



BRILL

Aramaic Studies 7.2 (2009) 163–188Aramaic
Studies

www.brill.nl/arst

In Search of Late Samaritan Aramaic

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Prologue

Under the rule of their great leader Baba Rabba the Samaritans enjoyed a short period of prosperity during the fourth century AD. The oldest Samaritan chronicle *Tulida* relates that, ‘He banished God’s enemies from the land of Canaan, ruled forty years, built synagogues, taught the Tora and established schools’. According to *Tulida*, he exercised control over the entire land and appointed twelve priests over the districts in which he divided the territory.¹ This is the most important period in their literary history as far as Samaritan Aramaic composition is concerned. In parallel with the Jewish Talmud and Midrash, Samaritan literature flourished and reached its apogee in this period. Figures such as Amram Dare, Marqe, and Ninna dominated Aramaic liturgy for centuries. To Marqe is attributed the ‘Book of Wonders’, a poetic Midrash on Exodus. Their legacy is almost entirely Aramaic. All this came to an end with the hostile attitude of the Byzantine rulers of Palestine. The *Tulida* reports of Zenon ‘the king of Rome’, who ‘plundered Mount Gerizim and built a tower there’, that ‘he was buried on the top of the holy hill’ when he died.² The anti-Samaritan measures advanced by Justinian drastically limited their religious practice in the sixth century AD, as they did to Jews.³ Apparently, no literary production of note existed under Byzantine rule, after the writers mentioned above. At least we have no indication of such products, for neither *Tulida* nor other chronicles give any account of a prosperity comparable to Baba Rabba’s

¹ M. Florentin, *Tulida, A Samaritan Chronicle* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1999; in Hebrew), fol. 9a, (pp. 88–89); henceforth: *Tulida*.

² *Tulida*, p. 93.

³ A.M. Rabello, ‘The Samaritans in Justinian’s Code I,5’, in A. Tal and M. Florentin (eds.), *Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Société d’Études Samaritaines, Tel-Aviv, April 11–13, 1988* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 1991), pp. 139–146.

time, nor do they mention any cultural movements. On the contrary, the period following the Arab conquest of Palestine is painted in very dark colours. Most important for the period ending in the tenth century is the *Continuatio* of Abu l-Fath chronicle named ‘Kitab al Tarikh’ (written in the year 1355), which is the principal source of information for the post-byzantine period.⁴ According to his sources, soon after Muhammad, from the very beginning of the rule of the Umayyad dynasty, the Samaritans all over the territory of فلسطين were subject to tax levying, poll tax and land tax. Later, under the Abasside rulers the taxes were doubled [f. 210 ff.] and during the domination of Palestine by their followers the Samaritans were subjected to harsh persecution. Heavy taxation and frequent atrocities culminated in a massive eviction of the Samaritan population from tens of villages, which resulted in the complete destruction of agriculture [f. 214 ff.]. Land was expropriated and became the property of the Muslim rulers. Defenceless, many were compelled to convert to Islam, while many others fled to Byzantium and other centres, Egypt, Syria, etc. No wonder that at the beginning of the twentieth century their number in Palestine had diminished below two hundred souls. It is only natural that during the period that interests us, namely between the sixth and the tenth centuries, very few literary pieces were composed. A very important factor contributed to the scarcity of Aramaic literature: Aramaic fell into disuse, to the extent that the reading of the Aramaic Targum of the Pentateuch was abolished. The *Continuatio* relates that in the year H 369 (AD 979/980) an assembly of priests and elders of the community in Shekhem, a kind of synod, under the leadership of the Ra‘is Darta, took this decision, which involved all the synagogues [p. 258].⁵ Undoubtedly, it reflects a matter of fact: the vernacular of the community was now Arabic. According to Tulida, Arabic penetrated literature in the 11th century: ושרי כתב בקלמוס ישמעאלאי וזה הוא ראש בלשן סרקאי (Matana, 10–11th centuries) started to write with the calamus of the Ismaelites (= to write in Arabic); he is the first (to use) the language of the Saracenes.⁶ Under such circumstances, the Aramaic Targum was no longer capable of mediating between the Tora and the members of the

⁴ M. Levy-Rubin, *The Continuatio of the Samaritan Chronicle of Abu l-Fath al-Samiri al-Danafi* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002).

⁵ The reading is rather difficult, for there is a correction in the manuscript: الرومي, ‘in Greek’, which makes no sense as far as the 10th century is concerned. It seems that it supersedes الرمي, ‘in Aramaic’. See the editor’s notes on pp. 110–111.

⁶ Tulida, p. 103.

congregation and became redundant as instrument of interpretation.⁷ In its stead, an Arabic translation became necessary. At first, the Jewish Arabic version of the Pentateuch, penned by Saadya Gaon was used. The British Library is in the possession of a manuscript of the Pentateuch (Or. 7562) arranged in three columns: The Hebrew text on the right hand column, the Aramaic Targum in the middle, and, on the left hand column, Saadya's Tafsir, with certain obligatory adaptations to the Samaritan beliefs. Since the use of a Jewish translation apparently did not make the Samaritans happy, in the eleventh or twelfth century a Samaritan Arabic version was composed, traditionally attributed to Ab Isda (אב הסדא), the Aramaic correspondent of Abu 'l-Hasan). Written in the local vernacular of its time, it probably was an adaptation of Sa'adya's Tafsir since it still contains many translations incompatible with Samaritan beliefs. The oldest copy of this Arabic version is dated to 1204AD and is located in the Synagogue of Shekhem to this very day.⁸ This version did not satisfy the exigencies of the learned members of the community, and, in the thirteenth century, the Egyptian Samaritan Abu Sa'id, a very learned figure, adapted it to the rules of the Samaritan interpretation of the Tora and converted its text to classical Arabic.⁹ Moreover, from now on Halakhic treatises, grammars and masoretic sketches, were written in Arabic.

Nevertheless, the use of Aramaic was not completely abandoned. Liturgical poetry, while in decline, was still written in Aramaic, as were some other pieces of work from the 10th to 11th centuries.¹⁰ In the following I shall try to give a short account of the literature written in Late Samaritan Aramaic, accompanied by remarks regarding its linguistic characteristics.

⁷ The fact that the a 13th century manuscript, comprising the Tora and its Aramaic *Targum* attests that it was written, 'for reading in the community on Saturdays and festivals' (von Gall, p. XVI) does not necessarily mean that the public spoke (or understood) Aramaic. It merely testifies that the Hebrew column was read, not the Aramaic one. Even if we take the colophon literally, it does not mean that the Aramaic was understood. After all, prayers in Aramaic are still recited during the service to this very day, without being understood at all.

⁸ H. Shehadeh, *The Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch, Prolegomena to a Critical Edition* (unpublished doctoral thesis; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977; in Hebrew), pp. 49–116; henceforth: Shehadeh.

⁹ Shehadeh, pp. 119–141.

¹⁰ A dated inscription proves that Aramaic was still in use, albeit scanty, in the 11th century: J. Pedersen, *Inscriptiones Semiticae Collectionis Ustinowianae* (Symbolae Osloenses, 2; Oslo: Some et Sociorum, 1928), p. 15. Republished with many notes and corrections: Z. Ben-Hayyim, *ידיעות החברה לחקר ארץ ישראל ועתיקותיה*, כתובת שומרונים מן המאה ה'א, 12 (1950), pp. 74–82.

Let me first call attention to a small Aramaic vestige which is recorded at the end of many Pentateuchal Manuscripts, none of them earlier than the second millennium CE. I refer to a list of a few masoretic terms, named *Sedari Magrata*, ‘the Ways of Recitation’. Very few traces of masoretic activity are detectable in Samaritan literature. A system of critical notes on the external form of the Biblical text, comparable to that elaborated by innumerable Jewish scholars during many centuries, was alien to Samaritan scholars. All we know of is a number of ten signs, occurring with little regularity in the Pentateuchal manuscripts, whose task was to mark various cessations and intonations. What interests us at this point is the fact that their names are exclusively Aramaic, originating either before or soon after the beginning of the Islamic era. The only short treatise which endeavours to explain them to the reader of the Tora is written in Arabic by Ibn Darta, and is named *قانون ابن درتا في ترتيب المقرء*, ‘The Rules of Ibn Darta about the Order of the Reading’.¹¹ If the current assumption is correct, the author mentioned by his كُنْيَة alone, has nothing to do with the well known 10th century poet Tabya Ibn Darta. Our Ibn Darta quotes Tabya by name, and this is a sufficient proof that they are two different persons. He wrote his treatise in Arabic, which already was the local vernacular, but in his explanation of the names of the marks he used quotations from the Aramaic Targum. This apparently indicates that the Targum was still understood, although it was not necessarily in current use.

