# UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION AND ADOPTION AMONG EASTERN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF LATE ANTIQUITY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSES OF THE ISLAMIZATION OF ARABIC AND THE ARABIZATION OF MELKITE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
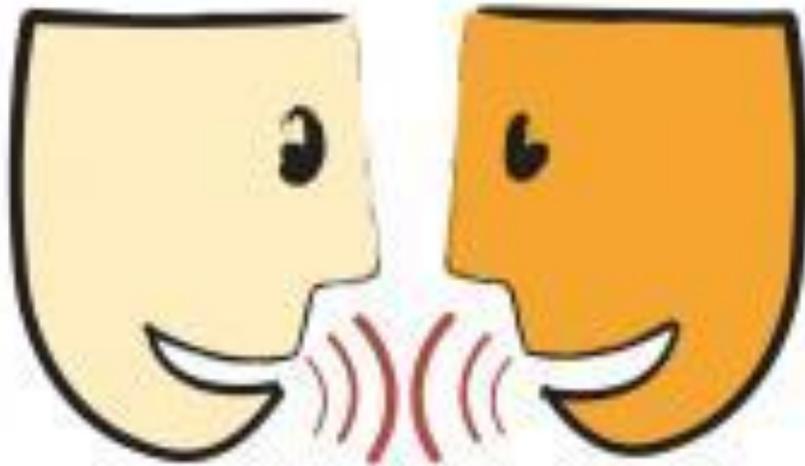
By

Nwokoro, Samuel Onyedika
(pnv859)
(pnv859@ku.dk)

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Supervised by

Thomas Jøhnk Hoffmann
(+45 35 32 36 57)

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This thesis is hereby approved for public access at the Faculty of Theology

Dedication

To Pippie

Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt at observing the relationship among religious groups through their choice and use of language. The faith groups herein observed are the Melkite Christian communities within and around the Arabian Peninsula and their Muslim counterparts during the first three hundred years of the spread of Islam (600-900 AD). Based on theories that support the advantageous use of language by coexisting ideological rival groups, this study set out to demonstrate how the Arabic language was valuably crucial in the ideological interaction between Melkite Christian theologians and the Islamic thinkers of the seventh to the tenth centuries CE. The concepts of standardizing and adopting a language have been used as fundamental tools to this end. From the findings herein portrayed, the Arabic language before the sixth century was diverse with many dialects. Only with the rise of the Arab religious movement did a harmonized and written form of the Arabic language start to emerge. This form of Arabic is testified in the first literature of the Arab language, the Qur'an, to have been divinely given. In addition to this qur'anic favorable disposition was the political force of the Islamic caliphates which saw to the social popularity of this selected variety. By the end of the second century following the Arab conquests, Arabic was a standard language that gave reputation to users of it. Muslim thinkers, scientists and theologians wrote and spoke in this standard means of communication throughout the empire. The effect of this Islamized standard language is found to have equally reflected on religious minorities living in the Peninsula. Picking Melkite Christianity as an example, this Syrian speaking group of Christians had profound Greek influence on their creed and liturgy. Sources, however, indicate that before the turn of the eighth century Melkite theological writings began to appear in Arabic. This was the earliest attested origination of Christian theology in Arabic language. Considering the context of this language shift the following conclusions have been drawn: (a) a variety of the Arabic language culminated in a standard form during the early years of the rise of Islam, (d) this standardization process exhibited elements of Islamization when compared to its pre-Islamic nature, (c) this Islamized and widely spoken Arabic became a viable means of communication for non-Muslim communities living within Islamic caliphates, (d) Melkite Christianity adopted Arabic as a strategic means of communicating their doctrines and preserving their religious identity in an Arabic-speaking world. An important lesson learnt in the course of this inquiry is that language behavior was an important aspect of near east late-antique Christian-Muslim exchanges. An analysis of this behavior equally shows that political institutions can facilitate religious superiority by creating the conditions for the development and thriving of certain languages. When such languages attain religio-political standard, minority groups reinvent their ideologies through such languages. This reinvention strategy, as observed in the case of the Melkite tradition, can raise the stake and creativity of minority language users. This implies that, where applicable, language behavior can give insight to how and whether language usage can account for certain features or help to unveil possible motifs in interfaith encounters. When applied to relationship among rival dogmatic groups today, this study and its approach of language choice as a communication strategy creates an opening for more meaningful multi-faith theological interaction.

1   CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

By the turn of the eight century, near east Christian theology had started undergoing an unusual language shift. It was the adopting of the religious language of a rival religious group that had subjected all dissenting faith groups under its political rule. The Syrian speaking Melkite Christian communities had Greek as their ecclesiastical language and Palestinian Aramaic as a local idiom.[1] Within the first two centuries of the rise and spread of the Arab movement that culminated in established Islamic caliphates, Arabic translations and original writings of Christian thought began to emerge from monastic and church leaders of the Melkite communities. What necessitated such a quick and swift transition to a rival religious language? And how did Greek Christian theological jargons find expression in an Islamized Arabic? In order to answer these questions, this thesis uses sociolinguistic concepts to inquire into the phenomenon of language prioritization and language acquisition among near east late antique religious communities.

Christianity and Judaism, prior to Islam, had had a mutual rival relationship that involved the use of political power to promote religious interests. Christian leaders, with the favor of the Roman Empire, from after the fourth century, had exercised political advantage over minority religious communities like those of Judaism and Roman traditional religions.[2] There was huge theological tension between Christianity and Judaism owing to Christian supersessionistic ideas that sought to assert the religious validity of Christianity through its political success.[3] There had also been the persecution of Jewish and alleged heretic Christian groups under the Holy Roman Empire, as well as, rare cases of the persecution

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[1] Sidney Harrison Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monastries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," in *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002).

[2] Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Robert Bonfil, *Jews in Byzantium Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

[3] Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, *Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian Anti-Judaism.*, 2005; Marc G. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*, SUNY Series in Judaica (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

of Christians under Jewish dynasties such as those of the Himyarites.[4] While Latin or Greek may be regarded as common means of communication, west and east of the Roman Empire respectively, other languages equally surfaced in major interactions, and Jewish documents continued to appear in the choice of the language of rabbinic authors.[5] However, with the rise of Islam from the seventh century, it can be said that the valorization of a particular language form through sacralization claims and the imposing of the said language on public space through political power, is almost unprecedented.

In multi-confessional societies, doctrinal groups tend to either dominate or 'negotiate their coexistence' in many ways.[6] Language can be seen as one of such means of domination or negotiation. Language can be a mode of expressing superiority as well as a means of developing 'suitable models of integration or assimilation'.[7] Using language in ways that serve and promote group identity and ideology could, in some ways, be referred to as the 'language behavior' of groups.[8] Observing language behavior is an important way of understanding communication and identity among groups of religious dogma within a particular context. The choice and use of language are basic constituents of how creed-inclined groups would want to projected themselves or be regarded by others.

As a study that explores language in its social dimensions, concepts in sociolinguistics, are useful in analyzing language behavior among competing and coexisting ideologically inspired groups. Given a setting where one ideological group has an advantage of control over social and political institutions, this group's language preference can be promoted in a way that compels other ideological groups with a minority social influence to respond conciliatorily. Based on this premise, language behavior can be performed or reactionary. A performed language behavior would be the use of institutional authority to promote a language variety, so that the said variety comes to represent a highly valuable means of

[4] Oded Irsai, *Confronting a Christian Empire : Jewish Culture in the World of Byzantium.* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 60–61.
[5] Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*.
[6] Tope Omoniyi, "Introduction," in *Sociology of Language and Religion: Change, Conflict and Accommodation.*, ed. Tope Omoniyi (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4,7.
[7] Ibid., 4; Milka Levy-Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language," *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 49, no. 2 (1998): 306–33.
[8] Li Xiaoguang, Zhan Ju, and M. E. van den Berg, "Urbanization, Education, and Language Behavior," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication (John Benjamins Publishing Co.)* 26, no. 1 (January 2016): 81–111.

communication, thereby becoming a standardized language. Sequel to this process is the reaction of minority language groups, who may either chose to oppose or adopt, accommodate or negotiate the standardized language.

In the case of religious groups, this promotion or adoption of language is hardly detachable from the doctrinal ideology of the groups involved. Religious ideology can be closely linked to the legitimacy with which a particular language is prioritized and the adoption or rejection of a standard language may be in the interest of minority religious identity. In this way, the concepts of language standardization and language adoption capture some of the language behavioral phenomena that can be exhibited in a multi-religious context. Late antique near east religious communities portray traits of language behavior that has been analyzed through the concepts of standardization and adoption.

1.2 Research Background

With the rise and spread of Islam, Arabic was 'sacralized' and established as a 'unique and indispensable medium' to Muhammad's revelatory claims.[9] This sacralization came with an extent of 'valorization' as well, meaning that words were clothed with new religious meaning.[10] Prior to this, *'arabiyya* was a language variegated in tribal dialects across the peninsula, with its colloquial and poetic usages. The Qur'an's neologisms changed the semantic space of the Arab language. 'Ordinary words' were 'invested with special meanings', terms were 'coined' and 'embedded' in a 'complex web of relationship'.[11] Qur'anic Arabic soon became the language brand of an emerging religious civilization with inscriptions stamped on mosques, coins, state political and legal documents. Works on various fields of human learning were also translated from their existing languages into Arabic.

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[9] Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East.* (Kenturky: Westminster, 1991), p.31.
[10] Term used by Mustanir Mir's article 'Language' in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 90ff..
[11] Mustanir 'Language' in Rippin, ed., *Blackwell* (2006), 90.

Islamic writers began to put forth refutations toward other religious adherents, especially Jews and Christians. In this event, the use of language became an important tool for religious identity. By the ninth century, Christians living under Islamic rule began to compose their theological rejoinders in Arabic.[12] The Melkites were one of the Christian traditions in dialogue with their Muslim debaters. Having decided to stick to the Orthodox ecumenical councils, coupled with a separation from fellow Greek and Latin Christians, the Melkites were left to the fate of preserving their doctrinal heritage, shaped in distinction from, as well as in dialogue with, other dissenting Christian groups, especially the Nestorians and Jacobites,[13] within the accompanying challenge of living in a dominantly Islamized vicinity.[14] Prominent features in the writings of Melkite Christianity during this period were the use of qur'anic terms, quotations, and allusions from Islamic theology to defend core elements of the Melkite faith.

1.3 Statement of Problem

A lot of important literature has been produced from studies on the emergence of Islam and Arab Christianity. The nature of the inter-religious communication in late-antique near east, however, has hardly been explored through sociolinguistic perspectives. Some of the major scholars in this area like Sidney Griffith, Robert Hoyland, G.J. Reinink, among others, have carried out valuable research in examining various aspects of Middle Eastern Christianity in relation to Islam. However, the fact that language exigency was so much at stake in late antique religiosity, indicates that more insights could be reached in this area of study, when particular attention is given to the analyses of the linguistic phenomenon during this era.

Also, scholars have equally been occupied with the nature of nascent Islam in relation to other monotheistic religions. The likes of Fred M. Donner, Gerald R. Hawting, Robert Hoyland, Chase F. Robinson, and Jonathan P. Berkey arguably fit into a bloc of opinion that seventh century Islam may not have been a clearly distinguishable religious category from Judaism and Christianity. Furthermore,

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[12]Sidney Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic.* (Burlington: Ashgate 2002), p.vii.
[13] Sidney Harrison Griffith, "Muslims and Church Councils; the Apology of Theodore Abu Qurrah," in *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 281.
[14]Sidney Griffith, 'Theology and the Arab Christian: The Case of 'Melkite' Creed' in David Thomas (ed.) (et al) *A Faithful Presence: Essays for Kenneth Cragg* (London: Melisende, 2003), p.184-5.

scholars like S.J. Shoemaker, along with some scholars of the previous bloc, seem to opine that Islamic religious structure and identity clearly solidified after the fifth Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (d.705). There are also scholars like John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone, G. Lulling, Michael Cook and Christoph Luxenberg, who, with a wide brush stroke, may all constitute a revisionist perspective that is characterized by misgiving toward qur'anic authenticity. From a sociolinguistic perspective, it can be said that the linguistic identity with which early Islamic religious and political authorities conducted themselves, in relation to neighboring and minority religious communities, can shed more light on when and how a concrete Islamic movement began in distinction to neighboring monotheistic tradition. The response through language behavior by non-Islamic religious groups, exhibits how the Arab movement was seen and reckoned with by these contemporary religions.

1.4 Research Question

Considering the relationship between the rise of Islam and the development and prominence of Arabic language, as well as the shift in ecclesiastical and monastic language of the Melkites, which led to the adoption of Arabic for Christian theology by the late eighth century, what does the attitude of late antique Islam and Melkite Christianity toward *'arabiyya* indicate about language and religious identity?

1.5 Research Aim and Methodology

The aims of this study are basically twofold. The first is to indicate that the rise of Islam had a direct relationship with the unprecedented change in the status and usage of Arabic language within and beyond late antique Arabia. This change is argued to have moved *'arabiyya* from a dialectically diverse and less crucial means of communication to a homogenized and imperial language. The second is to present the adoption of Arabic by Melkite Christian theology as a strategic linguistic shift for such a minority religious community under Islam. This language migration has been argued to have been a crucial means of preserving religious identity and maximizing the interactive opportunities that came with acquiring the new and standard means of communication.

To show that pre-Islamic Arabic had been through a valorization process that culminated in the form of Arabic that was in use throughout late antique Arab caliphates, *'arabiyya* has been considered in its pre-Islamic socio-political context. This historical survey traced what *'arabiyya* meant in its occurrences in ancient sources. This has been explored from ancient Greek sources right through to the last major political event of the sixth century, which is the Ethiopic invasion that finished off the Himyarite dynasty in Yemen. The historical survey culminates in the conclusion by Arab experts regarding pre-Islamic testimonies of *'arabiyya* in ancient sources and how there is no support for a standardized and homogenous Arabic before the time of Islam. Sequel to this conclusion, the first document that testifies to a standard Arabic, being the Qur'an, has equally been examined. How the Qur'an represents the Arabic language and the corresponding action of standardization by early Arab grammarians and caliphs support the conclusion that an unprecedented valorization, which placed a form of Arabic at a standard level in society, religion and politics, came with the nascent Islamic era.

A determination of whether the adoption of Arabic, by Melkite Christianity, had any relationship with the standard Islamized Arabic has been done through a historical discourse that examines what non-Islamic religious communities' experience was like under Islamic caliphs. Syrian Christians wrote extensively about the Arab conquests. An examination of ecclesiastical sources has also been used to show that Christian leaders then often had to delineate the necessary distinction and instill the required prohibitions aimed at curbing unwanted level of Arabness among their Christian followers. The eventual adoption of Arabic, at least for Melkite Christianity, as Melkite Arab Christian sources indicate, largely had to do with identity preservation and interaction with Islam, as well as other coreligionists.

Concepts of sociolinguistics have been used to analyze the phenomena of language standardization and adoption. Sociolinguistic theories that discuss factors that are responsible for language standardization and how the process of standardization may occur have been used to analyze the historical features in the Islamization of Arabic. Theories that emphasize how minority language users can employ language shifts for identity sake and for the maximization of communication, such that their voices and ideas do not go unregistered in popular discourses of their context, have been used to analyze the arabization of Melkite Christianity. Due to the intention of bringing out these elements of language behavior that have been explored and researched in a variety of languages, priority has been given to modern linguists over pre-

modern Arabists, whose works rather focused on the Arabic language alone.[15] However, some of such grammarians anticipated certain modern linguists on the meaning and nature of language. For instance, Abu Bakr Abd al-Qāhir bin Abd ar-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Jurjānī (d. 1078), echoes a Bakhtinian understanding of language as dialogical in meaning when he would not separate mind reposed meaning from uttered speech.[16] For our purposes, however, the theoretical frame of this study derives largely from a range of general modern language theories.

Therefore the set goals of this research mainly have to do with the cases of early Islam and early Melkite Christian tradition, in relation to language behavior. A historical procedure constitutes the first means of establishing the concepts of language standardization and adoption among these religious communities. Concepts of sociolinguistics, which provide an analytical frame, are then used on the historical representation, so as to bring out evaluated perspectives of the said language behavior among these late antique rival religious groups.

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[15] Kees Versteegh, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought Volume III: The Arabic Linguistic Tradition* (Routledge, 2013), 9ff.
[16] Ibid., 120.

1.6 Scope of Study
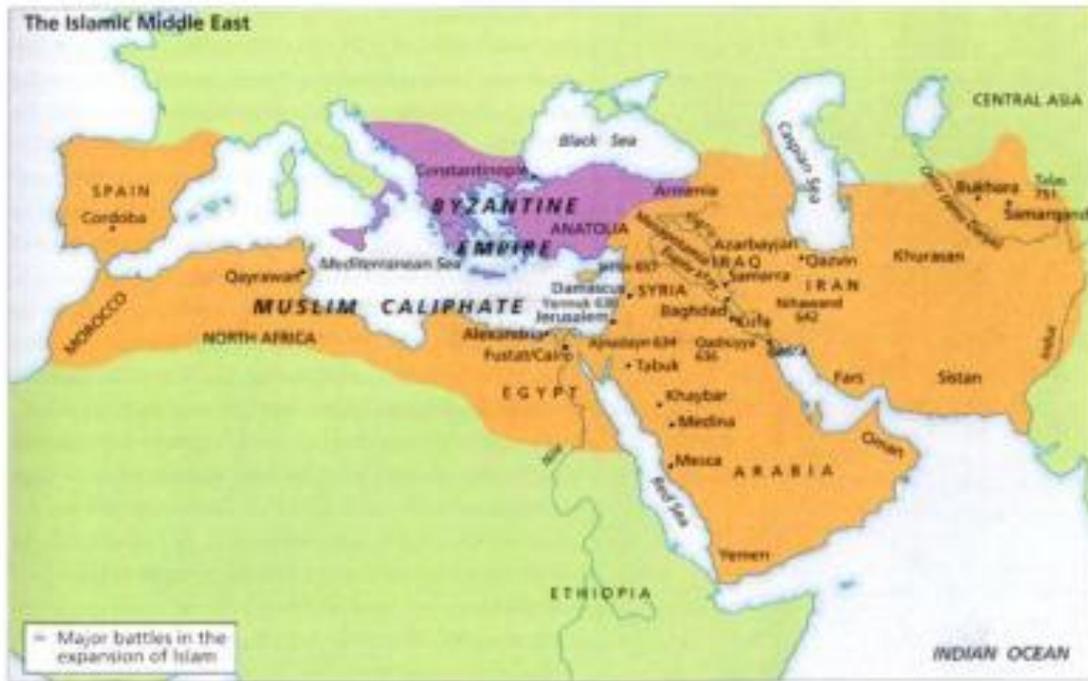
Late antique Abbasid domains: Spain, North Africa, Arabia and Persia[17]

In a broad sense, seventh to tenth century Arabia is the time and geographic setting for this research. The discussion on the Arabs and *'arabiyya*, prior to the seventh century, refers to various parts of the peninsular. The history of the revelatory experience of the prophet centres on the Hijaz, in the northwest. The activities of caliphs in relation to other religious groups, especially in the late Umayyad era and under the Abbasids are drawn from various encounters in cities around Syria, but also other major cities like Baghdad and Basra. Cities in the far east of Persia or Iran, cities of north Africa, and cities in al-Andalus, apart from Cordoba, are rarely focused on.

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[17] Map was gotten from an online excerpt of John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 3rd ed (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): "Chapter 2: The Muslim Community in History," accessed April 20, 2017, http://www-personal.umich.edu/~vika/TeachPort/islam00/esposito/chapt2.html.

With regard to Melkite Christianity, the time and place that this research has covered are seventh to tenth century Christian domains that were mostly within the Arabian territories. Of the Melkite Christian theologians of this era, a recurring name is Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. 820), since most other contemporary Melkite documents mentioned were either anonymously written, or simply had unknown authors. The Islamic caliphates of the Umayyad and Abbasid era that reigned over the area northwest of Arabia, especially Syria, Jerusalem, Palestine and Judea are also within the scope covered, particularly on religious encounters. Therefore, late antique near eastern religious communities essentially refer to seventh to tenth century Christianity and Islam within and around Syria. Even though Syria is a major setting, extended discourse might often include monasteries south of Palestine, cities east of Arabia such as Basra, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, and, of course Baghdad. In the analyses on Christian religious identity and Arab enculturation, some parallel has been drawn between experience in Spanish cities like Cordoba, in the far west end of the Abbasid era, and those of Syrian domains.

All other eastern Christian traditions, under Islamic rule, had similar experiences as the Melkites. The Jacobites and the Nestorians were very much in active communication with their Islamic debaters and with other rival Christian groups. These groups have been briefly considered collectively prior to the arabization of Melkite Christian theology. However, the Melkites constitute a single case study throughout this work. Also, aspects of Melkite Arab theology that addressed Islamic interlocutors have been given priority over their theological treatises in conversation with other rival Christian groups.

1.7 Outline of Chapters

This research comprises of five chapters. The first chapter contains introductory details. The second chapter is a theoretical survey of the phenomenon of language standardization and adoption: it begins with a basic discussion on concepts of language and culminates in the use of sociolinguistic concepts to analyze language behavior along the lines of language acquisition and proficiency. The third chapter is occupied with the discussion of Arabic from its pre-Islamic socio-political context to nascent Islamic era when it reached unprecedented prominence. The chapter tries to indicate how this period of transition proved to be the process of linguistic standardization for what turned out as caliphate Arabic in early Islamic milieu. The fourth chapter examines the trend on Arabic language as portrayed by Islamic political and religious authorities, such that the experience of Melkite Christians living under Islamic rule

warranted an eventual language adoption process which is analyzed as strategic. The fifth and final chapter sums up the phenomenon of language behavior among the religious groups, concludes with a theoretical and evaluative perspective, and leaves considerations for possible areas of further study. Overall, a progression is built in the use of a theoretical basis (in chapter two) to analyze the linguistic aspects in the historical elements of two religious groups (Islam in chapter three; Melkite Christianity in Chapter four), within their Middle Eastern context, over a period of three centuries (7th-10th centuries).

