Translating the Bible into Arabic: historical, text-critical and literary aspects

Edited by Sara Binay
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Foreword

Arabic translations of the Bible exemplify the complexities of translation as a linguistic operation, and they also illustrate the intricate aspects of their embeddedness in particular cultural and social settings. Translation is informed by premises, facilities and intellectual frameworks, and it results from policies determined by historical contexts. More generally, translations contribute to the appropriation of the foreign and are thus part of a continuous process of modification and reproduction, which keeps cultures alive.

From the outset, Arabic translations of the Bible may be regarded as a classic topic of Oriental Studies concerned with text, its linguistic features and its history, but they are also pertinent to the broadening of horizons which characterise the discipline today. Whatever Oriental Studies may signify today, or whatever they used to signify, it is quite obvious that Arabic Studies, Islamic Studies, the history of the Middle East, the study of Christianity in the Middle East and other region-specific research areas are currently re-engaging in debates and inquiries of more general significance. After a period characterised by rather reclusive specialisation, our study fields are prepared to engage with and – possibly – to contribute to the body of notions, concepts, ideas and methods which are constantly produced in the humanities and social sciences. This development corresponds with the social and intellectual experience of the last decades, at least, as it reflects the interrelatedness of phenomena across cultural boundaries, past and present, and instigates growing interest in common structures and features, as well as in the similarities which interconnect them.

Our interest in Arabic translations of the Bible is therefore related to the broader perspective of translation.

Translation is the "representation of foreign cultures", as the title of a study by Doris Bachmann-Medick suggests.[1] In this vein, translation is a major issue for every student of foreign cultures in practice and theory, since "translation" comprises both the practice of and the discourse about processes produced and structured by cultural encounters. When the Bible and associated religious texts are adapted to new linguistic and cultural contexts via translation, the linguistic interpretation must be understood as a component of a broader concept of translation processes which are especially effective in cross-cultural interaction.

The translation of the Bible into Arabic combines interreligious, intercultural and historical aspects. Translating the Bible is related to multi-confessional and multilingual backgrounds which were – and are – particularly present in Lebanon. The translation of the Bible, again, seems to be part of a broader encounter be-

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1 Bachmann-Medick, Doris, ed., *Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen*, Berlin: Schmidt 1997.

The relationship between author and translator, and between original and translation, is situated in specific social and political frameworks, such as mission in the case of religious texts, or colonialism and the confrontation with the Western models of modernity in philosophy and literature. There is an intrinsic relationship between translation and power,[3] and translations express, more or less obviously, cultural policies. Translations may therefore be effective in processes of political and social transformation.

Seen from this viewpoint, translation is more than a vehicle for the diffusion of knowledge. It is a means of creating modes of expression, ideas and concepts on the ground of a mediating process, which starts off from the notion, and the experience, of difference and moves towards the production of similarities.

This overarching broad concept of translation offered a motivational support and a general framework for our proposal to revisit Arabic translations of the Bible in their various linguistic and cultural contexts.

This volume and the conference at the Orient-Institut Beirut in December 2008 owe a lot to Sara Binay without whose dedication and persistence the conference, and the collection and editing of the contributions would not have been possible.

Stefan Leder

3 Tymoczko, Maria, and Gentzler, Edwin, eds., *Translation and Power*, Amherst, Mass. 2002.

Introduction

Sara Binay

The first section of this introduction is intended to trace the development of Arabic Bible translations, so far as they are known to us and have already been described in the research literature. This brief account makes no claim to be exhaustive but should give a sketch of the literary history of Bible translation which constitutes the background to the conference "Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of Translation – The Arabic Bible", held in Beirut in December 2008. Some general conclusions arising from the discussions and talks are then presented, particularly with regard to the term "translation", which Stefan Leder has already discussed in his foreword. In the final section, the arrangement of the articles is given and their contents are briefly presented.