This is the list, as it appears at the end of some manuscripts of the Tora:

נגד, *leading*, connects the phrase to the following one.

פסק, *cutting*, marks the disjunction of the sentence from the following one.

אנחו, *rest*, another disjunctive, weaker than the former **פסק**, i.e., the two phrases are in loose connection.

ארכנו, *command*, marks an imperative. According to Ben-Hayyim it is a denominative of **ארכן**, *ruler*,¹² distinct from the verb **ארכן**, *to lean, to be submitted*.

שיאלה, *question*, acts as an interrogative mark.

זעיקה, *call*, is the exclamatory mark.

אתמחו, *amazement*.

בעו, *demand*, indicates a request.

זעף, *rebuke*, marks anger, reprimand.

תורו, *instruction*, signifies the connection of an apodosis to the protasis.

¹¹) Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic Amongst the Samaritans* (5 vols.; Jerusalem: Hebrew Language Academy, 1957–1977), II, pp. 340–371 (henceforth *LOT*).

¹²) Ben-Hayyim, *LOT*, IIIb, p. 51.

I must emphasise that we have no positive evidence as to the time the Samaritans coined their terms, we do not even know when the signs were invented and put into use, for the oldest manuscript of the Pentateuch known so far does not precede the tenth century. By analogy with the Jewish masoretic activity one can assume that *Sedari Maqrata* were conceived at the same period of concern with the correct reading of the Tora. Indeed, the manifestation of Aramaic as a masoretic instrument may recall the Jewish masoretic terminology that was conceived mostly in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. Some Jewish terms even parallel the Samaritan ones: **אתנחתא** and **פסק**, which recall **אנחו** and **פסק** respectively. However, etymologically the Syriac terms of intonation and pausal signs seem closer to the Samaritan ones:

נגד = נגודא
 פסק = פסוקא
 אנחו = מנחתא
 שאלה = משאלנא
hyphen changed into equal sign; correct?

Other Syriac terms are related in meaning:

פקודא = ארכנו
 זעיקה = קרויא
 אתמחו = מדמרנא
 בעו = מצלינא

As far as our knowledge goes, this list is the last manifestation of Aramaic when it was still an instrument of communication. After this time we may speak of Late Samaritan Aramaic.

Naturally, the notion ‘late’ implies that there exists another notion, namely ‘early’, with which it is positioned in a clear contrastive relationship. Unfortunately, when it comes to Samaritan Aramaic literature, there is no clear cut division between the two chronologic units. We may know when a certain ‘early’ piece was authored and when a ‘late’ one saw the light if we can ascertain when their authors flourished. Thus, we may know which literary product is old, *i.e.*, belongs to the first generation of authors, who lived in an Aramaic speaking society, and which is new, penned by writers whose vernacular was another language, in our case, Arabic. However, linguistic features that distinguish between the two are not always self-evident because of the strong dependence of the latter category on the former one. To demonstrate this embarrassing state of affairs, I shall juxtapose two prayers composed by two different authors, living at quite different epochs.

The first one belongs to the old Amram Dare.¹³ As far as we are aware today, he is the first Samaritan poet. He lived in the fourth century when Aramaic was flourishing, being spoken by Samaritans, Jews, and many Christians in Palestine and its surroundings. He wrote many poems, twenty nine of which are still present in the Samaritan prayer book. One of them is Hebrew, the rest are pure Aramaic. Its Aramaic dialect comes very close to that of the Palestinian Talmud on the one hand and Syropalestinian on the other. It is a developed stage of Samaritan Aramaic, which is later than the stage manifested by the oldest form of their Targum of the Pentateuch, yet still a living and perhaps even a vernacular form.¹⁴

The short poem starts with a call to all human beings to wake up at sunrise and watch the miracle of the change from night into day:

האן דאתון קעמין / בחלקה דצפרה / ועמין למאורה סלק / ומניר לכל עלמה / כרוו כהלכון
ואמרו / ישתבח נהירה דאלק לעלמה / בוצין דלא טפי.

Wherever you stand during the morning watch, and see the Luminary rising and shining over the whole world, proclaim, all of you, and say: 'Praised be the Enlightener, who kindled for the world a candle that is never extinguished'.

Now Amram goes on describing God's deeds:

געזו הו ברקיעה / ומניר לכל עלמה / לפם דו מרה דכלה / אלק לעלמה בוצין דלא טפי / בראשית
אתעבד אוצר למאוריה / שומיה וארעה בניאן דלא בני / אורה רבה דמי לשבשבה / נהר קרץ כל
צפר פתח לעלמה.

It crosses the firmament and illuminates the entire world, as He, the Master of all, kindled for the world a candle that is never extinguished. *Bereshit* became a treasure for the luminaries, the skies and the earth—a building that had not been built (before). The great light resembles a root. A light wakes up early, opening the world.

And the *grand finale*:

נהר כרו לבניו דאדם קומו מן שנתכון ועמו נהרה ושבחו לעבודה.

A light calls to the sons of man: 'wake up from your sleep and see the light and praise its maker'.

¹³) A.D. Crown, R. Pummer and A. Tal (eds.), *A Companion to Samaritan Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), p. 13 (henceforth, *Companion*).

¹⁴) The poem is published with a Hebrew translation and a rich commentary in *LOT*, IIIb, pp. 54–57.

This beautiful poem is written with simple words, taken from the common vocabulary, in clear and well-constructed sentences. No attention is given to rhythm and no concern is shown to rhyme, both absent from fourth century poetry in general. Obviously, because Amram wants the members of the community to cooperate, he puts in their mouths a prayer with which they can identify, for they practice its language daily.

Let us compare it with a few stanzas taken from a poem of an (allegedly) tenth century poet named Ildustan:¹⁵

He who seeks to know what God is let him contemplate His creations He who sees His deeds let him praise Him about them words that fill up the world - and subdue the one who says them	דבעי מדע מה הוא חילה יהי מתבונן בבוראיו מן דעמי עבידאתה יהי משבח לה עליון מלין מליאן עלמה ומשעבדן למן דאמרין
God created heaven and earth and they last for ever One of them is for the use of the immortals the other for the use of the mortals	שומים וארע ברא חילה ואנין ממנים לעלם אחד מנון תשמיש דקעימין וחורנה תשמים למאתין
The light wakes up early to the world and the darkness withdraws before it They make room for one another without animosity because they fear the awe of their Master	אורה קרץ לעלמה וחשכה מסטר מקדמיו מנשפין דן לדן דלא עכר אימתה דמרון עליון
When my Master finished His deeds He started to proclaim about the <i>table</i> 'I finished it with no blemish' 'I bless it forever'	כד עסל מרי עבידאתה שרי כרו על פתורה כלליתה דלא צריך לה מברך אנה לה עד לעלם
The Sabbath resembles a domain built at the end of the creation And God calls to Israel 'rest in it and receive blessings'	שבתה דמיה למדינה בניה על חסול בריתה ואלה כרו לישראל שבת לגבה וסב ברכן

One can hardly conceal one's admiration for Ildustan's mastery of grammatical rules: The congruence of gender is perfect: *ומשעבדן למן דאמרין ... מלין מליאן* (in the refrain). There is no syntactic anomaly, no distorted word order. A language beyond reproach. To all appearances, it could have been written by a fourth century poet, were it not for some stumbles, here and there, revealing traces of a later language, which we may name 'Late Samaritan Aramaic'.

¹⁵ LOT, IIIb, pp. 17–18; 280–282.

Thus, the third stanza says: אורה קרץ לעלמה וחשכה מסטר מקדמיו. The unfamiliar מסטר must be a denominative verb from סטר, 'side', meaning 'to turn (aside)'. If this is true, then the given form ought to be a participle of a reflexive אסתטר, whose *t* has been assimilated to the preceding *s*. In any case, the verb is an innovation, occurring in late documents alone. It also occurs in a poem of of the 14th century poet Hibbat-Alla AlMasri: ישים לכון גאלה מכל: צר ... ויצטר בישה 'let (God) redeem you from any foe ... and remove evil'.¹⁶ Also in a poem of, אלעזר בן פינחס, his contemporary: יבד כל דבביה ויסטר כל: עכריה, 'Let (God) destroy all the enemies and remove every torment'.¹⁷ The verb does not occur in earlier documents, except for Asatir, were we shall meet it in a moment.