2   CHAPTER TWO
LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION AND ADOPTION:
A THEORETICAL SURVEY

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter explores some theoretical inquiries about the nature of language and how it relates to social existence. The selected theories create a simple trajectory from the meaning of language, also known as semantics,[18] to unraveling dimensions of language as a dynamic phenomenon in social situations. There are three major sections in this survey namely: (a) meaning of language, (b) language and standardization, and (c) language adoption. The first section deals with three basic semantic definitions of language: the Cartesian, the Saussarian and the Bakhtinian, and then presents a cohesive view of language as the function of linguistic structure and human existence, thereby necessitating such a paradigm as sociolinguistics. An example of how language content can be laden with social dispositions is given through William Downes' performative and reactionary aspects of contextualized conversation. The second section focuses on the creating of a standard language within the social settings of many languages and dialects. The last section discusses the dispositions of minority language groups toward a successfully homogenized language. This theoretical exploration concludes with a select number of theories that are directly applied to the cases demonstrated in the ensuing chapters.

2.2 Defining Language

The meaning of language serves as a take off point to this theoretical survey. Language theorists have been extensively engaged with the concept of language. This supports the notion that how language is defined and how semantics are formed is 'key' to understanding other elements of language.[19] A linguistic approach to the study of languages often involve observing and trying to address questions regarding innate linguistic abilities, grammatical rules, 'intentions' in language usage, and how to account for language 'competence'.[20] The sociolinguistic method sees language as better comprehended when its

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[18] J.M.E Moravcsik, *Understanding Language* (Paris: Mouton, 1975), 15–16.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Moravcsik, *Understanding Language*; M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (University of Texas Press, 1986); Michael Lane, *Introduction to Structuralism* (Jonathan Cape, 1970); Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought*, 3rd Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

inner important structural component is in dialogue with social existence.[21] The linguistic perspective on language serves a primary purpose to the phenomena of language standardization and adoption which are addressed with preference for a sociolinguistic point of view.

2.2.1 Language as a Property of the Human Mind

René Descartes had made the important indication that speaking and acting intelligibly is a fundamental distinction between man and animal.[22] The subsequent school of thought that maintains a close link between language and the human mind constitute the Cartesian tradition of language study. For Descartes, the core elements of language are universal because they derive from the human faculty.[23] These 'universal conditions' are not studied or 'learned'; they are an innate and fixed system that when activated by external factors, meaning is produced.[24] It is through this 'fundamental correspondence' alone that the mind is able to generate the meaning that makes language an intelligible phenomenon.[25] Language as a natural phenomenon acquires its properties from the way the human mind was structured.[26] For Cartesian linguists, therefore, language is basically a natural function of the human mind which is expressed in intelligible ways that are higher and more complex than the basic stimulated sounds of animals.

The Cartesian concept of language as an intelligible phenomenon is interestingly comparable to traditional claims about Muhammad being an illiterate caravan trader who was unable to read but was divinely endowed with the ability to directly convey the Qur'an in a rather sophisticated Arabic language.[27] On the one hand, it may mean that the prophet had the natural universal wherewithal which was triggered by the revelation process, thereby enabling him to recite the qur'anic message. On the other hand, it automatically raises a disparity between the universal intelligibility of language and the ignorance

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[21] William Downes, *Language and Society*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Andree Tabouret-Keller, "Language and Identity," in *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Florian Coulmas (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1997), 315–26; Florian Coulmas, ed., "The Handbook of Sociolinguistics," in *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998), 327–43.
[22] Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics*.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 98, 100.
[25] Ibid., 102, 106.
[26] Downes, *Language and Society*, 1998, 10.
[27] Sebastian Günther, "Muḥammad, the Illiterate Prophet: An Islamic Creed in the Qur'an and Qur'anic Exegesis," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 4, no. 1 (2002): 1–26.

of it, as represented in this claim. It therefore follows that a social context should be anticipated wherein such a claim may have been intended to serve an ideological purpose.

2.2.2 Language as a System of Signs

The Saussarian concept of language reposes the understanding of language in a functional scheme. For Ferdinand de Saussure, language is a systematized network of interdependent signs, and meaning is produced by patterns of relationality between these signs and their components. The fundamental elements of language are 'concepts and sound-images' which may fuse to form signs.[28] When a 'mutual implication is established' between sign components, a signified meaning is reached.[29] Signs eventually find a fixed status in a shared community, thereby making Language a collectively acquired system of internalized meaning.[30] Unlike Cartesian scholars for whom language is instinctively acquired but externally activated; de Saussure thinks that language is 'socially acquired' but is 'passively reposed' in the mind of a speaker, who is at liberty to draw on various elements of the language system during speech.[31] By implication, individual speech by members of a language group is a personalized and arbitrary usage of elements of this reservoir of signs-structure in ways that suit personal interest.[32] Saussure's approach to language would constitute the structuralist tradition of linguistics which gives priority to language meaning in relation to, in and of itself.

In the late antique inter-religious communication that warranted Melkite theologians to express their Greek-coined Chalcedonian doctrines in Arabic, Arabic words such as *ḥūlul, aqānīm,* and *ittiḥād* were respectively endowed with new meanings such as 'incarnation', 'hypostases' and 'divine-human union'.[33] These words did not derive the ascribed meanings so much from their internal signs as much as from Chalcedonian Greek thinking. In this translation process, existing Arabic words with the nearest meaning

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[28] Philip W. Davis, *Modern Theories of Language.* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 17.
[29] Ibid., 17–18.
[30] Ibid., 16.
[31] Michael Lane, *Structuralism: A Reader* (London: Cape, 1970), 95.
[32] Davis, *Modern Theories of Language.*, 16–17.
[33] Stefan Wild, "'An Arabic Recitation: The Meta-Linguistic of Qur'anic Revelation'," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 109; Najib George Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abū Qurrah's Theology in Its Islamic Context* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2015).

were made to accommodate Melkite Christian concepts. It is important to say that Saussure's concept of language has played a role in the understanding of the internal operations of language. However, the consideration that the sign system does not just give meaning to language usage, but can also derive signified meaning from social interaction, makes the Saussarian system in need of a concrete social dimension.

2.2.3 Language as a Dialogical Phenomenon

Mikhail M. Bakhtin insists that language meaning does not reside in a complex of an internalized framework; but in human encounters. He emphasizes that the logic of consciousness is the logic of ideological communication in the semiotic interaction of a social group.[34] Language is a 'two-sided action' in which a speaker reckons with the listener's disposition while speaking.[35] Unlike Saussure for whom language is systematic, in contrast to speech as un-systematic;[36] Bakhtin does not separate speech and language so radically; rather the nature of speech is primary to the understanding of what goes on in language communication. Bakhtin thinks that utterances come in genres. Speech genres would mean the 'typical form' of an utterance that derives from contextual circumstances such as language, culture and the like.[37] Language is constant while genres are 'flexible' and the ability to utilize this flexibility makes for a good speaker within a given linguistic and cultural context.[38] The choice of genre for utterances is largely shaped by the evaluative disposition of the speaker: from an actual opinion of response in 'agreement or disagreement, acknowledgement or resistance, affirmation of criticism,' to elementary constituents of speech such as 'lexicon, grammar, [and voice] tone'.[39] Genres could be further said to be 'situated within and shaped by an exchange of utterances' and this exchange creates the reservoir of 'intention' on which utterances and their component words draw meaning.[40] Therefore, for Bakhtin, language finds meaning through real-life encounters. Bakhtin's dialogical concept of language, unlike

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[34] V. N. Voloshinov, Ladislav Matejka, and I. R. Titunik, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language [by] V.N. Volosinov. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik* (Seminar Press, 1973), 13.

[35] Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen, "Preaching as a Carnivalesque Dialogue, between the 'Wholly Other' and 'Other-Wise' Listeners" (University of Copenhagen, 2012), 27.

[36] Lane, *Structuralism*, 96.

[37] Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 97.

[38] Ibid., 94, 95.

[39] Li Shuguang, "Bakhtin's Socio-Semiotic View on Language and Linguistic Studies," *Chinese Semiotic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 159, doi:10.1515/css-2009-0116.

[40] Paul Dickerson, "Humpty Dumpty Meets Mikhail Bakhtin," *Journal of Pragmatics* 27, no. 4 (April 1, 1997): 523–30.

Saussure's, anticipates a sociolinguistic approach that evaluates language structure in connection with a social experience.

2.2.4 Language as a Structural and Social Phenomenon

Unlike Descartes, Saussure, or Bakhtin, late modern linguists, like Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough have a more cohesive approach to the meaning of language. This is largely motivated by the 'social fragmentation and complexity' of modern society which rather transcends simplified dichotomy and often results in the 'repression of difference'.[41] Linguists of this theoretical category propose that a dialectical relationship between objective relations and structures on the one hand, and the practical disposition of subjects engaged in practice on the other is a required critical perspective.[42] Through this perspective, a 'communicative interaction' that takes into account all 'properties of discourse' is prioritized over the notion that structure and practice are mutually distinct categories.[43] Through a process of dual sensitivity toward inner elements and outward social implication, language becomes a different phenomenon. It becomes an 'open system' of mutual influence between an internal 'meaning-making capacity' and its 'sociological' dimension.[44] Language would then be viewed as having meaning in itself as well as from and within social contexts. Through this dialectical perspective, social factors like politics, economy, religious ideology and identity, not just the human psyche, can also be viewed as able to account for the nature of language. Acknowledging this coherence would then imply that there can be such a thing as sociolinguistics which mediates between language structure and social factors.

2.2.5 Performance and Reactionary Components of Language

An example of language as dual-dimensional, in the sense that while it constitutes a structure it also derives meaning from social contexts, is demonstrated in William Downes' interpersonal conversation analyses. As a discipline concerned with how language properties owe their explanations to human interaction, sociolinguistics, according to William Downes, operate on two levels: 'large-scale social

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[41] Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 34, 96.
[42] Ibid., 30.
[43] Ibid., 46–47.
[44] Ibid., 141.

patterning and small-scale speech situations'.[45] On a small scale pattern, Downes suggests that utterance and response in conversations bring out dimensions of language use that can only be explained situationally and that there is always a backdrop of social reasoning that pre-set the context and precondition for language use.[46] It is inferable that this backdrop shapes the performance and reactionary aspects of conversations, such that reactions can suggest a concluded perception, on the part of the listener, regarding why a certain language performance was made in a particular manner. Therefore, the implied and inferred components of social interaction shape conversational semantics in ways that are peculiar to particular contexts.

When applied to the inter-religious exchanges between Melkite theologians and Islamic scholars, Downes' small scale communication can help, to some extent, in explaining choices of words and roles they were intended to play. For instance, the Arabic word '*shirk*' or its participle '*mushrikīn*', in a polemic context, came to be a derogatory reference to Christians for their deification of ʿĪsā ibn Maryām and Muslim scholars would often use this term in that way.[47] Some of the longest and most metaphorical, as well as philosophical, aspects of Christian theological response to their Islamic co-debaters would be in rebuffing this accusation.[48] For instance, Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. 820), an early Arab Christian theologian of the Melkite tradition, would often use qur'anic exegesis in defending the Christian faith.[49] Apart from his exegetical wit, Abū Qurrah would use analogies from the sun and human attributes like the mind, spirit and word in his refutation of the shirk allegation.[50] It is beneficial to understand that the weight of argument invested in exonerating Christianity from the shirk accusation was rooted in an understanding of a shared cultural and linguistic idiosyncrasy. The Latin and Greek-Byzantine Christian scholars may have exhibited their defensiveness differently if they are considered not to have experienced the impact of ideological pressure in the same way, or not to have always had to navigate through debates where an Islamized Arabic favored the intellectualization of their Muslim opponents.

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[45] Downes, *Language and Society*, 1998, 15.
[46] Ibid., 12–14.
[47] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 165.
[48] Sara Leila Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with Islamic Thought (9th Century C.e.)*, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 21 (Boston ; Leiden: Brill, 2014).
[49] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*.
[50] Ibid., 170; Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God*, 144.

2.3 Language Standardization

Language standardization can be concerned with the selection of a particular language variety on the basis of which lexical, phonological and syntactical archetypes are set.[51] The aim of promoting a language model can be to reach a state of 'invariance or uniformity' that is instrumental for the 'diffusion of knowledge, codification' and the establishment of the said language as 'legitimate'.[52] The process and outcome of a standardization project can be extensively shaped both by political and religious institutions, language managers or intellectuals, as well as, individual language users.[53] What follows is a discussion of language standardization as a preferential move on a particular language variety, the quality of which is promoted through education, stamped in public space through recognition, thereby making shifting dispositions to occur toward the set language.

2.3.1   Standardization through Language Preferentiality

Downes' large scale pattern of language properties and social contexts is more directly applicable to the concept of language standardization. On the larger scale of language characteristics, elements of language can vary due to social factors like gender, geography, history, social class, age and death.[54] The kind of change that occurs at this level can result in variable instances of vernacular, accents, phonetics, typology and dialects: for instance when people are separated by time and space, language expression can undergo the kind of mutation that creates dialects.[55] Diversity of dialects can also raise the need for one language as a socio-political medium. This often results in the stepping up of one dialectical variation so as to meet the adequacy required for performing multiple functions such as politics, commerce, education and entertainment. This 'functional elaboration' sometimes leads to adoption of loanwords as well.[56] As the stake of languages is improved in this manner, the phenomenon of standardization is also bound to occur such that elites and authorities of a language group or civilization promote or impose a language-version that should be regarded as the norm. Standardizations often take shape through ideology, exclusivity, and

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[51] Kiak Uei Khoo, "Malaysian Mandarin Variation with Regard to Mandarin Globalization Trend: Issues on Language Standardization," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2017, no. 244 (January 1, 2017).
[52] James Milroy, "Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5, no. 4 (November 1, 2001): 530–55.
[53] Christina Kramer, "Writing Standard: Process of Macedonian Language Standardization," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 50, no. 1–2 (March 1, 2008): 37–53.
[54] Downes, *Language and Society*, 1998, 4, 177ff.
[55] Ibid., 16–45.
[56] Ibid., 35.

literacy, such that the forces of protection around a particular language, against perceived threats, or external denigrating factors can be high.[57]

Downes' observation about language variety and standardization applies to pre-Islamic Arabia and the rise of Islam as an Arab-centred religion. Scholars of Arabic indicate that before the rise of Islam, during which the development and standardization of an elite version of Arabic took place, there was no such homogenous language that could have been referred to as Arabic; rather, *'arabiyya* was variegated.[58] A dialectical variation of Arabic was rather stepped up through the help of Arab grammarians of the early Islamic centuries, as a consolidation of the caliph-led civilization began.[59] This codification process saw to the spread of a Qur'an-dependent Arabic that spread across conquered domains through the policies of Islamic political authorities.[60] In this way language standardization can be seen as a phenomenon that plays a role in the formation of religious identity in Islam and other surrounding religious communities.

2.3.2   Standardization through Education

Education can be an important way of demonstrating the superiority of a language. Arabists concur that the curriculum of the educational institutions of nascent Islam which prioritized the study of the Qur'an and *tafsir* constitute an important way by which the value and influence of Arabic spread throughout conquered areas.[61] Indeed, some of the Christians that church authorities found difficult to curb the

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[57] Ibid., 35–38.

[58] Kees Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language," in *Language Empires in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Christel Stolz (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2015); Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Yasir Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*," ed. Kees Versteegh et al., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, A-Ed (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Jan Retsö, "Arabs and Arabic in the Age of the Prophet," in *The Qur'an in Context, Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu* (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2011).

[59] Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem, "Arabic as the Language of Islam," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011); Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language."

[60] Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christianity and Early Muslim World*, 2015, 25.

[61] Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language"; Rainer Enrique Hamel, "The Development of Language Empires," in *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society*, ed. Ulrich Ammon et al., Second, vol. III (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 2240–58; Chase F Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest the Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

excesses of their 'arabness', were the 'second-generation Arabophone Christians' who had had their formative school years in Arabic.[62] Language travels across and settles over locales and ethnic zones through knowledge content and knowledge acquisition. A learned language which is 'perceived as being only available' to people with 'sufficient schooling' is a means of 'qualitative spread' of that language such that language speakers are part of a hierarchy of restricted linguistic access.[63] This theory is propounded in Enrique Hamel's study of the development of language empires. Hamel supposes that when the ideology of an empire is established through language superiority and promoted in culture, religion, writing system and scientific knowledge, groups in subordinate territories would wish to gain access to commodities of this imperial language.[64] If this access can only be gotten through education, then the standardized language becomes a mark of an educated few, and such limited access can contribute to a linguistic 'heirarchization' that renders other vernaculars secondary to this 'language of the learned'.[65] This is, among many factors, crucial to imperial 'language spread, shift, [and] dominance' over a 'diverse population'.[66]

2.3.3   Language Standardization as 'Habitus' in a Multi-Lingual Context

Adrian Blackledge uses Pierre Bourdieu's model of language symbolism to illustrate how the attitudes of dominating and dominated groups toward a certain language, in a multilingual context, can constitute a cooperate process that culminates in the status of recognition or non-recognition for the language in question.[67] This fosters the dynamics between identity and power within a given social context and it shapes the situational relationship between ideology and language. Language becomes significant if it reaches the index of *habitus*, which is a normative status of social acceptability.[68] This process is arbitrary in the sense that any language, depending on diverse social factors, but more importantly the 'collective recognition' of a dominant and subordinate group, can attain a valued state.[69] This state of value is then sustained by the usage of the language in a way that endorses its recognition, disregards other languages

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[62] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 424; Charles Lowell Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*, Studies on the Children of Abraham, v. 3 (Leiden: Boston : Brill, 2013).
[63] Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language," 45.
[64] Hamel, "The Development of Language Empires."
[65] Ibid., 2254.
[66] Ibid., 2253.
[67] Adrian Blackledge, *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2005).
[68] Ibid., 32–33.
[69] Ibid., 208–9.

or varieties, and creates a linguistic superiority that raises the worth of its speakers.[70] Political and public institutions are 'major players' in promoting such language 'legitimacy'.[71] As the Arab conquest took hold of major cities in the east, and as Islamic administrative centres were operated in the language of the political power, many languages of urban centres either gave way to Arabic or diminished in public usage.[72] The eventual adoption of Arabic by various minority communities under Islam sealed the rise of Arabic to a hegemonic or *habitus* level.

Adopting a hegemonic language, within a multilingual milieu, could be argued to be an acquisition of the 'linguistic capital' necessary for access and participation in the important discourses of a given social context.[73] Identity could be a central issue at stake in the concept of language as a symbolic capital. The high significance that language can acquire within a particular context can project it as a 'symbolic marker of difference'.[74] A linguistic circle can often form in a way that determines who is in or out, such that language acts inseparably become acts of identity.[75] Language features can be a 'binding link' between individuals and the social setting to which they belong.[76] A shared language holds members of a community to a collective identity and this connectivity 'prevails where and as long as the same language is spoken'.[77] This recognition builds over time, internalizes through 'socialization,'[78] and eventually perpetuates itself into what Bourdieu calls 'self-evidence': Self-evidence is a social order that is largely formed through a sustained institutional and popular 'common-sense consensus' until a *status quo* is reached.[79]

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[70] Ibid., 34.
[71] Ibid., 181.
[72] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 41; Touraj Daryaee, "The Effect of the Arab Muslim Conquest on the Administrative Division of Sasanian Persis / Fars," *Iran* 41 (2003): 198.
[73] Blackledge, *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World*, 207–8.
[74] Ibid., vii.
[75] Tabouret-Keller, "Language and Identity," 315–26.
[76] Ibid., 317.
[77] Ibid., 319.
[78] Adrian Blackledge and Aneta Pavlenko, "Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts," *International Journal of Bilingualism* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 250.
[79] Blackledge, *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World*, 33.

2.3.4   Language Standardization and Dispositions

William Downes has earlier been used to demonstrate how language can derive meaning in interpersonal conversations. We can extend William Downes' small-scale discourse analysis to a hypothetical examination of dispositions toward a particular language, when standardized. As earlier established, functional elaboration, which means increasing the importance of a language, can make language undergo an internal change that may result in a standardized version.[80] This moves the said language from a less-influential state (Lang.1) to a more-influential state (Lang.2). Similarly, Arabic in the pre-Islamic Near east certainly did not enjoy the same manner of attention and value it had during and after the rise of Islam. The possibility that dispositions toward Lang.2, as a language with standard features and normative value, may change is much higher than when it was in its initial state. This can only be verified by an observable change in postures toward Lang.2 and whether or not the value change proportionately accounts for change in disposition. Evidence of change in disposition would then be marked by a shift from a state of less-concern (Disp.1) to a state of any form of increased interest (Disp. 2). However, factors that may be responsible for observable change in disposition can vary for a complex of reasons namely commerce, politics, user-interests, proselytization or identity. For Melkite Christianity, being the first Greco-Syriac Christian tradition to adopt Arabic, the chances of communicating its theology and maintaining its religious identity in an Arabic-speaking religious civilization were very much higher in the adoption of caliphate Arabic than otherwise.