The beginnings of the translation of biblical books into Arabic remain historically obscure. The possibility of pre-Islamic translations of the Bible into Arabic is the subject of ongoing discussion.[1] The fact is that at St Catherine of Sinai we have some very ancient Arabic Gospel manuscripts translated from the original Greek text which date back to the end of the 8th century AD.[2]

Later on, one can find fragments of Arabic biblical texts which show the importance of translations over time, and the demands for and uses of Arabic texts for different purposes, e.g. liturgical, polemical and apologetic.[3]

There is considerable evicence for Gospel translations from the Old Syriac into Arabic.[4] Throughout history, several individual scholars have commented on and

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1 Most recently: Qāshā, Suhayl, "al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas wa-l-lugha al-ʿarabiyya", in: *Tarjamāt al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas fī l-Sharq. Buḥūth bībliyya muhadāt ilā Lūsyān ʿAqqād*, Ayyūb Shahwān, ed., Bayrūt: al-Rābiṭa al-Kitābiyya 2006 (Dirāsāt bībliyya 30), 79–96; Shahid, Irfan, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs*, Washington (DC): Dumbarton Oaks 1984. Badr, Habib, chief ed., *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches 2005. See also Paul Féghali's article in this volume.

2 Kachouh, Hikmat, *The Arabic Version of the Gospel: the manuscripts and their families*, 3 Vols., Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2008; idem, "The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: A Case Study of John 1.1 and 1.18", in: *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, David Thomas, ed., (The History of Christian–Muslim Relations, 6) Leiden/Boston 2007, 9–36; idem, "Sinai Ar.N.F. Parchment 8 and 28: Its Contribution to Textual Criticism of the Gospel of Luke", *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008), 28–57. Hikment Kachouh participated in the Beirut conference and we would like to express our gratitude for his fruitful contribution.

3 Thomas, David, ed., *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, Leiden/Boston: Brill 2007, here: Arbache, Samir, "Bible et liturgie chez les Arabes chrétiens (VIe-IXe siècle)", 37–48.

4 Vööbus, Arthur, *Early versions of the New Testament. Manuscript Studies*, Stockholm 1954, 276ff; Khalīl, Samīr, et al., eds., *Anājīl ʿAbd-Yashūʿ al-Ṣūbāwī al-musajjaʿah*, 2 vols., Bairūt: al-Maktabah al-Bulūsīyah 2007; Brock, Sebastian, *The Bible in the Syriac tradition*, Piscataway, N.Y.: Gorgias Press 2006.

We then enter the 17th century, which produced the first Arabic Bibles in print. Two of them are products of European scholarly linguistic interest and were published as polyglots in Paris (1629–45) and London (1657).[11] In the polyglots the texts in their original languages were printed beside the Arabic version.

Parallel to these achievements, it is clear that clerics of the Greek Orthodox Church in the East felt the need for a new or better translation of the Bible, and measures were taken to prepare the publication.[12]

It took nearly four decades to complete work on the Bible for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, for which the Latin text of the *Vulgata* was printed alongside the Arabic text (finished in 1671). Due to the involvement of many scholars and different personalities from Europe and the Near East, the translated text is far from homogeneous.[13] Nevertheless, it must be considered as a very influential edition until the advent of the 19th-century translations.[14]

We now approach a period of very intensive Bible translation activity. The translation projects of the 19th century are closely associated with the foreign missionaries who came to the Near East in that period.

One rarely-mentioned Bible translation is that by Fāris al-Shidyāq. It is assumed that he worked on it, in cooperation with Samuel Lee, on the basis of the London Bible edition dating back to 1657.[15]

Much more attention has been given to the translations initiated by the Protestant missionaries (first parts printed in 1856, completed in 1865) and the Jesuits (3 vols. 1876–1880) of Beirut. Little has yet been said about the literary value of the Protestant and Jesuit editions. In general, the translation effected by the Western Protestants and their Arab colleagues was well received. Supposedly, they tried to imitate the literary style of the original texts.[16] This caused deficiencies which adversely affected the literary quality of the translation. In spite of this, the influence of their translation cannot be exaggerated, because the Orthodox Churches, including the Copts of Egypt, adopted this version.