Likewise, פתורה, the 'table' as a metaphor for the creation is an innovation. It is found in a late elegy which says: טובך מנו דיתור, בניאנך לית לה סתור, 'Your goodness—who can appreciate, Your building—who can destroy, The whole earth is a table, established by Your might'.¹⁸ In addition, a late addition to Tibat Marqe, which is attested only in late recensions, has: ביומה קדמאה ברית שומיה וארעה וביומה תנינה פרסת רקיע: רם וביומה תליתה עמרת פתור וצמתת לגוה גוני טבואן 'On the first day I created heaven and earth, on the second day I stretched out the firmament and on the third day I arranged a table and gathered in it various favours'.¹⁹

On the other hand, when he writes non liturgical prose, Ildustan is less engaged in pseudo-classical composition. We do not know much about his literary activity in prose. We are aware of a commentary to the Pentateuch named ספר אלביאן, 'The Book of Exegesis', lost for centuries now. All we are left with is two quotations, both in Aramaic, handed down by a thirteenth century Samaritan scholar, Nafis AlDin Abu 'lFaraj AlKathar in his treatise of the pericope אמ בחקתי (Lev. 26).²⁰

ומא אחסן מא קאלה אלדסתאן פי דלך איך חוה יכלה קעימה לעלם וקנת דבביות מלכה דעבד
עלמה ועוד כל בניה כריכין לשטנה כד נסיבת מות ועבדת כליל וקד קאל איצא ען הוכאים פי
מתל דלך כליל זכותה אדלי כשרין הוו בחייון כפיתים בקטלה דאדם

¹⁶ A.E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 227 (henceforth: Cowley).

¹⁷ Cowley, p. 331.

¹⁸ To appear in my colleague M. Florentin's forthcoming book on Samaritan Elegies. I am grateful to him for providing me with the draft of his book.

¹⁹ Z. Ben-Hayyim, *Tibat Marqe, a Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1988; in Hebrew), p. 87 (henceforth *TM*).

²⁰ *LOT*, p. 18.

How nice is what Ildustan said about this: ‘How could Eve live forever, while she held the abhorrence of the King who made the world? Moreover, all her sons were tied to Satan, when she took death and made a crown of it. He already said about the Righteous: They are My Crown of Righteousness, they were virtuous during their lives [and now they are] tied to the death of Adam’.

וקד קאל אלדסתאן פי שרה ספר אלביאן ענד כלאמה פי שרה את הדברים האלה דבר יהוה אל כל קהלכם מא יאיד מא דכרנאה מן אן אלמעון עיר השמים והו קולה אמת דאתה אלה ממללה {במקמאתה} <בקמאותה> הות מלתה נפקה ממעון קדשה מפם מלכה חיה וקעימה ונעתה עללה עלאה ונעתה כל תלמה דמיה ובועה רגועיה (!) ונעתה כל אהן עללה במשתוק ועלה לגו חשכה אנכי יהוה אלהיך

Ildustan has already said in the commentary ‘The Book of Exegesis’ saying in the interpretation of what we mentioned (These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly—Deut. 5.19) that מעון is anything but heaven. This is what (the book) says: ^{non-matching quote} when the Lord came to say at first (*i.e.*, the First Commandment), the speech emerged from the holy abode, from the mouth of the everlasting King and descended to the upper *heaven* and descended (further) to the pile of water (the primordial waters) and burst through the firmament, descended to that *space* in silence and entered the darkness: ‘I am the Lord your God’.

If these quotations are correctly transmitted, obviously, Ildustan’s Aramaic differs significantly from the language of the Samaritan community in the first centuries. For example דבביות is an innovative construction instead of the normal construct state דבבות. Likewise, כריכין לשטנה looks like a direct influence from the Islamic surroundings, as before the rise of Islam Samaritans did not know Satan. Actually, in Numbers 22 לשטן occurs twice, but this is not the devil, as it occurs in later sources. It is rather the infinitive of the Qal verb, *lišṭān* whose meaning is just ‘hostility’, as it is everywhere in the Old Testament. Accordingly, the Samaritan Targum renders the word as לסנה, meaning ‘to be hostile’. In fact, Samaritan Hebrew has no ש, as a phonologic shift transformed it into ש, in similarity with the sound shift that occurred in Phenician. The Aramaic parallel of ש is spelled with a ס, for this is its valid correspondent of the old ś, in similarity with post-Biblical Hebrew.²¹ Therefore Ildustan, when he writes לשטנה, obviously represents the Arabic شيطان, otherwise he would have spelled לסטנה. The collocation מלכה חיה וקעימה in the second quotation does not exist in Samaritan sources, but recalls the Hebrew מלך חי וקיים, ‘everlasting King’, in the prologue of the Jewish midrash Lam. R. 24, etc.

²¹ Z. Ben-Hayyim, *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press and Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), pp. 35–37.

The word *עללה* denoting ‘space’ is a peculiar spelling of *חללה*, which basically means ‘emptiness’. In Samaritan sources it supplants the old *שומיא*, for example the ST of *הבה נבנה לנו עיר ומגדל וראשו בשמים* ‘let us build a town and a tower with its top in the sky’ (Gen. 11.4) says: *נבני לגן קריה ומגדל ורישה*. Similarly, in Ex. 9.8 for *וזרקו משה השמים*, ‘and let Moses throw (the ashes) toward the sky’, the ST has *ויורקנה משה בחללה*. And so is *כל צפור כנף* ‘any winged bird that flies in the sky’ (Deut. 4.17), which is rendered as *כל עוף פרע דטעס בחללה*, etc. In the old manuscripts of the ST *חללה* occurs only when *שמים* denotes ‘the higher space, above the earth’, with no celestial implications. When heaven is involved, *i.e.*, God’s abode, in contrast with the earth, it is rendered as *שומיא*. In Late Aramaic, as attested by the younger manuscripts of the ST, however, the word has lost its distinctive sense and is now used in the sense of ‘heaven’: *יומא דעבד יהוה אלה חללה וארעה* for *ביום עשות יהוה אלהים שמים וארץ* (Gen. 2.4). *עללה* occurs in our quotation twice, with both the early and the later meaning.²² Another unexpected expression is *תלמה דמיה*. According to the biblical account of the creation, God split the primordial waters into two, with the firmament between them: the upper waters and the lower waters, from which the dryness appeared. It is rather difficult to imagine this as a *תלם*, ‘a breach, furrow’. Even worse is the word *תלם* itself, which does not occur in any other Samaritan document, and I am reluctant to assume that a word that occurs in the Psalms, in Job and in Hosea could be available to a Samaritan who believes in the Pentateuch alone. On the other hand, the word is quite frequent in post-Biblical Hebrew. From the database of the Academy of the Hebrew Language one learns that a tenth century Hebrew poem says: *רחום רקועה רקעתה משמים רוות תלמיה בסגות מים*. ‘O graceful One, You have hammered out heaven, its furrows were watered with plenty of water’. In the context of the creation this line is edifying, even though not directly connected with our case. One may also recall that *تلم* exists in Arabic with the same meaning.

Similarly, it is not a rarity that a poet of the caliber of the eleventh century Ab Isda²³ writes a stanza that emulates the style and language of the old authors in every respect:²⁴

²²) A. Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2000), s.v. A. Tal, *The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch* (3 vols.; Tel-Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1980–1983; henceforth *ST*).

²³) *Companion*, p. 3.

²⁴) *LOT*, IIIb, pp. 277–278.

All are submitted to You, my Master	כלה משעבדין לך מרי
All are trembling at Your awe	כלה רתת מן אימתך
The creatures	בריאיתה ובוראיה
All of them testify to You	כהלון סהדין לך
Heaven and all their array	שומיה וכל חיליון
Earth and its foundations	ארעה ויסדיה
In the heights and in the depths my Master, is Your dominion	ברומה ובמכה מרי הו שלטנך
All the angels of divinity	כל מלאכי קדשה
Eulogize You forever	מרוממין לך לעלם

This is fairly good Aramaic. It hardly discloses the time of its composition. The fourth century Marqe could have written it as well. Fortunately, the previous stanza of the same poem reveals the real nature of Ab Isda's language:

All hearts thank You	יודין לך לבביה
All bodies submit to You	ישתעבדון לך גויאתה
For You are the creator of all creatures	דאתה בריו כל בריאתה
You created Adam and shaped him	בריך לאדם וצערכנה
He sinned before You, and You forgave him	סרה קמיך וסלחתנה
He feared You, and You pardoned him	דחל מנך וארתיכנה

Here gender congruence is not respected. The feminine *גויאתה* is coupled with the masculine future verb *ישתעבדון*, instead of *ישתעבדן*. Notice the two unorthodox forms *וצערכנה* and *וארתיכנה*, which have both the second person singular formative *-כנה* (followed by the object suffix *-נה*), instead of the general Aramaic *-תנה*, as it is in the form *וסלחתנה*. This is a Late Aramaic innovation. Truly, the object formative *-ך* occurs already in the language of the first generation of poets, for example in *הויך*, 'you have been', instead of *הויית*. The difference, however, lies in the fact that when Amram or Marqe use it, they confine it to verbs *ל"י*, those with the last radical *yod*, mainly in the verb *הוה*, to be, which in many cases functions as a copula and thus, it may align itself with the ordinary copula *אית* (and *לית*), and became *הויך* by analogy to *איתך* (or *ליתך*). By contrast, Ab Isda generalized (with no consistency) the formative to non-*ל"י* verbs.²⁵ In this he reveals the true nature of his Aramaic.

