

**BETWEEN HELLENISM AND
ARABICIZATION. ON THE FORMATION
OF AN ETHNOLINGUISTIC IDENTITY OF THE
MELKITE COMMUNITIES IN THE HEART
OF MUSLIM RULE**

**ENTRE HELENISMO Y ARABIZACIÓN.
SOBRE LA FORMACIÓN DE UNA IDENTIDAD
ETNOLINGÜÍSTICA DE LAS COMUNIDADES
MELKITAS EN EL SENO DEL PODER ISLÁMICO**

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The present paper deals with the Melkite community as a specific group with an ecclesiastical identity which arose in the Islamic period, in the heartland of Islam, and therefore not in Constantinople. Our aim is to describe those features of this community that arose from the Byzantine Orthodox faith, although formed from anti-Monothelite Syrian Chalcedonian groups, as distinct from the Jacobites, later identified with the Christians of the Umayyad Caliphate who accepted the teachings of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of the Royal Byzantine Church in 681. In this context the label Melkite should not be understood as a synonym of «Greek Orthodox» but rather of «Chalcedonian», which, for the Syrian Christians, identifies those who followed the Dyothelite dogma.

Key words: Melkites; Umayyads; Chalcedonians; Arabic; Arabicization.

El presente artículo se ocupa de la comunidad melkita, en tanto que grupo que se conformó como una identidad eclesiástica surgida en el periodo islámico, en el corazón del Islam y por tanto no en Constantinopla. De ahí que insistamos en que aquellos rasgos de identidad de esta comunidad que vienen dados por la fe de la Ortodoxia bizantina, formada a partir de grupos de calcedonios siriacos anti-monotelitas como grupo diferenciado de los jacobitas, que serán identificados posteriormente con los cristianos del califato omeya que aceptaron las enseñanzas del sexto concilio ecuménico de la iglesia imperial bizantina en el año 681. En este contexto, el uso de la denominación melkita no ha de entenderse como sinónimo de «ortodoxos griegos», sino de «calcedonios», que en el caso de los cristianos siriacos identifica a aquellos que siguieron el dogma diotelita.

Palabras clave: melkitas; omeyas; calcedonios; árabe; arabización.

Introduction

The seventh century gave a remarkable new shape to the Near East, tracing human landscapes that in many respects –despite all the subsequent changes wrought by the passage of time– are still in evidence today. The crisis prompted by the upheaval of the seventh century brought to an end the long-standing *status quo*, heralding a radical reshaping of all those lands whose geostrategic importance was –and indeed remains– crucial. The emergence of what Wellhausen called *Das arabische Reich*¹ was to chart a new human map using new sociopolitical and religious coordinates that arrived with Islam, and were duly described by the chroniclers, each with his own peculiar slant.² A further consideration was that much of the vast territory occupied by Arab contingents as well as Syriac-speaking, Coptic-speaking, Armenian-speaking, Georgian-speaking, and Greek-speaking Christians, was also peopled by Arabic-speaking Christians.

Arabic and Greek belong to different language families, and are therefore not genetically related. Yet from the seventh century onwards, amongst the Melkite authors, the two languages became indispensable elements, inextricably bound together by the Chalcedonian faith. Both languages served as vehicles for oral, cultural and religious communication, and their joint use at times gave rise – particularly in the case of texts produced in Arabic – to fascinating examples of linguistic hybridism that may be seen as a kind of pre-sociolect, given the mutual dependence of the two languages through the translation of Greek texts into Arabic.³

With the conquest of the Near East by Arab Muslim troops in the seventh century (630s-640s), the Arabic language gradually supplanted both Aramaic –until then the *lingua franca* of this whole vast area– and Greek, little by little becoming the spoken and written language in all the territories occupied by Muslims as well as by Christians and Jews. Aramaic had hitherto been the language most widely spoken by Christian groups in inland rural areas, whilst Greek was the preferred language of the coastal settlements. In the seventh century, Jews and Christians in urban areas of Palestine, Syria and

¹ Wellhausen, *Das arabische Reich und seine Sturz*.

² Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*.

³ On ‘languages in contact’, see Thomason, *Language contact*.

Mesopotamia adopted Arabic as the language of communication, prompting a progressive decline in the use of Greek. By the tenth century CE, Arabic had become the language of oral and literary expression for most Jewish and Christian groups, although in certain areas –such as Antioch– large Greek-speaking Christian communities were to be found well into the twelfth century.

In taking over as the official language of the Arab-Islamic state, Arabic gradually replaced the other languages previously used in the new Islamic territories. Obviously, this did not happen overnight, nor was it a process of total replacement; rather, it was the result of a slow but gradual transition from which a new linguistic situation emerged. The mechanism –introduced by caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (65-86/685-705) and continued in the reign of his son al-Walīd I (86-96/705-715)– consisted in making Arabic the only administrative language, and forbidding the use of Greek.⁴ This decision was not without its problems, not only because the mother tongue of most subjects was a language other than Arabic, but also because even the Arabic-speaking population spoke only dialectal Arabic, as witnessed by the fact that the Umayyad governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj, had to replace the Arabic used in the chancellery by the appropriate Iraqi dialect.⁵

In Egypt, where there was a sizeable Melkite community, the population essentially spoke two languages until the country was conquered in the mid-seventh century: Greek and Coptic. Greek was also the language of administration, whilst Coptic –often together with Greek– was the language of religion. After the occupation, the use of Greek began to decline; it was ousted by Coptic, which was even used in official documents aimed at local native representatives, thanks to the oral or written mediation of Arabic-speaking Copt translators.⁶ From the ninth century onwards, however, the situation was reversed: Coptic was gradually restricted to religious uses. By the tenth century, members of the Christian intellectual elite systematically wrote in Arabic.⁷

⁴ Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, vol. II, p. 481. Cf. Vasiliev, “Kitab al-‘Unvan”, vol. V, p. 498. Cf. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History*, p. 66.

⁵ Hitti, *History of Syria*, vol. II, p. 473.

⁶ Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, p. 95.

