When we look at Late Antique Syro-Palestine and Arabia in the early seventh century, the time when Islam is said to have become a religion, an interesting yet complex mosaic of cultures and languages can be observed. Linguistically, various languages were spoken and written. Here we confront a common long-persisting misconception, namely that the Arabs were largely illiterate before Islam. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Roughly speaking, Arabia in Antiquity was divided into three geographical regions: *Arabia Felix*, *Deserta*, and *Petraea*.

In the South-western corner (approximately modern Yemen), *Arabia Felix*, or “Happy Arabia,” various South Arabian Semitic languages were spoken, the most important of which is Sabaean, written in a Semitic script which split off from the Syro-Palestinian alphabetic tradition during the Bronze Age. Ancient Yemen was heavily involved in the spice and incense (later also the silk) trade from which it garnered considerable wealth.

To the North, in what is now more or less Saudi Arabia was the Classical *Arabia Deserta*, or “Abandoned Arabia,” home to Mecca and Medina, a region sparsely inhabited by nomadic tribes and various oasis settlements, often caravanserais for the long-distance trade. The contemporary local languages are nowadays designated as Ancient North Arabian: they are interrelated Semitic (oasis) dialects that, however, are not direct ancestors of
Classical Arabic. Inscriptions in these languages or dialects are attested roughly from the sixth century BC to the sixth century AD throughout the region into the modern Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The writing culture of Arabia Deserta was thus borrowed from the South – i.e., they used variants of the Ancient (epigraphic) South Arabian script.

![Distribution of Arabic alphabets](image)

*Figure 1: Distribution of Arabic Alphabets; with kind permission of Trouw (Dutch daily newspaper).*

Further to the North, in the geographical area of Syro-Palestine (which includes the Egyptian Sinai, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and South-eastern Turkey and North-western Iraq) was Arabia Petraea, or the Provincia Arabia, the Roman border province whose capital was Petra. This region had been exposed to Greco-Roman culture for close to a millennium. The major written languages here were Greek and various Aramaic dialects, the most important of which was Syriac. Furthermore, much of the population of this region (unlike in Arabia Deserta) had converted to one form or another of Christianity (which was anything but an homogenous, monolithic entity).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>tranlit.</th>
<th>Syriac</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Ge'ez</th>
<th>OSA</th>
<th>Ugaritic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ذ ح خ د ض ت ث س ن س ص ح ن ب ن ط ف ق ك</td>
<td>swyhnmlkqfgztdsszrddhhghttb</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OSA = Old South Arabic

*Hatched boxes* (in the lines with Syriac and Hebrew letters): Phonemes lost in Aramaic, in Arabic replaced by the nearest phonetic equivalent.

*Black boxes*: equivalent missing.

The Arabic letters for ُ, ِ, ُُ, and ِِ and the Syriac letters for َ and ُ merged due to cursive writing.
The important point that must be noted is that although in *Arabia Petraea* Aramaic and Greek texts are often attributed to the Nabataeans, Palmyrenians and others who were actually neither Aramaic nor Greek, their names and occasional stray words in inscriptions show that they were ethnically Arabs. We are dealing with a situation similar to that of medieval Western Europe in which Latin was the written language, while the spoken languages (vernaculars) were the precursors of the languages spoken today.

Briefly summarised, the Arabic language (especially with regard to the primary diagnostic feature, the definite article *ṯâ – al-*) and script of *Arabia Petraea* are the precursors of the classical Arabic script and language. Before Islam, texts in the Aramaic script are hardly attested south of the modern state of Jordan and then only in the extreme North-west corner of modern Saudi Arabia. In *Arabia Felix* and *Deserta*, other scripts and languages were current. It is in *Arabia Petraea* that we find occasional Arabic texts in an Aramaic script and even Arabic written in Greek characters. A sixth/seventh century fragment of Psalm 78 found in the Umayyad “Mosque” at Damascus shows just how close this Arabic is to what would later morph into Classical Arabic (e.g., *ṯâ – imāla*). The precursor to Classical Arabic was thus spoken in Syria, not in the Hijaz.

We now have two independent sources of *prima facie* contemporary evidence—aerial linguistics and script distribution—to show that the language of the Qurʾān must be based on a Syro-Palestinian Arabo-Semitic dialect and that the script employed was not that used in Mecca and Medina of the period, but the one used in *Arabia Petraea*. If the Qurʾān is actually a product of the Hijaz, then we would expect it to be in a different (Ancient North Arabian) Semitic language and written in a different script. That is not the case. The traditional account of the Qurʾān’s origins is not supported by the evidence.

The peculiar thing about the Arabic script we are familiar with today is its polyvalence—i.e., it needs diacritical dots (ِ ـ – *ʾiǧām*) to distinguish between otherwise identical consonantal characters (ض – *rasm*). For example, the Arabic glyph ٌ can be read as *b* (ب), *t* (ت), *ṯ* ( ث), *n* (ن) and medially as *y* (ي). Thus the Arabic script distinguishes eighteen glyphs that are made distinct by diacritics to render twenty-eight phonemes. A part of this polyvalence is not phonetically conditioned; it is due to the cursive erosion of distinct forms (e.g., *b, n, medial y*). In other cases, it is due to the fact that a twenty-two letter Aramaic alphabet was later supplemented to render additional Arabic phonemes (i.e., sounds that Aramaic had lost, but which survived in Arabic) by adding diacritical dots, a practice already found e.g. in Palmyrenian Aramaic, to the nearest phonetic approximant. This, along with borrowed Aramaic orthographic customs (such as ِ, the *tāʾ marbūṭa* to mark the feminine ending, the *alif otiosum*, etc.) and the method of adding vowel marks (١٠ – *harakāt*) shows unmistakably that Arabic
writing evolved from a long tradition of writing Aramaic and can, therefore, only have occurred in a region where the Arabs had had a long exposure to Aramaic writing culture: that is Aramaic writing was *arabicised*—note that the perhaps anachronistic notation of suffixed case vowels which had been lost in Aramaic at least a millennium and a half previously is known in Arabic grammar as such (إعراب – *iʿrāb*). The only place where this could have happened is *Arabia Petraea*. If the Qurʾān were actually a product of Mecca and Medina, then (besides it being written in a different Semitic language) it would have had to have been composed in the South Arabian script which unambiguously differentiates each of the twenty-eight phonemes of Arabic and which, by this time, had a twelve hundred year tradition in the Hijaz. That this ideally suited script was not used means that it was unknown to the writers of the Qurʾān (the only attestation hitherto of pre-Classical Arabic being written in the Ancient South Arabian script is by an apparent resident alien at Qaryat al-Fāw on the North-Western edge of the Empty Quarter, situated on a major trade route from the Yemen to Eastern Arabia and the Gulf – see M. C. A. Macdonald, “Ancient Arabia and the Written Word,” in idem (ed.), *The development of Arabic as a written language* (Supplement to the PSAS 40; Oxford, 2010, 17).

The fact that both the script and language of the Qurʾān point to the Classical *Arabia Petraea* of Syro-Palestine, and not *Arabia Deserta*, is further supported by the fact that the Qurʾān’s vocabulary is largely borrowed from Aramaic, especially Syriac, the liturgical language of the local churches. Needless to say, the semantics of the technical religious vocabulary of the Qurʾān, the spelling of the names of biblical figures, and the often subtle biblical allusions presuppose an intimate knowledge of biblical literature in its Syro-Aramaic tradition. Syro-Palestine was heavily Christianised by the seventh century. Although there is some evidence of Christianity and Judaism in “happy” and “deserted” Arabia during this period, it just does not appear to have had the critical mass necessary to launch a new religion. Furthermore, the theological, doctrinal controversies that gave rise to the “heresies” that permeated Late Antique society were largely absent, or rather were not so significant outside of the Roman Empire. Thus, all of the contemporary epigraphical, literary, and linguistic evidence points to Islam being a product of Arabs living in Syro-Palestine.

This claim stands in stark contrast to the traditional narrative of a *blitzkrieg* from the Hijaz into Syro-Palestine. This event has vexed modern archaeologists. There is simply no archaeological support for a quick, violent and destructive invasion of Syro-Palestine as reported by traditional Islamic sources. Instead, excavations reveal a continuity of occupation and culture: the period in question is, archaeologically speaking, quite uneventful and
The major cultural changes in ceramics and the like (such as the introduction of glazed wares) only occur in the eighth century. There is an uninterrupted settlement continuum through the Umayyad period (in which the mosaic as an art-form reached its peak) into Abbasid times. Even then the change is gradual rather than sudden. Where there was change, it consisted of a tendency towards smaller settlements in the countryside, which became favoured over towns. Archaeologically speaking, then, an Arab or Muslim conquest of Syro-Palestine is invisible. And the reason for this was that the Arabs were already living in the region as evidenced by their language.

In the end, archaeology, epigraphy and linguistics mitigate against a Hijazi origin of the Qur’ān. The latter can only be a product of Hellenistic Syro-Palestine.

1. Introduction

We have now seen that, based on archaeology, script geography and areal linguistics in the Late Antique Roman-Byzantine Middle East (including Arabia), the Qur’ān could not have originated in the Arabic script or language in the Mecca/Medina region. Current epigraphic and linguistic knowledge decisively contradicts the traditional narrative; one must instead look more closely at greater Syria, toward the Ghassanids and in particular the Lakhmids or the descendants of deported Arabs from in and around Merv. This is where the precursor of the Arabic language we know today was spoken, and where the transition from Aramaic to Arabic script was completed. If these arguments for how and where the Qur’ān was written down are examined, then much of its content will be easier to understand.

The following article will proffer a discussion on the theological and technical loan-words in the Qur’ān. By taking these into consideration, it becomes clear that Syria must be considered as the most likely place of origin of the holy book of Islam.

A reader of the Qur’ān will quickly notice its biblical legacy. What also stands out, however, is how the Qur’ān understands the Bible. This supposedly revealed book asserts the biblical lore it conveys as historical fact. The Qur’ān is guilty of the same mistake that many Christians and Jews still make today, specifically, confusing revelatory truth, or biblical historiography, with actual history. As the Qur’ān largely recognises the historical validity of Judaeo-Christian salvation history, as would be expected based on the period of its writing, which can be seen for example in 2:136 (also 3:84):
qūlū āmānna bil-lāhi wa-mā unzila ilaynā wa-mā unzila ilā ʾibrāhīma wa-
ʾismāʿīla wa-ʾIsā muṣā wa-ʾIsā wa-mā ʾūt iya mūsā wa-ʿīsā wa-mā ʾūt iya l-nabiyyūna min rabbihim lā nufarriqu bayna ʾaḥadin min-hum
wanaḥnu lahu muslimūna

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allāh and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered. (Pickthall)

Thus the Qurʾān cannot claim any historical authenticity for itself. Historical and critical biblical research over roughly the past two-hundred years has uncovered the complex origins and history of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament, granting some aspects remain to be clarified in detail. Nonetheless, while academic Bible research can show that hardly any story in the Bible is historically true in the modern sense of the word, this must also apply to the versions of these biblical stories which appear in the Qurʾān. This subject would best be clarified elsewhere, but in passing we merely want to note, for instance, that the narrative of the Deluge clearly must have originated from a similar topos out of Mesopotamia, where floods were very frequent and where a very early literary model of the (Sumero-
)Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh came from. Another example is the question of whether Abraham/Ibrahim was the first monotheist. This can be ruled out. Today we know that the blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek (Genesis 14:19) does not refer to a single God as the translation based on an understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews might suggest (“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth”). Rather, this verse refers to three deities (a more correct translation would be: “Blessed be Abraham by Elyon, El, [and El], the Creator of heaven and earth.”) The same goes for Moses. There is no way he could have been the founder of Israelite Monotheism (and it must be explicitly noted that the monotheism attributed to Moses has nothing to do with the Amarna period in Egypt). For one, the narratives concerning him have a complex history of composition which only began centuries after the events were allegedly narrated. Similar remarks could be made in regard to
the doctrine of angels or prophecy. Hence, the Qur’ānic understanding of the Bible rather represents the preliminary end of a long history of development. The Qur’ān therefore largely follows in the traditions of the Judaeo-Christian divine revelations.  

But where does this monotheistic, biblical, influence on the Qur’ān come from? In the past, also based on Islamic traditional literature, it has been reported that local Jewish and Christian Arabic tribes exerted varying degrees of influence on “Muḥammad.” Some epigraphical evidence also suggests a history of Judaism in Arabia, as well as Christian missions in the region. Of course, there were also various tribes with diverse traditional Semitic religions other than Judaism and Christianity, and the Qur’ān pursues a polemic against these as well, although surprisingly enough quite imprecisely. Some evidence for these religions has been found in the form of inscriptions, although these, as we have noted, are not particularly helpful or informative and are mostly related to the kingdom of Sheba in present day Yemen. North Arabian inscriptions are for the most part simply graffiti and mostly inconsequential, except perhaps for possible theophoric elements in the individual names. Although it is entirely possible that an originally pagan “Muḥammad” could have had Jewish and Christian teachers from whom he would have been taught about both Judaism and Christianity, as well as about the Old and New Testaments from which he created a new, autonomous, religion, I have my doubts about this interpretation.  

Although there is still a lot of work to be done in the archaeological exploration of Arabia, so far this research has simply not produced sufficient evidence for mass conversion to Judaism and Christianity in the region to make a plausible case supporting the idea of a direct transfer of these religions to Islam. This applies especially to Christianity, which in my opinion is presupposed by the Qur’ān. On the other hand, there is nothing in the holy book of Islam which could be exclusively interpreted as Jewish, or at least no traditions which could be evaluated and attributed uniquely to (rabbinic) Judaism. The Qur’ānic stories originating from the Hebrew Bible certainly could have come from a Christian source, for example from an Aramaic translation of the Bible.  

To thoroughly investigate the possible origins of the Qur’ān, it is essential to analyse the text itself.  

One particularly notable problem with trying to do this is that a critical edition of the Qur’ānic text does not exist. That is, no raw consonantal text (رَاسُمٌ - rasm) without diacritical marks (إِعْجَامٌ - iʿǧām) with variant readings of relevant early manuscripts exists. There is also no diachronic etymological dictionary of Arabic. The current stage of text-critical research into the Qur’ānic text takes the Cairo edition of the Qur’ān as the standard, which essentially means that Qur’ānic textual criticism is at the same stage of development as were biblical studies in the seventeenth-century. This was a
time when a conflict was raging over whether or not the Masoretic vowel-pointing was revealed together with the text itself to Moses on Mount Sinai. Some Jewish scholars, such as Ibn Ezra, had previously pointed out that the addition of vowels must have originated with the Tiberian Masoretes only in the Middle Ages. This thesis gained notoriety among Christian scholars in the sixteenth century through Elias Levita, although it was highly contested, especially by the Buxdorfs. It was Louis Cappel who first scientifically proved this theory in his anonymous work *Arcanum Punctationis Revelatum*, which was published by the Leyden professor Thomas Erpenius in 1624. Since then, and in fact even before then, the text of the Hebrew Bible, as well as that of the New Testament, was understood in a context of ongoing change. Thus the Old and New Testaments should not historically be considered “canons.” This term must be understood here as an anachronism, in part thanks to many recent discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. The development of comparative linguistics has also helped to transform our understanding of these texts. No respectable Old Testament Bible scholar today would still rely on works like מְמַורְרַת מְנַחֵם by the tenth century Menahem ben Jakob ibn Saruq of Cordoba, or שְׁרוֹשְׁת קַאסְפִי ("Chains of Silver") of the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries by Joseph ibn Kaspi from the Provence region. Similarly, no scholar would rely on early scientific dictionaries, which in some respects are based on the work of mediaeval Jewish scholars. One such example would be the *Lexicon hebraicum et chaldaicum complectens omnes voces, tam primas quàm derivatas, quœ in Sacris Bibliis, Hebræâ, and ex parte Chaldæâ linguâ scriptis extant ...* (Basel, 1631\(^1\)), by the Buxdorfs (père et fils). It was very well known in its time, as was the *Lexicon et commentarius sermonis hebraici et chaldaici veteris testamenti ...* (Amsterdam, \(^1\)1669; \(^2\)Frankfurt, 1689) of Johannes Coccejus from Bremen. Regardless, it is likely that many theologians today—to their own detriment—would not understand enough Latin to use these resources anyway!

These works were ground-breaking in some respects at the time of their writing, but for modern academic Bible study they have become obsolete. The advancement of academic Hebrew and biblical Aramaic lexicography over the course of the last two centuries can be seen by the various editions of Wilhelm Gesenius’ lexicons.\(^6\) The eighteenth edition of this publication has recently been completed by the Old Testament scholar and Egyptologist Herbert Donner from Kiel, and is now regarded as the “state of the art” tool for serious Bible scholars. The older works, especially those compiled by mediaeval Rabbis, are of course still valuable. They are important in their own right for research into the rabbinical, or classical Jewish understanding of biblical writings—I even used the first edition of Gesenius on occasion during my studies of rabbinical texts. However, they are now essentially useless for
understanding the conceptual meaning of biblical words and texts at the time of their supposed writing. This makes it all the more surprising that Qur’ānic exegesis is still based on pre-scientific works, such as the deservedly famous – Lisān al-ʿarab of Ibn Manzur, living in the thirteenth/fourteenth century, or – Al-qāmūs al-muhīṭ by al-Firuzabadi, who lived in fourteenth/fifteenth century Iran.

These dictionaries, as well as those produced by Western scholars, offer profound support for the reading of classical Arabic texts, but are only of limited use in the philological work related to the “first Arabic book,” since they assume the later Islamic interpretation of it. Here would be the place to mention the Lexicon Arabico-Latinum of Jacob Golius, a Leyden scholar and Erpenius’ student (Leyden, 1653), as well as the revised edition by Georg Wilhelm Freytag (Lexicon Arabico-Latinum, 4 Vols.; Halle, 1830–1837). Also worth mentioning are Al-Zabidi’s – Tāǧ al-ʿarūs and the subsequent extended Arab-English Lexicon (incomplete; London, 1863–1893) by the English scholar Edward William Lane as well as the Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes (Leyden, 1881) by the Dutch Orientalist Reinhart Dozy and the Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache by the Tübingen arabist Manfred Ullmann (Wiesbaden, 1970–). Despite Fück’s conclusion that a philological-etymological dictionary would be required for any translation of the Qur’ān, as for study of the Bible, such a resource does not actually exist for the former. The most recent Qur’ānic dictionary is the Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’ānic Usage by the scholars Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, published (twice!) by the renowned Leyden publishing house E.J. Brill in 2010. This dictionary is far from reaching the same scientific level as the new edition of the “Koehler-Baumgartner” biblical Hebrew lexicon, also published by E.J. Brill, which includes epigraphical findings and results of comparative Semitic linguistics, among other things. The older works certainly drew from the most current knowledge of their time, but the newer Qur’ānic works have yet to reach a state of the art academic level, thus scientific philological study of the Qur’ān is still for the most part impossible.

The problems with interpreting the Qur’ān are essentially the same as with Bible exegesis. Religions are human creations and are thus constantly evolving: they are not fixed programmes, despite what fundamentalists say. Without critical analysis, any reading of for example the Germania by Tacitus, Roman Law, the Bible, the Qur’ān, Don Quixote by Cervantes, or any other literary work, will only ever be understood in terms of the present views and circumstances of the reader. For example, every Christian today knows at least roughly what is supposedly meant by the religious terms “Son,” “Trinity,” and “Last Supper.” However, the current meaning(s) of these words simply represent the provisional end of a long semantic evolution, and in no way have the same meaning they did during the time when Jesus is said to
have lived. Historical linguistic research into the meanings of Hebrew and Greek words is well established, but with Arabic this work has hardly yet begun. With this method, we can see that the Donatio Constantini is a forgery and that the surviving copies of the Karelsprivilege have nothing to do with Charlemagne. The Greek of the New Testament is not the Greek of the Homeric epics; the language of the Hebrew Bible is not the same rabbinic language of the Mishna and the Tosefta. Likewise, the Arabic of the commentators (مفسرون – mufassirūn) is not the Arabic of the Qur’ān.

Here, it must be pointed out that the philological method is universally applicable; it can be applied to any text. Although the traditional commentary literature (تفسير – tafsir) on the Qur’ān is important for understanding this book in the context of Islamic traditions, it is not really useful for research into its origins and original meaning. This problem has been previously mentioned on occasion, even by Old Testament scholars who regularly draw on Arabic vocabulary for their research. The remarks of L. Kopf are important to note here:

A large portion of the vocabulary that Arabic philologists have recorded and interpreted was not previously known to them either from everyday usage or from comprehensive reading. Their main task, then, was not to find a clear and definitive meaning for words that were already known to every scholar, but rather to find meanings for rare and lesser-known words, which they very well may have encountered for the first time in their professional endeavours. There were two essential foundations for this type of research which were missing, specifically knowledge of other Semitic languages and the availability of large and systematically structured sets of linguistic data. As a result, many imprecise and even completely absurd definitions arose. The numerous varying meanings which have been assigned to many seldom-used Arabic words should be seen as the result of efforts undertaken without adequate resources by philologists attempting to explain difficult expressions using the resources available to them … Since the knowledge of other Semitic languages was missing and parallel passages were often not available for comparison, the floodgates were opened to this type of guesswork. Especially often, the use of different methods led to varying results. Along with the erroneous definitions provided by philologists themselves were others which were motivated by either religious considerations … or old linguistic traditions of the "pre-scientific" times.

An example of this can be seen in the oldest monument of the Arabic language, the كتب العين by Al-Ḫalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahid, which does not even discuss commonplace words like كلب “dog,” كثير “many,” or even the very common adverb كل – kull “all.” Kopf provides
a good example of the workings of traditional Arabic philology (art. cit. 298) from the above mentioned - Al-qāmūs al-muḥīṭ, specifically the common word كَرْسِي - kursî “chair.” This lexeme is obviously related to the Hebrew lexeme כִּס “throne” (but must be borrowed from a later Aramaic form such as Syriac كُرُسْ - kursyā), but in this work it surprisingly takes on the meaning “knowledge,” alongside its primary meaning. This is due to the “Throne Verse” (2:255) of the Qur’ān:

\[
\text{wāsiʿa kursiyahu l-samāwāti wal-arda}
\]

“His Throne comprehends Heaven and Earth.”

There are many such examples from traditional Arabic lexicography. However, the previous example makes the problem sufficiently obvious: the traditional dictionaries are not helpful in determining the Qur’ānic meaning of Arabic words. They are more comparable to unrealistic thesauri. Imagine what would happen if Beowulf or Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales were read using a dictionary of modern English usage. Goethe’s “Seek only to confuse people, it is too difficult to please them” surely applies, then, to research on Arabic words of the Qur’ān.

2. Foreign Words as a Feature of Cultural Exchange

Thus, there is no academic critical edition of the Qur’ān and no scientific study of its lexicon. Anyone who reads the Qur’ān in Arabic (or is even perplexed by the varying renditions of the translations), will quickly become confused. Each word can seemingly be assigned an unexpected meaning according to the preferences of each researcher, thanks to the legacy of the older traditions. A student of comparative Semitic linguistics will also be confused, as the necessity of such leaps often remains a mystery.

What also stands out to Semiticists is the high frequency of foreign words in Qur’ānic Arabic. Foreign words are an interesting linguistic phenomenon; they can reveal something about the history of the speakers of a language and their past encounters. We can see this in German, for example. The vocabulary relating to wine production is of Latin origin, suggesting that this aspect of Germanic culture was introduced by the Romans (for example, “Wein” (“wine”) < viminus, “Kelter” (“wine-press”) < calcatura etc.). This becomes especially clear when we also consider the fact that the regions in Germany where traditionally the most wine is produced previously belonged to the Roman Empire – beer was the traditional beverage of the Germanic peoples.

It is also not surprising that the English Christian vocabulary has largely Latin origins as well: advent, accident (accidens < συμβεβηκός), confession,
confirmation, Eucharist, host, liturgy, mass, mission, oblate, passion, pastor, real presence, sacrament, substance etc., leaving no doubt as to how and from where Christianity spread to the English (vis-à-vis the Greek derivation of such words in Slavic languages and even in Arabic). It is important to note here that these words have a specific theological meaning in English, regardless of what their definitions are in classical Latin (or their respective etymologies). In addition to these loan-words, there are also so-called loan-translations. These are verbatim (verbum pro verbo) translations from Latin to English which (etymologically) make no sense in the latter. The meanings of the terms are thus derived from the donor language, like “holy spirit” (<spiritus sanctus), “holy” (<sanctus), “shepherd” (<pastor), “body” (corpus <σῶμα), “baptism” (<baptismus) or even “God,” in the sense of a single and specific entity (<deus), etc. Most of these words have long since been adopted into English (as well as other European languages) and are no longer even perceived as foreign.