The most visible display of Late Samaritan Aramaic, as far as liturgy is concerned, is Tabya Ibn Darta's *אה מן דו כל עלמה מר*. Besides a good knowledge

²⁵ LOT, IIIb, pp. 110–111.

of Aramaic, Tabya manifests a prolix style, which distances itself from the concise, yet elevated style of the fourth century Amram Dare, whose poem we have seen earlier.

1	I AM WHO I AM O! the one who is Master of the whole world Hear what we say before you. And if we sinned, forgive and absolve, for what You are, we cannot say I AM WHO I AM	אהיה אשר אהיה אה מן דו כל עלמה מר קבל מד לה קמייך נימר ואן חטיינן סלה וסובר לפם דאתה לית בן נימר אהיה אשר אהיה
2	O! Our leader and provider In your mercy set us up And absolve us and forgive us According to what You are, not to what we are I AM WHO I AM	אה דברן וזאונן ברתואתך כונן וסובר יתן וסלה לנן לפם דאתה לא לפם דאנן ... אהיה אשר אהיה
3	Glory to You, for You preceded this world, that You created. And who can assess Your great greatness? And what we ought to praise, We cannot say, because what You are. Forgive us, according to what you said: A merciful and gracious God' I AM WHO I AM	רבותה לך דקדמת לדן עלמה דומנת רבותך רבתה ומן ישום ומד עליינן בתשבחתה לית בן נימר לפם דאתה ארתיינן לפם מה דאמרת יהוה רחמן ורתאה ... אהיה אשר אהיה
4	You are the most ancient among the ancients, The devotee of the devotees, The most perfect among the perfect ones, And the possessor of the worlds. In Your grace look down from heaven and remember our covenants, and atone for our guilt, for You are the master of mercy. I AM WHO I AM	אתה קדום קדומיה ואתה רחמון דרחמיה ואתה שלמון דשלמיה ואתה מלוך עלמיה בחסדך אדיק מן שומיה ודכר לנן קיאמיה וכפר לנן אשמיה דאתה מרון דרחמיה ... אהיה אשר אהיה
5	The gates of Your mercy are not used to be shut before an unfortunate, and those who ask for You are not rejected, and those who quest for You are not rebuffed Your Mercy is accustomed to extinguish The flames of sin that consume us	לית תרחי רחמיך אלופים באפי מסכין מתרקפים ולא בלושיך מנופים ולא שאוליך מטרפים ורחמיך אלופים טפים להבי חוביה דלנן שרפים

For You are merciful and gracious, keeping grace to thousands דאתה רחום וחונן נצר חסד לאלפים
I AM WHO I AM	אהיה אשר אהיה
6	
O! Master of the nobles	אה רבון דרב רביה
O! the one near to the heart	ואה קריב לבביה
O! The cooler of all the burning heats.	ואה מקר כל שרביה
Remove from us the enemies, and forgive us all our sins.	כפת מנן דבביה וסלח לנן כל חוביה
Do not bind us to the sinners, for You are the best among the good ones ...	ולא תצרכנן לחיביה דאתה טבון דטביה ...
I AM WHO I AM	אהיה אשר אהיה
7	
O! my trust, O! my shield	אה רחצוני ואה מגני
Pardon the sins that disgrace me	סלח לחטיה דלי מגני
And as You are used to, save me	ואך דאת אלוף תדבקני
And do not leave me in oppression	וברצמה לא תשבקני
And do not banish me from Your grace	ומן חסדך לא תרחקני
And do not make me dependent on man	ולאנשה לא תצרכני
My Master, whose habit is truth	מרי דאמונתך כני
Do not hand me down to my (own) power	ועל חילי לא תשלמני
And accept my prayer	וקבל צלותי מני ...

Soon after the refrain **אהיה אשר אהיה**, taken from Ex. 3.14, a favorite motif in the liturgy, where it occurs hundreds of times, the poem starts with a long invocation, paying great attention to rhyme: each line ends with a **-מר**. Remarkable formalism, if I may apply a modern term to an ancient piece of work. This, of course, causes a number of concessions to grammar, syntax and lexicon. For example:

Right from the beginning a strange word order occurs: **מן דו כל עלמה מר**, which supplants the natural sequence: **מן דו מר כל עלמה**, 'who is the master of the whole world'. The last line of the stanza is twisted too: **לפם דאתה לית**, 'for, what You are we cannot say', *i.e.*, we are nor able to express what is your substance. Moreover, the line does not follow the idea expressed in the former one, which twice appeals to God's forgiveness: **סלח וסובר**. This is reiterated in the following stanza in inverse order: **וסובר יתן וסלח לנן**, to respect the rhyme which requires the ending **-נן**. The unconditional capitulation to rhyme is best illustrated by the last line of the stanza: **לפם דאתה לא לפם דאנן**, which may be translated with great pain as 'according to what You are, not according with what we are'. I guess that Tabya is trying to say that God is forgiving while humans are not. Not exactly Shakespeare.

The third stanza is no less distorted in syntax and word flow, incomparable with Amram's smooth style. Notice the tautology רבותך רבחה, 'Your great greatness', followed by a deformed

ומד עלינן בתשבתה
לית בן נימר לפם דאתה

'and what we ought to give praises, we cannot express because what you are', *i.e.*, You are so great that we cannot express it. The use of the causative לפם in this environment is at least an innovation, if not a proof of the status of Aramaic at this moment, which is so weak and unstable that the poet finds no difficulty in bending its normal use for the sake of what he considers an esthetic need. Obviously, this is the result of yielding to the rhyme ending in תה- (even when the last vowel is not represented graphically, as is the case with קדמת, זמנת, which are pronounced *qedimta* and *azmintā* respectively).

So is in the fifth stanza the use of the verb טפים in the Qal conjugation: רחמיך אלופים טפים. Qal denotes the intransitive, while the transitive is expressed by Pi'el. Accordingly, מטפין would have been the better choice with the object להבי חוביה. The same use of Qal as transitive occurs in a prayer of Tabya's contemporary, Ab Gilluga: וטפי יקדן לחצה דמספסף ולהב, 'quench the fire of the oppression, that burns and blazes'²⁶ ... and earlier: וטפי לגמרה, 'and quench its coal'.²⁷ In both cases, the Qal conjugation is attested by the pronunciation *ʔēfi*, which has no gemination, therefore it is not Pa'el. The later parts of Tibat Marqe also have such a case of transitive Qal when it comments on במים האדירים, 'in Mighty waters' (Ex. 15.10) in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic: הם המים הרבים לא יכלו טפים לגורה דאכלת יתון (the Egyptians).²⁸ Unfortunately, the same transitive Qal occurs once in a poem attributed to Marqe: כמים טפים כל אש, 'like water that quenches any fire'.²⁹ This would undermine the whole demonstration if this poem could be considered as being of Marqe's pen, which is a matter of dispute. However, in another poem also attributed to Marqe, it is said גורה בישתה הוא מטפי (God) extinguishes the evil fire' ■.³⁰ This is undoubtedly the transitive Pa'el.

²⁶) *LOT*, IIIb, p. 296.

²⁷) *LOT*, IIIb, p. 292.

²⁸) *TM*, p. 139.

²⁹) Cowley, p. 85.

³⁰) Cowley, p. 73.

The line ends with a Hebraism: להבי חוביה דלנן שרפים. What Tabya means is: 'Your mercy is accustomed to extinguish the flames of sin that burn us'.

In the sixth stanza the verb כפת is at least unique in its present use. Its common meaning is 'to bind someone tightly', habitually a prisoner. Here the imperative means 'banish'. Only the nuance of force remains from the original meaning. I suspect that the author has chosen the word under the influence of the Arabic كَفَأَ, which means *inter alia* 'to divert, to drive someone away'.

