

Yā Maryam / Ave Maria: Textual Appropriation and Diglossia in Aljamiado-Morisco Marian Texts

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The narratives, polemical discourses, legal codes, sermons, and other didactic writings that fill the folios of Aljamiado-Morisco manuscripts bear evidence not only of the intermingling of religious traditions—Islamic, Jewish, Christian, and Indian, among others—but also of the symbiotic relationship between these documents and the communities that engaged with them. That is, as much as the content of these pages helped to shape the ideologies of the Moriscos that utilized them, so too did these same individuals and the environments in which they lived shape the form and content of their texts. Close readings of these manuscripts—including their traditional, often folkloric or fictionalized, narratives (*ḥadīṭ*)—against what we know of the Morisco historical record allows the modern reader to cultivate a portrait of Morisco socio-cultural and religious identities as evolving and fluid entities that challenge and often blur religious boundaries.

Much work that has already been conducted to this end examines Morisco appropriations or adaptations of Christian ideologies, writings, and practices in their texts. Miguel Asín Palacios, for instance, coined the term “Islam cristianizado” to describe what he viewed as influences of ascetic Christian practice on the Ṣūfī teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī of Murcia (1165-1240). Leonard Patrick Harvey and Gregorio Fonseca similarly examined the so-called Mancebo de Arévalo’s reshaping of the spiritual exercises of Thomas Kempis’s *Imitatio Christi* in his *Sumario de la relación y ejercicio espiritual*.¹ Additionally, the role of the Virgin Mary [Maryām in Islam/Arabic], both in Aljamiado-Morisco writings and in Spanish efforts to catechize the newly-converted Moriscos, has been the subject of a number of studies. A respected figure in both Christian and Islamic traditions, scholars including Amy G. Remensnyder, Manuel Barrios Aguilera, and Aliah Schleifer have approached Mary, in various contexts, as a logical bridge connecting the two. For Spanish authorities, the advent of Counter Reformation, which began with the Council of Trent (1545–1563), spurred evangelization efforts that emphasized Mary as a point of entry into Christian devotions. Schleifer has argued conversely that for Moriscos, their own Marian writings were “a response to Christian doctrine” and “an important factor in their adherence to Islam” (679). María del Mar Rosa-Rodríguez has exemplified this point in her study of the appropriation of specific terminology used to describe the Virgin Mary in the Gospels to characterize Āmina, the mother of the prophet Muḥammad, in the Aljamiado-Morisco *Libro de las Luces*.

The present study will continue this conversation, approaching Aljamiado-Morisco narratives broadly as active spaces of cultural and religious negotiation between Morisco scribes, their Islamic pasts, and their Iberian realities. Specifically, its subject is the insertion of the initial two verses of the Latin *Ave Maria* prayer into an otherwise Islamic *ḥadīṭ* of the lives of Mary and Jesus [‘Īsā]. Unlike the examples mentioned to this point, the insertion of this Latin text into an Aljamiado narrative adds an additional layer of linguistic complexity to an already diglossic and digraphic narrative. Charles Ferguson coined the term diglossia to refer to the separation of language use into the Low (L) language of the commonplace vernacular and the comparatively High (H) language of formal education. The former is the language of quotidian interactions; the

¹ See Harvey (1999) and Fonseca.

latter, that of formal writing and speech, often accessible only to the literate, educated classes. Thus, the Low and High varieties of a language convey distinct sets of information and are relegated to distinct spheres of use. Joshua Fishman extended Ferguson's original definition, which limited its scope to language variation within a single language family, to acknowledge the possibility for diglossia across language boundaries. It is this extended definition that I employ throughout this study.

Beyond its linguistic implications, the imposition of an additional language into the *ḥadīṭ* carries a specific set of ideologies and values that have come to form part of the language's identity. Hence, the reader is confronted with the question of intention. What purpose(s) did these Latin verses serve for the Morisco author and his intended audience? To attempt a nuanced answer to this question, I turn to Mukul Saxena's theoretical construct of 'critical diglossia.' "In contrast to the language-centric notion of classical diglossia," writes Saxena, "this revised notion contends that diglossia is primarily a socio-cultural, economic and political phenomenon [...] (94)." Like the examples mentioned in the opening paragraph of this study, the *Ave Maria* of the *ḥadīṭ* must be approached, at least in part, as a socio-cultural entity that reflects the lived experiences of sixteenth-century Aragonese Moriscos. Spain's Morisco populations endured nearly a century of institutionally imposed tactics to mold them into authentic Christians. Prolonged contact between the two religious communities—Christianity and Islam—resulted in generations of Moriscos born into a hierarchical construct whereby religious understanding and practice was dictated to them both from within their own communities—by the educated elite and, in many cases, Moriscos—and from without by Catholic clergy. It is thus my contention that the two lines of Latin text embedded within Aljamiado *ḥadīṭ* represent the deliberate and thoughtful appropriation of a specific element of Christian religious devotion that, for generations, had formed part of the Moriscos' environment. This act not only enriched the Moriscos' expression of their Islamic faith, as María Jesús Rubiera Mata contends, but also bears witness to a particular moment of religious negotiation and evolution (470).