Thus it should come as no surprise that there are also foreign words and loan-translations in the Bible. For example, the Old Testament contains lexemes derived from Akkadian (and Sumerian), Egyptian, Greek, Aramaic etc. The Greek New Testament further reflects its origin in the Semitic world through its usage of many borrowed terms, like Mammon (Matthew 16:24; Luke 6:9,11,13) or the last words of Jesus: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?” (Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46 <Psalm 22:2). The use of these words, especially in the field of theology or in other scientific areas, is not a coincidence, but rather has a lot to do with the introduction of previously unknown novel concepts or terms into the intellectual realm of a particular language. One example of an old (pre-Hebrew) loan word in the Old Testament must suffice here to briefly illustrate this process: The Hebrew loan-word הֵיכָל – hēkāl “temple” (actually found in all Northwest Semitic languages) is derived from Akkadian ekallum, which itself goes back to Sumerian é.gal “big house.” This indicates that the construction of an architecturally specific building, imagined as the house of a deity, is a custom that has its origins in Mesopotamia. Confirmation of this can also be found in the archaeology of the Early Dynastic Period (early Bronze Age). Similarly, there are many loan words in the tale of the construction of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9), which describes the construction of a ziggurat (namely, inspired by the famous one commenced by the neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II). In this case, the loan words come from a later language stratum, like for example לְבֵנָד “a sun-dried mud brick” – in Akkadian libittu. The fabrication and use of mud bricks was also a Mesopotamian practice—in Palestine one built with stone.
3. The loan-vocabulary of the Qur’ān

Returning to the main topic of this paper—the foreign words (including the loan-translations) in the text of the Qur’ān—it should have been made clear above that these must relate to the texts and faiths with which the authors of the Qur’ān were in contact. In this section I deal primarily with the work of the Australian scholar Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān*, which thankfully has been re-published by the Brill publishing house (2007).

In this compilation, he deals with three hundred and eighteen different words (without inflected forms; in the following, I add a few more). The Qur’ān contains three to seven thousand words, depending on how the different word-forms are counted. Bearing this in mind, between six and ten percent of the vocabulary is of foreign origin. This in itself is not surprising, considering that approximately eighty percent of English words have foreign roots (from an etymological point of view), without this completely obscuring its Germanic origins. With respect to the Qur’ān it is important to note, however, that all of the important theological terms stem from Aramaic and in fact largely from Syriac. A few are potentially of Ethiopian or Persian origin, but many Iranian words were in all likelihood borrowed into Arabic through Syriac. I will also show that a few key terms demonstrate prior knowledge of the classical Syriac translation of the Bible, the *Peshitta*. An interesting example of this situation is the word ḫardal “mustard seed” in the Qur’ānic verses 21:47:

\[
\text{wa-nada’u l-mawāzīna l-qisṭa li-yawmi l-qiyāmati fa-lā tuẓlamu nafsun šayʾan wa-ʾin kāna miṯqāla ḥabbatin min ḫardalin ʾātaynā bi-hā wa-kafā binā ḥāsbīn}\\
\text{“And We shall set up balances of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything. And if there be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account.”}
\]

And Qur’ān 31:16

\[
yā-bunayya ʾinna-hā ’in taku mitqāla ḥabbatin min ḫardalin fa-takun fī ṣaḥ-ratin ʾaw fī s-samāwāti ʾaw fī l-ʾardī yaʾit bi-hā l-lāhu ʾinna l-lāha lātfun ḥabar\\
\text{“O my son! If it be (anything) equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, Allāh will bring it}
\]
forth. Verily, Allāh is subtle (in bringing out that grain), well-aware (of its place)."

It will be obvious to a knowledgeable reader that these verses bear a certain resemblance to the "Parable of the Mustard Seed" in Matthew 13:31–32 and to the "Healing of a Demon-Possessed Boy" in Matthew 17:20 (Mark 4:31, Luke 13:19 and 17:6 have less bearing here). The Peshitta actually translated the Greek ὡς κόκκον σινάπεως with ܡܳܪܝܐ ܕܳܗܳܪܳܠܳܐ. The Arabic word is also found in allegedly "pre-Islamic" poetry (Divan Hudhail 97:11), suggesting at least the possibility that the word was adopted even earlier. Although this may be the case, the fact is that the Aramaic loanword ܘܗܳܪܳܠܳܐ is not a common lexeme (and has more common synonyms), and also that it is used in the specific context of the same parable by all accounts, make it extremely likely that we are dealing with the influence of an Aramaic source.

The example given above is striking. However, it could be argued that this was a migrant word which was acquired along with the product it describes, as is the Greek word cited in the Gospels τό σίναπι (comp. German “Senf”) which seems to come ultimately from Akkadian. There are certainly examples of such as well. Consider خمر “wine” (2:219; 5:90f; 12:36,41; 47:5), which undoubtedly stems from the Aramaic ܚܡܪܐ (compare this to the word used in Old Testament poetry ܚܡܪܐ – hâmâr <*hâmār), since the wine trade in the Syro-Arabian world at that time was firmly in Christian hands (and the Arabic root means "to cover, to hide.") The word خبز “bread”– not a customary food item among the ancient Arabs–is only found in the dream of the baker in Sura Yusuf (12:36). It stems from the Old Ethiopic እዓ боęż (with the retroactive assimilation < እዓ боژ(bus), compare to Tigré እዓ ኣዝ (thick, round bread.”) Also consider زجاجة “glass,” a commodity most likely imported from the Aramaic world –זגעזתא (cf. Revelations 21:21) or זײע “olive,” a tree not native to Arabia –זײט (this word for this fruit was also lent to Africa, for example زײט/זײט – djeit/djoit, ʐײ – zayt, and to the East, e.g. classical Armenian ճետ – jët’ and Georgian ჭეთი – zeti with the meaning “oil”– the primary exported product made from the olive), because the tree was originally only native to the eastern Mediterranean coast. These loan words are interesting because they point toward Syria as the source of the main cultural contact of the Arabs, and much less toward Ethiopia. There are also isolated (Middle-) Persian loan words, mostly for imported luxury goods, such as "ستانق "silk brocade" (i.e. from the same source which the English word is ultimately derived from). In such exceptional cases,
the words must have been borrowed from Persian and not through Syro-
Aramaic due to their morpho-phonetic features. Old South-Arabic loan
words are surprisingly rare, especially since according to the traditional
narrative, the Qur’ān emerged in the “back-yard” of this linguistic and
cultural entity.

Although these examples are very interesting and warrant further study in
their own right, they shed but little light on the linguistic origins of the
Qur’ān—they all could have been borrowed at any given time: the relevant
trade routes are ancient. We are interested in focussing on the technical
theological vocabulary, as it was described above for English. When we find
Syro-Aramaic vocabulary in the Arabic of the Qur’ān whose specific religious
and liturgical meanings depend on the donor language, we can draw con-
clusions about the intellectual environment and the sphere of influence which
led to its emergence. However, in the following analysis some philological ex-
ceptions are taken into account. They are already apparent from the examples
given above. As Jeffery has already noted (op. cit. 39f.), foreign words in the
Qur’ān belong to three basic groups:

1. Words that cannot be Arabic (or even Semitic) at all, like for example
   یُصُبرَّ (istabraq) “silk brocade.” This could be compared in English to
   the word “schnitzel.”

2. Words which have attested Arabic roots, but with a different meaning,
   like for example خَمْر (ḫamr) “wine” (most of the infamous homony-
   mous roots in Arabic belong in this category). This is roughly com-
   parable to the English word “cool” in German; although it is etymo-
   logically related to kühl, in German it takes on only a specific meaning
derived from modern colloquial English.

3. Homonyms, words which are genuinely Arabic but have a nuanced
   technical meaning alongside their Arabic meaning and must be
   borrowed. An English example would be “gill”– which usually refers
   to the breathing organs of fish and is of Germanic origin; the measure
   mostly used for alcohol, derives from French as indicated by its pro-
   nunciation, and ultimately from a Late Latin term for a jar. Loan
   translations (“calques”) also belong in this category (see e.g., “Holy
   Spirit” supra).

I would also like to add a fourth category, which is:

4. Lexemes with a seemingly Semitic root which must be borrowed due
to their morpho-phonetic forms. These include the names of biblical
figures, such as the Patriarchs, as I will show in the following sections.
Compare in English “vessel” (vs “vat”).
4. The Vocabulary of Writing in Arabic

Without getting into the specifics of word formation and other morphological details of Semitic languages, I would like to briefly discuss one of their main characteristics: the interaction between consonants and vowels. The consonants provide a rough indication of the meaning; for instance the root √ktb usually has something to do semantically with writing. Through the addition of vowels (but also consonants)—mostly according to a particular modification sequence—the specific meaning can emerge, as we see with the given root:

- /kataba/ “he wrote”
- /katabnā/ “we wrote”
- /yaktub/ “he writes/will write”
- /naktub/ “we (will) write”
- /aktaba/ “he dictated”
- /yuktibu/ “he dictates/will dictate”
- /istiktaba/ “he had (something) written/copied”
- /yastaktibu/ “he orders/will order (something) written/copied”
- /kātib/ “writer” (actually “writing”—active participle)
- /maktūb/ “letter, something written” (passive participle)
- /maktāb/ “office, desk”
- /maktaba/ “library, bookshop”

As this root is widespread throughout Semitic languages, the problem is obvious. In the North-West Semitic branch of Semitic languages, both the Canaanite branch (e.g. Phoenician-Punic and Hebrew) and Aramaic, as well as Ugaritic of the Late Bronze Age, attest this root in this meaning in various derivations. However, writing is a relatively new phenomenon in human history. Its first beginnings hearken back to southern Mesopotamia of the fourth millennium bc, and then somewhat later in Egypt. Our own alphabet developed under Egyptian influence and its origins are to be found among Semitic miners in the Sinai during the first half of the second millennium bc. Consequently, the original meaning of this root cannot logically have been “to write.” Further proof of this lies in the fact that this root is found neither in Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian), nor in South-Semitic. We can thus establish that the root √ktb only came to describe the action of writing at some later time, and only in the North-West Semitic languages. Other branches of the Semitic language family used other roots, since different and certainly older writing traditions than what we today call Arabic existed there, as we have briefly seen (supra §0).
In addition to semantically describing “writing,” this root in Arabic also carries a second, independent meaning, namely “to bring together, to bind, to close, to stitch.” This is an example of an homonymous root, whereby one meaning is from Arabic itself and the other was necessarily borrowed and adopted into the language. The meaning “to write” must have been taken over from Aramaic when the Arabs of Syro-Palestine adopted and adapted Aramaic writing culture. Jeffery (op. cit. 249) suggests that the borrowing may have happened at al-Ḥīrah (الهيرة) – the seat of the Lakhmids – as I have discussed elsewhere. Regardless, the use of the root √ktb in its borrowed sense of “to write” further indicates the influence of the Syro-Aramaic writing culture on the Arabs resident in Syro-Palestine.

If we look at the semantic domain of literacy in Arabic, interestingly enough we find only loan-words. Take, for example, the root √ṣḥf mentioned above. This root is attested in the Arabic of the Qur’ān as the noun صفح – ṣuḥuf (the plural of صَحْيَة – ṣahīfa “sheet, page;” Modern Standard Arabic: "newspaper"), always in the sense of something previously revealed: 20:133 (صَفَحَةٌ مَّا فِي الصُّفْحَةِ الْأُولَى) as well as 53:36 (صَفَحَةٌ مُّقْسَمَةٌ) 74, 52; 80:10; 87:18f. (in nahalî the plural of صفح - ṣuḥuf mūsá) and with an indication of the new revelation 98:2 (رَسُولُ مِنْ نِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ ِلَّا مُحَذِّبَهُ). There is no doubt that we are dealing with a loan-word from South Semitic (linguistically, not necessarily geographically speaking). It is already well-documented in “pre-Islamic” poetry for one, and it also appears in Sabaean and Qatabanian as TfAS – ṣḥft (pl. fAS – ṣḥf) “document.” This root was borrowed once again later on into Arabic, however, this time from Classical Ethiopian as صفح – muṣḥaf “book” (actually, a bound volume of the Qur’ān) in Gə̀z̀ this is the customary word for “book,” but also “sacred writing” (i.e. the Bible), i.e., ṣwarḥ – maṣḥaf (also pl. ṣwarḥ – maṣḥafāt [scil. ṣwarḥ – qaddusāt]). The Arabic verbal derivation with the meaning “to misread, to falsely place diacritical marks” is in Form II (D-Stem), which here is an indication of its secondary, nominal derivation (which in turn produced the noun صفح – tasḥīḥuf “mistake in writing, distortion”). Here we can see the Qur’ān in the context of Late Antiquity: the vocabulary of writing is borrowed from the neighbouring cultures from which the Arabs took their writing traditions. Since the (Syro-Palestinian) Arabs were for the most part in contact with the Syro-Aramaic writing culture, as is evident from the visual resemblance which both writing systems display, it is not surprising that most of the roots describing this action were borrowed from that culture. Other terms come from more distant regions such as southern Arabia and Ethiopia.

There are other Qur’ānic expressions with reference to the written word that are also borrowed. For example, صَجَّال – sigill, a hapax legomenon, is documented in the Qur’ān only in 21:104. The classic commentators had great
difficulty with this word and translated it in different ways, such as “angel” as-Sijill (i.e., “engel” in Keyser’s Dutch translation), “the secretary of Muhammad” (Pickthall), or as “sheet” (“Blatt” Paret). In post-Qur’anic Arabic, it is defined as “an anthology of judiciary rulings” (>“archive, land registry,” etc.) and forms a denominal verb the D-stem “to record, to note.” Although the relevant passage yawma naṭwī s-samā’ā katayyi s-siǧilli li-l-kutubi (21:104) is still difficult (at least for me), this word originates from Latin, specifically from sigillium (<signum)—also the origin of the word “seal” in English. This word was also borrowed by Greek as σιγίλλον and often had the meaning “imperial edict” or “deed” in the Byzantine Empire. Whether the word was borrowed into Arabic directly from Greek or through a derivation of the Syriac sigiliyōn “diploma (spec. quo chalĭfā patriarcham confirmat)” (Brockelmann, 459a; compare, for instance msglsnytʾ “libellus, scriptum accusatorium”) remains uncertain. In my opinion the latter is more likely.

Furthermore, the word Qur’ān itself is an Aramaic loan-word, as Chr. Luxenberg convincingly shows (Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran, 2nd edition 2004: 81ff.; cf. Jeffery op. cit. 233f). This word is derived from the root ʿqrʾ (pace al-Jawhari as-Saḥāḥ s.v. qarana!), which primarily means “to read ( aloud)” in modern Arabic. Of course this cannot be the original meaning, for the same reasons discussed above regarding the ʿktb—“writing” must exist before anything can be read. In Akkadian (qerʾu) and in Ugaritic we come across this root in the meaning “to call; to invite.” In South Semitic, this root has nothing to do with the semantic domain of reading. In Sabaic it means “to command” and exists in Old Ethiopian, possibly as a relic, as ḥʾqwʾ rera “to cry out, to knock, to be confused.” But then again, the semantic development of “to call” > “to read out” > “to read aloud” (> “to read”) was only carried out in the North-West Semitic languages (Hebrew, Phoenician-Punic, Aramaic, etc.) during the Iron Age and then further in a particular theological sense, like the Hebrew miqrāʾ “reading” (Nehe- miah 8:8, which the German Revidierte Eberfelder renders literally with “das Vorgelesene,” i.e., “... and caused them to understand the reading”—most other translations render the Hebrew with “book, scroll”), which subsequently became the common designation for the Hebrew Bible in later Hebrew. Following the path set out by Jeffery and Luxenberg, I would also suggest that the Arabic term Qur’ān derives from a Syriac usage such as ḡš’nā (ḏ-ḵṯāḇā) which can also have the meaning “scriptura sacra” (Brockelmann 690b). The same holds true for asfār, the plural of sifr “book,” only found in the Qur’ān in 62:5:
maṭalu llaḏīna ḥummilū t-tawrāta ṯumma lam yahmilu-hā ka-maṭali l-ḥimāri yahmilu 'asfāran

"The likeness of those who are entrusted with the Law of Moses, yet apply it not, is as the likeness of the ass carrying books." (Pickthall)

As well as in 80:15, actually “writer (transcriber)” and not angel, as it is often translated. The root √ṣfr in Arabic has many meanings, for instance: "to remove a woman’s veil," and "to send (someone) away, to expel," "to travel, to go on a journey" etc. In any case, nothing that could be interpreted as “book,” as was even acknowledged by the early commentators, 34 which makes a borrowing from Syriac quite certain. The quote from 62:5 just cited in which the Torah (torah – tawrāt) is cited in conjunction with “books” (asfăr – asfār) makes it clear that (some component of) the Bible was being referred to here, the same way it still is in modern Arabic, e.g. سفر التكوين – Sifr al-takwīn “the Book of Genesis.”

Words derived from this root and with this meaning have a long history in the Syro-Aramaic donor and – sāfrā “scriba.” 35 The Aramaic meaning of this root itself ultimately stems from Akkadian: šaparu “to send (a message), to write (to)” with derivations like šapru “envoy, messenger,” šipāru “regulations, instructions,” šipītu “message, letter, instruction” etc. 36

Another Arabic root denoting things written is again certainly borrowed from Syro-Aramaic and of Akkadian origin, namely √ṣfr. 37 In the Qur’an this verb always appears in relation to the “well-preserved tablets” (fī lawḥin maḥfūzin 85:22), at least in the conventional interpretation 38 (17:58; 33:6; 52:2, 37; 54:53; 68:1; 88:22). The verb šatāru is commonly used in Akkadian to indicate the activity of writing (originally thus “to incise,” much like Greek γράφω) and has nominal derivations like šapru “envoy, messenger,” šiparu “regulations, instructions,” šipītu “message, letter, instruction” etc. 39

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only been documented in the last, monotheistic, period of Sabaean, but a Qatabanian or Sabaean source cannot be ruled out entirely. In any case, we have another term describing writing borrowed from a neighbouring language.

The well-preserved planks, or rather the “guarded planks” (Pickthall), mentioned above, is the last term related to writing to be discussed here. It is interesting in terms of the third category mentioned earlier–it is a true Arabic word with a borrowed technical meaning. The root √lwḥ with the meaning “plank, board” is well-attested throughout the Semitic languages, e.g. Akkadian (nominal) le’u. In Arabic, as well as in “pre-Islamic” poetry, it is used as in Qur’ān 54:13 for the wooden planks of Noah’s Ark: وَحَمَّلْنَا هُوَ عَلَىٰ ثَمَانِيٍّ وَدُسُورٍ – “alwāḥin wa-duḥurin, similar to the ḥawāl – ‘alawāḥ (sg. ḥawā – lawḥ).”

In Acts 27:44 of the Ethiopian version of the New Testament where it specifically refers to the planks used by those who couldn’t swim to save themselves when the boat taking St. Paul to Rome struck a reef before Malta. In Hebrew, it (לַוְחָ) is mentioned in connection with the construction of the altar of burnt-offering in Exodus 27:8 (et passim). The archetype of the Qur’ān is what is being referred to in Sura 85:32, mentioned above, and in 7:145ff. The term refers to the “stone tablets,” which the Lord delivered to Moses on Mt Sinai – the same word we find used in Hebrew in Exodus 24:12 (et passim) which is also used here by the Targums (לָטַהַ) and, significantly, the Peshitta (lawḥā) and, the Peshitta (lawḥā) and, the Peshitta (lawḥā). The semantic development of “board” > “writing tablet” appears to have first occurred in Akkadian, also in the theological sense similar to the le’u ša balāṭi “tablet of life” (that is, on which destinies are written). Wax tablets are apparently being described here, i.e. similar to the tabula cerata or perhaps more appropriately the mediaeval diptycha ecclesiastica. The word had already been recorded in Amarna-Canaanite with this meaning (358:9), also in Ugaritic, Hebrew (e.g. Proverbs 3:3; 7:3; Song of Songs 8:9; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 17:1), and in some forms of Aramaic. So, we have here a technical loan word from Akkadian which spread throughout neighbouring languages. There is no possibility, however, that the Arabic word is directly borrowed from Hebrew–here we must once again look into Aramaic, specifically Syriac. As we noted, in the Peshitta (lawḥā is used in Exodus 24:12 and elsewhere, as well as for the INRI-inscription (τίτλος) of Pilate on Jesus’ cross in John 19:19, for example, and is therefore certainly the source of the Arabic word. 
5. Borrowed Terms in the Qurʾān

5.1 Introduction

So far it has been shown that the literary culture from which the Qurʾān emerged was in close contact with both the Syro-Aramaic region and its local manifestations of Christianity. This has been made clear by the borrowings from Aramaic already discussed. Many of the words discussed here have undergone a long evolution—even the Hebrew word that everyone knows: “Torah”—until they eventually acquired the meanings they now have (or are given) in the Qurʾān. The fact that the Arabic vocabulary with regard to reading and writing stems from the language of the culture(s) from which the writing culture was adopted is not surprising. It can be compared to German lesen (< Latin legere — “to read”) and schreiben (< scribere — “to write”). If we dig a little bit deeper, though, we find a surprising abundance of key theological terms borrowed from Aramaic in the vocabulary of the Qurʾān. Here I will mention just a few from Jeffery’s work with a few additional comments of my own.

5.2 Adam: ﷲ ﻲ ﻢ – ʾādam

The Hebrew word ﷲ ﻲ ﻢ – ʾāḏām, as in Ugaritic, Phoenician etc. means “human(ity)” (in Sabaean, “vassal, subject”). In the Qurʾān however, it appears only in the sense of the name of the first human (compare to ابن أدم – ibn ādam lit. “son of Adam”=”human,” as in 7:35, for example). This interpretation can already be found in the Septuagint. In the Hebrew story of creation, ﷲ ﻲ ﻢ – ʾāḏām was translated as ἄνϑωπος “human” until Genesis 2:15; however, in the next verse, when God places humans in the Garden of Eden, the Hebrew word was understood as a name and was transcribed as Αδαμ. The interpretation of this word as a proper noun “Adam,” can already be found in later books of the Hebrew Bible such as I Chronicles 1:1 and Hosea 6:7. This is also the understanding of this lexeme in the New Testament (for instance Romans 5:14 et passim) and in fact Christianity in general until the early modern period. Although the root √ ’dm retains its Aramaic meaning in Syriac, ﷲ ﻢ ﻲ ﻢ ﻢ – ʾāḏām is always used as the name of the first human, just as in Classical Ethiopian ኢ ﻢ ﻢ – ʾādām. Although this root is well attested in Arabic, for example ﻢ ﻢ ﻢ ﻢ ﻢ – ʾadīm “skin,” its interpretation as the name of the original human assumes a prior knowledge of Christianity or Judaism. Verses like Qurʾān 3:59, 7:172 (تقولوا يوم القيامة – taqūlū yawma l-qiyāmati) and 124:20ff. make it obvious that we are dealing with a Christian influence. Because Adam is only used in the Qurʾān to describe the first human, whereas in Hebrew it was originally used as a term for humans in general, Arabic presupposes a certain exegetical evolution. Thus, this word falls into the third category listed above.
5.3 Islam: الإسلام – al-ʾislām

The root √šlm (>Arab. s-l-m) is well-attested with the meaning “to be complete, finished” in most Semitic languages. Another meaning emerged from this one: “to be healthy, well,” as can be seen in Akkadian. The meaning “peace” as in Hebrew shalom, in the sense of a greeting is a logical development. In Arabic, the IInd form has undergone the development “to make healthy, unharmed” > “to protect from damage” > “to deliver safely” > “to deliver” (compare to the French sur-rendre), in the sense of dedito. The original semantics can certainly be found in the Qurʾān, for example in 31:22 وَمَنْ سَلَمَ وَجِهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ “And whosoever submits his face (himself) to Allāh,” as well as in 2:112 and 131. The verbal root from which the noun الإسلامية – ʾal-ʾislām (causative!) is a nominal derivation, is used here as a religious terminus technicus, once again certainly presupposing a Syriac semantic development. The causative conjugation ʾašlem is also found in Syriac in the sense of “to commit” (Luke 1:2, John 18:35, 19:30 (the Spirit), Acts 8:3 (to a prison); > “to betray” > Matthew 10:4 etc.) but also as a specifically Christian term: “to commit to the faith,” so in the sense of “to be devoted to” or “to be dedicated to” (i.e. devotio). Therefore, Islam does not mean “peace” in the sense of a pacificatio or debellatio, but rather it means to commit oneself to the will of God, i.e. “surrender,” “dedication,” dedicatio. This is another example of a genuine Arabic root which took on a secondary Christian-technical meaning—this belongs in the third category as well.

