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ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bājī's (d. 714/1314) critique of the Pentateuch and the plurality of Christian Bible recensions[*]

It is by now well known that Christian Arabic Bible translations exhibit a wide range of translation techniques, depending on the intended function of the translated text and the training of the translator.[1] In addition to the rich and rather uncontrolled production of Arabic translations, major characteristics of Christians in the East were the lack of an authoritative biblical *Vorlage* that could indisputably serve as the model for Arabic translations, the movability of texts between communities, as well as the involvement of converts who brought knowledge across already blurry communal borders.[2] Instead, Christians in the Levant had access to and used the Peshīṭtā, the Syro-hexapla, the

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[1] Many Peshīṭtā-based Arabic translations exhibit a wealth of additions that serve to explain what the translators perceived to be the meaning of the biblical text or to make its style more acceptable to a reader well versed in literary Arabic. In contrast, Greek-based translations, as well as al-Ḥārith b. Sinān's translation from the Syro-hexapla, normally contain fewer deviations from the source text, although they, too, range from "extremely literal", to rather reader-oriented Arabic translations that, while aiming at representing one text unit in the source text with one text unit in the target text, did not refrain from departing from such a principle for the sake of the intelligibility of the translated text. For an overview, see Miriam L. Hjälm, "1.2.12 Arabic Texts [Overview Article > The Textual History of the Deutero-canonical Texts]," in Frank Feder and Matthias Henze (ed.), *The Textual History of the Bible*, vol. 2A (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 483-495. On specific biblical books, see the respective entries in *The Textual History of the Bible*, vol. 2 and further references there.

[2] See for example, Sarah Stroumsa, "The Impact of Syriac Tradition on Early Judaeo-Arabic Bible Exegesis", *Aram* 3.1–2 (1991), pp. 83-96; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Ronny Vollandt, "Saʿadia Gaon's Translation of the Torah and Its Coptic Readers", in Meira Polliack and Athalya Brenner-Idan (eds.), *Jewish Biblical Exegesis from Islamic Lands: The Medieval Period* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), pp. 75-87; Miriam L. Hjälm, "Christian Bibles in Muslim Robes with Jewish Glosses: Arundel Or.15 and other Medieval Coptic Arabic Bible Translations at the British Library", published at the British Library Blog, April 2022.

Septuagint, as well as Arabic renditions of the Hebrew Bible and it was not uncommon for engaged copyists to compare the Arabic translation they were about to transcribe with other biblical *Vorlagen* or translations, and to revise it.[3]

In the vivid intellectual climate of the mediaeval Islamicate world where various competing religious communities had access to a wealth of biblical texts, it was inevitable that Muslims, too, would take notice of the many contradictions found within the Bible as well as between its various recensions. The author discussed in this article, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bājī, was certainly no exception. Our purpose in what follows is to identify the sources al-Bājī used in his polemical tract against Christians and Jews and to examine how his arguments related to the issue of the multiple, and sometimes contradicting, biblical *Vorlagen* that Christians had inherited from late antiquity, and to the textual corruption that inevitably occurs in texts copied by hand, which sometimes influenced his argumentation. Before doing so, however, we shall provide a bibliographical sketch of al-Bājī and discuss the structure and overall argument of his only surviving and little-known work, entitled *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt*, in which he directs text-critical and rationalistic objections against the Torah, especially as transmitted among Christians.[4]

ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bājī: A biographical sketch

Tāj al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Khaṭṭāb al-Bājī, sometimes also called al-Maghribī, was born in 631/1233, but the place of his birth is unknown, and it is unclear whether the *nisba* al-Bājī refers to Beja in present-day Portugal, which at the time was part of al-Andalus, or Beja in Tunisia.[5] Although the *nisba* al-Maghribī usually refers to someone hailing from North Africa, it is not seldom used for Andalusīs, especially by Muslims residing in the eastern part of the Muslim world, including Egypt. According to some scholars, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn was related to the famous Andalusī *faqīh* Abū l-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474/1081), whose many works include a polemic against Christianity.[6] Unlike this Bājī and the vast majority of scholars from the Islamic West, who

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3   This happened already in the early Palestinian texts and reached a climax among the Copts once they started to embrace literature in Arabic during their golden age. For the former, see Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "The Pauline Epistle to Philemon from Codex Vatican Arabic 13 (Ninth Century CE): Transcription and Study", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 60.2 (Autumn 2015), pp. 341-371. See also Hikmat Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: The Manuscripts and Their Families* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), *passim*. The positive attitude among these Copts to texts from other religious denominations is reflected by the Coptic intellectual Ibn Kabar, see the translation: Abū al-Barakāt, *Catalog of Christian Literature in Arabic* (2009) by Adam McCollum, available online: https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/abu_l_barakat_catalogue.htm.

4   In what follows, we use the terms Torah and Pentateuch interchangeably.

5   Full details of the biographical dictionaries containing entries on al-Bājī on which this biographical sketch is largely based may be found in the Appendix. Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1089/1679) is the only one who specifically states that "al-Bājī" refers to a town in al-Andalus; see his *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 6: 179.

6   On the Andalusī Bājī and his polemical tract, see Diego Sarrió Cucarella, "Corresponding across Religious Borders: Al-Bājī's Response to a Missionary Letter from France", *Medieval Encounters* 18 (2012), pp. 1-35. Abdelilah Ljamai thinks it is quite possible that "our" Bājī is a grandson of Abū l-Walīd; see his *Ibn Ḥazm et la polémique islamo-chrétienne dans l'histoire de l'islam* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 191. In that case,

were Mālikīs, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ("our" Bājī) belonged to the Shāfiʿī school of law. He seems to have received his earliest education in Damascus, which was home to many families that had immigrated from the Islamic West.[7] He is known to have attended the classes of the eminent scholar al-ʿIzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262), another Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī of Maghribī descent, who was expelled from the city by the local Ayyubid ruler, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl, and moved to Cairo in 638/1240.[8] This means that al-Bājī cannot have been more than seven years old when he attended al-ʿIzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām's lectures in Damascus. This was by no means unusual: we know of many well-known scholars who had been taken to lecture sessions at a very early age.[9] The only other teacher mentioned by our sources is the ascetic Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Tilimsānī (d. 655/1257), from whom al-Bājī received a collection of prophetic traditions by the Damascene ḥadīth transmitter Ibn Ḥawṣā (d. 320/932).[10] There were no doubt other teachers: al-Bājī enjoyed a close friendship with his exact contemporary Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), author of the best-known commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* as well as of a number of legal tracts in the Shāfiʿī tradition, and together they attended lectures by scholars whose names are not mentioned in the sources, but who were most likely specialists in ḥadīth and law, the fields in which al-Nawawī excelled.[11] Sometime during the early years of the reign of the Mamluk sultan Baybars (regn. 658-676/1260-1277) al-Bājī, probably in his early thirties, was appointed Qadi in the town of Karak in present-day Jordan, adjacent to the former Crusader fortress. He may have combined this position with that of *wakīl*, or intendant of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) there.[12] It seems that he resided in Karak at least until the year 684/1285 (see below). At an unknown date and for reasons not altogether clear he moved to Cairo, where he acted as deputy magistrate and witness preparer. His renown as a specialist in a number of disciplines which he had apparently

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however, one would expect the latter's given name, Sulaymān, to be included in ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn's chain of names.

7   Louis Pouzet, "Maghrébins à Damas au VIIᵉ/XIIIᵉ siècle", *Bulletin d'études orientales* 28 (1975), pp. 167-199; Mariam Sheibani, "Islamic Law in an Age of Crisis and Consolidation: ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām (577-660/1187-1262) and the Ethical Turn in Medieval Islamic Law" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2018), pp. 68, 81-85. Sheibani paints a vivid picture of the religious, intellectual and political atmosphere in Damascus at the time.

8   Sheibani, "Islamic Law in an Age of Crisis", pp. 128-129.

9   Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo. A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 32; Camilla Adang, "Shurayḥ al-Ruʿaynī and the Transmission of the Works of Ibn Ḥazm", in Camilla Adang, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (ed.), *Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba. The Life and Works of a Controversial Thinker* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 513-537 at p. 516.

10 On al-Tilimsānī, see Abū Shāma (Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ismāʿīl), *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa-l-sābiʿ, al-maʿrūf bi-l-Dhayl ʿalā al-Rawḍatayn*, ed. ʿIzzat al-ʿAṭṭār al-Ḥusaynī (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1974), p. 198.

11 On al-Nawawī, see W. Heffening, "al-Nawawī", *EI²*, s.v. For a characterization of al-Nawawī's main legal writings, see Norman Calder, "Nawawī and the Typologies of *Fiqh* Writing", in Norman Calder, *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Classical Era*, ed. by Colin Imber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 74-115.

12 On the administrative positions in Karak, see Marcus Milwright, *The Fortress of the Raven. Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100-1650)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008), p. 82.

acquired in Syria –legal methodology, logic, grammar, *ḥadīth* and Ashʿarī theology– only increased after he had given up his administrative positions. The fact that he adopted an ascetic lifestyle, wearing modest garments, may have appealed to prospective students. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), author of the most detailed biography of al-Bājī, relates that our scholar had to go into hiding for a while because of something he had supposedly said. Unfortunately, al-Subkī does not elaborate: did al-Bājī get into trouble with the local ruler or the political establishment, or was it a rival or opponent who threatened him? The tensions between Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarīs on the one hand, and Ḥanbalīs on the other are well known. This complication notwithstanding, al-Bājī was much in demand as a teacher: he taught at the Sayfiyya *madrasa* and acted as tutor at the Manṣūriyya and Ṣāliḥiyya *madrasa*s.[13]

Al-Bājī was often requested to issue *fatwā*s. This he did in a most conscientious way, refusing to give a legal opinion unless he was absolutely certain of its correctness. In cases of doubt he would refer the petitioner to the view of al-Shāfiʿī. He was admired for his rhetorical and debating skills, which he put to good use defending the Ashʿarī school, which came under attack from more traditionally-minded theologians. It is said that the two persons most skilled in defending the teachings of al-Ashʿarī were al-Bājī in Cairo, and Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hindī (d. 715/1315) in Syria, except that al-Bājī was the more talented debater.[14] Besides his two sons, al-Bājī taught some of the most respected scholars of his time, such as the Andalusī grammarian and exegete Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344)[15] and al-Subkī's father, the polymath Taqī al-Dīn (d. 756/1355), whom he instructed in the art of disputation (*munāẓara*).[16] Two other Shāfiʿī legal scholars known to have studied with al-Bājī are Zayn al-Dīn al-Balfiyāʾī (d. 749/1348) and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the son of Qadi Badr al-Dīn b. Jamāʿa (d. 767/1365).[17] Kamāl al-Dīn al-Udwufī (d. 748/1347), too, refers to him as his teacher.[18] Al-Bājī also interacted with the controversial Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), whom he debated and whose praise of him made al-Bājī uncomfortable, perhaps because of the Ḥanbalī's bad reputation and his vocal opposition to Ashʿarism. Among al-Bājī's Egyptian teachers, mention should be made of Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1302), a highly respected Shāfiʿī *ḥadīth* scholar and jurist who was also well versed in Mālikī law.[19] Active in Upper Egypt and Cairo, he was regarded as a

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[13] See on these institutions al-Maqrīzī (Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī), *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār, al-maʿrūf bi-l-Khiṭaṭ al-Maqrīziyya*, 3 vols., ed. Muḥammad Zaynhum and Madīḥa al-Sharqāwī (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1997), 3:449, 480, 465-466.