Some years after the Protestants, the Jesuits published their edition of the Bible in *fuṣḥā*-Arabic, translated by Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī.[17] He kept away from contempo-

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11 Ibid., 93f.

12 The contributions of Carsten Walbiner and Hilary Kilpatrick to this volume focus on this topic.

13 Thompson, John Alexander, *The Major Arabic Bibles*, New York: American Bible Society 1956, 16ff.

14 See Paul Féghali's article in this volume.

15 Kahle, Paul, *Die arabischen Bibelübersetzungen*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs 1904, V. See al-Baghdadi, Nadia, "The Cultural Function of Fiction: From the Bible to Libertine Literature. Historical Criticism and Social Critique in Aḥmad Fāris al-Šidyāq", in: *Arabica* 46 (1999), 375–401, here 382f. (We are grateful to Professor al-Baghdadi for her participation in the Beirut conference.)

16 For some evaluations of the literary style, see Thompson, *The Major Arabic Bibles*, 25ff.

17 The procedure was desribed in Khūrī, Sāmī al-, "Al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī wa-l-maṭbaʿa al-kāthūlīkiyyah, baina 1872 wa 1881", *Al-Mashriq* 65 (1991), 127ff.

The efforts made by translators of the Bible, who came from different backgrounds, are not confined to the above-mentioned famous translations. Other projects are worthy of mention although they are relatively unknown to the wider public. These include the so-called Būlusiyyah translation of the New Testament in 1953 and Kaslīk's New Testament translation from 1992, as well as *Tarjamat al-Kitāb al-Sharīf*, published between 1990 (New Testament) and 2000 (Old Testament), especially intended for use in North African countries.[23]

Editing or Translating?

The conference "Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of Bible Translation – The Arabic Bible" had as its central theme Bible translations of the 18th and 19th centuries. It was a happy circumstance that contributions focusing on considerably earlier periods led to a broadening of the perspective. Connections between the various contributions even led to the realisation that the meaning of an entirely "new epoch" of Bible translations since the 19th century must be brought into doubt or at least newly defined.[24] The quest to create a uniform and complete edition of the Arabic Bible was probably a modern endeavor which finds a predecessor in the Roman *Propaganda Fide* edition which also displayed this ambition. What must, however, be noted in relation to the editions in question which date back further than the 21st century is the texts' close interdependence. Unfortunately, we cannot always tell with certainty which older versions were used as a template by those preparing a particular compilation.

It has, however, been shown that the so-called "new translations" were in fact in each case based on the older editions, which they naturally sought to improve upon in accordance with the prevailing level of knowledge and theological orientation. This approach seems to apply to the American Mission's and the Jesuits' influential Beirut translations, described in the literature up to now as a new beginning. The echoing of the old manuscripts speaks of a meticulous choice on the part of the translators in each case, who appear to have been well versed in the Bible in the true sense of the phrase and to have mastered their tradition.

Only the 20th-century translations, e.g. the *mushtaraka* edition, which was worked on by the poet Yūsuf al-Khāl among others, break with this tradition and deliver entirely new texts, translated or rather composed by linguists and people from a literary background who were fully aware of their own creative potential.

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23 Referred to as "Injīl al-sharīf" in *Tarjamāt al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas fī l-Sharq*, Ayyūb Shahwān, ed., 321.

24 So a list of "the modern translations" (*at-tarjamāt al-ḥadītha*) in ibid., 319, begins with Fāris al-Shidyāq's translation, first published in London in 1857. This is followed by the 1865 Beirut edition of the complete Bible by the American missionaries and their Lebanese translators.