5.4 God: الله – Allāh

Although there can be no doubt that the root of this word is a good and genuine Arabic lexeme, its morpho-phonetics point rather to Syro-Palestine than to the Hijaz; I have discussed the problems associated with it elsewhere. Briefly, the form ’il as a noun to denote a deity is well-attested in Semitic. The word ’il can in Semitic refer to a god but is also the name of the chief divinity of the Semitic pantheon ’Il (‘El). The singular ’lh (already attested, though rarely in Ugaritic), however, seems to be a back-formation of the plural ’ilm (which is a strategy sometimes employed in Semitic to make a tri-radical root out of a bi-radical one in the plural) that is only found in North-West Semitic and Ancient North Arabian. ’lh is especially common as the generic term for a(n unnamed) god in Aramaic where this form largely replaces ʾlʾ and which also seems to be the source of this form in Ancient North Arabian. The usage in Arabic, however, in which ʾilāh is appended with the article al- (see supra §0) to denote “The God” (i.e. the one and only) and not a god or the chief deity of a pantheon, presumes the invention and evolution of monotheism. The roots of this term can be found in later passages of the Hebrew Bible that
refer to the God of Israel as תָּהְ-אֵל "the God" (instead of using the plural אֵלִים as in Phoenician) which becomes the norm in later Jewish and Christian dialects of Aramaic: e.g. Official Aramaic תָּה-אֵל "you have sworn to me by Yahu, the God" (TAD B2.2, r.4); Syriac אל "the God" (both status emphaticus, i.e. determined). Thus, the base form lh, the usage of the definite article (אֹזְתָּת at-ta'rīf), and that this form, despite the availability of other lexemes (see infra §7.2.2) was used to denote "God" and not just "God," but "God" in a "Judaeo-Christian" understanding shows that this lexeme with this specific meaning was borrowed, also because it starkly contrasts with traditional Semitic forms of divine address. This is further supported by the fact that Arab Christians also use this word when referring to God.48

Further support for the adoption of this term can be found in the usage of epithets for this monotheistic deity. Besides erek (§7.2.2), one also finds e.g. Pickthall "peace of reassurance," Yusuf Ali "assurance," Shakir "tranquility," the officialesque Muhsin Khan translation has "Sakinah (peace and reassurance)." The ultimately Jewish origin of this term was recognised by Keyzer in his Dutch rendition (9:28) "dat de arke w aarin de Godheid woont." In later Rabbinic Judaism, עקינת - šḵīntā (not in the Hebrew Bible, but cf. e.g. Exodus 25:8 וּמְגַדָּשׁ וּמָשָׁקָנטַ ְהוֹצָה "And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them"; Deuteronomy 33:16 לֹּא שָׁקַּן שְׁנָה "and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush"; in later tradition, such as with Saadia Gaon in the tenth century, the term came to mean the "Divine Presence" i.e. אַגְּדוֹת - cf. idem,كتابة الأسامات والاعتقادات - Kitāb ul-ʾamānāt wal-iʿtiqādāt ed. Landauer p. 94) became a term used to indicate that the "Divine Presence" was residing (ושֵׁק - šāḵan) when e.g. "ten are gathered for prayer" (Sanh. 39a), "three sit as judges" (Ber. 6a), "one goes into exile" (Meg. 29a) from whence derived meanings such as "peace," "tranquility," "holiness" etc., attributed to the presence of the divinity, arose (cf. Greek σκηνή/ σκῆνος – lxx "tabernacle" Exodus 26:1 Καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν ποιήσει ς δέκα αὐλαίας ἐκ βύσσου κεκλωσμένη; also Euripides, Ion 806 σκηνάς ἐς ἱεράς). This term, as אַגְּדוֹת - šḵīntā, also entered Christian Syriac with the meaning "divine presence," e.g. Peshitta II Chronicles 5:14 (אָשֶׁר תֵּקַּנְתָּא שָfois הָאֱלֹהִים אָבֵא אלהים אַלְבָּא אֵלָי - "leprosy went out from the presence of the Holy One" (D. Ioannes Parisot, "Aphraatis sapientis persae demonstrationes," in R. Graffin (ed.), Patrologia Syriaca, (Paris, 1894–1907); note also N. Séd, "Les Hymnes sur le Paradis de Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives" Muséon 81 (1968): 455–501). This loan-word presupposes theological developments in Judaism and their borrowing into Oriental Christianity.
5.5 Hell: ǧahannam

This word is clearly borrowed and presupposes a complex development, namely the differentiation between heaven and hell, in other words a final judgement for humanity. This notion, introduced through apocalyptic ideas, is by no means an originally Semitic one. In fact it is not even found in the Hebrew Bible; the dead all descended to Sheol, regardless of their deeds in this life. Sheol in the Hebrew Bible is in many ways quite similar to the archaic Greek notion of Hades. Gehenna was originally the name of a place, ḥānām, the “Valley of (the son of) Hinnom,” in other words where the Jerusalemite Moloch (not a divinity!) cult was practiced (see for example, 2 Kings 23:10, Jeremiah 7:31f, where children were burned alive for the Lord). As for the word-form, there are translations in the Septuagint, along with transcriptions, such as γαΐβενενομ, γαιβαναιεννομ as well as the contracted phonetic form γαιεννα(μ), which is then attested in the New Testament as γέεννα. With regards to the meaning, we find it in the apocryphal literature, e.g. in 1 Enoch⁵⁰, 4 Ezra, and later in the Sibylline Oracles as a place of future punishment for sinners and evildoers. The word appears in the New Testament with this meaning, e.g. Matthew 5, Mark 9 etc. The doctrine of hellfire and the eternal suffering of non-believers, still widespread today, has a long (unhistorical!) history of development–it testifies to a combination of an ancient sacrificial cult, Zoroastrian beliefs, together with a good dose of Hellenistic influence. The Qur’anic-Islamic doctrine of after-life, similar to and derived from the Christian one, is thus a later development, and therefore presumes the development(s) described. The Arabic form with the preserved final -m could indicate a borrowing from Hebrew, however, the Old Ethiopian ǧah/ānam could just as easily be the source of this loan word (possibly through Hebrew or from now lost Greek spelling). Syriac ǧhanna scarcely applies here. Thus the lexeme along with the associated beliefs were necessarily derived from Christianity.⁵¹

5.6 The Satan: ʾšayṭān

Obviously the notion of a master of hell presupposes the concept of hell itself. The Arabic word, like ours, has its origins in Hebrew. The etymology is still unclear; however, the details do not need to be worked out here. In the Hebrew Bible, we find ʾšāṭān in the earlier books with the meaning “adversary,” such as 1 Samuel 29:4 where David is identified as a (possible) satan of the Philistines (lxx: μὴ γινεῖν ἐπίβουλος τῆς παράβουλῆς), as we also see in 1 Kings 11:14, 23:25 and Numbers 22:22–32. Only the Chronicler uses this word as the name of a particular person, the (proto-)Devil, 21:1 (compare to the lxx: Καὶ ἔστη διάβολος ἐν τῷ Ἰσραήλ καὶ ἔπεσεν τὸν Δαυὶ
τοῦ ἁρικήσας τὸν Ἴσααλ), which was most likely also meant in Zachariah 2:1f. (an intermediate stage might be the Book of Job). The origin of this term could stem from legal terminology, where it refers to a "prosecutor," such as in Psalms 109:6. In the New Testament, we find this form, the Σατανά (διάβολος, lit. "the confuser"), also found in the Rabbinic literature (although entirely absent in later Judaism), which developed into the personification of evil—in contrast to Jesus, who is portrayed as an advocate, the παράκλητος. This meaning is also found in the Peshitta, الساتان (this form could stem from Hebrew, just as well as from Greek). The Arabic form الساتان may have previously been borrowed by pre-Islamic Arabic in the sense of "evil spirits," for example 6:71:

ka-llaḏī ṣahwat-hu š-šayāṭīnu fī l-ʾarḍi ḥayrāna l a-hū āṣḥābun yadʿūna-hū ilā l-hudā ʾtinā

"... like one bewildered whom the devils have infatuated in the earth, who hath companions who invite him to the guidance ..." (Pickthall)

Which is roughly a synonym to the جن – ǧinn "genies." Although this could be the case, the word is probably borrowed from the Ethiopian Ḥyṯr – ṣayṭān (<Aramaic), a lexeme that can also possess this nuanced meaning (pl. Ḥyṯr – ṣayṭān, pl. Ḥyṯr – ṣayṭānāt "demons"). In any case, the connexion between the incarnation and this word makes the semantic development clear and shows that it culminated in Christianity, as found e.g. in 58:19.

5.7 Forgiveness: حُطّة – ḥṭṭa

In this context I will also discuss حُطّة “forgive” (2:58; 7:161) and the common verb حَطَّى “to sin” ( خطئة “to sin”), all of which presume the semantic evolution of this root which took place in Hebrew. The root ḥṭʼ originally had the meaning "to fall short of, to miss,” similar to Arabic "to miss the mark (shooting)” in the causative IVth stem. In this sense, the word is used, for example, in Isaiah 65:20 “... for one who dies at a hundred years will be thought a mere youth, and one who falls short of (¨¥§¤ḥāḥōṭä’, literally “misses”) a hundred years will be considered accursed.” The beginning of the development “to miss” > “to displease” (as a result of misconduct) can be seen, for instance, in Proverbs 8:36 “But those who miss (_highlight_ – ḥoṭʾi’) me injure themselves. All who hate me love death.” From here, the developmental path to indicate a misdemeanour is easily understandable—a development that was also completed in Akkadian ḥatû”, Ugaritic ḥṭ’, as well as in Sabaeæ, Qatabanian, etc. However, there is a large difference between offence (with or without intention) and sin, in the sense of a moral offence against a deity. This understanding is not found in the older parts of the Hebrew Bible, but rather is the result of a later, complicated, theological evolution of the
term, which cannot be examined in any detail here. Nonetheless, the New Testament notion of sin is not a self-evident development. In this specific theological-technical sense we find the Syriac سـيِّمـهـ - ḥṭā “peccavit” (with nominal derivations, such as سـيِّمـهـ - ḥṭā, سـيِّمـهـ - ḥṭīṯā, سـيِّمـهـ - ḥṭīṯānāyā, سـيِّمـهـ - ḥṭāyā etc.). In Arabic as well as in Old Ethiopian, this root with the semantic domain briefly touched upon here can only have been borrowed from Syriac. In fact, its use in these languages presupposes hamartiology.

The meaning of the word حـمـجـة - ḥiṭṭa “forgive” is clear to all commentators; however, their work has not yet produced a satisfactory derivation. Based on their suggestions, I suspect a possible borrowing of the meaning from Hebrew Piʿel (D-Stem), ʿוֹשׁ - ḥiṭṭēʾ “to cleanse (of sin).”

5.8 Angel: ملائكة - malāʾika

Finally, one other important term for Islam should be mentioned. Once again, this term underwent a long semantic development before it came to have its Qur’anic meaning. The word ملائكة - malāʾika “angel” obviously assumes a prior conception of the existence of such spiritual beings. Indeed, this word stems from the Hebrew מַלְאָךְ - malʾāḵ (from the root לְק - lʾk “to send a message”). This nominal derivation means “messenger,” or the bearer of a message in the older parts of the Hebrew Bible, as in Ugaritic, for example. In this sense it is even attested in Ezekiel 23:40:

"And furthermore, that you have sent for men to come from afar, unto whom a messenger (מַלְאָךְ - malʾāḵ) was sent"

That this word came to mean a divine being sent by God to bring a message to humans is the result of an inner-“Israelite” development mitigated by external influences. The later traditions that we find in the New Testament, as well as elsewhere, depicted Gabriel (מַלְאָך - gabriʾel “Man” or “Hero of God,” Daniel 8:15ff; 9:20ff.) and Michael (מִיכָּאֶל - mīḵāʾēl “Who is like God?”, Daniel 10, 13ff.) as “angels”—it cannot be a coincidence that these just happen to be the only two angels referenced by name in the Qur’ān, as in 2:98:

من كان عدوان الله ملائكة ورسوله جبريل وميكائيل فإن الله عدوان للكافرين

man kāna ʿaduwwan li-lāhī wa-malāʾikati-hi wa-rusuli-hi wa-ʿgibrila wa-mikālā wa-ʾinna llāha ʿaduwwun li-lkāfirīna

“Whoever is an enemy to Allāh, His Angels, His Messengers, Jibril (Gabriel) and Mikāʾil (Michael), then verily, Allāh is an enemy to the disbelievers.”
The use of both the terminus technicus “malāʾika” and the proper nouns “ǧibrīl” and “mīḥāʾīl” must have been borrowed, in terms of both the words themselves and the underlying concept. These words were borrowed by Syriac from Hebrew. In the Peshitta, “malāʾıkā” is expressed in the sense of the Hebrew term (e.g. Genesis 16:7); the same is true of the Greek term ἄγγελος as we see in this verse in both the Septuagint and in the New Testament. The Syriac lexeme was in turn borrowed by Old Ethiopian ምላክስ – “malʾak”. Whether these words were adopted into Arabic directly from Syriac or possibly through Gǝsz is difficult to determine.

Incidentally, it should also be noted that the early commentators surprisingly considered Gabriel foreign and there are countless different spellings such as “ǧibrāʾīl” besides “ǧibrīl”. The Arabic spelling of Gabriel is a phonetic rendition of ǧibrīl/. This must be derived from a Syro-Aramaic form such as ܓܒܪܐܝܠ – gabriel, compare to Gabriel, thus /gābrīl/ > /gābrīl/ (vowel harmony!). The vocalisation of Michael – /mīḥāʾīl/ can by no means be genuine—the theophoric element /ʾel/ (supra §5.4) would never have been understood as such. Furthermore, the alternate form /mīḥāʾīl/ is a transcription of a North-West Semitic spelling, most likely a Syriac transcription (< Hebrew, supra) – mikāʾīl (i.e. Syriac post-vocalic ansomDam is pronounced as /x/ which can be rendered in Arabic with خ – {ḫ}). The orthography and vocalisation of these forms contradict the possibility that an indigenous Arabic tradition is the source of these names. Because of their Semitic etymology, these can only be phonetic transcriptions whose origins are to be found in another language, namely in casu Syriac.

This is also incidentally the case with many names of biblical figures in the Qurʾān. With an authentic Arabic revelation, we would expect to see etymological spelling and not a transcription of Aramaic (or Ethiopic) forms, which themselves were often borrowed from Greek. This applies for example to Isaac – isḥāq; based on the Hebrew form, יישא – yishāq, in Arabic something like يبشرك – yashaqu or even يضحك – yadhaku (“he laughs”) would be expected, that is if there had been a genuine tradition of the traditional folk etymology of Genesis 17:17; 18:12. In this sense, this form can only be a phonetic transcription of the Syriac form ܝܫܥܐ – isḥāq; in other words, this form would not have been understood as a conjugated verb + a theophoric element (<yishāq-ʾel). We find a similar situation with the name Israel – イスラエル ultimately from the Hebrew יسرائيل – yisraʾel. Although the etymology of the first (verbal) element remains unclear, it is a (short) prefix conjugation with the theophoric element /ʾel/ (compare to the discussion above §5.4 on “Allāh”). The Arabic orthography recognised neither the verb nor the name of God as such and is certainly to be understood as a transcription of a Syriac form يسرايل – israʾel or similar (var. يسرايل – (y)isrāʾel,
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á¡Ø žûéØ ¥~ – isrāʾil; or less likely < Ethiopic ኢሱlardır – asrāʾīl). Surprisingly, the same phenomenon also applies to the orthography of Ishmael: ًـً – ismāʾil does not express the Hebrew יִשְׂמָעֵל “God heard (scil. the request for a child, i.e. son),” so <√šm “to hear” + ʾl “God”–in fact it can only be a transcription of a form ًـً – ismāʾil. Concerning the name Jacob, يعْرَب – yaʿrāb or录入 – yaʿrāb are indeed etymological renditions of the Hebrew يَاشُمَا进展! – yašmāʾih; however, the disagreement among the early Qur’ānic commentators regarding the etymology of this name (cf. Jeffery, op. cit. 291) makes it clear that the name was borrowed, especially since the verbal root ًـً – ʿaqaba can have a similar meaning to Hebrew يَاشُمَا进展! – yašmāʾih, cf. Genesis 25:26; 27:36. Furthermore, the fact that the verbal prefix in Arabic is written here without any knowledge of its derivation must certainly indicate a borrowing from Syriac. A similar situation occurs with Arabic يوُسُف – yūṣuf <Syriac يوُسُف – yūṣīf; however, the Qur’ān is not so much entirely new revelation to an ٰیَلً – illiterate prophet, but rather it must be viewed as a continuation, or rather an evolution, of a literary tradition that had already been long established.

Further evidence of this can be seen in cases where the diacritical marks were apparently incorrectly placed on the consonantal skeleton, such as بحى– y-h-y-y for "John (the Baptist)" /yahyā/. Of course what is meant here is the Hebrew يَاحُنَان – yohannān >Syriac يَاحُنَان– only a rasm بحى can form the basis of this, which by mistake was not pointed بحى – y-h-n-n (see above §0 on the phonetic polyvalence of the Arabic archigrapheme ب–the issue is made clear by the Christian Arabic realisation of this name as يوُحَنَان– yuḥanna. An interesting case of this phenomenon in the extra-Qur’ānic tradition is the exegetical fate of the Egyptian bureaucrat Potiphar, in Hebrew פוֹתִיפָר̱ in Hebrew פוֹתִיפָר̱ – pōṭīpar (Genesis 37:36 and elsewhere; Syriac يوُسُف). In Sura Yusuf (12), he is not mentioned by name and in v. 21 is merely called للذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَ~ - ىَلً – ىَلً. Clearly ظَنَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَـِذَ~قَـِذَـِذَ~قَـِذَ~قَـِذَ – ىَلً or ىَلً – ىَلً) reminiscent of the Syriac يوُسُف – yūṣīf, a form perceived as foreign, where there was likely very little guidance and an incorrect guess was ventured.
6. On the Five Pillars of Islam

6.1 Introduction

The influence of Syro-Aramaic on the theological vocabulary of the Qur’an should by now be evident. The examples given above may appear to have been selected at random, but they were chosen pars pro toto to make a point. To complete this picture, I will discuss a few key terms, namely the “Five Pillars of Islam” (أركان الإسلام –’Arkān al-ʾIslām):

1. The profession of faith: الشهادة – aš-šahāda
2. Prayer: صلاة – salāt
3. Charitable giving: Zakāt or صدقة – ṣadaqa
4. Fasting: صوم – sawm

Although these terms could all be genuinely Arabic lexemes based on their morpho-phonetic structure, their technical meanings, as they relate to faith, clearly suggest Syriac as their origin in most cases.

6.2 The profession of faith: الشهادة – aš-šahāda

The Arabic root ṣhld “to testify,” here in the specific sense of “to bear witness to one’s faith,” presupposes Syriac šđ – sheḏ with a similar meaning, for example in Deuteronomy (5:20):

Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbour.” In the New Testament, this root is used (compare to the noun ṣāhdā) to express the Greek root μάτυρ: μάτυριαν “testimony,” μάτυρου “to testify” etc., for example in John 3:11:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.”

The nuanced meaning of martyrs (شهيد – šahīd ~ ʾsunūb – sahda), used to describe a person who dies for their beliefs in both languages, is also noticeable. A borrowing from Syriac is the only feasible possibility here.
6.3 Prayer: صلاة – ṣalāṭ

The root √ṣlw in Arabic is only used in the second (factitive) conjugation and would seem to be denominal. A look at Aramaic shows the meaning of √ṣlw – ṣlā in the Peal to be “inclinavit, flexit” etc.–the physical act of bowing (compare to 2:43–wa-arka‘u ma‘a r-rāki‘in). In the second form, the D-stem (Syriac: Pael), however, it is used in the sense of “to pray,” for example Matthew 6:6:

.tarāḵ; wa-ṣalā laʾuḵ da-ḵesyā. wa-ʾuḵ d-ḥāzeh b-ḵesyā nepʾaḵ ba-gelyā

“…pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.”

Here once again the semantics of Syriac are determining–the Arabic term can have its origins only in Syriac, based on the specific use of this root in the sense of bowing to ask something of God, and which displays the long semantic evolution that led to this meaning. Indicative of such a conclusion is also 48:29:

.tarāhum rukkaʾan suḡgadan yatabaguna fadlan mina l-lähi waridwānan simāhum fi waḡāḥihim min atari l-suḡuda ḏālika maṭaluhum fi l-tawrātī wa-maṭaluhum fī l-injīli kazarʿin ʾaḫraḏu šaṭʾahu fāzarahu fa-istaḵlaẓa ʿalā sūqihi yuʿḡibu l-zurāʿa

“… You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers …”

Here, it is clear that Qur’anic prayer, by its own account, is based on biblical practice. This is supported by the fact that this root was also borrowed from Syriac into Late Sabaic (Period E; cf. n39) X ʿlāḥ – ʿlāḥ “prayer,” along with monotheism, e.g. Ha11:3–5 (Ash 1952.499; cf. I Gajda, Himyar gagné par le monothéisme (IVe-Ve siècle de l’ère chrétienne). Ambitions et ruine d’un royaume de l’Arabie méridionale antique (Université d’Aix-en-Provence, 1997):
may ṭḥmnn listen to his prayer" (cf. §7.2.4 on ṭḥmnn);

Gar Bayt al-Ashwal 1:2–3 (Gajda, op. cit.)

"avec l’aide et grâce de son Seigneur qui s’est créé lui-même, seigneur de la vie et de la mort, seigneur du ciel et de la terre qui a créé tout et avec les prières de son peuple Israël."

Of further significance here is that the adjectival noun "prostrating" in the Qur’ānic quotation just given, must also be of Syro-Aramaic origin. The common Aramaic root √sgd (Syriac – sged) “to bow down” has a long history in this language of being used to denote “prostration” as in “The Words of Aḥiqar” (TAD 3 C1.1:13): “…[T]hen, I bowed and prostrated myself, verily <I> Aḥiqar, before Esarh[addo]n, [King of] Assyria” (note Late Sabaic 𐎧𐏥 – s’gd “to submit,” e.g., w-s’gd l-hmw l-ys’ḥln “he submitted himself to be subject to” – Wellcome A 103664, Gajda, op. cit.), but then evolved to “worship, prayer, adore, venerate” as in the Old Syriac gospels, Matthew 2:2 where the Magi tell Herod – “For we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship (l-masgad) him.” From this root, the unsurprisingly nominal derivations in the meaning “worship, adoration, veneration” (cf. in Bar Hebraeus, Menerat Qudshe – ṣegdātā “worshipper,” – ṣāḡōḏā “worshipper, veneration of the Cross,” – bēṯ segdtā, lit. “house of worship, prostration,” but also the term for the lection John 14:15–31 (read on Whitsun and the eve of Good Friday) etc. The word in the meaning “submiss venerari, precibus venerari (hominis, Deum)” also seems to have been borrowed by Old Ethiopic from Syriac as ሰなのです – ትቀማሌ, to worship. So for example in Samaritan Aramaic to denote a pagan temple (Tibat Marqē 1.856): “and they began overturning some of their shrines.” Frequently in Nabataean, a place of worship is denoted as a mšgd. This word–already attested at the Persian-era Jewish military colony at Elephantine (Egypt; TAD B7.3:3): “[Oath to be sworn] … by Ḥ[erem the go]d at the “place of prostration” (i.e. shrine) and by Anat-Yahu”–is from whence the Arabic word – ms gió – is derived, i.e. literally “place of prostration.” Thus the Islamic manifestation of prayer and its location have Aramaic predecessors in Syro-Palestine and not in the far distant Hijaz. Finally, with regard to the act of prayer (صلاة – salāḥ) itself in...
Islam, as a recent study has shown, all of its major features are pre-Islamic with many interesting parallels to be found in Mesopotamian and Ancient Egyptian depictions.68

6.4 Charitable giving: زکاء – zakāt or صدقة – ṣadaqa

The giving of alms, which is the obligation to provide a particular portion of one’s wealth (نصاب – niṣāb) to the destitute and needy as well as other defined social groups. زکة – zakāt can hardly be derived from زكر – zakā “to clean” as some traditions claim. The nearest cognate meaning of this root is found in Jewish Palestinian/Galilean Aramaic کذی – “to give to charity.” The precursors of this semantic development can probably still be seen in Syriac کذی – zakūṯā “acquittal, innocence” (also “grave of a martyr”)—or possibly in Jewish-Babylonian-Aramaic, Palestinian Targum-Aramaic and Galilean Aramaic کذی – zakūţā “reward, commendable deed.” The latter seems more likely to me.

The “voluntary donation” صدقة – ṣadaqa has a specific meaning and thus is certainly of foreign origin. In Amorite, Ugaritic, (older) Hebrew, Sabaean, Gaʿaz, etc. this semantic domain encompasses “justice, to be righteous, to be documented as true” (compare the Tzaddik; Sadducee) – from which the classical commentators derived the Arabic term.69 The development of “to be righteous” > “that which is right(eous) > “that which is proper (to give)” > “to give charitably” > “to give a portion, toll” was completed in Aramaic. Syriac, which renders here the /ṣ/ with [z] is less relevant here. However, here we do find a similar semantic development: کذی – zadūṯā (<√zdq!) “beneficium, eleemosyne,” for example, as in Matthew 6:2, where this word expresses the Greek ἐλεημοσύνη:

‘immati hāḵēl d-ʿādēn ṣatt zadūţā ῳ teqrā qarnā qadmayḵ ṣayḵ d-ʿādēn nāsbar baʿpe ba-ḵnumāţa wa-b-šuqe: ṣayḵ d-nešbḥun men bnay (ʾ)nāšā wa-ʾmīn (ʾ)nā lḵun d-qabbel u-ʾaḡrhun

“So when you give alms do not sound a horn before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.”

This usage is also found elsewhere: غیظ – zdq found in Western Aramaic is, however, in all likelihood the source of the Arabic borrowing. So for example Christian-
Palestinian אדוע — ṣdq’ as well as the Hebrew word borrowed by Jewish dialects נדוע — ṣdqqא’ב “liberality, especially almsgiving.” Although the exact Aramaic source of this word is not clear, it is most likely the same one which lent this word into Classical Ethiopian נדוע — ṣdqqא (pl.; sing. נדוע — ṣdq). In any case, the particular semantic development of the root ṣdq here, from “righteousness” to “alms(giving)” is somewhat convoluted so as to preclude the same semantic development having occurred twice independently. The precedence of this development in Aramaic certainly shows that it was borrowed by Arabic. The fact that it, unlike most of the borrowed Aramaic lexemes hitherto discussed, seems to have been borrowed from a Jewish Western Aramaic dialect could indicate that it is an Islamic continuation of an originally Jewish custom, possibly a relic of Islam’s Judaeo-Christian origins (see §7.2.9).