It is equally possible that the shift in disposition may tilt in disaffection away from the standardized language, toward an alternative variety (Alt.V.), thereby creating a reverse disposition (Disp.-1). Reverse disposition toward Arabic during the rise of Islam could be seen in tenth century Constantinople where Christian literatures were shaped to emphasize the importance of Greek.[81] Also, some Christian writers, even during the emergence of Melkite Arabic theology, still wrote in Syrian or Aramaic vernacular.[82] Another disposition which varies along the arc of favorable disposition toward Lang.2 could exist by

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[80] Downes, *Language and Society*, 1998, 35.
[81] Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*; David Vila, "The Struggle over Arabisation in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography," *Al-Masāq* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 35–46.
[82] Sidney H. Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (D. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (D. 1286)," in *Doctrine and Debate in the East Christian World, 300-1500*, ed. Averil Cameron and Robert G. Hoyland, The Worlds of Eastern Christianity, 300-1500, v. 12 (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2011).

certain language users' who have an evaluative attitude toward the contents of the standardization process that culminates in Lang.2. This evaluative disposition (Eval.D.) does not accept everything in the standardized language but uses it selectively. Selective usage often depends on extent of the evaluative reckoning (Eval.R) by the selective user, who is often also familiar with aspects of volarization such as translations and etymology.

The diagram below illustrates this hypothesis further:

Standardization and Language Users' Dispositions
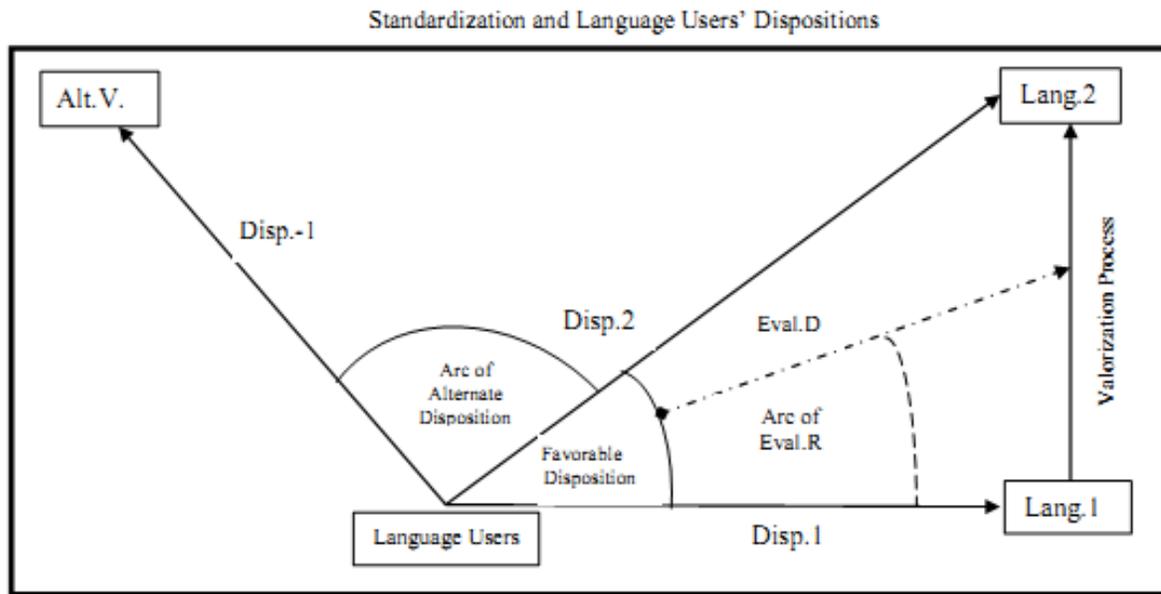
Some of the risks involved in analyzing interpersonal conversations may equally apply here. Intentions behind the promotion of a language and the resultant shift in disposition toward that language may not be fully grasped just from the mere fact of their occurrence. Also the categories may also be misrepresenting of the nature and character of the matter being analyzed. It is equally true that such analysis may be very subjective in the sense that one can choose to see only what serves one's own assumptions. However, the demonstrated hypothesis presents the basic elements, such as language transition and varied dispositions, which are at play when language comes into the intricacies of power and social identity.

2.3 Language Adoption

As a process that captures shift in language disposition, language adoption can be the complete abandonment of a particular language for another one, or the use of a second language as a major means of communication. It has been observed that most cases of total language shift may always be in connection with 'a local history of political suppression, social discrimination, or economic deprivation'.[83] The theoretical exploration in this section majorly deals with issues of language adoption as they relate to minority language groups and how writing in an adopted language can present minority language users with a strategic advantage.

2.3.5   Language Adoption as Negotiation of Minority Identity

Negotiation of identity by language minorities can be common in a culture where standardization is perpetuated by an 'ideology which implies that clarity, logic and unity depend on the adoption of a monoglot standard variety in public discourse'.[84] By the late eighth/early ninth century, Syrian Christians would seek to 'articulate their doctrines' using terms of the 'distinctive Kalam logic' in order to match the Muslim intellectuals of their day.[85] This attempt at logical articulation of Christian theology in Arabic reflects the need for Syrian Christian communities to stay in dialogue and be reckoned with as intelligible faith communities in their own right. Andree Tabouret-Keller opines that language and identity sometimes relate reciprocally: language speech can be a 'behavioral attribute of a speaker' while the 'expressional' means of that attribute of identity comes through language.[86] This is equally applicable to the fact that the Arab culture, literature and speech held strong attraction for non-Arabs in the heyday of the Abbasids: it was socially reputable to read and conduct oneself 'in the way of the Arabs'.[87]

Islamic scholars also projected their discourses with so much logic and reason, as if to support that the reputation of being a learned Arab was objectivity.[88] Ben Rampton's concept of language-crossing also

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[83] Milroy, "Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization," 38.
[84] Blackledge and Pavlenko, "Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts," 246.
[85] *Muslim Theologians And Christian Doctrines*, The History of Christian-Muslim Relations 10 (Brill, 2008), 3.
[86] Tabouret-Keller, "Language and Identity," 315–26.
[87] Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*.
[88] *Muslim Theologians And Christian Doctrines*, 3–5.

implies that language can be used to project an identity that nobody suspects or challenges easily.[89] The nature of the relationship between language and identity makes it possible for identity formation to easily find language as an instrumental means. Groups are able to use language to 'appropriate, explore, reproduce, or challenge influential images and stereotypes of groups to which they do not themselves belong'.[90] Switching between multiple identities is also enabled by language. Jennifer Miller opines that in language use, identities can be discursively developed such that language minorities switch between second or third languages so as to identify with, sound like, or be legitimated by users of dominant discourses.[91] Through discursive maneuvering linguistic minorities 'construct a range of identities to serve specific purposes, memberships and contexts' or to invoke the 'audibility' that enables them to be heard.[92] Melkite Christian writers maximized their knowledge of Arabic to identify with the intellectual capacities of their day while they also used the same language competence to put forth their theological rejoinders. The connection that most such authors also kept with ecclesiastical vernaculars, such as Greek, was an important link to their Chalcedonian ecclesiastical heritage as well. It is therefore, difficult to detach language from identity and ideology. The linguistic posture taken in order to score an ideological point is central to individual and communal identity.

2.3.6   Language Adoption and Strategic Usage among Linguistic Minorities

Studies in Multilingualism have explored the various ways identity can be negotiated by linguistic minorities in relation to leading linguistic circles. Suresh Canagarajah examined what writing does for non-natives who have to engage in a prevalent language discourse through formal writing. He examines the essays of American foreign students and academicians, who had various non-English backgrounds but had to write academically in English. Depending on their writing motivations and linguistic resources, Canagarajah grouped the authors' use of their textual construction in five different ways: avoidance, transposition, accommodation, opposition, and appropriation. (1)Avoidance is categorized as a writing strategy in which an author would not engage with dominant academic discourses critically; but discovers the norm and follows the usual writing tradition so as to fit in and gain approval. (2) Transposition implies a writing style that exhibits bilingual competence in author's native and English writings. This

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[89] Ben Rampton, "Crossing," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1/2 (1999): 54.
[90] Blackledge and Pavlenko, "Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts," 249.
[91] Jennifer Miller, "Identity and Language Use: The Politics of Speaking ESL in Schools," in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, by Adrian Blackledge and Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2004), 291.
[92] Ibid., 291–92.

bilingual ability is used advantageously to promote the writer's critical intentions in the ongoing discourses of the different spheres of language proficiency, thereby developing a dialectical process between both languages. (3) Accommodation refers to a writer's volitional identification with, as well as self-location within, the membership of a prevalent discourse, largely due to an impressive ability to adjust and acclimatize into the new circle of discourse. (4) Opposition is a deliberate resistance of popular academic discourse by a writer who chooses to stick to a vernacular expression of ideas, hanging on to whatever strengths there may be in assuming such an 'unpopular' style of writing. (5) Appropriation has to do with a writer's style that essentially expands the assortment of academic vocabulary by infusing the non-standard vernacular of minority groups, thereby creating a special genre within the acceptable boundaries of learning.[93]

These textual strategies vary in terms of strengths and weaknesses, depending on author's linguistic capacity, critical will, confidence, and ideological stake. For a conformist, accommodation and avoidance serve best and does not rock the boat. For an author with a strong sense of appraisal, transposition, opposition or appropriation, can be effective writing strategies. The vernacular writer may feel self-empowered. Although works in minority languages can be registered among unique categories of writing, sometimes chances are higher that vernacular texts can hardly be fully engaged with in major formal exchanges. Canagarajah argues that 'more critical and communicative potential' lie with the transposition and appropriation strategies.[94] The former represents authors who maximize their bilingual proficiency and are able to stay relevant in two spheres of language discourse, while the latter represents authors whose nuanced creativity produce change within a scholarly system.

Canagarajah further indicated that for each of these non-native authors' writing was an identity construction process. The texts were negotiation strategies that presented the writers with the opportunity to use their various linguistic resources to engage with the dominant discourse. Through texts, self-images are constructed that can 'appeal' to oneself and 'display' to others the 'types of identity' that are to one's

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[93] Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse," in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, ed. Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Sydney: Multilingual Matters, 2004), 271–84.
[94] Ibid., 285.

'advantage in specific communicative situations'.[95] This is, in part, because writing has the properties that present bilingual authors with a 'safe-haven' where 'control in communication' is felt without the anxiety that often comes with instant speech.[96] Writing in a learned language can be instrumental to authorial ideological and rhetorical inclinations. Evaluating identity and texts from Canagarajah's experiment, one can say that texts are efficient means of identity negotiation and construction, especially in consideration of authors' need of assertion within a domain where native language proficiency is a symbolic marker of difference. Writing gives a linguistic minority group the chance to negotiate the linguistic boundary that hinders them from participating ideologically in major converses.

Using Canagarajah's theory, it is demonstrated in this thesis that the adoption of Arabic by Melkite Christians served the transposition and appropriation strategies for their religious ideology. Being the two most effective means by which bilingual authors can fully engage with dominant intellectual discourses, these two strategies constitute the analyses of the Arabization of Melkite Christian theology. By way of appropriation, Melkite authors can be said to have adopted and reinvented aspects of the Arabic lexicon that were important for their ideological assertions. While, as a transpositional tact, it can equally be said that Melkite authors' Greek language proficiency equally enabled them to develop a dialectical linguistic expression that merged Greek thoughts with Arabic words. In this way, the Melkite authors may not have maximized the depth of communication they had with their Islamic interlocutors if they wrote and interacted solely in vernaculars such as Greek or Syriac or Aramaic.

It therefore follows that the texts which emanate from the Melkite-Muslim encounters reflect nuances of language and religious identity, since authorial identity construction are behind the manner of language usage in the text. This quality of texts that enable identity negotiation echoes a Bakhtinian concept of the interactivity of texts. Bakhtin is said to have a 'polyphonic or dialogic' notion of texts which implies that texts are 'woven through with history' and laden with 'voices'.[97] Historians have reckoned that the reading of ancient texts for their own situational and historical worth can be a meaningful way of sneaking into the social life of texts. Treating ancient texts as ''texts' not documents,' implies that texts

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[95] Ibid., 270.
[96] Ibid., 271.
[97] Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 74.

speak with 'articulation' and a 'discursive character'.[98] Connecting language, ideology and identity to written texts allows texts to be seen as a graphic representation of one's ideas through a preferred language. A homogenous language boundary is often navigated by persons of a heterogeneous linguistic background in order to be heard. This linguistic migration can occur through texts. Clarity and other communication skills required in an ideological exchange could make this linguistic migration an exigency for non-members of a standard language. Texts in a language form, therefore, can hint at the ideological strength of both a dominating and a dominated language group.

2.4 Application to the Islamization of Arabic and the Arabization of Melkite Christian Theology

The theoretical landscape, herein surveyed, sets the frame for the discussion, in the ensuing chapters, about the Islamization of Arabic and the Arabization of Melkite Christian theology. In chapter three, the idea of Arabic attaining standardization through the codification of the Islamic holy text and the political authorities of nascent Islam derive largely from three of the discussed theories: Downes' large scale pattern of sociolinguistic analyses, Enrique Hamel's study on education and imperial language, and Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*. The discussion of the standardization phenomenon in the next chapter is shaped by ideas from these theories.

Similarly, in chapter four, the discussion of the Arabization of Melkite Christian theology, which examines the disposition of Melkite Christian theologians toward Arabic and their eventual adoption of it, derives its shape from the theories of language minority and strategies of language adoption. So the thoughts of Adrian Blackledge, Aneta Pavlenko, Andree Tabouret-Keller, Ben Rampton and Jennifer Miller, which may be classified under language adoption as a negotiation of linguistic minority identity, determine the perspective used in exploring and analyzing the language act of the Melkite community, being a language and religious minority in an Arabic-speaking context.

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[98] Ibid., 156–65.

The analyses of how Greek Chalcedonian theology was expressed in Arabic, as evident in Melkite documents of eighth to tenth century, follow Suresh Canagarajah's transposition and appropriation strategies. The application of the transposition strategy pays close attention to how non-native users of standard language can find it advantageous to utilize their multi-lingual competence in engaging and contributing to a critical discourse, thereby developing hybridity. An example of linguistic hybridity in Melkite Arab Christian theology is demonstrated in the phenomenon now known to Arabists as 'Melkite Arabic'.[99] The appropriation style is equally applied with an emphasis on how non-native users of standard language modify established model of the language so that it is made to accommodate and express the writers 'unconventional' ideas.[100] Examples of this unconventionality come from Greek-coined concepts of Chalcedonian Christology which had had no expression in Arabic until the late eighth century when the Arabization of Melkite Christian theology began.

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[99] Fischer Wolfdietrich, "Classical Arabic," ed. Kees Versteegh et al., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, A-Ed (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Sidney H. Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 11.
[100] Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse," 281.

3 CHAPTER THREE
THE ISLAMIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF ARABIC

3.1 Chapter Introduction

According to the theoretical study in the preceded chapter, language standardization can be seen as the preference given to a language variety or a dialect, such that being endowed with important roles, the language attains a standard level that makes it a respectable means of communication within a given social context.[101] This chapter examines the Islamization of Arabic, beginning with the important role of the Qur'an, which promotes the *'arabiyya* in an unprecedented manner, to early Islamic political era under which public administration and education operated solely in the sacred tongue of the Qur'an. Considering the socio-political context of the term *'arabiyya*, this chapter indicates that the rise of Islam and the codification of the Qur'an were fundamental in bringing standardization into a variegated language system.

3.2 The Role of the Qur'an in the Islamization of Arabic

The first codified formulation of the Arab language and the first literary testimony of Arabic in Islamic literary tradition is the Qur'an.[102] The Qur'an's preference for *'arabiyya*, referring to it as a clear language of revelation, stirs a curiosity about what the value and state of Arabic might have been before and during the time of the prophet Muhammad. It further raises the question as to what role the Qur'an plays in promoting an *'arabiyya* within the linguistic context of the Arab Peninsula. This section examines the role of the Qur'an in a process of language change that resulted in the Islamization of Arabic, which was fundamental to its standardization as a language of the emerging Islamic world.

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[101] William Downes, *Language and Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Blackledge, *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World.*

[102] Michael Zwettler, "Classical Arabic Poetry between Folk and Oral Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 2 (1976): 198–212.

3.2.1   The Geographical Context of the Qur'anic Revelation

Islam had its beginning in the west of Arabia, also referred to as the Ḥijāz. The two major cities of Muhammad's Prophet-hood, Mecca and Medina, the former being his birthplace, are dotted within this region, one being roughly three hundred and forty kilometers away from the other. These two cities mark the dual categorization of the revealed messages given to the Prophet Muhammad over an approximated duration of twenty-three years. The Meccan phase of the revelation often echoes the minority status of the Prophet's message; whereas an increasing community of believers is bound to have been the audience of the Medinan recitations, which are rather authoritative and assertive in nature. The good record keeping in seventh century Mecca, as a city bustling with trade, found appropriation in aspects of this new revelation, including warnings about the final fate of all mankind on the 'day of reckoning,' as with collation of commercial records after a day's trade.[103] The situational context of the Qur'an makes its 'contents inseparable from their interpretation and their import'.[104] As Kenneth Cragg succinctly asserts, 'Muhammad preached as he heard and he heard as he preached'.[105] Thus, with regard to language, insights can be gained as to standardization, when the Qur'an's contents particularly on *'arabiyya* are studied within what we know to be its historical context.

3.2.2   Qur'anic Linguistic Self-Referentiality as Language Preferentiality

The Qur'an reflects its own situational context in passages often known as qur'anic 'self-referentiality'.[106] Even though the basis of qur'anic self-referentiality, as a concept, has been questioned in light of qur'anic canonization process, such that there may be a need to separate what may have constituted actual revelation from the early believers' insertions, based on the assumption that some passages of self-referentiality may not have been part of the message initially revealed, scholars have contemplated this qur'anic feature and the role it plays in the text.[107] The mantic quality of the Qur'an is stepped up by verses that underscore its message as originating from a credible source. This point becomes more critical for the Qur'an when consideration is given to the threat by *jinns* who can overhear, leak or distort divine

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[103] Kenneth Cragg, *The Event of the Quran* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), 101–4.
[104] Ibid., 112.
[105] Ibid., 114.
[106] Wild, "'An Arabic Recitation: The Meta-Linguistic of Qur'anic Revelation'," 8.
[107] A. Daniel Madigan, "The Limits of Self-Referentiality in the Qur'an," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006).

messages.[108] Through verses of self-reflection, the Qur'an also distinguishes itself by its language medium: it underscores the justification of communicating in Arabic, as opposed to any other language.[109] On the note of selfhood, it has also been suggested that in consciousness of other members of its surrounding, the Qur'an delineates contours of its own identity through self-referential passages.[110] Part of this identity formation could be seen in how the Qur'an presents itself as having attained *a kitāb* status among the book-religions of its time.[111] Self-referentiality, therefore, is a qur'anic phenomenon that indicates how the Qur'an both exonerates and asserts itself through various claims that include the Arab language.

Arabic occurs eleven times as an adjectival justification for the qur'anic revelation. In Q.12.2, *'arabiyya* is mentioned as the language of the sent down Qur'an (*qur'ānan 'arabiyyan*). In Q.13.37, *'arabiyya*, as a chosen language, is accompanied by the indication that the Qur'an was a sent legislative guide (*ḥuk'man 'arabiyyan*). The Qur'an is further indicated, in Q.16.103, to have come from the divine since it appeared in a clear Arabic language (*lisānun 'arabiyyan mubīnun*), as opposed to an alleged informant from a foreign language group (*a'jamiyyun*). In Q. 20.113, the *'arabiyya* adjective solidifies the role of the Qur'an as a book of warning. The theme of warning also extends to Q.42.7, where the role of cautioning the Meccan audience regarding eternal fates is attached to the reason why the Qur'an was given in Arabic. In Q. 26.195(-202), we see the succinct assertion of the Qur'an about itself as a descended text, delivered by a reliable spiritual agent, into the heart of the Prophet, and in the clear tongue of Arabic (*lisānun 'arabiyyan mubīnun*). This is so in order that those who have understanding may see and recall that the Qur'an was both foretold and given for recognition and belief. In Q. 39.28, the import of an Arabic Qur'an is such that the *'arabiyya*-adjective further implied the straightforwardness of the holy text, as one without crookedness (*'iwajan*). Most occurrences of the word 'crookedness' refer to the pathway of truth, or the followership of Allah; only in Q.39.28 and Q.18.1 does it occur with particular reference to the Qur'an as a textual phenomenon. Q. 41.3 states that the Arabic Qur'an was given for people of knowledge or insight. In Q. 43.3, understanding is mentioned as the rationale behind the choice of an Arabic Qur'an.

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[108] Gerald Hawting, "'Eavesdropping on the Heavenly Assembly and the Protection of the Revelation from Demonic Corruption,'" in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 36.

[109] Wild, "'An Arabic Recitation: The Meta-Linguistic of Qur'anic Revelation'," 136–57.

[110] Thomas Hoffman, "'Agonistic Poetics in the Qur'an: Self-Referentialities, Refutations, and the Development of a Qur'anic Self'," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 53–54.

[111] Nicolai Sinai, "'Qur'anic Self-Referentiality as a Strategy of Self-Authorization'," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 103–34.

In confirmation of the books of Moses, and in affirmation of its dual function, warning to the unbelieving and cheerful news to the good, the Qur'an further validates why it came in the Arabic language (Q.46.12). Lastly, in Q. 41.44, we see a case being made for an Arabic Qur'an by the fact that the language is understandable to its audience. Thus, it is for the sake of understanding that the Qur'an came in no foreign glossa but *'arabiyya*.

