

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE ARABIC TRANSLATION OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

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The various Arabic translations of the Bible, Rabbinic, Karaite, Samaritan and Christian, are a vivid witness to the fact that the Bible has remained firmly rooted to the civilization of the Middle East. These religious communities, with the exception of the Karaites, lived before the advent of Islam in the seventh century and continued all to exist until the present day. The Israelites consisted of Jews, both Rabbanites and Karaites on the one hand and the Samaritans on the other hand¹, whereas Christianity was represented by Copts, Jacobites, Maronites, Melkites and Nestorians². These religious communities called by Islamic law 'ahl al-kitāb / ad-dimma, the people of the book / the dhimīs (Christians and Jews) had gradually been arabicized by the end of the eleventh century.³

The spread of Islam in vast areas of the so-called Middle East meant among other things the replacement of Aramaic by Arabic. The Arabic language became the *lingua franca*, as well as the native tongue and literary tool of all communities mentioned above. In such circumstances it was but natural that the need for an Arabic translation of the Scriptures has emerged. Unlike the Jews and Samaritans, the Christian communities have translated the Bible not directly from the original languages but from Syriac and Coptic versions which have been in circulation among their members. The Arabic versions of the Bible which were carried out by these communities served as a milestone in the history of non-Muslim Arabic literature. As a matter of fact, those versions were the firstlings of that literature and functioned as a fundamental source of inspiration and an example to be

¹ The Samaritans call themselves: Bāni Yišrā'el aš-Šāmēr'm and the Jews are Bāni Yišrā'el ay-Yē'ūd'm. They still believe that they are the descendants of the original children of Israel and Judaism is an imitation. See ha-'Aretz 8.5.1992. Though the government of Israel considers Samaritans as Jews, the Orthodox Jews do not have the same attitude, see Y. Ben-Zvi, *Sefer ha-Shomronim*, 2nd ed. Jerusalem 1970, p. 365.

² See for example: L. Cheikho, *Le christianisme et la littérature chrétienne en arabie*. Beirut 1912-1919; G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 4 Vols., Vatican City: Biblioteca Vaticana, 1944-1953; G. Troupeau, »La littérature arabe chrétienne du X^e au XII^e siècle«, *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, XIV, 1971.

³ See in general Ahmad Mukhtār 'Omar, *tārikh al-luga al-'arabiyya fī misr*. Cairo 1970, p. 28 seq.; as to the Samaritans see H. Shehadeh, »Matai tafsa ha-'arvit 'it m'qom ha-'aramit ha-šomronit«, *miḥq're lašon muggašim li-Zi'ev Ben Hayyim b'-haggi'o l'seva*, ed. by M. Bar-Asher et alia, Magnes, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1983, pp. 515-528.

followed.⁴ One of the remarkable features of this bulky literature written in different scripts, such as Syriac (karshūnī), Hebrew square letteres, Samaritan and Arabic, is the fact that it came down to us in the so-called Middle Arabic. In this connection it seems not superfluous to draw attention to the fact that the Arabic language is not only the native and national language of Christian Arabs but also their language of liturgy. This statement does not hold true with respect to the other religious communities aforementioned.

Despite the common origin of Jews and Samaritans there are many differences with regard to beliefs and practices between these two sects.⁵ Suffice it here to refer to three primary differences. It is well-known that Samaritans believe only in the first part of the תנ"ך namely the Torah, which differs from the Masoretic Text in about six thousand instances.⁶ They believe in one prophet only, Moses⁷: *וְלֹא קָם עוֹד נְבִיא בְיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה* - *wlā qām ūd nēbi abyīsrā'ēl kāmūšī ēšār yādā'ē'u šēmā fān'm al fān'm* - And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face (Dt 34:10). The third main difference is related to the chosen place of worship.⁸

For Samaritans the holy place is not Jerusalem and Mount Moriah as Jews, Christians and Muslims believe but Mount Gerizim.⁹ Attention must be directed to the fact that

⁴ See J. Blau, »On a Fragment of the Oldest Judaeo-Arabic Translation Extant«, *Genizah Research after Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo Arabic*, eds. J. Blau and S.C. Reif, Cambridge 1992; the first Arabic book, though in Hebrew script, to have been printed in the East was the *Tafsīr* of Raḡ Sa'adia Gaon 882-942) in the *Polyglot Pentateuch* of Constantinople in 1546. One century later the *Fafsīr* in Arabic characters appeared in Paris Polyglot in 1645 by Gabriel Sionita (1577-1648) and later by E. Pococke (1604-1691) in London Polyglot in 1657.