6.5 Fasting: סומ — sawm

In Arabic, the root סומ, in the limited religious sense of forgoing food, drink, sexual intercourse etc., can only have been borrowed—its phonology disqualifies it being Arabic. In Ugaritic the word is attested as ṣm with this meaning. Were סומ — sawm a genuine Arabic lexeme, we would then expect to see something resembling סומ — *ṭawm. The origin of this word is most likely the Hebrew סומ — ṣôm “to fast” (verb Qal “to fast, a self-deprecation rite, generally performed during the day”; Gesenius18 s.v.), since Aramaic סומ — sawm must itself also be a loan-word: proto-Semitic /ṭ/ evolved into /ṭ/ in Aramaic, which would here have resulted in סומ — *ṭwm. In Judaism, rites of fasting were not uncommon, e.g. סומ — sawm “the great fast” (i.e., Yom Ha-Kippurim; PTMeg70.b: 25[2]). Fasting was also widespread in early Christianity, particularly in its Oriental varieties, something which requires no further explanation in light of its Jewish roots. We merely note here the month-long fast during Advent (סומ — sawm “the great fast”). Both the word and the religious concept were likewise borrowed by Old Ethiopian, i.e. סומ — sawm from Aramaic, certainly with the introduction of Christianity. Thus, this lexeme demonstrates in a striking manner the Judaeo-Christian roots of Islam.

6.6 Pilgrimage: חג — ḥaǧg

This word, specifically referring to the Meccan pilgrimage appears also to have been borrowed. Again, the semantic development of the root betrays its Syro-Aramaic origins. In Biblical Hebrew, the root חאא is defined as a religious festival in general and is commonly derived from the verbal root חאג “to draw a circle, to measure precisely” (compare to טאא — tawaf), so originally “to dance in a circle” >“to take part in a procession.” In Arabic
though, besides the by all accounts quite specific verbal meaning “to undertake the Ḥaǧǧ,” this root furthermore encompasses a second, judicial semantic domain, e.g. جَـحّة - ḥuǧga “argument, proof, plea etc.” (probably related to a secondary form حَجّ - ḥaqq “truth”; note Sabaic ḫw - ḫg “to command” etc., Classical Ethiopic ḫr - ḫagaga “to legislate” ḫr - ḫag “law”). As this Arabic root is very productive in the semantic domain of law and displays no other obvious connections to (the) pilgrimage, it seems certain that it is a loan. This premise is supported by the fact that the meaning “to celebrate” in a specifically religious context is widely spread throughout Aramaic, and is an Hebraism—cf. the Jewish wish Chag sameach “happy holiday.” Especially in Syriac though, this root in a religious sense becomes quite productive: حَـقّ - ḫuqqa “feast,” حَقّـاء - ḫaggayā “festivity” حَقّـاء - ḫaggayānā, حَقّـاء - ḫaggayānātū “festivity,” حَقّـاء - ḫaggayānā’t “in a joyous or festal manner,” also in conjunction with “worship” (sgd see sub §5.2) with Jacob of Sarug:

... l-yēšū' sagdīn ḥaggā w-kensa w-'ātrātā
"... groups and assemblies and regions worship Jesus."

It is also in this language that we see the further, less obvious semantic development to pilgrimage, e.g. حَـقّاء - ḫaggayā “solemnis; peregrinans ad festum agendum.” In Sabaean we find ḫw - ḫg most often with the meaning something along the lines of “divine destiny, claim, authority; order,” although in late Sabaean it can also mean “pilgrimage” (e.g. seemingly in Ha 11; cf. ad §6.3). This must constitute a borrowing from Aramaic and may possibly be attested in Old Northern Arabic (Thamudic) as well.

In the German version of this article, I left some possibility open that this word might be the product of an inner-Arabic development. The fact, however, is that the semantics of religious festivity culminating in a pilgrimage derive ultimately from Hebrew, from whence these semantics entered Aramaic, preclude such. Furthermore, since then, I have become increasingly convinced that the association of Islam with Mecca first came about during the Abbasid period, when Mecca seemingly emerges out of nowhere – the بَـکَـکَـة of the Qurʾān simply cannot be convincingly associated with this city as I intend to demonstrate in a forthcoming publication. Therefore, the pilgrimage to Mecca is not so much the Islamic reinterpretation of an indigenous Hijazi rite, but rather the later transposition of a Syro-Palestinian Judaeo-Christian one to the Hijaz. In passing, it should be noted that the lesser, voluntary Meccan pilgrimage, the عَـمرَـة - ṭumrah also has Syro-Aramaic roots: نَـمَر (“to dwell”) “habitavit specialiter in coenobio,” i.e. to lead a monastic life اَـہِرَـم - ḫrām, the sacred state
in which one enters to perform these pilgrimages has Syro-Aramaic origins, scil. the causative conjugation of the root ḥrm, i.e. aḥrem "to devote, to consecrate" whose specific semantics were in turn borrowed from Hebrew as can be seen by comparing the Peshitta with the Masoretic Text of Leviticus 27:29:

we-kul hermā d-mahram min (ʿ)ēnāšā lā netpreq ʿellā metqāṭlū netqtel

kūl-ḥārām šaʿrāy y[h]ōram min-ḥā-ʿāḏām lō(ʾ) yippadē mōṯ yūmāṯ

"None devoted, that may be devoted of men, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death." (JPS)

Here again, it is the specific religious semantics of this root that reveal its Syro-Aramaic heritage in Arabic.

7. The First Surah of the Qurʾān

7.1 Variations of the Fātiḥa

In the previous sections, I have discussed some of the theological vocabulary of the Qurʾān and of Islam. It is has been shown that the words discussed (as well as many others) are largely borrowed from Aramaic, especially Syriac—the language of a large portion of Eastern Semitic Christianity during the time of "Muḥammad." In conclusion then, it is perhaps fitting to provide an example of a Qurʾānic text, in order to demonstrate the role of Aramaic in context. For simplicity’s sake, I will take the opening Sura, the Surat Al-Fātiḥah (سورة الفاتحة), the “Exordium.” Here I provide a literal Anglicisation and a table of notes where the borrowed words are briefly explained.
Although the Qurʾān claims to be unique and singular, its textual transmission is no more unique than that of its predecessors (scil. the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament). The notion that only one version of the text exists is an anachronistic myth and other interesting versions of the text, in *Casu* Sura 1, are attested, such as the two published by Jeffery. Here I give them, including his translations:

1. **nuḥammidu llāha rabba l-ʿālamīn**
   
   We greatly praise Allāh, Lord of the worlds,

2. **ar-raḥmāna r-raḥīma**
   
   The Merciful, the Compassionate,

3. **malʾaka yawm ad-dīn**
   
   He who has possession of the Day of Judgment.

4. **hayyāka naʿbudu wa-yyāka nastaʿīn**
   
   Thee do we worship, and on Thee do we call for help.

5. **turšidu sabīla l-mustaqīm**
   
   Guide us on the straight path (=faith)

6. **sabil l-laḏīna naʿʿamta ʿalayhim siwā l-maģḍūbi ʿalayhim wa-lā ḍ-ḍallin**
   
   The way of those upon whom you have bestowed your mercy, not (the way) of those who have fallen to (your) anger and who go astray

We greatly praise Allāh, Lord of the worlds,

The Merciful, the Compassionate,

He who has possession of the Day of Judgment.

Thee do we worship, and on Thee do we call for help.
Thou dost direct to the path of the Upright One,
The path of those to whom Thou hast shown favor,
Not that of those with whom Thou are angered, or those who go astray.

1. bi-smi llah r-rahmān r-rahim
2. al-hamdu li-llāhi sayyidī l-ālamīna
3. ar-razāqī r-rahīm
4. mal`āki yawm ad-dīn
5. inna laka najud wa-inna laka nasta‘ūn
6. arṣid-nā sabīlā l-mustaqīm
7. sabīlā l-laqīna mananta` alayhim
   siwā l-magdūb `alayhim wa-gayrā
   d-dāllīna

In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Raise be to Allāh, Lord of the worlds,
The Bountiful, the Compassionate,
He who has possession of the Day of Judgment,
As for us, to Thee do we worship, and to Thee we turn for help,
Direct us to the path of the Upright One,
The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed favors,
Not that of those with whom Thou art angered,
Nor that of those who go astray.

These two versions present very interesting variations, although I will not elaborate on them here – I hope to have the chance to deal with this elsewhere. Most of the variants reflect the use of synonyms. These reveal that the textual tradition is not nearly as consistent as is suggested by believers.

Before the borrowed vocabulary of this Sura is discussed in detail, it should be pointed out that due to these loan-words and the theological concepts that underlie them, the Sura contains many cruces interpretationis and hence the meaning of many verses (ayāt) was unclear to the traditional commentators.
7.2 Discussion of the individual forms

7.2.1 (=A) =all– Allāh

Allāh=all<al-ilāhu, “God”–see above §5.4.

7.2.2 (=B)  rabb

This lexeme from the root √rbb in the sense of Rabbi ("master, teacher") is a technical term, cf. NT ḫαββί. Without wanting to go into excessive detail here, I merely note that the semantic development of this specific meaning was completed in Aramaic. In Late Sabean of the monotheistic period, this is attested as ),$êb – ṭāḥ yḥd "Lord of the Jews," as well as in Old Ethiopian as Ʃr – ṭabbān, also borrowed from Aramaic. Thus, it is no surprise that we find this usage well-attested in Syriac as e.g.: ƙ̱ – ṭabbān and ƙ̱ – ṭabbūli (diminutive) etc. and which are obviously loan words in Arabic (as well as their derivations, such as "to own, to control" etc.).

In passing, it should be noted that the usage of  rabb here displays the undoubtedly Christian origins of the Qurʾān and precludes an ancient Arabic monotheistic tradition that hearkens back to the mythical figure of Abraham: behind the epithet “Lord” lies the name of the Hebrew deity Yahweh (Hebrew יְהֹוָה, the Tetragrammaton). In an earlier stage of what became Judaism, reflected by the consonantal Hebrew text of the Masoretic tradition, there was no prohibition in pronouncing the name of the deity (which is confirmed by Hebrew names such as אֲלֵיָּהוּ – yāʾḥōh "Y. is salvation," i.e. Isaiah and e.g. the texts from Elephantine). In later Jewish and Samaritan tradition, this name was considered to be too holy which is reflected in the vocalisation tradition of the Masoretic text which points this word (a Qrê pepetuum) as אֱלֹהֵי, that is with the vowels of ארִי – "dōnāy “my Lord” (which was misunderstood by the early Bible translators who thus falsely read the word as Jehovah). Whether it was Jews or Christians who first rendered the name of the deity with Κύιος “Lord” in Greek texts such as the translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, is not entirely clear although there was a tendency in some Greek Jewish texts to write the Tetragrammaton in Hebrew/Aramaic letters. That is Judaism always remembered that the name of their God was yhwh. Although some later Christian writers were still aware of this, in Christian tradition already attested by the New Testament, “Lord” (Κύιος, Syriac كَيُوس, كَيُوس – mārē, māryā, mārā) has become an epithet (and not the given name) of the Deity. The fact that the Qurʾān shows no knowledge of the Jewish tradition and follows Christian usage is a certain indication of this book’s Semitic Christian origins (see below §7.2.9). Thus
the Islamic conception of God as “Lord” and not being named Yahweh precludes any notion of an old Hijazi tradition or direct Jewish influence.

7.2.3 (=C) علامين

The root ṭlm in Arabic has the basic meaning “to know” > “science,” cf. modern calqued forms of similar compounds ending in -logy: - ṭlm al-ʿāhya “biology,” - ṭlm al-ʿīghtimā “sociology,” - ṭlm al-ḥisāb “mathematics” etc. The meaning “eternity” (sg.), “eternities” (pl.) is a borrowing from Aramaic. For the original sense of the word here, compare Ugaritic “duration” > “eternal,” such as lḥt wʿlmh “now and forever,” as well as the title of a deified dead King mlk ʿlm “eternal King” (cf. ḥq3 ḏt as a title of Osiris!)—very similar to the usage dealt with here, also in Hebrew ṭmlōhīm ṭmäṯ hûʾ-ʾmlōhīm ṭāḥyāʾ “biology,” ṭmlōhīm ṭiḥmāʾ ṭmālāḵ “mathematics” etc. The meaning “eternity” (sg.), “eternities” (pl.) is a borrowing from Aramaic. For the original sense of the word here, compare Ugaritic “duration” > “eternal,” such as lḥt wʿlmh “now and forever,” as well as the title of a deified dead King mlk ʿlm “eternal King” (cf. ḥq3 ḏt as a title of Osiris!)—very similar to the usage dealt with here, also in Hebrew ṭmlōhīm ṭmäṯ hûʾ-ʾmlōhīm ṭāḥyāʾ “biology,” ṭmlōhīm ṭiḥmāʾ ṭmālāḵ “mathematics” etc.

87 The meaning “eternity” (sg.), “eternities” (pl.) is a borrowing from Aramaic. For the original sense of the word here, compare Ugaritic “duration” > “eternal,” such as lḥt wʿlmh “now and forever,” as well as the title of a deified dead King mlk ʿlm “eternal King” (cf. ḥq3 ḏt as a title of Osiris!)—very similar to the usage dealt with here, also in Hebrew ṭmlōhīm ṭmäṯ hûʾ-ʾmlōhīm ṭāḥyāʾ “biology,” ṭmlōhīm ṭiḥmāʾ ṭmālāḵ “mathematics” etc.

86 This meaning of the word has been borrowed by Late Sabean and by Old Ethiopian. In the interest of brevity: God as the Lord of eternity is well attested in Syriac which presupposes the
apocalyptical notion of eternity and this is the product of late Jewish/early Christian theological developments; the Arabic equivalent can only have been borrowed—whereby the customary translation “Lord of the Worlds”92 should in light of the preceding be more properly rendered by “Lord of Eternity.”93

7.2.4 (=D)  rahmān

The term الرحمان – ar-rahmān “the merciful” as an epithet of God has long been recognised as a borrowing. The noun rahm in Semitic originally means “womb,” also in Ugaritic, for example (with the derived connotation “woman”).94 From this, the term “motherly love” >”mercy” developed in Hebrew and Aramaic, and it also came to be used to describe a divinity, for example already at Tal Fahariy l. 5 (KAI 309), where it is said of the god Hadad: `lh ṭmn zy tswth ṭbh “merciful God, to whom prayer is good.”95 It is also often used in this sense in the Hebrew Bible. In post-biblical Judaism, however, this term becomes a description of God, such as in the Tosefta (דוא רומא ב Mattis) where it says: kol zamn st’attâh rahmân hâ-rahmân mara[hêm ‘lekâ “Whenever you are merciful, the Merciful will show you mercy.”96 This term was also used to describe gods at pagan Palmyra, where it was also used as an epithet for an otherwise unnamed deity which was often worshipped together with Allat and Shamash,97 such as ṣhrk šmh l’m’ ṭbʾ rahmn’ wtr “May his name be blessed forever, the Good, the Merciful, and the Compassionate.” In Syriac, a derived form was used–Greenfield98 wonders whether Christian Syriac avoids this expression in reaction to the pagan use of rahmn’ and uses مراحم instead, for example in James 5:11: méttul da-mraḥmān hu márā wa-mraḥp (from Greek: ὅτι πολύσπλαγχνός ἐστιν ὁ Κύριος καὶ οἰκτίμων) “for the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.”100

In Sabaic of the late monotheistic period (cf. also Ha11 supra §6.3), we find forms of this root used as both an epithet and as a name for a God, which has already been shown by an inscription. Some of these are clearly Jewish, such as CIH 543 (note also Gar Bayt al-Ashwal 1, supra §6.3):

1 ibrk w-ibrk s’m Rhmnn101 ḏ-b- s’myn w-YS’r’il w-
2 `lh-hmw rb-yhd ḏ-hrd(’)bd-hmw pn; w-
3 ’m-hw bdm w-hs’kt-hw s’mṣ’m w-’l-

Bless and be blessed the name of Rahmān who is in heaven, and Israel and

Its God, the Lord of the Jews who helped his servant pn; and
his mother pn; and his wife pn; and their
And other (later?) ones are apparently Christian, like the long inscription commemorating the building of the dam at Marib by Abraha, CIH 541 (only the relevant opening passage is cited here):

1. *b-hyl w-[r]d' w-rh-
2. *mt rhmnn w-msMahon-
3. *hl-hw[r] h-w [q]ds1 s'ītrw
4. *n msMahon 'n 'brh 

With the power, support and mercy of the Raḥmān and his Mes-

siah and the Holy Spirit, wrote

this inscription, I Abraha ...

As can also be seen for example in another inscription, Ry 508 (the ending, l.

11):

11. … w-b-

|hfr rhmnn (d)n … and with the protection of

msMahon 'n kl ḥ-[s]'s'mMahon w-

mḥd'm w-trhm ʿly kl 'lm

Rahmān for this inscription against harm and robbers. Because you

Raḥmān are merciful for the entire world, you are the merciful Lord.

In this last inscription, we see the use of the three loan termini discussed here: *rb, 'lm and Raḥmān. In some inscriptions, a pagan deity might be referred to instead of or alongside the Judeo-Christian God. It is also important to note that in Sabaic inscriptions which refer to Judaism and Christianity, an originally Aramaic term was used to describe God (note too the middle Sabaic text, +/- 3rd cent. ad, CIH 40:5 where reference is made to a deity *rhm

s'īgh b'l 'ṣydm). As I have argued previously, I do not believe that Sabaic
culture had any significant influence on Islam; rather we are dealing with a
borrowed term for “God.”

ar-raḥmān ar-raḥīm then, should be translated as either “the most gracious Merciful One” or “the merciful Rah-

mān” (كرَبِلْيُوسَئ). The usage described here thus has a long

history and its Qurʾānic meaning must derive from (Judeo-)Christian

Aramaic divine nomenclature.

7.2.5 (=E) يوم -yawm

The lexeme يوم - yawm “day” is doubtlessly a genuine Arabic word. Its es-
chatological semantics, here, in the sense of “day of judgement” (يوم الدين -
yawm ad-dīn), “day of the resurrection” (يوم القيامة - yawm al-qiyāma; cf.
Syriac qyantā, qayyantā “Resurrection,” e.g. Matthew 27:53 [… μετὰ τὴν

ἔγενσιν αὐτοῦ…], Peshitta: قُيْتَ، “the last days,” must be a borrowed term,
as such presuppose the notion apocalyptic prophecy which was especially prevalent in early forms of Christianity (re. the Second Coming of Jesus).

7.2.6 (=F) ad-dīn

The word ad-dīn used here meaning “the (final) judgement,” but also in the sense of God as “judge.” Although the semantics of judgement as they relate to this root are indeed very old, as can be seen e.g. from Ugaritic ḏn and Akkadian diānu/dānu, the usage of the term to indicate the final judgement, or of God as the judge on the last days, is a product of the developments touched upon above in 7.2.5. The understanding of God as a “judge” (רדאנת) as well as the expectation of a “day of judgement” (Hebrew: 요מ הָדִינָא) was quite common among contemporary Jewish and Christian circles and was thus unsurprisingly also borrowed by Old Ethiopian as dayn “damnation.” It is indicative of borrowing that the Arabic term with the meaning “judge” is only used as an epithet of God on the Last Day—in Syro-Aramaic it is the general term for judge, analogous to the generic Arabic lexeme al-qāḍī. The restricted eschatological usage of this term to describe God at the Final Judgement illustrates that this (late Christian) concept was borrowed along with its vocabulary.

Here it should be noted that in Arabic ad-dīn can also mean “religion” (even if not yet in the modern sense as a terminus technicus; not only with regard to Islam as “the Religion,” but also used significantly in Arabic Christianity). The restrictive semantics here also indicate a borrowing from Syriac ܕܝܢ – din/ dayn “religio” (cf. Brockelmann, Lexicon 151 s.v.) which in turn was borrowed from Iranian, cf. Avestan daēnā “insight,” “revelation” > “conscience” > “religion” (> Farsi دین – dīn; also Classical Armenian դեն – den). Thus while the root ḏyn may well be Arabic, the technical theological meanings of God as the “Judge” at the “Final Judgement” and its use to denote (the revealed) ‘Religion’ are clearly borrowings from Syriac where the former meanings had their theological semantic evolution and the latter meaning was borrowed from Persian.

7.2.7 (=G) ʿabd

The root ʿbd “to serve,” from which the lexeme ʿabd “slave” comes, is once again a true Arabic word. The semantics of slavery, also attested in e.g. Hebrew עבד – ʿabād (the verb is expressed in the Peshitta as פלח – plaḥ), are well-attested in Semitic, but are not directly relevant here. In Aramaic, this root normally forms the general verb for “to do, to make” (Hebr. אָד – ʿād̄̂).
Arab. فعل – fa’ala), though in Syriac\textsuperscript{106} we also see an expanded meaning for this root in the semantic domain of religion. Here, in this technical sense, it can mean “to celebrate” and “to worship, to adore,” such as in Acts 20:16: đ-en meškḥā: yawmā d-pentiqāwsī b-ʾurīšlem neḥbdîwhy “… if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost,” and which can also have the meaning “ordination, consecration.”\textsuperscript{107} It would thus seem that here and in similar cases the cultic activity of human adoration of the Deity is intended, i.e. “to worship” and not “to serve (as a slave).”

7.2.8 (=H) صراط

The lexeme صراط “path” is certainly a loan-word from Latin *strāta* >στάτα >estrāta) >صراط – sirāṭ,\textsuperscript{108} a word that entered the region with the Roman road-building occupiers, cf. also the English word “street,” with the same origins. The word is common in the Qurʾān and often appears with the adjective مستقيم – mustaqīm. It can also be used in the figurative sense to mean a teaching, such as that of Moses (Qurʾān 37:118) – wa-hadaynā-humā ʿṣ-ṣirāṭa l-mustaqīma, or significantly Jesus (3:51) – ʾinna ilāha rabbi wa-rabbukum fa-ʿbudūhu hāḏā ṣirāṭun mustaqīmun, as well as in the general sense (7: 16) – qāla fa-bi-mā ʾaḡwaytā l-ṣirāṭa l-mustaqīma, or qāla fa-bi-mā ṣ-ṣirāṭa l-mustaqīma. What is actually meant by the “straight path” is not mentioned here; in this sense it is similar in meaning to شريعة – šari’a (e.g. 45:18) >“legislation.” Typically the path is taken to mean the *path of Islam*, but this is practically impossible from a historical perspective\textsuperscript{109} – and would in any case be an anachronism–a reference here to Islam is just as inconceivable as Qurʾān 2:2 - ḏālika l-kitābu lā rayba fīhi hudan li-l-muttaqīna referring to the Qurʾān we have today.

Since a critical edition of the Qurʾān still does not exist, as I mentioned earlier, we can neither assess nor rely on *variae lectiones*. Of interest here though are the texts with significant variant readings published by Jeffery and cited above.

Both of these texts use a common synonym for صراط – sirāṭ, namely سبيل – sahil, a word which too is borrowed from Aramaic. In Syriac, 附加值 renders the Greek ἱκανόν (“rule, standard, principle;” >قانون in Galatians 6:16 and Philippians 3:16, but also תִּקְוֹן in Matthew 3:3 “Prepare the Way for the Lord,” and תְּמוּנָה in Hebrews 12:13—so "path" here is meant in the figurative sense of "path" or "way of life," i.e., "route of salvation." The Greek terms are synonyms for ὁδὸς, a lexeme which can also describe Christian beliefs and the Christian *Way of life* in the New Testament, such as in John
The latter Greek word is typically translated by ʾŪrḥā in the Peshitta, which is a synonym in Syriac for šfīlā. This latter Greek word, however, is also used to describe the new faith, cf. Acts 9:2: Saul wants to apprehend those who “belonged to the Way” (ὅπως ἐάν τινας εὕῃ τῇ ὁδῷ ὄντας, ἄνδρας τε καὶ γυναῖκας = ʾāḏāb b-sāḥdē ʾūrḥā gābrēʾaw nēšē) – “so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women …”), to take them as captives to Jerusalem, cf. also 19:23 (Ἐγένετο δὲ κατὰ τὸν και ὑὸν ἐκεῖνον τὰς ἀχοῦς οὐκ ὀλίγος περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ), and also the alleged statement made by Paul in 22:4: ὃς ταύτην τὴν ὁδὸν ἐδίωξα ἄχι ϑανάτου ϑανάτου δεσμεύων καὶ παῦνεις εἰς ϕυλακὰς ἄνδρας τε καὶ γυναῖκας (wa-l-hāḏē ʾūrḥā reḏpeṯ ʿḏammā l-mawtā: kaḏ ʾāsrar wa-μαιλέντη ʿḏaʾīlē ὃς ταύτην τὴν ὁδὸν ἐδίωξα ἄχι ϑανάτου ϑανάτου δεσμεύων καὶ παῦνεις εἰς ϕυλακὰς ἄνδρας τε καὶ γυναῖκας). It is important to note here that at Paul’s trial in chapter 24, Tertullus describes him as the πρωτοστάτην τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἱ ἐσεὼς in v. 5, to which Paul replies in v. 14 ὁμολογῶ δὲ τοῦτό σοι, ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν [Peshitta: yūlpānē “doctrine”] ἢν λέγουσιν αἵεσιν οὕτω λατεῖνα τῷ πατῷ Θεῷ, πιστεύων πάσιν τοῖς κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς προφήταις γεγαμένοις. Here we see the “Way” as an early self-description for Semitic Christians. Their opponents though, first the Jews, and later Greco-Romans, described them as Nazarenes. Seeming confirmation for this proposal is given by 19:36:

wa-inna l-laha rabbī warabbukum faʿbudūhu hāḏā ṣirāṭun mustaqīmun

[Jesus said] “And lo! Allāh is my Lord and your Lord. So serve Him. That is the right path.” (Pickthall)

It is of course obvious that the Qur’ān was revealed spontaneously from heaven above just as much as was the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament. The holy book of Islam presumes a prior knowledge of oriental Christianity, as the discussion in the previous sections should have made clear, especially in as much as that the Qur’ān shows a definite familiarity with the Peshitta. Thus if the roots of the Qur’ān are to be found in a (heterodox) current of Semitic Christianity—something which I am only briefly able to touch upon in this article—then the mysterious “Path” is self explanatory: it is a religious self-description.
Excursus “Nazarene” and “Anṣar”

At this juncture, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss the term “Nazarene.” As Pritz has already explained, an inhabitant of Nazareth would not have been described as Ναζωάιος, rather the term stems from Isaiah 11:1: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse (יִשְׂיָ֖א), and a branch (נְשָ֣ר) shall grow out of his roots.” This term, along with ḤIeṣṣai (Isai, Jesse), were terms used to denote indigenous Christianity before it became Graecised and the name Χιστιανός became common. However, Naζωάιος was preserved in the Semitic languages as the word for Christianity, such as Arabic ḍ•Ç’© – al-naṣrānī and Hebrew Ð/³ – nōṣrī.