[14] On Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hindī see Jon Hoover, "Early Mamluk Ashʿarism against Ibn Taymiyya on the Nonliteral Reinterpretation (taʾwīl) of God's Attributes", in Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele (ed.), *Philosophical Theology in Islam. Later Ashʿarism East and West* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 195-230 at pp. 211-216. On his limited debating skills, see Sherman A. Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on trial in Damascus", *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXXIX:1 (1994), pp. 41-85 at p. 47.

[15] See on him J.M. Puerta Vílchez, "al-Gharnāṭī, Abū Ḥayyān", in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. 1: *De al-ʿAbbādiya a Ibn Abyaḍ*", (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de estudios árabes, 2012), pp. 361-396, no. 120.

[16] On the two Subkīs, see J. Schacht – C.E. Bosworth, "al-Subkī", *EI²*, s.v.

[17] See Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, 3:56-57, no. 606; 3:135-138, no. 647. On Badr al-Dīn and his son ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, see Kamal S. Salibi, "The Banū Jamāʿa: A Dynasty of Shāfiʿite Jurists in the Mamluk Period", *Studia Islamica* 9 (1958), pp. 97-109 at pp. 99-102.

[18] Jaʿfar b. Thaʿlab al-Udwufī, *al-Badr al-sāfir* 2, no. 195.

[19] See on him R.Y. Ebied and M.J.L. Young, "Ibn Daḳīḳ al-ʿĪd", *EI²* (Suppl.), s.v.

mujaddid, that is, a restorer or reformer of the religion.[20] Several anecdotes preserved in the biographical dictionaries of Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and al-Ṣafadī (all of them Shāfiʿīs) state that al-Bājī attended the lectures of Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd at the Ṣāliḥiyya *madrasa* and impressed his master with his knowledge, in particular of the legal treatise *al-Wasīṭ fī l-madhhab* by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd is said to have expressed surprise at al-Bājī's knowledge, considering his youth. However, if he resided in Karak at least till the age of fifty-two, as is suggested by the date of composition of his polemic against the Pentateuch, to be discussed below, this is difficult to reconcile with Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's wonderment, unless we assume visits to Cairo from Karak at an earlier age. It is said that Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd would never address anyone, not even the (unnamed) sultan, except by *yā insān*, the only exceptions being al-Bājī, whom he addressed as *yā imām*, and the Shāfiʿī legal scholar Ibn al-Rifʿa (d. 710/1310), to whom he turned with the words *yā faqīh*.[21] According to Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, al-Bājī was truly worthy of being called a scholar. For our purpose, it is especially the following anecdote that is relevant. Shaykh Najm al-Dīn al-Aṣfūnī (d. 751/1350) relates that he attended a study session with Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, who turned to those present saying: "There is a Jew here who wants to have a disputation" (*yā fuqahāʾ, ḥaḍara shakhṣ yahūdī yaṭlubu al-munāẓara*). According to al-Aṣfūnī all the scholars there kept silent, but al-Bājī eagerly volunteered to debate him, saying "Fetch him and, God be praised, we shall remove all doubt". (*fa-bādara al-Bājī fa-qāla: aḥḍirūhu fa-naḥnu, bi-ḥamdi li'llāh, nadfaʿu al-shubha*). If such a disputation did take place, we may assume that the Jewish participant wished to refute the standard themes of Muslim polemics against his religion: abrogation of the Torah, distortion of its text or interpretation, and the presence of references to Islam and Muḥammad in this scripture.[22] Al-Bājī's polemical tract reflects these themes. However, a disputation between members of different religious communities could also take a philosophical, rather than a theological turn. Al-Bājī may have interacted with a Jew on another occasion: it is said that he replied to a Jew who had requested a *fatwā*. Unfortunately, the sources do not tell us what the topic of the *fatwā* was, and in neither case do we know the identity of the Jewish interlocutor. We are on shaky ground also when it comes to al-Bājī's reply, in verse, to a brief poem allegedly authored by a *dhimmī*, more specifically a Jew, criticizing the Muslim conception of predestination and challenging "the scholars of Islam" to supply explanations and proof for their belief. According to al-Subkī, the author was actually a Muʿtazilī Muslim pretending to be a *dhimmī*.[23] Al-Bājī was one of six scholars in Cairo and Damascus who took up the gauntlet

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[20] See Ella Landau-Tasseron, "The 'Cyclical Reform': A Study of the *mujaddid* Tradition", *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989), pp. 79-117, at p. 92.

[21] On Ibn al-Rifʿa, who advocated the destruction of Christian and Jewish houses of worship, see Gowaart Van den Bossche, "Destroying Churches by Performing Knowledge: Ibn al-Rifʿa's *Kitāb al-nafāʾis fī adillat hadm al-kanāʾis* (700/1301) and the Social Negotiation of Legal Authority", *Islamic Law and Society* 27 (2020), pp. 297-324.

[22] On these standard topics, see Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke, "Polemics (Muslim-Jewish)", in: Norman Stillman et al. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 82-90.

[23] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 10:352. Livnat Holtzman has made a detailed study of the circumstances of the composition of the provocative poem and the replies it elicited: "The Dhimmi's Question on Predetermination and the Ulama's Six Responses. The Dynamics of Composing Polemical Didactic

and whose shorter or longer responses are included in Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's biographical entry on al-Bājī.[24] Although the biographical dictionaries refer to several possible interactions with Jews, then, not a single Christian contact is mentioned, which is surprising in light of the fact that his polemical tract takes issue with a Melkite translation of the Pentateuch and criticizes Christian teachings. But although Karak, which is featured in the famous sixth century Madaba mosaic map, had a long Christian history and had been the seat of a bishopric in Byzantine times, we do not know whether there was still a significant Christian presence there in the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods.

Al-Bājī died in Cairo in 714/1314 and was buried in the Qarāfa cemetery, in or near the section that included the tomb of Warsh (d. 197/812), the transmitter of one of the canonical readings of the Qurʾān.

Al-Bājī's works

According to the available biographical sketches of al-Bājī, he was a productive writer, though most of his works were digests of or commentaries on works by earlier scholars that did not do justice to his learning. It is said that there wasn't a single discipline on which al-Bājī did not write a digest, this despite the fact that no one ever saw him reading a book.[25] This may be a way to emphasize that the author prized oral instruction above book learning. Sadly, none of these works has survived, although during his lifetime and immediately after they were well known and being memorized.[26] As the biographer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Asnawī (d. 772/1370) put it, *inṭafaʾat kaʾanna lam takun*, as if they never existed.[27] The only exception is *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt*, a work variously described in the sources as a refutation of the Jews, of the Torah, of the Torah that the Jews possess, and of the Jews and the Christians. By the author's own account, he wrote the tract during the last part of Rabīʿ al-Awwal 684, that is, June 1285, in the town of Karak. Unless he interrupted his stay in Karak with visits to Cairo, it is thus in Syria that he became acquainted with the Pentateuch, which he read in at least two recensions. It is to this work and these different recensions used by al-Bājī that we shall now turn our attention.

Poems in Mamluk Cairo and Damascus", *Mamluk Studies Review* XVI (2012), pp. 1-54. She discusses two rationalist Muslim scholars, Ibn al-Baqaqī (d. 701/1301) and al-Sakākīnī (d. 721/1321) as possible authors.

[24] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 10:353-366 (al-Bājī's is the first retort: pp. 353-354). For a translation of the responses, see Holtzman, "The Dhimmi's question", pp. 38-52 (pp. 38-39 for al-Bājī's).

[25] According to Holtzman, the titles of the books of which he wrote abridgements reflect al-Bājī's expertise in Ashʿarī *kalām*; see "The Dhimmi's question", p. 33, n. 134.

[26] That his works were not transmitted beyond one generation may be due in part to the fact that he apparently had few active students, though it may also be that scholars preferred the originals on which al-Bājī's digests were based.

[27] Al-Asnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, 1:137, no. 263.

Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt

The late Ayyubid and early Mamluk period, which coincided with al-Bājī's lifetime, was rife with polemics. The Crusader conquest of large parts of Greater Syria, with forays into Egypt, had not only constituted a military threat, but a theological challenge as well, leading many Muslim scholars to compose tracts defending their own faith and arguing against the scriptures and beliefs of the Christians, and to a lesser extent the Jews.[28] Among these works we may mention *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira ʿan al-asʾila al-fājira* by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285),[29] *Taʿlīq ʿalā al-Anājīl al-arbaʿa wa-l-taʿlīq ʿalā al-Tawrāt wa-ʿalā ghayrihā min kutub al-anbiyāʾ* by al-Bājī's peer Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316),[30] and Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī's (d. 727/1327) reply to a Christian polemicist.[31] Ibn Taymiyya, too, contributed an elaborate anti-Christian tract: *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*[32] as well as a shorter epistle.[33] His faithful student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) would add another relevant work to this literature: *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-Yahūd wa-l-Naṣārā*.[34] Besides religious polemics, tracts criticizing the social position of the Christians, especially those employed in the administration, were also produced. A prime example is Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān al-Nābulusī's (d. 660/1262) *Tajrīd sayf al-himma li'stikhrāj mā fī dhimmat al-dhimma*.[35] Such works mainly inveighed against members of the Coptic minority in Egypt, who in the eyes of many Muslims, scholars and laymen alike, were able to exert a degree of influence not commensurate with the size of their community. Moreover, the Copts seemed to be

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[28] For an excellent survey of the religious and political context, see Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean. The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285)*, col. «The History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 23 (Leiden, Boston: Brill: 2015), pp. 28-35.

[29] Translated and analyzed in Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean*.

[30] This work was edited, translated and analyzed in Lejla Demiri, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo. Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures. A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation with an Introduction*, col. «The History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 19 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013).