⁷ Griffith, “Apologetics and Historiography”, pp. 69-70. On the Arabicization of the Christian Egyptians, see Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt*, pp. 59-81, cf. 43-57.

A similar situation occurred in Palestine. Since most senior civil servants and scribes in the Umayyad administration were Greek-speaking, or Greek-educated, Greek continued to be the language of administration until the census (*ta'dīl*) and the reforms carried out by caliph 'Abd al-Malik between 697 and 699.⁸ Many of these administrative staff must have been Melkites (*rūm*), but other groups (e.g. the Monophysites of the Banū Ḡassān) also contributed to “the prevailing high culture” of the Greek-speaking population,⁹ that had been trained in the techniques of the old East Roman bureaucracy. This Christian administrative corps maintained the procedures of the earlier Byzantine administration until the reforms were introduced.¹⁰ In Egypt, for example, both Melkites and Monophysites enjoyed the privilege of working in the Islamic state administration.¹¹

The ‘high culture’ referred to by Gutas should not be understood as an exclusively Christian culture – any more than it was among Syriac authors – but rather as a Christian culture that embraced a number of Hellenistic elements essential for reshaping the cultural outlook of the Eastern churches in a pagan setting.¹² That outlook is closely linked to the work of Christian translators under the patronage of the Abbasid State, in which Melkite translators played a major role,¹³ to the extent of acting as veritable *informateurs*, providing enlightened Muslim circles with information on the doctrines of the Eastern churches.¹⁴ But the vast, crucial work of the translators should not be allowed to blind us to the contemporary linguistic situation; the rise of the Abbasids to power prompted a new social situation characterized by the further decline of the Greek language in the Syro-Palestinian milieu, where Arabic even replaced Greek in liturgical rites.¹⁵

⁸ Harrak (transl.), *The Chronicle of Zuqnān*, pp. 147-148.

⁹ Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁰ Fowden and Fowden, *Studies on Hellenism*, pp. 118-119. Cf. Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra*, pp. 269-270.

¹¹ Wilfong, “The non-Muslim communities”, p. 186.

¹² Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, pp. 96-116.

¹³ Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 136.

¹⁴ Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, pp. 132-134.

¹⁵ Griffith, “Eutychius of Alexandria”, p. 161.

1. The emergence of a new Christian community in the heart of Islam

Contrary to expectation, the various Christian communities living in the Islamic state did not all find themselves in the same circumstances; the situation of each community was shaped by its specific historical, religious and sociological context. In sociological terms, for example, the Melkites emerged as an ecclesiastical group during the Islamic period at the very heart of Islam rather than –as has sometimes been suggested– in Constantinople in an exclusively Greek milieu which was later exported to Islamic territories.¹⁶ Their distinctive features, therefore, are defined by faith in Byzantine orthodoxy subjected to the figure of the Byzantine monarch,¹⁷ hence the name *Mal(a)kiyyūn / Milkiyyūn / Malkā'iyūn / Malkāniyyūn* ‘royalist’ (< βασιλικοί > Syr. *Malkōyē*, cf. Gr. Μεληχῖται).¹⁸ The term *malkōyō* (Ar. *mal(a)kī*) was first used in the mid-fifth century¹⁹ by Monothelete Syrian Chalcedonians to distinguish themselves from Jacobites,²⁰ and was later used to refer to Christians in the Umayyad caliphate who accepted the teachings of the sixth ecumenical council of the Byzantine imperial church in 681, known as Constantinople III.²¹ However, it should be noted that the label ‘Melkite’ was used not as a synonym of the double epithet ‘Greek Orthodox’,²² but of ‘Chalcedonians’ (*al-khalqidūniyya/al-khalqidūniyyūn*), although it was also used to refer specifically to those Syrian Christians who followed the dyothelete dogma.²³ The term *al-rūm* (pl. *al-arwām*) was used to denote Romans

¹⁶ Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, p. 70.

¹⁷ Severus b. al-Muqaffā', *Historia patriarcharum alexandrinorum*, vol. I, p. 1 and 83.

¹⁸ Dick, *Melkites: Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics*, p. 9. Cf. Graf, *Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher Termini*, p. 108.

¹⁹ Al-Khūrī, “al-Malkiyyūn”, p. 37.

²⁰ Harrak (transl.), *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, p. 126.

²¹ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, vol. VIII, p. 153. Cf. Palmer, *The Seventh-Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, pp. 25-26. Griffith, “‘Melkites’, ‘Jacobites’, and the Christological Controversies”, pp. 11-18. See also Nasrallah, “Syriens et Surliens”, pp. 493 and 495-496; Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches Trilogy. I*, p. 14 and 20 and Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches Trilogy. II*, pp. 184-185.

²² Cf. Renaudot, *Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum*, p. 119. See also Every, “Syrian Christians in Palestine”, p. 363 and Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, p. 179.

²³ Palmer, *The Seventh-Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, p. 25.

or Byzantines who professed faith in the Greek Orthodox church of Byzantium,²⁴ a feature rarely attributed to the Melkites. By contrast, *mal(a)kī* / *milkī* was used to refer to Arabic-speaking Christian Chalcidians living in the territories of *Dār al-Islām*, who –together with the Orthodox– remained in communion with Constantinople.²⁵

In ethnic or linguistic terms, the distinctive feature of the *malkiyyūn* could be defined as their ‘Arab Orthodoxy’,²⁶ given that the Melkite authors constituting the intellectual elite had received a Greek education that had equipped them to pursue quite prestigious professions.²⁷ This group has been subdivided into two clearly-differentiated sectors: the Greek-speaking *rūm* and the *mal(a)kiyyūn* or *suryānē* that spoke Arabic and/or Syriac and shared with the *rūm* –among other things– the Byzantine liturgical *corpus*.²⁸ These were therefore two distinct communities, which – despite their shared faith – represented two distinct human, cultural and linguistic situations; contact between the two weakened as the Arab/Syrian groups lost touch with the Byzantine world and grew remote from the events unfolding in the imperial capital, Constantinople.²⁹

In 697, the structures of the Byzantine Empire started to be replaced by the Islamic model throughout the Islamic territories. The twofold process of Arabization and Islamization implemented through the policy introduced by the Umayyad authorities led to Arabic replacing Greek as the language of the administrative apparatus, although under the influence of the Hellenized Arab culture.³⁰ This linguistic, political and cultural situation, together with the economic changes instituted in 697, heralded a new age in human relationships in the Near East. The completion in 691 of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and the circulation in 697 of coins proclaiming that God was One and Eternal and that Muḥammad was

²⁴ Even in distant lands, see Fiey, “Rūm a l’Est de l’Euphrate”.