'arabiyya does not only justify the nature of the Qur'an. It is used to justify qur'anic claim of transcendence and it is presented as a valuable linguistic means for the roles that the Qur'an was sent to play in human history, namely: to guide, to warn, to cheer and to cure the believing. To this extent, it can be said that *'arabiyya* is very central to the meaning of the Qur'an and of its message. Making sense of the process of qur'anic revelation is, then, closely tied to its language choice. Concerns have been raised as to the scarcity, or almost non-existence, of support from ancient sources indicating that the usage of the term *'arabiyya*, right before or during the time of Muhammad, could be referring to one collective group of people with one Arabic tongue. Neither pre-Islamic poetry nor the Qur'an uses such a designation for an ethnic group with a homogenous linguistic identity.[112] Even though, the Qur'an does use 'Arab' for a group of people who rejected its message (Q. 9.97), this group neither falls within the approved audience of qur'anic revelation, nor the adjectival usage of the term in the Qur'an.[113] What, then, does the Qur'an mean by *'arabiyya* when it uses it as a qualifier of revelation and a vindication of its message? A historical exploration of *'arabiyya*, prior to and during the time of the prophet, can help with a better interpretation of qur'anic occurrences of *'arabiyya*, especially how such language prioritization may have connections to a standardization process.

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[112] Cragg, *The Event of the Quran*; Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Jan Retsö, " 'Arab," ed. Kees Versteegh et al., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, A-Ed (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Yasir Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*," ed. Kees Versteegh et al., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, A-Ed (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Jan Retsö, "Arabs and Arabic in the Age of the Prophet," in *The Qur'an in Context, Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu* (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2011).

[113] Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*."

3.2.3　'Arabiyya in Pre-Islamic Socio-Political Context

Concepts in nascent Islam were inherited from the shaping events of preceding centuries. The political activities of preceding empires had changed the Arabian Peninsula from a 'mere desolate desert frontier region between Rome and Persia' to a more 'articulated zone lending varying measures of cohesion and incorporation to Arabs, pastoralists and otherwise'.[114] The Greeks were said to have discovered and named the Peninsula 'Aravia' (Αραβία) and the Arabs, at this time, about whom many ancient sources often referred to in connection to 'the Syrian desert,' or their camels, were just a separate group of their own living among the other vast peoples of Arabia.[115] Also, these ethnic groups may not have been known by a singular vocation: Ancient North Arabia graffiti in Hismaic indicates a variety of vocations such as hunting, masonry, pasturing and even raiding.[116] This implies that most ancient references to the Arabs hardly meant a breed of settlers that were bound by a common genealogy throughout the area; it was rather a general designation for the various ethnic contents therein. It is suggested that the term 'Arab' served more as an administrative referent by imperial powers. Most Rabbinic sources indicate Arab or Arabic as something coming from the region of Nabataea or the Roman Provincia Arabia.[117] 'Arab' as a word, however, disappeared from North Arabia ancient sources around the fourth century CE and was replaced by some other words in Greek-Latin sources.[118] The last evidence regarding the Arabs in this period was a tomb inscription related to Imru' al-Qays ibn 'Amr, who was dubbed as 'king of the Arabs' in southern Syria. A close study of archeological remains by Heinz Gaube in Khirbat al-Bayda, a settlement north of Namara where al-Qays' tomb inscription was, testifies to a political system that shaped the Arabia. Gaube discovered unique patterns of craftsmanship on the architectural remains that strongly suggest a settlement built by a Byzantine state client who ruled over the Arab area as a local police so as to ensure political accountability of the area and not risk arbitrary crack-down.[119] Such crack-downs had seen to the end of regimes like those of the Palmyrenes.[120]

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[114] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*, 102.

[115] Retsö, " 'Arab," 126–27.

[116] Jouni Harjumaki and Ilkka Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic," in *Cross-Cultural Studies in Near eastern History and Literature*, ed. Saana Svärd and Robert Rollinger (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2016), 74.

[117] Jan Retsö, "What Is Arabic?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, ed. Jonathan Owens (Oxford University Press, 2013), 435.

[118] Retsö, " 'Arab," 128.

[119] Heinz Gaube, "Arabs in Sixth-Century Syria: Some Archaeological Observations," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 8, no. 2 (1981): 95ff.

[120] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*, 110.

By the sixth century, state-client system had permeated Arabia and empowered certain tribes to perpetuate their family dynasties over others. One of such tribes was the Quraysh tribe in Meccan to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged.[121] Tribe dynasties were both weakened and strengthened by foreign invasions. During this time, there was an Ethiopic invasion that brought the Himyarite dynasty to an end thereby letting cities like Mecca seize control of important caravan trade routes.[122] The Himyarites were said to have been politically dominant in sixth century Arabia: in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, the 'Homerites' were represented as 'superior in power' and that they ruled from a capital city of 'Aphar.[123] The drastic decline met in the Ethiopic invasion of 525CE left a power vacuum that enabled the rise of new political and social quests from west of the peninsula: it was a quest associated with an emerging Arab religious and political ideology to crush the East Roman capital.[124] It has been suggested that the height of commitment by the Yemenis during the Arab-conquest in the seventh century may have been inspired by a vengeful sense of loss and the hope of a neo-Himyarite religious and political state.[125] This example does not only paint a picture of an aspect of the political state of pre-Islamic Arabia; it also hints at the complex of motivations that contributed to what would spread and consolidate as an Arab-monotheistic movement.

Mecca, at this time of the fall of the Himyarite dynasty, was a city that was already thriving with religious and cultural significance, so that the fall of the Himyarites added economy to the influence wielded by leading clans of the city.[126] Tribal rule may have also heightened raiding and formation of alliances among various tribes. Safaitic graffiti from Ancient North Arabia exemplified such anxieties with inscriptions of wishes of luck in raiding.[127] Tribes were observed to have begun to result from 'politics and not nature' and that they were 'catalyzed by military force' and 'formed under the pressure of

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[121] Ibid., 111.

[122] Irfan Shahîd, "Byzantino-Arabica: The Conference of Ramla, A. D. 524," *Journal of Near eastern Studies* 23, no. 2 (1964): 115–31.

[123] William Vincent, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Cadell and Davies, 1805), 283.

[124] Jan Retsö, "In the Shade of Himyar and Sasan. The Political History of Pre-Islamic Arabia According to the Ayām Al-Arab-Literature," in *Arabia*, vol. 2, s. 111–118 (Arabia, 2004).

[125] Jan Retsö, "Constantinople and the Early Islamic Conquests," in *Istanbul as Seen from a Distance: Centre and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. M. Sait Ozervarli, Tansug Feryal, and Elisabeth (Istanbul, 2011), 29–36.

[126] Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 28.

[127] Harjumaki and Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic," 73.

external circumstances and actors'.[128] This situation within the area favored trade. Trade was catalyzed by imperial demands for the unique resources of the desert. These resources were delivered through trade-routes under Meccan control, as some ancient records indicate that under the Nabataean dynasty, the Arabs were instrumental in the cultural and economic flow between the Mediterranean world, the Nile crescent and the Peninsula.[129] The writing system in this culture used Aramaic script but people possibly spoke old dialects or colloquial forms of Arabic. This Nabataean region is also the traceable point of origin to most pre-Islamic forms of documentation until the invention of the *kufic* and *nashki* scripts during early Islamic centuries.[130]

The flourishing of trade also saw to the competitive skills of art and entertainment. Poetry became an important oral artistry that contained themes of social importance such as valor, honor, bravery, vengeance, and reputation, and it spread through 'seasonal markets and royal courts'.[131] Indicated to have generated from East Arabia where Kinda and Qays principalities ruled, these poems grew into other genres and spread as legendry and forms of 'pan-Arab myths' among commoners and elites alike.[132] Soothsaying also thrived among locals. People often needed diviners and oracular verdicts over their disputes.[133] Michael Zwettler observes that pre- and early Islamic Arab poetry were composed from around the end of the fifth century BC to mid-seventh century AD but that no systematic, large-scale movement to set it down in textual form was initiated before the end of the seventh century; rather, a process of oral tradition is assumed to account for the preservation of these poems until their eventual textualization.[134]

From Zwettler's conclusion, the rise of Islam and the writing down of traditional Arab poetry occurred within the same duration. Neither pre-Islamic poetry nor the Qur'an has an assuring usage of the term

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[128] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*, 127; Retsö, " 'Arab," 127.
[129] Retsö, " 'Arab," 127.
[130] Retsö, "What Is Arabic?," 435; John F. Healey and G. Rex Smith, *A Brief Introduction to The Arabic Alphabet* (Saqi, 2012), 84–94.
[131] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*, 146.
[132] Ibid., 144; Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 52.
[133] Alan Jones, "The Quran in Light of Earlier Arabic Prose," in *University Lectures in Islamic Studies*, ed. Alan Jones (Altajir World of Islam Trust, 1997), 69.
[134] Michael Zwettler, "Classical Arabic Poetry between Folk and Oral Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 2 (1976): 211.

'Arab' for a collective ethnic entity. Aziz Al Azmeh rather proposes that such projection would only be found in caliphate Islamic era or 'Paleo-Islam': before this era, we can only speak of a culminating 'ethno-genesis' wherein a 'relative linguistic homogenization across territories under the influence of Arab principalities' was occurring.[135] It is in this culmination that language would eventually encapsulate the 'symbolic register the ethno-genesis of al-'Arab al Musta'riba; it rendered them, with time and very rapidly, Arabs both to themselves and to others'.[136] In pre-Islamic Arabia, therefore, it can be said that tribal rivalry had contributed to divergences of ethnic identity. By the end of this era, however, emerging pan-Arab poetic language was becoming recognizable. But *'arabiyya* was neither a singular language of standard that was widely spoken across the Arabian Peninsula, nor a successfully homogenized language by which a singular ethnic group was known. The idea of a standard Arab tongue and an ideal Arab tribe came with the crystallizing Arab religious identity of the seventh century onward.

3.3 Qur'anic Self-Referentiality as Proto-Standardization

From the pre-Islamic socio-political context of *'arabiyya* it would be more accurate to speak of Arabic before and during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, as a variegated language with an emerging poetic version but hardly a standardized variation. A concept of contrast to the acclaimed 'clear Arab language' in which the Qur'an was revealed is the 'ajami, which is related to 'drunken or crooked' or un-understandable manner of speaking.[137] This clearly appears as a strategy of linguistic normativity in a context of abounding variants. *'arabiyya* as it occurs in the Qur'an hardly represents a commonly spoken language throughout the Peninsula. In other words, *'arabiyya* does not capture with certainty any 'linguistic definable phenomenon'; rather it serves as a 'functional designation' that supports qur'anic argument or proposal of a divinely originated language not deriving from anything human, but intended to be commonly understood.[138] This irony of an exceptionally and transcendently derived language intended to be understood by its hearers is only explainable by the fact that *'arabiyya* was far removed from common usage but recognizable by speakers of the many existing dialects. Jan Retso opines that pre-Islamic Arabia, certainly had a considerable amount of linguistic variation that never could have gone away during nascent Islam and that we have no reason whatsoever to assume that at the time of the

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[135] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*, 154.
[136] Ibid., 147.
[137] Retsö, "What Is Arabic?," 435.
[138] Ibid., 436.

Prophet everybody in Arabia spoke something like the *'arabiyya*; however such a variety may have been understood when heard in poetry or even formal speech.[139] Retso further thinks that the variant dialects, which may have constituted the 'ajami of early Islam, were perhaps the antique predecessors of surviving forms of Arabic, in contrast to which the Qur'an sought to assert a singular superior variant.[140] To this purpose, the concept of a clear *'arabiyya* may fit into the idea of an effort to promote a preferred dialectical expression that is most religiously appropriate. This preference would be the object of later lexicographical innovations and systematization.

What then was the *'arabiyya* at the time of the Prophet and its connection to the message of the Qur'an? *'arabiyya* in its context begins with the basic depiction of a branch of Semitic language with, as Jan Retso suggests, 'partly archaic features similar to Ugaritic and Akkadian of second century BCE Syria and Mesopotamia'.[141] Scholarly opinions deem either of the following: (a) that after the conquests, Arabic became the predominant language in the whole of the Arabian peninsula, displacing Ancient South Arabian in Yemen and other forms of North Arabian in the North;[142] or, (b) that there were prior similarities between ancient versions and what culminated into a refined version of classical Arabic. Scholars of the second idea, such as Kees Versteegh, say that in the Aramaic script, from which Nabataean writing ultimately derives, there are no ligatures between letters, but in a later form of the Nabataen epigraphic script, between the third and forth centuries CE, transitional forms between Nabataean and Arabic script can be detected.[143] This later form of Nabataen script comes from the fourth century CE, the final era of which we have any testimony on Arabic from ancient sources. One common agreement however, is that the non-availability of a homogenous Arabic met with a proliferation of corpuses of poetry that would begin a path toward what we may imagine as a 'unified form of linguistic expression', especially during and after the codification of *'arabiyya* within the first two centuries of the spread of Islam.[144] It is possible that at the time of the Prophet, there existed such a fortunate variety of Arabic and it had elements of linguistic superiority, elitist preference, and a certain level of professional usage.

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[139] Ibid., 445, 455.
[140] Retsö, "What Is Arabic?"
[141] Retsö, "Arabs and Arabic in the Age of the Prophet," 282.
[142] Harjumaki and Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic," 63.
[143] Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 39.
[144] Retsö, "Arabs and Arabic in the Age of the Prophet," 282.

The sacralization of the source of *'arabiyya* secured the standardization process of the language and largely shaped the nature of this process as well. The basic linguistic developments that made *'arabiyya* a standard dialect, unparalleled in Arab linguistic history, began within centuries of the Prophet's death. An ideological promotion of the superiority of *'arabiyya* may have been the earliest phase of language standardization for Arabic. In concurrence with Retso, qur'anic usage could possibly be a 'legitimization of the *'arabiyya* as a language of revelation,' thereby making it superior so as to function at a more valuable level.[145] The dialogue between the Qur'an and those who resented its message as jinn-influenced or as madness brings the term '*'arabiyya*' into a new light. According to the testimony of the Qur'an, skillful and artful language users, during the Prophet's time, allegedly derived their poetic ability from supernatural possession of a demonic kind (Q.37.36, 52.29-30). These poets and soothsayers were also perhaps getting mistrusted for being deceitful (Q.26.224-226). That the message of the Prophet was analogous to cultural poetry among Meccan Arabs indicates that qur'anic *'arabiyya* was not so different from the way the skilled Arabs used it. This became trickier when the 'commoners' Arabic' differed from a professional version which, among other things, was associated with distrust. Thus, using this skillful variety of Arabic as a revelatory means would only warrant that its quality, which was adequate for a revelatory ideology, is clearly distanced from the murky spill around it. The credibility of the source of revelation, opposed to demonic influence, was then an important assertion by which the Qur'an had to vindicate itself. The Arabic recitation given unto the, arguably, 'illiterate Prophet'[146] was then claimed to have had its entire derivation from the divine (Q.4 2.7, 17; Q.96.4-5). In this way, *'arabiyya* reached a certain manner of sacralized standardization. Even the 'poetically minded Arabs' would be dared to produce a version of Arabic that could 'challenge', compete or counter the 'excellence of the revealed Arabic'.[147] This divine-source ideology was a climax that sealed the value of qur'anic *'arabiyya* for generations to come.

We infer, therefore, that *'arabiyya*, according to sources, was no blanket language that was spread all over the Hijaz, at the time of the Prophet. But if there was any form of linguistic homogenous movement, as we are convinced there was, *'arabiyya* would have been a dialectical variety that was most eligible to render other forms of Arabic inferior. This 'supra-tribal' *'arabiyya*, being separated from other spoken

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[145] Ibid., 287.
[146] Günther, "Muḥammad, the Illiterate Prophet."
[147] Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*," 174.

varieties, became the special poetic variety ('*Kunstsprache*') that was most suitable for the qur'anic revelation and preferred by early religious authorities of Islam.[148] Associating revelation with this intelligible variety may have equally warranted a justification of it among Meccan commoners, whose daily *'arabiyya* may not have been of equal standard. Such justification is seen in the fact that the Qur'an deems this variety to be divinely derived. And the book (*kitāb*) in which it is embodied should command respect and obedience from the hearers (Q. 42.15). Those who would not regard or understand this revelation are then termed as deformed (Q. 41.44). The Qur'an's preference for such a superior dialect was an exigency, which certainly resonated with the contextual pan-Arabic socio-political movement that was an immediate predecessor to nascent Islam.

3.4 Nascent Islam and the Standardization Process of Arabic

A codification, valorization and eventual standardization of qur'anic Arabic constituted the literary project that was a huge part of the spread of the Arabs' religious movement and the establishment of Arab caliphates across various lands. This caliphate *'arabiyya* would eventually define the true Arabs (al-'Arab al-Musta'riba). Such identity was first associated with 'tribal aristocracy of early Islamic period', then warriors of the Islamic faith, and eventually it was the identity of 'Meccan and Medinan Arabs'.[149] For religious militancy to have been tagged with true Arab identity, fits the idea that the spread of *'arabiyya* was also promoted by the roles people played in the emerging Arab religion. A major difference between pre-Islamic raiding and raiding in early Islam has been deduced from inscriptions to be that the former raided tribes for fortune, while the latter did so to plunder and wage war against the 'unbelievers'.[150] It is difficult to tell what believers may have meant at this stage; but it certainly may have included the idea of a true Arab identity, which was part of the socio-political themes of pan-Arabism. Olof Heilo has indicated how theological ideologies often ended up along political, cultural and ethnic lines during this stage of the Arab faith movement, such that being a 'religious believer' took shape within social and political attitude that both 'smoothened' and 'underlined' cultural, political and ethnic identities.[151] The

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[148] Zammit Martin R., *A Comparative Lexical Study of Qur'ānic Arabic* (BRILL, 2002), 40–43; Michael Zwettler, *A Mantic Manifesto : The Sura of "The Poets" and the Qur'anic Foundations of Prophetic Authority*, 1990; Jones, "The Quran in Light of Earlier Arabic Prose."

[149] Retsö, " 'Arab"; Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*"; Retsö, "Arabs and Arabic in the Age of the Prophet."

[150] Harjumaki and Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic," 74.

[151] Olof Heilo, *Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam: History and Prophecy* (Routledge, 2015), 56.

matrix of all this, of course, operated through linguistic choices as well. It was those who associated with this Qur'an centered movement that were very likely to be the real Arabs (al-'Arab al-Musta'riba).

The Qur'an and Arab poetry were the only language sources of *'arabiyya* that were fundamentally influential in the standardization process that began with the literary codification of Arabic. The Qur'an presented the earliest graphic representation of poetic *'arabiyya*.[152] The standardization which gave more preference to qur'anic text would expand the lexical constitution of qur'anic words, invent semantics within it, stylize its expressions and ultimately shape it into something more suitable for administrative purposes in conquered territories under the caliphates.[153] The consonantal contents of the Uthmanic authoritative codex were improved upon through the inventions of a late seventh century grammarian known as Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali (*c*. 603CE/16BH – 688 or 689CE/69AH).[154] This invention enabled a short vowel system that was lacking in the initial orthography, as well as inclusion of Hamza and germination of roots.[155] Al-Du'ali's invention was even improved upon by the eight century lexicographer Abu 'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d.791).[156] Through al-Khalil's invention of grammatical explanations, the codification of both Arab poetry and qur'anic Arabic was possible. This codification enabled the following: lexical expansion, the straightening out of *neologisms* found in qur'anic lexical registers, the adoption of loanwords with new phonology and morphology, and the emergence of early collection of Arabic words in a dictionary form.[157] Later philologians would be known for defending qur'anic Arabic against 'imputations of linguistic inadequacy' like Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Qasim al-Anbari's (d.940) *Kitāb al-addad*.[158] It is therefore, as Yasir Suleiman opines, 'impossible to exaggerate the role of Islam in the development of the Arabic language and in shaping attitudes toward it'.[159]

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[152] Zammit, *A Comparative Lexical Study of Qur'ānic Arabic*, 43.
[153] Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*; Zammit, *A Comparative Lexical Study of Qur'ānic Arabic*; Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Brill, 2007).
[154] Oliver Leaman, "Caligraphy and the Qur'an," ed. Oliver Leaman, *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 130–35.
[155] Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 63–64.
[156] Ibid., 64.
[157] Ibid., 69–70.
[158] M.G. Carter, "Al-Anbari, Abu Muhammad Al-Qasim Ibn Muhammad (231-328/885-940)," ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, A-J (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 89–90.
[159] Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*," 173–74.

Early Islamic era also saw to the establishment of an affiliation with the purest expressions of dialectical elements, possibly preserved among isolated desert tribes. The idea of Islam being the possessors of an appropriate kind of *'arabiyya* is strengthened by this affiliation to the original and preserved variety, which is often said to be that of the Bedouins.[160] This Islamized form of Arab will be perpetuated as classic and standard for the posterity of this spreading religious civilization. The Bedouins were incorporated in establishing an 'ideal type' of Arabic being that they may have had a good preservation of a preferred older version.[161] The Aramaic/Nabataean scripts of qur'anic orthography was inflected with necessary changes: the 'pre-Islamic system of short final vowels being pronounced long and part of the rhyme was dropped in the qur'anic system' where only 'rhyming consonants' counted.[162] Many other adjustments were done that certainly gave rise to a new version of Arabic which both derived and deviated from existing linguistic styles and reinvented itself to meet the need of a rising empire.

