

**‘Christianity and Judaism in the Language of Islam’  
(Uppsala, March 29 - April 1, 2016)**

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The conference “Christianity and Judaism in the Language of Islam” was hosted by the Department of Linguistics and Philology at Uppsala University and executed in cooperation with the DFG-funded *Biblia Arabica* project located at Tel Aviv University and at Ludwig-Maximilians Universität in Munich. It was scheduled to last for four days (29 March and 1 April 2016) and located at Gustavianum, one of Uppsala University’s most impressive museums, right in the city centre.

This unique conference and its diverse program were organized by Camilla Adang, Mats Eskhult, Miriam Hjälms, Anette Månsson, Meira Polliack and Ronny Vollandt.

In order to arouse more attention for the conference’s topics and cognate disciplines, around fifty researchers from the Middle East, Europe, the United States and Canada were invited to speak about the current state of knowledge referring to Biblical Studies and the Arabic language (see *List of Speakers* below). Both senior scholars as well as PhD students were presenting the latest developments in their scholarly fields. Selected papers will be published in the series *Biblia Arabica: Texts and Studies* (Leiden, Brill).

The conference focused on more specific areas, such as translation techniques employed in various Arabic Bible translations, but also on the different perspectives of reception: In order

to reveal the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Near East and in Byzantium, it is important to take a closer look into how for example Arabic Bible texts among Jewish and Christian communities were received by Muslim intellectuals, but also into how non-biblical texts were translated into Arabic and received by Jews and Christians.

The presentations were divided into different sections, moderated by chairs and later on discussed with the audience.

### **Overview of papers presented and activities of the conference**

The approaches presented by the speakers and discussed with the audience was not limited to a specific scholarly field or approach. The papers concerned mainly theological and linguistic approaches, including translation strategies, as well as discussions on methodology. The interdisciplinary character of the conference in question is also reflected by the number of languages involved in the papers presented: besides Arabic and Hebrew, also Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, Latin, Greek and Turkic.

The keynote speech was given by Alexander Treiger, Dalhousie University, and was entitled: *From Theodore Abu Qurra to Abed Azrié: The Arabic Bible in Context*. It mainly concerned various “contexts in which the Arabic Bible has functioned in Middle Eastern Christian societies”<sup>1</sup>, such as the theological context, Middle Eastern music and the material culture. Several papers posed interesting questions concerning the Bible, such as “*Was there a pre-Islamic Bible translation into Arabic? If not- why?*”<sup>2</sup>, while other papers’ research

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<sup>1</sup> Phrase taken from Alexander Treiger’s abstract of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Paper presented by Jan Retsö, University of Gothenburg.

was based on a further expanded analysis, for example on whether “*Christian concepts in the early Greek translation of the Qur’an?*”<sup>3</sup> can be found.

During their stay in the city of Uppsala, the attendees of the conference visited the Uppsala University Library *Carolina Rediviva*. At the library, they had the opportunity to see the Silver Bible and receive a brief introduction about it, followed by a presentation of a selection of old Arabic and Hebrew manuscripts by Mikael Persenius. Moreover, shortly before the end of the conference, there was also a visit to the Old Anatomical Theatre of the Gustavianum Museum.

As part of the organizing crew, we found the conference particularly enriching and thought-provoking. Among the presenters were both senior scholars of long experience in their respective fields of research, as well as young and promising researchers and PhD students presenting their recent findings. Thus, the speakers and attendees of the conference formed a diverse scholarly environment, which offered a conducive milieu for scholarly exchange. Their presence, approaches and ideas, contributed to a scholarly event full of innovative proposals, further enrichment of the various subjects presented, and suggestions for future research directions.

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<sup>3</sup> Paper presented by Christian Høgel, University of Southern Denmark.

### List of Speakers

#### Keynote address

Alexander Treiger (Dalhousie University), “From Theodore Abu Qurra to Abed Azrié: The Arabic Bible in Context”.

#### *Session I: The Bible in the Early Islamic Milieu*

Jan Retsö (University of Gothenburg), “Was there a pre-Islamic Arabic translation of the Bible? If not, why?”