The Aljamiado-Morisco MS J57 belongs to the collection of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas of Madrid, previously the collection of the Biblioteca de la Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios e Investigación Histórica. It consists of 173 folio pages measuring 28cm by 25.1cm and composed in clear Maghrebi script. The bottom portions of most of the pages show considerable deterioration due to humidity resulting in fragments of lost at the beginning and end of the manuscript. An annotation in Latin script on the final folio page dates the manuscript to 1587: "prinsipiose a doze dias de la luna de chumedi legual que se / contaba a beinte y uno de abril de 1587 / cumplira a beinte y dos dias de la luna de xaaben y al primer di- / a de agosto del dicho año." It was discovered in the late nineteenth century in the Aragonese town of Almonacid de la Sierra as part of a large cache of documents hidden in the walls and floorboards of a dilapidated house. The contents of the manuscript are a mixture of fantastic and eschatological narratives, legends of Biblical and Qur'ānic prophets, eschatological tales, and didactic writings on the virtues of fasting at specific points in the Islamic calendar.

The narrative of the life of Jesus, to which Miguel Asín Palacios and Julián Ribera assigned the title *Hadiz del nacimiento de Jesús* [hereafter *ḥadīṭ*], occupies twenty-four folio pages of MS J57. This text, attributed to the seventh- and eighth-century theologian, exegete, and scholar al-Ḥasan ibn Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642-728) and eighth-century storyteller Abū-l-Ḥasan Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 767), appears in at least two other Aljamiado manuscripts. A nearly identical text appears in MS J9, fols. 106v-132v, also of the CSIC. A second nearly identical text

composed in Latin characters is found in MS 11/9393 (previously Gay S.1), fols. 99r-128v, of the Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid.

Comparative analysis reveals that the *ḥadīṭ* contained in MS J57 is largely congruent with the narrative of Mary and Jesus contained in the eleventh-century collection '*Arā'is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*' by al-Tha'labī (622-680). The following table details shared passages between the two works:

MS J57, fols. 54r-78r

- Mary is born and dedicated to the Temple.
- Zachariah houses and provides for Mary.

- Gabriel appears to Mary and she conceives.
- Jesus is born.
- Allāh provides Mary with water and food from a dead date tree.
- Jesus speaks and performs marvels as an infant.

- Jesus educates a teacher in the meanings of the Arabic alphabet.

- Jesus works with a master dyer.
- Jesus and Mary are exiled from the community of Banī Isrā'īl.
- Mary dies and is buried.
- Jesus returns to the community of Banī Isrā'īl to fulfill his prophetic mission to propound parables, cure the sick, heal the blind and the possessed, etc.
- Jesus turns school children into pigs.
- Jesus raises Shām ibn Nūḥ from the dead.
- Jesus calls a table of provisions down from heaven and feeds the people.

- The tale of Qayṭun and his two sons, the younger of which Jesus heals and sends as a messenger to the king of Banī Isrā'īl.
- Qayṭun's youngest son is crucified in Jesus' stead.
- Jesus is ascended to Heaven.

Al-Tha'labī, '*Arā'is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*'

- Zachariah's lineage
- Mary is born and dedicated to the Temple.
- Zachariah houses and provides for Mary.
- When Zachariah is no longer about to care for Mary, she falls under the care of Joseph.
- John, son of Zachariah, is born.
- John's prophethood and life
- John's murder
- Zachariah's murder
- Gabriel appears to Mary and she conceives.
- Jesus is born.
- Allāh provides Mary with water and food from a dead date tree.
- Jesus speaks and performs marvels as an infant.
- Mary and Jesus depart for Egypt to escape Herod.
- Jesus educates a teacher in the meanings of the Arabic alphabet.
- Jesus turns school children into pigs.
- Jesus works with a master dyer.

- Jesus receives his prophetic mission to propound parables, cure the sick, heal the blind and the possessed, etc.

- Jesus raises Shām ibn Nūḥ from the dead.
- Jesus calls a table of provisions down from heaven and feeds the people.
- Another (Judas or a guard) is crucified in Jesus' stead.
- Jesus is ascended to Heaven.
- Mary dies.
- The tale of the three messengers whom Jesus sent to the king of Byzantium in Antioch during the reign of the petty kings

Both narratives are composed upon a framework of Qur'ānic passages—principally 3:35-47, 5:110, and 19:16-33—providing key details of Mary's role as the chosen among women, her conception, Jesus' birth, and his role as prophet, Messiah, and bearer of the *injīl* (Gospels). While al-Tha'labī's text follows more closely the Qur'ānic passages, including information about the

lives of Zachariah, his wife, and his son John; the Apostles of ‘Īsā ; and the continuation of his prophetic mission following his ascension to heaven, the scope of the Aljamiado tale is condensed to focus on the Virgin Mary and her prophetic son. Moreover, whereas al-Tha‘labī’s text is comprehensive in its presentation of *isnād* (authoritative support), often providing several accounts of particular narrative episodes based on various authorities, the Aljamiado text establishes a single *isnād*. The result is a more succinct and less encyclopedia narrative than that of al-Tha‘labī.

