

Translators, copyists and interpreters. Jews, Christians and
Muslims and the transmission of the Bible in Arabic in the
Middle Ages
(Casa Árabe, Córdoba, April 26-28 2017)

Faiad Barbash
University of Córdoba

On 26th April 2017, an international conference related to biblical studies was held by the University of Cordoba, the University of Tel Aviv and the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton). The conference took place at Casa Árabe in Cordoba. The meeting was organized in three days (26th-28th April) with four sessions per day.

Wednesday, 26th April

At the opening session, the Director of Casa Árabe's headquarters in Córdoba, Dr. Javier Rosón, welcome the participants and Prof. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala presented the three days programme of the conference. After the opening session, Prof. Federico Corriente Córdoba (Saragossa University) gave the Opening keynote lecture titled *Canonization of texts through linguistic archaism and higher registers: the case of the Psalter fragment published by Prof. Violet*.

JUDEO-ARABIC TRANSLATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS was the first session of this day, opened by Ilana Sasson¹ (Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT) who presented *The Open Book—Textual Fluidity and the History of Transmission: A Case Study of A Medieval Karaite Commentary*. In this work, Prof. Sasson found significant variants between the different manuscripts that she used in a previous work on Yefet b. Ali's Arabic translation.

At the second part of this session, Marzena Zawadowska (University of Warsaw & Jewish Historical Institute) gave the lecture *Stylistic Explanations of Theological Cruxes in the Medieval Karaites' Arabic Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible* in which she talked about the Medieval Karaite, focusing on the Arabic Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible.

Gregor Schwarb (SOAS University of London) closed the session with a talk titled *Authorship, structure and genre of the commentary known as B'rēshīth Rabbā ascribed to Yeshu'ah ben Yehudah*. Gregor Schwarb took the opportunity to investigate different elements of the text analyzing the original Arabic fragments and comparing them with the Hebrew translation.

After lunch, the third session started with Arik Sadan (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Tel Aviv University; Shalem College; Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) on *Different Transmissions of Yefet Ben Eli's Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job in Judeo-Arabic, Based on the Available Manuscripts written in Arabic and Hebrew Letters*.

¹ Recently deceased.

Sadan explored the differences between the manuscripts written in Arabic letters and the manuscripts written in Hebrew letters.

Tania García Arévalo (University of Granada) was not able to attend the conference but she sent a copy of her talk *Šarḥ in Modern Times and its relation to medieval sources: Continuity or rupture?* which was read by Prof. Lourdes Bonhome (University of Cordoba). García Arévalo has worked with sources which have not been well analyzed yet as different works related to Šarḥ which were published in the Maghreb in the 20th century (written in Judeo-Arabic).

The fourth session started with Shari L. Lowin (Stonehill College, Easton MA) and her talk *The Jews say the Hand of God is Chained”: Q 5:64 and the Rewritten Bible* in which she explained how the same expression was transmitted in different ways by using images in which the hand of God is depicted in chains.

Esperanza Alfonso (ILC – CCHS, Madrid) gave the lecture *Arabic and the Study and Translation of the Bible in the Vernacular* in which she analyzed the glosses in a Hebrew codex preserved in the Bodleian Library. She used the Arabic glosses to describe the translation of the Bible in Castilian. She also used Sa’adia Gaon’s work to show the transmission of the Bible in Castilian as a vernacular language.

Meirav Nadler-Akirav (Bar-Ilan University – BAP) in her talk *Yefet ben ‘Eli’s Commentary to the Book of Malachi* studied ‘Eli’s work on Malachi’s book drawing the problems to understand it and to translate this work into English.

Thursday, 27th April

The second day was dedicated to the Christian Arabic tradition and its relation with the Bible. The session titled CHRISTIAN-ARABIC TRANSLATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS started with Samir Arbache’s talk (Université Catholique de Lille) *Stafana de Ramla, copiste du IX^e siècle, au monastère Saint Chariton*. Arbache’s talk was about Stepahnus of Ramla, a really interesting copyist. Arbache focused on the work Sinai Ar. 72.

Miriam Lindgren Hjälms (BAP, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich) was not able to travel to Córdoba but her presentation *Towards a Codicological Categorization of Early Christian Arabic Bible Manuscripts* was read by Gregor Schwarb. Hjälms dates Christian Arabic manuscripts based on a textual corpus of Arabic biblical manuscripts.