Ghassan Khalaf (غسان خلف) in his overview of the influences on Bible translations deals in particular with the period since 1850, which he regards as the "Modern epoch" (المرحلة الحديثة) of Bible translation. In contrast, Sara Binay in her contribution stresses the continuity between the older transmissions and the translations of the 19th century, a continuity assured in particular by the Arab contributors to the Protestant translation. How strongly dependent this new translation remains on older works was shown by Nicolas Abou Mrad's talk at the conference.

Issa Diab (عيسى دياب) offers a small concordance of biblical passages from the 19th-century translations as well as of the Masoretic texts and the Septuagint. He outlines the differing theological views, mirrored in these texts, of 19th-century translators.

In their contribution, Walid Saleh and Kevin Casey bring to us the perspective of a Muslim scholar's interest in the text of the Bible. Al-Biqāʿī's astonishing familiarity with the Gospels which he used for his Quran commentary is shown in Walid Saleh and Kevin Casey's concordance.

The literary studies section addresses Arabic poetry, the language's ultimate discipline. Here Hedi Ayadi (الهـادي العيّادي) devotes himself to an exciting search for poetic motifs in the work of Yūsuf al-Khāl, where he traces the "game with the sacred and its antithesis".

Adib Saab (أديب صعب) studies the significance of Arabic hymnal Protestant poetry in the broader context of contemporary Arabic literature. He demonstrates inter alia notable metrical similarities between the Arabic version of the Psalms in the 19th-century Protestant Bible translation, produced by, for example, Shaikh Asīr, and Protestant hymns.

The Arabic Pentateuch of the Paris Polyglot: Saadiah Gaon's advent to the republic of letters*

Ronny Vollandt

> "As I perused the translation of the learned Rabbanite Saʿīd al-Fayyūmī, I satisfied myself on account of his style that he is the most preferable of all translators and most eloquent interpreter among the people of his confession."

These words are found in an anonymous preface to Saadiah's Pentateuch translation preserved in MS. Paris BNF Ar. 1 (fol. 1v). It is generally recognised that this very manuscript served as the main basis for the edition of the Arabic portions of the Paris Polyglot. Despite this common knowledge, however, little is known about the manuscript itself, the particular text type it contains and how it made its way into one of the most prestigious printing projects of early modern Europe.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, multiple. I shall start by summarising our current knowledge of the emergence of Saadiah's *tafsīr*. Next, I shall attempt to deal with its adaptation by the Coptic Church and present a brief description of the textual changes that occurred thus. Although MS. Paris BNF Ar. 1 clearly belongs to that branch of transmission, it exhibits – as will be shown – an inner-Coptic attempt to re-establish the Judaeo-Arabic character of the *tafsīr*.

This stage of transmission is – in my view – also crucial for understanding the early Arabic prints of the Bible, since these are based on existing medieval manuscripts and were produced in a transitional bookish culture that was not clearly demarcated from that of the earlier, chirographic era. Within the confines of the Pentateuch, three distinct – but nevertheless historically interwoven – printing projects belong to that early period of printing Arabic Bibles: Erpenius' *Pentateuchus Mosis Arabicè* (1622); the Arabic portions of the Paris Polyglot (1628–45), which were reprinted in the London Polyglot (1653–57); and *Biblia Sacra Arabica* of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (1671–73).[1] A new type only emerged with the translations by Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (Psalter 1850, NT 1851) and Eli Smith and Cornelius van Dyck (entire Bible, 1860–65). Being homogeneous, monographic texts produced in their entirety at one point of time, they were to a certain degree provoked by a strong disapproval of Arabic Bibles printed earlier.[2]

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* I thank the Syndics of Cambridge University Library for permission to publish images of T-S Ar. 28.144r (see Plate 1) and the Paris Polyglot (see Plates 4–5).

1 In addition, one may add an earlier Judaeo-Arabic Pentateuch that had been printed by Eliezer Soncino in Istanbul in 1546. It features Saadiah Gaon's version in Hebrew letters. It is, however, advisable to treat this print in a separate context.