²⁵ Nasrallah, “Syriens et Suriens”, p. 496. Cf. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, p. 139.

²⁶ Cf. Little, *Peacemakers in Action*, pp. 322-323.

²⁷ Hoyland, “Jacob of Edessa on Islam”. Cf. Palmer, *Monk and mason on the Tigris frontier*, p. 166.

²⁸ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, pp. 335-339. Cf. Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 89-90. Cf. MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East*, p. 8.

²⁹ El Cheikh, *Byzantium as Viewed by the Arabs*, p. 119.

³⁰ Bowersock, *Mosaics as History*, p. 120.

‘the Messenger of God’ (*rasūl Allāh*) not only replaced the habitual minting of bilingual coins in Greek and Arab as ordained by the various *dawāwīn*,³¹ but also served to indicate that both culminations marked the dawn of a new era in which Islam presented itself as distinct from, and a rival –even a successor– to Christianity, the latter was forced onto the defensive not only in terms of lifestyle but also in religious and cultural terms.³²

The labels used by the Christian Arab chroniclers to refer to Arab-speaking Christians draw a certain distinction between Melkites and pre-Islamic Arab-speaking Christians. For example, the Melkite Maḥbūb al-Manbijī (tenth century) refers to the latter as ‘Christians from [amongst] the Arabs’ (*al-naṣārā min al-‘arab*)³³ and calls the native population of Palestine and Syria ‘Arabs’ who wrote in Greek (*‘āmmat al-‘arab alladhīna kānū bi-l-Ša‘m wa-Sūriyā kānat khuṭūtu-hum bi-l-yūnāniyyah*).³⁴ The same writer, when recounting Chosroes’ oppression of the inhabitants of Edessa, refers to them as “those who respected the criterion of the Melkites” (*ra’y al-mal(a)kiyyah*), who were ordered to follow the precepts of the Jacobites (*al-ya’qūbiyyah*).³⁵ This information, transmitted by a Melkite, is valuable, because that native population probably comprised Aramaic-speaking Arabs (Aramaic was still in use well into the twelfth century)³⁶ who were the first to make use of the epithet *malkāyē*, perhaps reflecting attempts at *rapprochement* aimed at uniting Chalcedonians with Monophysites under Justin II (565-578) between 566 and 571. In fact, Arab groups had peopled this vast area centuries before the advent of Islam. A whole range of Arab groups, for example, formed part of society in the kingdom of Ḥaṭrā between the first and third centuries CE. We have evidence of “Arabs” in and around Edessa during the same period, and indeed some authors place Arab tribes at the founding of the city of Edessa, which was to be strongly Monophysite by the end of the fifth century CE.³⁷ The same is true of the city of Palmyra and

³¹ Tsafrir, “Trade workshops and shops in Bet Shean/Scythopolis”, pp. 78-82. See also Qedar, “Copper coinage of Syria”, pp. 33-34.

³² Hoyland, “Jacob of Edessa on Islam”, p. 159. Cf. Bierman, *Writing Signs*, pp. 33-34.

³³ Vasiliev, “Kitab al-‘Unvan”, vol. V, p. 457.

³⁴ Vasiliev, “Kitab al-‘Unvan”, vol. V, p. 498.

³⁵ Vasiliev, “Kitab al-‘Unvan”, vol. V, pp. 458-460.

³⁶ Segal, Edesa, ‘the Blessed City’, p. 238.

³⁷ Frend, “The Monks and the Survival of the East Roman Empire”, p. 8.

environs, due to a phenomenon common in parts of Syria and Mesopotamia at the end of Seleucid rule, where these *shuyūkh* Arabs remained independent of both the Roman and the Parthian Empires. These Arab groups were an integral part of a society in which Greek, Aramaic and Arabic were all freely spoken, in a Hellenizing setting³⁸ which was later to bear fruit in the intellectual sphere, in the Syriac tradition among others.³⁹ More important still, however, is the case of Syrian Buṣrā, a highly-valuable geostrategic enclave in Late Antiquity⁴⁰ which by the middle of the third century already had a Christian bishop, Beryllos, described by Eusebius like ἐπίσκοπος δ' οὗτος ἦν τῶν κατὰ Βόστραν Ἀραβῶν ('bishop of the Arabs in Buṣrā').⁴¹ Over this whole area peopled by Arab tribes, Aramaic—in its dialectal variants—was the only language used in various types of writing⁴².

A truly remarkable blend of ethnic, cultural and linguistic elements were pooled and redefined under the influence of Christianity in the Near East; three major groups can be distinguished among the Christian population in the area:⁴³

1. Greek groups of various ethnic origins whose culture was Greek.
2. Hellenized Syrian and Arab groups.
3. The largest group, comprising Aramaic- and Arab-speaking groups in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

Available data on the organization of *Provincia Arabia*⁴⁴ indicate a clear distinction on economic or geographical grounds: the urban population comprised Hellenized Arabs and Syrians (group 2) living with pagan communities,⁴⁵ whilst the rural population (*fallāḥūna*, the κολωνοί of the Byzantine period)⁴⁶ spoke a dialect of Aramaic or

³⁸ Drijvers and Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions*, pp. 36-39.

³⁹ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 285. On this issue, see Watt, "Graeco Syriac Tradition".

⁴⁰ Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, pp. 110-111.

⁴¹ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, VI,20.2, cf. 33.1, in Bardy (ed.), *Eusèbe de Césarée*. Cf. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, p. 400.

⁴² Gorea, "Coupes magiques syriaques et manichéennes", p. 109.

⁴³ Trimmingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs*, pp. 212-213.