[31] Edited, translated and analyzed in Rifaat Y. Ebied and David Thomas, *The Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response*, col. «The History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 2 (Leiden-Boston: Brill: 2005).

[32] Ibn Taymiyya, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity. Ibn Taymiyya's* al-Jawab al-Sahih, edited and translated by Thomas F. Michel S.J. (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1984). Diego Sarrió Cucarella calls it "one of the landmarks in the history of Muslim-Christian polemics". See his "Corresponding across religious borders. The letter of Ibn Taymiyya to a Crusader in Cyprus", *Islamochristiana* 36 (2010), pp. 187-212 at p. 188.

[33] *Al-Risāla al-Qubruṣiyya*. See on this text Sarrió Cucarella, "Corresponding across religious borders".

[34] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya is also the author of *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, which deals with the rights and duties of Jews and Christians in Muslim society. See on this work Antonia Bosanquet, *Minding their Place. Space and Religious Hierarchy in Ibn al-Qayyim's* Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma, col. «The History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 42 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020). See on the author and his two relevant works Jon Hoover, "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya", in David Thomas and Alex Mallett, with Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala et al. (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200-1350)* vol. 4, col. «History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 17 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 989-1002.

[35] ʿUthmān b. Ibrāhīm al-Nābulusī, *Tajrīd sayf al-himma li'stikhrāj mā fī dhimmat al-dhimma. The Sword of Ambition. Bureaucratic Rivalry in Medieval Egypt*. Edited and translated by Luke Yarbrough, Foreword by Sherman ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Jackson (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

experiencing a literary renaissance which strengthened their identity vis-à-vis the Muslims. Al-Bājī's work, then, was not written in a vacuum, though we do not know what exactly induced him to write it. It is unique in that it singles out the Pentateuch for critical analysis, whereas his predecessors and contemporaries were mainly concerned with the New Testament, or at times with the Bible in its widest sense. Another feature that distinguishes the work is that it is not cast in the form of a reply to a query or request for enlightenment, real or fictitious, nor does it appear to have been written in reaction to an earlier polemic, either by a Jew or by a Christian. If al-Bājī was concerned about the role played by *dhimmī*s in the social and political life in Syria and Egypt, there is no clear indication of it in his work. Interesting is also that he does not include references to the Qurʾān in order to strengthen his argument.

Al-Bājī's tract narrowly escaped the fate of his other writings which, as was seen above, disappeared as if they never were. It has been preserved in one manuscript only, and does not appear to have been quoted by later authors.[36] The unique manuscript, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, is kept at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul. The title of the tract, *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt*, was taken by one of the editors (referred to below) to mean that it is a polemic against Judaism, although Christianity is targeted no less than Judaism, and in fact even more so. The author seems to want to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak, seeing that the Torah or Pentateuch is an integral part of the Christian canon.

In the Istanbul manuscript the tract is bound together with a lengthy polemical work against Christianity by Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī (d. 656/1258),[37] and takes up pages 215 to 262. The two works are in same the hand, namely of an Egyptian Shāfiʿī, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī, who completed his transcription of al-Qurṭubī's *Iʿlām* on 27 Rabīʿ I, 879/11 August 1472 and of al-Bājī's' work on 21 Jumādā I of that year, i.e. 21 September 1472. There are three editions: *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt: Kitāb fī naqd al-Tawrāt al-yūnāniyya*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, [Cairo]: Dār al-anṣār, 1980; repr. Paris: Dar Biblion, 2006; *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt aw al-Radd ʿalā al-Yahūd*, ed. al-Sayyid Yūsuf Aḥmad, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1428/2007; an edition, Spanish translation and analysis are included in Hussein O. Zurghani, *ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Bāŷī y su crítica a la Torah*, PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense Madrid, 2 vols., 2007. Unfortunately, each of these editions has its problems, which can partly be explained from the fact that none of the editors has had access to the manuscript and had to make do with a microfilm or a reproduction of the microfilm. In what follows, we shall therefore include references to the Istanbul manuscript, which has by now been digitized.[38]

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[36] See on the tract Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, "al-Bājī", in David Thomas and Alex Mallett, with Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala et al. (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200-1350)* vol. 4, col. «History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 17 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 767-768.

[37] Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *al-Iʿlam bi-mā fī dīn al-Naṣārā min al-fasad wa-l-awhām wa-iẓhār maḥāsin dīn al-Islām wa-ithbāt nubuwwat nabiyinā Muḥammad*, ed. Samīr Qaddūrī (Tunis-Beirut: Dār al-Mālikiyya, 1441/2020).

[38] At the time of writing, the digital images could only be viewed and purchased on the spot at the Süleymaniye Library.

Aim and structure of the work

Al-Bājī's tract aims to expose inconsistencies and illogicalities in biblical narratives. It opens with the following statement: "I studied the Torah of Moses (peace be upon him) rendered in Arabic which the Melkite Christians possess, as they claim, and it consists of five books. Questions occurred to me about its wording, which I present in the order of their appearance." The author then starts right away with a quotation and discussion of Genesis 1:1–5, without any further introduction. The lion's share of the work is taken up by a critique of Genesis (*Sifr Kawn al-dunyā*), which is followed by what al-Bājī sees as confusing passages from Exodus (*Sifr al-Khurūj*), Leviticus (*Sifr al-Lāwiyyīn*), Numbers (*Sifr al-ʿAdad*) and Deuteronomy (*Sifr al-Istithnāʾ*). The fact that he specifically mentions a Christian recension of the Pentateuch already indicates that it is this religion whose scripture he seeks to undermine, not only by pointing to internal inconsistencies, but also to discrepancies between different translations. Muslim polemicists against Jews and Christians had a large arsenal of arguments against the Bible at their disposal, accumulated over several centuries, and these tended to be repeated with little variation. One of them was that unlike the earlier scriptures, the Qurʾān was the inimitable and untranslatable word of God, and that copies of it did not show any variation. The most elaborate polemic against both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament was written by the Andalusī Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), who pointed to inconsistencies, geographical, historical and mathematical inaccuracies, attributions of immoral behaviour to the biblical prophets, and passages that were theologically unacceptable, all of which in his view clearly demonstrate that the extant Torah is not the one that had been revealed to Moses. Although he does not explicitly say so, al-Bājī's main aim, too, was obviously to prove that the original Torah had undergone changes. But if al-Bājī read and felt inspired by Ibn Ḥazm's work, which is quite likely,[39] he did not adopt his abrasive polemical style: on the whole, his critique of the Pentateuch is dispassionate, though one can imagine him shaking his head at some of the descriptions he encountered in the biblical books. Moreover, many of his arguments are quite original and have no parallel in works like Ibn Ḥazm's, even though al-Bājī, too, cannot resist the temptation to adduce a well-known verse believed to refer to the Prophet Muḥammad: Deuteronomy 18:18. It should be stressed that he has made no attempt to cover the entire Pentateuch. It is not clear where al-Bājī obtained or consulted his *Vorlagen*, nor do we know how familiar he was with Jewish and Christian tenets.

Al-Bājī's method throughout his *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt* is as follows. He dedicates a longer or shorter section to each of the books making up the Pentateuch, whose Arabic titles were given above. He begins by quoting a verse or passage (mostly following the order in which the verses appear in the biblical book) and then proceeds to criticize it, often identifying several illogical or otherwise problematic aspects. Rather than indicating the number of the biblical verse, he refers to its occurrence in a "reading unit" (*qirāʾa*). The following passage from Genesis with the author's comments may illustrate the manner in which he proceeds.

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[39] It is assumed by Ljamai; see his *Ibn Ḥazm et la polémique*, pp. 191-196.

Question about the eleventh reading, from six perspectives

[…] The fourth:

How can it be rightly said: "The Lord God said: 'My spirit will not dwell among these people forever, because they are flesh'" (Genesis 6:3). His expression "among *these* people" makes one imagine that the spirit of the Lord, praised be He, does dwell among *other* people, but this is not so.

Also, the phrase "because they are flesh" comes to explain why the spirit of the Lord will not dwell among those people, namely, because they are flesh. But the remaining people, too, are flesh, so why are some singled out?

If this explanation were correct, it would constitute an argument against the Jews and the Christians, invalidating [their claim that] His spirit resides in the body of Jesus - for he is flesh. Now, one of two things: either this explanation is invalid, or their belief in the incarnation of the spirit of God, praised be He, in the body of Jesus, peace be upon him, is false.

In another copy [of the Torah] it says: "My spirit will not dwell in humankind forever, because they are flesh". This renders the question even more acute.[40]

After introducing the author and his *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt*, we now turn to a philological analysis of selected biblical passages that were singled out by al-Bājī for criticism, with the aim of identifying the different recensions of the Pentateuch used by him. Before that, however, we will pay some attention to previous research on the reception of the Pentateuch among Christian Arabic-speakers as a means of locating al-Bājī's sources within it.

The Christian sources used by al-Bājī

In his discussion and Spanish translation of al-Bājī's *Kitāb ʿalā al-Tawrāt*, Hussein Zurghani notes that the author tells us nothing about the sources he is using other than that he quoted the version of the Torah in Arabic that circulated among the Melkites.[41] Zurghani also notes that al-Bājī often refers to "another copy" and sets out to identify the Arabic text witnesses that the Muslim author could have had access to. Based on the classifications by Georg Graf in 1944[42] and Joseph Rhode in 1921,[43] he studied samples of each Arabic version known at the time and concluded that al-Bājī used the Coptic-based Arabic version

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[40] Ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 226. For another example, see Camilla Adang, "Al-Bājī, *Book against the Torah*", in David Thomas (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations, 600-1500* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), pp. 123-125.

[41] Zurghani, "'Alāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 1, p. 23.

[42] Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, vol. 1 (Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1944), pp. 101-108.

[43] Joseph Francis Rhode, *The Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch in the Church of Egypt: A Study from Eighteen Arabic and Copto-Arabic Mss. (IX-XVII Century) in the National Library at Paris, the Vatican and Bodleian Libraries and the British Museum* (Dissertation, Catholic University of America; Leipzig: Drugulin, 1921).

attested to by ms Paris, BnF Ar. 9 (henceforth BnF Ar. 9) dated 1284 CE, whereas he was not able to detect the "other copy" used by him.[44]

Ronny Vollandt did not specifically deal with BnF Ar. 9 in his classification of Arabic Pentateuch translations, but he notes in passing that it contains the detached version of Marcus ibn al-Qunbar's (ca. 1130/40–1208 CE) commentary-translation.[45] In 1942 Graf listed a range of manuscripts of anonymous commentaries on Genesis–Leviticus containing the same version of the text as the one found in BnF Ar. 9. He suggested that they were produced by Ibn al-Qunbar.[46] The commentary is sometimes interspersed with the biblical text, as in Vat. Sir. 216, or placed after a reading unit, as in Vat. Ar. 606.[47] We do not know what version al-Bājī had access to, but we assume that he used a biblical translation detached from the commentary rather than a copy which included the commentary.