According to the *ḥadīṭ* of MS J57, Gabriel descended to Mary carrying with him fruit from Paradise. He approached the maiden, who concealed her face from him out of fear, and revealed himself as a messenger of Allāh sent to convey the news that she would bear a healthy son; for Allāh had chosen her and purified her above all women (Qur’an 3:42, 19:17-19). He then exhorted her to humble herself and prostrate before her Lord (Qur’an 3:43). Astounded, Mary asked how she, a chaste woman, could possibly bear a child (Qur’an 3:47, 19:20). She also expressed concern that the people of Banī Isrā’īl would mistreat or even kill her if they found her unwed and with child. Gabriel assured her that through Allāh’s will, all is possible, and that she would be protected from harm (Qur’an 19:21). While he spoke, Mary felt the infant stir in her womb. At this point, al-Tha‘labī’s account follows a different Qur’ānic *ayā*, 21:91, which states, “And [mention] the one who guarded her chastity, so We blew into her [garment] through Our angel [Gabriel], and We made her and her son a sign for the worlds.”² Returning to the *ḥadīṭ*, Gabriel then placed a hand on Mary’s head and recited “ave Mariya / ġarasiya llena dominuš tequm benediqata-tu en-muller- / -ibus e de benediqatum furutum ventereš tuyoš” before departing. Afterward, Mary ate of the fruit that he had provided and her heart was calmed (fol. 59r).

To begin to unpack the implications of this moment for the Morisco producers and users of this text, let us first consider the treatment of non-Romance languages in the *ḥadīṭ* as a whole. Arabic-language passages are dealt with in one two ways. Commonly occurring or high-frequency Arabic phrases are presented without translation. These include:

*Allāhu akbar.*³

*Bismi-llāhi rrahmāni rrahīmi.*⁴

*Lā ilāha illā Allāh.*⁵

*Lā ilāha illā Allāh waḥadhu lā shārika lahu.*⁶

² Al-Tha‘labī recounts the words of al-Suddī and ‘Ikrima who stated that Gabriel “blew into the pocket of her loose outer garment that she had removed, and when he had left her, she put on this garment and conceived Jesus” (639). See also al-Ṭabarī (113). Translations from the Qur’an throughout are those of Sahih International found at the website <https://quran.com/>.

³ This common declaration of “God is the Greatest,” known as the *takbīr*, is one of the most common of Arabic-Islamic utterances. In Aljamiado writings, it is often used to divide sections of a *ḥuṭba* (sermon) or other didactic work, or to separate the works in a miscellany. In the *ḥadīṭ*, it is the final phrase repeated twice to close the work.

⁴ The *basmala*, which translates “In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, commences each *sūra* of the Qur’an except the ninth. Additionally, some variation of this text opens every *ḥadīṭ* in MS J57 and concludes the manuscript.

⁵ Translated as “There is no god but God” and referred to as the *tahlīl*, this passage begins the *shahāda*, or Islamic creed or declaration of faith. In its entirety, the *shahāda* reads, “lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh” (There is no god but God and Muhammad is the prophet of God).

⁶ This variant of the *shahāda* appears several times in the *Sunna* or the saying and traditions attributed to the prophet Muḥammad. Of note is *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 8.75.412, narrated by Abū Huraira, which states that whoever recites this verse 100 times will earn the same reward as freeing 10 slaves. The recitation of this verse in increments of 100 became a part of the practice of *tasbīḥ*, or a form of *dhikr* involving the repetition of short phrases in praise of Allāh, of particular importance in Sufism.

*Lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāhi il‘alī il‘azīmi.*⁷

In addition to the canonical *shahāda*, a variant replacing Muḥammad’s name with that of Jesus and the title “prophet of Allāh” with “the Spirit of Allāh and His word” appears five times in the narrative. This variation echoes two Qur’ānic verses that refer to Allāh breathing his Spirit (*rūḥ*) into Mary causing her to become pregnant and a third in which Jesus is described as “a messenger of Allāh and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him” (21:91, 66:12, and 4:171). The lack of translation in these cases suggests a level of familiarity on the part of the receptive audience. Either these phrases were such a part of their common practice that their meanings were universally known, or the mere act of recitation without regard for meaning fulfilled their function. In either case, such phrases, found throughout Aljamiado narratives and manuscripts, are prescriptive *sententiae* of a religious nature employed in ritual-like ways and at particular moments in daily life.

Additionally, lengthier Arabic quotations of Qur’ānic verses appear in two instances in the *ḥadīṭ*. Each is followed immediately by Romance translations. The first appears shortly after Jesus’ birth. Iblīs [Satan], having learned of the birth from a local shepherd, reported the news to the people of Banī Isrā’īl, who, in response, set out to kill Mary and her newborn child. When the mob descended upon them, the infant Jesus raised his voice and said:

yo-šoy ‘Īsā ibnu Mariyam šiyervo de Allāh ātāniya / alkitāba wa ja‘alanī nabiā ja‘alanī mubārakā / abza mā kunta
 wa aw šānī biššalāti wārrakāti / mā dumtu ḥayyā ke me fuwe ḍaḍo ell-alkitāb / i pušome annabī i pušo en-mī bendisiyon i me / kaštiḡo kon laššalā iy-ell-azzake miyenteres yo-ḍurare / en-el-munḡo (I am Jesus, son of Mary, servant of Allāh, *ātāniya alkitāba* (the book) *wa ja‘alanī nabiā*. *Ja‘alanī mubārakā abza mā kunta wa aw šānī biššalāti wārrakāti mā dumtu ḥayyā*. For the *alkitāb* (the book) was given to me, and He made me a prophet, and blessed me. And He punished me with *aššalā* (prayer) and *azzaque* (tithes) while I remain in this world and after my death.) (MS J57, fol. 62r).

The initial part of this statement continuing through the end of the Arabic citation is derived from the Qur’ān 19:30-31: “[Jesus] said, ‘Indeed, I am the servant of Allāh. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and zakah as long as I remain alive.’”