⁴⁴ Devreesse, "Le christianisme dans la Province d'Arabie"; Piccirillo, *L'Arabia cristiana*, pp. 191-217.

⁴⁵ Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, pp. 35-39.

⁴⁶ 'Abbās, *Ta'rīkh Bilād al-Sha'm*, p. 96.

Arabic and retained their traditional culture. Thus, the urban population included Greeks and Hellenized groups; both were Chalcedonians. By contrast, the rural population was eminently anti-Chalcedonian and therefore anti-Melkite.

In ideological terms, this division arose from fifth-century controversies regarding the nature of Christ. As a result, northern Arab Christians –both nomadic and sedentary– under Byzantine influence were Monophysites and thus under the authority of Edessa, the metropolis of the Syriac church within the Byzantine Empire, rather than Antioch, the metropolis of Greek Christendom, which the Syrian Aramaic communities considered remote; this accounts for the latter being mostly Monophysites.⁴⁷ When addressing Egypt, the Melkites' Monothelite confession must also be borne in mind.⁴⁸

2. The Arabic cultural-linguistic program as an identitarian feature for the Melkite communities

The policy of Arabization and Islamization instituted by the Umayyad caliphs like part of their legitimation⁴⁹ prompted an unprecedented reaction among Christian authors writing in Greek, Syriac and Coptic.⁵⁰ Nor were the Melkites slow to develop an intelligent cultural policy which may be regarded as complete, in that they succeeded in shaping a cultural project in Arabic based on original compositions and translated works, giving rise to what a leading scholar has termed 'the Christian Arab legacy' (*al-turāth al-'arabī al-masīhī*).⁵¹ At the same time, this project provided the Melkites with a twofold advantage: first, they were able to boast an Arab-language culture that was truly their own, as distinct from the Christian tradition in Greek, a linguistically-productive culture in the language used by the Christian Arabs;⁵² secondly, it afforded them an essential weapon –language– with which to fight an enemy who could be

⁴⁷ McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity*, pp. 78-85. Cf. al-Khūrī, "al-Malkiyyūn", pp. 37-66 and 41-44.

⁴⁸ Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite*, vol. II/1, pp. 53-59.

⁴⁹ Donner, "Umayyad Efforts at Legitimation".

⁵⁰ Fiey, "Umayyads in Syriac Sources".

⁵¹ Samir, "Madkhal ilā al-turāth", pp. 35-49, 83-102 and 195-210. Cf. Samir, *Abū Qurrah: al-Sīrah wa-l-marāji'*, fasc. I, p. 6.

⁵² Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, p. 124.

confronted only in Arabic, and clearly not in Greek, Syriac or Coptic. This distinctive feature is essential for understanding the sense of cultural, linguistic and ethnic identity of the Melkites as distinct from their Byzantine counterparts.

Implementation of this new project by the Umayyad conquerors evidently required the prior linguistic Arabization of an elite at least sufficient to start on the radical break with the previous Byzantine model.⁵³ But the earliest surviving textual sample suggests that this process in fact affected the whole urban native population, from top to bottom. This is apparent in the fragment (vv. 20-31 and 51-61) of Psalm 78 (LXX: 77) from the *Qubbat al-Khaznah* of Damascus, laid out in double columns, Greek on the left and Arabic in Greek characters on the right; the fragment indicates that the celebration of the Eucharist in the Greek Orthodox faith, in the city of Damascus in the late seventh century,⁵⁴ involved both a Greek-speaking and an Arabic-speaking group.⁵⁵ Both were Christians, but the latter was not wholly a group Arabized as a result of the arrival of Islamic Arab troops; rather, it comprised Arabs belonging to tribes which had settled in Syria some centuries earlier.⁵⁶ In this respect, it is interesting to note that Arabic appears to have been the only language spoken in the sixth century by Byzantium's *foederati*. This is indicated by the term ἑρμηνεύς ('interpreter') applied to the Roman general commending them –Andreas– suggesting that these Arab groups led by Byzantine generals only understood Arabic, even almost one hundred years after they first allied with the Byzantine army. However, this was probably not true of all groups or tribes; evidently, the Gassānid phylarchs (φύλαρχοι) spoke some other language in addition to Arabic.⁵⁷ It must thus be surmised that three linguistic communities coexisted: Greek-speakers, Arabic-speakers, and recently-Arabized groups with other mother tongues. The fact that the *Qubbat al-Khaznah* fragment used Greek rather than Arabic characters for the Arabic version shows how superficial the process of Arabization still was amongst the Greek

⁵³ For a consideration of this context, see Kennedy, "The Last Century of Byzantine Syria".

⁵⁴ Violet, "Ein zweisprachiges Psalmfragment aus Damascus", pp. 429-430.

⁵⁵ Haddad, "La phonétique de l'arabe chrétien vers 700".

⁵⁶ For these tribes, see Nau, *Les arabes chrétiens de Mésopotamie et de Syrie*, pp. 31-94.

⁵⁷ Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, vol. I.1, pp. 553-554. Cf. Aigrain, "Arabie", vol. III, p. 1190.

clergy, who –like the monks– were to take some time to adopt Arabic as the language of cultural transmission. Thanks in some degree to contacts with the immigrant population in Syria,⁵⁸ the Arabization of the Christian population was a progressive process that started in the latter years of the seventh century, when a linguistic form that Corriente described as “a birth certificate of Nabaṭī Arabic”, the ‘forerunner’ of Neo-Arabic⁵⁹ gained currency amongst the urban population. This –together with a by now wholly-Arabized ecclesiastical structure,⁶⁰ accounts for the surviving *corpus* of anonymous translations made in the eighth and ninth centuries in Syria and Palestine.⁶¹