In his short study on the manuscript, Joseph Rhode notes that Genesis in BnF Ar. 9 reflects readings in the Septuagint but that the other books, "especially Deuteronomy", exhibit deviations from it, and calls for a comparison with the Syro-hexapla.[48] Similar observations on a witness to the commentary version had already been made in 1823 by Johann Anton Theiner, who states that Genesis, and to a certain extent also Exodus, exhibit affiliation with the Septuagint, whereas the other books seem to be related to the Peshīṭṭā.[49] Graf corroborates and develops the findings by Theiner and Rhode on this version and based on the renditions of proper names, he suggests that the basis was the Peshīṭṭā, which was later partly revised according to the Septuagint.[50] Graf also suggests that Ibn al-Qunbar was not the translator of these Arabic Bible texts but that he took what was available to him in the *Rūm* Orthodox church at the time and revised these materials.[51]

Adding Zurghani's observations to those of Rhode, Theiner, and Graf, the present study confirms our previous observations that al-Bājī thus used the Arabic text revised by Ibn al-

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[44] Zurghani, "'Alāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 1, pp. 47–61, esp. pp. 60-61. Ms BnF Ar. 9 is accessible online https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b11004704q/f66.item. Accessed 9 January 2024.

[45] Ronny Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch: A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources*, col. « Biblia Arabica» 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 69n79.

[46] Georg Graf, "Ein arabischer Pentateuchkommentar des 12. Jahrhunderts", *Biblica* 23 (1942), pp. 113–138. Ibn al-Qunbar's commentaries are often attributed to Ephrem the Syrian. For later works on Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary, see Samir K. Samir, "Vie et oeuvre de Marc ibn al-Qunbar", in *Christianisme d'Égypte. Mélanges René-Georges Coquin*, col. « Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte » 9 (Paris, 1995), pp. 123–158; and Mark N. Swanson, "Marqus ibn al-Qunbar", in David Thomas and Alex Mallett, with Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala et al. (ed.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 4, col. «History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 17 (Leiden: Brill: 2012), pp. 98-108, esp. 98-101; 103-108.

[47] For more on the various structures of the commentary, see Samir, "Vie et oeuvre de Marc ibn al-Qunbar".

[48] Rhode, *Arabic versions of the Pentateuch*, pp. 70-74. Rhode suggests a close relationship between BnF Ar. 9 and BnF Ar. 16 yet according to Zurghani, only the four last books are the same in these two manuscripts "'Alāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 1, pp. 52-53.

[49] Johann Anton Theiner, *Descriptio codicis manuscripti, qui versionem Pentateuchi arabicam continent, asservati in Bibliotheca Universitatis Vratislaviensis, ac nondum editi, cum speciminibus verisonis arabicae*, etc. (Breslau, 1823).

[50] Graf, "Ein arabischer Pentateuchkommentar", pp. 118-119.

[51] Graf, "Ein arabischer Pentateuchkommentar", pp. 128-129.

Qunbar.[52] In addition to the actual renderings of the text, this explains the structure of the division of the Pentateuch into various "readings" (*qirāʾāt*) in al-Bājī's text and corroborates the fact stated by the Muslim author that this is the version used by the Melkites: Ibn al-Qunbar is known to have left his Coptic denomination for the *Rūm* Orthodox church.[53]

Below, we also confirm Graf's suggestion that this version is based on earlier Arabic translations that circulated among Christians at the time and we aim to identify these translations by using the categorization established in Vollandt's study. Although Ibn al-Qunbar's full commentary is only extant for Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, these manuscripts sometimes include renditions of the biblical text in Numbers and Deuteronomy as well (here we use Vat. Sir. 216 for Genesis and Exodus and Vat. Ar. 606 for Leviticus–Deuteronomy).[54]

Finally, as noted above, we aim at understanding al-Bājī's criticism in light of the biblical material he had at his disposal. Since this is a large undertaking, we restrict this study to a few examples. Thus, we will select a few sample texts and look more closely at the sources used in BnF Ar. 9/al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar, how they relate to various *Vorlagen*, their translation techniques and, where possible, how the textual situation relates to his overall argument of scriptural distortion. We shall also keep an eye on "the other copy" that al-Bājī had access to and referred to as a means to undermine the credibility of the scriptural tradition among Christians.

Example 1

In the questions prompted by the twenty-first reading from Genesis, al-Bājī discusses the chronology from the Flood to Abraham in Genesis 11 (here and below, al-Bājī's text is reproduced according to ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 226, including its inconsistent orthography).[55]

السوال علي القراة الحادية والعشرين من ثلاثه اوجه احدها ان مقتضي ما ذكره فيها من وفيات المذكورين فيها من ارنخشد المولود بعد الطوفان بسنتين الي اولاد ابرام وهو ابرهيم بن تارخ وهم عشره انفس ان المدة الف[56] وسبعون سنه ومقتضي ما ذكر في النسخه الاخرى[57] ان المده ثلاث مايه وخمسه[58] وتسعون

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[52] See Sabine Schmidtke, "Notes on an Arabic Translation of the Pentateuch in the Library of the Twelver Shīʿī Scholar Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266)", *Shii Studies Review* 1 (2017), pp. 72-129, p. 74 n.7.

[53] Swanson, "Marqus ibn al-Qunbar".

[54] Swanson, "Marqus ibn al-Qunbar", p. 105; and Graf, "Ein arabischer Pentateuchkommentar". Vat. Sir. 216 is available online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.sir.216; as is Vat. Ar. 606 in two parts: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ar.606.pt.1 and https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ar.606.pt.2.

[55] For published editions of the work, see Aḥmad (ed.), *Kitāb*, p. 80; al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 61; Zurghani, "ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 44. Al-Saqqā's edition in particular includes substantial editorial alterations, see below. In the ms, there is a note in the margin referring to the chronology in Genesis 5, including the total amount of year elapsing between Adam to Shem. It is transcribed in Zurghani, "ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 44 n.82 and Ahmad (ed.), *Kitāb*, pp. 80-81.

[56] al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 61 adds the word واثنتان, thus altering the age to 1072 years. The alteration is probably made by the editor to improve the count.

سنه⁵⁹ وهذا تناقض فاحش بين النسختين تسقط الثقه بهما في تفسيرهما التوراه العبرانيه والا ان يكون
التناقض في نسخ التوراة العبرانيه ايضا فيزداد التناقض فحشا⁶⁰ **والعشرة** هم ابرم بن تارح بن ناخور بن
ساروخ بن راعوا بن فالق بن غابر بن شالح بن قينان بن ارفخشد وارفخشد بن سام بن نوح ومن ولاده
سام الى ولاده ارفخشد ماية وثلاث سنين⁶¹

Question on the 21ˢᵗ reading, from three perspectives. Firstly, the result of what it
says there concerning the deaths of the people mentioned from Arpachshad, who
was born two years after the Flood, to the birth of Abram, that is, Abraham the son
of Terah – and these are ten people – is a period of 1,070 years. [However] the result
of what is mentioned in another copy is a period of 395 years and this is an absurd
contradiction between the two copies, which deprives both of them of credibility in
their translation of the Hebrew Torah, except if the contradiction also occurred in
the copies of the Hebrew Torah itself, in which case the contradiction would be
compounded and be even more absurd.⁶² The ten [men] are: Abram son of Terah,
son of Nahor, son of Serug, son of Reu, son of Peleg, son of Eber, son of Shelah,
son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, Arphaxad being the son of Shem, the son of Noah.

Al-Bājī has identified one of the most problematic text-critical cruxes in the textual history
of the Hebrew Bible.⁶³ In the Septuagint, ten people are included from Arpachshad to
Abraham, including a certain Cainan, whereas the Masoretic text, as well as the Samaritan
Pentateuch and later the Peshīṭṭā, includes only nine. Cainan was perhaps added in later
witnesses to the Septuagint as a means to match the account of the genealogy provided in
Luke 3:36.⁶⁴ Cainan lived no less than 460 years, which, together with other additions and
alterations in the two texts, results in a difference of more than a thousand years between

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⁵⁷ al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 61 adds the passage وهي التوراة العبرانية "and this is the Hebrew Torah" as a
  means of explaining the text. However, as argued below, this was in fact not the Hebrew text but the
  Peshīṭṭā.

⁵⁸ al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 61 reads وائنان, again likely the editor's attempt to make sense of the
  numbers.

⁵⁹ Ahmad (ed.), *Kitāb*, p. 80 excludes text between سنه ... ومقتضي.

⁶⁰ In al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 61, the following is excluded فحشا ... في تفسيرهما.

⁶¹ In al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 61, the numbers of years are included by the editor.

⁶² A similar comment is made by the author with regard to Genesis 6:1-2; see Ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M,
  p. 226; Aḥmad (ed.), *Kitāb*, p. 49.

⁶³ The genealogies in Genesis chapters 5 and 11 serve to connect the time lapsing from Adam to Noah and
  from Noah to Abraham. Although the names of the biblical characters listed remain more or less the
  same, their lifespans were revised and the three main versions vary significantly (i.e., the Masoretic text,
  the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint, with some internal deviation as well). In chapter 5, it is
  mainly the division of years before the birth of the first son and the years elapsing after it that differ
  between the versions and the total amount of years for each character is the same (except for the case of
  Lamech where all three versions differ with up to a century, and Jared and Methuselah where the
  Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the other two). In contrast, chapter 11 exhibits a great variation.