⁵ The Samaritan creed is: »My faith is in Thee, Yahweh (pronounced Shēma) and in Moses son of Amram, Thy Servant; and in the Holy Law; and in the Mount Gerizim, Beth-El; and in the Day of Vengeance and Recompence«. See J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*. London 1964, pp. 49-55.

⁶ B. Walton, E. Castellus and J. Lightfoot, *Animadversiones samariticae, textum hebraicum et samaritanum*, in: *Walton's Biblia Polyglotta*. London 1657, vol. VI, sec. V, pp. 19-34. These variants were classified into eight categories by G. Gesenius (1785-1842), *De pentateuchi samaritani origine indole et auctoritate, commentation philologico critica*. Halae 1815, p. 25.

⁷ About the role and status of the Samaritan Messiah the Taheb as a prophet see now F. Dexinger, *Der Taheb: Ein »messianischer« Heilsbringer der Samaritaner*. Kairos. Religionswissenschaftliche Studien 3, Otto Müller Verlag Salzburg, 1986, p. 117.

⁸ The root בָּרַר in connection with God's chosen place occurring 21 times in the Pentateuch (Dt 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11) appears in the imperfect tense (will choose) in the MT and in the perfect tense in the ST (has chosen). For the Samaritans the chosen place has been chosen in Shechem since the period of Abraham. The Samaritans are also proud to indicate that Mt. Gerizim in contrast to Jerusalem is mentioned in the Torah (twice in the MT: Dt 11:29, 27:12 and three more times in the SP: after Ex 20:14 and after Dt 5:18 and Dt 27:4 instead of Mt. Ebal). Finally it should be noted that the two words Mt. Gerizim are written as one word in Samaritan sources and pronounced *ārgārīz'm*.

⁹ Though Mt. Gerizim is 868m high and Mt. Ebal is higher than it (938m), the Samaritans consider it the highest mountain. It has 13 names in the Torah: Gn 10:30, 12:8, 22:2, 22:14, 28:17, 28:19; Ex 15:17, 23:19 and 34:26; Dt 3:25, 11:9, 12:11, 33:15. A short interpretation of these names is

Mount Gerizim forms the tenth commandment¹⁰ in the Samaritan version of the Torah. Samaritans hold that Noah's ark rested upon this mountain because it was the only place that the waters of the flood did not reach it. Marqa adds that the olive leaves brought by the dove to Noah were from Mt. Gerizim.¹¹ This tradition is clearly reflected in versions of the Samaritan Arabic Pentateuch (Gn 8:4, 11). Ararat is rendered by Nablus¹² and עליו¹³ [עלה in the MT] are translated by the collective form 'waraq' = leaves. It is to be noted that this interpretation is not attested in the known versions of the Samaritan Aramaic translation (Targum).¹⁴

The Samaritan community is well-known as a historical curiosity.¹⁵ It is perhaps the smallest and the most ancient religio-ethnic group in the world. The present total number of the Samaritans is about 560 souls.¹⁶ Half of them live in Qiryat Lūzah on Mt. Gerizim in Nablus (ancient Shechem, 66 km to the north of Jerusalem in the West Bank) and the other half live in Ḥolon (to the south of Tel-Aviv) since 1954. Palestinian Arabic is the mother tongue of all Samaritans living in Nablus and of the old generation in Ḥolon. The

given by the greatest Samaritan scholar Marqa from the fourth century A.D., see תיבת מרקה [Tībat Mārqa] A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim. Edited, Translated and annotated by Z. Ben-Hayyim. Jerusalem 1988, pp. 148-151. An alphabetical list of about forty names and nicknames for Mt. Gerizim appears in A.B. Samaritan News 9.4.1990, p. 11.

¹⁰ It appears after Ex 20:14 and Dt 5:18 in the MT and this tenth commandment is a composition of Dt 11:29, 27:2-3, 4-7 and 11:30.

¹¹ See Ben-Hayyim, תיבת מרקה, pp. 190-191, section 130b. Cf. Midrash B^e-Rishit Rabba, section 32.

¹² It seems that Samaritans did not give this name to their sacred mountain (see note no. 9) in order to avoid a possible confusion with Mt. Ebal.

