1995); and Melvin R. Seiden Houghton Library Book Fund (1994) together with a gift of Roderick and Joan Nordell (1999). *99-168F.*

THE MARONITE COLLEGE IN ROME WAS FOUNDED BY POPE GREGORY XIII in 1584, an event regarded with some ambivalence by modern Maronites.¹ The Roman-educated clergy became the agents of the now deplored Latinization of their church; but the College produced illustrious scholars and, during the time its press was active, several notable books. One of these was the *Rudimentum syriacum* of 1618, of which Houghton has two finely-bound copies. But considered as a printed book, the *Rudimentum* was a mere practice piece for the *Shĥimto*, the great work of the Maronite press, published in 1625.²

Shĥimto is the Syriac word translated *simplex* in the Latin title. Properly it denotes the "ordinary," that is, the non-festival, daily service, *teshmeshto shĥimto*. The book thus corresponds to part of the Latin Breviary. It is divided into the days of the week, for each of which there are the usual seven canonical offices. On the first page we see the beginning of the evening office for Sunday. The large format is that of a choral book or manuscript that needs to be seen by several people at once in a dark church—although it must be doubted whether a luxury edition like this, consisting of only five hundred copies, was ever intended for daily use in the village churches of Lebanon.

The manuscript on which this edition was based was probably less than a century old at the time. The Maronite patriarch sent it, along with other church books, for inspection by the Roman Curia, and it is still in the Vatican Library, now called MS Vatican syr. 406. The one scholarly study we have of the Maronite office³ is based on a Beirut edition of 1890. The textual character of this and other earlier Rome editions⁴ has yet to be investigated.

Quite apart from its contents, this edition of the *Shĥimto* has a particular importance arising from its typography. It was printed on the Maronite press by Stefano Paolini, one of the pioneer oriental printers of Rome, using large and beautiful Syriac types made especially for the book. Surviving records identify the punchcutter as Giacomo Antonio Moro, who was an engraver at the Roman mint. In January 1619 he was paid 458 *scudi* for the punches and matrices for large and small Syriac types *per stampare un breuiario in lingua caldea*. ("Chaldean" was a usual word for Syriac at that time.) The number of punches was 242 for the "large" Syriac, which probably includes both the titling and the text sizes seen here,⁵

1 See, e.g., Nasser Gemayel, *Les échanges culturels entre les Maronites et l'Europe* (Beirut, 1984), 2 vols.

2 That is the date of the Syriac preface. The book was long in the press. The Latin title page says 1624, and the colophon at the end of the text, page 888, says October 1622.

3 P. Jean Tabet, *L'office commun Maronite*, Bibliothèque

de l'Université Saint-Esprit 5 (Kaslik, Lebanon, 1972).

4 In 1717, 1732, 1797, 1830, and 1863; see A Baumstark, *Comparative liturgy* (London, 1958), 223. None of these rare editions is yet in any Harvard collection.

5 But not the estrangela type (the first rubric of 5 lines), which was the work of an earlier and less skilful punchcutter.

וְכִלְדַּשְׁיָא בַּבְּרִית
 לְעַבְדֵי מְלִכֵּי
 עֲדָבְנִים אִימָא לְיוֹדֵד
 לְבַּעַר מָסַר . עֲדֻמְסַר
 עַבְדֵּי מְלִיכֵי עַבְדֵּי
 עֲדָלְפִי עַבְדֵּי אִימָא
 חֶמְדֵּי . אִימָא וְדִמְר
 דִּתְמַר מְפִדָּא לְעַבְדֵּי
 לְאִמְרֵי . עֲדָבְנֵי עֲדָבְנֵי
 לְעַבְדֵּי מְלִיכֵי . עֲדָבְנֵי
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כָּדָבַר אַבְרָם
 אַבְרָם אַרְבָּעָה
 הֵם אַרְבָּעָה
 שָׁנָה אַרְבָּעָה
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and 181 for the "small," used for marginal notes and editorial matter.⁶ These are generous numbers, and the resulting lavish fonts include some delightful and rarely seen ligatured sorts.

Moro's types, deservedly, lived on long after the closure of the Maronite press. In 1653 they were sold to the press of the Propaganda Fide, where in due course the rest of the Maronite breviary (the festival part) was issued in two more volumes, in the same large format, in 1666-67. In 1799, after the French conquest of Italy, two of the types (that is, the punches and matrices) were part of the spoils carried off to the Imprimerie Nationale in Paris. The order was given in 1815 to return the Vatican types, but these two, at any rate, stayed, and they may still be seen in the specimens of the Imprimerie Nationale.⁷ The Imprimerie Catholique in Beirut, founded in 1856, got a set of strikes for these types, and they start to appear in Lebanese imprints around 1887.⁸

This copy of the *Shhinto* is in a contemporary crimson morocco binding, stamped with the arms of Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1576-1633), who was, among many other dignities, *Bibliotecario de Santa Romana Chiesa* at the time the book was published.

J. F. COAKLEY is a cataloger in the Department of Manuscripts of Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.

6 A. Bertolotti, "Le tipografie orientali e gli orientalisti a Roma nei secoli xvi e xvii," *Revista Europea* 9 (1878): 217-68, specif. 252-53.

7 E.g. *Les caractères de l'Imprimerie Nationale* (Paris, 1990), 182-83.

8 The first (?) Lebanese showing of these types is in the *Specimen des caractères fondus à l'Imprimerie Catholique des Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus à Beyrouth*, a rare type-specimen in Houghton's collection (TypTS 893.40.462). This is undated, but is ca. 1870.