The Islamized or caliphate Arabic would most importantly spread through learning. Quests to study the 'vast store of knowledge, not only in religion, but in other sciences', would find caliphate Arabic as 'a major tool' of access.[163] 'Indigenous languages' in conquered domains were 'marginalized' as this new language of 'culture, religion and scholarship' spread.[164] Basic education curriculum everywhere prioritized memorization of the Qur'an, learning of the Arabic script, grammar and the *tafsiri*.[165] Advanced levels of study in other subjects of art and the sciences were also done in Arabic.[166] This was largely possible due to the translation movement in Baghdad. When the Arab conquest had spread and taken over the eastern and western regions of the Mesopotamia, there was an enriching free flow of resources, one of which was of particular importance for literacy: this was paper production by prisoners from Asia.[167] Dominating the Hellenized regions of Mesopotamia made Arabic translations of the much needed wealth of knowledge in Greek, a necessity. This translation movement was begun by the 'Abbasids in the second half of the eight century and would last for the next two centuries when almost

[160] Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Arabic," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Literatures of the Roman Empire*, ed. Daniel L Selden and Phiroze Vasunia, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015).
[161] Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 45.
[162] Ibid., 54.
[163] Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language," 41.
[164] Ibid., 48.
[165] Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language."
[166] Ibid., 49.
[167] Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (Psychology Press, 1998), 11–13.

all Greek works of science and philosophy would have had their Arabic versions. The first appearance of Christian theology in Arabic dates to this period. This was a strong indication of the emergence of an imperial language. The receptivity of this language among dissenting religious traditions, such as Melkite Christianity, will then follow.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion: The Islamization of Arabic as a Standardization Process

In light of the survey so far, the pre-Islamic form of the *'arabiyya* in qur'anic self-references can be said to be a less-common variety of Arabic known among the elites and poetically skillful. When this pre-Islamic variety is compared to the caliphate Arabic of the post Arab-conquest, a transitional change is evident. The structural and social status of pre-Islamic *'arabiyya* found a reinvention that culminated in a standardized language of a religious and political movement. Structurally, the poetic variety underwent linguistic codification and other elements of elaborative function that would enable it to function in all aspects of an emerging civilization. Socially, the said variety was ideologically sacralized. Its lexical content was endowed with religious semantics. And its inscriptions appeared on public space paraphernalia, not least on items like coins, milestones, and more importantly, the monumental inscription on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. It became the language of academic translations and eventually the official language of public administration. A valorization process, therefore, occurred which transposed pre-Islamic *'arabiyya* to a standardized status during nascent Islam. This standardized status would shape the disposition of minority language groups as explored in the next chapter.

4 CHAPTER FOUR
THE ADOPTION OF ARABIC AND THE ARABIZATION OF MELKITE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

4.1 Chapter Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was indicated that the Qur'an, as the reputable text of an emerging Arab religion, which was codified within the era of nascent Islamic promotion of a homogenous language, makes a preferential case for a poetic variety of *'arabiyya*, through its emphasis on this variety as a clear language of revelation. It was further argued that under the political authorities of early Islamic centuries, Arab grammarians focused on developing the language of the Qur'an, thereby make it a language of literacy, political administration and culture.[168] This placed Arabic as a standard means of communication within the empire. Such a linguistic phenomenon may have been unprecedented in the history of Arabic as a language: before and during the time of the prophet, *'arabiyya* was hardly a homogenized tongue; the Arabian Peninsula was dotted with tribal varieties of Arabic.[169] However, the emergence of the Arab religious movement found and prioritized a poetic dialect that would be promoted as the clear Arabic.[170]

The reaction by non-Islamic religious communities to this promoted language is what this chapter deals with. An examination of the progressive disposition of Christian communities toward an Islamized Arabic, with particular attention on Melkite Christianity, furnishes our understanding of the relationship between language, politics and religious identity, within the early centuries of Islamic reign over Syria and Palestine. How this relationship develops into the adoption of Arabic as a language for Melkite theologians leads to the analyses of language adoption as a linguistic minority strategy. Having set the background to the origin of the Melkites within Syrian Christianity and the reception of the Arab conquest among Christian communities, the arabization of Melkite Christian theology is evaluated using theoretical principles of language adoption strategies.

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[168] Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language."
[169] Retsö, "What Is Arabic?"
[170] Abdel Haleem, "Arabic as the Language of Islam"; Suleiman, " *'arabiyya*."

4.2 The Melkites among other Christian Traditions under Islamic Rule

This section discusses Syrian Christianity under the emergence of an Islamic empire and how this resulted in Arab Christian theology. It begins with the origin and development of the various Christian groups created from splits along Christological differences. This internal schism, by the time of Islamic consolidation, had resulted in various Christian traditions namely the Nestorians, the Jacobites and the Melkites. How did these diverse Christian groups experience and express their understanding of the Arab conquests and the establishment of Islamic polities around them? What was the character of Islamic rule over these minority religious groups? How did a theological interaction result in the arabization of Melkite Christianity? These questions are treated in the subsections here following, as a helpful background to the analyses of the arabization of Melkite Christian theology.

4.2.1   The Syrian Origin of Melkite Christianity

The Syrian Christian tradition of eastern Rome was the religious pedigree of what would, by the late sixth century, come to be known as Melkite Christianity. The 'Syrian-speaking Christians' are said to have seen themselves as 'sons of Aram' implying them to be 'speakers of the Aramean language in the regions on both banks of the Euphrates.[171] The Aramaic variety from Edessa, which was later promoted in the writing of Jacob the bishop of Edessa (d. 708) and came to be known as Classical Syriac, is important to the history of Syrian-speaking Christians in the east.[172] 'After the conversion of the royal house of Edessa, perhaps in the third century, classical Syriac became the 'preferred language of the Christian communities of Syria and northern Mesopotamia, functioning as a *lingua franca* for a wide variety of Aramaic speakers'.[173] By the sixth century, eastern Christianity was getting torn apart by doctrinal schism regarding the nature of Christ: the imperial church of the East tilted toward a dyophysite doctrine of two different and independent natures cohabiting in the person of the Christ, while most of the 'Syriac-speaking Christians of Syria and west of Mesopotamia' rejected this position.[174] The Church of the East

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[171] Muriel Debié, "Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1/3 (2009): 112.

[172] Ibid., 106–10; Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (New Jersey: The Darwin Press Inc., 1997), 160ff.

[173] Heleen Murre-Van Den Berg, "Syriac Christianity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, ed. Ken Parry (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 251; Aaron Michael Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context*, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic, volume 11 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 1.

[174] Murre-Van Den Berg, "Syriac Christianity," 252–53.

would later be known as Nestorian, after a condemned dyophysite named Nestorius (d. 450), while the anti-Chalcedonians or the Miaphysites, who later became Syrian Orthodox Christians, were nick-named Jacobites, after their leader Jacob Baradeus (d.578).[175] Syrian-speaking members of the Jacobite movement who chose to rather stick to the Chalcedonian two-in-one nature creed and to stay connected to the Roman-Byzantine ecclesiastical authority were derogated by their co-religionists as 'imperials' or 'loyalists to the imperial power,' the Syriac translation of which came to be known as 'Melkites'.[176] This pejorative title stuck with these Syrian-Chalcedonians who remained heirs of the Greek creedal heritage among Syrian natives. For some time, Greek would remain an important language in the ecclesiastical and monastic life of the Melkites.[177]

4.2.2 The Character of Islamic Reign over Syrian Christians

All these Christian traditions came under Islamic reign, following the Arab conquests. They enjoyed considerable independence, especially under Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs.[178] However, the administrative policies of these caliphates shaped the world of Syrian Christianity, especially how the Umayyad caliphs championed Islam in their public decisions.[179] The Marwanid caliphs of the Umayyad clan had injected and stamped qur'anic vocabulary in public space paraphernalia such as buildings, coins, milestones and political documents.[180] Some of the clear marks of the reign of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (d. 705) were conspicuous qur'anic inscriptions on coins and worship places.[181] The later stage of the Marwanid dynasty will be characterized by a selective usage of qur'anic words and passages in political documents, so as to promote legitimacy and secure loyalty. The Marwanid household was often tensed with 'succession disputes'.[182] One of such documents was passed on as correspondence intended to secure

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[175] Ibid., 253–54; Uriel Simonsohn, "Seeking Justice among the 'Outsiders': Christian Recourse to Non-Ecclesiastical Judicial Systems under Early Islam," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1 (June 1, 2009): 192.

[176] Friedrich Heyer, "Ecumenical Mission in the Oriental Church: The Melkites," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1, no. 3 (1964): 487.

[177] Bas ter Haar Romeny, "Athanasius in Syriac," *Church History and Religious Culture* 90, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 233.

[178] Murre-Van Den Berg, "Syriac Christianity," 253.

[179] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 25.

[180] M. Paul Cobb, "The Empire in Syria, 705-763," in *The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F Robinson, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Chase F Robinson, "The Rise of Islam, 600-705," in *The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F Robinson, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[181] Robinson, "The Rise of Islam, 600-705," 220–21.

[182] Cobb, "The Empire in Syria, 705-763," 227.

the loyalty of local princes for Caliph al-Walid II and his sons: It was between Yusuf b. ʿUmar, governor of Iraq from 738-744, and the administrator of Khurasan, Nasr b. Sayyar (d.748).[183] Andrew Marsham's study of this text reveal vocabularies of qur'anic derivation such as (a) pledge or allegiance (*bāyaʿa*), the verbal forms of which could be found in passages like Q 9.111; Q 48.10; Q 60.12, connoting contractual loyalty; (b) Hearing and obeying *(samʿ wa-a'l-tāʾa)*: the qur'anic occurrences of these words, as in Q 2.285; Q 4.46; Q 5.7; Q 24.51; Q 64.16, often serve as prerequisites for a blessing or favor; (c) Covenant *(ʿahd)*, which in all its forms of occurrence, appears 'twenty-nine' times in the Qur'an; and (d) *mīthāq,* which mostly connotes a bond or treaty and it has about twenty-five qur'anic occurrences as a noun.[184] Marsham concludes that the first half of the eight century saw to the establishment of qur'anic language as the vocabulary of legitimate authority which was also deployed by the Marwanid caliphs to articulate a religio-political position.[185] Thus qur'anic vocabularies never ceased to feature prominently in texts of claims to political and theological legitimacy. Words of qur'anic Arabic, in fact, became the language of choice of Muslim scholars and a prominent feature in the apologetic documents of non-Islamic theologians, by the time of the Abbasids.

The Abbasids ousted their Umayyad predecessors with a revolution. The character of the Abbasid revolution and its subsequent dynasty were shaped by the mixed inclusion of militants from Arab and non-Arab tribes, as well as the use of Persian bureaucrats.[186] The military man-power that aided the setting in of the Abbasids through the 'series of executions and massacres' that mostly targeted the Umayyad princes, was 'integrated' in nature, merging tribal, social and religious groups from across Arabia and Persia.[187] This inclusion was also accompanied by disappointments among committed tribes like the Mudarites of Khurasan, whose dissatisfaction and feeling of ill-treatment led to their withdrawal from the political movement.[188] Also, certain spillovers from the Zoroastrian and Manichean worldviews

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[183] Andrew Marsham, and Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy, Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 169–70.

[184] Ibid., 170–71.

[185] Ibid., 178.

[186] Said Amir Arjomand, "'Abd Allah Ibn Al- Muqaffa' and the 'Abbasid Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1–4 (January 1, 1994): 9–36.

[187] Chase F. Robinson, "The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution," in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand and Yasir Suleiman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 243–44; Arjomand, "'Abd Allah Ibn Al- Muqaffa' and the 'Abbasid Revolution," 31.

[188] Khalid Yahya Blankinship, "The Tribal Factor in the ʿAbbāsid Revolution: The Betrayal of the Imam Ibrāhīm B. Muḥammad," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 4 (October 1988): 589.

that would breed dualistic dispositions, religious pluralism and critical thinking were equally embedded in the Abbasid political movement due its high patronage of Persian scribes.[189] The use of astral calendar and *Nowruz* new-year marker in Iranian Islamic tradition is argued to have also been rooted in this encounter.[190] Dimitri Gutas further opines that some 'Muslim intellectuals' of nascent Islam found in Manichaeism and related dualistic systems things that the Islam of their time could not offer them.[191] Whatever may have been the precise nature of the influence of Persian philosophy on early Islamic intellectuality, this influence may have contributed in forming the literary quest and fostered the right atmosphere for one of the richest cross-communications of culture and ideology in nascent Islam.

In their heyday, the Abbasids controlled the stretch from the Mediterranean coastlines of North Africa in the west, to the Balkh province in the east, and from Aleppo in the north, to Yemen down to the south.[192] Some of the political activities of this era occurred in Syriac-speaking cities of eastern Christianity, especially Edessa, Harran and Nisibis and Basra. This also meant increased encounter between religious and political authorities. Harran, for instance, is said to have been a strategic city marked by walls and a gate.[193] Some of the intense battles to topple the Umayyad lords took place in Harran, which was an administrative capital under Marwan II, last of the Umayyad Caliphs of Syria.[194] It is not difficult to imagine that before the move to Baghdad in 762, the Abbasid authority may have made Harran, which was equally the Episcopal seat of the Melkite bishops, including Abū Qurrah, a transitional bureaucratic centre. The Abbasid administrative centre in Baghdad was not very far from Seleucia-Ctesiphon where the Nestorian catholicate stood.[195] This proximity paid off in the influence and interaction that the Nestorian catholicos Timothy I (780-823) enjoyed in caliph Mahdi's court, owing to Timothy's versatility.[196] In 780, Timothy eventually moved his 'residence from Ctesiphon to Baghdad'.[197] Also, the

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[189] Arjomand, "'Abd Allah Ibn Al-Muqaffa' and the 'Abbasid Revolution."

[190] M. T. (Marietta Tigranovna) Stepaniants, "The Encounter of Zoroastrianism with Islam," *Philosophy East and West* 52, no. 2 (2002): 166–67.

[191] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*.

[192] Description from a map in Marcelo Guimaraes Lima, "Abbasid Architecture," accessed March 10, 2017, http://islamicartandarchitecture.blogspot.com/2011/11/abbasid-architecture.html. *see appendix I.*

[193] Chase F. Robinson, "The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution," in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand and Yasir Suleiman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 234; Seton Lloyd and William Brice, "Harran," *Anatolian Studies* 1 (1951): 104.

[194] Robinson, "The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution," 234,235.

[195] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 40.

[196] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 472ff; Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 45.

monastic man-power, at least for Melkite Christianity, that would serve the important task of preserving ecclesiastical literary heritage through the years of Islamic reign, by the ninth century, all filed in from Syrian domains such as Edessa, Damascus, Baghdad, Tiberias, and Ramlah; prior to this time the monks, who were mostly Greek, hailed from Cappadocia and Constantinople.[198]

The Abbasids had a sustainable administrative structure that was basically integrating in effect: the *Qāḍī*, a supervising magistrate, was stationed in various places to serve as a facilitator of the judicial, political, social and economic network that kept provinces, which were led by governors, linked with the administrative centre.[199] Under this system of rule, education flourished and most subjects were learnt in Arabic, beginning with the *ḥadīth*.[200] Laws were debated by leading caliphs and their *'Ulamā'* before being passed in various regions.[201] It can be said that the exchange and flourishing of skilled and intellectual culture marked the days of the Abbasid rule. There was also literary independence under the Abbasids, exemplified in local history writing, as opposed to earlier imperial political chronicles.[202] This is reflected in the literary tradition that contains records of how Arab rule was received among Syrian Christian authors.

4.2.3   Syrian Christians' Experience under Islamic Rule

Syrian Christians wrote about the Arab conquest as they experienced it and as they tried to make meaning of it. Syriac literary tradition was well developed by the seventh century as 'multiple genres' of Syriac accounts on the Arab conquests emerged before there was any in Arabic.[203] Initially, Syrian authors were either dismissive of Islam or made an apocalyptic meaning of it. Dismissive views like that of John of

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[197] Françoise Micheau, "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century): Copts, Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites," in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 378.

[198] Sidney H. Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas: Arabic in the Monasteries of Palestine," *Church History* 58, no. 1 (1989): 10–11.

[199] Cobb, "The Empire in Syria, 705-763," 241.

[200] Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest the Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*, 166; Versteegh, "An Empire of Learning: Arabic as a Global Language," 49.

[201] Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest the Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*.

[202] Ibid., 165–71.

[203] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 16.

Damascus (d. 749), who dubbed the Arab religious movement as deceptive and imitative,[204] soon gave way to extensive texts, like *Life of Maximus the Confessor*, *Book of Main Points*, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, *Edessene Apocalypse*, *Apocalypse of John the Little*, whose authors mainly saw the Arab conquest as punitive and a sign of the world's end.[205] The *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, as well as, the apocalyptic sections of the Syriac versions of *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā* may be added to this literary bloc of Syrian punitive and eschatological perspective.[206] But as an Islamic empire was increasingly and successfully afoot, with caliphs taking on 'active role in championing Islam,' Syrian apocalyptic perspective would eventually give way to a more apologetic way of reasoning.[207] Muslim caliphs began the process of 'Arabization' which made Arabic the 'language of governance' and 'every aspect of life was regulated according to Islamic law'.[208] This political success was attached to religious validity: the Umayyad authorities 'officially promoted claims of Islam' being 'the true religion' and a superior successor to Christianity.[209] Syriac texts emanating from this period, such as *the Disputation between a Monk of Bet Hale and an Arab Notable* also portray the possibility that Christian leaders had Islamic supersessionistic ideas to deal with. In the *Disputation*, the monk was asked to account for why God had allowed the Christians to become subordinate to Islamic rule, if indeed Christianity were a true religion.[210] The legitimization of Islam, by Islamic scholars, owing to the success of the Arab conquests and the establishment of Islam across vast regions, posed a stronger threat to the validity of the Christian faith, thereby necessitating a more intelligibly engaging manner of response from Syrian scholars.

Also, Islamic jurisprudence attracted many Christians in a way that threatened ecclesiastical control over its own membership. Uriel Simonsohn's evaluation of legal sources of late-antique Nestorian and Jacobite

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[204] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 486.

[205] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 25; Abdul Massih Saadi, "Nascent Islam in the SeventhCentury Syriac Sources," in *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds, Routledge Studies in the Qur'ān (London ; New York: Routledge, 2008), 219.

[206] Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monastries of Plaestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," VII: 148-149, 152.

[207] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 18–25.

[208] Ibid., 28; Simonsohn, "Seeking Justice among the 'Outsiders,'" 211.

[209] J. Gerrit Reinink, "Political Power and Right Religion in the East Syrian Disputation Between a Monk of Bet Hale and an Arab Notable," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thomas, The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, v. 5 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 154.

[210] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 468.

church traditions show 'uniform objection to recourse to non-ecclesiastical judicial systems'.[211] Church life was modeled to foster a sense of communality among members such that persons who patronized the legal system outside 'ecclesiastical judiciary' were 'excommunicated' and ostracized by the entire community.[212] These were indications that Islam had come to stay and that Syrian Christians were more likely to be in lasting contact with their Muslim counterparts. Syriac Islamic accounts set within this era began to portray historical details of Islamic development and even justification for the success of Islamic reign over Christians. Some of such accounts of historical detail may include the works of Theophilus of Edessa (d. 758), an expert in an Abbasid court, which served as source material for later Greek and Syrian writers like Theophanes the Confessor (d.818), Dionysius of Tellmahre (d.845) and Agapius of Manbij (d.950s).[213] A big part of the work of a Zuqnin Chronicler who wrote in the north of Mesopotamia contained detailed story of Arab takeover of cities.[214] The catholicos Timothy I (780-823), who enjoyed prominence in the court of caliph Mahdi and is credited with important translations at Baghdad, mentioned in one of his exchanges with the caliph that Islamic reign over Christian populace was divine reward for the monotheistic emphasis of Islam.[215] This interpretation of the advancement of Islam could be seen as a midway transition of thought between an apocalyptic perspective and a full blown apologetic engagement. The listed set of accounts highly indicates that religious coexistence and proximity had warranted a Christian view of Islam that derived very much from the practical reality of living with Islam.

This religious coexistence and interaction familiarized Muslims with the doctrinal distinctions that existed among eastern Christian groups and this began to reflect in religious exchanges.[216] In some way, Christological differences had created a political ideological struggle among the various Syrian Christian traditions and this had required some Syrian Orthodox writers to assert their historical legitimacy, owing to their doctrinal inclination.[217] The Chalcedonian doctrine, which had gained grounds in Byzantium from the time of Justinian, was the doctrine to which the imperial church of the east had subscribed to before

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[211] Simonsohn, "Seeking Justice among the 'Outsiders,'" 215.
[212] Ibid., 211, 215–16.
[213] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 400–402; Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 41–43.
[214] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 413; Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 45.
[215] Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 45–47; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 61ff; Reinink, "Political Power and Right Religion in the East Syrian Disputation Between a Monk of Bet Hale and an Arab Notable," 167–68.
[216] Griffith, "Muslims and Church Councils; the Apology of Theodore Abu Qurrah."
[217] Dorothea Weltecke, "Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1/3 (2009): 115–25.

their Nestorian identity.[218] The Miaphysite or non-Chalcedonian creed of the Syrian Orthodox Christians made them unpopular among their eastern Chalcedonian co-religionists, who claimed to be true heirs of the right doctrine of Christendom.[219] Muslim questioners were aware of Syrian Orthodox Christians' struggle to reinvent their narrative of political heritage, as the dialogues in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and the *Revelations and Testimonies about Our Lord's Dispensation* portray.[220] But a more daunting challenge came on doctrinal topics beginning with the likes of Al-Qāsim b. Ibrahim's *Reply to the Christians* (*Al-radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*) and Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's *The Refutation of the Creed of the Three Christian Sects* (*Radd 'alā al-Thalāth Firaq min al-Nasara*), whose works reflect knowledge of the details on how the Nestorians (East Syrian Christians), the Jacobites (West Syrian Christians) and the Melkites (Chalcedonians) all differed on the nature of Christ.[221] Eventually Islamic refutation developed into 'a synthesized theological compendium' addressing non-Muslim religious claims.[222] This literary development was intended to dispute the validity of non-Islamic doctrines on the grounds of inconsistencies and lack of logic, thereby upholding 'Islamic formulation' as 'tenable'.[223] It could be said that logical ineptitude was the biggest Islamic criticism against the Trinitarian and Incarnation doctrines, in the evolution of Kalām culture.[224] Generally speaking, Kalām would be an Arabic translation of the Greek for 'word' or 'speech' (*logos*) and it came to be associated with the logical outworking of scientific reasoning.[225] The participle *mutakallim* resultantly meant an expert in a particular Kalām.[226] In the religious parlance of nascent Islam, matters of theological discourse were often associated with Kalām and those engaged with scholarly theological discussion were the *mutakallimūn*, not least for their mastery in logical arguments of theological discourse.[227] It was in the encounter with the challenge of Islamic religious Kalām that Syrian Christian apologetics came to full bloom.