Although the root √nṣr in Arabic has the well-attested meaning “to help, to support” alongside its “Christian” meanings and derivations, I have long wondered whether the – al-ʾanṣār, the Medinan helpers/supporters of “Muḥammad” in the Qur’ān, were actually Christians—perhaps they were about as Muslim as Jesus was from Nazareth?

Although interpreting – al-ʾanṣār as “Christian” might at first seem outrageous; a second look in light of the context of its Sitz im Leben in Late Antiquity could make this hypothesis entirely plausible. Both attestations of this word in the Qur’ān (9:100,117), are found together with – al-muhāǧirūn “émigrés,” and taken in their own right offer no bearing at all for their interpretation in later Islamic exegetical traditions. Sura 9:100:

وَالَّذِينَ آتَنِي الْإِيمَانَ وَاتَّجَهُوا بِمَّا تَوجَدَ مِنْهُ مَعَ الْمُهاَجِّرِينَ وَالَّذِينَ آتَنُونَ مَا أُنْفِقَ مِنْهُ مُتَّقِينَ ﷺ

wa-s-sâbiqûna l-ʾawwalûna mina l-muhāǧirîna wa-l-ʾaņṣāri wa-llaḏîna tâbû ʿūhum bi-ʾiḥsānin raḍiya llāhu ʿanhum wa-raḍū ʿanhu wa-aʿadda lahum ḥanānina taǧrī taḥtahā l-ʾanhāru ḫālīna fīhā ʾabadan ḏālika l-fawzu l-ʿaẓīmu

“And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct–Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him; He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.”

Sura 9:117:

لَقدْ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالَّذِينَ آتَنُونَ مَا أُنْفِقَ مِنْهُ مَعَهُمْ وَالْأَنْسَرِينَ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُمۡرَةِ مِنْ بَعۡدِ مَا كَانَ يُقۡلُبَ بَعۡدَ مَا كَتَبَ عَلَى نَكۡرٍ وَفُرۡطُ ۚ زَجُّ
la-qad tāba llāhu 'alā n-nabiyyi wa-l-muhāģirīna wa-l-ʾansārī llaḏīna ttabaʿūhu fī sāʿati l-ʿusrati min baʿdi mā kāda yazīģu qulūbu farīqin minhum tūmna tāba alayhim innahū bihim raʾūfun raḥīmun

"Allāh has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful."

We can only conclude from these verses that both were pious, God-fearing groups of people. There is no further information provided by the Qurʾān itself. The later traditions referring to a possible flight of the prophet “Muhammad,” along with faithful followers (al-muhāģirūn) to “Medina” (al-madinah), a city sui generis, are just as irrelevant here as is for example the Liber de infantia for research on the historical Jesus. Examining the morpho-phonology of the Arabic root √nṣr discussed here, it can only be concluded that it is a borrowing. The semantics “to help, to support” would seem to be a secondary denominal derivation from √nṣr – al-ʾansār and thus presuppose later Islamic tradition. It is not the customary Arabic word for “to aid, to help” and usually only means such in a theological context (especially the ’Ansār which always only refers to the supposed Medinan helpers of “Muhammad”). The original meaning of this root in Arabic was certainly “to Christianise, to convert to Christianity.” Unsurprisingly then, in the Qurʾān this root is also frequently used to describe Christians, such as 2:111:

lan yadḫula l-ǧannata ʾillā man kāna hūdan ʾaw naṣārā

"None will enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian."

2:113:

wa-qālati l-yahūdu laysati n-naṣārā ʿalā šayʾin wa-qālati n-naṣārā laysati l-yahūdu ʿalā šayʾin wa-hum yatlūna l-kitāba ka-ḏālika qāla llaḏīna lā yaʿlamūna miṯla qawlihim fa-llāhu yaḥkumu baynahum yawma l-qi yāmati fī-mā kānū fīhi yaḫtalifūna

wa-qālati l-yahūdu laysati n-naṣārā ʿalā šayʾin wa-qālati n-naṣārā laysati l-yahūdu ʿalā šayʾin wa-hum yatlūna l-kitāba ka-ḏālika qāla llaḏīna lā yaʿlamūna miṯla qawlihim fa-llāhu yaḥkumu baynahum yawma l-qi yāmati fī-mā kānū fīhi yaḥtalifūna
"The Jews say 'The Christians have nothing [true] to stand on,' and the Christians say, 'The Jews have nothing to stand on,' although they [both] recite the Scripture. Thus the polytheists speak the same as their words. But Allāh will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ."

My own rendition:

"The Jews say: 'The Christians don't have [anything/a leg] to stand on.' The Christians say: 'The Jews don't have [anything/a leg] to stand on.' Though they (both) are based on (the Holy) Scripture. Even the ignorant [~ pagans?] express themselves in a similar way. On the Day of Resurrection, God will judge among them regarding their controversy."

Or 3:67:


mā kāna ʾibrāhīmu yahūdiyyan wa-lā naṣrāniyyan

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian."

The first meaning, "to help," might also be found in Late Sabaean ᵐᵃⁿˢʳ - nṣr,¹²⁰ where ᵐᵗ/s/ can be confused with ᵐᵗ/z/. However, this is a lexeme that is only attested in late texts, and which was mostly used in a fixed expression to describe a god, often the above mentioned Rahmān, such as in CIH 540:81f:

b-nṣr w-rdʾ ʿlhn b-ʾsʾmyn w-rdn

"With the help and support of God (Allāh!), who is above heaven and earth."

Here though, the meaning "protection," or verbally "to preserve, to guard, to protect" is conceivable and in light of the comparative evidence from Hebrew, Akkadian, etc. would be seemingly more appropriate. Since the later Aramaic realisation of this root is √ⁿṭʳ¹²¹ and it is attested in Ugaritic as n-ǵ-r,¹²² the proto-Semitic root can be presumed to have been √ⁿẓr. This then would also be the expected form of the root in Classical Arabic. And in fact, such a form is well-attested, namely نظر "to behold" etc.; note also correspondingly غاء ʿAle - naṣṣara "to view" (empr ηαλε - manaṣar "spectacles"). The semantic development then appears to have been "to look, to see, to behold" >"to protect" (cf. (re)garder in French and to watch in English). Hence the Arabic root √ⁿṣr, on account of its phonetic shape, must be a borrowing.

Arabic must therefore have borrowed this root as a designation for Christianity, as did other Semitic languages, and then later reinterpreted it in the sense of "to help." As mentioned above, and already noted by Eusebius, the origins of this root are the Hebrew noun רַעַשׁ - nāṣār.¹²³ "Judaic-Christsans"¹²⁴ called Nazarenes as well as a sub-sect of them, the Ebionites, are well-
known in Church History as Christians, who to some extent still felt bound by the Jewish ("Mosaic"—also an anachronism) Law. Often, they are mentioned in connexion with the so-called "Hebrew" Gospel, τὸ καθ’ Ἑβραίους εὐαγγέλιον. According to the preserved testimonies, this document was supposedly similar to the canonical Gospel of Matthew, apparently a collection of Jesus’ logia written in Hebrew. This gospel, only preserved in fragmentary quotations of some Church Fathers, is by all accounts originally identical to what later became known as the “Gospel of the Nazarenes” and the “Gospel of the Ebionites,” although no witnesses from these groups themselves have survived, but only (hostile) views and quotes as preserved by Church Fathers. It is important to remember in this regard that there were many manifestations of Christianity during the first few centuries AD, before that what became orthopraxis could establish itself. It is probably more appropriate to speak of “Christianities,” as is evident from the work of heresiologists, such as Epiphanius of Salamis, a contemporary of SS Augustine and of Jerome, who wrote the Panarion. According to these few, pejorative, and often secondary accounts, the Nazarenes, among others, were Jewish Christians. The main difference between their sect and the emerging (Greek-influenced) orthodoxy was their continuing adherence to Jewish customs.

This is not the place to deal with the native Christianities of the Syro-Palestinian world during Byzantine Late Antiquity—a field of study that is in any case beyond the expertise of this author. The evidence is in any case by all accounts scarce and often confusing. In the citation from Epiphanius given above, it is said that originally “all Christians were called Nazarenes” (πάντες δὲ Χριστιανοὶ Ναζωραῖοι τότε ὡσαύτως ἐκαλοῦντο). However, here he lists them as one of sixty Christian heresies, between the Cerinthians (Κῆρινθιανοὶ) and the Ebionites (Ἐβιωναῖοι), in accordance with his assessment of when they came into existence. One of course must exercise due caution when employing such sources besides their depreciatory nature, we can no longer ascertain and assess the sources used. Although Epiphanius undoubtedly saw and read “heretical” scriptures himself, which will be discussed in due course, he appears in most cases to give preference to Nicaeophile informants, usually not because of any greater reliability of their reports, but because of their orthodox views. Furthermore, using these accounts, it is also difficult to assess the extent of the alleged heresies numerically and chronologically.

The three heretical traditions just mentioned have in common using the said “Gospel according to the Hebrews,” an adherence to Jewish customs, such as circumcision. The Cerinthians (Pan. i.29) in addition distinguished between “Jesus” and the “Christ” (“Adoptionism”)—Jesus was a common man, the child of Mary and Joseph, whereas Christ (i.e. the Messiah, the
“anointed one”) came into him at the former’s baptism and departed from him at his crucifixion, without thole. The most orthodox group of the three were seemingly the Nazarenes. In terms of their Christology, they were in fact Jews (όντες μὲν κατὰ τὸ γένος Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ τῷ νόμῳ προσανέχοντες καὶ πειρατομήν κεκτημένοι—28.5), who believed in Christ. The Ebionites, a branch of the Nazarenes, according to Epiphanius, were similar to them; however, they lived according to stricter purity requirements (they were supposedly also vegetarian) and one group by this name believed in the virgin birth of Jesus. Furthermore, they supposedly also rejected consuming wine. There were supposedly also other similar sects, such as those of the Assyrian Tatians (Τατιανός; idem, sub i.46).

The rejection of Paul among these groups (re. Baur’s “Petrine” Christianity) and in Epiphanius’ “refutation” 5:2–4 is a common recurring element in such descriptions. In this account, a certain inaccuracy is also noticeable, for example things that are ascribed to the Nazarenes by Epiphanius are attributed to the Ebionites by Irenaeus in his work Adversus Haereses, a source used by both Epiphanius and Eusebius. In all likelihood, this has to do with Epiphanius’ classification and not actual contemporary self-descriptions – all of these groups could have described themselves as Nazarenes, which Epiphanius was aware of. Also common among these groups, as mentioned, is the use of a supposedly Hebrew original version (which is likely better understood as Aramaic in this time) of the Gospel of Matthew Hebraice. The Ebionites are said to have used nothing else but this text. At least some of the Nazarenes also made use of only one Gospel, which is always described as a Semitic composition.

Although an attempt to precisely define the respective doctrine(s) of this/ these sect(s) based on surviving testimonies, the previous observations are of seemingly unanimous and of considerable significance. We see that these Judaeo-Christians adhered to some extent to Jewish laws, including circumcision and the rejection of unclean meat, along with some particular views concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. When we consider the Qur’anic view of these issues, which cannot have originated ex nihilo and show signs of having a long and accepted tradition, it is clear that these must have originated among such milieux. A case in point is the Docetic or perhaps Gnostic Christology found in 4:157–158 (on which see G. Said Reynolds, “The Muslim Jesus: Dead or alive?” BSOAS 72 (2009): 237–258) in which Christ is depicted as one who shewed the “Way of God” rather than being the Redeemer:
And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah’s messenger—they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up to Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise.” (Pickthall)

We must though bear in mind that we don’t know of every such sect and their doctrines, nor are testimonies by these groups themselves preserved, and the accounts of heresiologists on the Nazarenes stop *grosso modo* in the fifth century. This, however, does not mean that such “heresies” ceased to exist, but only that combating other ones which posed more serious threats to the by then established Orthodoxy became more urgent. Besides the fact that both the Qur’ān and Islamic tradition preserve Jewish tradition and a non-divine Christology, especially the former’s usage of the loan-word mentioned above, *ʾanāǧīl* is notable in light of the preceding especially since in the Qur’ān it is only ever used in the singular (although Arabic has a perfectly sound broken plural, namely *ʾanāǧīl*). This word is naturally frequent in the Qur’ān, for example, in Sura 5:46:

And We sent, following in their footsteps [scil. The Hebrew prophets], Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.”

The exclusive usage of the singular form strongly indicates that only one Gospel was used by the writers of the Qur’ān and not the four “canonical” (an anachronism here) Εὐαγγέλια, something that cannot be attributed to
coincidence—although this could at least theoretically also be explained by the use of Tatian’s *Diatessaron*.

Another point of interest regarding this connexion is the geographical placement of these groups. Epiphanius places both the Nazarenes and the Ebionites in the Transjordan (cf. §0 supra) at Pella (Taqabat Fahl), in the Decapolis (after a flight from Jerusalem), Paraea (Abila in Moab, today Abil ez-Zeit), Kokabe in Qarnaim, specifically Ashtaroth (cf. Genesis 14:5), as well as in Coele-Syria around the Beroea (today Aleppo) and in Arabia (scil. Petraea) in general. This brings us, as was noted at the beginning of this article, to the region of the Nabataeans, also that of the Ghasanids and Lakhmids, the area in which Qur’ānic Arabic and Arabic script emerged. A further remark of Epiphanius is also of importance in this respect. In his polemic against the persistence of circumcision after the death of Christ (30:26ff.), he notes that this custom was also prevalent among other sects (30:33—cf. already Herodotus, ii.104; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* i.22): ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ Σαρακηνοὶ οἱ καὶ Ἰσμαηλῖται περιοπημὴν ἔχουσι καὶ Σαμαῖται καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Ἰδουμαῖοι καὶ Ὁμῆροι “The Saracens, too, also called Ishmaelites …” From this, we can establish that the Saracens (not Άβες!) at this time did not yet belong to these groups, but on the other hand, the association with Ishmael already existed.

The Arabic usage of theologically loaded terms dealt with here, صرائط – Syriac ₒ⁻širāṭ ~ Greek τοποθάνη or ὁδός “path,” i.e. “Christianity,” عجماء – źhīlā ~ Greek τροχός “ Nazarenes,” i.e. “Christians,” اللسان – al-ʾinṯār <Greek Ναζωάιοι “Gospel (of Matthew)” taken together, including their placement in Arabia Petraea, where the language and script used in the Qur’ān must have also emerged, form a strong body of evidence, or as Tor Andrae noted:

L'idée de révélation chez Mahomet témoigne donc d'une parente avec la doctrine ébionite-manichéenne, qui ne peut être fortuite.

Indeed, some memory of this tradition may be preserved in Islamic literature, in the ḥadīṯ (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī i.1.3) relating to the commencement of “Muḥammad’s” prophecy, when it is related that Kahdijah took her husband to her cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzza who confirms the prophethood of the Messenger of God: “This is the law which God had sent down to Moses …” Previously, he is introduced:
Khadija then accompanied him (scil. "Muḥammad") to her cousin Waraqah bin Naufal bin ‘Asad bin ‘Abdul ‘Uzza, who, during the "Days of Ignorance" (ǧāhiliyyah) converted to Christianity (tanaṣṣara) and used to write the book with Hebrew letters. He would write from the Gospel in Hebrew as much as Allāh wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight."

Although this tradition is not unanimous, as elsewhere the Gospel he read is described as being in Arabic (iv.55.605, cf. nearly identical ix.87.111):

"He was a Christian convert and used to read the Gospel in Arabic."

This is also found in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (I.301/160a):

"And he was the man who had converted Christianity in the "Days of Ignorance" and he used to write books in Arabic and, therefore, wrote the Gospel in Arabic as God willed that he should write."

Whatever the historicity of these accounts are, they offer some confirmation for what has been set out in the preceding, including the revelations to the ITHKB being thought of as being in the Judaeo-Christian tradition along with the use of one Gospel.

Why then did later, a new cult, namely Islam emerge? The answer is relatively simple. Concrete accounts by the Church Fathers regarding the Nazarenes cum suis largely cease during the course of the fifth century ad, i.e. after Theodoret Cyrensis; later references such as by Eugippus Abbas Africanus, Isidore of Seville, Paschasius Radbertus (who coined the term "evangeliun Nazarenorum") were largely copied from the older authors quoted in the preceding. In most cases, it is assumed that these by all accounts relatively small Judaeo-Christian sects experienced a quiet and well-deserved death and thence disappeared from history entirely. However, if one considers the vehemence with which John Chrysostom, Bishop of Antioch in the
fourth century, combated these groups in his surviving homilies, it would indeed be surprising if they had actually disappeared so suddenly, nigh spontaneously. The small number of Nazarene Jewish Christians mentioned by the Church Fathers (Justin and Origen use the symbolic figure of 144,000 for the entire Roman Empire), are clearly programmatic and secondary. If we look at the flourishing of Christian communities of different types in Coele-Syria however during the first few centuries (von Harnack, op. cit. 660–682) as well as the movement toward Arabia (idem, op. cit. 699–705; Briquel-Chatonnet art. cit.), we can only be puzzled, as was von Harnack (p. 72). He ascribes the surviving image of the circumstances of the time, handed down through the church history, to the fact that “in gewisser Weise … ja das Christentum bis auf den heutigen Tag griechisch geblieben <ist>” (“In a certain way … Christianity has indeed remained Greek until today”).

In my opinion, the stress on Hellenism and its influence is understandable for von Harnack’s time, but nonetheless still too strongly emphasised. From a historical perspective, it would seem that the later success of Islam in this region was because for a large part the inhabitants of Coele-Syria had no affinity for Greek-influenced (Orthodox) Christianity. Inland, however, in the Transjordan, on the borders of the Arabian Desert, there where the Greek influence was not as prominent as it was in regions closer to the Mediterranean coast, there was no reason why a Jewish-Semitic Christianity could not have survived and even flourished in this area until the seventh century, much as did other regional “heresies” such as Arianism in Germania or Donatism in Africa.

Even after the fifth century, especially after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Theodoret’s (393–457) “Arabia haeresium fera,” Wansbrough’s Sectarian Milieu, continued to apply. The struggle between pro- and anti-Chalcedonian elements continued to be fought out at many levels in the East. Various attempts were made to re-unite the Church. There were meetings with anti-Chalcedonians in Constantinople in 532 (the “Conversations with Syriac Orthodoxy”), Justinian’s efforts in the next decade to have the “Three Chapters” condemned and then the Second (Fifth Ecumenical) Council of Constantinople in 553 (which recognised the hypostatic union of Christ as two natures, one divine and one human, united in one person with neither confusion nor division) by which Justinian hoped to reunite Chalcedonians and Monophysites in the East, but which really only gave rise to yet another group, the so-called “neo-Chalcedonians” (which emphasised the synthesis of natures in Christ). Increasingly the matter became more and more confused as various parties denied or shared communion with others and competing bishops were ordained. Justin ii and the empress Sophia also attempted to bridge the theological differences unsuccessfully at Callinicium. Heraclius twice promoted a compromise: firstly advocating Sergius’ doctrine of Monenergetism discussed first at the Synod of Garin in 622. Although this
proposal initially seemed to gain wide acceptance, it was officially denounced by staunchly Chalcedonian Sophronius after he became Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634. He saw this compromise as a threat to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy and as promoting Dyothelitism—the doctrine of the two wills of Christ.

Sergius and Heraclius too abandoned Monoenergetism. In 638, they released a slightly amended formula, called the Ἐκθέσις. In this revision, the question of the energy of Christ was not relevant; instead, it promoted the belief that while Christ possessed two natures, he had only a single will, the teaching of Monotheletism. The “Doctrine of the Single Will” as proscribed in the Ἐκθέσις was sent as an edict to all four eastern metropolitan sees and when Sergius died in December 638, it looked as if Heraclius might actually achieve his goal of ecclesiastical unity. However, in the same year Pope Honorius I, who had seemed to support the new formulation, also died. His successor Pope Severinus condemned the Ἐκθέσις outright (and was thus denied his seat until 640). His successor Pope John IV also rejected the doctrine completely, leading to a major schism between the eastern and western halves of the Catholic Church at the moment Heraclius was dying.

Subsequently, Heraclius’ grandson Constans II, who rejected the doctrine of Monotheletism was determined to end the dispute with the West. Consequently, he ordered that all discussion about the Monothelite doctrine was to cease and that all theological positions were to reflect the status quo ante of Chalcedon, issuing his Τύπος in 648 to this effect. Ignored in the West, the Ἐκθέσις was condemned by the Lateran Council of 649. This infuriated emperor Constans who ordered the abduction and trials of Pope Martin I and Maximus the Confessor. In 668 Constans died, and Monotheletism was condemned once and for all at the Third Council of Constantinople (the Sixth Ecumenical Council, 680–681) in favour of Dyothelitism.

The events which I have attempted to relate in an oversimplified form in the preceding largely coincide with what is traditionally seen as the “Arabic Invasions,” the enigmatic human tsunami from desert ed Arabia which, as we saw, was entirely apocryphal. While we often read that the new conquerors permitted the non-Chalcedonians to practice their faith in peace, there actually was no need to bend their beliefs to the Byzantine hierarchy; or rather official orthodoxy disappeared with the Byzantine overlords. As the areas that remained to the empire were largely Chalcedonian, the need to reach a theological compromise soon disappeared. Even today, the Council of Chalcedon—which made official the dogma of the Trinity—is still rejected by the Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, and Ethiopian churches, collectively known as “Oriental Orthodoxy.” In light of this, it is no surprise that in the homeland of Christianity most people have rejected Hellenistic Christianity. They either cling to a non-Chalcedonian branch or have converted to Islam.
However, Heraclius’ failed attempts to unite Christendom under one acceptable Christological formulation might be an explanation as to why Heraclius is the only Roman Emperor whose memory is preserved in Islamic literature, and quite positively too. Some traditions claim that he recognised “Muḥammad” as the Prophet of God whilst others claim that he was a Muslim and tried to convert his Court to the new religion.

Jewish Christianity however, unlike these other “heresies,” was rejected by more than just the Nicene main church. As their name suggests, they felt simultaneously Jewish and Christian—and this at a time when both religions were distinctly differentiating themselves from each other and were thus consciously carving out their own independent identities. They were denounced as Christians by the Jews and accused of heresy by the Christians. Independence was probably the only way out of this balancing act. It is nonetheless clear that Islamic theology must have emerged from a Judaeo-Christian antithesis to Byzantine orthodoxy.

7.2.10 (=I) 

mustaqīm

The word mustaqīm “straight” e.g. in the phrase the straight paths of the Lord (ἅς οδὸς Κύριου τὰς εὐθείας) in Acts 13:10. This derivation of the root √qwm here is by all accounts Arabic. Other meanings, however, are likely borrowed from Aramaic, such as the day of the resurrection (yawn al-qiyyāma, discussed above in (§7.2.5), in the sense of “resurrection” (avádtaqnc)--cf. i.a. Syriac ḥayyā in the NT with this meaning: the eternally existent and the eternal preserver of creation (2:255; 3:2; 20:111) is also borrowed. “life” also means “salvation” in Syriac, such as in Luke 3:6:

And we believe and are sure that you are that Christ, Son of the living God.”