⁶⁴ Andrew E. Steinmann, "A Comparison of the Text of Genesis in Three Traditions: Masoretic text,
  Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64.1 (2021), pp. 25-43, here p.
  41 n.33.

the Masoretic text and the Septuagint. The Samaritan Pentateuch differs from both of them.[65] The discrepancies between the three versions were carefully recorded already by Eusebius in the fourth century and sporadically discussed by scholars in the East throughout late antique and mediaeval times.[66]

Muslim scholars like al-Bīrūnī (d. in or after 442/1050) and the above-mentioned Ibn Ḥazm also addressed this issue, and it was apparently through a Muslim source that al-Bājī became aware of the discussion.[67] In the biblical texts, the lifespan of each biblical figure is provided according to two sets: first according to how old the character was when his first son was born, and then how long he lived after his first son's birth. Al-Bājī only takes into consideration the first numbers as he reaches a result of 1070 years, which perfectly matches the numbers provided in BnF Ar. 9 and the main manuscripts of the Septuagint if the first years only – the age of a character when he begets his firstborn – from Arpachshad to Terah are added together.[68] In witnesses to what is labelled Arab^Copt in Vollandt's classification, the first number in Nahor's life is listed as 75 instead of 79 years, thus BnF Ar. 9 and al-Bājī seem to preserve an older reading.[69] In Ibn al-Qunbar's text, as represented in Vat. Sir. 216, something interesting occurs.[70] The text follows the Septuagint's count until Cainan but then starts following the Peshīṭṭā. This deviation does not occur in al-Bājī's text nor in BnF Ar. 9 and as Genesis continues, they follow Ibn al-Qunbar's text again. Thus, this deviation may have occurred only in Vat. Sir. 216. It is not uncommon for Christian scribes to note down what they found in other copies in this particular passage. The scribe of BnF Ar. 12, for example, noted in the margin that Cainan is not mentioned in the Hebrew version.[71]

As for the other copy used by al-Bājī, it reportedly contained a span of 395 years. This is exactly the result we get if we add up the first numbers provided in the Peshīṭṭā and include the one connected to Shem to reach a total number of ten men. The Peshīṭṭā matches the Masoretic text in full except in the case of Terah, who in the main recension of the Peshīṭṭā

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[65] Steinmann, "Comparison".

[66] Yonatan Moss, "Versions and Perversions of Genesis: Jacob of Edessa, Saadia Gaon, and the Falsification of Biblical History", in Aaron M. Butts and Simcha Gross (ed.), *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), pp. 207-229; and Alexander Treiger, "From Theodore Abū Qurra to Abed Azrié: The Arabic Bible in Context", in Miriam L. Hjälm (ed.)*, Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition: The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims*, col. «Biblia Arabica» 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 11-57.

[67] See Adang, *Muslim Writers*, pp. 236 and 248.

[68] John William Wevers, *Genesis* «Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum» I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), pp. 114-147; BnF Ar. 9, fol. 16r-v. In COP Bible 20, fol. 12v-13r, a copy of Arab^Hebr1a (cf. Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, p. 226), the same numbers are provided and thus deviate from the Hebrew text.

[69] Witnesses of this translation include Vat. Copt. 1, fol. 12v-13r and BnF Ar. 12, fol. 14r-v. These two manuscripts are available online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.copt.1 and https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84192173/f2.item. Some numbers were not fully legible as the margins of fol. 12 are partly damaged. In contrast to the first years, the second years provided for each biblical character differ rather substantially from other witnesses to the Septuagint in the Coptic-Arabic version.

[70] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 51v.

[71] The same occurred in the chronology of Genesis 5, see Rhode, *Arabic Versions*, p. 72.

begets Abram at the age of 75 and not 70, as in the Masoretic text.[72] It is likely, then, that al-Bājī had in front of him an Arabic copy of what Vollandt labels Arab^Syr2. [73] We have had access to Sinai Ar. 4 in this recension, which matches the Peshīṭtā in this regard.[74] Alternatively, al-Bājī had another copy of Ibn al-Qunbar's text in which a similar change of *Vorlage* to what we saw in Vat. Sir 216 had taken place.

Al-Bājī's last hypothetical statement that "if the contradiction also occurred in the copies of the Hebrew Torah itself, in which case the contradiction would be compounded and be even more absurd", seems to indicate that he did not have access to a Hebrew copy otherwise he would probably have noticed that in the Hebrew Bible, the span is only 290 years (in the Samaritan Pentateuch it is 940).[75]

	Hebrew	Samaritan	Greek	BnF12/ Vat.Cop1	BnF Ar.9	Vat. Sir. 216.	Pesh.
Shem	(100+500)	(100+500)	(100+500)	(100+500)	(100+500)	(100+500)	(100+500)
Arpachshad	35+403	135+303	135+430	135+330	135+330	135+430	35+403/430*
Cainan			130+330	130+430	130+330	130+330	
Shelah	30+403	130+303	130+330	130+300	130+330	30+430	30+403
Eber	34+430	134+270	134+370	134+270	134+330	34+430	34+430
Peleg	30+209	130+109	130+209	130+270	130+209	30+209	30+209
Reu	32+207	132+107	132+207	132+207	132+207	32+207	32+207
Serug	30+200	130+100	130+200	130+200	130+200	30+200	30+200
Nahor	29+119	79+69	79+129	75+120	79+119	29+119	29+119
Terah	70	70	70	70	70	75	75
	290+	**940+**	**1070+**	**1066+**	**1070+**	**525+**	**295+**

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[72] Here the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu is used for the Peshīṭtā and for the Hebrew text Rudolf Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart, 3rd ed., 1987 [1967/77], p. 16.

[73] Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, p. 245.

[74] Sinai Ar. 4, fol. 10v-11r. Fol. 10v appears to have been written by another hand. As Treiger has already shown, the other early Peshīṭtā-based Arabic version (Arab^Syr1), Sinai Ar. 2, fol. 16r-v, exhibits considerable deviation, with several numbers omitted or altered, see Treiger, "From Theodore Abū Qurra", pp. 26-27. It should be mentioned in this regard that yet another Arabic version of the Pentateuch, that by al-Ḥārith b. Sinān based on the Syro-hexapla, provides an even higher number, 1170 or 1270 depending on the mss we had access to (cf. Sinai Ar. 3, fol. 37r–38r and ms Oxford, Bodleian, Laud. Or. 258, fol. 43v-44r). Apparently, al-Bājī did not have access to these recensions here. Even within the same version, there is some notable variation in the lifespans of the various characters.

[75] Steinmann, "Comparison", p. 41.

Finally, al-Bājī sums up the findings in Genesis 5 and 11 and notes that from Shem to Abram, 1,073[!][76] years have elapsed and from Adam to Shem 2,156 years, that is 3,229 years in total. The other copy has a total of only 1,564, he claims. The numbers do not fully match the above, and it appears that just like numbers vary in many Christian Arabic Bible translations, so they did in al-Bājī's text and for the same reason: numbers require no grammaticality that instantly prompt the observant reader to spot a mistake and if there is no external paradigm that makes sense of them, they easily get corrupted. This is probably partly why they differ in the biblical *Vorlagen* as well. In any event, al-Saqqā, the editor of one of the editions of al-Bājī's text, altered the numbers found in the manuscript and adds in the footnote a chart with the Hebrew, Greek, and Samaritan calculation of these numbers.[77] However, the copy consulted by al-Bājī was neither related to the Hebrew version nor to the Samaritan text, but rather to the Peshīṭtā, as mentioned above, and to the complex transmission of various biblical texts among Eastern Christians at this time.

Example 2

Our next sample is taken from the story of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. There is a slight variation between the Septuagint and the Masoretic text in their respective renditions of this passage. Al-Bājī includes Genesis 39:11–15 in his refutation of the fiftieth reading.[78] Thus, we will now compare 1) his rendering, 2) the Arabic Bible he had access to, i.e., BnF Ar. 9,[79] and 3) a representative of Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary,[80] with Arab^Copt, to show that in Genesis these texts are related. For the sake of comparison, we will also bring into the conversation the most widespread Peshīṭtā-based Arabic version, Arab^Syr2 (= ms Sinai Arabic 4, henceforth SA 4), an earlier Peshīṭtā-based version, Arab^Syr1 (=ms Sinai Arabic 2, henceforth SA 2), as well as Arab^Syr_Hex1a (= ms Sinai Arabic 10, henceforth SA 10) and Arab^Syr_Hex1b (= ms Sinai Arabic 3, henceforth SA 3).[81]

Most important for the plot is whether Potiphar's wife took Joseph's *garment*, i.e., a piece of clothing in singular as in the Masoretic text (בגדו), or his *clothes* in plural, as in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint (בגדיו/ τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ). In the latter scenario, Joseph fled naked from his master's wife whereas in the former case, he simply left one piece of clothing behind.[82] Not only does Arab^Copt, including al-Bājī's version of it,[83] reflect

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[76] In the ms, this passage is written in the margin and may originally be from another ms. This would explain why in the main text, the number was 1070 and in the marginal text 1073.

[77] al-Saqqā, (ed.) *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, pp. 61-62.

[78] Ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, pp. 247-248. For the other editions, see Aḥmad (ed.), *Kitāb*, p. 115; al-Saqqā (ed.), *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 85; Zurghani, "ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 67.

[79] BnF Ar. 9, fol. 63r.

[80] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r.

[81] Arab^Syr_Hex1b/SA 3 according to Monferrer-Sala's edition, see his *Hexateuch from the Syro-Hexapla*, col. «Biblical and Apocryphal Christian Arabic Texts» (Gorgias Press, 2019), p. 73. The other manuscripts are available on the Sinai Manuscript Digital Library https://sinaimanuscripts.library.ucla.edu. Login requested.

[82] Steinmann, "Comparative", p. 29.

[83] Including BnF Ar. 9, fol. 63r. In this passage, there are some minor discrepancies between BnF Ar. 9/al-Bājī's text and Arab^Copt.

the plural form "clothes" (ثيابه) as in the Septuagint but it also expands on this feature by adding an explanatory clause "[And she caught hold of him by his clothes] *and stripped him of these*". This addition, which is not found in the *Vorlagen*, indicates again that in Genesis, al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar share common ground with Arab^Copt. Yet, as it occasionally deviates rather substantially from it, it is best seen as a subcategory of it, or as reflecting a stage in which Arab^Copt had yet to be revised.

As for Arab^Syr_Hex1a–b, they reflect the Septuagintal plural (ثيابه), but, as expected, not the addition "and stripped him of these". Arab^Syr2 seems influenced by the tradition of Joseph leaving behind all his clothes as well but opts for other word choices (لباسه/بردايه) and does not include the additional passage. Arab^Syr1 clearly reflects the Masoretic-Peshīṭṭā tradition in using the singular (ثوبه). Both Syriac-based versions include the addition "to the market" found in the Peshīṭṭā. Compare al-Bājī (Ibn al-Qunbar's text, BnF Ar. 9 and Vat. Sir. 216, in footnotes) with the Arabic recensions mentioned above:

LXX 12 And she caught hold of him by his <u>clothes</u> [τῶν ἱματίων; MT בבגדו P ܒܠܒܘܫܗ], and said, Lie with me; and having left his clothes, in her hands, he fled, and went forth [P: ܠܫܘܩܐ].[84]

al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar	فتعلقت[86] بثيابه وعرته اياهم قايلة ارقد معي	نخلف ثيابه في يديها وهرب وخرج[85]
Arab^Copt[87]	فتعلقت بثيابه وعرته اياها قايلة ارقد معي	فترك ‧ ثيابه في يديها وخرج هارباً
Arab^Syr_Hex1	[88]فتعلقت بثيابه وقالت له ارقد[89] معي[90]	فترك ثيابه في يديه وخرج هرباً
Arab^Syr2[91]	فتعلقت بردايه وقالت له ضاجعني	فترك لباسه في يدها وهرب نخرج الي السوق
Arab^Syr1[92]	واخذت ثوبه وقالت اضطجع معي	فترك ثوبه في يدها وفر خارجا الي السوق

Based on the examples surveyed in this paper, the addition of an entire clause ("and stripped him of these") that we see here is rather untypical of this translation. In general, Arab^Copt stays close to the source text, yet it deviates from its form for the sake of fluency in the target text and here, seemingly for emphasis. The discrepancy in the *Vorlagen* in verse 1 "and there was no one of the household within [MT/Pesh in the house]", is reflected in

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84 Wevers, *Genesis*, p. 372; English translation by Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament* (Samuel Bagster & Sons, London, 1879 [1844]), p. 53; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 64.