At the end of the narrative, when Jesus and the younger son of Qayṭun flee from the horsemen of the king of Banī Isrā’īl, Allāh causes the two to switch appearances. As a result, the king’s soldiers murder the son of Qayṭun in Jesus’ stead. The narrator inserts at this point the Qur’ānic affirmation that Jesus was not crucified, but rather another was killed in his place:

ḍīze / Allāh en-šu onraḍo alqur‘ān ḍonde ḍīze wwa mā qatalūhu wwa mā / šalabūhu wwalākin ššubihi lahum wa rafa‘ahu Allāhu illayhi / ke kiyere dezīr no-lo mataron ni-lo kurusifikaron maš pušo / Allāh otro en-šu luḡar i no lo mataron [...] / teš lo-‘also Allāh a los siyelos komo el-kišo (Allāh says in his honorable Qur’ān where it says, ‘*wa mā qatalūhu wa mā šalabūhu walakin ššubiha lahum wa rafa‘ahu Allāhu ilayhi*,’ which is to say they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but rather Allāh put another in his place. And they did not kill him [but before]hand Allāh raised him up to Heaven as He willed.) (fol. 77v).

The first portion of the Arabic—“*wwa mā qatalūhu wwa mā / šalabūhu wwalākin ššubihi lahum*”—is excerpted from the Qur’ān 4:157. The repeated statement “i no lo mataron” is a translation of “*wa mā qatalūhu*” reiterated at the end of this same *ayā*. The middle portion of the

⁷ This statement, commonly called the *ḥawqala*, translates as “There is no might nor power except in Allāh, the Most High, the Most Magnificent.”

ayā, which states, “And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption,” is omitted from the Aljamiado. Finally, the Aljamiado quotation “*wa rafa’ahu Allāhu illayī*” opens the subsequent *ayā* 4:158.

A third, shorter Qur’ānic quotation appears earlier in the narrative during Gabriel’s first appearance to Mary. Given the angel’s beautiful form, Mary feared that he was a *taqiyā*, or an irresistible seducer of women. She declares, “*billahi / minka ani kunta taqiyā* (With Allāh [I seek refuge] from you, if you be God fearing).”⁸ Unlike previous examples, this fragment is not followed by translation. Rather, the term *taqiyā* is contextualized in three other Aljamiado phrases that together allow the reader to approximate the meaning of Mary’s Arabic declaration. The first appears in folio 57v: “*eškondiya Mariyam šu-kara de mucho temor penšando no-fuweše taqiyā* (Maryam hid her face out of much fear thinking, let him not be a *taqiyā*).” That Mary hid herself from the supposed *taqiyā* speaks to the first part of the Arabic: “*billahi minka*” (With Allāh [I seek refuge] from you). This is followed by an explanation of the term *taqiyā* itself:

abiya en-akel tiyenpo / un-onbere en-loš de Banī Isrā’īla ke še llamaba / taqiyā de los maš fermošoš de akel tiyenpo / i no-miraba a ninguna mujer ke biyen le paresiya / ke no-la alkansaba (There was at that time a man from among Banī Isrā’īl that was called *taqiyā*, of the most beautiful [men] of that time; and he did not look upon any woman that was pleasing to him that he did not conquer).

Thus, the Aljamiado defines *taqiyā* as a beautiful, irresistible conqueror of women. Finally, Gabriel responds to Mary’s fearful reaction on the following folio page saying, “*yā Mariyam yo-no-šoy taqiyā* (Oh, Mariyam, I am not a *taqiyā*).”

The treatment of these Arabic passage bespeaks the diglossic relationship of Arabic and Aljamiado in Morisco environments as studied at length by María Angeles Gallego. In the Kingdom of Aragon, Arabic had ceased to be the spoken language of the Mudejar and Morisco populations during the Middle Ages. However, notes L. P. Harvey, this “did not mean that during the period their written language was not Arabic.” Muslims would continue to remain loyal to Arabic as the language of Islam (124-125). By the so-called Morisco period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, classical Arabic remained the High (H) diglossic language of Aljamiado texts as exemplified in the preceding paragraphs. Its status as the language of Qur’ānic revelation, notes Ferguson, “widely believed to constitute the actual words of God and even to be outside the limits of space and time, i.e. to have existed ‘before’ time began with the creation of the world,” imbues Arabic with prestige and divine authority (330). The identification of Arabic as the language of prestige anchors these terms, and by extension the texts in which they appear, firmly within an Islamic cultural and religious framework.

In contrast, Moriscos employed a variety of Low (L) diglossic languages. For Valencian Moriscos, L languages of everyday interactions included colloquial Arabic, Valencian, and Catalan. Aragonese Moriscos communicated principally in Castilian or Aragonese. While all Morisco communities regardless of geographical region, degree of linguistic and cultural assimilation, and other factors negotiated varying degrees of H- or L-language use, each eventually fell subject to a number of edicts illegalizing Arabic use in any form during the middle of the sixteenth century.⁹

⁸ This passage is based on the Qur’ān 19:18. The Aljamiado fragment differs from the Qur’ānic verse in that it lacks the first part of Maryam’s declaration in the latter, “*inni a’ūdhu* (Indeed, I seek refuge)” and the Qur’ānic invocation “*birrahmāni* (with the Most Gracious)” is replaced with “*billahi* (with Allāh).” Touria Boumedhi Tomasi, notes that *taqiyā* is related to *ittaqa*, which means “to fear God” (704-705).