Or 1 Peter 1:3:

huan haymenan w-ida’n: d-ʾaʿt-ʿu mšīḥā brēh d-ʾalāhā hayyā

"...and all flesh shall see the salvation of God," however also in the sense of the (eternally) living God, such as in John 6:69:

Outside of the Bible it is used with a different meaning, roughly with the semantics of ὑπόστασις. The use of this root in the theological context to denote a characteristic of God, specifically the resurrection, can only be a semantic borrowing from Aramaic.

8. Conclusion

In the preceding, an argument has been made that points to Syro-Palestine as the Qur’an’s likely place of origin. In the Prologue (§0), it was briefly argued that both script-distribution and language (areal linguistics) point to this region. After discussing the significance of loan-words (§§1-2), especially in relation to the Qur’an (§3), some loan-words in various semantic spheres were discussed: in relation to the vocabulary of writing (§4)–which supports the argument made in §0; some key theological terms (§5); the “Five Pillars of Islam” (§6); and, finally, the loan vocabulary found in the First Sura of the Qur’an was discussed (§7). Briefly, we can note here that the loan vocabulary of the “first” Arabic book, the holy book of Islam, largely employs words of Syro-Aramaic origin for key terms with isolated and sporadic Wörter und Sachen also deriving from Southern Arabia and Ethiopia; Persian loans usually entered Arabic via Syriac.

It is important to note here, that the focus of this exercise was not on Semitic cognates, or proto-Semitic etymologisation. Rather, an attempt was made to show the borrowed semantic load of especially theological termini. Both the quantity as well as the nature of the borrowed terms discussed here clearly shows that the authors of the Qur’an possessed an intimate knowledge of the Syriac Bible, probably the common version of the time, the Peshitta (=Vulgata). Although some of the terms discussed also found their way into Old South and especially Old North Arabic languages
after their transfer to monotheism (cf. n39), the concentration of Syro-
Aramaic terms, as well as the writing system is indicative of a transfer from
Syriac.

The vocabulary of a language can tell the story of its speakers (cf. n12),
and to what extent they came into contact with other peoples. Thus English
has borrowed but a few lexemes from the Celtic languages (as opposed to
many Anglicisms in Celtic languages)\textsuperscript{158} which says something about the
nature of the contact. The Viking Age left its traces in the vocabulary Old
English,\textsuperscript{159} and even more so the Norman Conquest with a myriad of French
and Latinate loans; Dutch maritime technology, thanks to which Britannia
once ruled the waves, left its linguistic traces too,\textsuperscript{160} as did the Dutch colonial
presence in New York on \textit{Americanese}.\textsuperscript{161} The Raj continues to live on in the
vocabulary of English.\textsuperscript{162} Vocabulary and semantics are a powerful tool, that,
when properly applied, can tell us something about the past of the respective
speakers. As with the inner-Semitic loans in Arabic, in English the North
Germanic, Old Norse and West Germanic Dutch loans at first glance seem to
be quite English even as do many Old French loans from the Norman period.
Nonetheless their semantics and morpho-phonology betray their foreign
origins.

As has been shown, the roots of what we now know as “Arabic” are to be
found in Syro-Palestine, especially in the \textit{Jazirah} (cf. note 2). This area has a
left a long written record and the linguistic history of the region can be traced
to at least the third millennium since the finds from Ebla (Tal Mardikh) have
come to light. It should then come as no surprise that the Arabic language
spoken here displays to some extent in its vocabulary this past. Some words,
such as that for an alcoholic beverage discussed in note 23 are old words that
have stuck to the product denoted by it (cf. “mead” in English), but whose
morpho-phonetic forms betray the path(s) taken. This product even reached
Ethiopia, where its realisation indicates that it, like the Arabic form, must
have been borrowed from Syro-Aramaic with its introduction.

In the case of theological vocabulary, we are not dealing with a word
descriving a product, rather with a lexeme denoting an idea. Naturally, in
both cases, the existence of the product or idea is a pre-requisite. As was
discussed in §1, the theological evolution of Judaeo-Christian monotheism
was a long, drawn-out and intricate process. Philology can help us to under-
stand when words took on certain meanings and help us date texts by iden-
tifying anachronisms both in the vocabulary and contents of texts. The
vocabulary of the Qur’\textacuten betrays its place and time of origin.\textsuperscript{163} Here, Classi-
cal Ethiopic serves as an interesting comparative case. As was seen in the
examples given in the preceding, \textit{Ga’az} loans are infrequent in Arabic (and
some of them suggested here were in all likelihood borrowed by Arabic from
a lost Syro-Aramaic source). However, it was also shown that, like Arabic, it
borrowed much of its Christian theological vocabulary from Syriac.\textsuperscript{164} That is,
a similar process of conversion to Christianity led to the adoption of Aramaic vocabulary by Arabic speakers in Syro-Palestine as by Go’az speakers in Ethiopia – much like the borrowing of Latin terms in English and other Western European languages discussed above.

Islam, as a “religion of the book,” and its consequent development of such a belief system of course presupposes the presence of a literate and literary culture. The present article sheds some light on the evolution of this culture over the course of Semitic and Semito-Hellenistic religious history, as well as the formation and development of monotheism. Since both the Qur’ān and Islamic tradition view biblical historiography as history that actually occurred – an anachronism – they constitute a part of this continually evolving revelatory truth. Understood in this way, the religion that emerged from the Qur’ān is one of many on a continuum that began in the Syro-Palestinian region: the local cults of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages gave rise to the religions of Judah, which later brought about manifestations of Jewish religion when the former came into contact with Hellenism. This later gave rise to Judaisms and Christianities, from which Islam would later arise. The latter as a religion which originated “in the full light of history” only makes sense in the context of Church History.

There is no historical basis for asserting that these religions and their traditions enjoyed one uninterrupted and continuous course of development. If we look at the various interpretations of scripture in Judaism, such as those found in the orders of the Mishna, the Tosefta, and the Talmuds, or, for example, the confusion with regard to the nature of Jesus Christ and his Death in early Christianity, we can only conclude that we are dealing with the invention of traditions and not with the preservation of ancient ones. The remarks of Adolf von Harnack on nascent Christianity in the introduction (p. iv) of his previously mentioned Mission und Ausbreitung, are also relevant for Islam:

The oldest missionary-history is buried under legends, or rather replaced by a tendentious history which supposedly played out in just a few decades in all the countries of the world. This story has been worked over for more than a thousand years–because the creation of the legend about the apostolic missions started in the first century and continued on until the Middle Ages, and even continues to flourish into modern times; its uselessness is now generally recognised.

The use of the word “uselessness” (Wertlosigkeit) here applies to the value of traditions and tradition literature (including sacred texts) as historical sources. While for the scientific historical-critical study of Judaism and Christianity such is generally accepted, Islamic Studies today still often uncritically
accepts the primacy of traditional literature. Whilst such retain relevance for homiletics, they have but little value for hermeneutic investigations such as scientific exegesis. The question with which Nietzsche commenced his historical-critical study on the life of the sixth century bc Greek poet Theognis:

“illos enim aetati ejus propiores nescio an verisimilius sit de eo rectius judicasse, quam nos recentiores viros” applies here as does his own answer:

“neque illis neque his omnibus in partibus suffragandum esse mihi persuasi.”

Indeed, the ancient sources had potentially more information at their disposal than we will ever have. However, this information was used selectively and uncritically and (cf. ad n132) we must understand how ancient historiography worked 169 – Herodotus did not set out to become the “Father of History,” but rather to tell a good story. We must learn not to read more into sources than they can properly render. Furthermore, in the case of religious history, textual documentation is usually not contemporary to the events related: for Islam, the relevant sources only commence at the end of the eighth/early ninth century, i.e. a century and half after the events which they purport to narrate. At best, they then can only tell us what their authors thought happened elsewhere in the early seventh century. While these texts undoubtedly contain some historical information, they do not qualify as scientific historical sources; they interpret the past in light of an orthodoxy fashioned post factum as von Harnack noted. Texts that are viewed as sacred by faith groups relate *Heilsgeschichte* and not history.

The religions known today popularly as the “Abrahamic” faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, traditionally justify at least part of their veracity on the fact that their respective scriptures relate to the intervention of their deity in history with his human creations in a past, normally formative period of these respective faiths. Hierophany in these religions usually commences with a narrative of origins placed in a mythical past, to demonstrate that the deity is eternal having existed before time and is the creator thereof, and which then continues displaying the close relationship of the deity with those whom he has chosen, his elect. The revelation of the deity to his elect was then written down in a canonical form that has validity for all time. Whether or not these texts actually contain the *ipsissima verba dei* is not a question that science can ask or is able to answer, this is a religious question that must be asked and answered by the believers and theologians of the respective faiths. The question though whether sacred time and historical time are or were once congruent, however, is one which concerns the essence of science, since if sacred time is historical time then the latter should also be provable by factual evidence. We know that the religious scriptures in question, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Qur’ān, like much of the literatures contemporary to them, largely contain allegory, a pre-modern, pre-
scientific manner of illustrating complex ideas and concepts in a digestible, concrete way and indeed for much of the history of these faiths their scriptures were interpreted in such a fashion. One must remember that kerugma is a theological and not an historical concept.

Hence it is clear that if we wish to seriously understand the origins of such religious traditions, we must transcend traditions and traditional literature—as they are not evidence driven—but rather employ historical and textual criticism. Here, it must be noted that the only evidence for the Islamic narrative of its beginnings is the said narrative. As such it is no different from the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament. What would later become Islam only enters the light of history in Syro-Palestine with the caliphate rise of the Umayyad Caliphate under Mu‘āwiyah I (cf. n119)—who in inscriptions and contemporary accounts saw himself as a Christian—an independent confirmation of the arguments proposed here. Historically speaking, the Hijazi origins of Islam in Mecca and Medina and the rule of the “Rightly Guided Caliphs” are entirely apocryphal, and indeed the sagas which narrate this period are riddled with anachronisms—much like the David saga in the Hebrew Bible or the biography of Jesus in the Gospels. As was briefly seen in the preceding, and which is also evident from the anti-Chalcedonian Christology expressed by the later Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân in his inscriptions found in the “Dome of the Rock” (مسجد قبة الصخرة), the religious sentiments which would later crystallise as Islam were a reaction to Byzantine orthodoxy. As such, their Sitz im Leben must be the Syro-Palestinian hotbed of theological controversy and not the far-off Hijaz, where such debate would have been largely irrelevant. As has been shown, the classical Islamic interpreters of the Qur’ān, such as Ṭabarī, often had no idea as to the meaning of Qur’ānic verses. They were often not Arabs, or even native speakers of Arabic, and lived during the Abbasid period. Unsurprisingly, in distant Baghdad, the Aramaic heritage stored in the Qur’ān went unnoticed. It is in this period when the origins of Islam were retroprojected to the Hijaz for theological reasons (cf. Galatians 14:22-26), but the discussion of such must be the subject of its own study.

In the preceding (§7.2.8), we have noted that two Arabic words found in the Qur’ān and which were borrowed from Aramaic, namely صراط—ṣirāṭ and سبيل—sabil have by all account the semantic load of the New Testament terminus technicus ἡ ὁδός “the Way” and denote the religion adhered to. Furthermore (§7.2.9), the apocryphal helpers of “Muḥammad” at Medina, the ἀνσαρ—ansar were seen to be Ναζωαῖοι which does not refer to Nazareth, but rather is another old term for Christianity deriving from the Messianic interpretation of the Hebrew word נַּ֫שָּׁר—nāṣār “branch” in Isaiah 11:1. In the works of the Church Fathers, written after Constantine’s tolerance of
Christianity which facilitated the later emergence of an imperial orthopraxis, it was seen that Nazarene was a term loosely employed to describe what might be anachronistically called “Judaic-Christians,” i.e. Jewish followers of Jesus, who rejected the teaching of Paul and continued in some manner to adhere to the Jewish Law (including circumcision). Although the sources are polemical and somewhat imprecise, it was seen that some of these groups believed, as does the Qur’ān, in the virgin birth of Jesus while rejecting his divinity. They are also said to have used but one Gospel (written in a Semitic language, probably Aramaic), corresponding to Qur’ānic usage (الإنجيل al-ʾinǧīl) and additionally rejected the consumption of alcohol. We thus see in the convergence of vocabulary, creed and practice the roots of what would later evolve into Islam. Here we have a convincing explanation for the curious phenomenon of Islam’s retaining Jewish custom while believing in a psilanthropic, parthenogenetic Jesus Christ. Indeed the use of رب rabb “Lord” as an epithet of God (§7.2.2) certainly confirms Christian rather than Jewish origins.

Here we see the historical background from which Islam would emerge. I have, however, only been able to portray a landscape in broad outlines here: much still remains to be investigated. As long as what is customarily known as “Islamic Studies” (or for that matter “Biblical Studies”) merely continues to paraphrase tradition, ignorance will prevail. The fashionable ideology of the post-colonial age to ascribe ahistorical unicity to peoples once colonised by Europe only serves to promote ignorance and prejudice and the nonsensical division between the “East” and the “West.” Worthwhile contributions to science and fundamental research desiderata in casu would be a critical edition of the Qur’ān and a diachronic lexicon of its vocabulary.

This being said, the preceding should have made clear the value of philological investigation of the Qur’ān. In contrast with the cluelessness or perplexity of early commentators such as Ṭabarī in mind, as well as the legendary hagiographic narratives of Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Ša’d, Wāqidī etc. (who must have used احاديث aḥādīṯ as sources, as Goldziher has already noted), the only conclusion is that Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, unsurprisingly preserved no historical memory of its origins: traditions can only surface after the completion of a formative period and the creation of an hierophantic revelatory history. It should by now be clear that the emergence of Islam belongs to the discipline of Church History, just as early Christianity is a part of Jewish history. Thus the actual historicity of Muhammad is just as irrelevant as that of Moses, David or Jesus—their respective fates in later traditions lead lives of their own. Ultimately all manifestations of “Abrahamic Faiths” are by definition each other’s heresy.
9. References

Unless otherwise stated, the definitions provided in these dictionaries have been used:

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Sabaean:

Ugaritic:

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correction of the oriental citations and formatting. Prof. M. Schub (Hartford) was kind enough to provide additional corrections and suggestions. In order to improve readability, transcriptions of most of the examples (except those in Greek) have been included. They are meant to facilitate reading and are not intended as exact phonetic renditions.

Notes


2 This area, roughly the Jazira (roughly the former province known as the Djezireh) encompassing the Chabur, Euphrates and Tigris basins in NE Syria, SE Turkey and NW Iraq is what was usually meant by “Arabia” in Antiquity. Here e.g., is found an Ἀραβάρχης at Dura-Europos (cf. C. B. Welles et al., The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report V, Part I [New Haven, 1959], 115 Nr. 20, 5); at Sumatar Harabesi in modern Turkey, five inscriptions were found at the ancient cemetery bearing the Syriac pendant ṣulṭānā d-ʿarab “Governor of Arab(ia)” (cf. H. J. W. Drijvers and J. F. Healey, The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene [Leyden, 1999], 104f. et passim); at Hatra, a mlk’ dy ’rb(y) “King of Arabia” is attested (cf. B. Aggoula, Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes [Paris, 1991], 92 Nr. 193, 2; 135f. Nr. 287, 3–4)–note also e.g. Pliny, Nat. Hist. V.xxi.86 “Arabia supra dicta habet oppida Edessam, quæ quondam Antiochia dicebatur, Callirhoem, a fonte nominatam, Carrhas, Crassi clade nobile. Iungitur prefectura Mesopotamiae, ab Assyriis originem trahens, in qua Anthemusia et Nicephorium oppida. . . . [87] ita fertur [scil. Euphrates] usque Suram locum, in quo conversus ad orientem relinquit Syriæ Palmymenas solitudines, quæ usque ad Petram urbem et regionem Arabiæ Felicis appellata pertinent.” This is the “Arabia” which St Paul must have visited (Galatians 1:17). Noteworthy in this regard is that Fredegar (Chronicon lxvi) even localises the Hagarenes somewhat more to the North: “Agareni, qui et Sarraceni, sicut Orosii [Boh. Eorosii] liber testatur, gens circumcisa a latere montis Caucasi, super mare Caspium, terram ...”

3 For example, see Sh. Sand, The Invention of the Jewish People (London, 2009), p. 64–189 and the references it cites as well as the now classical work by Th. L. Thompson, The Bible in History. How Writers Create a Past (London, 1999).

4 This is not the place to deal with this question in detail. However, I will refer to the discussion in M. S. Smith, God in Translation (Tübingen, 2008), as well as the references it cites.


10 R. Paret “His throne comprises the heavens and the earth.” Here the problem is also obvious: the Arabic verb قَصِرَةَ - w-s’ can mean “wide, to be spacious, to house” > “to have understanding,” depending on the context. I must confess that I do not think I have ever come across the latter meaning.


12 This is how we can determine the path of Gypsies from India to Europe, for example; see L. Campbell, *Historical Linguistics* (Edinburgh, 1998), 363ff.

13 The Latin word for beer, cerevisia, is itself a loan-word from Gaulish, compare Welsh cwrw.

The first major Latin Christian author Tertullian uses "tinctio."


As for example in the book of Daniel which therefore could not have originated in the time of Nebuchadnezzar II.


Matthew: Ηλι ηλι, λεμα σαβαχϑαν; Peshitta: 'īl 'īl l mānā š aqtāny, Eastern Syriac: 'ēl 'ēl l mānāh š aqtāny; OT: ©'¬' ©'¬' ¨•®•¬ ©'°•⍡"¦² – 'ēlī 'ēliīlāmā ʿăzạ tānī “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Although early Islamic commentators also dealt with this topic, their work was deficient because they generally did not know the donor languages which were mentioned. Cf. Jeffery, op. cit. 12–35 and Kopf, art. cit.

Cf. S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Lehnwörter im Arabischen* (Leyden, 1881), 141.

The other Qur’ānic root for an intoxicating alcoholic beverage škr (– sakar 16:67; – sukār 15:15) is also of Aramaic derivation: Syriac /šark/ – škar, ša/iḵrā etc. In Aramaic, the root šmr is used for grape-based intoxicants whilst škr denotes such made from dates or grain (i.e. beer) — cf. e.g. Numeri Rabbah 10:8 (ad Num. 6:3): "... are not yāyin ("wine") and šēḵār the same thing?..." — cf. cfr. Hebrew τό σίκε ᾀ “strong drink” vs οἶνος “wine” e.g. Luke 1:15 καὶ οἶνον καὶ σίκε ᾀ οὐ μὴ πίῃ “and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink”– Hebrew šē’pum “a sealed letter (Old Babylonian)” (von Soden, AHw 109 1) is related to the South Semitic term.


For example, it is not documented in Sabaean and Qatabanian. Go‘zî ḫbr – kataba in this sense with derivations like ḫbr “book” (/katāb/ <*>katāb/) etc. as well as the phonetic variants ḫbr – katap are borrowed from Arabic. The actual word in Classical Ethiopian for writing, such as ṣḥf in Sabaean and Qatabanian, is ṣḥafa–which was in turn borrowed into Arabic, and will be picked up on later in this article. Akkadian šēpum “to write down,” šē’pum “a sealed letter (Old Babylonian)” (von Soden, AHw 1091) is related to the South Semitic term.

See for example in Lane’s *Dictionary*, Vol. VII, p. 2589f. This meaning is also productive in modern Arabic, cfr. e.g. كتيبة – katība “regiment, conscription” etc.

Here I would suggest that خراء – Ḥirāʾ the cave in which according to later tradition “Muḥammad” received his first revelation, and whose precise location is contested, actually refers to this Christian Arab city.

The reference here must be to a pseudo-epigraphical work such as “The Testament of Abraham.” I am of the opinion that some version of this text must be the
source for much of the Qur’anic information on this Patriarch. On the history of this figure see the classic works J. Van Seters, Abraham in History and Tradition (New Haven, 1975); Th. L. Thompson, The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives (Berlin, 1974).

29 These forms could very well have been pronounced like resp. Arabic ʿṣāḥīfa (sg.), ʿṣāḥuf (pl.).

30 This root is also active in the modern Semitic languages of Ethiopia, for instance Amharic ṣēḥāf - ʿṣḥāfī “writer,” ṣuḥūf - ṣuḥūfit makīnā (<Italian macchina da scrivere) “typewriter” and as the verb ṣāfī “write.”

31 This root is used in Modern Standard Arabic with reference to news reporting. It is possible that the original meaning of the Arabic root can be seen in nouns such as ʿṣāḥīfa “bowl,” ʿṣāḥīfīa “sheet.”

32 “Reading” is normally formed with the causative (IV) stem of the root ṣāfū - ṣāfūba in Gāʾz as well as other modern Ethio-Semitic languages like Amharic and Tigré. This root is well attested in Semitic languages, as for example in Arabic “bleat in sexual excitement (billy goat)” (Lane, s.v.). This weak root is possibly related to the root ṣābīn in Semitic. The Arabic word َنُبَيّ - َنُبِيّ - nābi, originated from this root, which itself stems from < נָבָי - nāvi. The precondition is of course the concept of the prophecy as a means of communication. For the origins of this phenomenon see D. Flemming, “Nabu and munabbatnu: Two new Syrian religious personnel,” JAOS 113 (1993): 175–183.

33 ʿṣāḥīfā - ʿṣāḥīnā translates ʿṣāḥīfa - ʿṣāḥīná in the Peshitta in Nehemiah 8:8, interestingly enough.

34 Cf. the authorities cited by as-Suyūṭī (الإفتاء في علوم القرآن - Al-itqān fi ʿulūm al-qurʾān 319–321), and the sources given in Jeffery, op. cit. 170ff.

35 Also in the description of the scribes (γαμματεύς) in Matthew 9:3 of the Peshitta! This lexeme was also borrowed by Armenian: սովեր - sover; but pace Jeffery, op. cit. 171, Ethiopian እራ>* - safira shows no Aramaic influence.

36 From the sense of “teaching, instruction,” Syriac ُسَيْر - sēpār doubt took on the meaning of “Holy Scripture.” The Akkadian root also has another semantic domain with reference to “work,” e.g. šīrum, probably in turn borrowed from Sabaean šarp - šēr “labour-force, corvée” (partly because they had to provide forced labour for the Mesopotamia?). Hebrew forms, like ְסֶפֶר - sēpār “book,” ְסֵפֶר - sōpēr “scribe” etc., are deliberately disregarded here.

37 Here ُسَيْر - sēr “side” is disregarded (e.g. Daniel 7:5 “And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side (יָדוֹ יָדוֹ). It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’”), = šṭr3 in J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions (Leyden, 1995), 1124f.

38 With reference to 57:22 ما أصاب من مصيبة في الأرض ولا في أنفسكم إلا في كتاب من قبل - mà ʾasābā min muṣībatin fī l-ʾarḍi wa-lā fī ṭabīṣikum ʾillā fī kitābin min qabli ’an nabraʾahā ʾinna ḏālika ʿalā llāhi yasīrun.

39 Period E. “During the second half of the fourth century the pagan formulas disappear from the texts (one single pagan text is later). Taking their place appear monotheistic formulas invoking the ‘Lord of Heaven’ (or ... of Heaven and

From the same root as Akkadian lētum (<*laḥtum), Ugaritic lḥ “jaw, cheek.”

The verb šērt – leha “writing” is found in Amharic as well as – luk (with the variation ṭēt – luḥ) “blank sheet of paper” which must have come from – laḥa – lawalha, although an Arabic source cannot be ruled out. This root is not attested in Old Northern Arabian or Old South Arabian, to the best of my knowledge.

I.e. the “folding tablets” ( Nikki, πύκτος) used to write the Bellerophontic letter in the Iliad 6:169.

Other versions use the transcription – tillos as a loan-word.

Here I do not deal in great detail with ʿ – tawrāt “Torah” and – inḏīl “Gospel” (yet cf. §7.2.9) as both clearly must have been borrowed. The first term was likely adopted from the Jews, though not from Hebrew per se (the Hebrew word was probably borrowed from the Akkadian tiĕrtum [from older tā’ertum “instruction”]). The Syriac lexeme – oraytā “Pentateuch, Old Testament” (>Gōz kēlt – ‘orit “Octateuch”) is formed from the same root. The latter of course ultimately stems from the Greek εὐαγγέλιον. Whether it was borrowed from the Aramaic – ewangeliyon or Old Ethiopian – wangel (because of the long vowels and missing Greek ending), is not important for the purposes of this article. In Syriac, the Greek loan word is roughly as common as its indigenous Aramaic synonym – sbarṯā, a form originating by way of metathesis. The root b-š-r can mean “to bring a message” >“to praise a deity” among other things, like Akkadian bussurum (D-stem; >bussurtum, mubassirum [Mari], tabsertum etc.), Ugaritic bšr (D-stem), and Hebrew – bīśēr “to exhibit.” Here the semantic development appears to have been “to communicate a message” >“to communicate a good message,” such as >Sabaean rGb – bsīr, Old Ethiopian – abśara “to announce good news.” The Arabic root  b-š-r with the meaning “to be glad” must have been derived from this. Aramaic appears to have followed its own semantic path, for example – sbar “putavit, speravit, expectavit.” I suspect this was borrowed by Arabic possibly from Gōz (perhaps also – sbarṯā), because this root was already common in this language in an “evangelical” sense, such as – bsīr “good news, Gospel,” > – baʿāla bsīrāt the “Annunciation of Mary” etc., which we also find in non-Qur’ānic (i.e. Christian) Arabic – bišāra “good news, Gospel,” – bāšīr “bearer of good news, evangelist,” – tabīzir, literally “the Spreading of Good News”-Christian missionary work, – mubaššir “missionary,” – ʿīd al-bišāra etc.