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[218] Richard Price, "The Development of a Chalcedonian Identity in Byzantium (451—553)," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1/3 (2009): 307–25.

[219] Debié, "Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation," 94–98.

[220] Ibid., 98.

[221] David Thomas, "Christian Theologians and the New Questions," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity With Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark (Mark N.) Swanson, and David Richard Thomas (BRILL, 2006), 260, 268; Mark Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries* (Milton Keynes, U.K: Regnum Books, 2005), 106.

[222] *Muslim Theologians And Christian Doctrines*, 13.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid., 3–5.

[225] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Structure and Growth of Philosophic Systems from Plato to Spinoza ; 4 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), 1–2.

[226] Ibid., 1.

[227] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 72.

4.2.4 Christian Theological Engagement with Islam and the Emergence of Arab-Christian Theology

It was increasingly important for all the Christian traditions living under Islamic rule to articulate their doctrines in a well-crafted and intelligent way, so as to meet the challenge of Islamic *mutakallimūn*.[228] Nestorians, Jacobites and Melkites were all faced with this challenge and were making remarkable efforts in Greek and Syriac. From the seventh century to the thirteenth century when Syriac writings ceased, Syrian 'apologetical tracts' were composed either in dialogical or epistolary treatises which addressed among a plethora of topics, the classic issues of Trinity and the Incarnation.[229] A Syriac account of the questioning of a Jacobite patriarch of Antioch named John (or John III d. 648), by the Muslim emir 'Umayr ibn Sa'd in 644, is said to be the first documented text in Syriac attesting to a Christian Muslim exchange.[230] In this encounter, the welfare of all the Syrian Christians may have superseded any denominational agenda, as the text indicates how all Christians prayed for John, signaling that the outcome of his interrogation would determine the emir's disposition toward Christianity generally.[231] Also, in chapter ten of Theodore Bar Koni's (c. 792) *Scholion*, perhaps a teaching material for Koni's students, there is a 'response to objections to Christian doctrines and practices customarily posed by Muslims'.[232] Again, Nonnus of Nisibis (d. c. 870) had, from the 850s or so, penned 'an apologetical essay' on subjects of Christian-Muslim disputes during his time.[233] There is also a compilation that is controversially ascribed to Moshe bar Kepha (d. 903), which deals with the topic of free-will as an indication of what may have gone on as a hot debate at some point between Christian and Muslim elites.[234] But all these documents were originally written in Greek, Syriac or Aramaic.

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[228] *Muslim Theologians And Christian Doctrines*, 3–5.
[229] Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (D. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (D. 1286)," 175–78.
[230] Ibid., 179.
[231] Michael Philip Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 83.
[232] Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (D. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (D. 1286)," 183; Steve Cochrane, "East Syrian Monasteries in the Ninth Century in Asia: A Force for Mission and Renewal," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38, no. 2 (April 2014): 83.
[233] Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (D. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (D. 1286)," 187.
[234] Ibid., 189.

4.3 The Arabization of Melkite Christian Theology

The first Syrian Christian community attested to participate in religious disputation by adopting the Arabic language of the *mutakallimūn* was the Melkite.[235] The Melkites seemed, geographically and demographically, positioned to take the Islamic theological challenge to the next level: they had a strong presence in Palestine and across Syria, an unrivaled control of monasteries within and around Jerusalem, and the advantage of monastic theological intellectuality.[236] Dossiers of church matters regarding a conflict between the Melkite patriarchs of Antioch and Damascus reveal that by the ninth century, there were Melkite patriarchates in Damascus, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch.[237] Each of these patriarchates had their ranks of bishops, notable members of laity, estates and sources of income, like the patriarchate of Damascus which ran a bakery with Muslims as business partners and financial competitors.[238] So, by the time it appeared pertinent for the Melkite Christian doctrines to be articulated and defended in Arabic, the Melkites had some economic, structural, theological and demographic stamina.

Early Melkite theologians such as patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem (d.ca.639), Anastasius of Sinai (d.ca.700) and St. John of Damascus (wr.730s) had written and debated in Greek.[239] However, the appearance of a Melkite Arab Christian apology concurrent with the Abbasid *arabocentric* cultural and intellectual awakening, may confirm that the Melkites deemed expedient to use 'good, clear Arabic, particularly in the explication and defense of the incarnation and the Holy Trinity, in the theological and

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[235] Sidney Harrison Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 63; Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 49; Najib George Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abū Qurrah's Theology in Its Islamic Context* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2015), 1; Sidney H. Griffith, "Melquitas Y Musulmanes: El Corán, Cristología Y Ortodoxia Árabe," *Al-Qanṭara* 33, no. 2 (December 30, 2012): 423; David Bertaina, "Melkites, Mutakallimūn and Al-Ma'mūn: Depicting the Religious Other in Medieval Arabic Dialogues," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1–2 (May 2008): 31–32.

[236] Micheau, "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century)," 377; Sidney H. Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh: A 'Melkite' Arabic Text From Sinai And The Doctrines Of The Trinity And The Incarnation In 'Arab Orthodox' Apologetics," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou and Mark N. Swanson (Brill, 2006), 280–81.

[237] John C Lamoreaux, "David of Damascus," in *Christian-Muslim Relations:: A Bibliographical History. Vol. 2: (900 - 1050)*, ed. David Richard Thomas, Alex Mallett, and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[238] Ibid., 81–82.

[239] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*.

philosophical idiom of the Arabic-speaking Muslim intellectuals'.[240] An anonymously authored text, from the late eighth or early ninth century, now known as *On the Triune Nature of God*, epitomizes this strategic linguistic shift.[241] It is the first known Christian text in Arabic that precisely engages scriptures of Christianity and Islam in a clear attempt to endorse Christian beliefs.[242] It bears numerous qur'anic citations, which would be a typical feature of ensuing Melkite apologetic documents, and it leaves no doubt that Muslims and Arab-speaking Christians were its target audience.[243] It has been strongly suspected that one of the monks from the Melkite controlled monasteries within and around Jerusalem may have authored the piece.[244] However, the first notable Melkite writer in Arabic is known to be a monk of the Mar Sabas monastery and one time bishop of Harran, Theodore Abū Qurrah (d.820).[245] Abū Qurrah is one of the foremost Arab Christian theologians to take on the 'formidable apologetic task of expounding Christian doctrine in an intellectual milieu dominated by Islam'.[246] In 817 Abū Qurrah attracted a Jacobite retort from Nonnus of Nisibis (c.790-c870), who was a messenger of a leading theologian of the Jacobite tradition Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭa l-Takrītī (d.c.830).[247] Abū Rāʾiṭa l-Takrītī would later be a co-debating contemporary of Abū Qurrah, alongside the Nestorian ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (fl.ca.850).[248] Our evaluation of the adoption of Arabic as a linguistic strategy for engaging with Muslim *mutakallimūn* focuses on Melkite Christianity, especially Theodore Abū Qurrah.

4.3.1 Analyzing Language Adoptation in Melkite Christian Theology

The Arabization of Melkite Christian theology can be understood as a strategic language adoption process, analyzable in three ways. The first depends on the theories of language and identity as explored

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[240] Griffith, "Melquitas Y Musulmanes," 421–23.

[241] Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "Once Again on the Earliest Christian Arabic Apology: Remarks on a Palaeographic Singularity," *Journal of Near eastern Studies* 69, no. 2 (October 2010): 195–97.

[242] Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh," 248.

[243] Sidney H. Griffith, "Christians and the Arabic Qurʾān: Prooftexting, Polemics, and Intertwined Scriptures," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2014): 251; Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 57.

[244] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 57ff.

[245] Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic," 24; Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 4–5.

[246] Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monastries of Plaestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," VI:271.

[247] Sandra Toenies Keating and Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Takrītī, *Defending The "people of Truth" in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Abū Rāʾiṭah*, The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, v. 4 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 35.

[248] Georg Graf, *Die Schriften Des Jacobitten Ḥabīb Ibn Hidma Abu Ra'iṭa*, CSCO 130 (Louvain: Imprimerie orientaliste, 1951), 61, 65–66; Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic*, II:164-168.

in Andree Tabouret-Keller, Ben Rampton, and Jennifer Miller, wherein language adoption process can be seen as an identity negotiation strategy, implying that the use of Arabic language was instrumental to the preservation of a Melkite communal identity within an Arabic-speaking society.[249] The second and third analytical perspectives, which are based on Suresh Canagarajah's theoretical examination of bilingual authors, explores the adoption process of Arabic by the Melkites as both a transposition strategy and an appropriation strategy. The transposition pattern hints at how an added language competence enables engaging in multilingual critical discourses, while the appropriation method represents how the use of a valued language enables thinkers to reinvent their ideas in this new language for the benefit of expressing their peculiar lines of thinking through it.

4.3.1.1   *Language Adoptation as Negotiation of Religious Identity*

Andree Tabouret-Keller had suggested that language and identity are mutually related, such that the choice of language in speech can be an attribute of the speaker's identity.[250] If extended to Ben Rampton's language crossing theory, it can further be said that an identity which derives from a speaker's language choice can equally impact on the manner of acceptability or opposition the same individual is bound to face within certain social encounters.[251] One of the reasons for language switching has been underlined by Jennifer Miller to be the need for legitimate recognition, such that linguistic minorities often adopt a language, especially one of certain standard, which has a greater chance of earning them audibility and respect.[252] Language standardization has been indicated to be partly perpetuated by the idea that thoughtfulness and intelligibility would often require the adoption of the standard linguistic mode of public discourse.[253] This implies that language minorities in a multilingual context would have to make the required compromise of gravitating toward a standard language, in order to stay relevant both as an ideological group and as a community that needs to be reckoned with by other co-existing communities.[254]

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[249] See above, the section in Chapter two titled 'Language Standardization in a Multilingual Context'.
[250] Tabouret-Keller, "Language and Identity."
[251] Rampton, "Crossing."
[252] Miller, "Identity and Language Use: The Politics of Speaking ESL in Schools."
[253] Blackledge and Pavlenko, "Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts."
[254] This could be said of the non-native English speakers in Suresh Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse."

For Melkite Christianity, as a religious minority under Islamic rule, one of things that would have been very much at stake in the challenge posed by the intelligentsia of Islamic theology was its religious identity. The loss of Christian territories and the sociopolitical subordination of Christians by the Islamic political power was a strong indication that a shaky theological ground would also be a walk over for the Islamic religious scholars. This could have been a bigger threat when Christian theological arguments in minority vernaculars such as Greek, Syriac or Aramaic, were seen as giving the Islamic debaters a linguistic edge over the Melkite theologians.[255] Navigating the language barrier posed by Arabic was the first and fundamental step to ensuring the subsistence of Melkite Christian ideology as a subordinate faith community under Islamic rule.

The spread of Arabic did not only delineate the minority status of the Melkite Christian community. It also came with a huge amount of 'enculturation' that may have been too engulfing over the Christian populace, much to the concern of ecclesiastical authorities.[256] By the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries, the 'political control' of Islamic caliphs had spread from 'Spain to eastern Iran', the world under the control of Islamic religious civilization was in every way easier to be shaped by Islamic culture than that of the minority non-Muslim communities.[257] Irrespective of the political details of how Islamic reign got established in Spain, it could be said that the experience of Latin-speaking Christian communities under the influence of Islamic culture in al-Andalus was analogous to those of Syrian Christians in the east.[258] As Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem rightfully asserts, 'wherever Islam went it took Arabic with it'.[259] Ninth century Cordoba was already flourishing with Islamic culture, such that apart from being a socially reputable thing to imitate Arabness, or the culture of the Arabs, it was even economically convenient and socially rewarding to convert to Islam: many were either converting to Islam or neutralizing their Christian identity by mingling with and observing Islamic customs.[260] The amount of knowledge spreading from Baghdad, in Arabic, equally made the adopting of the Arabic language a common thing in Cordoba. This is indicated in the decrying of the situation by the Iberian theologian and author Paul Alvarus (d.861),

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[255] *Muslim Theologians And Christian Doctrines*, 3–5.
[256] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 57–58.
[257] Vila, "The Struggle over Arabisation in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography," 35.
[258] Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*, 34.
[259] Abdel Haleem, "Arabic as the Language of Islam," 812.
[260] Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*, 34–35.

The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to form a correct and elegant Arabic. Where is the layman who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophet or Apostles? Alas! All [sic] talented young Christians read study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian literature as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their language. For every one who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in this language than the Arabs themselves.[261]

Melkite ecclesiastical authorities expressed a similar concern over their followership. Apart from the possibility that the Melkites may have been part of the Syrian churches that adopted ecumenical excommunication strategy as a 'surveillance on socio-confessional boundaries' and a deterrent to the contacting of non-Christian judicial arbitration, ninth century Melkite sources mirror similar 'boundary control' problems as ninth century Cordovan Christian authorities.[262] The anonymous author of Summary of the Ways of Faith, which is a ninth century Melkite document addressing the issues of Christian-Muslim relations of the time, mentions the formidability of Islam and how the Islamic communication about Allah is done in 'a clear language which the broad mass of people understands'.[263] The author's further clarification on the meaning of the Christian creed indicates that there were either Arab-speaking Christians who hardly discerned any difference between their monotheistic creed and that of Islam, or that there were those who simply tried neutralizing their Christian identity in order to get a share of the social benefits of being Muslim, and as such saw no harm in reciting the Islamic shahādah.[264] In describing the latter, the author would use strong words such as 'hypocrites' in condemning their action and the author further addressed the issue of arabization, especially among Christians 'born … grown … and educated' in the Arab culture.[265] This, as in Cordoba, was depictive of the younger generation of Christians born into the Islamic civilization who had simply come to unsuspectingly embrace being Arab and speaking Arabic. It is evident that perhaps the most difficult group of Arab-speaking Christians to restrict from their inappropriate leaning toward Islam were some of the generations of Christians born under the Arabic culture and Islamic civilization.

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[261] Ibid., 35.
[262] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 56ff; Simonsohn, "Seeking Justice among the 'Outsiders.'"
[263] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 57–58.
[264] Ibid., 58ff.
[265] Ibid., 58.

The Melkites began to respond to the challenge of Arabization by translating their religious heritage into Arabic. Sidney Griffith rightly observed that the climax of the use of Arabic went hand in hand with the diminishing of Greek as a language of church scholarship in the monasteries of the Holy Land.[266] In order to align with the trend in language use, monastic abbots began to instruct monks to translate Christian documents into Arabic.[267] This will be the new preoccupation of the Melkite monks. Monasteries became central to the transmission of Christian theology in Arabic. Monks and monasteries made the adoption of Arabic easier for Melkite Christianity.

Translation projects, however, hardly escaped Islamic idiosyncrasies. The nuances in authorial styles of early Islam were equally evident in Christian Arab translations. Anthony David of Baghdad was one of the monks whose monastic career in the ninth century was translation. Monk Anthony's manner of dating in his manuscripts already followed the Islamic system of dating which was often marked by popular events or the *Hijra*.[268] This was not a prominent feature in Syrian documents which would usually follow some kind of Christian dating, or a timing system that is pinned on patriarchs or Christian emperors.[269] One of the manuscripts from Anthony's copying, now preserved as Vatican Arabic MS 71, reads, 'It was copied in the month Rabī' al-awwal, of the year 272', and another, referring to the same year reads, 'it was copied in the year 272 of the years of the Arabs'.[270] This indicates that Christian Arabic translation projects, even in enclosed monastic spaces, reflected the dominance of the Arab linguistic culture.

Reckoning with Arab events in the dating of Christian documents was not the only new feature on Arabic translations of Christian documents in late antiquity. Equally noteworthy is the translators' opening remarks. In Anthony's translations the theme of sin dominates his reflection of himself. The Vatican MS 71 manuscript opens with,

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[266] Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas," 7.
[267] Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas."
[268] Harjumaki and Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic," 66–67.
[269] *See* 'The Zuqnin Chronicler' in Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 409.
[270] Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas," 8–9.

'…the poor sinner, Anthony David the son of Sulayman of Baghdad…I, the weakly sinner who has copied it, ask Jesus Christ, our God and savior, to forgive my many sins and offenses.[271]

This is echoed in the second manuscript (Oriental MS 4226):

'we ask Christ, our God and Savior, to have mercy and to forgive the sins of the one who has copied…I, poor sinner who has copied this volume, ask everyone who reads it, I beseech him, to pray and to ask the Christ for the forgiveness of my sins'.[272]

This opening formula is akin to early Islamic graffiti full of 'invocation to Allah to forgive the writer's sins' and some of these inscriptions use the same qur'anic verb gafara/yagfiru.[273] More fascinating is authorial asking of forgiveness for others. Some early Islamic graffiti bore the following:

'O Allah, forgive --- and ---,'

'O Allah, forgive Muhammad, Your servant and Your Prophet. Forgive Haytam'.[274]

 Anthony's translation also had a similar intercession tone for others:

'…to forgive the sins of the one who has copied, and the one who asked for a copy'
(MS 4226).[275]

Although, intercessory prefaces by translators existed in Latin or Syriac translations,[276] it can be said that Arabic translations may have strongly aligned with writing features that were both familiar and widely receptive to Islamic civilization. Adopting early Islamic writing styles may have hardly signaled any form of anomaly to the Christian copyists. It seemed that it was a prevailing pattern of writing that made documents acceptable to public readers. Anthony had anticipated a wide readership of his translation since twice in his opening formulae he mentions an intercession for those who would have '...asked for a copy, read, [and] heard' about his work.[277] This further suggests that the population of Arab-speaking

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[271] Ibid., 8.
[272] Ibid., 9.
[273] Harjumaki and Lindstedt, "The Ancient North Arabian and Early Islamic Arabic Graffiti: A Comparison of Formal and Thematic," 77.
[274] Ibid., 78.
[275] Ibid., 9.
[276] This is my conclusion from some of the interaction generated by a paper presentation titled 'The Life Story of Manuscripts Sinai Arabic 151' by Vevian Zaki at a conference about translations of the Bible in Arabic in the middle ages, convened by the Universities of Cordoba, Tel Aviv and the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), at Casa Arabe, Cordoba, Spain, April 26-28, 2017.
[277] Griffith, "Anthony David of Baghdad, Scribe and Monk of Mar Sabas," 8–9.

Christians by the ninth century may have been of a tangible reckoning. If this insinuation is correct, then it follows that Arab-Christian readership was equally chief in the factors that necessitated the translation projects of Christian materials into Arabic.

The monastic translation projects, however, indicate the negotiation strategy that sealed the Melkite identity as an Arabized but non-Islamized faith community. Initially, polemics against Islam in Greek sources of the Melkite tradition portrayed total rejection for Islam, its prophet, its holy book, and the Arabic language, and such demonization of Islam and Arabic was found in the Latin west as well.[278] Even though the rejection of Arabic and Islam continued in Latin and Byzantine sources, monastic productions of Arab Christian hagiography, by the ninth century, began to portray the appropriation of Arabness and the Arab tongue into Christian identity.[279] In David Vila's scrutiny of two hagiographical accounts, one being the *Twenty Martyrs of Mar Saba* and the other being the Arabic account of *the Martyrdom of Rawh al-Qurayshi*, he indicated that while there is a radically harsh portrayal of the Arabs and the Muslims in the former, a Byzantine text, the Arabic account of al-Qurayshi bore an underlying mixture of Christianity and Arabness, with 'Arabness' as a legitimizing means for a Christian identity.[280] Al-Qurayshi is portrayed as a descendant of the noble tribe of the Islamic prophet who converts from Islam to Christianity through baptism, witnessed a remarkable miracle in the hands of an iconic Christian leader, had a Eucharistic vision, exhibited bravery by refusing to recant his faith before Caliph Hārūn Ar-Rashīd, and then was executed.[281] 'The fact that a Qurayshi Arab converted to and eventually died for his Christian faith,' Vila concludes, would have played a significant role in legitimizing an Arabic Christianity'.[282] While the Byzantine hagiographical narrative in the *Twenty Martyrs of Mar Saba* tried to discredit Arabness and Islam, the Melkite Christian community in reckoning with Arabness as a cultural reality, would rather adopt the culture and language of the Arabs to emphasize its Christian belief. In this way, the developing of an Arab Melkite Christian identity was a process of aligning with the pervasion of the Arabic language, through the use of Arabic as a linguistic means of communicating Christianity,

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[278] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 480ff; Janna Wasilewski, "The 'Life of Muhammad' in Eulogius of Córdoba: Some Evidence for the Transmission of Greek Polemic to the Latin West," *Early Medieval Europe* 16, no. 3 (August 1, 2008): 333–53.

[279] Vila, "The Struggle over Arabisation in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography."

[280] Ibid., 37–38.

[281] Vila, "The Struggle over Arabisation in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography"; Mark Swanson, "The Martyrdom of 'Abd Al-Masih," in *Syrian Christians Under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Richard Thomas (BRILL, 2001).

[282] Vila, "The Struggle over Arabisation in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography," 43.

while also retaining a Christian identity within the Arab culture, through the same language. This can be seen as the negotiation of a Melkite religious identity through the adoption of Arabic.