⁹ On edicts to abandon Islamic cultural practices, see Amelang, Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent, and Cardaillac.

This “top-down process” of assimilation, to quote Matthew Carr, which began during the medieval period as a byproduct of the Christian *Reconquista*, resulted in a gradual linguistic shift imposed upon Spain’s Muslim populations by the new dominant power (93). In this way, the agency of Christian religious and political ambitions resulted in a state of ‘critical diglossia’ among Mudejar and Morisco populations. Thus, Morisco communities in Castile and Aragon turned to Aljamiado as an alternative and necessary means of expressing their cultural and religious identities and preserving their Islamically-rooted texts for posterity in the face of the prohibitions placed upon them.

Generations after this language shift took place, Morisco scribes continued to acknowledge that the language in which they composed their texts was not the H language of Islam.¹⁰ The very label *Aljamiado* is derived from the Arabic ‘*ajamiyya* meaning ‘foreign’ or ‘non-Arabic.’ In MS J57, the scribe prefaces the *Rrekontamiyento del-çibdad del-aranbere* (The Story of the City of Brass), fols. 112v-144v, stating that the rendition to follow is “dekalarado en-‘ajamī” (declared in Aljamiado). This acknowledgment suggests that the original text from which the *Rrekontamiyento* derived was not composed in Aljamiado, but likely in Arabic. Similarly, the fifteenth-century Segovian *mufti* and *alfaquí*, ‘Īsā bin Jābir, wrote in the opening folios of his *Breviario Sunni*, composed in 1462:

kon-bendīdaš / kawšaš me moviyeron a enterepe- / tar la-đevinal garasiyađa all-qur’ān / đe ġarabiya en-‘ajamiya šobre ke a- / lġunoš-kardenaleš-me đišiyeron / ke le teniyamoš eškondiđo komo no ušađo pareser ke no-šin mucha o- / kašiyon-me puše a šakarło-đe lenġuwa // kaštellana akopilando akella al- / ta aktoridaj ke tođa kiriyatura ke / koša alġuna-supiyere đe la-ley lo-đe- / be đemoštara a tođaš-laš-kiria- / turaš-đel-mundo en lenġuwa ke lo / entiyendan ši eš-pošible (With blessed causes they moved me to interpret the divine grace of the Qur’ān from Arabic into Aljamiado, about which some cardinals told me that we kept hidden and unused. Thus without much occasion, I set to putting it in the Castilian language, copying that high authority. So that every creatures could know something of the law, it should be shown to all creatures of the world in a language that they understand, if possible.) (MS J1, fols. 2r-2v).

‘Īsā describes the Qur’ān, and, inseparable from it, the Arabic tongue in which it is composed as “eškondiđo” (hidden) or “no ušađo” (unused), thus suggesting a language guarded from or inaccessible to the general population; reserved for the elite and the educated. In contrast, ‘*ajamiya*—the Castilian of the Mudejars—was that of “tođa kiriyatura.” Efforts to translate the authority of the Qur’ān into the L language of Castilian Muslims was not a task that he took lightly or even one that he admits was entirely possible but was necessary for the perpetuation of this knowledge.

As this brief analysis demonstrates, both Arabic (H) and Aljamiado (L) served compartmentalized roles within Morisco environments. The H language of the Qur’ān preserved intact and unaltered those Arabic syntagma relating to the Islamic faith, the messages of which could not be adequately conveyed in any other language. As such, scribes of Aljamiado manuscripts used the popular vernacular to which their populations had acclimated to transmit centuries of tales and teachings, supplementing these whenever necessary, or whenever confusion or misinterpretation might arise, with Qur’ānic Arabic. For the Morisco, *aššalā* was distinct from *oración* or Catholic forms of prayer. *Aššalā* defined a prescriptive formula of Arabic utterances and prostrations that must be performed in a state of ritual purity. This information is an intrinsic part of the DNA of the Arabic term itself that, while it might be accurately and closely

¹⁰ This point speaks to Saxena’s claim that critical diglossia is “not necessarily accepted as a natural state of affairs by all the minority groups and individuals” inasmuch as these groups have little control, in many cases, over the attitudes toward languages held by the dominant population and the linguistic shifts that result from these attitudes (94).

approximated in Romance, could never be matched or replaced by it. Aljamiado, for its part, was the L language of practicality and inevitability. It was the Moriscos' medium of quotidian communication. Perhaps more importantly, it was the medium through which their religious and cultural traditions were comprehended by the majority of their populations, and in which they were preserved for future generations.

The Latin verses of the *Ave Maria* spoken by Gabriel are, like the prescriptive Arabic phrases previously mentioned, left untranslated in the *ḥadīṭ*. This raises questions for the modern reader as to what extent Moriscos gathered for the recitation of this text would have understood this utterance. The *Ave Maria* as it exists today is composed of three verses of text. The first two come from the Gospel of Luke in which the angel Gabriel extends a salutation to the Virgin Mary (1:28) and the Virgin's mother, Elizabeth, blesses the fruit of the womb (1:42). The earliest manifestations of this formulaic utterance most probably date to the eleventh century. The final portion of the prayer—"Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae"—is not Biblical and does not appear in the Aljamiado passage. Rather, it was created by the Catholic Church and was "officially added in the reformed Breviary of Pius V in 1568" (De Marco, 898). Thurston estimated that it likely appeared sometime in the fifteenth century, pointing to the use of the phrase by the Florentine Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola in 1495 (112).