Interestingly enough, this is also the situation in Indo-European. The head of the Greek pantheon Zeus (genitive Δίως; <*dijēus) seemingly the only Olympian deity with an Indo-European name, is cognate with Latin deus “god” and Jupiter (<*dyeu[ə]-phēr “Sky-Father”–Zeus παθήρ [ánθrōn te theon te]). The latter is of
course the archaic Vedic sky god द्यास्पित्र – *dyauspītṛ attested a handful of times in the Rig-Veda.

47 See already Tell Fakhariyeh 5: ʾlh ṭḥm ẓy tšlwθ ṭbh “merciful god whose prayer is beneficial.”


49 See example 90:24ff.:

And the judgement was held first over the stars, and they were judged and found guilty, and went to the place of condemnation, and they were cast into an abyss, full of fire and flaming, and full of pillars of fire. And those seventy shepherds were judged and found guilty, and they were cast into that fiery abyss. And I saw at that time how a like abyss was opened in the midst of the earth, full of fire, and they brought those blinded sheep, and they were all judged and found guilty and cast into this fiery abyss, and they burned; now this abyss was to the right of that house.”

50 A possible relict of the older view of the after-life in the Qurʾān may be مالك – mālik the angel who guards hell in 43:77. This could be equated with the Bronze Age deified royal ancestors attested in texts from Syro-Palestinian Ugarit.

51 It is unclear whether the verbal forms of this root in Hebrew and Aramaic are original or later denominal derivations.


53 For a relevant discussion on this matter see now E. Muehlberger, Angels in Late Ancient Christianity (Oxford, 2013).

54 The verbal root is not attested in Hebrew, but compare this to Ugaritic ʾlʾk, ʿz – laʾaka etc. For this word see also Luxenberg, op. cit. 59ff.

55 The angel Raphael, who plays a role in the biblical book of Tobit and in the Book of Enoch, seems to find no continuation here.

56 Such transcripted loans are not uncommon in Arabic. So for example تاریخ – tārīḫ “date, time; history; annals” (and the denominal factitive verb ʿارخ – *ʿarraḫa “to date, to write the date”) would seem to come from a root √ʿrk.


58 As we shall see (§7.2.9), the identification of the Arabs as Ishmaelites predates Islam. It is an ideological term used by Christian historiography and is not originally an ethnonym or a self-designation.

59 The name is pre-Hebrew and documented with theophoric elements in the Bronze Age, for instance at Ugarit. The actual meaning of the root √ʿqb here must have
been similar to the Goʿez ḥmil – aqaba “to guard, to protect” – cf. Amharic ערות – tabaqi “minder.”

The fact that this name is of Egyptian origin is, however, not a confirmation of the historicity of the story of Joseph. This name is only attested in the Late Period (664–332bc) and not during the Bronze Age, when Joseph supposedly lived, if one were to take the chronological data of the Bible literally.

Vs the secular legal usage of this root e.g. in Official Aramaic and at Palmyra: ṣhd, verb “to testify” (scil. “on someone’s behalf” + lh); noun “witness.”

In Jewish Aramaic “to be sure, to be present, to testify” etc., although not in the sense of martyrdom. The Arabic usage matches Syriac more closely. Late Sabaic ṣhd – ṣalay “to pray” is borrowed from Aramaic.

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So for example in the Talmud (BT Hag 10b(9)) “eat, drink, and celebrate the holiday before me”; Lamentations Rabbah (EchR[1]54 (9)) “for the holiday is coming, and I (lit. that man) have nothing.” In Galilaean Aramaic, in the Pesikta de Rav Kahana (ed. B. Mandelbaum; New York, 1962) 68.8 it refers to Succoth: “[from Passover to Succoth.”


Æ ›Ï – ḥagg “peregrinatio Moslemorum” is of course a later term re-borrowed from Arabic. Possibly the meaning “pilgrimage” for ḥq is already attested in Nabataean, although this is uncertain. It certainly could be used in pagan contexts as is clear from – ḥeggṯā “the shrine or fans of an idol,” i.e. ḥeggṯ “from Passover to Succot.”

The fact that the Arabic root has dual the meanings “to devote, consecrate” (in the ivth, causative stem) and the nuance of “forbidden,” i.e. ḥarām (i.e. one of the – al-ḥamdu li-llāhi rabbi l-ʿālamin the definite article appended to the first word was correctly seen as problematic by at-Ṭabarī (a.l. instead of *– al-ḥamdu li-llāhi rabbi l-ʿālamin*), and received a somewhat forced explanation. Similarly Tafsīr Jalalayn a.l.:… is a predicate of a nominal clause, the content of which is intended to extol God [by stating that]: He possesses the praise of all creatures, or that He [alone] deserves their praise. God is a proper noun for the One truly worthy of worship.”

The biblical tradition is not unanimous as to when the God of Israel reveals himself by name to his elect. The account of the Jahwist in the Hexateuch presumes that it is known that the Deity’s name is Yahweh from its beginning (Genesis 2:4b). According to the Priestly source, a critic of J, the Lord only reveals himself as Yahweh to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14f.). Nonetheless, it should be noted that the notion of Abraham as the patriarch of the Israelites is a
late (post-)exilic literary production that presumes events originally related to Nabonidus.

81 For the later Jewish tradition cf. e.g. in the Talmud Qiddushin 71a: I am not referred to as it [scil. my name] is written. My name is written yod-hé-vav-hé and it is pronounced 'Adonai.' Already in the Mishna (Seder Nezikin, tractate Sanhedrin 10.1), according to Rabbi Shaul those who pronounce the proper name of God will have no place in the world to come:

82 See e.g. St Jerome, Epistola xxv “De decem nominibus dei” to Marcella (d.d. 384; Migne, PL Vol. 22, p. 428f.): “Septimum adonai, quem nos Dom inum generaliter appellamus. Octavum ia, quod in Deo tantum ponitur : et in alleluia extrema quoque syllaba sonat. Nonum τετάγαμμα, quod ἀνεκϕώνητον, id est ineffabile putaverunt, quod his litteris scribitur, jod, he, v av, he. Quod quidam non intelligentes propter elementorum similitudinem, cum in Graecis libris repererunt, πιπι legere consueverunt.”


84 See for example in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:2): I am Y. your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” in e.g. the Septuagint ἐγώ εἰμι κύιος ὁ ϑεός …, the Syriac Peshitta: ‘ănā ‘ănā māryā ălāhāk … and in the Classical Ethiopic Bible –‘ana w% tu ’gzi’ … This is of course what is also found in Arabic translations of this passage: …

85 While the pointing of the Tetragrammaton as ‘ăḏōnay is certainly of Jewish origin–based on an ancient Canaanite custom of using an epithet to avoid using the proper name of the deity, re. 'Adūn for Eshmun at Sidon, Melqart for an unknown deity at Tyre etc.–although in Jewish tradition this was later restricted to usage in prayer and God was then addressed by other terms such as haš-šēm “the Name” (cf. already Leviticus 24:11) or ḫaq-qādōš bārūḵ hū’ “The Holy One, blessed be He” (abbrev. HKBH). Thus the Qur’an follows Christian tradition and seems entirely ignorant of Jewish custom here.

86 While the mufassirūn such as aṭ-Ṭabari understood the meaning of the word (الرَبُّ فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” فِي كِلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصُرُ عَلَى مَعْنَى: “الْرَبُّ” F

87 From which is derived ʿālim “scholar,” pl. ʿulamāʾ – experts in Islamic law.

88 I.e. τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου.

89 And note e.g. bēṯ ʿālmā as a term for “sepulcher, grave, tomb” in later Aramaic dialects: Palmyra (P 24:1.1) ʾksdrʾ dnh bt ʿlmʾ d y bgw mʿrtʾ mʿlyk mn bbʾ ʿl ymynʾ “this arcade, the sepulcher within the burial cave on the right of the doorway as you enter”; Qumran (4Q549 1.6). Cf. also Syriac ʿālmāyūṯā “this world” e.g. Ephesians 2:2 “wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world …”

90 Such as e.g. the prayer fragment CIH 538:

1 […] ’ykfrn lb-hmw w-yqbln grbn-hm[w …]
91 In Classical Ethiopic, which also borrowed this term from Aramaic, we find the same semantic development as in Arabic including the usage of the plural and plural i.a. in the sense of “tempus remotissimum, sive prateritum sive futurum; tempus perpetuum, secula, aeternitas” (Dillmann, Lexicon 951), e.g. דִּילְמָן: - naguša ‘alām (Vulgate) “rex seculorum” (Tobit 13:6), and similar to the plural Qur’ānic usage discussed here Enoch 81:10 אֶנֶוך 1:10. And I returned to my fellow men, blessing the Lord of Eternity” (la-‘aggā‘a ‘alamāt).

92 Or is this a reference to the Jewish terms הָאָלָם הָזִּזָּה “this world” and הָאָלָם הֲבָה “the coming world”?

93 The usage of the lexeme in the plural perplexed the mufassirūn who clearly had no idea what was meant. Ṭabarī took the word here to mean “generation”:

والعالم اسم لأصناف الأنم. وكل من عالم ذات векن والذين رمان قال انس عالم وكل من أهل زمان منهم عالم ذات زمان ونجين عالم وذلما أفاض أبيض الخلوق. كل من عالم زمان. وذلما يجمع قليل "عالمون" وواحدة يجمع يكون عالم كل زمان من ذات زمان ذات زمان. ومن ذلك قول المفسر جعله هامًا هذا العالم فجعله عالم زمانه

“‘alām is the name for various groups—each type is an ‘alām. The members of each generation of each kind are the ‘alām of that generation and that time: humanity is an ‘alām and all the people of a given time are the ‘alām of that time. The genies are also an ‘alām etc. with other created beings. Each species is the ‘alām of its own time.”

At-Ṭabarī then quotes Ibn ‘Abbās: ربّ الغَلَامين ذُخْرُ وَلَدَانِسّ رَبِّ الْغَلَامِين, al-ğāmin wal-nās “rabb l-’alāmīn means genies and people” (although one would then expect a dual!); similarly Tafsīr al-Galālyn:
As the title of a goddess. For the profane use cf. Judges 5:30 “They must be dividing the captured plunder—with a woman or two (עמה וandel as) raham rahamatayim ba-ro’s galbar) for every man. There will be colourful robes for Sisera, and colourful, on both sides.” In Akkadian, the verbal realisation of this root, rēmūm, means “to love,” a meaning also found for this root in Aramaic (cf. e.g. in Official Aramaic TAD D.1 2.13 “I shall lie with her; I love her greatly”) with numerous derivations (cf. in Syriac, often for calques of Greek terms, e.g. ἀνθρωποθυσίας χαρίτων ‘philanthropy’).

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99 Cf. mhraḥmānuṯā as a title of Byzantine kings, mraḥmānuṯāḵ “Your mercy.” Whether or not the Christian-Syriac usage stems originally from Judaism, which could well be the case, is irrelevant here.

100 Although the Bismillah (bismi-llāhi) is certainly also a borrowed term, in my opinion it is used in a general sense here, but it would be well worthwhile to study it diachronically in detail, especially in the collocation bismi-llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm. Note also the Christian Trinitarian variant "There is no God but God and Michael is the Messenger of God" or a stress on the oneness of the Trinity, e.g. al-ʾāb wal-ibn war-rūḥ al-qudus ilāh wāhid “The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” In passing, it is worth noting that after Odo of Châteauroux’ arrival in the Holy Land in 1250, when he prohibited Crusader coin issues with Islamic inscriptions and Innocent IV’s confirmation and explication of this prohibition ("nomen Machometi atque annorum a nativitate ipsius (sic) numeros sculptabant“, cf. E. Berger, Les registres d’Innocent IV, vol. 3 (Paris, 1897), n° 6336) after 1253, the Shahada is replaced with the Bismillah (Damascus imitative types v and vi)—besides a “Christianised” Shahada “There is no God but God and Michael is the Messenger of God” or a stress on the oneness of the Trinity, e.g. al-ʾāb wa-ʾibn war-rūḥ al-qudus ilāh wāhid “The Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit: One God” (see M. Bates and I. F. Preston in: A. G. Malloy, I. F. Preston, A. J. Seltman et al., Coins of the Crusader States 1098–1291 [New York, 1994], 129–140).

This expression is important for understanding the manifestations of Christianity that would later lead to Islam. The "Anointed One" (i.e. the Messiah, or the Christ) is not described as the Son of God here, cf. 5:75: ma ʾāb la-masīḥu bnu maryama ’illā rasūlan qad ḫalat min qablihi r-rusulu wa-ʾummuhu ʾṣiddīqatun kānā yaʾkulāni ṭ-ṭaʿāma nẓur kayfa nubayyinu lahumu l-ʾāyāti ṭumma nẓur ʾannā yuʾfakūna as well as 3:45; 4:157, 172; 5: 17, 72; 9: 31, but rather as "his anointed one!" 103 A discussion of the Christian roots of Qur’ānic apocalyptic thinking would exceed the limits of the current discussion and the capabilities of the author. For a general of the subject see i.a. F. Hahn, Frühjüdische und urchristliche Apokalyptik. Eine Einführung (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1998); and especially the various articles found in D. Hellholm (ed.), Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East. Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism. Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979 (Tübingen 1983); also H. Gese, "Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik, dargestellt am Sacharjabuch," in idem, Von Sinai zum Zion (Munich, 1974), 202–230. In passing, it should be noted that Islamic eschatological views presuppose Christianity (and not Judaism or indigenous ideas), for example the “False
The mufassirūn are quite perplexed as to what this expression might have meant. Also spelt £¡²

Cf. e.g. Hebrews 12:23 (σκληροί ἥ διωκόμεθα ἐν σάρκι σου "and to God the judge of all.")

Cf. C. A. Ciancaglini, *Iranian Loanwords in Syriac* (Wiesbaden, 2008), 152. The term would seem to be an Indo-European cognate with ḏḥāna – dhyāna, a technical term for forms of meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism (in the latter, a state of sanna).

Another, albeit impossible, derivation is given by Chr. loan-word here). Note also M. Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000), 40. Another, albeit impossible, derivation is given by Chr. Luxenberg, op. cit. 18.

The mufassirūn are quite perplexed as to what this expression might have meant. At-Tabari a.l.:

"This is the 'straight path,' because he who succeeds the prophets, the righteous and the martyrs, upon whom God has bestowed favour, have succeeded, succeeds in Islam, in believing in the prophets, in adhering to the Book, in doing what God commands, and in restraining himself from what He abhors, in following the course the Prophet took, the way of Abū Bakr,
'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Ali, and of every devout servant of God. All this is the 'straight path.' The interpreters differed about the meaning of the 'straight path,' but all their interpretations are contained in the interpretation we have proffered here” … And citing 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās:

“The 'straight path' is the Book of God” … citing Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh:

“Guide us in the 'straight path' [means] Islam, which is wider than heaven and earth” … citing Abū-'l-ʿĀliya [and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī]:

the ‘straight path’ “is the messenger of God, and his two Companions after him Abū Bakr and 'Umar.” It is clear that at-Ṭabarī c.s. have no idea what is meant here, nor of the relevant historical details.

111 Cf. Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem iv.8: "Nazaræus vocari habebat secundum prophetiam Christus creatoris. Unde et ipso nomine nos Iudæi Nazarenos appellant per eum. Nam et sumus de quibus scriptum est: Nazaræi exalbati sunt super nivem, qui scilicet retro lurdati delinquentiae maculis et migrati ignorantiae tenebris. Christo autem appellatio Nazaræi in extraneum Iesu post tibi transtulit, sed addidit Junius quæro an scribendum fuerit cum se confirmavit competitura erat ex infantiae latebris, ad quasi apud Nazareth descendit, vitando Archelaum filium Herodis”; also Pliny, Naturalis Historia v.81: “Cœle habet Apameam Marsya amme divisam a Nazerinorum tetrarchia.”


113 As every reader of the New Testament knows, Jesus was not from Nazareth, but from the Galilee. In Antiquity, he and his teaching were known as Galilean—cf. e.g. Julian’s famous last words according to Theodoret Γαλιλαϊν ο ἲλιος ἑτοίμως! A similar usage is also found in his refutation of Christianity Contra Galilæos (e.g. Bk. 1: Καλὸς ἐξεν ἐμοί καὶ ὕπατος οὐκ ἔχει οὐκ ἔχεις τῆς τῶν Γαλλαίων ἡ σκευωρία πλάσμα ἐστι πάντων ἀνθρώπων, ὡς ἄν ἐπείθηθη ὅτι τῶν Γαλλαίων ἡ σκευωρία πλάσμα ἐστὶν ἅπασι ἀνθρώποις ἐπὶ κακουργίας
114 Isaiah 11:1–10 has a long story of messianic exegesis, also in early Judaism. The rendition of the Targum makes this clear: יְהוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה Y

115 Cf. Epiphanius, Panarion 28:1: ἦς εἰλήφατο τοῦ ἱεροῦ τοῦτος ἔποντο, etc. (probably from Greek) along with hícāreš – nāṣartā “surculus.” Something which Tertullian was well aware of op. cit. (n111) “nomine nos Iudaei Nazarenos appellant.”

116 Cf. Acts 11:26: χρηστάτης τε πρώτως ἐν Λατινίῳ τοῦς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς. The historicity of this passage is not at issue here. The relevance is the awareness that “Christianity” was not the original lexeme used to describe what later became the new religion.

117 Cf. also Syriac ܐܢܕܐ ܡܠܐ – nāṣrāyūṯā; Goʾaz ῦθWithDataDownloadWorkbook(“ko”) r – nazarawi (probably from Greek) along with hícāreš – nāṣartāyā; something which Tertullian was well aware of op. cit. (n111) “nomine nos ludei Nazareni appellant.”

118 According to John (19:19), citing the previously mentioned INRI-inscription, the only NT attestation which renders Pilate’s supposed text as Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωάριος or Ναζαρητ (re. the Greek spelling in Matthew 2:23). The Greek word is morphologically the same here as in the expression used by Tertullian in Acts 24:5 (τῶν Ναζωαρίων), “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” Although the rendition of the Semitic phoneme /š/ with θ in Greek might appear odd, and could cast doubt on the derivation proposed here, e.g. the rendition קַדְשָׁא – d-nāṣrāyā etc. in the Syriac NT make it clear that this etymology is correct and it should not be derived from an alleged root <*√nzr (this spelling, מָצְרָא – nzrwy “Nazarene” found in Christian Palestinian Aramaic is
probably calqued from Greek; cf. also גַּ֫שַׁשׂ הָ֫מֶ֫ךְ in the previous note). In 
Modern Hebrew (Ivrit), the term נֹ֫שִׁ֫רְׁי – nōṣrī (sg.) is the common word for 
Christian (whereas another group uses מַ֫שִּ֫יחַ – masiḥī "Messianic Jews" as a self-
description; cf. Arabic مسيحي – masiḥī, مسيحيّة – al-masḥiyah "Christianity"); 
note also Mandaic nasraia. The root נָ֫שַׁר is unsurprisingly productive for things 
Christian in Arabic, e.g. مُناَسِّر – munaṣṣir "missionary," تَنْصُر – tanṣūr "to become 
Christian," "to be baptised." A derivation of this root, borrowed ultimately from 
Syriac, is used in Malayalam to denote the St Thomas Christians of Kerala, the 
mar toma nasrani.

I have discussed this term at length in a forthcoming essay ("Annu Hègiræ vel 
Annus (H)Agarorum? Etymologische und vergleichende Anmerkungen zum 
Anfang der islamischen Jahreszählung" in: K.-H. Ohlig und M. Gross (eds.), 
Inârah 7 [Berlin–Tübingen, 2014]). Briefly, the traditional account of "Muḥam-
mad’s" life tells us that in June of 622, upon getting wind of an assassination plot 
against him at Mecca, he escaped with some of his loyal followers and eventually 
made his way to Yathrib/Medina. The traditionally accepted reference for this 
event is in Sura 9: 100 (cited above). In Islam, this event is viewed as so significant 
a turning-point that the Islamic calendar commences with the "year of the exile" 
(sanat or ′am al-hiǧra, not referred to in the Qur‘ān). Traditionally, the مهاجرون – muḥāǧirūn 
(from a supposed root ḥǧr “to emigrate, go into exile”) are 
interpreted as the "émigrés" who left with "Muḥammad." However, several 
problems arise from this traditional interpretation. First, the Qur‘ānic quotation is 
vague at best. Second, as the Qur‘ān is by all accounts the first book in Arabic, we 
lack internal comparative evidence for the meanings of key words as this essay 
demonstrates. The root ḥaǧara is only attested in South Semitic in the meaning of 
"city(-dweller)” and in Hebrew and Aramaic as the name of Abraham’s concubine, 
Hagar. This datum, the lack of comparative Semitic support, is cause for suspicion.

We know about the Islamic dating system, which begins with the "year of the 
exile,” from contemporary evidence in Arabic, Syriac, Greek and even Chinese 
sources. The Syriac and Greek sources usually refer to a "year of the Arabs." We 

119 know that in Late Antique literatures, one of the many synonyms for 
Arabs is "Hagarite" (along with Ishmaelite and Saracen, for example), and that in 
Syriac we find a derivation مهاجرة (also borrowed into Greek as μαγραῖοι). An 
Greek inscription of the Caliph Mu’āwiyah from Hammat Gader, 
dated in Classical fashion, includes the year of the colony, the indiction years for 
taxation (indicating that there still was some association with Constantinople, 
imagined or real) and the year of the local Metropolitan. In addition, it is dated 
"year 42 κατὰ Ἁβας" which, based on the other dating systems, denotes the year 
664. Arabic sources, such as an inscription of Mu’āwiyah from Ta‘if (modern 
Saudi Arabia), as well as Chinese sources, mention only the year, without 
reference to the dating system employed. Indeed, Mu’āwiyah’s inscriptions have 
no Islamic content whatsoever, posing additional serious questions about the 
traditional narrative. From the comparative evidence we have briefly touched 
upon here, it seems clear that the مهاجرون – al-muḥāǧirūn are Arabs (مهاجرة – mhağraya) 
and not otherwise unknown ‘émigrés.'
What then are the origins of the Islamic year (هـ – hiǧra)? For one answer, we know that Easter 622 was when the Romano-Byzantine Emperor Heraclius initiated a “Holy War.” Led by an icon of Christ said to have come into existence miraculously (ἅχειοποίητα), that is, as if led by Christ himself, Heraclius’ goal was to re-conquer lost Syro-Palestinian possessions and then ultimately destroy the Sassanid Empire. These are the events that led to the formation of the Umayyad Caliphate, a Byzantine shadow-empire in which the Arabs and not the Romans were to rule the region. They marked the birth of an Arab dynasty – not an Islamic one – that would rule much of the former Roman and Sassanid Empires. This is what was meant by “the year of the Arabs.” The hiǧra from Mecca to Medina described in Islamic sources has no historical underpinnings.

120 Cf. in the Sabaean dictionary by Beeston et al., op. cit. p. 100 “aide, appui, soutien, secours.”

121 Well-attested in Aramaic dialects, in Syriac also with the further semantic development ∼”observance,” for example nāṭōrūt cf. e.g. JECan 3:8 يَاثِثُورَتُم, “Jewish observances.”


123 Note e.g. the etymology of the (Gnostic) Gospel of Philip: μαθητῶν εὐαγγελικῶν τῆς θεοῦ πυλαρίων μεσσίας ετε παῖς παῖς πυλαρίων μεσσίας … Ναζάρη τε κοινωνία πυλαρίων οὐ την κοινωνία “The apostles who have gone before us called [him] Jesus the Nazarene, the Messiah, that is Jesus the Nazarene Christ (“the Anointed One”)… Nazara means “truth,” thus the (Nazarene) is the “true one” (Text according to W. Till (ed.), Das Evangelium nach Philippos (Berlin, 1963), 62; translation by the author); cf. however also 114.12f.: πυλαρίων πετυγώντω, ἐνω γὰρ ἔπεσαν “the revealed Nazarene is the secret,” interpreted as Jesus’ second name, without any linguistic basis. Nevertheless, such exegesis points out the problems regarding the interpretation of Ναζωάραοι already in Antiquity.

124 The usage of this term, currently in vogue in anti-Islamic religious cultural polemics in the West, has its origins with the Irish freethinker John Toland (1670–1722), who coined it in his work on the Jewish origins of Christianity: Nazarenus: or Jewish, Gentile and Mahometan Christianity, containing the history of the ancient gospel of Barnabas... Also the Original Plan of Christianity explained in the history of the Nazarens... with... a summary of ancient Irish Christianity... (London, 1718). He formulated in detail, largely basing himself on the 'Gospel of Barnabas,' the Jewish Christian origins of Islam, presupposing by over a century and a half Nöldeke’s view of Islam being an Arab manifestation of Christianity; from his conclusion: “You perceive by this time … that what the Mahometans believe concerning Christ and his doctrine, were neither the inventions of Mahomet, nor yet of those Monks who are said to have assisted him in the framing of his Alcoran; but that they are as old as the time of the Apostles, having been the sentiments of whole Sects or Churches: and that theo the Gospel of the Hebrews be in all probability lost, yet some of those things are founded on another Gospel anciently known, and still in some manner existing, attributed to Barnabas. If in the history of this Gospel I have satisfy’d your curiosity, I shall think my time well spent; but infinitely better, if you agree, that, on this occasion, I have set The Original Plan of Christianity in its due light, as far as I propos’d to do” (84f.). Toland’s book gained notoriety, especially on the Continent through
Johann Lorenz von Mosheim’s (1693–1755) rebuttal, *Vindiciae antiquæ christianiorum disciplinæ adversus... Johannis Tolandi... Nazarenum* (Kiel, 11722; Hamburg, 21722) – which went to great lengths to rebut Toland’s views on Christian origins. Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) of the Tübingen School would later pursue the former’s line of thought in a Hegelian fashion of second century Christianity being the synthesis of two opposing theses: Jewish (Petrine) Christianity vs Gentile (Pauline) Christianity. Baur assumed, indirectly following Toland, that the Christianity represented by the Ebionites (apud Epiphanius), which as has been mentioned saw Paul (=Simon Magus, cf. Acts 8:9–24, according to Baur) as a heretic, represented ‘original’ Christianity, i.e. that of the Twelve Disciples.