2 For example, Eli Smith's statement on the *Propaganda Fide* edition: "Of the prophetical and poetical portions of the Old Testament much is either without force, in bad taste, or

quaintance with the Tiberian tradition of Hebrew grammar and pronunciation originated in Tiberian scholarly circles.

Through his intervention in the great calendrical dispute with Ben Meir, son of the Palestinian Gaon in the years 921–23, Saadiah gained public recognition. This dispute was ignited by the disagreement of Palestinian and Babylonian scholars over the calculation of the New Year and Saadiah's taking the Babylonian side prompted his appointment as Gaon of Sura in 928. As such, he was the generally recognised religious leader of the early medieval Jewish communities.

About two years later, a bitter quarrel broke out between Saadiah and the Exilarch David ben Zakkai, his political counterpart, when the Gaon refused to confirm a judicial decision by the latter. He was declared to be removed from the post of Gaon and another scholar was installed in his stead. Saadiah, for his part, deposed David ben Zakkai from his post as Exilarch and replaced him with his brother Josiah. The Babylonian elite was divided in two armed camps. Even an attempt to involve the Muslim authorities on his behalf did not resolve the crisis, which lasted for six or seven years. During that period Saadiah had to hide in actual fear of his life and composed – *inter alia* – his commentary to the *Book of Creation*, in Arabic *Tafsīr kitāb al-mabādī*[6], his great philosophical work *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Arab. *Kitāb al-amānāt wa-l-iʿtiqādāt*[7], as well as the *tafsīr*, in secrecy. Reconciliation was finally effected and Saadiah was once again universally acknowledged as Gaon. He died in May 942.

There can be no doubt that the Judaeo-Arabic Bible translation is one of the most influential texts produced by Saadiah.[8] The *tafsīr* could soon be found everywhere throughout the communities in the Near East, North Africa and Muslim Spain, which attests to the fact that it acquired an authoritative, almost canonical, status among all Arabic-speaking Rabbanite communities. Concerning the number of books he rendered into Arabic, he most certainly did *not* translate the en-

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Study of Karaite Translations of the Pentateuch from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries C.E., Etudes sur le Judaïsme Médiéval, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill 1997, 12, no. 39.

6 Lambert, Mayer, ed., *Saadia ben Joseph: Commentaire sur le Séfer Yesira, ou Livre de la Création*, Paris: É. Bouillon 1891.

7 Qāfiḥ, Yosef, ed., *Saadia ben Joseph: sefer ha-nivḥar ba-emunot va-de'ot*, Kiryat Ono: Mekhon mishnat ha-rambam 1998; Altmann, Alexander, *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* (Philosophia Judaica), Oxford: East and West Library 1946.

8 Derenbourg, Joseph, Derenbourg, Hartwig, and Lambert, Mayer, eds., *Saadia Ben Joseph: Œuvres Complètes de R. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyoûmî*, Paris: E. Leroux 1893–1899. The edition is based on the Constantinople imprint of 1546, the Paris Polyglot and a late Yemenite MS., cf. Mieses, J., "Textkritische Bemerkungen zu R. Saadja Gaons Arabischer Pentateuchübersetzung", *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 63 (1919), 269–90. A new edition is currently being prepared under the auspices of Prof. E. Schlossberg, University of Bar-Ilan. It will be based on MS. St Petersburg RNL Yevr. II C 1. On that manuscript, see Blau, Joshua, "Saadya Gaon's Pentateuch Translation in the Light of an Early-Eleventh-Century Egyptian Manuscript", *Leshonenu* 61 (1998), 111–30.

of the eleventh century, their scarce attestation does not allow any conclusive and univocal answer to that question. The earliest known dated Christian copy of the *tafsīr* – MS. Leiden Warner 377 – was copied in 1239–40 and would serve as a *terminus ante quem* in that matter. In total, about two dozen manuscripts are extant today, which may be classified into three distinct branches of transmission: a Syrian Orthodox branch (only for the Book of Genesis),[13] a Coptic branch and an independent branch.[14] For the purpose of this paper I shall limit myself to the Coptic branch.