4.3.1.2   *Language Adoptation as a Transposition Strategy*

Closely linked to the salvaging of Melkite religious identity was the need to define what it means to be 'Melkite' in the Arab idiom. A comprehensive Arabic representation of the doctrinal implication of subscribing to the sixth ecumenical council of the imperial Byzantine church in 681 was what this necessity entails. The Chalcedonian belief that characterized the Melkite theological heritage was composed in Greek: terms like *hypostasis, prosopon, ousia, logos* were the Christological jargons in which most doctrinal details of Chalcedon were couched.[283] It seems that there was hardly enough time, between the 680s and when Syria and Palestine were severed from Byzantine ecclesiastical authority under the political rule of the Arabs, for the Melkites to fully absorb the Chalcedonian doctrines.[284] This would mean that the Melkite community was very much in its formative process when the language shift from Greek to Arabic became a pressing need. In other words, adopting Arabic, barely half a century after the sixth ecumenical council implied that the Greek Chalcedonian doctrines were to be thought through and promulgated in Arabic. Developing a Melkite theology in Arabic, therefore, was necessary in affording the Melkite theologians a place and a voice in the religious intellectualization of their day; but even more important, was the need to make the details of the Chalcedonian faith that should characterize the Melkite identity of an Arab-speaking world, clear to both Islamic interlocutors and even the Arabic-speaking Melkite Christians.[285] To a large extent, this meant thinking in Greek and writing in Arabic.

Greek, however, continued to play a role in Melkite Christianity even while the adoption of Arabic was ongoing. Greek and Arabic were indispensable to Melkite literary tradition.[286] Some residual elements of the Hellenistic culture that could not have easily and entirely been wiped away within the first two

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[283] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 115–62.
[284] Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "Entre Helenismo Y Arabización. Sobre La Formación de Una Identidad Etnolingüística de Las Comunidades Melkitas En El Corazón Del Poder Islámico," *Al-Qanṭara* 33, no. 2 (December 30, 2012): 450.
[285] Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The Languages of the Monastries of Plaestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," II:165.
[286] Monferrer-Sala, "Entre Helenismo Y Arabización. Sobre La Formación de Una Identidad Etnolingüística de Las Comunidades Melkitas En El Corazón Del Poder Islámico," 446.

centuries of the Arab conquest required that while the Melkites adopted Arabic, they retained Greek liturgical expressions that enabled Greek-speaking members to participate meaningfully in worship.[287] For instance, a *Qubbat al-Khaznah* fragment, from the late seventh century, which contains liturgical portions from the book of Psalms, show a double-column layout that has 'Greek on the left and Arabic in Greek characters on the right,' indicating the liturgical importance of Greek.[288] This importance may have lasted beyond the seventh century because proto-Melkite authors like Maximus the Confessor (d.662) and John of Damascus (wr.730s) wrote prolifically in Greek.[289] Theodore Abū Qurrah is said to have written about thirty original works, sixteen of which are in Arabic while the rest are in Greek.[290] Some of his works in Arabic were said to have been translated to Greek for Christian readership elsewhere, for instance, in 811, Thomas of Jerusalem had translated one of Abū Qurrah's Christological works for Armenian Monophysites.[291] So there was no doubt that Greek continued to play a role in the development of Melkite Christianity.

Having a Christian tradition that is rooted in a bilingual theological process meant that Melkite authors were exercising a competent influence in two language worlds.[292] Authors who are able to utilize a formal writing skill in more than one language can have the advantage to reach out to various categories of audiences and make influential contributions.[293] Such authors, also, are able to create a dialectical rather than a conflicted or dichotomized manner of discourse from both languages and this can bring out a 'third voice' discourse.[294] This is called the transpositional strategy in the writings of bilingual authors, according to Suresh Canagarajah.[295] This active proficiency in Greek, an ecclesiastical language, and Arabic, the Islamic imperial language, enabled the Melkite theologians to engage, although from a Greco-Christian worldview, with their Muslim counterparts in a meaningful dialogue.

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[287] Ibid., 454.
[288] Ibid., 454–55.
[289] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 484.
[290] John C Lamoreaux, "Theodore Abū Qurrah," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (600-900)*, ed. David Richard Thomas, Barbara Roggema, and Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala (BRILL, 2009), 440.
[291] Ibid., 439.
[292] Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse."
[293] Ibid., 285.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.

By exploring the possibility of a bilingual theological reasoning, the Melkites were unlike their Greek and Latin co-religionists in Constantinople and Spain. Right up to the tenth century, writings that portrayed discrediting polemics against Islam continued to emerge from Greek-speaking Byzantium and Latin-speaking Spain, promoting Greek and Latin as the Christian languages of their areas.[296] The Byzantines, being closer neighbors of the eastern Islamic caliphates than Spain, were said to have been among 'the main enemies of the Islamic empire' with hostility portrayed both physically and in correspondence between emperors and caliphs: some tenth century Islamic writers like Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Muqaddasi (c.946-c.1000) would refer to the Byzantine emperor as a 'dog'.[297] The political situation in Constantinople, therefore, can be said to have allowed for little admiration for Arabic in the Byzantine literary culture.[298] Melkite authors, on the other hand, had the advantage of producing the Greek theological thoughts that were relevant to both Greek-speaking and Arabic-speaking co-religionists. The fact that Abū Qurrah's theological treatises in Arabic were translated and read in Greek meant that a transpositional advantage of the adoption of Arabic was the ability to participate in the discourses of more than one linguistic tradition.[299]

Adopting Arabic afforded the Melkites the opportunity to defend their Greek conciliar affiliation. Muslim scholars often alleged that it was at church councils, which were mostly summoned by emperors, that the distortion of Christian theology began, culminating in the deification of Christ.[300] Making a case for the six councils to which Melkite Christians subscribed, under the summons of emperors Constantine (324-337), Theodosius I (379-395), Theodosius II (408-450), Justinian (527-565) and Constantine IV (668-685), was a task evident in the works of Theodore Abū Qurrah and the anonymous author of *Summa Theologiae Arabica* among others.[301] These Melkite authors argued that collegial decisions regarding the

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[296] John Tolan, "Tultusceptru de Libro Domni Metobii," in *Christian-Muslim Relations:: A Bibliographical History. Vol. 2: (900 - 1050)*, ed. David Richard Thomas, Alex Mallett, and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Vila, "The Struggle over Arabisation in Medieval Arabic Christian Hagiography."

[297] Tolan, "Tultusceptru de Libro Domni Metobii"; David Thomas, "Muslim Regard for Christians and Christianity, 900-1200," in *Christian-Muslim Relations:: A Bibliographical History. Vol. 2: (900 - 1050)*, ed. David Richard Thomas, Alex Mallett, and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 18–20; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 512–16.

[298] Averil Cameron, "Thinking with Byzantium," *Royal Historical Society (London, England). Transactions of the Royal Historical Society; Cambridge* 21 (December 2011): 55–56.

[299] Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse," 285.

[300] Griffith, "Muslims and Church Councils; the Apology of Theodore Abu Qurrah," 281.

[301] Ibid., 283,289.

Christian faith was a tradition rooted in the bible, from the time of Moses to the apostles, and that no individual had a monopoly over Christian doctrine.[302] They further emphasized how conciliar decisions were representative of the voice of the Holy Spirit and that secular leaders who facilitated the convening of these councils were only instrumental in achieving the stability necessary for the inspired theologians and bishops to set out the creeds they deemed right for the church.[303] Defending the conciliar traditions to which they subscribed was primary to the ensuing theological exchanges between Melkite scholars and their Muslim counterparts.

Through Greek and Arabic language proficiency, Melkite authors were also able to develop a dialectical discourse approach that enabled a respectful inter-religious communication, in which the Muslim holy book was often used to buttress the arguments of the Melkite creeds. One of the methods used by Melkite theologians in their response to Islam was an exegetical interpretation of qur'anic passages, such that a refutation of some of the points raised on the basis of the Islamic holy book would risk contradiction on the part of the Islamic scholars and nobles.[304] Christians were often accused as being guilty of *shirk*, which literally translates as 'replacers,' implying the idolatrous replacement of God by the human figure of Jesus Christ, whom Christological teachings deify.[305] Theodore Abū Qurrah, in responding to such accusations, used qur'anic citations to build up arguments that culminated in the idea that the Qur'an 'distanced the Nazarenes [Christians] from *shirk* [replacing God with others] and exculpated them from unbelief when it [the Qur'an] attributed to them honor and merit.[306] Abū Qurrah does this manner of comeback on the doctrines of Trinity and the Incarnation as well. In order to justify a basis for a Trinitarian argument that does navigate the thorny allegation of polytheism, Abū Qurrah draws on passages like Q.3.45 and Q.4.171 where ʿĪsā ibn Maryām is referred to as God's Word and Spirit, thereby pointing to a qur'anic text of plurality as a 'logical tenability of the pluralism in the Christian reference to God as a Trinity of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit'.[307] With regard to the doctrine of Incarnation, Abū Qurrah begins by agreeing with qur'anic emphasis on the 'infinite transcendence and incomprehensibility' of God and on that basis he argues that the possibility of God taking a human form

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[302] Griffith, "Muslims and Church Councils; the Apology of Theodore Abu Qurrah."
[303] Ibid.
[304] Clare Elena Wilde, *Approaches to the Qur'ān in Early Christian Arabic Texts (750-1258 C.E.)* (Bethesda (Md.): Academica Press, 2014), 108.
[305] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 165–66.
[306] Ibid., 167.
[307] Ibid., 168–69.

was an act of 'divine mercy and benevolence' which is equally a miraculous fulfillment of Q.19.17 that says 'and we sent to Maryam from our Spirit, and it appeared to her in the image of a normal human'.[308] Apart from this qur'anic passage, there are three other points of strong qur'anic allusions in Abū Qurrah's defense of the Incarnation doctrine. The first is the greatness of God which the Qur'an is replete with. The second is the mercy and the benevolence of God which are qur'anic attributes of God. The third is the miraculous descent of the Son of God to be coated in human form, which is akin to the miraculous descent of the holy Qur'an itself. Through these examples, it could be concluded that some of the deepest and most meaningful communications between Melkite theologians and Islamic interlocutors occurred due to the linguistic compromise of adopting Arabic for Christian theology. This afforded Melkite theologians the knowledge of the language of the Qur'an and the ability to use its authority in communicating their belief.

This double language proficiency also enabled a hybrid theological discourse wherein Greek concepts were made to have Arabic expressions. Early Melkite authors, and indeed other Syrian Christian contemporaries of Abū Qurrah, such as Theodore bar Koni (c.792), who wrote in languages other than Arabic, did so for mostly catechetical purposes and Muslim scholars would hardly have read any of them.[309] Authors in minority languages may not engage a homogenous language discourse fully by using a subordinate language, as Canagarajah had suggested.[310] Unlike catechetical writers in Syriac, Greek or Latin vernacular, Melkite Arabic authors communicated extensively with Islamic dissenters.[311] This context compelled a linguistic reinvention that resulted in expressions of Greek doctrinal words in the tongue of the Arab intellectuals. For Abū Qurrah, a lexical creativity in Arabic for doctrinal words like incarnation would be the trilateral root word *ḥulūl* which means 'indwelling', implying the occupation of human likeness.[312] A synonym to *ḥulūl* in Abū Qurrah's theology would also be another trilateral root word *ḥijāb,* which when considered as the fleshly covering of the divine inhabitant, could translate as 'veiling'.[313] The author of the late eighth/early ninth century document, *Answers for the Shaykh*, also uses

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[308] Ibid., 372.
[309] Ibid., 380–81; Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (D. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (D. 1286)," 261–62.
[310] Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse."
[311] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 399.
[312] Ibid., 401.
[313] Ibid.

the veiling metaphor for the incarnation as a 'concealment' of Jesus within Mary.[314] Using the Arabic word *ḥulūl* as 'indwelling' or 'inhabiting' may not be a perfect representation of the Chalcedonian exegesis for *hypostasis* or '*enhypostaton.*' which may rather connote 'embodiment'.[315] However, Melkite authors, in their attempt to embark on a Chalcedonian theology in Arabic, can be said to be operating with a dialectical approach across language borders in a way that prioritizes theological communication over theological precision. Seeking to produce the most accurate Arabic equivalent of Christian theological jargons may have been an ideal which, when pursued, would have usurped the efforts that had proven more fruitful in the process of making the most of available Arabic words. This process came to majorly constitute the transposition strategy.

4.3.1.3   *Language Adoptation as an Appropriation Strategy*

The consideration that language can present a group with the means to 'appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge' influential ideologies of popular movements with which they do not readily identify, applies very well to religious communities.[316] Again, using Suresh Canagarajah's model of language minorities and their participation in formal discourses by a standard language, non-native writers who participate in standard language formal discourses are often effective when they adopt the standard language and amplify it with their peculiar ideas, rather than having to stick to the minority language as a means of participating in a popular discourse.[317] This strategy, also known as the appropriation strategy, enables authors who are non-native users of a dominant language to adopt the popular language but influence it from within by making the standard language convey ideas and concepts of the foreign language user. Melkite Christian theologians exhibit important elements of the appropriation strategy in their adoption and usage of Arabic for discussing, debating and stating their theological thinking.

Melkite, and indeed many other non-Muslim, writings of Christian theology in Arabic idiom 'were not always free of morphological phenomenon deviating from classical rules' as Wolfdietrich Fischer once

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[314] Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh," 305.
[315] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 402.
[316] Blackledge and Pavlenko, "Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts."
[317] Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse."

pointed out.[318] This deviation further developed into a linguistic variety now known to Arabists as 'Middle or Christian Arabic'.[319] Middle Arabic as a linguistic phenomenon often emerged from a 'mixture of classical and vernacular elements in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon'.[320] It has been argued in the preceding chapter that Arabic was standardized under early Islamic caliphates, based on the Qur'an. This was such that by the ninth century it is less anachronistic to talk about a caliphate Arabic than a classical Arabic. It then follows that Christian usage of the caliphate Arabic developed into a deviation owing to the following: non-Islamic religious concepts, elements of scribal transmission, and failed attempts at using the standard idioms.[321] Joshua Blau has studied original and translated manuscripts of Christian Arabic texts which are also called South-Palestinian texts, since most of these texts were produced in monasteries of South-Palestine, especially the Mar Saba monastery which was a Melkite scholastic centre from the eight to the eleventh century.[322] Some of the major deviations, in Blau's observation, come from influences of words from Greek, Syriac and even Aramaic, such that Arabic translation of these words results in unusual expressions.[323]

Certain traits in Melkite Arabic writings even create a peculiar linguistic variety, or a 'phase' in Christian Arabic, referable as 'Melkite Arabic'.[324] Greek and Syriac translations to Arabic, which came from places including Melkite monasteries, portray grammatical deviations from caliphate *'arabiyya* in ways that suggest that their authors or copyists had little diligence for the study of the standardized form of Arabic compared to most of their Muslim contemporaries.[325] Also, the Arabic 'utilized' in most of these manuscripts has been observed to have been consistent enough for the suspicion that the Melkites had their own colloquial *lingua franca* of Arabic usage.[326] This linguistic variety is further observed to have been a sub-cultural and sub-linguistic identity of the Melkites, especially because they existed in 'close-

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[318] Wolfdietrich, "Classical Arabic," 403.

[319] Wolfdietrich, "Classical Arabic."

[320] Geoffrey Khan, "Middle Arabic," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), 818.

[321] Ibid., 818–21.

[322] Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium*, 267, 276, 279 vols., I–III (Louvain: Secretariat Du CorpusSCO, 1966); Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh," 281.

[323] Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium*, 54.

[324] Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh," 283; Joshua Blau, "A Melkite Arabic Literary 'lingua Franca' from the Second Half of the First Millennium," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 57, no. 1 (1994): 14–16.

[325] Blau, "A Melkite Arabic Literary 'lingua Franca' from the Second Half of the First Millennium," 14.

[326] Ibid., 15.

knit' communities within Palestine and farther east.[327] Concerning a twenty-two page manuscript, now known as *Answers for the Shaykh*, which contains short answers by an anonymous Melkite monk of Mar Sabas to an inquiring Islamic scholar, dating probably from the ninth century, Sidney Griffith observed how the text had attesting features of authorial knowledge of standard Arabic and qur'anic passages; but also a 'befuddlement over the transcription of such foreign elements as Greek proper names,' which in Griffith's opinion, 'are otherwise common features in Melkite compositions'.[328] Also the author's use of a multiple amount of qur'anic citation and a special expression of caliphate Arabic, suggests a high anticipation of Muslim readership.[329]

From the foregone, 'Melkite Arabic' can be concluded to be the product of an attempt to use Arabic innovatively. The unusual expression of the Melkite doctrines in Arabic was one potent means of salvaging and stabilizing the doctrinal stake of Melkite Christianity in the arabocentric religious and political civilization of early Islam. It can be said that 'Melkite Arabic' was a linguistic niche through which Melkite Greek theological heritage was reinvented, thereby making it speak for itself within an Arab-speaking state. This strategy appropriated Arabic grammar and vocabulary in ways that best communicated the Melkite Chalcedonian Christology. The conclusion that the adoption of Arabic by the Melkite community of late antiquity was bent on the intent to register the uncommon Chalcedonian doctrines in the religious discourse of the early Islamic era, implies a linguistic maneuvering in which Arabic does not stand as a barrier anymore; but a means to making the Melkite voice heard, and the Melkite doctrinal identity preserved, albeit through a non-Christian standard language.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion: Language Adoption and the Arabization of Melkite Christianity

The arabization of Melkite Christian theology is the adoption of Arabic as the theological language of late antique Melkite Christianity. The discussion in this chapter has been the examination of the function of Arabic for non-Muslim communities, even as Arabic became the language of Islam and the newly formed Islamic empire. The intellectual function of Arabic in the Islamic caliphate warranted that from the eighth century, Christians began to adopt Arabic as the most potent and viable means of communicating their

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[327] Blau, "A Melkite Arabic Literary 'lingua Franca' from the Second Half of the First Millennium."
[328] Griffith, "Answers For The Shaykh," 283–283.
[329] Ibid., 308.

faith. The case of Melkite Christianity has been of particular attention, especially the works of Theodore Abū Qurrah and other anonymous authors of the eighth and ninth centuries. These Melkite theologians and monks were some of the first non-Muslim scholars of religion to put their creeds to expression in Arabic and they were in close interaction with scholars and caliphs of the Abbasid era.

The arabization of Melkite Christian theology has been analyzed in three perspectives. The first being that it was an identity preservation strategy for a minority faith community whose theology and creedal identity could only be reckoned with if they were expressed in the known language of the time. The second was the transposition strategy which meant that by the adoption of Arabic, Melkite theologians exercised a multilingual competence that enabled them to write and think in different languages. The advantage of being competent in Greek and Arabic was the ability to develop a dialectical theological discourse between the two languages, thereby charting a 'third-way' critical discourse. This dialectical ability enabled the linguistic hybridity evident in the third strategy, which was the appropriation strategy by which the semantic frame of the religious language of Islam was modified to contain and express theological meanings that were rooted in the Greek-coined Christian theology of the Melkites. By this, it could be said that the Melkite Christian creed was 'bound over to a language bound over to Islam,' thereby allowing the evolution of a Greco-Arabized linguistic phenomenon referable as 'Melkite Arabic'.[330]

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[330] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 157.

5   CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

5.1 Summary

In sum, the priority given to Arabic during the formative centuries of Islam culminated in making Arabic a language of standard, valuable in communicating religion, administrative policies and education. A confirmation of the value reached by Arabic was the adoption and utilization of it, as a means of communicating an entirely different religious ideology, namely Melkite Christian theology. Arabic was an Islamized language and may not have had suitable elements to serve a Christian theological expression. Acquiring and making use of Arabic in an innovative way that eventually gave rise to Arab Melkite Christian theology, confirms the resultant acknowledgment of Arabic as a standard language by a smaller religion living under Islam. In this way, ideological groups tend to dominate, exert influence, and negotiate identities through language.

5.1.1   The Islamization and Standardization of Arabic

The link between the rise of Islam and the prominence of Arabic language corresponds with elements of standardizing a language. The Ancient Near East (ANE), prior to the rise of Islam, was a pool of faiths with competing monotheistic claims couched in preferred religious languages.[331] In this setting, the Arab tribes were different in many ways: there was inter-tribal rivalry, varied dialects of *'arabiyya*, polytheism owing to multiple tribal and clan gods, political impoverishment due to the rise and fall of empires, among others.[332] Arabs hardly constituted a homogenous linguistic, religious or political entity prior to the seventh century, and Arabic was not a written language during this time: literate Arabs wrote in Nabataean Aramaic script.[333] By the seventh century, a movement that was purely Arab in character swept across the peninsula, culminating in a wave of conquests. If understood within its context, this would have been perceived, at the time, as something typically akin to Arab raiding and forceful

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[331] Stefan Wild, "Why Self-Referentiality?," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006); Levy-Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language."
[332] Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*.
[333] Zbigniew T Fiema et al., "Provincia Arabia: Nabataea, the Emergence of Arabic as a Written Language, and Graeco-Arabica," in *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, ed. Greg Fisher, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015).

extension of socio-political influence.[334] However, something in this serial outburst of conquests was completely different: non-Arab testimonies indicate that the Arab revolution was also rooted in an allegiance to the revelatory recitations of a caravan trader from the Quraysh tribe of Mecca, named Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim.[335] In these revelatory recitations which became the Qur'an, Arabic language was portrayed as the language of the divine and a precious means by which *Allah* has communicated his will to all mankind. Islamic regimes over conquered domains of the Arab conquest were instrumental in the collection and codification of the Qur'an. This era is equally historically attestable to be the period of the emergence of a literary or written Arabic.[336] Based on the argument that before the rise of Islam, Arabic was mainly oral and variegated, it has been proposed that the process which saw to an unprecedented emergence of Arabic, as sacralized in the Qur'an, developed by early Arab grammarians, valorized in the Baghdad translation project, and promulgated throughout conquered domains of Islam, was the standardization process that gave rise to what became caliphate Arabic in the late antique world and has since remained classical Arabic.