¹³ The form is עלה in the edition of Avrahm and Ratson Tsedaka, vol. 1. Tel-Aviv 1962, Genesis 8:11.

¹⁴ To put it more accurately: in the versions which reflect the stage in which Samaritan Aramaic was a spoken language. Ararat is in fact as in the origin, and «עלי» appears as «טרף» a leaf in singular like the reading in the MT. The two MSS, Shechem (Synagogue) Nos. 3 and 4 present variants of Arabic versions.

¹⁵ The word השמרניים, the Samaritans, the inhabitants of Samaria is a hapax legomenon in the Bible (II Kings 17:29). In the New Testament the Samaritans are mentioned in the following places: Matthew 10:5, Luke 9:52-53, 10:25-37 (the Good Samaritan); Luke 17:11-19, John 4:4-30, 39-42 (the Samaritan Woman), 8:48; Acts 6:1-6, 7:2-53, 8:4-24. For a brief discussion of some of these passages see Bruce W. Hall, Samaritan Religion from John Hyrcanus to Baba Rabbah. Sydney 1987, pp. 35-42 and notes in pp. 117-122, pp. 98-101; on John 4:1-42 see J. Eugene Botha, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: A Speech Act Reading of John 4:1-42. Novum Testamentum, Supplements, 65, E.J. Brill 1991; J. Macdonald, «The Discovery of Samaritan Religion», A Journal of Religion and Religions 2 (1972), pp. 144-148 and now in F. Dexinger and R. Pummer (eds.), Die Samaritaner. Wege der Forschung, Band 604, Darmstadt 1992, pp. 367-371.

¹⁶ In March 1992 the number of the Samaritans was 555 of which 303 were males (60%) and 252 females (40%). There is no scientific explanation for the fact that more males than females are born among the Samaritans.

young generation in Holon speaks modern Israeli Hebrew as a mother tongue. After the war of 1967 most of the Samaritans in Nablus started to learn modern Hebrew. The only Samaritan paper, the bi-weekly A.B. Samaritan News, established in December 1969 reflects the linguistic situation of modern Samaritans. Though its main and official part is written in modern Hebrew, other sections appear in Samaritan, Arabic and Latin (as a rule English) scripts.

A complete and detailed picture of the emergence of the Arabic Translation of the Pentateuch still can not be drawn due to the paucity of surviving sources.¹⁷ We are almost in dark regarding the identity of the translator(s). Yet it is reasonable to assume that the translation in question emerged some time between the end of the 10th - beginning of the 11th centuries. This assumption is mainly based on the fact that grammatical, halakhic and lexicographical Samaritan works in Arabic from that period have come down to us.¹⁸ These four works namely qānūn ibn Darta fī tartīb al-miqra and qānūn ibn Darta fī al-miqra of Ṭabia ibn Darta,¹⁹ kitāb al-kāfī of al-'Uskarī²⁰ and an anonymous tri-lingual (Hebrew, Arabic and Samaritan Aramaic) glossary of the Pentateuch²¹ are in fact the oldest extant compositions written by Samaritans in Arabic. These works, as well as the lion's share of the whole Samaritan literature viz. in Hebrew, Samaritan Aramaic and Arabic are substantially religious.²² In other words, the five books of Moses are the core of life and existence of the Samaritans.

In view of this state of affairs it is very likely to presume that certain Arabic versions of the Pentateuch would at least have been among the first Arabic writings of the Samaritans in their main places of residence - Palestine, Syria and Egypt. This means that a period of more than three centuries of Muslim Arab rule has elapsed and the Arabic language spread over the entire Muslim empire. We were unable to find any evidence for

¹⁷ This issue has been discussed by about thirty scholars since the 17th century, see H. Shehadeh, *The Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch: Prolegomena to a Critical Edition*, Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1977 (Hebrew), pp. 49-118.

¹⁸ See Shehadeh in note no. 3, pp. 524-526.

¹⁹ The former was at first published with a German translation by P. Kahle, »Die Lesezeichen bei den Samaritanern«, in *Oriental Studies Published in Commemorations of the Fortieth Anniversary (1883-1923)* of Paul Haupt, ed. by Cyrus Adler and Aron Ember. Baltimore-Leipzig 1926, pp. 425-436; both works were published with Hebrew translation and annotation by Z. Ben-Hayyim, LOT, vol II, Jerusalem 1957, pp. 339-373; pp. 308-315, about Ibn Darta and his work see *ibid.* pp. 300-302.