85 Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r خرج.

86 Vat. Sir. 216 fol. 106r فسكت (in Karshuni)

87 Arab^Copt = Vat. Copt. 1. fol. 49v–50r; BnF Ar. 12, fol. 53v.

88 Arab^Syr_Hex1b=Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 73; Arab^Syr_Hex1a=SA 10 fol. 44r.

89 SA 10, fol. 44r تعال لتضاجعني.

90 SA 10, fol. 44r, see above.

91 SA 4, fol. 47v-48r.

92 SA 2, fol. 62r.

the various Arabic translations as expected, yet they all, regardless of the *Vorlage*, alter the text somewhat so as to make it run more smoothly in Arabic. Thus, in Arab[Copt], including al-Bājī's text, the above passage is rendered "and there was no one inside the house",[93] and the Syriac-based translations both rendered it "and there was no one from the household there".[94]

We make an interesting observation in verse 14, where a switch from direct speech (the Septuagint: "he came in to me, saying, 'Lie with me'") to indirect speech (the Masoretic text/the Peshīṭtā: "he came in unto me to lie with me") has occurred. It is worthwhile to note that al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar's texts reflects the direct speech found in the Septuagint "and said: lie with me" whereas Arab[Copt] has turned it into indirect speech, just as the other biblical *Vorlagen* and probably for the same reason: to make the sentence run more smoothly. It thus appears that in this instance, al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar reflects an older, more original reading, closer to the Septuagint, which was later changed for the sake of fluency in the target language or in conversation with other *Vorlagen*. The choice of rendering "a Hebrew boy" in indefinite form as in al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar rather than as "this Hebrew boy" as in Arab[Copt] also supports the notion that al-Bājī's text reflects an older stage in the transmission of this version. In contrast, however, we read in al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar's text that the boy laughs "at me [the queen]" and not "at us" as in the other source texts and Arabic translations.

LXX 14 that she called those that were in the house, and spoke to them, <u>saying [P–]</u>, See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew servant to mock <u>us</u> – he came in to me, <u>saying, Lie</u> [λέγων κοιμήθητι; MT לִשְׁכַּב and P ܠܡܕܡܟ "to lie"] with me, and I cried with a loud voice.[95]

al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar   دعت الذين[96] في البيت وقالت لهم نظرتم[97] انه ادخل[98] الي غلاما[99] عبرانيا[100]

Arab[Copt101]   نادت الذين في البيت وقالت لهم انظروا   انه ادخل الينا <u>هذا الغلام العبراني</u> ليضحك

بنا دخل الي <u>ليرقد</u> معي فصرخت بعظم صوت

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[93] ولم يكن احد داخل البيت

[94] SA 3, Monferrer-; ولم يكن احد من اهل البيت هناك SA 4, fol. 47v;ولم يكن ثم احد من اهل البيت SA 2, fol. 62r Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 73./SA 10, fol. 44r ولم يكن داخل البيت احد.

[95] Wevers, *Genesis*, p. 373; Brenton, *Septuagint*, p. 53; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 64.

[96] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r الذي.

[97] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r لم ابصروا (in Karshuni).

[98] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r قد دخل (in Karshuni).

[99] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r هذا الغلام (in Karshuni)..

[100] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 106r العبراني (in Karshuni).

[101] Arab[Copt] = Vat. Copt. 1, fol. 49v-50r; BnF Ar. 12, fol. 53v.

Arab^{Copt102} نادت الذين في البيت وقالت لهم انظروا   انه ادخل الينا هذا الغلام العبراني ليضحك

بنا دخل الي ليرقد معي فصرخت بعظم صوت

In any event, should this version of the Arabic Pentateuch be critically edited, it will be important to take al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar's rendition into consideration, as it seems to reflect an early stage of his version.

The main inconsistency al-Bājī finds here is that first the text tells us that no one is in the household, whereas later, Potiphar's wife calls for "them" and "they" come, thus it is not connected to its later transmission, but to the logic of the story.

To conclude: as far as we can tell, al-Bājī's text for Genesis is the same as the one found in BnF Ar. 9 and in Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary. The small deviation we have seen between witnesses to this text – al-Bājī's text, BnF Ar. 9, and Vat. Sir. 216 – is likely the result of inner-textual corruption or the intervention of engaged copyists.[103] Most importantly, based on these two samples it can be established that al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar's version of Genesis is related to Arab^{Copt}, either as a branch within this recension or as a text preceding it, in which case Arab^{Copt} would be a revision.

Example 3

In our text sample from Exodus, namely chapter 1:12, al-Bājī[104]/Ibn al-Qunbar's[105] rendition continues to reflect the Septuagint reading as opposed to the one found in the Masoretic text. Here, in the first reading in Exodus, the Greek text explicates that "*the Egyptians* greatly abhorred the children of Israel", whereas in the Masoretic text and the Peshīṭṭā the verb is in the passive and the word "Egyptians" is omitted (i.e., "and they were adread because of the children of Israel"). Al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar and Arab^{Copt} follow the Septuagint's inclusion of the "Egyptians", whereas Arab^{Syr_Hex}1a–b omit it,[106] as do the Peshīṭṭā-based Arabic translations, as expected.[107] The rendition of Exodus 1:12–13 in the two sets (al-Bājī/BnF Ar. 9/Ibn al-Qunbar and Arab^{Copt}) are similar in word choice:

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[102] Arab^{Copt} = Vat. Copt. 1, fol. 49v-50r; BnF Ar. 12, fol. 53v.

[103] In our text samples, al-Bājī's text does not reflect Arab^{Heb}1b in Vat. Ar. 2, fol. 28v. (https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ar.2) nor that in Arab^{Syr_Hex}1a in COP Bible 20, fol. 47r (https://archive.org/details/COP3-4/page/n5/mode/2up).

[104] Ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 249. For the other editions, see al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 89; Ahmad, *Kitāb*, p. 120, Zurghani, "ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 71.

[105] BnF Ar. 9, fol. 86r; Vat. Sir 216, fol. 122r.

[106] Arab^{Syr_Hex}1a = SA 10, fol. 61r; Arab^{Syr_Hex}1b = Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 89.

[107] SA 2, fol. 82r. SA 4, fol. 66r, is difficult to read here but does not seem to include the word "Egyptians".

12 But as they humbled them, by so much they multiplied, <u>and grew exceedingly strong</u>; and <u>the Egyptians [οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι; MT/P–]</u> greatly abhorred the children of Israel.[108]

<div dir="rtl">

al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar   وكلما كانوا يذلونهم كانوا يزدادون¹⁰⁹ بكثرة [ويزدادون قوه]¹¹⁰ وكان¹¹¹ <u>المصريون</u> يشفقون¹¹³ 112 علي بني اسرايل

Arab^{Copt114}   وكانوا كلما اذلوهم   يزدادون   كثرة   ويزدادون قوه   وكان <u>المصريون</u> يمتهنون   بني اسرايل

</div>

In other places, there are similarities between al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar's text and Arab^{Syr}2 and it may be that Exodus was revised, as mentioned above in the section on previous research. In any event, al-Bājī or his copy (or later copyist) omits a clause, seemingly a case of scribal haplography (cf. يزدادون كثرة ويزدادون قوه). More importantly, the copy used by al-Bājī contained another scribal error, which he used to undermine the integrity of the biblical text. In verse 12, we read in al-Bājī's text that the Egyptians "had pity" on Israel and in the next verse that the Egyptians enslaved them, causing al-Bājī to state: "The reports that the Egyptians had pity on the children of Israel and the reports that they unjustly enslaved them are two mutually exclusive reports".[115] The Arabic word "had pity" (يشفقون) in al-Bājī's text is seemingly a corruption of يشتقون, from the root *shaqqa* "to be heavy, burdensome, grieve". Indeed, Ibn al-Qunbar (i.e., BnF Ar. 9/Vat. Sir. 216) reads يشقون. Based on the (admittedly few) samples extracted for this paper, we have thus detected one of the surprisingly few discrepancies between Ibn al-Qunbar's and al-Bājī's texts.

Although al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar reflects the same text as Arab^{Copt} here, there are notable variations between the two versions in other places, requiring a more thorough study. In any event, whether as the result of a partial revision or an original composition, both Genesis and Exodus in al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar's texts exhibit a relationship with the Septuagint. This is not the case as we move on.

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[108] John William Wevers, *Exodus* (Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum II,1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), pp. 67-68; Brenton, *Septuagint*, p. 70; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 86.

[109] Vat. Sir. 216, fol. 122r يزدادو ا (in Karshuni).

[110] Omitted in al-Bājī, see below. Here according to BnF Ar. 9. Vat. Sir. 216 reads ويزدادوا بقوه (in Karshuni).

[111] Vat. Sir. 216 وكانت (in Karshuni).

[112] Vat. Sir. 216 المصريين (in Karshuni).

[113] BnF Ar. 9 يشقون. Vat. Sir. 216 شقوا (in Karshuni).

[114] BnF Ar. 12, fol. 74v. Some words in the margin are difficult to read; Vat. Copt. 1, fol. 63r; one word is in the margin and difficult to read.

[115] Ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 249. فان الاخبار عن المصرين بانهم كانوا يشفقون علي بني اسرايل والاخبار عنهم بانهم يستعبدونهم جورا اخباران متنافيان.

