Characteristics of MS London BL OR7562: Language

Introduction: The Language of the Early Samaritan Arabic Translation and Its Later Revision, of Saadya’s *Tafsīr*, and of MS London BL OR7562

In § 3.2 above we concluded that the original stage of MS London BL OR7562 is itself eclectic, with the Saadyan version as its main component. It also draws on the early Samaritan Arabic translation and its later revision. There is also other vocabulary, whose closest counterpart is found in the 9th-century Christian Arabic Bible translations from the Peshitta tradition (as preserved in MSS Sinai Arabic 2 and 4) and in Saadyan adaptations of Syriac Christian origin (as preserved in MS London BL Add. 11855 and MS Florence BML OR57). Far less of its vocabulary is common with the Coptic Saadyan versions (as preserved in MS Florence BML OR112 and the London Polyglot).

Shehadeh described the language of the early Samaritan Arabic translation in his dissertation.\(^1\) He found that it is generally not homogeneous and that early manuscripts conveying this version show more departures from Classical Arabic than do later ones.\(^2\) He notes deviations from Classical Arabic grammar, including: change of the stem *faˁala* to *ˀafˁala*;\(^3\) change of verbs tertiae א to verbs tertiae י;\(^4\) dialectal features;\(^5\) use of prepositions in a non-Classical manner;\(^6\) placement of plural verbs before their subject, and the use of plural resumptive pronouns in reference to non-human plurals (whereas Classical Arabic requires verbs in the singular and resumptive pronouns in the feminine singular, respectively);\(^7\) inconsistent use of case endings;\(^8\) use of the negative

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\(^2\) Shehadeh 1977 I:177.
\(^7\) For the agreement rules of Classical Arabic, see Wright 1898 II:288–294; Fischer 2002:187. For deviations from them in Middle Judeo-Arabic and Middle Christian Arabic, see Blau 1967 II:275–296, 1980:129–137.
particle *lam* before *qatala* verbs and indicative *yaqtulu* verbs instead of jussive forms;\(^9\) confusion of the indicative, jussive, and subjunctive moods;\(^{10}\) attachment of the accusative *tanwīn* \(\text{א} \) to diptotic nouns;\(^{11}\) use of the plural instead of the dual;\(^{12}\) and use of a fossilized form of the relative particle *allaḏī*.\(^{13}\) According to Blau, all these deviations regularly appear in Middle Arabic texts, both Judeo-Arabic and Christian Arabic.

The language of the later revision of the early Samaritan Arabic translation generally shows similar Middle Arabic features, especially dialectal features, deviations from Classical agreement rules, and inconsistent use of case endings.\(^{14}\)

A description of the language of Saadya’s *Tafsīr* depends on the sources of transmission. According to Blau, the language of the early 11th-century manuscript in Hebrew letters, MS St. Petersburg RNL Ebr. II C, is post-Classical Arabic; later manuscripts and editions tend more towards Middle Arabic.\(^{15}\) Inasmuch as MS St. Petersburg RNL Ebr. II C is dated to approximately 1009/1010, less than 70 years after Saadya’s death (942), it should be regarded as an authentic reflection of Saadya’s original language. Blau discusses various features that testify to its post-Classical character, including partial preservation of the cases and the dual, adherence to the agreement rules of Classical Arabic, partial inflection of the relative particle *allaḏī*, partial preservation of the moods, use of the Classical forms of the numbers, and differentiation between ض and ظ.\(^{16}\)

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9 For the Classical Arabic use of *lam*, see Wright 1896 I:287, 1898:41; Fischer 2002:173. For deviations from it in Middle Judeo-Arabic and Middle Christian Arabic, see Blau 1967 II:304, 1980:142.


11 For Classical Arabic rules of the accusative of diptotic nouns, see Wright 1896 I:238–239; Fischer 2002:32–93. For its use with *tanwīn* in Middle Judeo-Arabic and Middle Christian Arabic, see Blau 1967 II:1337, 1980:153.

12 For Classical Arabic use of the dual, see Wright 1898 II:293–294; Fischer 2002:68–69, 72, 187. For its replacement by the plural in Middle Judeo-Arabic and Middle Christian Arabic, see Blau 1966 I:209–216, 1980:99–102.

13 For the inflection of the relative particle *allaḏī* in Classical Arabic, see Wright 1896 I:277–272; Fischer 2002:148. For the use of a fossilized form in Middle Judeo-Arabic and Middle Christian Arabic, see Blau 1967 III:549–554, 1980:235–237.