²⁰ This book written in 433 Hegira-1041 A.D., is still kept in several MSS, yet an Italian translation was published, see S. Noja, *Il Kitāb al Kāfī dei Samaritani*. Napoli 1970.

²¹ Known as ha-Mēliṣ was published by Z. Ben-Hayyim, LOT II. Jerusalem 1957, pp. 440-616.

²² As to Samaritan Pentateuchal fragments in Greek see S. Noja, »The Samaritikon«, in: A.D. Crown, ed. *The Samaritans*. J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen 1989, pp. 408-412.

the Samaritan tradition saying that Samaritans began to write in Arabic from the middle of the 9th century.²³

That the Samaritans possessed and used the Torah in Arabic before the 13th century is obvious on the basis of the following four evidences. Firstly, the oldest dated MS including an arabic translation of the Samaritan Holy Writ, namely Shechem (Synagogue) No. 6, a triglotte - Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic - was copied in 601 Hegira, 1204 A.D.²⁴ Secondly, the evidence of Abū Sa'īd ben Abī al-Husain ben Abī Sa'īd, the 13th century Egyptian Samaritan reviser of the ancient Arabic translation of the Torah. Thirdly, the existence of Samaritan MSS of the Pentateuch in Arabic written in Samaritan letters such as BL Or. 7562 which are based on the Tafsīr of Sa'adia.²⁵ In the light of a recent discovery of a fragment from the Cairo Genizah it is possible to deduce that the Tafsīr was in circulation in the second half of the 10th century in Egypt. To put it more precisely the Tafsīr, most probably in Arabic script, was known and used in the weekly court (mağlis) of the vizier Ibn Killis (d. 991).²⁶ Fourthly, the usual appearance of Pentateuchal verses in Arabic in Samaritan works from the 11th-12th centuries such as al-Kāfī, at-Ṭabbākh and Masā'il al-Khilāf.²⁷

In a one-page preface to his revised text Abū Sa'īd writes²⁸: »...verily [when] I saw the translation of the Noble Book, which is in the hands of our fellow worshippers, may God increase their number and restore them, which is corrupt both in form and meaning, because of their ignorance of the Arabic language, whilst some of them [emphasis added] claim it is the translation of the eminent scholar Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣūrī, may God have mercy upon him. But it is not his and it is not permissible to utter it especially the rendering of 'When thou goest to return to Egypt' [Exodus 4:21 ff.] which is within the realm of pure

²³ See M. Gaster, *The Samaritan Oral Law and Ancient Traditions*, vol. I: Samaritan Eschatology. London 1932, pp. 12-13.

²⁴ A brief description of this MS is found in Shehadeh's dissertation mentioned in note no. 17, pp. 273-275. The text of this Pinhsiyya served as the basic text for the ancient version in: *The Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch Edited from the Manuscripts with an Introductory Volume* by Haseeb Shehadeh, Volume One: Genesis-Exodus. The Isarel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem 1990.

²⁵ See P. Kahle's description of the MS in the introduction of A.F. von Gall, *Der hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner*. Giessen 1918, pp. LXXXVIII ff. It seems worthwhile to mention that the Aramaic Targum in this MS served as the basic text in Tal's edition.

²⁶ See M.R. Cohen and S. Somekh, »In the Court of Ya'qūb ibn Killis: A Fragment from the Cairo Genizah«, *JQR* LXXX, Nos. 3-4 (January-April, 1990), pp. 297-298.

²⁷ See Shehadeh's dissertation, part I, pp. 89-105.

²⁸ *Bibliothèque Nationale Arabe* 6 copied in 1432 A.D., a description of the MS may be found in Shehadeh's dissertation, part I, pp. 308-309.

heresy, and so are other similar passages. It is rather the translation of al-Fayyūmī, a scholar of the Jews, may God requite him...²⁹».