The period following the forced conversions of Spanish Mudejars between 1502 in Castile and 1525 in the Crown of Aragon saw movements to educate the new Morisco populations in the catechism of the Catholic Church. Convocations of the Cortes of Segovia (1532), Valladolid (1532), and Monzón (Huesca, 1537) resulted in a new wave of evangelical efforts that sought to continue those initiated, but only superficially implemented, at the end of the fifteenth century (Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent, 26 and 96). By the 1540s, catechistic texts were being produced and distributed on a large scale throughout Spain.¹¹ While little study has been conducted on the results of this enterprise in the Kingdom of Aragon, the place of origin of the *ḥadīṭ* under examination, it is useful to consider the findings of Dedieu's analysis of catechistic efforts in New Castile and those of Ana Labarta and Carmen Barceló in the Kingdom of Valencia.

Dedieu explains that in Counter-Reformation Spain, measures were already at work prior to the Council of Trent to combat the growing Protestant threat that had arisen elsewhere in Europe. Beginning in 1540, the Catholic Church in Spain recognized as the minimum indicator of religious education the knowledge of and the ability to recite the four central prayers of the Church—the *Pater Nostre*, the *Ave Maria*, the *Credo*, and the *Salve Regina*—and to make the sign of the cross. In Toledo, the diocesan administrator don Gómez Tello Girón added to the provincial council's decree of 1565-1566 to "teach the catechism on Sundays and days of obligation in the church or some other stipulated locale, after high mass, around noon (Council 1566, fols. 49v, 50r)" an additional canon in which he "forbade communion to those who did not know the four prayers (Synod 1568, fol. 77v)" (5). Cardinal Bernardo de Sandoval y Rojas would reiterate this policy in the Synod of Toledo of 1601. Furthermore, Sandoval y Rojas wrote in his publication of the complete Christian doctrine that "the *Pater*, the *Ave*, the *Salve*, and formulas for making the sign of the cross [were to be taught] in Latin and in Castilian" (5). The data that Dedieu presents in the second part of his study, compiled from records of Inquisitorial testimonies from the Toledo tribunal, reveals a steady increase in the percentage of the Christian population of New Castile that could demonstrate a foundational knowledge of the catechism. It should be noted that "Christian population" in this case does not distinguish between Old and New Christians. In 648

¹¹ For a survey of catechistic texts produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Resines and Hernández Sánchez.

interrogations conducted during the century from 1550 to 1650, 85 percent of those questioned were able to recite the *Ave Maria*. This number rose to 97 percent during the period from 1575 to 1584. One quarter of these records also indicate that prior to 1585, interrogators preferred that prisoners recite prayers in Latin. This preference would shift toward Castilian from 1585 onward (Dedieu, 15 and 17-18).

In Valencia, Ana Labarta has asserted that “la mayoría de los moriscos valencianos procesados por la Inquisición, al ser interrogados sobre la doctrina cristiana, la ignoraban completamente, no sabiendo ni santiguarse.” She adds that only a few had learned to recite the *Pater Nostre* and the *Ave Maria* (179). Nevertheless, Labarta and Barceló have both examined instances in which Valencian Moriscos employed forms of “aljamiado latino,” or Latin texts composed in Arabic characters, to pronounce accurately the memorized prayers and teachings of the catechism. In four cases, Moriscos recited the *Ave Maria* before their interrogators in a heavily Catalan-influenced Castellano. Pedro Mangay of Xátiva, brought before an Inquisitorial tribunal in 1573, recited the first two verses of the prayer in Latin. He recited the remaining verse soliciting Mary’s intercession in Catalan. Two decades later, another Valencian Morisco, Francisco Açán of Matet, would face a similar tribunal and recite the *Pater Nostre*, the *Credo*, and the *Ave Maria* in Romance, though the texts on his person were composed in Latin Aljamiado (Labarta, 179).

Despite the limited scope and statistical flaws of these examples, several general conclusions can be reached. First, it is evident that the *Ave Maria* indeed circulated throughout the Spanish kingdoms from the late-fifteenth century onward as part of a state-sponsored evangelical campaign. Second, those Moriscos who were converted earlier, such as those of Castile, and those that lived for longer periods of time among Old Christian populations, including Castile and Aragon, likely had greater exposure to catechistic texts than the Moriscos of Valencia, who were both converted later and retained the use of Arabic and open practice of Islam longer. Third, it is likely that by the final two decades of the sixteenth century, virtually all Moriscos could recite with relative ease the *Ave Maria* and the *Pater Nostre*, and were increasingly familiar with the *Credo* and the *Salve Regina* (Dedieu, 17-18; Labarta and Barceló, 315). Finally, these fundamental prayers were recited in both Latin and a number of Romance vernaculars including Castilian and Catalan. The records consulted indicate a shift toward the latter in the concluding decades of the sixteenth century.

Gabriel’s recitation of the *Ave Maria* in the *ḥadīṭ* introduces Latin into MS J57 as a second H language. Like Arabic, Latin was a language of prestige; the High language of the Catholic Church and of formal writing and speech. It would remain the language of the Mass and other religious observances into the twentieth century. By the sixteenth century, however, it had long since given way to the Romance vernaculars that supplanted it as a language of daily interaction and communication. As such, mastery of this tongue required formal education and grammatical study. Hence, Latin occupies a privileged place alongside Arabic in the Aljamiado-Morisco *ḥadīṭ*.