Tabya is very fond of old collocations, which he simply recycles in his poem. Thus, in the fourth stanza בחסדך אדיק מן שומיה, 'in Your grace look upon us' combines two widespread locutions: אדיק עלינן בחסדיך, 'look upon us in Your grace',³¹ and Amram's אדיקת מן מעון קדשך, 'You have looked from Your holy abode'.³² אדיק עלינן מרן, 'Our Lord, look upon us', is a very popular prayer penned by Marqe.³³

Likewise, in the fifth stanza he uses the expression תרחי רחמיך, a habitual spelling of תרעי רחמיך, 'the gates of Your mercy', already coined by Amram: תרחי רחמיך לא תצנקון באפינן, 'do not shut before us the gates of Your mercy';³⁴ אקמנן סכואן על תרח רחמיך, 'we have set our hopes at the gate of Your mercy'.³⁵ The same occurs in Marqe's poems: ולא תרח רחמיך צניק באפי ערוק, 'the gate of Your mercy is not shut before a fugitive';³⁶ תרח רחמיך לא תצנקנה באפינן, 'do not shut before us the gates of Your mercy' (a slightly modified repetition of Amram, above).³⁷ As Amram and Marqe, both belong to the Defter, the common Samaritan prayer book, it is no wonder that certain expression were borrowed by various writers: even Tabya's contemporary, Ab Gilluga resorts to it: מרי אפתח באפי תרחי רחמיך, 'my Lord, open before me the gates of Your mercy'.³⁸ It is worth noticing that the same collocation is quite frequent in Jewish worship. Thus שערי רחמים occurs in second century blessings that accompany the קריאת שמע, the Jewish creed: הפותח לנו שערי רחמים, 'He who opens before us the gates of mercy', and in the sixth century Hekhalot Book of Enoch: שלש מאות אלפים שערי רחמים, 'three hundred thousand gates of mercy' (III, 8). The seventh century poet Eleazar Haqaliri says too: שערי רחמים פתח ממרומים 'open from the upper abode the

³¹) An anonymous prayer, early enough to be included in the Defter, the Samaritan common prayer book. Cowley, p. 10.

³²) Cowley, p. 48.

³³) Cowley, p. 12.

³⁴) Cowley, p. 27.

³⁵) Cowley, p. 29.

³⁶) Cowley, p. 12.

³⁷) Cowley, p. 67.

³⁸) Cowley, p. 78.

gates of mercy', etc.³⁹ Note the unique appearance of the *Itpe'el* מתרַקפִים (*mitrāqēfīm*) with the meaning 'to be shut'. In fact, this verb means elsewhere to 'tremble', as for example in Tibat Marqe: *וארקפת איבריו כד עמתה*, '(Moses') limbs trembled when he saw him (*i.e.*, the angel)'.⁴⁰ Our case, is paired only by another *hapax legomenon* in the Midrash Rabba to Leviticus, which says: *תרעא פתיה מרקפא ליה*, '(even if) the gate is open, she knocks on it' (Lev. R. 5.8).

Another common expression that Tabya adopts is *לא תצרך*, which may be translated literally as 'do not put someone in need', *i.e.*, 'make not someone dependent on'. He employs it twice. In the sixth stanza he says: *ולא תצרכנו* and *להייביה*, 'and make us not dependent on the sinners', and further, in the seventh one: *ולאנשה לא תצרכנו*, 'and make me not dependent on man'. This also is a well-known Jewish expression, already found in the *ברכת המזון*, the meal blessing, originating in the second century: *ואל תצריכנו ... לידי מתנת*: *בשר ודם*, 'make us not dependent on the gift of blood and flesh', also in the Palestinian Talmud, tract. Berakhot fol. 6, col 4, etc.

I do not claim that Tabya was influenced by Jewish customs; all I am trying to do is showing that he used extant literary tools that were at hand at his time.

In spite of these occasional deviations from the simple and concise language and style of his predecessors, Tabya is not a stranger to living Aramaic, 'living' in terms of a written language. The aberrations mentioned above, the irregularities, indicate that his Aramaic was no longer a spoken language, but a tool of worship, which materializes intensely the principle of *licentia poetica*.

The poem in question is longer than the part under discussion, but its rest is different in literary structure, to the extent that one may doubt Tabya's authorship. What comes after the seventh stanza starts with *אהיה אשר אהיה*, but this is not repeated as a refrain, and the contents is no longer an invocation of God's mercy, asking for forgiveness. This part is rather a series of submissive expressions and long praises addressed to God. It is not unlikely that the opening *אהיה אשר אהיה* led some later editor to join this part to the former one.

We should keep in mind that Tabya's contemporaries, who wrote prayers at the dusk of Aramaic, were hardly prolific as far as Aramaic is concerned. Thus, Ab Isda left one Aramaic prayer, as against two in Hebrew, Ildustan wrote

³⁹ All instances collected from the data base of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, Jerusalem.

⁴⁰ *TM*, p. 41.

three Aramaic prayers, and Ab Gilluga two. This is undoubtedly a rather poor harvest, compared to the preceding period of abundance in Aramaic literature and to the later revival of Samaritan literature of the fourteenth century.

The last centuries of the first millennium, however, also yielded some prose pieces in which Late Samaritan Aramaic is far more visible. Generally speaking, as no liturgical solemnity is required, no literary model imposed itself on prose composition. As a result, there is very little evidence of dependence on the ancient writers. Since the compositions have very few stylistic pretensions, nothing compelled the authors to choose their language from the prestigious poetic compositions of the past. Hence their language better reflects the conventional Aramaic of their own time. I use the word ‘conventional’ in an attempt to avoid the usual term ‘artificial’, which has a negative connotation, as being the opposite of ‘natural’. Since this negative connotation is widespread, I shall distance myself from it.

The most important—and voluminous—prose composition in Late Samaritan Aramaic is a midrashic, pseudo-historic treatise named *Asatir*.

This is a strange piece of work with a strange name, first known from an Arabic commentary named شرح الاساطير, ‘a commentary of *Asatir*’. It was first published by Moses Gaster under the title ‘The *Asatir*, the Samaritan book of the Secrets of Moses’, in London in 1927. Of course, the ‘secrets’ are the result of a misidentification of the Arabic name with the Hebrew/Aramaic סֵתֵר which means ‘mystery’, as ט and ת never interchange. Ben-Hayyim pointed out that the Arabic اساطير is the plural of أسطورة, ‘a folk tale’, and no ‘secret’ is involved in the narrative of the book. Rather, it is a very developed recapitulation of the story of mankind from Genesis up to the death of Moses, with an enigmatic supplement, consisting of prophecies enunciated by Moses before his death concerning the following 3204 years. The book adds many stories to the narrative of the Pentateuch, which were probably handed down in oral traditions or borrowed from the Moslim environment.⁴¹

This is supposedly a tenth century document, written in Late Aramaic. Since it was copied and recopied by many incompetent scribes, it is no wonder that its text has deteriorated greatly. Arabic has penetrated deeply into its

⁴¹ The work has been published by Z. Ben-Hayyim according to a manuscript located in the institute Yad Ben-Zvi in Jerusalem: סֵפֶר אֲסַטִּיר, *Tarbiz* 14 (1943), pp. 104–125; 174–190; 15 (1944), pp. 71–87; 128. His publication is accompanied by a translation and rich comments (in Hebrew).

Aramaic and one cannot say with certainty whether it was part of the original composition or a later inroad. The first two paragraphs are given here as an example (following Ben-Hayyim's publication mentioned in note 40):

1 ישתבח אלה דעבד עלמה ואקים אדם ארש. ובניו קין והבל כמהו. ויהב לקין מערבה. ויהב להבל צפונה וימה. ויהב אלעלה תלימת קין להבל לאתה: ויהב מקדה תלימת הבל לקין. לאתה: ושרא קין במיססת מדי מתקריה ניכל: ופלג ארעה לה ולבניו בירח אב. והוה מסכום יומים איתי קין מנחה. והבל איתי קרבן וראשית מדבחה הוה בשפול מקדשה. בין לזוה והרגרזים. אתה קעם אתה וכד הקרב קין והבל בעשרים יום בניסן אבו וכד לא עמה קין מנחתה מתקבלה <2א> הך הוה אלוף עמי מנחתה דאבוה ידע דו פסיל. והדקרב אתעכר עלמה ורוחה וב: הקרב הבל וב: שעין אתרחי יהוה להבל ולמנחתה: ולקין ולמנחתה לא שעה. דרוה בשעתה קמאיתה ולושה. לא אתצטר ויחר לקין ועור לארעה וכתר ד: שנין דלא עמי לאדם ולא הבל. והות חוה רחמה לקין. ואדם רחם להבל וכד שחו קין דלא איתי נסבת חוה מלך מן אדם ואולת לידה והבל עמה ואשקחתה עקיר לאתר מדו מתקריה אחריה ערפאת מלתה דאמירה להבל ולידך עזרותה וכל <דברתה> {דברתה} נהך לברה ודמן תקנך אדמה דהבל <2ב> וכד השפך אדמה דהבל. התעכרת רוחה והות ארעה בקנאה וימיה עכירין ושמשה אשנתה וזערה בניושה ודחל אדם דחלה רבה. הך יתה יומה הך יומה דהלקטו פריה וקעם אדם במדינה דחכמתה דמתקריה ספרה. דספר מלחמות יהוה. ועמה נגימו דיומיה. ו: קרבי יתה ועמה לית אחד מנון ועקר ושרה לוגו באדן. ומנה ל: שנה עד קטל קין להבל לוגו עשר יומין בטיבת דאתברא אדם חרופתה. ואשתחה אדם וחוה בגנה ח: יומים דלא ידע חוה. וזנת מדעיון במלתה דנחשה. ובתר קטלה. דהבל אתנור ק: שתה ובתר חכם אתה ואולד ית שת