With regard to Arabic versions of the Bible, the Coptic tradition differs from the Syriac and Greek (Melkite) in many ways. The Copts began to translate the canonical Scriptures much later than the others, especially the Melkites. Until well into the twelfth century, the Copts seem to have used Arabic as a written language only very reluctantly and sparsely.[15] Although it cannot be ruled out that partial translations of the Pentateuch – e.g. as part of lectionaries – were written down earlier, manuscript evidence dates from the first half of the 13th century onwards. The first occurrence of an Arabic Pentateuch translation of Coptic provenance is in the form of a later addition on the outer margins of MS. Vatican

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13 The group consists of MSS. Leiden Warn. 377, Copenhagen Royal Library Cod. Ar. LXXV, Florence BML or. 57 (olim 12) and Paris BNF Ar. 4. They have distinct approaches towards revision of the Peshitta and employ numerous Syriacisms. MS. Leiden Warn. 377 explicitly mentions the name of the scribe as *al-mardlhīnī al-yaʿqūbī* and MS. Paris BNF Ar. 4 features many marginal notes in Syriac. Their attribution to the Syrian Orthodox Church does not necessarily point to a Greater-Syrian provenance in geographic terms. We know that the Parisian and Florentine MSS. were acquired in Egypt, by J. M. Vansleb and Giovanni Battista Vecchietti respectively. They may likely have originated in the Syriac-speaking monophysite communities of Egypt, cf. Den Heijer, Johannes, "Relations between Copts and Syrians in the Light of Recent Discoveries at dayr as-Suryān", in: *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies,* Mat Immerzeel and Jacques Van Der Vliet, eds., Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Dep. Oosterse Studies 2004, 924–38.

14 As represented in MSS. Vatican Borg. Ar. 126 and Istanbul Topkapi 3522. Both are of a yet undetermined provenance, but clearly distinct from the Syrian and Coptic branches. I discovered the latter at the CEDRAC during my stay in Beirut a few days after the conference and am indebted to N. Edelby for his kind assistance. It was copied in 1348. In contrast to the aforementioned branches, they are strictly speaking not adaptations, but rather exhibit an unchanged Arabic transliteration of the Judaeo-Arabic text.

15 This is true for the monastic culture that monopolised manuscript production. The extra-clerical lingual situation is less documented and therefore somewhat difficult to assess. Even so, it appears that the conservative attitude was restricted to the monasteries. Cf. Papaconstantinou, A., "'They Shall Speak the Arabic Language and Take Pride in It': Reconsidering the Fate of Coptic after the Arab Conquest", *Le Muséon* 120 (2007), 273–99; Richter, T. S., "O. Crum Ad. 15 and the Emergence of Arabic Words in Coptic Legal Documents", in: *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt*, Petra Sijpesteijn and Lennart Sundelin, eds., Leiden and Boston: Brill 2004; Rubenson, Samuel, "Translating the Tradition: Some Remarks on the Arabisation of the Patristic Heritage in Egypt", *Medieval Encounters* 2/1 (1996), 4–14; Zaborowski, J. R., "From Coptic to Arabic in Medieval Egypt", *Medieval Encounters* 14 (2008), 15–40.