The second session started with Pilar González Casado (Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso) on *Christian Arabic terminology in some Bible quotations*. The corpus used by González Casado shows new vocabulary in the Middle Ages used by Christian communities. During the translation, translators have to use new terms that didn’t exist in the Koran but are in the Bible. González analyzed a few examples of these terms.

Peter Tarras (BAP, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich), in his lecture *Arguing from Scripture: Extracts from the Summa Theologiae Arabica in a membrum disiectum of Sin. Ar. 155 (MSS Munich BSB Cod. arab. 1071 + Paris BNF Syr. 378)*, studied the importance of the apologetic commentaries on the Ms Sin. Ar. 155 as well as some folios that appeared at the BNF and at the British Library.

After the sessions, the participants were invited to walk around Córdoba’s Jewish quarter where Camilla Adang (Tel Aviv University) gave a talk about Ibn Hazm.

Faiad Barbash

The third session of the day started with Vevian Zaki (BAP, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich) on *The Life Story of Manuscript Sinai Arabic 151*. She focused on the story of Sinai Ar. 151 and specially on some folios replaced and restored through the times.

Sara Schulthess' lecture (Vital-DH/Vital-IT, Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics) *Marciana Gr. Z. 11 (379): A New Testament multilingual manuscript from a multilingual milieu?* discussed the possible origin of this peculiar multilingual manuscript that appeared in Sicily. She analyzed several elements in this manuscript to draw some conclusions about its possible origin.

The last session started with Mayte Penelas (CSIC, Granada) *Narratives of Samuel and Kings in a Christian manuscript from al-Andalus (Ms Raqqada 2003/2)* who studied the Book of Samuel and Kings at the Ms Raqqada 2003/2. Penelas compared this manuscript with the Arabic Orosio and concluded that it was necessary to study the modification that appears in Raqqada's manuscript.

The second intervention, by Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (University of Cordoba), *'Prove the Torah in Hebrew and the Gospel in Latin' On the biblical quotations contained in the Andalusī Kitāb Tathlīth al-Wahdāniyyah*, was helpful to explain how taking biblical quotations of the *Tathlīth* allows to show the possible connection with the Ms Qarawiyyīn 730.

Geoffrey Kyle's talk (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) *Scribe A of the Seville Bible: Arabic, Latin, and Eschatology* closed the session with a study on an Andalusian version of the Bible written in Latin with several marginal notes in Arabic.

Friday 28th April

The last day was dedicated to the MUSLIM TRANSMISSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BIBLE. Camilla Adang (Tel Aviv University) *The story of Joshua ben Nūn according to al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442)* explained the biblical texts appeared in al-Maqrīzī's work which are combined with Koranic quotes. Adang studied the description of Joshua ben Nūn's battle passage which is interesting by Al-Maqrīzī's view due to the absence of a mention to ben Nūn in the Koran and in the Islamic tradition.

Dennis Halft's lecture (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) *Notes on the So-Called Persian Diatessaron and its Author and Commentator* was about the work of *Giuseppe Messina*. Halft focused on the interlinear commentary on Gospels that appears in the 'Persian Diatessaron' which did not appear in Messina's work. Halft studied the context in which the Diatessaron was translated and its transmission process.

At the second session, Mateusz Wilk's (Warsaw University) *Prophets and Scriptures in the Islamic Piety of the 3rd/9th Century* started with Ibn Ḥanbal which allows Wilk to draw the view of pre-Islamic Prophets as Mūsā, Dāwūd and 'Isā, in different sources. In Wilk's opinion, the importance of the Historical Prophets in the studies of the Bible related to Islamic tradition must be taken into account by scholars.

David Vishanoff's talk (University of Oklahoma) *An Early Thirteenth-Century Recension of the Islamic Psalms of David: The Islamicized Style and Content of Istanbul Manuscript Fatih 28* presented the rewriting of Psalms that appears in several manuscripts. Vishanoff explained how the vocabulary used in these versions showed how the author tries to islamize the text.

The closing keynote lecture was given by Meira Polliack (Tel Aviv University) with the title *'He saw her bathing on the roof': the David and Bathsheba Narrative in inter-*

religious exegetical exchange and cross-cultural character development (from late antiquity to the Middle Ages). She analyzed this quotation in different sources to explain the transmission of biblical texts in general regarding changes suffered by the original texts in order to be adapted to the audience.

After the closing keynote lecture, Sara J. Pearce presented her last work *Judah ibn Tibbon and His importance for the study of the Arabic Bible* which was part of her latest research project.

Faiad Barbash
University of Córdoba