2 <3א> ביומי שת אול קין למדנחה דבנה חנוך מדינה דשמה אנטיה ומלך קין ק: שנה ימיה ויבשתה. ואולד שת לאנוש, ובנה אדם קריה. ושמה פילונה על שם אנוש. ואולד אנוש לקין. ובנה שת מדינה וזעקה דמשק על שם קין. ואולד קין למהלאל. ובנה מדינה ושמה עטירות שפיים ואולד מהלאל לירד. ובנה מדינה מתקריה יעזיר. ואולד ירד לחנוך ובנה מדינה ושמה שלם רבתה. בתר י: שנה: אלף חנוך בספר האותות דתיהב לאדם ואנין כד: אבני שהם בי: לרחותה. ויב: לבחור כרניה בני יעקב ולתולדות עבדי אל <3ב> עליון ביתה עדנה אתילדו בני קין לאתרון וצעדו עלמה מן אצטרה עד אולד קין לחנוך. וחנוך לעזיר ועזיר למחיאיל ומחיאיל למתושאל ומתושאל ללמך בדי: עשר שנה אול למך מן חנוכיה ובנה ענה. וברה וניסה ועדה. וקטל לקין ובנה דחלה שמה {מ} <פ> אדראי ובמיעול אדם ר: ע: אלצנמין. עביד טנס דהב צלמים לפצעוי ולחבורתי. ב: הו קרו אדם גיסס קמי בניו. וכד שמע חנוך בעו לאלה בר ה: וס: ואתהלך חנוך עם אלהה, ובנה מזבח אדם סהבה ואולד למתושלח ומתושלח ללמך. ולמך לנח בניסן בד: יום מולדה אתעמי סימן בממציע שומיה. ורתתו כל דיארי <4א> עלמה. ואתא ליד אדם וקעם אדם ברמות חכמתה ובסר במבולה ואמיר דאמר חנוך בחייה ולא אתשקע ואתפעס אדם דו צפית נקמס וחכם בניו וכד הגמל נח אנדיה למך ליד אדם לביספרה. ואמר אדם דן ינחמנו. דהוה טובה במולדה. ובנה למך קריה על שמה ושמה ריפת. והיא גבעון הדנון דרום מקדשה הרגרזים. ואולד למך ששה בנים תובל קין אתילד דאקטל קין יובל בנה מיסדה מת רבתה עיבל בנה קנו והיא ניסבור. תובל קין בנה סכיפה שמה אלבצרה. לארדאן כל אמן נחשה. אלה אלף אדם ק: ו: פ: אדם אלף למך ביספרה דקשטה שת ברה אלף ה: וק: <4ב> שמה. אנוש אלף צ: שנה וטק: שמה. קין אלף י שנין וטק: שמה. מהלאל אלף ה: וס: ה: וצ: וחק: שמה ירד אלף ו: ומ: וחק: שמה וחנוך אלף ה: וס: וק: שמה. ביום מת חנוך אתו כל בני אדם לספרה. משמע אדם מבכי לה בד מית. חנוך: והסתבל לספרה ובכותה אדם ושת ואנוש וקין. ומהלאל ירד. וברה מתושלח דהוה דער בבאדן וכתרו מבכין לה. עד אול משמועה ליד אחידן בר תובל קין דהוה דער בחברון ריש חיל קינאי והוה תמן אלף בביספר האותות קמי אדם. וכד אתו בעו מן אדם דיקרי נימס. וקרא אדם בה וקביר חנוך בו בככון הרגרזים. בכטא די מתקריה יסכר <5א> ואתקרי טברה הר עיבל דהבחלו חנוך בה. והבנה בה קברין סגי הך דאמר

חנוך. {אדם} דו <שפך> {שכם} אלעלמה ולעל מנה תרח שומיה, דלית אשתה קרבה ליד סהרת הרגזיום ב: אלפים דאמין. דו קרי מקלט לערוק. צור ישועה. ואלף מתושלה כ: שנה ווק: שנה ולמך אלף ג: ונ: שנה ווק: שנה ונח אלף וק: שנה קרי בספר אדם דאלפו.

And here is an attempt to translate these paragraphs into English:

1 Praised be God who created the world and established Adam (as) foundation and his sons Cain and Abel like him. And He gave to Cain the West; and He gave to Abel the North and the West (?). And He gave Al'alah, the sister of Cain, to Abel as a wife, and he gave Maqedah, the sister of Abel, to Cain as a wife. And Cain started founding a town named NIKL and he divided the earth between him and his sons in the month of Ab. In the course of time, Cain brought an offering and Abel brought an offering. And the first of the altars was on the slopes of the (hill) of the temple, between Luza and Mount Garizim, the one opposite the other. And when Cain and Abel brought the offerings, it was on the twentieth of Nisan. When Cain did not see his offering accepted, as he had been used to seeing the offerings of his father, he knew he was rejected. And as he brought his offering, the world became tormented and his spirit (as well). Afterwards Abel brought an offering. And after three hours God favoured Abel and his offering. But to Cain and his offering He had no regard. When he saw on the first hour that (to) his offering He did not turn, Cain was in anger and returned to his land. And he tarried four years without seeing Adam or Abel. And Eve loved Cain, but Adam loved Abel. And as Cain tarried, not coming, Eve took advice from Adam, and went to him and Abel (was) with him. And she found him (Adam) moved to a place which was called Arfat afterwards. (This is) the word spoken to Cain 'Its craving is toward you' (Gen 4.7) and all that follows (up to): 'let us go out to the field' (Gen 4.8). And there the blood of Abel was shed. And when the blood of Abel was shed, his spirit (Cain) became tormented, and the earth was in tumult and the seas were turbid and the sun was abated, and the moon was in weakness. And Adam was greatly frightened that day, like the day when the (forbidden) fruit was plucked. And Adam stayed in the city of wisdom called Sifra of the 'Book of the Wars of the Lord'. And he saw the constellation of the days and the seven (future) wars, and he saw one of them missing. And he moved and dwelt in Badan. And he counted thirty years before Cain killed Abel on the tenth day of Tebet. Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath. And Adam and Eve remained in the Garden (of Eden) for eight days in which he did not know Eve. And their minds strayed in the matter of the serpent. And after the murder of Abel, Adam secluded himself (from Eve) for one hundred years. Then he knew his wife and he begat Seth.

2 In the days of Seth Cain went to the east, to a city, which Enoch had built and named it Antiochia. And Cain reigned one hundred years over the seas and the dry lands. And Seth begat Enosh and he built a city and called its name PYLONH on the name of Enosh. And Enosh begat Qenan. And Seth built a city and called it Damascus on the name of Qenan. And Qenan begat Mahalalel, and he built a city and called its name ATRWT SPYM. And Mahalalel begat Yered and he built a city called Y'ZYR. And Yered begat Enoch, and he built a city and called it Shalem the Great. After he was thirteen years (old), Enoch learned the Book of Signs, which was given to Adam. These

are the twenty four onyx stones: twelve for the Age of Divine Grace, and twelve for the the chosen families of the sons of Jacob and the descendants of the servants of God Most High. At that time the children of Cain were born in their places and they corrupted the world from one end to another, until Cain begat Enoch. And Enoch begat Irad, Irad (begat) Mehiyael and Metushael, and Metushael (begat) Lemekh. In (his) fourteenth year (of age) Lemekh departed from HNWKYH and built ANH and BRH and NYSH and ADH. And he killed Cain and built an idol, whose name was PADRAY TNS. And when Adam entered RHWBWT, the city of idols, he made a column of gold, image{s} to 'my wound and my strike'. Afterwards Adam was reading the law before his sons. And when Enoch heard, he prayed to God. He was sixty-five years old, 'and Enoch walked with God'. And he (re)built the altar of his forefather Adam and begat Metushelah. And Metushelah (begat) Lemekh, and Lemekh (begat) Noah. In Nisan, on the four[teen]th day of his birth, a sign was revealed in the middle of the sky, and all the inhabitants of the world trembled and [they] came to Adam. And Adam stood and foretold the Flood, at the height of his wisdom. And it is said that he said: (As long as) Enoch is alive, it would not happen. And Adam was comforted, for he had foreseen the Lawgiver and he acquainted his sons (with this). And when Noah was weaned, Lemekh brought him to Adam to his school, and Adam said: 'This one will provide us relief'.