Although not crucial to the linguistic aspect of Arabization, the role played in the pre-Islamic period by Arab groups acting as veritable ‘tribal police’⁶² such as the Banū Lakhm⁶³ among the Sassanian Persians, and the Byzantines’ *foederati*, must have been important in the *limes Orientalis*. The same is true of the Banū Ḡassān, and of the North Arabian groups referred to by Syriac sources as ‘*arab d-rēhūmiyē*, i.e. ‘Arabs of the Greeks’,⁶⁴ and even as *ṭayyāyē d-rēhūmiyē* (‘Arabs of the Greeks’) as against *ṭayyāyē d-parsāyē* (‘Arabs of the Persians’), the term used to describe the Banū Lakhm,⁶⁵ even though the word *ṭayyāyē* is used –along with other terms– to refer to the Muslims.⁶⁶ Christian Arabic anthroponyms certainly feature strongly in pre-Islamic Greek inscriptions from *Palaestina tertia*, pointing to the existence of an Arab-speaking Christian group which would help to swell the ranks of the Melkites. This group, which lived in the northern Near East, central Mesopotamia, the West Bank, Transjordan and the Sinai Peninsula prior to the advent of Islam⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Gaube, “Arabs in the Sixth Century Syria”, p. 64. Cf. Crone, “Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad period political parties?”.

⁵⁹ Corriente, “The Psalter fragment from the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus”, p. 319.

⁶⁰ Samir, “Michel évêque melkite de Damas”.

⁶¹ Graf, *Die christlich-arabische Literatur*, pp. 8-24.

⁶² See Donner, *The early Islamic conquests*, pp. 43-44, 292 and pp. 45-47, 293 for Ghassānids and Lakhmids respectively.

⁶³ Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Lakhmiden in al-Hira*.

⁶⁴ Shahīd, “Ghassanid and Umayyad structures”; Wright (ed. and transl.), *The Chronicle of Joshua*, p. 39.

⁶⁵ Smith (ed.), *Extracts from the Ecclesiastical History*, p. 20, cf. 101.

⁶⁶ Cf. the expression *ṭayyāyē d-Mḥmṭ* (‘the Arabs of Muḥamad’), Motzki, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, p. 278.

⁶⁷ Peters, “The Arabs on the Frontier”. Cf. Mayerson, “The Desert of Southern Palestine”, pp. 167-169. See also Devreesse, “Le Christianisme dans la péninsule sinaïtique”.

represented the settlement of a variety of Arabic within a non-Arabic-speaking territory; it subsequently went through the usual stages of pidginization and creolization to attain dialectal scope,⁶⁸ as indicated by linguistic phenomena in Christian Arab texts. The early works written in, or translated into, Arabic by Christian Arab authors, are relatively simple in terms of grammar and lexis –as might be expected from any contact language– and generally contain a mixture of two languages. That linguistic mixture gave rise to a hybridization involving languages that were vehicles for different cultures; this in turn prompted a cultural fusion in the new group, eventually leading to depidginization and decreolization, and hence to a reconvergence towards a standard register of the original language of the group. One example of this sort of Christian Arab in that milieu, dated in 14 April AD 413, is ‘Paul (son) of Arabianus’ (Παῦλος Ἀραβιοβοῦ), which is clearly the Greek equivalent of the Arabic Bawlus b. al-‘Arab (‘Paul, son of the Arab’),⁶⁹ and he was certainly not an isolated case.⁷⁰ Thus, the process of Arabization taking place amongst Christian communities –enhanced by the Arab substrate provided by Arab tribes and/or Christian Arab groups⁷¹– had a marked impact over the eighth century, although progressive Arabization did not wholly eliminate Greek language and culture, which in the eighth century were still to be found in the *monasteria* of Palestine, though surrounded by swift Arabization.⁷² The cultivation of this Greek literature was the work of an ecclesiastical elite, and more particularly of a pro-Chalcedonian sector –a leading figure being John of Damascus (d. ca. 749)– whose authors would continue to use Greek up until the end of the eighth century.⁷³

This new ethnic-linguistic and confessional situation, prompted by the presence of the Melkites, acquired renewed vigour through the

⁶⁸ Versteegh, *Pidginization and creolization*.

⁶⁹ Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou, *Inscriptions from Palaestina Tertia*, p. 197, no. 103, lines 1-2. References to the (pagan) Arabs are also usual in the Nabataean inscriptions, see Cook, *A glossary of the Aramaic inscriptions*, p. 94.

⁷⁰ Knauf, “Umm el-Jimāl”, pp. 580-586.

⁷¹ Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*. Cf. Sauget, “La littérature arabe chrétienne ancienne”, p. 151.

⁷² Blake, “La littérature grecque en Palestine”, pp. 376-378. Cf. Vailhé, “Le monastère de Saint-Sabas”, p. 21-28, also for decadence pp. 168-177; Vailhé, “Les écrivains de Mar-Saba”.

⁷³ Griffith, “John of Damascus and the Church”.

cultural undertaking on which they had embarked; so much so, that –in their hands– Arabic was to become, in textual terms, a true *lingua franca* amongst Christian Arabs, and the Melkites were to be its leading advocates and exponents.⁷⁴ Given that the Melkites were Chalcedonians, Greek might be expected to be their *langue supérieure* or their *langue de prestige*, whilst in sociological terms Arabic would be relegated to a secondary position. This, however, did not happen; Arabic fairly rapidly displaced Greek – though not totally, as we have seen – while Greek continued to be used despite the policy introduced by the Islamic state with the twofold aim of boosting Arabization and reducing the use of Greek.

Amongst Melkite authors, the declining use of Greek was offset by the intrinsic Hellenization both of the writers (e.g. Michel the Synkellus)⁷⁵ and of the work they produced, in the form of either original compositions or translations; on more than one occasion, indeed, Greek (as well as Coptic and Syriac) survived within Arabic texts through calques or mere transliterations.⁷⁶ In this respect, the Melkites were responsible for merging two linguistic and cultural entities into a single language. Greek – a language doomed to vanish from public life – was to be ideologically grafted onto Arabic, which was to become the new language of administration and public life for a given area, if not for the whole of the Near East and beyond. This Hellenistic element within Chalcedonian Christian Arab groups, and the faith shared with their counterparts in Constantinople, were strengthened by the policy of Arabization and Islamization introduced by the Umayyad authorities. The Islamic authorities themselves, for their part, were also affected in various ways by the strength of this Hellenistic cultural interaction,⁷⁷ which exerted its effects both directly, through the Byzantine link, but also indirectly through its influence on Semitic groups in earlier periods, a wholly natural influence forming part of the general process of Hellenistic acculturation that had been taking place on Semitic soil since centuries earlier.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Blau, “A Melkite Arabic literary *lingua franca*”.