Interesting evidence of an inner-Coptic attempt to return to the Judaeo-Arabic character of Saadiah's *tafsīr* is found in Manuscript MS. Paris BNF Ar. 1 (see Plate 2).[20] It was copied in 1584–85 by four distinct copyists and contains the entire Old Testament according to the Coptic canon, except for the Book of Ruth.[21] It features many prominent Arabic versions: the Pentateuch of Saadiah (fols. 3v–83v), the Psalter of Abū al-Fatḥ ʿAbdallāh Ibn Faḍl of Antioch (232v–267r)[22] and the Prophets of al-Aʿlam of Alexandria (fols. 268r–387v).[23]

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a Hebraised form is not attested in Saadiah's translation works at all and suggests the involvement of a third party. A similar example is the rendition of *hak-kərūḇīm*, "cherubim", in Gen. 3:24. Saadiah uses *malāʾikah*, whereas the manuscripts exhibit *al-karūbīm*, identical to Yesh'uah ben Yehudah's version. Such a pursuit of imitative affinity to the Hebrew source text is surprising, but nevertheless plays a functional role in adapting the text to a new context, since the Coptic Pentateuch features a Hebraised form, following the Greek χερουβιμ, cf. Peters, Melvin K. H., *A Critical Edition of the Coptic (Bohairic) Pentateuch* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, 15), Chico: Scholars Press 1983, 10. Similarly, a replacement of Saadianic lexical features in favour of Karaite lexicon can be observed, e.g. *li-l-irshād*, "to guide", for *li-l-ʿaql*, "for the intellect" (Saadiah for Heb. *ləhaskīl*, "to make one wise") in Gen. 3:6. Also this reading is found in Karaite versions and seemed more suitable to reflect the Coptic; idem, 9.

20 One of them, a Muslim copyist named ʿAbd Rabbih b. Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ash-Shaʿarānī, mentioned his name on fol. 387r. Another, Faḍlallāh b. Tādrus, wrote a colophon at the end of the Book of Proverbs, fol. 404v. The manuscript belongs with a highly interesting set of additional copies, which apparently originated from the same scriptorium. Another copy, apparently made the following year, is preserved in MS. Coptic Patriarchate Bibl. 32, as first mentioned by Samir Khalil Samir in "Trois Versions Arabes du Livre des Juges. Réflexions Critiques sur un Livre Récent", *Oriens Christianus* 65 (1981), 87–101. In contrast to the Parisian manuscript, it contains the Book of Ruth, but dispenses with all Sapiential Books and Major Prophets, except Isaiah and Jeremiah. The observed difference suggests that the choice of books was to a certain degree conditioned by the wishes of commissioners and compiled from different sources. The group consists of MSS. London BL Or. 1326, Vatican Ar. 445, Paris BNF Ar. 25, Coptic Patriarchate Bibl. 79 and Coptic Patriarchate Bibl. 80; a specimen of the last MS. is found in Simaika, Marcus, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Patriarchate, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt*, Cairo: Government Press 1939, Vol. II, plate XXIV. See also my forthcoming "From the working desks of a Coptic-Muslim workshop: MS Paris–BNF Arabic 1 and the mass production of Arabic deluxe Bibles in early Ottoman Cairo", in: *Patronage and the Sacred Book*, E. Alfonso and J. Decter, eds., Turnhout: Brepols, 2012.

21 There are multiple colophons on fols. 96v, 107r, 122v, 135v, 321r and 345v ranging from Ramaḍān 992 to Muḥarram 993 A.H. For details see Troupeau, Gérard, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes: Première Partie: Manuscrits Chrétiens Nos. 1–6933*, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale 1972, 11.

22 Graf, Georg, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 1944 (= *GCAL* I), 116–119.

23 *GCAL* I, 131–133; Löfgren, Oscar, *Studien zu den arabischen Danielübersetzungen, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der christlichen Texte; nebst einem Beitrag zur Kritik des Peschittatextes*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell 1936; Vaccari, Alberto, "Le Versioni Arabe Dei Profeti", *Biblica* 2 (1921), 401–23.