Abū Sa'īd is convinced that the Arabic translation of the Pentateuch used by the Samaritan community in Egypt was Sa'adianic and could not have been carried out by a Samaritan such as the famous writer Abū al-Ḥasan (Ab Ḥisda) the Tyrian.³⁰ The reason for Abū Sa'īd's conviction is explained in his marginal note on Exodus 4:24. The word יהי בדרך במלון ויגשהו יהוה ויבקש³¹ המיתו referring to Moses in this verse - is rendered by 'qatlahu' (killing him) in the version under discussion. Such a rendition ascribes to Moses a great disobedience which deserves death punishment. It goes without saying that Samaritans strongly reject this interpretation because it offends one of their five main articles of faith, namely the belief in Moses as the only and greatest prophet. It is noteworthy to point out that the rendition *hamito* = *qatlahu* is not found in the present common editions of the Tafsīr, that is to say, Derenbourg's edition³² and the Tāğ.³³ In these editions we find that God's angel set out to kill the son of Moses..³⁴ The said rendition is attested in a Florence MS of the Tafsīr copied in 1245-46 and including Genesis 1:4-Exodus 26:15³⁵, as well as clearly in only one Samaritan MS of the Samaritan Arabic translation of the Pentateuch. This MS is BL Add. 19011, a biglotte, Hebrew and Arabic, written in Samaritan letters and copied in 1509/10 A.D.³⁶ It seems that the same reading was the original one before the erasure in three Samaritan MSS.³⁷ Moreover, the interpretation of המיתו as derived

²⁹ The origin is: »'innanī lammā ra'aitu tarğamat al-kitāb aš-šarīf allatī bi-'aidī 'shābinā kattarahum 'Allāh wa-'aslahum mafsūda šūrat^{an} wa-ma'n^{an} li-ğahlīhim bi-lluğati-l-'arabiyya ma 'a kawnihim yaz'amūna 'annah tarğamatu š-šaiķi-l-fādīl Abī-l-Ḥasan aš-Šūrī rahimahu 'Allāh wa-laisat lahu walā yastahillu [in the MS yastahīl] 'an yantuqa bihā kušūš^{an} mā turğima fī בלכתך לשוב מצרימה [originally in Samaritan characters] mimma huwa kuf^{an} šurāh wa-mā waqa 'a mušabbah^{an} lahu wa-'innmā hiya tarğamat al-Fayyūmī 'ālim al-yahūd qābalahu 'Allāh..

³⁰ About Abū al-Ḥasan Ishāq ibn Farağ ibn Mārūt known as Abū al-Ḥasan aš-Šūrī and his work see Shedaheh's dissertation, part I, pp. 13-48, 109-110.

³¹ For further discussion see Alan D. Crown ed., *The Samaritans*, pp. 495-499.

³² *Oeuvres complètes de R. Saadia Ben Iosef Al-Fayyūmī publiées sous la direction de J. Derenbourg*, volume premier, version arabe du pentateuque. Paris 1893. פאגא וודה מלאך אללה (sic.!) פטלב קטלה.

³³ Joseph ben Aharon Ḥasid, *The Tafsir of R. Sa'adia Gaon in the Pentateuch 'Hatağ' with Fifty commentaries*, 5 Volumes (Hebrew). Jerusalem 1960.

³⁴ According to some medieval Jewish commentators such as Rashi (1040-1105) and R. David Qimḥi (1160-1235) God intended to kill Moses because he did not circumcise his son.

³⁵ P.E. Kahle, *Die arabischen Bibelübersetzungen, Texte mit Glossar und Literaturübersicht*. Leipzig 1904, pp. VIII, XII-XIII, 24.

³⁶ For a description of this MS see Shedaheh's dissertation, pp. 290-291.

³⁷ See the edition of the Arabic translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch mentioned in note 24, p. 274 verse 24.

from the root מוּת (to kill, murder) rather than from הוּם, הוּם³⁸ (to frighten, to confuse) is reflected in several variants of the Samaritan Targum - למאתה, למאתה, לקטלנה, לקטלנה, למותה, למקטלה, למקטלה and למותה.³⁹