Cornelia Horn (Berlin, Germany), “Variations on Jesus’s life in Arabic in the Early Islamic Milieu”.

Nathan Gibson (Vanderbilt University/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität), “A Florilegium of Bad Translations: Al-Jahiz’s Ninth-Century Excerpts of Jewish Arabic Bible Translations”.

#### *Session II, part 1: Christian Arabic Translations in al-Andalus*

Geoffrey Martin (University of Tennessee), “From Latin to the Language of Islam in a Mozarabic Psalter”.

Daniel Potthast (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität), “When were the Gospels translated in al-Andalus?”

Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (Cordoba University), “Geographica neotestamentica. Adapting place names in Arabic in an Andalusi version of the Gospel of Mark”.

#### *Session II, part 2: Christian Arabic Translations*

Mats Eskhult (Uppsala University), “Language and translation technique in the Letter to the Hebrews in Codex Tischendorf from 892 AD, as edited by Edv. Stenij”.

Vevian Zaki (Biblia Arabica project at Ludwig-Maximilians-

Universität), “The Transmission of the Text of the Arabic Pauline Epistles”.

Rana Issa (University of Oslo), “The Shidyaq-Lee Version (1857): An Example of a Non-Synchronous nahda Bible”.

*Session III: Muslim Perception of the Bible*

Sabine Schmidtke (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), “Notes on an Arabic translation of the Pentateuch in the library of the Twelver Shī'i scholar Raḍī al-Dīn 'Alī b. Sa'd Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266)”.

Dennis Halft (Free University of Berlin), “Ismā'īl Qazwīnī: A 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>-Century Jewish Convert to Imāmī Islam and His Reception of Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Visions of Daniel”.

*Session IV, part 1: Judaeo-Arabic Translations*

Karin Almladh (Uppsala University), “Muḥammad in Jewish (?) documents from the Cairo Genizah”.

Arik Sadan (Biblia Arabica project at Tel Aviv University/the Hebrew University of Jerusalem/Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) “Islamic terminology and the epithets and names used for God in Yefet Ben Eli's Translation of and Commentary on the Book of Job in Judaeo-Arabic”.

Meirav Nadler-Akirav (Biblia Arabica project at Tel-Aviv University/ Bar Ilan University), “The Translation and the Meaning of the Biblical Word 'ūlay Among Medieval Jewish Thinkers, in particular Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon and Yefet ben 'Eli”.

*Session IV, part 2: Judaeo-Arabic and Samaritan Translations*

Marzena Zawawska (University of Warsaw/Jewish Historical

Institute) “Religion in an Age of Reason: The Treatment of Theological Conundrums in Medieval Karaite Bible Commentaries”.

Frank Weigelt (University of Bergen), “What is special about Samaritan Arabic Bible exegesis?”

Ilana Sasson (Sacred Heart University, Connecticut), “The Making of a Critical Edition of Yefet ben Eli’s work on Proverbs: Manuscript choice, Translation, and editorial decisions”.

*Session V: Graeco-Arabic Texts*

Christian Høgel (University of Southern Denmark), “Christian concepts in the early Greek translation of the Qur’an?”

Olof Heilo (University of Vienna), “The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement between Byzantium and the Abbasids: the Case of Photius”.

*Session VI Translation Techniques*

Jonas Karlsson (Uppsala University), “The Origins and Characteristics of Some Turkic Garshuni Texts Preserved in an 18th Century Chaldean Prayer Book”.

Zsuzsanna Olach (MTA-SZTE Turkological Research Group & University of Szeged), “The Song of Moses in Halich Karaim translations: Additions”.

Camilla Adang (Tel Aviv University), “The ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut. 32:1-43) in the rendering and interpretation of Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064)”.

**Photo Gallery**



Pic. 1: Keynote address by Alexander Treiger



Pic. 2: Conference's audience





Pic. 3: Visit to the anatomical theatre, Gustavianum museum



Pic. 4: The editorial board of the Brill series Biblia Arabica: Texts and Studies



Pic. 5: Visit to Carolina Rediviva, Uppsala University Library.