⁷⁵ Peristeris, “Literary and Scribal Activities”, p. 174.

⁷⁶ Monferrer Sala, “Notas lexicográficas”, p. 79 § 3.1, 84 § 3.22.

⁷⁷ Fowden and Fowden, *Studies on Hellenism*, p. 128. Cf. Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra*, pp. 266-267. Cf. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History*, p. 120.

⁷⁸ Millar, *The Roman Near East*, pp. 397-399.

There is no doubt at all that Melkite textual production started in the second half of the eighth century, and continued to grow thereafter. The earliest known text is a work called *Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāhid*, produced in around 738 CE. At about this time, church authors embarked upon the systematic production of texts, an undertaking led by the renowned Melkite Theodore Abū Qurrah (ca. 750-ca. 825), an admirer of John of Damascus.⁷⁹ It is this author—leaving aside certain flaws in the manuscripts in various languages attributed to him—that best embodies the distinctive features of the Melkite element: an Arab-speaking Chalcedonian with a Greek cultural background, although he apparently never wrote in Greek, Abū Qurrah was readily conversant with the Christian Palestinian Aramaic script and with the language itself,⁸⁰ a Christian dialectal variety of Western Aramaic⁸¹ containing Arabisms resulting from contact with Arab-speaking groups, that were already to be found in Old Syriac.⁸² This cultural and linguistic hybridization characteristic of the Christian Near East at the time is undoubtedly the hallmark feature of the Melkite element. It is interesting to note that a kind of historical chiasmus, of a linguistic/ideological nature, took place between John of Damascus and Theodore Abū Qurrah, marking two distinct stages: whilst John never wrote in Arabic, and his work was always bound by the horizons of Constantinople intellectualism,⁸³ Abū Qurrah never wrote in Greek, and his work always displayed the influence of the Iraqi *mutakallimūn*.

In view of the foregoing, it might be assumed that this was a dichotomous process in which Greek was supplanted by Arabic and the Greek Orthodox tradition was replaced by the rationalism of the *mutakallimūn*; yet this would be a mere *reductio ad absurdum*, since—as indicated earlier—Hellenistic elements in various cases persisted through Arabic elements. This is far from being a process of substitution, in which Melkite intellectuals simply renounced their Greek

⁷⁹ On this writer, see Griffith, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, and Samir, *Abū Qurrah. Vida, bibliografía y obras*.

⁸⁰ Desremaux, “The Birth of a New Aramaic Script”.

⁸¹ For a summary of this dialect, see Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, pp. 51-53.

⁸² Müller-Kessler, *Grammatik des Christlich-Palästinisch-Aramäischen*, p. 7 § 1.1.6.2; Healey, “Lexical Loans in Early Syriac”.

⁸³ For the reception of John of Damascus’ work in Arabic, see Atiya, “St. John Damascene”.

background. Quite the opposite: Melkite intellectuals, as heirs to, and representatives of, a specifically Christian historic, ethnic and linguistic situation, zealously defended the two elements defining them, their distinctive ethnic and linguistic features, grouped under a single label 'Arabic'. But at the same time as being Arabs, they also sought to defend their Graeco-Arabic, Syriac-Arab (or Copto-Arabic, as the case may be) culture through the manifestation of their Christian faith. This was not, therefore, a process of change with respect to their Greek Orthodox fellow-believers, but rather a reaffirmation of their historical status, a kind of Melkite *shu'ūbiyyah* through which Melkite intellectuals distinguished themselves both from the Greek Orthodox groups and from the Muslims. At the same time, this defense of their identity as a people (*shu'ūbiyyah*) also served as a means of reasserting the Arabic origin of the communities occupied by Muslim armies, an authentic yet distinct Arabhood (*'urūbah*), a Christian Arabhood whose roots could be traced back beyond Islam into the period of the *Jāhiliyyah*.⁸⁴

Sozomen's account of the encounter between the Arabs and the Christian priests and monks in the mid-fifth century CE has to some extent coloured the explanation of the origin of Christian Arab literature. Whilst the surviving Christian Arab texts undoubtedly originated at the Palestinian *monasteria*,⁸⁵ it should be noted that many of the texts produced at the monasteries of St. Catherine, St. Sabas or St. Charitōn were translations, recensions or adaptations of works mainly in Greek or Syriac, which constituted the twin linguistic and cultural pillars of the Melkite community. Can we therefore safely ignore these two key elements when searching for the origin of Christian Arabic literature? Probably not, as Griffith indirectly suggested some years ago when describing the linguistic (and by extension cultural) situation in the Palestinian monasteries; his account focuses on the linguistic interaction between Greek, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, 'Melkite Arabic' and –to a lesser extent– Armenian and Georgian in the heart of an Orthodox *oikouménē*.⁸⁶ Indeed, the Christian Arab texts betray the influence of living Aramaic, visible in the Neo-Arabic layer of the 'Melkite Arabic' texts.⁸⁷ Moreover, as indi-

⁸⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, vol. I, p. 834.

⁸⁵ Griffith, "The monks of Palestine", pp. 13-28.

⁸⁶ Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic".