Both Munaḡḡā and Abū Sa'īd testify of faulty pronunciation of הַמִּיתוֹ as īmītu⁴⁰ which falls into line with 'killing him' but contradicts the belief of the reader. According to the former this reading was current among some Samaritans (ba'd šhābinā, 12 cent., Syria) whereas the latter speaks about the majority of the Samaritan community ('ktar ṭā'ifatinā, 13th cent., Egypt). It is equally hard to determine whether the reading at stake has stemmed from a Sa'adianic rendition or it was a result of a Samaritan oral tradition in reading the Torah. It seems reasonable to assume that in some cases both factors have worked together or separately. In some MSS such as Shechem (Synagogue) No. 6, the oldest MS as mentioned above, presents two different meanings for הַמִּיתוֹ: מַקְטֵלָה in Aramaic and 'ihāḡatahu (to excite, awaken) in Arabic.⁴¹ On the other hand the so-called »arabized«⁴² versions of the Samaritan Targum as Shechem (Synagogue) No. 3 (a biglotte, Hebrew and Aramaic from the beginning of the 16th cent.) reads מַקְטֵלָה. However, one thing is clear: the efforts of Abū Sa'īd to replace 'qatlahu' by 'ihāḡatahu' in rendering 'הַמִּיתוֹ' were fruitful. The present Samaritan pronunciation 'āmītu' could be a reflection of Abū Sa'īd's correction included in his revised text which has been common among Samaritans for many centuries. That the original Samaritan reading(s) of the Torah has (have) undergone changes is taken for granted. As the High Priest Jacob ben 'Uzzi (1899-1987) has put it while referring to present-day recitation of the Pentateuch »This pronunciation can in no way be original«⁴³.

³⁸ As adopted by Abū Sa'īd himself in his famous revision 'ihāḡatahu (to awaken him, excite, agitate, arouse etc.) instead of qatlahu (killing him). The whole issue is discussed in detail by Abū al-Faraḡ Munaḡḡā Ibn Sadaqa from the middle of the 12th century in his book Masā'il al-Khilāf..., in which he derives the form הַמִּיתוֹ from הַמָּה which is like בַּכָּה and כָּשָׂה, see Shehadeh's dissertation, part I, pp. 83-86 (there the name and the time of the author are inaccurate and they refer to his son the physician Sadaqa al-Hakīm). Cf. S.L. Skoss, The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfaz (Agron) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī the Karaite (Tenth Century), Vol. I. Yale 1936, pp. 446-447. It should be noticed that the two roots הַמָּה and הוּם are employed as intransitive verbs, whereas הַמָּה is transitive and may occur in Pi'el without gemination of the second radical (fā'ī), see Z. Ben-Hayyim, LOT, Vol. 5. Jerusalem 1977, p. 82.

³⁹ J.H. Petermann and C. Vollers, Pentateuchus samaritanus ad fidem librorum manuscriptorum apud Nablusianos repertum. Berlin 1872-1891; AA. Tal, The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch, a Critical Edition, Part I Genesis, Exodus. Tel-Aviv University 1980.

⁴⁰ Like the modern reading of the other forms of מוּת in the infinitive of hif'īl such as Gn 18:25, 37:18; Ex 16:3, 17:3; Lev 20:4; Dt 13:10, see Ben Hayyim, LOT, IV. Jerusalem 1977.

⁴¹ The issue of adjustment between the two or three columns (Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic) in Samaritan MSS deserves special investigation.

⁴² See A. Tal, The Samaritan Targum..., Part III, Tel-Aviv 1983, p. 83, and cf. p. 8.

⁴³ See R. Macuch, »The Importance of Samaritan Tradition for the Hermeneutics of the Pentateuch«, in: Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Société D'Études Samaritaines, Tel-Aviv, April 11-13, 1988. Tel-Aviv University 1991, p. 15.

The only written source known to us that has some bearing on the ancient Arabic translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch are Abū Sa'īd's few words included in his previously mentioned preface and marginal note. In the preface we are told that »some Samaritans claim (believe, maintain etc.) it is the translation of the Shaikh Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣūrī (ba'duhum yaz'amūna). From the marginal note we learn that the earlier Samaritan sages were content with the Tafsīr of Sa'adia, whereas the uneducated ones believed it to be the translation of Abū al-Ḥasan. (wa-'innī la-'ḡabu mina-l-fuṣaḥā'i-l-mutaqaddimīna min 'ummatinā raḥimahumu llāhu kaifa raḍaw bi-tarḡamatihī wa-l-ḡuhhālu minhum yazunn-ūna 'annahā tarḡamatu ṣ-Ṣaikhi Abī-l-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣūrī...). Needless to say that these words of Abū Sa'īd neither confirm nor deny Abū-l-Ḥasan's authorship of an Arabic translation to the Samaritan Pentateuch. We believe that the customary Samaritan tradition of attributing such a work to Abū-l-Ḥasan is based on these two quotations of Abū Sa'īd.⁴⁴

The separation between Jews and Samaritans, south and north in Israel, took place after a long series of events, the climax of which, was the destruction of the temple on Mt. Gerizim in the 2nd cent. B.C. by John Hyrcanus. The present version of the Samaritan Pentateuch has emerged in that period, 2nd-1st cent. B.C.⁴⁵ It is in fact the oldest Samaritan work which came down to us. In contrast to the Jewish tradition which is written (כתבו לכם, they wrote to you) the Samaritan one is based on ולמדה את בני ישראל שימרה בפיהם (wlammēda it bāni yiśrā'el šīma bāfiyyimma - and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, Dt 31:19).

