My aim in this paper is to collect and organize some of the data (most of them well-known, but not always placed in the right perspective) about traces, or evidence, of phenomena related to bilingualism or multilingualism in Qur’ānic Arabic.1 These are, roughly, phenomena of interference. Except for reasons of religious dogma (“the pure Arabic of the Qurʾān,” a meaningless formula from a linguistic and historical point of view), there is no reason to dismiss prima facie the idea that the audience—and even more the author(s)—of the Qurʾān, were to some extant bilingual or multilingual (as was a good part of the

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1 This topic got more attention these last years, with the publication of Christoph Luxenberg’s *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran. A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran* (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2007), originally in German, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache* (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2004, 1st ed. 2000). The way this book has been received in the academic world seems to me unsatisfactory. Luxenberg’s work has sometimes been enthusiastically praised, but also fiercely dismissed, quite often on dogmatic grounds (for a good review of the book, see Daniel King, ”A Christian Qurʾān? A Study in the Syriac Background to the language of the Qurʾān as presented in the work of Christoph Luxenberg,” *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 3 (2009), 44–71; see also my brief remarks in Guillaume Dye, ”Le Coran et son contexte. Remarques sur un ouvrage récent,” *Oriens Christianus* 95 (2011), 263–267). Clearly, Luxenberg’s method is often faulty, especially because of its disregard of any historical and literary context and, too frequently, its arbitrary use of linguistic evidence. However, Luxenberg offers many suggestions and emendations which should be examined case by case. Some of them are hasty, speculative, or unconvincing, but there are also very interesting and valuable insights (several examples given here owe him much). So the question should rather be: what can be extracted from the mass (and mess) of Luxenberg’s analyses, and be solid ground for a critical examination of the nature of Qurʾānic Arabic?
Near East at the time\textsuperscript{2}), and especially had some command of (notably) Syriac or another Aramaic dialect such as Christian or Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.\textsuperscript{3} Such languages were indeed well-known in “Syro-Arabia” (a rather vague label, but it might aptly refer to the area—from the North of the Arabian peninsula to Syria-Palestine—where the Qur’an came into existence\textsuperscript{4}), and the life of Arab Christians in Late Antiquity was marked by a kind of diglossia: Arabic for daily life, Syriac/Aramaic or Greek for liturgy (but Syriac/Aramaic also worked as a \textit{lingua franca}). Such a diglossia was obviously not limited to Arab Christians, but it is a decisive element for the understanding of many aspects of the Qur’an. Moreover, Syriac was the language of religious exhortation in many Eastern Churches, and it was the language of many religious writings, such as sung rhymed homilies (\textit{madrāšē}), recited rhymed homilies (\textit{memrē}), or religious dialogic poems (\textit{soğīyāṭā})—all literary genres which have their close counterparts in the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{5}

“Bilingualism” refers to the fact that the speakers, or some speakers, of a given language, have a command (total or partial, active or passive—in this case, one speaks of “receptive bilingualism”) of another language, generally used in the same area, or in a neighboring one. This is not the same phenomenon as the existence, in any given language, of words and syntactical

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\textsuperscript{3} For the Aramaic-speaking Christian communities of Sinai, Palestine or Trans-Jordan, Christian Palestinian Aramaic was the dominant language in local churches; for Syria and Mesopotamia, it was rather Syriac. For reasons of convenience, my examples will be mainly related to Syriac, which is better documented—but the corpus of Christian and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic undoubtedly deserves further study. There are also traces of other languages in Qur’ānic Arabic, but most of my examples will concern Aramaic.