Furthermore, both H languages are employed to similar ends. Traditionally, the *Ave Maria* is recited as part of the Catholic custom of praying the Rosary, first developed during the Middle Ages (Winston-Allen, 14). This form of personal, meditative devotion in which core prayers are repeated in numbered increments has its kin in the Islamic practice *tasbīḥ*. *Tasbīḥ* is a part of the larger practice of *dīkr*, meaning ‘mentioning,’ in which a worshiper repeats the names of Allāh or short phrases of devotion silently or quietly to themselves, entering a kind of rhythmic state of deep contemplation. Among the passages recited are the prescriptive Arabic phrases found in MS J57: the *takbīr*, the *basmala*, the *tahlīl*, and the *ḥawqala*. Often practitioners employ a *misbaha*, or

set of prayer beads, reminiscent of the Catholic rosary, to count the recitations and to serve as a tactile focus point.

Linguistically, the text of Gabriel's utterance in the *ḥadīṭ* exhibits a number of incongruities with the now standard Latin found in modern catechistic texts:

MS J57, fol. 59r:

Ave Mariya / ḡarasiya llena dominuš tequm benediqata-tu en-muller- / -ibus e de benediqatum furutum ventereš tuyoš.

Standard Latin:

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

First, the Latin *gratia* is rewritten with the Castilian / Romance ending '-siya.' Additionally, the Latin terms *plena*, *in*, and *ventris tui* are replaced by the more closely Romance forms *llena*, *en*, and *venteres tuyos*. Grammatically, the Aljamiado exhibits a lack of familiarity with Latin case endings evidenced by the inconsistency between *benedictus frutus* and *benediqatum furutum*.

Comparatively, the versions of the *Ave Maria* recited by Pedro Mangay and Francisco Açán are nearly identical to the standard Latin text:

Pedro Mangay:

Avē Mariā (a)graçia (a)plinā dominus tēqum benediṭa tū in mulier[i]bus eṭ benēdiṭus (u)fruqtūs ventris tūis Iesus. Santā Mariā mari di Dīu (i)priqau pir nos 'i pir toṭs los piqaḡors. Amīn Iesus.

Francisco Açán:

Ave Maria (a)graçia-plina dominus tekum benediṭa tu i'mulieribus [be]nediṭus fruqtus ventris tui Jessus. Verje Maria (i)priqeu pir nos pi-to-los piqados, amin Jessus (Labarta and Barceló, 322-323).

The one notable distinction is again the substitution of the Latin *gratia* with the Romance *graçia* / *graçia*. Variations in spelling both in these examples and in the text of the *ḥadīṭ* can be explained by the fact that no standardized, homogenous method existed for transcribing Latin or Romance texts in Arabic characters. Rather, each writer attempted to preserve the phonetic integrity of the texts that they transcribed.

The linguistic errors in each of these Morisco texts speak to both the conditions and the purposes behind their production. Presumably, clerics transcribed the Valencian catechistic texts into Arabic characters to facilitate the reading process for Arabic-speaking Moriscos, as previously stated. Hence, those clerics would have possessed a stronger working knowledge of Latin than the Morisco scribe of the *ḥadīṭ*. The purpose behind their recitation was, in essence, to pass an Inquisitorial examination, demonstrating their basic knowledge of Christian doctrine. To this end, pronunciation rather than comprehension was key. The more accurate the articulation of the Latin, Castilian, or Catalan words, the greater likelihood of passing the test.

Regarding the *Ave Maria* of the *ḥadīṭ*, Boumedhi Tomasi alleges that Gabriel's utterance, which combines Luke 1:28 and 1:42, "excluye un conocimiento directo de los pasajes evangélicos y permite asegurar que el traductor se limitó a transcribir (claramente, de oídas) el Ave María que se había aprendido en latín" (144). Ergo, Boumedhi Tomasi refers here to the Latin text of the catechism. For the Aragonese scribe and the Morisco community in which this text was produced, MS J57 served an altogether different function than did the Valencian catechistic passages. This was a text composed by Moriscos for Moriscos. It was an object of education and entertainment

to be read in Morisco communal settings or in the privacy of the Morisco home. To this end, its importance lay not in its linguistic exactitude, but rather in the messages that it conveyed.

As the truncated form of Gabriel's *Ave Maria* attests, the Morisco scribe did not accept the catechistic text at face value. Rather, he omitted the third and final verse added later by the Church that acknowledges Jesus' divinity and invokes the Virgin Mary as a viable intercessor for personal devotions. The result is a Latin declaration of homage and praise to the Virgin mother of Jesus that is congruent with descriptions of Mary in the Qur'ān:

Ave Maria of MS J57:

Ave Mariya	ğarasiya llenā, dominuṣ tequm	benediqata-tu en-mulleribus
Hail Mary	full of grace, the Lord is with you	blessed are you among women

Qur'ān 3:42:

Yā Maryām	Allāh aṣṭafāki waṭahharaki	wāṣṭafāki 'alā nisā'i al'ālamīna
Oh, Mary	Allāh has chosen you and purified you	and chosen you above the women of the worlds

The continuation—e de benediquatum furutum ventereš tuyoš—resonates with the Qur'ān's characterization of Jesus as “a pure boy” (19:19), “a sign to the people” (19:21), and “a word from Him [...] distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allāh]” (3:45). Hence, this adapted *Ave Maria* fits neatly within the Islamic dogmatic framework of the *ḥadīth*.