Many geographical names and persons involved are of Arabic origin, and are thus a good part of the vocabulary. Such is נִכְל 'punishment' in the first paragraph, which corresponds to the Arabic نِكَال, and גְּנִימו 'star' from the Arabic نَجْم, the adverb אַד instead of טַטָּה, which reflects the Arabic اِذ, in the word וְהִדְקַרְב, which is a contraction of וְאִד קַרְב; the article אַל in the word אַלְצַנְמִין, easily discloses the Arabic اَل, etc. Antiochia is named אַנְטֻכְיָה after the contemporary Arabic اَنْطَاكِيَّة, and עַרְפָּאָת recalls a place near Mecca called عَرَفَات. Arabic syntactic structures recur frequently, such as the construction of a singular feminine with the plural subject: וּזְנַת מְדַעִיּוֹן, 'their minds strayed', etc. Another Arabic syntactic construction is the asyndetic connection of a relative clause to an unarticulated noun, as is the case in וּבְנֵה מְדִינָה מִתְקַרְיָה, 'the city of which' is omitted here, as اَلَّذِي is avoided in Arabic in similar circumstances.

Late Aramaic is represented by תְּלִימָה instead of אַחַת, 'sister', which is frequent in later manuscripts of the ST.⁴² Late Aramaic is also the verb שָׁמָה, which is a denominative of שֵׁם, 'name' in view of the following וּזְעָקָה. It occurs

⁴² ST, III, p. 59. With the exception of one occurrence in the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch (gloss in Gen. 49.5), this noun hardly occurs in other Aramaic dialects. Its presence in Syropalestinian is reduced to a single doubtful instance, in a fragment of the catechism of Cyrill, as reproduced by Fr. Schulthess in his *Grammatik des Christlich-Palästinischen Aramäisch* (Tübingen: E. Littmann, 1924), p. 126: אַחַרִי תְּלִימָיָא. However, the

in later manuscripts of the ST, probably under the influence of the Arabic *وَقَرَأَ* לִין שמהן כשמהתה דשמה לין אבוה, ‘to give someone a name’; cf. *وَقَرَأَ* לִין שמהן כשמהתה דשמה לין אבוה, ‘and he called them names like the names their father had called them’ (ST Gen 26.18 Ms m. Var. דוקרא, דזעק, דזעק). In the following, the genuine Aramaic *זעק* is used instead. In addition, *שמה* reappears in connection with *קין* and with *Yared*, but when it comes to Mahalalel the ancient *מתקריה* occurs. Apparently, the rule of alternation applies here to avoid cacophonous repetitions. Interestingly, the building of Antiochia is attributed to Enoch, although the narration of Gen. 4.17 speaks about Cain building a city, which he called after the name of his son Enoch. *לושה* for ‘offering’ is an expansion of the original meaning ‘kneading’, i.e. ‘cake’, in this case, what one offers on the altar. In a late manuscript of the ST to Ex. 12.39 the original use of the word occurs: *ועפו ית לושה דאפקו ממצרים*, ‘they baked the dough (do) that they brought from Egypt’. Furthermore, *אתצטר* is a denominative of *סטר*, ‘side’, with partially assimilated *s* to the following emphatic *t*. There is another issue with this verb: what kind of conjugation is this? Apparently, it is a unique case of *Ittafal* of *סטר*, for the regular *Ithpa’el* would require metathesis: *אצתטר* or *אסתטר*. The semantic area and the temporal distribution of this denominative we already discussed in our analysis of Ildustan’s poem above. *ערב* means *ערובתה*, Sabbath’s eve, *ערב שבת* in Hebrew.

There are also plenty of riddles, such as *במיססת*, which is probably a mistake for something else, meaning ‘town’, *יתה*, *קרביה* probably from *קרביה*, ‘the wars’, etc. *טנס* is a mutilated form from *סטכן*, which appears in another mutilated form in the mentioned above late manuscript of the ST *טסכן קרתה* 10.11. Both probably belong to *סטבן*, a form of the Greek *στόβα* which occurs in the Palestinian Talmud with the sound shift *u > w*, very often pronounced as *v*. So is *גיסס*, deteriorated from *גימס*, ‘law’ (*νόμος*), a dissimilated form, usual in both Jewish and Samaritan Aramaic: *גימוס*.

Another piece of Late Samaritan Aramaic is the *Tulida*, a segment of which exemplifies the scientific literature at the turn of the first millennium. The composition is named *Tulida*, a name that recalls the word *תולדות*, which opens the lists of descendants of various personalities in the Bible. Indeed, *Tulida* is a *chronicle*, listing the heroes of the Pentateuch from Adam to Moses, and further, the priests that led the community. It is a dynamic composition, permanently changing, in the sense that various authors at various times added

original reading of the fragment is *אחוי תלמידיא* (J.P.N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1875], IV, p. 201). For its Akkadian origin see W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959–1978), s. v. *talimu*.

their notes to the main text. This is *not* our subject. The entire document is much longer than the segment presented here, which is an astronomical fragment, intercalated in the chronicle by someone at a certain date. We do not know the details. In fact, only this small portion belongs to the period of Late Samaritan Aramaic. The rest (with the exception of few short passages) is much later, and is different in content, language and style (see above, note 1).

אמת דאת בעי מהכם פאת שמשא והוא רחוקה דלבין שמשא וזערה בשעת צמותון חכם דרג סלוקה בקשטה וחכם בה דרג מיסון שומיה מן ריש אמרה עדאן דתמטי וחכם אתרה צפונהי אי דרומאי וחכם כמה מיליה דרגים ודקים וכדו חכם כמה לתנינה דרגים ודקים ליתה שעתה ואפחיתה מן דרגי ודקי מיסון שומיה והן הוה וסב מה התבקי פאת זהרה וחכם אתרה והן הוה מיל שמשא ופאת זהרה באתר חדה צמתון והן הוה מחלפין אפחת אהן דצבצב מן אהן דסני וצפי למה דהתותר והן הוה תריון בצפונה טר יתון מן אנפש ארעה והן הוה תריון בדרומה אוזפון על אנפיש ארעה ומד אצטמת בתר תוּפּוּתה אי בצרה חכם בה פאת זהרה ומד ייתי סב סדסה ומדו דו פאת שמשא ליתה שעתה ואלה חכם כסיאתה.

When you want to know the angle of the sun, i. e., the distance between the sun and the moon the moment of their junction, know (= calculate) the degrees of its ascent exactly, and know the degrees of the middle of the sky from the head of 'the lamb' (ARIES) as far as it goes. And know its place to the north or to the south. And know how much is its declination in degrees and minutes. And now know how many degrees and minutes (is the declination) of the DRAGON at that hour and subtract them from the degrees and minutes of the middle of the sky. If so (= afterwards), take what remains (and you will know) the angle of the moon and you (will) know its place. If the declination of the sun and the angle of the moon are in one place, add them up. But if they are in different (places), deduct the one which is less from the one which is more, and see what remains. And if both are at the north, keep (deduct) them from the breadth (= latitude) of the earth. And if both are at the south, add them to the breadth of the earth. And what results from the addition or subtraction, you will know the angle of the moon. And what comes (= the sum) take a sixth of it, and this is the angle of the sun at that hour. And God knows the concealed things.

Right from the beginning one notices the genuine Aramaic adverbial locution 'אמת דאת', 'when you', and the temporal expression 'ליתה שעתה', 'at that time'. To the same linguistic layer belongs the asyndetic 'בעי מהכם', 'want to know'. Most of the lexemes are of good Aramaic stock. However, 'צבצב' for 'less' is Late Aramaic, as against the older 'זעור', and so is 'צפי', 'see', for 'הזי' or the even younger 'חמי'.⁴³ No doubt the document reveals the author's Arabic background, which manifests itself in loanwords, such as 'דקים', 'minutes', borrowed from *دَقَّة*, or 'תנין' for the constellation DRACO, which is borrowed from the Arabic *تَيْن*, and 'התבקי' from *تَبَقَّى*, 'to remain' (instead of the Aramaic reflexive 'אשתאר'). One

⁴³ *ST*, III, pp. 56–62.

may add מיל and its Aramaizing plural מיליה, ‘decline’, which is nothing but the Arabic term ميل. And also סדסה, an Arabic measure unit: سادسة, ‘a sixth’. No less eloquent are loan translations, such as דרג for ‘degree’ after the shape of دَرَجَة. Normally, דרג means ‘step’ in Samaritan Aramaic.⁴⁴ Another obvious calque is צמות, whose usual meaning is ‘gathering’; here it has the denotation of the astronomic term ‘conjunction’ as has its Arabic parallel اجتماع (when the sun, the moon and the earth are aligned).