5.1.2   The Adoption of Arabic and the Arabization of Melkite Christianity

Other religious groups like Jews, Christians and Persians witnessed the Arab revolution and gradually came to live under Islamic caliphs. Syrian Christians, whose regions were equally conquered, saw the Arab religious civilization rise and settle over them, in their own homelands.[337] Pro-Chalcedonian Syrian Christians, who came to be known as Melkites, had thriving Christian communities across Syria and Palestine with monasteries in Jerusalem and the Judean deserts. Like all Christians of the Syrian traditions, leaders of the Melkite faith community were in interaction with Islamic scholars and caliphs. With these, they often held intelligible discourses about religious doctrines. The Melkites are recorded to have been the first non-Muslim group to, as early as the late 700s, engage in cross-religious discourse with their Muslim interlocutors using the prioritized Arabic language. This language shift has been analyzed to be a strategic language behavior by which the Melkites (a) intended to preserve their religious identity from being swallowed up in the fast spreading appeal of the Arab culture and language, (b)

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[334] *See* 'Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (d. ca.639) in 'Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 73; Heilo, *Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam*.
[335] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*; Penn, *Envisioning Islam*; Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims*.
[336] Zwettler, "Classical Arabic Poetry between Folk and Oral Tradition," 1976; Fiema et al., "Provincia Arabia: Nabataea, the Emergence of Arabic as a Written Language, and Graeco-Arabica."
[337] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 20.

developed a dual language proficiency that enabled them to chart a dialectical course in which their Greek Chalcedonian doctrines found expression in the Arab glossa, (c) modified the semantic space of *'arabiyya* with Christian doctrinal meanings, thereby developing a linguistic deviation in an arabized Melkite *glōssos*, now known as 'Melkite Arabic'. An arabized Melkite Christian theology became the end, to which the exigency of language adoption was but a means.

5.2 Conclusion

The attitude of nascent Islamic authorities toward what may have been a single variety of Arabic shaped the language behavior of a neighboring and subjected religious community. The vesting of religious and political legitimacy on Arabic, such that it attained the state of a potent, viable and reputable means of clear, dependable and intelligible communication, created the unchallengeable *habitus*, or social recognition, that affected neighboring religious groups such as the Melkites. Having the need to retain its unique recognition and be engaged with as a religious group in its own right, the Melkites found the Arabic language to be the most effective way to stay in a meaningful and sustainable communication with the probing Islamic religious and political authorities.

William Downes' small scale language analyses had been extended into a hypothetical discourse on homogenous language and the various dispositions that it can generate from affected language users. Initially, Downes' analyses portrayed that within a conversational exchange, language choice and usage can generate a certain kind of response that reflects a listener's interpretation of the language performance, based on background of meanings. The extended hypothesis on language behavior among groups of language users has been represented in the diagram below.

Standardization and Language Users' Disposition
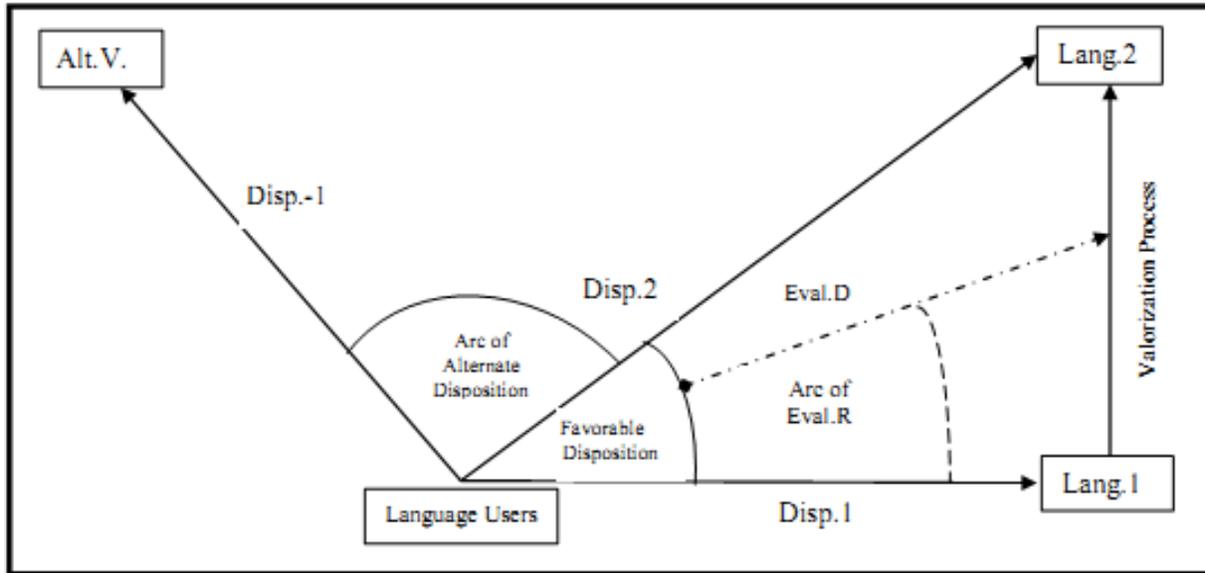
In summary, the hypothetical extension explores how a valorization process could produce a standardized language (Lang. 2), which, based on a variety of factors, may cause affected language users' disposition to (a) tilt in its favor, thereby constituting a shift in language disposition, from Disp. 1 to Disp. 2, (b) withdraw farther away from the standard language thereby constituting a disposition of apathy (Disp.-1), (c) or range within the arc of favorable disposition but in a selective manner that comprises an evaluative disposition (Eval.D).

Drawing on this hypothetical extension, it can be concluded that the Islamization of Arabic and the Arabization of Melkite Christian theology depict a completion of the contextual interaction through language behavior among the religious groups. This interactive process comprises of language use, language acquisition and language proficiency. Beginning with the process that raises the significance of pre-Islamic *'arabiyya* (PIA) from a minor variegated language form to a singled out variety that serves as the preferred means of communication in the culture and civilization of Islam (Caliphate Arabic (CA)), changes in disposition may be observed by various religious groups, particularly the Melkites. Prior to the late eighth century, the disposition of the Melkite community toward pre-Islamic Arabic (PIA) may have been one of less-concern (Mlk.-8th). With the rise in the influence of Arabic in the Islamic empire, an interest in Caliphate Arabic (CA) for the expression of doctrinal belief to Arab-speaking interlocutors led

to a change in the Arabic language disposition (Mlk.8CE-) of Melkite theologians. The Melkites had an innovative and evaluative disposition to the use of Caliphate Arabic (CA), such that gave rise to a Melkite Arabic (MA). The apathy that was often expressed toward Arabic in Byzantine Greek hagiography and in the criticisms by leaders of Latin-speaking communities in Spain can be said to constitute a differing disposition (Bz./Lt.Ch) away from Arabic, tilting, instead toward Greek and Latin (Gr./Lt.).

This applied expression is diagrammatically represented below:

Standardization and Language Users' Disposition
(Case of the Islamization of Arabic and the Arabization of Melkite Christian Theology)
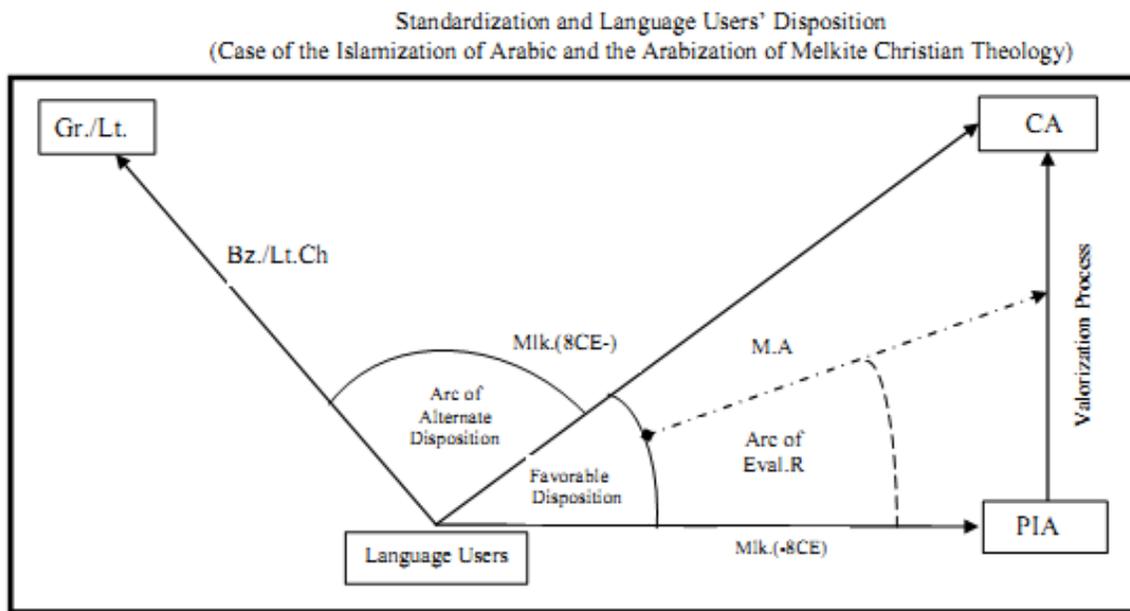
Using sociolinguistic concepts to survey the use of language among religious communities of late antique near east, raises methodological issues. A theoretical approach to antiquity aligns with the opinion that certain 'difficulties' in ancient sources can be 'tackled' through models of theoretical insight and that researchers are able to 'ask new questions' through such appropriation.[338] However, there are anachronistic tendencies in casting modern concepts on historical events that were weaved by and within a complex of factors of their own time. Using the term 'standardization,' which may vary in nature and context, to define the emergence of what is now known as classical Arabic, may not do justice to all that went on through the said process. Evaluating the use of Arabic, by the Melkites, as a language shift within the category of adoption, may downplay the complexity operational in the emergence of Arab Christian theology, especially considering that levels of language shift and adoption within close-knit societies may

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[338] Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation Between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

not be as radical as geographically separated linguistic domains. Perhaps it is more realistic to talk about the extent to which modern theoretical paradigms may or may not properly represent features of historical processes.

The range of theories employed in the exploration of the phenomena of language standardization and adoption has been rather wide. A tidy and less varied theoretical framework could be argued to be a much less complicated approach to the foregone sociolinguistic evaluation. However, the important elements portrayed by the cases of standardization and adoption among late antique Islamic and Melkite communities are covered by the various selected theories, such that only a flexible theoretical exploration can be representative of the dimensions in question. Albeit complex and somewhat circuitous, a wide theoretical exploration enables an appreciation of the diverse and ramified aspects of language and religiosity. These varied aspects stand the danger of being oversimplified when they are compelled to fit in singular theoretical moulds.

It risks a certain amount of contextual inaccuracy for Christian traditions under nascent Islam to be treated in isolation from one another. The Nestorians, Jacobites and the Melkites were Christian communities in continued mutual contact and opposition, as they all interacted with Islam. Various developments in the theological history of these communities were paralleled, including the adoption of Arabic for theological expression. It is for want of space and due to case-study precision, that the examining of the arabization of Melkite Christian tradition is done in little reckoning with similar phenomenon among neighboring Christian communities. Observing how the Melkites, being the first to adopt Arabic for Christian theology, may have inspired and shaped the subsequent adoption process among the Jacobites and the Nestorians is equally an important aspect of a comparative approach.

It can be rightly argued that adopting new languages has been part of Christian history, such that there may be little or no peculiarity with the so called arabization of Melkite Christianity. Considering the Semitic linguistic milieu of the Middle East, it may equally be argued that adopting Arabic might not have been a huge language shift for Syrian speakers. Choosing, however, to observe this process of language shift closely indicates that every process of language shift exhibits peculiarities that often owe to

unique political, social, economic and religious factors. As Sidney Griffith had rightly observed, one of the exceptionalities about the arabization of Melkite Christian theology was that this was the first time, and historically so far the only time, when Christians have been faced with the necessity of translating, defending, and commending their religion in a new language and in new cultural circumstances, still within the borders of their own conquered homelands, where in due course, over a period of centuries, most Christians eventually either emigrated or converted to another religion, in this instance Islam.[339] Also, the ability to knit Greek and Arabic together in their theological exchanges, made the Melkites rather unique in multilingual theological language proficiency, considering that Greek terms and concepts are as grammatically and semantically far from Arabic as they can get. The Melkites had no preceding lexical tradition to emulate in this regard, since the Baghdad translations were concurrent to the emergence of Melkite Arabic.

5.3 Further Study

Considering the reciprocal effect that expressing Christian theology in Arabic terms had on the Arabic language is equally an important inquiry that can be sequel to the arabization of Melkite Christian theology. It has been argued that the semantic space of Arabic language was expanded in the process of Christian adoption of Arabic for theology, such that gave rise to Melkite or Middle or Christian Arabic. This phenomenon might not have been a one way process of language change. Considering such a thing as the Christianization of the Islamized Arabic would equally paint a fuller picture of the mutual effect that Christianity and Islam had on the Arabic language, within the religious milieu of late-antique Middle East.

Language continues to shape the nature and rhetoric of religious identity in our world today. Some political establishments that are rooted in religious ideal draw on religious language to justify and validate the social and political order of things within their domain.[340] The rise and subsistence of strong religious rhetoric by leaders and members of dissenting militant religious groups across the Middle East have been

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[339] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 20.

[340] Elham Manea, "In the Name of Culture and Religion: The Political Function of Blasphemy in Islamic States," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 27, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 117–27.

shaped by the quest for reviving an era of model religious civilization akin to historical golden ages, such as nascent Islam when the Arab religious language, culture and social ordering held sway.[341] As at 2015, eighty percent of the audio and visual propaganda released from major neo-classical Islamic agitation groups of the Middle East had been in Arabic.[342] Worldviews continue to be formed by religious languages. Models of religious movements that draw on religious language vocabularies and ideal religious pasts often generate perspectives that can categorize the members of any society into terms with ideological import. Such terms are often based on doctrinal semantic provisions that define the believing in contrast to the non-believing. One of the biggest sources of tension between fundamental Islam and the West, for instance, remains differing concepts of social rule and order: using qur'anic and Arabic terms and concepts, the former believes that God and Islamic religious literature must play an uncontested authoritative role over society while the latter prefers a social order based on democracy and the constitution.[343] Exploring the nature and substance of religious language rhetoric in modern social existence can produce a deliberate linguistic investigation into how religious ideology and attitude weigh very much on the language medium that convey their impacts.

Also, language complicates the identity of persons who share certain cultural affinity. The late antique era when Arabic was adopted by Christianity can be seen as the beginning of Christian theology in Arabic; but not necessarily the beginning of Arab Christianity. The state of being Arab and being Christian has necessitated mixed perspectives on who the Arab Christians are and what it means to be Christian in an Arab culture.[344] Furthermore, diverse opinions, often addressing language, cultural and religious complexes, continue to pour in on the state of religious coexistence between Arab-speaking Christians and their Islamic counterparts. Being an Arab becomes even trickier for non-Muslim Arabs when they have to deal with prejudices and assumptions often resulting from associating Arabness to a particular

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[341] Andrew Phillips, "The Islamic State's Challenge to International Order," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 495–98; Massimo Calabresi, "Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi," *Time* 186, no. 25/26 (December 21, 2015): 100–103.
[342] Rohan Gunaratna, "The Islamic State's Eastward Expansion," *The Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 60.
[343] J. Vincent Cornell, "Reasons Public and Divine," in *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Carl W. Ernst and Richard C. Martin (Univ of South Carolina Press, 2012).
[344] Raja Mattar, "Arab Christians Are Arabs," accessed April 18, 2017, http://www.alhewar.com/arab_christians_are_arabs.htm.

religious civilization.[345] How language relates with cultural, religious and non-religious identity in the Middle East is a line of inquiry that can be beneficial to modern times and a late-antique perspective could only be foundational to it.

A final thought on possible consideration for future research effort has to do with multi-faith theology; not just dialogue or emphasis on universal themes such as love and goodness, which at best can become superficial codes of religious unity. Considering the tension and rivalry that often characterize religious truth claims, can theologians of Judaism, Christianity and Islam be involved in meaningful cross-faith thinking processes that put differing elements of their theological thought in communication with one another? The approach adopted in this study which is language behavior as a communication strategy helps to bring out principles that can govern multi-religious thinking. A major principle may be that religious convictions can vary a great deal one from another, these do not have to be suppressed or smoothened over; rather an acknowledgement of these differences and openness to procedures favorable for putting these opinions in mutual interaction can be most beneficial in the long run. In this way religious differences may no longer be a menace but an example imitated in tackling various other forms of human differences.

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[345] Patrick Seale, "Why Do Arabs and Muslims Hate America?," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 31, no. 8 (December 11, 2012): 12–14.

A Simplified Summary

The use of language is a strategic means of communication in itself. Theorists of language have researched on how language usage can be a means of creating impression and putting forth preferred ideas and identity. When seventh to tenth century Christianity and Islam are examined in this regard, there are traits exhibited in their use of language that confirms this instrumental attitude toward Arabic language. In this research, two aspects of language behavior among the religious communities of this period have been observed. The first is how language can be made a standard means of communication through religious claims and political power. The second is how affected religious minorities are faced with options of adopting or rejecting the language that has been made a normative means of communication.

The rise of an Arab power elite and the revolution which culminated in Islam saw to the heightening of Arabic as a divine language and a reputable *lingua franca* in the post-seventh century Arab sociopolitical civilization. Melkite Christians, who were initially Syriac-speaking but were bound to Greek councils and Greek terms in their liturgical and creedal traditions, had their Syriac homelands and monasteries conquered and subjected to Islamic rule. In order to stay in dialogue with their rival religious thinkers and to stay accountable to their ruling caliphs, the Melkite theologians soon adopted Arabic as a means of studying, writing and communicating their Christian faith. Therefore, Arabic was no longer a language of Islamic theology but equally of Christian theology.

The phenomenon of language standardization and language adoption has been analyzed accordingly in this thesis. The standardization process of Arabic was Islamized in many ways. The Qur'an was the first literary document of written Arabic. In the Qur'an a case is made for Arabic as divine and a highly prestigious language of revelation. This ideology fundamentally shaped the appearance of qur'anic quotations on buildings, coins and documents of early Islamic centuries. As this Islamized variety of Arabic grew popular, the Arab culture and language became widespread and somewhat formidable for minority languages and cultures. An examination of Melkite Christian adoption of Arabic indicates that language was a means of ideological survival for some of the minority faith communities. It was also a strategic way to stay in meaningful dialogue with Islamic theologians of the time. Therefore the Islamization of Arabic was the language priority of a rising religion while the Arabization of Melkite Christian theology was a strategic adoption process of a major language so as to stay communicatively recognized and relevant.

Et simplificeret resumé

Brugen af sprog er i sig selv et strategisk middel inden for kommunikation. Sprogteoretikere har forsket i, hvordan brugen af sprog kan være et middel til at skabe indtryk og til at viderebringe ideer og identitet. Når man i denne henseende undersøger kristendom og islam i det syvende til tiende århundrede, fremstår træk i deres sprogbrug, der bekræfter denne instrumentelle holdning til arabisk sprog. I denne forskning er to aspekter af sprogadfærd blandt de religiøse samfund i denne periode blevet observeret. Den første er, hvordan sprog kan gøres til et standardiseret kommunikationsmiddel gennem religiøse krav og politisk magt. Den anden er, hvordan berørte religiøse minoriteter bliver mødt med muligheder for at tilpasse eller afvise det sprog, der er blevet gjort til et normativt kommunikationsmiddel.

Fremkomsten af en arabisk magtelite og den revolution, der kulminerede i islam, udmøntede sig i en ophøjelse af arabisk til et guddommeligt sprog og anerkendt *lingua franca* i den arabiske sociopolitiske civilisation efter det syvende århundrede. Melkitiske kristne, som oprindeligt var syrisktalende men var bundet til græske råd og græske termer i deres liturgiske traditioner og bekendelser, fik deres syriske hjemlande og klostre erobret og underkastet islamisk styre. For at forblive i dialog med deres rivaliserende religiøse tænkere og for at kunne forblive holdt ansvarlige over for deres regerende kaliffer tog de melkitiske teologer snart arabisk til sig som et middel til at studere, skrive og kommunikere deres kristne tro. Altså var arabisk ikke længere et islamisk teologisk sprog men ligeligt et kristent teologisk sprog.

Fænomenet sprogstandardisering og sprogtilegnelse er analyseret i overensstemmelse hermed i denne afhandling. Standardiseringen af arabisk var på mange måder islamiseret. Koranen var den første forekomst af skriftlig arabisk. I Koranen redegøres der for arabisk som guddommeligt og som et prestigefyldt åbenbaringssprog. Denne ideologi formede fundamentalt tilsynekomsten af koraniske citater på bygninger, mønter og dokumenter i begyndelsen af det islamiske styre. Som denne islamiserede version af arabisk blev populær, blev den arabiske kultur og det arabiske sprog udbredt og på sin vis formidabelt for minoritetssprog og kulturer. En undersøgelse af melkitisk kristendoms tilegnelse af arabisk indikerer, at sprog var et middel til ideologisk overlevelse for nogle af minoritetstrosfællesskaberne. Det var også en strategisk måde at forblive i en meningsfuld dialog med den tids islamiske teologer. Derfor gjorde islamiseringen af arabisk arabisk til det foretrukne sprog hos en fremherskende religion, mens arabiseringen af melkitisk kristen teologi var en strategisk tilegnelsesproces af et betydeligt sprog for at forblive kommunikativt anerkendt og relevant.

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