Example 4

The first sample from Leviticus provided by al-Bājī comes from chapter 3:1–2, listed there as the first reading of the third book.[116] The same text is found in Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary.[117] The Greek and Hebrew renditions of this passage are rather close, yet they allow for a certain variation in meaning. In the Septuagint, the Hebrew *[zebaḥ] shəlāmīm* "complete, whole > peace [offering]" is rendered [θυσία] σωτηρίου, often translated as "peace [-offering]" but also with the meaning of "salvation".[118] The Peshīṭtā uses the Syriac cognate with a similar meaning as the Hebrew. The Hebrew term *ʾōhel mōʿēd* "tent of *meeting*" is rendered τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου, "the tabernacle of *witness*" emphasizing the aspect of presence in the Hebrew text, whereas the Peshīṭtā renders it as "tent of *time*" (*mashkənā zabnā*) focusing on its temporariness. Although both the Septuagint and the Peshīṭtā reflect the proper meanings of the two Hebrew terms, these in turn give rise to a certain fluctuation in meaning in the various Arabic translations. Arab^Copt reads "sacrifice of salvation" [ذبيحة خلاص] and "shrine/dome of witnesses" [قبة الشهادة], clearly reflecting a Greek origin.[119] The same word choices are provided in Arab^Syr–Hex1a.[120] In contrast to what we saw in Genesis and Exodus, however, al-Bājī's word choices rather reflect a literal translation from the Peshīṭtā: "whole offering" (ذبيحة تامة) and "shrine/dome of time" (قبة الزمان).[121] In fact, al-Bājī's version reflects Arab^Syr2 more or less word by word.

al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar	وان كان قربانه ذبيحه تامة للرب وقرب [من الثيران][122] فليقرب قربانا لا عيب فيه ذكرا كان او انثي ويضع صاحب القربان يده علي راس قربانه ثم يذبحه علي باب قبه الزمان
Arab^Syr2[123]	وان كان قربانه ذبيحه تامة للرب وقرب من الثيران فليقرب قربانا لا عيب فيه ذكرا كان او انثي وليضع صاحب القربان يده علي راس قربانه ثم يذبحه علي باب قبه الزمان

It thus appears that the text used by al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar is one of the many mixed versions of the Pentateuch that circulated in the Christian communities.[124] Genesis and Exodus represent a Greek-based Arabic translation, possibly via the Coptic as indicated by

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[116] This rendering is found in ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 255; For the other editions of al-Bājī's text, see al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 103; Ahmad, *Kitāb*, p. 142, Zurghani, "ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 86.

[117] For Ibn al-Qunbar's Leviticus commentary, we had access to Vat. Ar. 606. For this specific rendering in Ibn al-Qunbar's recension, see BnF Ar. 9, fol. 157v and Vat. Ar. 606 (1st part), fol. 147r.

[118] John William Wevers, *Leviticus* (Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum II, 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), p. 55; Brenton, *Septuagint*, p. 127; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 160.

[119] Cf. BnF Ar. 12, fol. 135r; Vat. Copt. 1, fol. 123v.

[120] Cf. Oxford, Bodleian, Laud. Or. 258, fol. 208v.

[121] Arab^Syr–Hex1b reflects the Peshīṭtā-based reading in this regard (ذبيح كامل and قبة الزمان), cf. Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 138.

[122] Omitted in al-Bājī's manuscript but present in BnF Ar. 9, fol. 157v.

[123] SA 4, fol. 128v.

[124] See Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, esp. pp. 222, 229, 260.

Zurghani (although further research is necessary to confirm this), yet Leviticus reflects the Peshīṭtā and represents a witness to Arab[Syr]2.[125] As we shall now see, the picture becomes even more complicated as we turn to the book of Numbers.

Example 5

In the book of Numbers, al-Bājī's tract continues to reflect the text in BnF Ar. 9 but it no longer follows either Arab[Copt] or Arab[Syr]2 but rather yet another Christian Arabic version, as noted elsewhere.[126] In contrast to the previous books, Numbers is most closely connected to Arab[Syr_Hex]1b as represented in SA 3.[127] Compare for example the second question in Numbers, which refers to Numbers 2:2, where al-Bājī's text exhibits similarities in syntax and word choice with SA 3, often as oppose to Arab[Copt] and Arab[Syr]2:[128]

LXX "Let the children of Israel encamp fronting *each other*, every man keeping his own rank, according to *their* standards, according to the houses of their families; the children of Israel [MT/P-] shall encamp round about the tabernacle of witness.[129]

al-Bājī/BnF Ar. 9 etc   ليحل بنو اسراييل تلقايِ وليحل كل رجل منهم[130]   في الارض كلها في بني ابيه وليحلوا حلول[131] القبة

Arab[Syr_Hex]1b[132]   ليحل بني اسراييل   كل رجل منهم وعشيرته في الاماكن بمنازل بيوتات ابايهم وليحلوا مقابلة القبة وحولها من كل نواحيها

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[125] A quick look at other passages supports these findings. See for example al-Bājī's rendering of Leviticus 1:2–3 in al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 103, and that in SA 4, fol. 126v; as well as the renditions of Leviticus 10:1–2 in al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 104 and SA 4, fol. 138r–v; and that in Leviticus 25:20–24 in al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p.108 and SA 4, fol. 164v.

[126] Adang, "Al-Bājī, Book against the Torah". Vat. 606, vol. 2, fol. 200v–201r, i.e., the manuscript that includes Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary of Genesis–Leviticus, exhibits the same text as BnF Ar. 9/al-Bājī here as well.

[127] See also Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, p. 260. In our test samples, Arab[Syr_Hex]1b differs from Arab[Syr_Hex]1a as represented in Oxford, Bodl. Laud. Or. 258, fol. 264v.

[128] See ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 260. For the other editions of al-Bājī's text, see al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 111; Ahmad, *Kitāb*, pp. 155-156; Zurghani, "'Alāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 95. For the text often transmitted with Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary, see BnF Ar. 9, fol. 209r and Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 200v–201r.

[129] John William Wevers, *Numeri* (Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum III, 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), p. 62; Brenton, *Septuagint* p. 172; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 211.

[130] BnF Ar. 9, fol. 209r adds post وعشيرته.

[131] In Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 200v–201r حول (the word is repeated on both folios).

[132] SA 3, fol. 211r. See Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 171.

ArabCopt[133]   كل رجل منكم فليقترب كمرتبته وعلامات بيوت قبآيلهم وينزل بنو إسرائيل بإزاء حول

قبة الشهادة في محلة بني إسرائيل

ArabSyr2[135]   يلزم كل رجل منكم بمعسكر[134] قايده ينزل بنو اسرائيل في مواضع منازل قواد اسباطهم من

يعيد حول قبه الامد

The biblical text in Numbers 2:2 is dense and its syntax challenging to any translator, which may have prompted revision and retranslation. The repetition of "the children of Israel" in the Septuagint is only reflected in Arab^Copt, which is clearly not the version followed by al-Bājī here. None of the two renditions is particularly literal. The last phrase in Arab^Syr_Hex1b "and surrounded it by all directions", is not attested in the *Vorlagen* but rather constitutes an addition that elaborates on the previous phrase "they camped around the tent". There are similar "alternative renditions" in Arab^Syr_Hex1b, a trait otherwise typical of Peshīṭṭā-based Arabic translations.[136] Al-Bājī later criticizes the rendering of "land" in the biblical text, yet this gloss is not detected in Arab^Syr_Hex1b and not supported by the *Vorlagen* and seems thus to be a corruption, which has occurred within this rendition (i.e. al-Bājī's text/BnF Ar. 9 etc).

Whereas al-Bājī's text and that transmitted in Arab^Syr_Hex1b are sometimes identical, they may be completely different at other occasions and it may be that we have to deal with another revision.[137] We will include another example from Numbers.

Example 6

In Numbers 3:39, the Peshīṭṭā clearly differs from the Masoretic-Septuagint twice: in the former only Moses is mentioned as the subject who numbered the Levites whereas in the latter two, both Moses and Aaron are mentioned. In addition, the Peshīṭṭā omits the phrase "according to their families", present in the other two witnesses. Here al-Bājī's text follows Arab^Syr_Hex1b rather closely.[138]

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[133] BnF Ar. 12, fol. 179v.

[134] Or معسكر. This passage is in general difficult to read, see also fol.47v in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Ar. 234 https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb00017607?page=98,99

[135] SA 4, fol. 173v–174r.

[136] For a comparative chart, see Hjälm, *Christian Arabic Versions*, pp. 379-398.

[137] In Numbers 2:3, the two texts are very different.

[138] See ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 260. For the other editions of al-Bājī's text, see al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 111; Ahmad, *Kitāb*, p. 156; Zurghani, "ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 96. For the version often transmitted with Ibn al-Qunbar's commentary, see BnF Ar. 9, fol. 212r and Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 203r.

LXX 39 All the numbering of the Levites, whom Moses <u>and Aaron [P om.]</u> numbered by the word of the Lord, <u>according to their families [P om.]</u>, every male from a month old and upwards, *were* two and twenty thousand.[139]

al-Bājī/ BnF Ar. 9 etc	فكان جميع الاويين اذ عدهم <u>موسى</u> بكلمة فم الله كل ذكر <u>لقبيلته</u> من ابن[140] شهر فا[141] فوق ذلك[142] اثنان[143] وعشرون[144] الفا
Arab[Syr_Hex]1b[145]	فكان جميع الاويين حين عدهم <u>موسى</u> بكلمة فم الله كل ذكر <u>لقبيلته</u> من ابن شهر وما فوق ذلك اثنين وعشرين الف رجل
Arab[Syr]2[146]	وكان عدد جميع الاويين الذي عد <u>موسى</u> عن قول الرب كل ذكر منهم من ابن شهر الي فوق اثنين وعشرين الفا
Arab[Copt][147]	بجميع عده الاويين الذين احصاهم <u>موسى</u> بقول الرب <u>كعشايرهم</u> كل ذكر من ابن شهر فصاعدا اثنان وعشرون الفا

Note that neither al-Bājī's text/BnF Ar. 9 etc nor Arab[Syr_Hex]1b reflects the Septuagint/Hebrew version of "Moses and Aaron"; they rather follow the Peshīṭtā. In contrast, they reflect the phrase "according to their tribes" which is omitted in the Peshīṭtā. As Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala has shown, the revision (Arab[Syr_Hex]1b) at times reworked the earlier version (Arab[Syr_Hex]1a) rather extensively.[148] Arab[Copt] does not share the Septuagint rendering either, (cf. the Göttingen edition),[149] which is thus only reflected in Arab[Syr_Hex]1a.[150]

Example 7

Our last example is from Deuteronomy. In the fourteenth question of the first reading, we find a quotation from Deuteronomy 21:22–23, a passage which is often taken by Christians as foreshadowing Jesus' crucifixion while for al-Bājī it constitutes proof that Jesus was *not*

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[139] Wevers, *Numeri*, p. 84; Brenton, *Septuagint* p. 175; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 215.

[140] Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 203r ابن.

[141] BnF Ar. 9, fol. 212r وما.