We do not know the date of the present document. All we can say is that its Aramaic is too fluent to be written after the eleventh century, when a new linguistic era began during which Aramaic was practically abandoned. On the other hand, the relative abundance of loans from Arabic betray the author’s dependence on Arabic astronomical sources, from which he adapted the text. This cannot precede the eighth century, when astronomy became a scientific tool among the Arabs.⁴⁵ We are left then with the tenth to eleven centuries, when Late Samaritan Aramaic was in use alongside Arabic.

Of course, we may add to the list some isolated tiny pieces of evidence of Aramaic still in use around the twelfth and even thirteenth centuries. Here and there, a scribe could leave the imprint of his personality writing a short colophon in Aramaic. Although very rare, such instances are not completely absent. Thus, the scribe of Ms Samaritain 3 of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, dated to the year 1181, writes:

[א]בי רשיד דכתבת אדה ארהותה קדישתה לאב מסתכיה בר אב יתרנה בר זהותה ועסלתה בשנת
ז וע וחמש מאות למלכות ישמעאל

After stating his name, Abi Rashid, he relates that he wrote this holy Tora for Ab Mistakhia the son of Ab Yitrana the son of Za‘uta in the year 775 of the kingdom of Ishma‘el. The scribe has an Arabic name, but the name of the person for whom he produced the copy of the Pentateuch is pure Aramaic, meaning ‘the one who hopes’, and so are the names of his father ‘the preferred’, and his grand father ‘the joy’ (a name that recalls the Jewish name שמחה and the girls name *Laetitia*). The end is in Hebrew. As we have very few manuscripts that precede the twelfth century, it is no wonder that the vast majority of

⁴⁴ However, note Biblical Hebrew מעלות, ‘steps’ in Ex. 20.26: ולא תעלה במעלות על מזבחי, ‘do not ascend My altar by steps’. The same מעלות are used in 2 Kgs 20.9–11 in the discussion between Isaiah and Hezeqia about the shadow left by the sun on the ‘steps’ of Ahaz. Was it a sun-clock? Are the ‘steps’ actually degrees?

⁴⁵ Sylvia Powels, *Der Kalender der Samaritaner anhand des Kitāb hisāb as-sinīn und anderer Handschriften* (Studia Samaritana, 3; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1977), p. 74.

colophons are in Neo Samaritan Hebrew. I repeat: ‘vast majority’, because one can find an Aramaic colophon even in the fourteenth century, naturally in a kind of mixture with hebraisms and arabisms.

A deed of sale written at the end of a manuscript located in the University Library in Cambridge and dated to 1149 AD reads in apparently good Aramaic:

אדה ארהותה קדישתה אובנה מתפציה בר מתוחיה מן אחיו בחמש ועשרים שקלים בממונה תהי
בריכה עליו ויהי מלף בה בנים ובני בנים שנת ה: < אלפים שנה ו: < מאות שנה וב: < ו: < שנה לצאת
בני: < ישראל ממצרים והיא שנת ד: ומ: < וה: < מאן למלכות ישמעאל: <

This holy Tora, Mitpasya the son of Matuhya bought from his brother for 25 sheqel in cash. Let it be blessed for him and let him teach in it sons and grandsons. (Hebrew): The year 5752 years from the Exodus from Egypt, which is the 445 to the reign of Ishma'el.

Notice the use of the Hebrew מאות along with the Aramaic מאן.

Incidentally, at the same time Aramaic was a language of literary creativity within Judaism. Most Targumim of the Hagiographa, the famous Pseudo-Jonathan, as well as many Aramaic liturgical pieces are the products of this period. Both communities established a new Aramaic standard for literary expression, which was different from both the vernacular and their literary legacy.

However, this state of affairs was not to remain, for the creativity of the Samaritan spirit was soon no longer satisfied with such static and unspoken Aramaic. As the fourteenth century drew near and the intellectuals of the community sought to broaden their horizons, a so far unknown language was created: Neo Samaritan Hebrew, in which Hebrew garnished with Aramaic and Arabic took the lead. This is the language that characterizes the era of literary *Renaissance* within the community. But this is the subject of another study.

Epilogue

One may wonder whether Late Samaritan Aramaic is an appropriate subject to be treated in a workshop dedicated to the Aramaic of the Zohar. I cannot give an unequivocal answer to this question. However, there is some resemblance between the two. Like the author(s) of the Zohar, whether or not written by de Léon or several authors, Tabya and his contemporaries compose in a language they do not speak. In their erudition, they know this language from study and worship. They often employ collocations derived from older sources, without paying much attention to the old morphologic and syntactic rules.

Let me give you some examples. The introduction to the Zohar (according to the Pritzker edition)⁴⁶ says in fol. 1a **ועל רוא דא**, and in fol. 1b **ועל רוא דנא**. Of course, the first locution suffers from incongruence, as **דא** is the feminine demonstrative, while **רוא** is a masculine noun. The parallel **רוא דנא** is grammatically correct, but **דנא** is a very old demonstrative, already an archaism in the Genesis Apocryphon, occurring only once, while the newer **דן**, occurs 25 times. The latter is the one preferred in Aramaic of the first centuries. Apparently, **רוא דנא** is nothing more than a loan from Daniel 2.18, 30. The same alternation occurs in fol. 2a: **על רוא דנא אמרו ... וברוא**. **דא אתקיים עלמא**. In fol. 4b disregard for gender is shown once more when the masculine **נהורא**, 'light' is the subject of the feminine predicate **אתפרשת**. On the other hand, **מילין סתימין** (fol. 2a) associates a feminine noun with a masculine adjective. Obviously, the irregular masculine ending of the feminine **מילין** attracted the ending **-ין** of the adjective **סתימין**. Some lines later the inarticulate plural **אתוון** occurs with the demonstrative **אילין**, which breaks the rule in Aramaic that an articulated noun is required in this case: **אתוותא אילין**. In the same spirit, fol. 1a masculinizes the feminine **כוס** by coupling it to the masculine personal pronoun **איהו**, instead of **איהי**, in the phrase **איהו כוס של ברכה**. Thus, we have here a feminine Hebrew locution with a masculine Babylonian Aramaic pronoun. There are numerous similar cases. In general, the Babylonian Talmud plays a central role in the language of the Zohar, for example: **אמאי** as the regular interrogative, for **למא**, the general Aramaic one, **האי** as the demonstrative for **הדין** 'this', **כגוונא** as the comparative particle for **כות** 'like', **הכי** as the adverb of mode instead of **כדין**, 'thus', **השתא** as the adverb of time for **כדו**, 'now', **לתתא** as the adverb of place for **מלרע**, 'downward', **קא** as the participial particle, etc. However, the predilection for Babylonian Aramaic does not exclude Palestinian Aramaic from the Zohar. Thus **בוצינא** is used, and not the Babylonian **שרגא** for 'candle', **חמי** along with **חזי**, 'to see', etc. For the infinitive of the non-Qal conjugations the Onqelos type **לקטלא**, **לאקטלה**, **לאתקטלא**, is preferred over the Babylonian type **לקטולי**, or the Palestinian **למקטלה**. No doubt, the author had a vast knowledge of Jewish literature and produced a cocktail in which he sometimes gives a special form to what he adopted. Thus, in fol. 4a he quotes the expression **אשתומם כשעה חדא** from Dan. 4.16, which he modifies to **אשתומם רנעא חדא**. Actually **רנעא** is an Aramaistic form of the Hebrew **רגע**, unrecorded in Aramaic, with the exception of one single occurrence in the late Targum

⁴⁶ See <http://www.sup.org/zohar/> (ed. D. Matt).

of Qoh. 9.12: **לזמן בישתא דאתעתדת למהוי נפלא עלויהון ריגועא חדא משמיא**. All this translates **לעת רעה כשתפול עליהם פתאם**. Obviously, a hebraism in both sources.

The Zohar very often quotes old documents. For example the Hebrew expression **שמע מאחורי הפרגוד** ‘to hear from behind the curtain’, an expression denoting disclosure of heavenly secrets to exceptional persons (b. Ber. 18b), is Aramaized in fol. 4a as: **דשמע מאחורי פרגודא**. It even quotes entire wisdom sayings. Such is **מלה בסלע משתוקא בתרין** ‘a word is worth a Sela, silence is worth two’. This is an old Palestinian proverb, attested in the old Midrash Leviticus Rabba (16.5). I suspect our author picked it up from the b. Meg. 18a, where Rav Dimi quotes it from a Palestinian source: **אמרי במערבא מלה בסלע** **משתוקא בתרין**, ‘they say in the West’...^{4 periods?} All this is just a sample of evidence that is available in great abundance.

אידיך זיל גמור.