125 On their name, cf. e.g. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* iii.27.6 ... ὅϑεν παρὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ἐγχείρησιν τῆς τοιᾶσδε λελόγχασι προσηγορίας τοῖς Ἐβιωναῖοι [i.e. Ἐβιων — ἐφιγνίμ — πτωχοῖς] ὑποθέτομεν τὴν τῆς διανοίας πτωχεῖαν αὐτῶν ὑποσφαίροντος ταύτη γὰρ ἐπίκλην ὁ πτωχὸς παρ' Ἐβιωναῖοι ὑποσφαίρεται; cf. 1: Ἐβιωναῖοι τούτους ἐσχάζουσιν χριστιανοὺς ὑποθέτομεν τῇ τοιαύτῃ λελόγχασι προσηγορίας. That the name is derived from Hebrew ⱱ ⁱ ŋ meaning ‘poor’ and was used by Jewish Christians is also noted by Origen, *Contra Celsum* ii.1: Ἐβιων τε γὰρ ὁ πτωχὸς παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις καλεῖται, καὶ Ἐβιωναῖοι χρηματίζουσιν οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὡς Χριστὸν παραδεξάμενοι.

126 Cf. e.g. St Jerome who presumes that the document was well-known and kept e.g. in the library at Caesarea, *Dialogus Adversus Pelagianos* 3.2 (*Migne, PL* Vol. 23, 597): “In evangelio juxta Hebræos, quoad Chaldaico quidem Syrioque sermone, sed Hebraicis litteris scriptum est, quo utuntur usque hodie Nazareni, secundum Apostolos, sive, ut plerique autamant, juxta Mathæum, quod et in Cæsariensi habetur biblotheca ...”; idem, *De viris illustribus* liber ad dextrum Book 3 (op. cit. 643–644): “Mattæus, qui et Levi, ex publicano apostolus (Matth. ix, 9 ; Marc. ii, 14 ; Luc. v, 27), primus in Judæa propter eos qui ex circumsicione crediderant, Evangelium Christi Hebraicis litteris verbitque compositum : quod quis postea in Graecum transuliterit, non satis certum est. Porro ipsum Hebraicum habetur usque hodie in Cæsariensi bibliotheca, quam Pamphilus martyr studiosissime confecit. Mihi quoque a Nazarœis, qui in Bere urbbe Syriæ hoc volumine utuntur, describendi facultas fuit. In quo animadvertendum, quod ubicumque evangelista, sive ex persona sua, sive ex persona Domini Salvatoris, veteris Scripœtri re testimoniiis abutitur, non sequatur Septuaginta translatorum auctoritatem, sed Hebraicam, ...”; and idem, *In Micheam* 7 “... crederitique Evangelio, quod secundum Hebraeos editum nuper transstulimus (in quo ex persona Salvatoris dicitur: Modo tulit me mater mea, sanctus Spiritus in uno capillorum meorum (Matth. x).” *Eusebius, Historia ecclesiastica* iii.24.6: Ἐβιωναῖος ἐν τούτοις τινὲς καὶ τὸ καθ’ Ἐβιωναίους εὐαγγέλιον


129 Frey, op. cit. 607–622. Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica iii.27.4 ... εὐαγγελίῳ δὲ μόνῳ τῷ καθ’ Ἐβραίοις λεγομένῳ χρόμμαν, τῶν λοιπῶν σμίκρυν ἐποίησαν λόγον.

130 For a detailed discussion of this subject see, Th. Hainthaler, Christliche Araber vor dem Islam. Verbreitung und konfessionelle Zugehörigkeit: eine Hinführung (Louvain, '2007).


132 In his proem 2.4 he says about his working methods: τῶν δὲ ὑμῶν μελλόντων εἰς γνώσιν τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων ἴδεν <πείς> αἰώσεων τε καὶ σημάτων τὰ μὲν ἐκ φιλολογίας ἴσην, τὰ δὲ ἐξ ἄκοις κατειλήφαμεν, τοῖς δὲ παν ἰδίως ὅσοι καὶ ὀφθαλ-
Τουτέστιν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ, τὸν Χάτῳ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ Ἰουδαίων, ἀπηγότα τὸν Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ κόσμου καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα, ὧσα περικυκλώσει ἀνιὼν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ὑδάτων καταδύσεως καὶ βαπτισμοῦ, τελεῖται. Ἔτι δὲ πλείω οὐκ ἐστὶν μὲν διὰ συνταγμάτων παλαιῶν συγγεγραμμένων. Παρ' αὐτοῖς γὰρ καὶ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασις ὑπολογίζεται καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ τὰ πάντα γεγένηθαι, ἐναὶ δὲ θεοῦ καταγγέλλουσιν καὶ τὸν τοῦτον παῖδα Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν· 28:6. See also St Augustine, De Haeresibus IX: “Nazorai, cum Dei Filium confiteantur esse Christum, omnia tamen veteris legis observant, quæ Christiani per apostolicam traditionem non observare carnaliter, sed spiritualiter intelligere didicerunt.”

Τοιτέστιν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ, τὸν Χριστόν γεγεννήθαι ἑλεγεν· ὡς καὶ ἦδη ἦμι προειρήται ὅτι τὰ ἔσοδα τοῖς ἄλλοις διά συνταγμάτων νόμου, καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς παραδείγματα καὶ κοινωνίας καὶ τῆς Μαρίας γεννημένος, ἦν δὲ τὸν Ιακώβου τοῦ κυρίου· ὡς καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς συναντηθηκαί της τῆς αὐτῆς ὄντες παραδείγματα καὶ κοινωνίας καὶ τῆς Μαρίας γεννημένος, ἦν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβου τοῦ κυρίου. Τὸν ἦκαν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβου τοῦ κυρίου. Τὸν ἦκαν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβου τοῦ κυρίου. Τὸν ἦκαν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβου τοῦ κυρίου. Τὸν ἦκαν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβου τοῦ κυρίου.
advocated, corresponds with the Islamic view as for example found in Surah 4:171–172 (also quoted on ʿAbd el-Malik’s inscription on the Dome of the Rock):

"O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allāh save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allāh, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allāh and His messengers, and say not 'Three'–Cease! (it is) better for you! – Allāh is only One Allāh. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allāh is sufficient as Defender. The Messiah will never scorn to be a slave unto Allāh, nor will the favoured angels. Whoso scorns His service and is proud, all such will He assemble unto Him."

(Pickthall)

19:34–35.

Note also St Augustine, De Hær. X: "Hebionitai Christum etiam ipsi tantummodo hominem dicunt. Mandata carnalia legis observant, circumcisionem scilicet carnis, et cætera, a quorum oneribus per Novum Testamentum liberati sumus."

136 Cf. also Eusebius, Hist. eccl. iii.27.4: οὗτοι δὲ τοῦ μὲν ἀποστόλου πάμπαν τὰς ἐπιστολὰς ἀποκλαύοντες αὐτὸν τοῦ νόμου … Cf. also the following note iii.15 “Ebionaeos perstringit, qui Pauli auctoritatem elevabant.”

137 Described using only the Gospel of Matthew, rejecting Paul, following Jewish custom and venerating Jerusalem as the House of God i.26.2: “Qui autem dicitur Ebionaei, consentiunt quidum mundum a Deo factum; ea autem quae sunt erga Dominum, son similiter, ut Cerinthus et Capocrates opinantur. Solo autem eo quod est secundum Mattheum, Evangelio utuntur, et apostolum Paulum recusant, apostatum cum legis dicentes. Quae autem sunt prophetica, curiosus exposere nituntur; et circumciduntur, ac perseverant in his consuetudinibus, quae sunt secundum legem, et Judaico charactere vivat, uti et Hierosolyman adoren, quasi domus sit Dei” (cf. also idem In Is. Ad 8.14). On only using the Gospel of Matthew iii.7: “Ebionaeitis enevig, quod es secundum Mattheum, solo utentes.” On rejecting Paul iii.15: “Ebionaeos perstringit, qui Pauli auctoritatem elevabant, hancque confirmat ex Luce scriptis …” “Eadem autem dicimus iterum et his, qui Paulum apostolum non cognoscunt, quoniam aut reliquis verbis Evangelii, quae per solum Lucam in nostram venerunt aegnitionem, renunabere debent, et non uti eis …”; The Ebionites following Theodotian the Ephesian and Aquila of Pontus, both of whom were Jewish proselytes, reject the virgin birth of Jesus iii.21.1: “Deus igitur homo factus est, et ipse Dominus salvabit nos, ipsi dans Virginis signum. Non ergo vera est quorundam interpretatio, qui ita ardent interpretari Scripturam: ‘Ecce adolescentia in ventre habebit, et pariet filium’; quemadmodum Theodotion Ephesius est interpretatus, et Aquila Ponticus, utrique Judæi proselyti; quos sectati, ex Joseph generatum eum dicunt …”; Ebionites rejecting the divinity of Christ iv.33.4: “Judicabint autem et Ebionitas: quomodo possunt salvari, nisi Deus est qui salutem illorum super terram operatus est? Et quomodo homo transiet in Deum, si non Deus in hominem? Quemadmodum autem relinquet mortis generationem, si non in novam generationem mire et inopinata a Deo, in signum autem salutis, datam, quae est ex virgine per fidem, regenerationem?”; Further rejection of the divinity of Christ and seemingly also abstaining from alcohol (cf. also cf. Epiphanius, Pan. 30.16, Acts of Peter and Simon, Clement, Strom. i) 96.v.1.3: “Vani autem ei Ebionaei, unionem Dei et hominis per fidem non recipientes in suam animam, sed in veleri generationis perseverantes fermento; neque intelligere volentes, quoniam Spiritus sanctus advenit in Mariam, et virtus Altissimi obumbravit eam; quampropter et quod generatum est, sanctum est, et filius Altissimi Dei Patris omnium, qui operatus est incarnationem eius, et novam ostendit generationem; uti quemadmodum per primorem generationem mortem hæreditavimus, sic per generationem hanc hæreditavimus vitam.”

138 Πάντων καλοίστων τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ τότε τοῦτο τῷ ὁμόματι διὰ Νααμβέτ τῆς πόλεως, ἄλλης μὴ οὕσεις χρήσεως τῷ ὁμόματι πρὸς τὸν καιρόν, ὡστε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὧν οὐκ ἦσαν κατὰ τὸν Χριστὸν πεπιστευκότας, πεί αὐτοῖς καὶ
γέγονε «ὅτι Ναζωάριος κληθήσεται». Καί γάρ καὶ νῦν ὁμονύμως οἱ ἄνθρωποι πάσας τὰς αἰρέσεις. Μανιχαῖοις τῇ φήμῃ καὶ Μαρκιωνιστάς Γνωστικοῖς τε καὶ ἄλλοι, Χριστιανοῖς τοὺς μὴ ὄντας Χριστιανοῖς καλοῦσι καὶ ὡς ἐκατέστη αἱρέσεις, κἀπεὶ ἄλλως λεγομένη, καταδέχεται τοῦτο χαῦρουα, ὅτι διὰ τοῦ ὄνοματος κοσμεῖται· 

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PART 2: ARAMAIC AND SYRIAC

καὶ καὶ νῦν ὁμωνυμῶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι πάσας τὰς αἱρέσεις, ὁμοιοίοις τοὺς μὴ Ὅντας καλοῦσι καὶ ὡς ἐκατέστη αἱρέσεις, κἀπεὶ ἄλλως λεγομένη, καταδέχεται τοῦτο χαῦρουα, ὅτι διὰ τοῦ ὄνοματος κοσμεῖται· 

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in question was seemingly already out of circulation—and where it is known variously as the "Gospel of the mixed" or "Gospel of the separated," but translated literally into Arabic.  

143 E.g. 29:7: ἐστιν δὲ αὐτὴ ἡ ἁγία ἡ Ναζωραῖον ἐν τῇ Βεροαίᾳ περὶ τὴν Κοίλην Σοφίαν καὶ εἰς τὴν Δεκαπόλει περὶ τὰ τῆς Πέλλης μέρη καὶ ἐν τῇ Βασανίτιδι ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ Κωκάβη. Χωκάβῃ δὲ ἔβασι τακελισά, μετὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν Ἱεροσόλυμων μετάβασιν πάντων τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Πέλλῃ ἕκειν. Ἐστιν δὲ, ἵνα ἔργο τὰ τούτα καταλείψει τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ ἀναχώρησή δὲ ἥν ἡμέρᾳ πάσχει πολυοικίαν. Καὶ εἰς τὰς τοιαύτας ὑποθέσεις τὴν Παρασκευὴν ὑκοῦσαντες ἔκεισε, ὡς ἑφι, διετέραν. Ἐνεπεδήν ἢ κατὰ τοὺς Ναζωραίους ἁγίας ἔσεθο πᾶσαν τὴν ἁγίαν.  

144 E.g. 30:2: γέγονε δὲ ἡ ἁγία τούτων ἡ παντὶ τῶν Ἱεροσόλυμων ἁλοσω. Ἐπειδὴ γάρ πάντες οἱ εἰς Χριστὸν πεπιστευκότες τὴν Παρασκευὴν κατ’ ἐκεῖνον καιρὸν κατέφθασαν τὸ πλείστον, ἐν Πέλλῃ τινὶ πόλει καλουμένῃ τῇ Δεκαπόλεις τῆς ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ γέγονεν ἄλλοις λόγοις καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας αἱ ἀποκάλυψε εἰς ἄλλους. Μὲ δὲ τὴν κατοικίαν ἐσεῖτο Χριστὸς τῇ Καριαίᾳ καὶ ἀποκάλυψε εἰς τὴν Βασανίτιδα χώραν, ὡς ἐλθὼν εἰς ἣμᾶς γνώσεις περιέγραψε. Εἴνας δὲ ἤθελε τῆς κακῆς ἀυτοῦ διδασκαλίας, ὥσπερ δὲν καὶ οἱ Ναζωραῖοι, οἱ ἅπαντες μοι προδειχθοῦσιν … ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἐν ἄλλους λόγοις καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας αἱ ἁγίαις περὶ τῆς τοποθετίας Κωκάβης καὶ τῆς Αραβίας διὰ πλάτους εἶπεν.  


146 T. Andrae, Mahomet, sa vie et sa doctrine (Paris, 1945), 99.  


149 Cf. Pritz, op. cit. 71–82. Some contemporary authors, such as St Augustine writing in distant North Africa, necessarily also relied on secondary information (in De haer. X – cf. n134 supra – he cites Epiphanius; note also Jerome’s Letter 79 to Augustine). See also the following note ad finem.

150 For further discussion see A. Schlatter, “Die Entwicklung des jüdischen Christentums zum Islam,” Evangelisches Missions-Magazin, n.F. 62 (1918): 251–264; H.-J. Schoeps, Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums (Tübingen, 1949). The classic explanation of their disappearance cf. A. von Harnack, Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten (Leipzig, 1924), 48–79 et passim: “Der größere Teil derselben [scil. the Jewish Christians] ist im folgenden Jahrhundert gräzisiert worden und in die große Christenheit übergegangen” 633, Jewish Christianity due to its Hellenisation “hob sich damit selbst auf” 69. For a modern reflection on von Harnack and his relationship with Judaism and Judaeo-Christianity cf. Murray, op.cit. 129–133. This view is still current among some, e.g. G. Stemberger, Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century (Edinburgh, 1999), 80: “no significant Jewish-Christian communities were left in Palestine itself” [scil. by the fourth century]. In a forthcoming study, Peter von Sivers convincingly argues for active Monarchian/Adoptionist congregations in the region of the northern Fertile Crescent after 325 and into the 600s, decisively contradicting the prevailing view that the clerical establishments of the Chalcedonian, Monophysite, and Nestorian Churches had succeeded by the mid-400s in eradicating Judeo-Christianity from the Middle East (P. von Sivers, “Christology and Prophethology in the Umayyad Arab Empire” in K.-H. Ohlig and M. Gross (eds.), Inârah 7 [Berlin–Tübingen, 2014]). It should be noted in passing that Jewish-Christian sects such as the Passagians (or Circumcisi) are attested in the Lombardy—also mentioned by Bonacursus and Gregorius of Bergamo; note also the “Nazarenes” mentioned by Humbert de Moyenmoutier and in Constantine ix’s bull of excommunication (1054).

151 A reference to Revelation 7:3ff., 14:1ff.

152 Note, however, in von Harnack’s Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte ([Tübingen, 1909], Vol. II, 529–538) he notes the importance of Judaeo-Christian theology for nascent Islam. Schoeps, Theologie, would later pursue this aspect.

153 Not σώφρενος in the Aristotelian sense but rather in the sense of actus, i.e. that Christ had but one active force (i.e. God’s energia is one, as he has but one nature of the three Persons). Supposedly, this was a formulation which the Chalcedonians could interpret to mean all are the actions of one subject though either divine or human according to the nature from which they are elicited whilst the Monophysites could read their theandric interpretation into this, i.e. all actions, human and divine, of the incarnate Son are to be referred to one agent, who is the God-man and that consequently His actions, both the human and the Divine must proceed from a single theandric energia. That is the nature of Christ’s humanity and divinity and their interrelationship was avoided in favour of agreeing that whatever the latter, the Godhead had only one active force.

154 E.g. the phrase – wo-kəl han-nosrim ka-rāğa’ yāḥūdā “And may all the Nosrim pass in a moment.” Cf. for this the discussion and the works cited in Pritz, op. cit. 95–107.
155 E.g. Panarion 29:9: πάνυ δὲ οὗτοι ἐχθοί τῶν Ἰουδαίων ὑπάρχουσιν. Ὅπως μόνον γὰρ οἱ τῶν Ἰουδαίων παιδεῖς πρὸς τούτους κέκτηνται μίσος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνιστάμενοι ἐωθὲν καὶ μέσης ἡμέρας καὶ περὶ τὴν ἐπέραν, τῆς τῆς ἡμέρας ὅτε εὐχάς ἐπετευκόνων οὕτως ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ἐπαιρώνται αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀναθεμάτισον, τῆς τῆς ἡμέρας ἄσκοντες ώστε «ἐπικαταφάσασθαι ὁ θεὸς τοῖς Ναζωραίοις». Δῆθεν γὰρ τούτους περισσότερον ἐνέχουσι, διὰ τὸ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων αὐτοὺς ὄντας Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσεσι εἶναι <τὸν> Χριστόν, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἕναντι πρὸς τοὺς ἔτι Ἰουδαίους, τοὺς τὸν Ἰησοῦν μὴ δεξαμένους.

156 Also – nūḥāmā, e.g. John 11:25.

157 James Barr's criticism of the difference between etymology and semantics, especially with regard to biblical philology are also especially relevant for Qur’anic philology (James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (Oxford, 1961)). Etymology "is not, and does not profess to be, a guide to the semantic value of words in their current usage, and such value has to be determined from the current usage and not from derivation" (107), and that "... there is a normative strain in the thought of many people about language, and they feel that in some sense the 'original,' the 'etymological meaning,' should be a guide to the usage of words, that the words are used 'properly' when they coincide in sense with the sense of the earliest known form which their derivation can be traced; and that when a word becomes in some way difficult or ambiguous an appeal to etymology will lead to a 'proper meaning' from which at any rate to begin" (109). To use an example of Barr's, it is indeed irrelevant for English semantics that the adjective 'nice' <Latin nescio "I don't know." Such criticism does indeed apply to much of the past research on alleged loan-words in the Qur’an.

158 One of the few English words with a Welsh etymology is probably "Dad," "father" <tad (pl. tadau).

159 So for example bylaw < bylög "village law"; "dirt" <drit "merda"; "husband" < husbondi "master of the house"; "slaughter" < slahtr "butchering"; "thrift" < frif "prosperity" etc.

160 Such as "bow" <boeg; "buoy" <boei; "deck" <dek; "freight" <vracht; "keel"<kieλ; "mast"<mast; "skipper"<schipper; "yacht"<jacht etc.

161 Which is why Americans eat 'cookies' (<koekje, diminutive) with their coffee and not biscuits with their tea. With the Dutch colonial presence in the New World are also the roots of 'Santa Claus' <Sinterklaas "Saint Nicholas."

162 For example 'avatar' < अवतार avatāra "descent"; 'Blighty' < विलायती – vilayati "foreign" (پیام) and [پیام] provincial, regional,” cf. French Wilaya); 'bottle' < بوتل – botul "rigid container"; 'bungalow' < بنگلা – banglā "Bengali"(-style) (<Gujarati बंगला – bangalo); 'candy' < चिनिया – kanṭu; 'cash' < किर्ज़ा – kācu; 'cot' < कुटुंब – khāṭ (Urdu کھٹ); 'pyjamas' < پیجماس – pājāmā <پیجماس); 'shampoo' < शाम्पू – chāmpo (Sanskrit „™chāmpa "kneading"?); 'thug' < थूग – thag (<Sanskrit स्थान – sthāga "scoundrel"?) etc.

163 It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss Arabic as a Semitic language. It should be noted, that its morphology indicates that it is most closely related to the North-West Semitic phylum of Semitic languages—siblings it may be best plotted in the Syro-Palestinian dialect continuum somewhere between Phoenician and
Hebrew on the one axis and Ancient North Arabic on the other; it displays no
close affinities with the South Semitic branch. Furthermore, Arabic is by no means
archaic—this thesis, often found in older works on Semitic languages, is no longer
valid. With the decipherment of third millennium Semitic languages such as
Eblaite and Old Akkadian, we now have a much better idea of ancient Semitic (cf.
e.g. R. Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian: A Historical and Comparative Study of the
Syllabic Texts* [Wiesbaden, 2005]). Breviter, that Classical Arabic seemingly
preserves more of the original Semitic consonantal inventory makes it no more
archaic than English, one of the few Germanic languages which preserves the
sound ṭ, i.e. /t/. Arabic is far removed from proto-Semitic, as one would logically
expect.

This can be seen especially in pivotal loans such as ܝ𝐈urancepi – ḥaymānot <
<šk’rāb – ḥaymānāṯ “faith, religion” (i.e. Christianity); Dillmann, *Lexicon*
“perigrinae formationis, ab Aramæis petitum, ab Æthiopibus frequentissime
uisseat…” According to tradition, Ethiopia became Christian with the conver-
sion of King Ezānā (†383) by the Syriac monk St Frumentius (†383) in
the fourth century; cf. G. Lusini, ‘Naufragio e conservazione di testi cristiani
antichi: il contributo della tradizione etiopica,’ *Università degli Studi di Napoli

Indeed the origins of rabbinic Judaism are largely the result of the polemic with
Christianity in the fourth century, cf. e.g. D. Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish-Christi-
nity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category,” *Jewish Quarterly

The doctrine of the parthenogenesis of Jesus Christ, also found in the Qur’ān (cf.
supra n134), presupposes the Greek Bible translation and in no way the Hebrew
understanding from Isaiah 7:14! Indeed all of the alleged ‘prophecies’ of Jesus
Christ in the Hebrew Bible are exegetical anachronisms.

See above n134.

"Die älteste Missionsgeschichte ist unter Legenden begraben oder vielmehr durch
eine tendenziöse Geschichte ersetzt worden, die sich in wenigen Jahrzehnten in
allen Länder des Erdkreises abgespielt haben soll. In dieser Geschichte ist mehr als
tausend Jahre hindurch gearbeitet worden—denn die Legendenbildung in bezug
auf die apostolische Mission beginnt schon im ersten Jahrhundert und hat noch
im Mittelalter, ja bis in die Neuzeit hinein gebliebt; ihre Wertlosigkeit ist jetzt
allgemein anerkannt."

See the comprehensive study: J. Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in
the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (Winona Lake, 1997).

Interestingly, historical criticism of the Bible has been noticed in the Islamic
world. For example, the impressive synthesis by the Indian scholar Rahmatullah
Kairanawi (1818–1891) – *Al-‘izhār al-ḥaqq* “Testimony of Truth” (6
Vols., 1864), uses the first fruits of critical biblical scholarship to demonstrate the
‘corruption’ of the Bible and Christianity—in contrast to Islam—(cf. C. Schir-
macher, “The Influence of German Biblical Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in
the 19th Century” in A. Sanlin (ed.), *A Comprehensive Faith: An International
Festschrift for Rousas John Rushdoony* [1997]).
Part 3

Apocrypha,
Jewish Christianity,
and the Koran