[142] Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 203r om.

[143] Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 203r اثنين.

[144] Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 203r وعشرين.

[145] SA 3, fol. 214r; Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 173.

[146] SA 4, fol. 176v.

[147] BnF Ar. 12, fol. 183r.

[148] Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, pp. xxviii-lviii.

[149] Wevers, *Numeri*, p. 84n39; cf. Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 215, n39ᵃ.

[150] In Arab[Syr_Hex]1a (in Oxford, Bodl. Laud. Or. 258, fol. 268r), the Septuagint-reading is reflected.

crucified. Again, al-Bājī's text and the one connected with Ibn al-Qunbar are identical.[151] Despite the rather dense Hebrew phrasing of this passage, the Septuagint and the Peshīṭṭā do not deviate notably from it. The Arabic translations, however, exhibit significant variation and it becomes clear that just like in Numbers, al-Bājī's text/BnF Ar. 9 etc exhibits similarities with Arab[Syr-Hex]1b.[152] Compare the three Christian Arabic versions used by al-Bājī/Ibn al-Qunbar in the various books (Arab[Syr]2; Arab[Copt]):

LXX 22 And if there be sin in <u>any one</u> [ἔν τινι; MT בְאִישׁ /P ܐܢܫ], *and* the judgment of death *be upon him*, and he be put to death, and ye hang him on a tree: 23 his body shall not remain upon the tree, but ye shall by all means bury it in that day; for every one that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God.[153]

al-Bājī/BnF Ar. 9 etc	وان اذنب رجل ذنبا <u>فليقتل</u> ويصلب على خشبه ولا يبات جسده على الخشبة لكن يدفن من يومه من اجل انه من الله ملعون كل مرفوع على خشبة
Arab[Syr_Hex]1b[154]	وان اذنب رجل <u>بخطاء وذنباً يستوجب للقتل</u> فليصلب على خشبه ولا يبات جسده على الخشبه لكنه يدفن في يومه من اجل انه من الرب ملعون كلمن معلق مفروع على خشبه
Arab[Syr]2[160]	واي رجل وجب عليه القتل[155] والصلب فصلب علي خشبه فيقتل[156] ولا[157] تبيت جسده علي الخشبه ولكنه يقبر/ يدفن[158] من يومه[159] ومن افتري علي الله يصلب

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[151] Ms Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 794 M, p. 271. For the editions of al-Bājī's text, see al-Saqqā, *ʿAlā al-Tawrāt*, p. 138; Ahmad, *Kitāb*, p. 186; Zurghani, "'Alā' ad-Dīn", vol. 2, p. 119. BnF Ar. 9, fol. 306v and Vat. Ar. 606 (2nd part), fol. 274v.

[152] There is notable variation between Arab[Syr_Hex]1b and Arab[Syr_Hex]1a here. Neither Oxford, Bodleian, Laud. Or 258 nor SA 10 includes the passage (there is a gap between fol. 192v–193r–192v ends with Deuteronomy 21:10 and 193r starts with Deuteronomy 23:15). Here we read from Vat. Ar. 1.

[153] John William Wevers, *Deuteronomium* (Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum III, 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), pp. 248-249; Brenton, *Septuagint* p. 260, here somewhat revised [Brenton reads "23 his body shall not remain **all night**" 23 οὐκ ἐπικοιμηθήσεται τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου…]; the Leiden critical edition as uploaded in https://cal.huc.edu; Kittel et al. (ed.), *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 324.

[154] Monferrer-Sala, *Hexateuch*, p. 244.

[155] SA 4, fol. 260v reverse order والقتل والصلب.

[156] SA 4, fol. 260v قتلا.

[157] SA 4, fol. 260v لا.

[158] SA 4, fol. 260v يدفن.

[159] SA 4, fol. 260v قبل الليل.

[160] As the ms is difficult to read, we primarily use Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Ar. 234, fol. 72v (https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb00017607?page=146,147); S4, fol. 260v.

Arab[Copt][161] واذا وجبت علي انسان خطيه حكمها الموت فيموت ويصلب علي خشبة وجثته لا تبيت

على الخشبة لكن تدفن دفناً في ذلك اليوم لان لعنة الله علي كلمن رفع على خشبة

Concluding remarks

The spread of multiple Bible versions among Eastern Christian communities was an accepted fact in these communities and at times a source for exegetical creativity. However, in a context in which Muslim accusations of distortion (*taḥrīf, tabdīl*) were always in the air, this variety could be exploited as a means to challenge Christian –and Jewish—claims of the divine origin of the Pentateuch. Once Arabic translations from Syriac, Greek, Hebrew, and other biblical source texts began to circulate, all that Muslim polemicists, including al-Bājī, had to do was to obtain some copies and to compare them to find proof of their argument that Christians and Jews had distorted the original version of Scripture. As we have seen in the examples above, al-Bājī used a combination of seemingly illogical statements and text-critical cruxes in the Torah and its reception to criticize it. Firstly, he identified apparent inconsistencies that are sometimes embedded in the biblical stories themselves (cf. Example 2). At times, however, the inconsistencies he found were the result of the use of multiple biblical *Vorlagen* in Eastern Christian communities which showed discrepancies (cf. Example 1). Lastly, some of the "irrationalities" he discovers seem to result from the specific copy of the text he had in front of him as they are not found in the other Christian Arabic texts used in the present study (Examples 3 and 5).

One of the aims of the present article was to identify or confirm the sources used by al-Bājī in his criticism of the Christian reception of the Torah. These sources reflect three different versions known to have circulated among Christians in the Levant at the time: Arab[Copt] for Genesis and seemingly for Exodus; Arab[Syr]2 for Leviticus; and Arab[Syr_Hex]1b for Numbers and Deuteronomy. Similar combinations of versions are known from other Christian Arabic Bible manuscripts,[162] and in our case, it seems clear that al-Bājī got hold of a copy of Ibn al-Qunbar's revision and describes it as the version of the Pentateuch in use among the *Rūm* Orthodox (Melkite) communities at the time. In our test samples, Leviticus in this version is close to its identified source, i.e., Arab[Syr]2, whereas Genesis and Exodus should rather be seen as revisions of their identified source (Arab[Copt]). It may be that Genesis reflects an earlier stage of this recension, which was closer to a Greek source text, which would make Arab[Copt] an initially Greek-based revision, which was later brought in line with the Coptic text. However, such a hypothesis needs to be tested on a larger corpus. The same is true for Exodus, which exhibits similarities with a Syriac-based version. Just like Genesis and Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are revisions of/related to their source (Arab[Syr_Hex]1b) rather than close reproductions of them.

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[161] BnF Ar. 12, fol. 269v–270r.

[162] For example, BnF Ar. 16 transmits, according to Vollandt, Genesis 2:10–19:26 according to Arab[Heb]1a, a few folios of Arab[Copt] and most of Genesis-Leviticus by Ibn al-Qunbar whereas Numbers and Deuteronomy reflects Arab[Syr_Hex]1b. Vollandt, *Arabic Versions*, pp. 228-229.

Appendix: Biographical sources on al-Bājī, in chronological order

Al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347), *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. Māzin b. Sālim Bāwazīr, Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī, 1998 [= *Tārīkh al-Islām*, 53, p. 158].

Al-Udfuwī (or al-Idfuwī), Jaʿfar b. Thaʿlab (d. 748/1347), *al-Badr al-sāfir ʿan uns al-musāfir*, ed. Muḥammad Fatḥī Muḥammad Fawzī, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, n.d. [vol. 2, no. 195].

Al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak (d. 764/1362), *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, ed. ʿAlī Abū Zayd, Nabīl Abū ʿAmsha et al., 6 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-muʿāṣir; Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1418/1998 [vol. 3, 483-487, no. 1210].

Al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak (d. 764/1362), *Al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Sven Dedering et al., 32 vols., Beirut, Stuttgart: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner, 1991 [vol. 21, 453-454, no. 311].

Al-Kutubī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shākir (d. 764/1362), *Fawāt al-wafayāt wa-l-dhayl ʿalayhā*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 5 vols., Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973 [vol. 3, pp. 73-74, no. 352].

Al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAlī (d. 771/1369), *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, 10 vols., Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1383/1964. [vol. 10, 339-366, no. 1394].

Al-Asnawī, Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (d. 772/1370), *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt, 2 vols., Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1407/1987. [vol. 1, 137, no. 263].

Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad (d. 851/1448), *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Khān, 5 vols., Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1399/1979 [vol. 2, 290-293, no. 512; vol. 3, 48, 53, 56, 136].

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1448), *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*, 4 vols., Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1349/1930. [vol. 3, 101-103, no. 232].

Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 911/1505), *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī tārīkh Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira,* ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols., N.p.: 1387/1967 [vol. 1, 544, no. 27].

Ibn al-ʿImād, Shihāb al-Dīn b. al-Falāḥ ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1089/1678), *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 9 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1419/1998 [vol. 6, 179-180].

Abstract: The present article discusses the Muslim legal scholar and theologian ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bājī (631-714/1233-1314) and his polemic against the Pentateuch, which he read in at least two Christian Arabic translations that were in use among *Rūm* Orthodox Christians (Melkites). It aims to identify the recensions of the Pentateuch that al-Bājī had access to, and to

Resumen: El presente artículo analiza al jurista y teólogo musulmán ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bājī (631-714/1233-1314) y su polémica contra el Pentateuco, que leyó al menos en dos traducciones árabes cristianas que estaban en uso entre los cristianos ortodoxos *Rūm* (melkitas). El objetivo es identificar las recensiones del Pentateuco a las que al-Bājī

understand how the differences between these recensions contributed to his view that the shared Jewish and Christian scripture had undergone changes. The article suggests that al-Bājī used a combination of arguments to undermine especially the Christian reception of divine revelation, pointing out apparent inconsistencies and illogicalities in the biblical stories themselves as well as text-critical cruxes caused by discrepancies between different versions that circulated side by side within the Eastern Christian communities. Finally, some of the "irrationalities" he describes seem to be particular of the copies of the texts he had in front of him.

tuvo acceso y comprender cómo las diferencias entre estas recensiones contribuyeron a su opinión de que las escrituras judías y cristianas compartidas habían sufrido cambios. El artículo sugiere que al-Bājī utilizó una combinación de argumentos para socavar especialmente la recepción cristiana de la revelación divina, señalando aparentes inconsistencias y faltas de lógica en las historias bíblicas mismas, así como puntos cruciales de la crítica del texto causados por discrepancias entre las diferentes versiones que circularon una al lado de la otra dentro de las comunidades cristianas orientales. Finalmente, algunas de estas 'irracionalidades' que él describe parecen ser propias de los textos que tenía delante.