It should be noted that the Samaritans have spoken and written Arabic without interruption for about a dozen centuries. Their Arabic version of the Pentateuch is undoubtedly an important source for a better understanding of their concepts and beliefs, of their medieval exegesis and of their Aramaic and Arabic dialects. Unlike the Aramaic version of the Samaritan Pentateuch the Arabic version(s) is (are) given in tens of MSS in whole or in part. Ninety-five such MSS which are housed in various libraries in the world have been examined so far by us.⁴⁶ These MSS fall into the following five main groups⁴⁷:

⁴⁴ See H. Shehadeh, »A New Unknown Version of the arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch?«, in: רחממות בנתה ביתה, *Studia Semitica Necon Iranica Rudolpho Macuch Septuagenario ab Amicis et Discipulis Dedicata*, eds., M. Macuch et alia. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1989, pp. 309-310.

⁴⁵ See J.D. Purvis, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect*. Cambridge, Mass. 1968, »Samaritan Pentateuch«, in: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Suppl. Vol. (1976) 772-774, »The Samaritan Problem: A Case Study in Jewish Sectarianism in the Roman Era« in: *Traditions in Transformation*, ed. B. Halpern and J.D. Levenson. Winona Lake, Indiana 1981, pp. 323-350; B.K. Waltke, »The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament« in: *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed., J.B. Payne. Waco, Tex. 1970, pp. 212-239; H.G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge*. Berlin-New York 1971; R.J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered*. Oxford 1975; F. Dexinger, »Limits of Tolerance in Judaism: The Samaritan Example« in: *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 2, ed. E.P. Sanders. Philadelphia 1981, pp. 88-114.

⁴⁶ They are found in the following cities: St. Petersburg 30, London 13, Nablus 12, Oxford 8, Manchester, Paris 6, Jerusalem 4, Cambridge, Berlin 3, New York, Sassoon's family 2, Rome, Leiden, Uppsala, Dublin, Rouen and Princeton 1. A great part of these MSS was described in Shehadeh's dissertation, part I, pp. 273-335. The collection of A. Firkovitsh in St. Petersburg needs further investigation. For the time being, see the partial description of: А. Я. Гархаби, *Описание Самаритянскихъ Рукописей, Хранящихся въ Императорской*

- (1) A version based primarily on the Tafsīr of Sa'adia.
- (2) The old version usually ascribed to Abū al-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣūrī.
- (3) The revised text of Abū Sa'īd.
- (4) The composite version.
- (5) A version based on modern Christian Arabic translations of the Bible.

I would like to conclude my article by touching upon an example which illustrates the contribution that the Arabic version can offer with regard to Palestinian Arabic venacular in particular. The dialectal word 'ta'ṣīn' (dedication, consecration, inauguration) as a translation of תַּצִּיחַ in Numbers 7:10 is attested in the oldest Samaritan MS - Shechem (Synagogue) No. 6 - copied in 1204 A.D. As far as we know, this is the oldest source for this vivid word.⁴⁸

Публичной Библиотеке. Санктпетербургъ, 1875, [the German title is: Catalog der hebräischen und samaritanischen Handschriften der kaiserlichen öffentlichen Bibliothek in St. Petersburg, Band II, die samaritanischen Pentateuchhandschriften (in russischer Sprache) erster Theil, St. Petersburg, 1875].

⁴⁷ See H. Shehadeh, »The Groups of the Samaritan Manuscripts of the Arabic Translation of the Pentateuch«, in: *Études samaritaines Pentateuque et Targum, exégèse et philologie, chroniques. Actes de la table ronde...*, eds., J.-P. Rotschild et G.D. Sixdenier. Louvain-Paris 1988, pp. 205-218; »A New Group of Manuscripts Including an Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch«, in: Proceedings mentioned in note 43, pp. 275-292.

⁴⁸ See H. Shehadeh, »The Arabic of the Samaritans and its Importance« (in press).