⁸⁷ Blau, "The Influence of Living Aramaic", pp. 141-142.

cated earlier, the translations made at the Byzantine monasteries were produced by a cosmopolitan monastic elite working in the great South Palestinian *lavræ*, whose linguistic skills cannot have extended either to monastery life in general nor to all monasteries,⁸⁸ even though most monks probably used Arabic as their colloquial language and a second language for liturgical purposes. This is natural enough, since the *lavræ* had become centers for the conservation and generation of Melkite culture, following the decline of Syria in the late sixth century CE and the Islamic occupation, which led to many churches being abandoned for economic and social reasons.⁸⁹

It is interesting to see how Arabic-speaking Melkite theologians exercised their intellectual leadership from the South Palestinian *lavræ* from the eighth century onwards, although this undertaking was not restricted to the monasteries; this is evident in the pastoral and literary achievements of Abū Qurrah, bishop of the Melkite community at Ḥarrān, and of the authors working outside monastic centers. Abū Qurrah, the leading Melkite author, also displayed a feature peculiar to Christian Arab writers (both Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian): the strong influence of Iraqi *mutakallimūn* practice on key intellectual activities.⁹⁰ The Melkite authors modeled their debating technique on that of these Muslim intellectuals, coupled with exegetical and hermeneutical tools inherited from the Christian tradition; all this was combined with the influence of the Hellenistic culture shared by the Chalcedonians. The result achieved its maximum expression in a series of philosophical and religious debates (*majālis*) prompted by Christian-Muslim encounters between the seventh and thirteenth centuries.⁹¹

While the influence of the *mutakallimūn* model undoubtedly shaped the lexis used by the Melkite authors, which clearly drew on the Qurʾān, on a number of technical theological terms, and on the debating techniques employed by Muslim authors, it is also important to remember that this Islamic originality was often no more than an

⁸⁸ Samir, "La tradition arabe chrétienne", p. 53.

⁸⁹ Kennedy, "The Melkite Church". See also the wealth of information provided by Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine*. On the status of Christian communities in Syria and Mesopotamia, see Ferré, "Chrétiens de Syrie et de Mésopotamie"; cf. Dennet, *Conversion and Poll Tax in Early Islam*.

⁹⁰ On this issue see Griffith, "The Syriac letters of Patriarch Timothy I".

⁹¹ On this genre, see Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*".

adaptation of procedures characteristic of the Christian exegesis that influenced Islamic theology in its formative stages.⁹² It was natural enough that Arab-speaking Chalcedonian authors should draw on a linguistic model like the Qurʾān: not only because within the framework of Arabization they had no other option, but also because they needed a linguistic archetype on which to (re)construct a reality appropriate to their legacy, the product of a linguistic and cultural journey that had started out from two languages – Greek and Syriac – which had subsequently become archaeological emblems of Arab Christianity, and which the Chalcedonian authors were themselves replacing by Arabic. In that sense, the Melkites found themselves in a position similar to that of Jewish authors, who abandoned Aramaic in favor of Judaeo-Arabic, taking the linguistic model provided by the Qurʾān as the basis for a deeper understanding of their sacred language, Hebrew.⁹³

This aspect deserves to be stressed, since the role played by Melkite authors and translators in the dissemination of Greek thought, in Arabic, amongst Muslim intellectuals was crucial to the Muslim reception of the Greek cultural heritage.⁹⁴ But that influence was exerted through translations into Arabic, a good example being the ‘translations-adaptations’ of Aristotle’s works by Theodore Abū Qurrah. As a result, the Greek heritage acquired new vigour, and was to some extent revitalized through the native languages of the Melkites, Arabic and Syriac. Syriac, indeed, came to embody the paradigmatic *lingua sacra*, a Christian antidote to the Islamic doctrine of the inherent superiority of the Arabic language⁹⁵ as the language used by God to reveal the Qurʾān to his messenger Muḥammad. After all, even though Greek was the most widely-used literary and liturgical language amongst the Melkites at the time of the invasion by Arab troops, the sector of the Chalcedonian community that originally accepted the ecclesiastical policy of the Byzantine *Basileús* Heraclius spoke Syriac,

⁹² Cook, “The Origins of Kalām”. Cf. Monferrer Sala, “Apologética racionalista”.

⁹³ On the Judaeo-Arabic register, see Blau, *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic*. Cf. the interesting information aduced in Yēhūdāh b. Quraysh’s *Risālah*, see van Bekkum, “The ‘Risāla’ of Yehuda Ibn Quraysh”. The critical edition of the *Risālah* was done by Becker, *The Risāla of Judah Ben Quraysh*.

⁹⁴ For the case of philosophy, see Parry, “Byzantine and Melkite Iconophiles”, p. 46. Cf. Griffith, “Answers for the Shaykh”, p. 280.

⁹⁵ Wilde, “*Lingua sacra?*”, p. 76.

whilst their people in Egypt spoke one of the dialectal varieties of Coptic.⁹⁶ This fits perfectly with data indicating that Arab acculturation was first evident amongst the Palestinian Melkites, followed by the Jacobites, the Nestorians and – somewhat later – the Copts.

When the son of Abū Sufyān, Mu'āwiyah (ca. 602-680), was proclaimed first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty in Jerusalem in 661, and set up his residence in Damascus, the Syrian population was largely Christian, and many families belonging to the ruling classes opted to emigrate to lands controlled by the Byzantine Empire.⁹⁷ Amongst those that remained there were Arab groups; Mu'āwiyah himself married a Christian Jacobite from the Banū Kalb, Maysūn, a marriage which brought him useful alliances with various Christian Arab tribes in North Arabia,⁹⁸ whereas other privileged groups such as some members of the Banū Gassān are known to have emigrated to the Byzantine Empire.⁹⁹ But the Jacobites were not the only groups to collaborate with the caliph, the Melkites, too, played a major role in the policy of collaboration instituted by Mu'āwiyah. A good example is that of Sarjūn b. Maṣṣūr al-Naṣrānī, 'Serge, son of Maṣṣūr the Christian', the father of John of Damascus (Yūḥannā b. Maṣṣūr b. Sarjūn), who before entering the monastery of Mār Sābā worked in caliph 'Abd al-Malik's administration in Damascus at a difficult time for the Melkite church, which had no Chalcedonian patriarch in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰ Sarjūn succeeded his father Maṣṣūr, who had worked for Mu'āwiyah, and was appointed head of the 'Syrian Treasury' (*Dīwān al-Sha'm*).¹⁰¹ The interesting genealogical information provided by the *nasab* appears to suggest a degree of acculturation; in any case, it clearly indicates that both father and son must have been fluent in Arabic, since the father must have held a senior financial post whilst the son was *de facto* the head of finance for the nascent Umayyad caliphate.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Brock, "A Syriac Fragment on the Sixth Council"; Micheau, "Eastern Christianities", pp. 373-403 and 399.