3 Savary de Brèves' effort for a printed Arabic Bible

In 1606 a new protagonist was about to enter the stage: François Savary de Brèves, who served as ambassador of France to the Sublime Porte during the years 1591–1604.[25] He had arrived in Istanbul with his uncle and predecessor in office, Jacques de Savary-Lancosme, in 1584 and is well known to have skilfully achieved the famous peace treaty between King Henry IV and Sultan Ahmed I. What is more, the effective diplomat was one of the outstanding Arabic and Turkish scholars of his time, thanks to a twenty-year residency in the East nearly unsurpassed in the Europe of his time.

Upon the cessation of his diplomatic service in Istanbul, however, Savary de Brèves set out on a journey throughout the Levant, Egypt and North Africa.[26] Its purpose, at royal behest, was to inspect the condition of the Christians living in the Ottoman Empire. In the course of the journey, the diplomat visited Lebanon, Jerusalem and Egypt, among many other places. He met the Maronite patriarch Joseph al-Rizzī at the Monastery of Qannūbīn[27] and was welcomed by Mark V, Pope of Alexandria, in Cairo.[28] The journey would determine his future aspirations in many respects: grieved by the inferior social and cultural status of Chris-

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25 This chapter is much indebted to Duverdier, Gerald, "Les Caractères de Savary de Brèves, Les Débuts de la Typographie Orientale et la Présence Francaise au Levant au 17e Siècle", in: *L'art du Livre à L'Imprimerie Nationale*, Paris: Impr. Nationale 1973; idem, "Les Impressions Orientales en Europe et le Liban", in: *Exposition: le Livre et le Liban jusqu'à 1900*, Camille Aboussouan, ed., Paris: Unesco 1982, 157–73; Lelong, Jacques, *Discours Historique sur les Principales Editions des Bibles Polyglottes*, Paris: Pralard 1713.

26 His journey is well documented. The itinerary of the captain, François Arnaud, is preserved in MS. Paris BNF fr. 19896. His secretaries, Jehan Vuiot de Baron and Jacques du Castel, both left descriptions of the travel. However, only du Castel's was later published in the name of François Savary de Brèves (*Relation Des Voyages De M. De Brèves, Tant en Grece, Terre-Saincte, et Ægypte, qu'aux Royaumes de Tunis & Arger. Ensemble un Traicte Faict l'an 1604, entre le Roy Henry le Grand & l'empereur des Turcs et Trois Discours du dit Sieur. Le tout Recueilly par le S[Ieur] D[u] C[astel]*, Paris: N. Gasse 1628). In addition, the diplomat refers to it in a number of letters.

27 His sojourn in Qannobin is described in his *Relation des Voyages*, 45. He met not only the Patriarch but also George Amira, who had published a *Grammatica Syriaca* at the press of Giaccobo Luna, Rome, in 1596 and Sarkīs al-Rizzī, brother of the Patriarch and later bishop of Damascus. Sarkīs was associated with the printing of the famous Quzhaya Psalter in 1610 and later headed the committee in charge of producing an Arabic Bible at the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in Rome.

28 Cairo and the negotiations with the Coptic Pope Mark V were at the core of the entire enterprise. He abided with him from September 1605 to March 1606. However, they are referred to only briefly in his *Relation des Voyages*. In a letter to Cardinal du Perron he states: "*Je me résous d'avoir vu le Grand Caire pour avoir eu l'occasion de procurer l'union de la nation Cofte à la croire de l'église romaine. J'en ay eu de bonnes arres et pense avoir avancé beaucoup en ce sujet. Le Patriarche de ceste nation écrit à sa Sainteté et au Roy avec promesses de vivre d'ici en avant l'obéissance d'icelle.*" (MS. Paris BNF fr. Dupuy 194, fol. 180). The confession of faith was sent to the Roman authorities by way of the French consul Gabriel Fernoulx. It furnishes important additional details of de Brèves' sojourn, cf. Cattan, Basilio, "La Chiesa Copta nel Secolo XVII: Documenti Inediti", *Bessarione* 34 (1918), 133–61.