⁹⁷ Haldon, "Citizens of Ancient Lineage...?"

⁹⁸ Aigrain, "Arabie", vol. III, pp. 1310-1311.

⁹⁹ Shahīd, "Sigillography in the service of history".

¹⁰⁰ On John of Damascus, see Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas*.

¹⁰¹ Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 477. Cf. Niebuhr (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia*, vol. I, p. 559, and Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, p. 26, and n. 5.

¹⁰² Aigrain, "Arabie", vol. III, pp. 1311-2; cf. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, pp. 26-30.

These are by no means isolated cases. There is evidence that Mu'āwiyah appointed one Ḥabīb, an Arab described as a “wicked Syrian”, to lead one of the two divisions of his army.¹⁰³ Another Ḥabīb appears on the scene later, in the reign of caliph 'Abd al-Malik, when appointed Bishop of Edessa by the metropolitan James of Edessa. In this city, for instance, the influence of the Christian community on Mu'āwiyah was quite effective, since the caliph ordered the church destroyed by the earthquake of 678 CE to be reconstructed because of the Christians' zealous efforts according to the narration given by Theophanes:

Τούτω τῷ ἔτει γέγονε σεισμὸς μέγας κατὰ τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν, ἐν ᾧ πίπτει τὸ βατᾶν καὶ ὁ τροῦλλος τῆς ἐκκλησίας Ἐδέσης. καὶ κτίζει αὐτὸν Μανίας σπουδῆ τῶν Χριστιανῶν .¹⁰⁴

In this year there was a big earthquake in Mesopotamia, in which the pulpit and the dome of the church of Edessa fell, and Mu'āwiyah restored it because of the Christians' zealous efforts.

On the other hand, accounts concerning these two aforementioned figures of Ḥabīb and James of Edessa are of interest, in that the monks' demand for the restoration of Greek language training testifies to the degree of Arabization in local monastic communities, in which the use and knowledge of Greek had disappeared.¹⁰⁵ It was during this period, in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik, that several figures of considerable intellectual importance emerged amongst the Arab groups, including the celebrated bishop George of the Arabs and bishop Joseph of the Banū Taglib, also known as Joseph of the Ṭayyayē, i.e. of the Arabs.¹⁰⁶ The Melkites, therefore, were clearly in the vanguard of that 'Nabaṭī Arabic' (*al-lughah al-'arabiyyah al-nabaṭiyyah*) that had been consolidated –in linguistic and cultural terms– far away from the Arabian Peninsula.

At the same time, the decline of Greek as a written language in Syria and Palestine during the Arab conquest –and indeed in Egypt– reflected something more than just the Christians' preference for their respective liturgical languages in the two territories –i.e. Aramaic

¹⁰³ Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 441.

¹⁰⁴ Niebuhr (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia*, vol. I, p. 544. Cf. Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 457.

¹⁰⁵ Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 472.

¹⁰⁶ Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 475b; cf. 476b.

dialects in Syria and Palestine, and Coptic dialects in Egypt. Nor was it only a further consequence of the replacement of Greek by Arabic in the territories of *Dār al-Islām*.¹⁰⁷ The Melkite identity was shaped by something more than the sum of the liturgical elements in their respective native languages and the process of linguistic and cultural Arabization, although both certainly played their part. But a third, equally-important, element was the strong and outspoken ethnic and cultural sentiment of Arab-speaking Christians in Islamic territory. Each of these elements made its own contribution to the forging of a Melkite identity whose distinctive feature was a sense of ethnic, cultural and linguistic Arabhood.

In the reign of the upright caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (644-656), with Muʿāwiyah commanding the armies at the Syrian-Palestinian borders, Michel the Syrian recounts in his ‘Chronicle’ that “the patriarch called the bishops and summoned the Tanūkayē, the ʿAqūlayē and the Ṭūʿayē, who knew the Arabic and Syriac languages, and charged them to translate the Gospel into Arabic”.¹⁰⁸ This summons arose from an order given to the patriarch by Emir ʿAmr (ʿAmrū bar Saʿd, *amīr Ṭayyayē*) who, after subjecting him to some searching questions, issued the following instructions: “Translate for me your Gospel into the language of the Saracens, that is of the Ṭayyāyē”.¹⁰⁹ It was this that prompted the alleged debate between the Orthodox Syriac patriarch John III and the governor of the *jund* of Ḥoms ʿUmayr b. Saʿd, who – according to tradition – held a session (*majlis*) in May 644 CE.¹¹⁰ The three Arab tribes mentioned in the text are none other than the famous Arab tribes converted to Christianity by the Jacobite metropolitan ʿAḥudemme in the mid-sixth century: the Banū Tanūḥ, the Banū ʿAqūl and the Banū Ṭayyiʿ.¹¹¹

To judge from the foregoing, the Arab-speaking Christian tribes clearly provided considerable support at this early stage, with a striking number of converts to Christianity in the area of Syria in the fifth century.¹¹² Moreover, the text to which we have just referred

¹⁰⁷ Micheau, “Eastern Christianities”, p. 390.

¹⁰⁸ Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 432b. Cf. Chabot, (ed. and transl.), *Chronicon Anonymum*, I, pp. 205-206 §§ 128-129.

¹⁰⁹ Chabot (ed. and transl.), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, vol. II, p. 431b-432b.

¹¹⁰ Samir, “Qui est l’interlocuteur musulman du patriarche syrien?”.

¹¹¹ Nau, “Histoires d’Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta”, p. 28-29.

¹¹² Nau, *Les arabes chrétiens de Mésopotamie et de Syrie*, pp. 38-39.

suggests that, just as these Christian tribes came under the authority of the Orthodox Syrian patriarchs, other Arab-speaking Christian tribes came under that of the Greek patriarchs, with whom they shared both their faith and a certain Hellenistic influence, though each had their own language and culture – orthodox Greeks and Melkite Arabs.

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Recibido: 15/11/2011

Aceptado: 04/06/2012