Similar modifications or omissions of Trinitarian references appear throughout the extant corpus of Aljamiado-Morisco manuscripts. As I mentioned at the start of this study, the writings of Thomas Kempis served as a foundation for the Mancebo de Arévalo's *Sumario de la relación y ejercicio espiritual*, which summarized the basic tenets of Islamic religious ideology and practice. In the introduction to his edition of this work, found in Madrid, BNE, MS 245, Fonseca observes that of the thirty-five chapters that comprise the work, fourteen coincide in part or in their entirety with Kempis's text. Rubiera Mata adds that chapter 17 includes a series of *addu'ās*, or supplementary devotional prayers, glossed in Castilian from the Latin text *Veni, Creator*. The Mancebo's adaptation, entitled “flor de flores,” opens with a double recitation of the *basmala* followed by a gloss on the first five strophes of the Latin hymn. The sixth and seventh strophes that reference the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are omitted (Rubiera Mata, 472-474).

There is perhaps no better example of Christian-Islamic syncretism in Morisco texts than the *Libros plúmbeos del Sacromonte*. Discovered in the mountains just outside of Granada between 1595 and 1599, these twenty-two lead books, composed in Arabic and Latin, recount the Virgin Mary's instructions to Saint James and two of his disciples, the brothers Cecilio and Tesifon aben Athar, to evangelize the Iberian peninsula.¹² Among these is the *Libro de los actos de Nuestro Señor Jesús y de sus Milagros y de su madre, María la Virgen*, consisting of an introduction and six chapters detailing the life of Jesus. The introduction includes a passage describing Jesus as the healer of lepers, the deaf, the blind, and the paralytic; remover of demons from among men and resuscitator of the dead that echoes both the New Testament (particularly Matthew 11:5) and the Qur'ān (3:49 and 5:110) (Hagerty, 98). The first chapter tells of Jesus' prophetic lineage, descended from Adam and sent by God to instate the Gospels as the “Verbo de Dios Espiritu Verdadero” (Hagerty, 102). This title is a clear reference to the Qur'ānic classifiers *kalimatin minhu* (a Word from Him) or *kalimatuhu* (His Word) and *rūḥ Allāh* (Spirit of Allāh) (3:45 and

¹² For an introduction to the *Libros plúmbeos*, see Hagerty (19-58), Barrios Aguilera and García-Arenal, Remensnyder, Bernabé Pons, and García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano.

4:171). The text continues recounting the experiences of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Following several Qur'ānic accounts, Allāh instructed the angels to prostrate themselves before His human creation (2:34, 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, and 20:116). Later, as punishment for their transgressions, Allāh banished Adam and Eve from Eden and cast them down to earth. The *Libro* uses this recollection of Adam and Eve's original sin as a segway to Gabriel's angelic salutation and blessing of the Virgin Mary:

Y cuando llegó el tiempo determinado de haberle de concebir, Santa María, según ella dijo, cuando bajó a ella el fiel Gabriel y le anunció que le había de concebir ella rezaba en el libro y díjole: “Oh Santa María, oh llena de gracia, Dios es contigo, bendita tú entre las mujeres”. Y aquella bendición es por ser ella limpia del pecado original (Hagerty, 103).

The reference “ella rezaba en el en el libro” is unclear. On the one hand, the reader may interpret that a passage in ‘the book’ describes Mary praying when Gabriel first appeared to her. This interpretation is reminiscent of the Qur'ān, 3:43-3:45, in which the angelic host instructs Mary to bow in prayer to Allāh prior to Gabriel's initial descent. ‘The book’ may alternatively refer to the very account that Mary herself provides (“según ella dijo”). Hence, Mary would have been praying within the narrative of the *Libro de los actos de Nuestro Señor*. On the other hand, this passage may suggest that Mary was praying *from* a book when Gabriel appeared to her. If this reading is to be believed, Mary could have been praying from any myriad of texts. In either reading, the metatextual reference to “el libro” produces a palimpsestic overlapping of texts—the Gospels, the Qur'ān, and the *Libros plúmbeos*—and time—the birth of Christianity, of Islam, and of the Moriscos—that recontextualizes Gabriel and Mary as pluralistic entities existing simultaneous in multiple temporal frames, religious traditions, and geographical locations. Mary/Maryam is/are at once the Virgin of the Gospel of Luke, the Virgin of Islam, and the Virgin of the *Libros plúmbeos*.

Gabriel's half declaration of the *Ave Maria*, in Arabic in this case, again stops short of naming Mary the Mother of God or of mentioning the fruit of her womb at all. Rather, the focus here is on Mary and her virtue as free from original sin. That this concept is wholly lacking from traditional Islam quickly shifts the text back into a Christian framework. Reacting to Gabriel's words, Mary looks up to find the angel “en honesta forma humana que resplandecía con luz refulgente,” calling to mind again the Qur'ān 19:17 (Hagerty, 104). This tug of war between Qur'ānic and Gospel references continues until the closing recitation of an alternative version of the *basmala*, similar to that found in the *ḥadīṭ* of MS J57: “No hay Dios sino Dios, Jesús, Espíritu de Dios” (Hagerty, 125).

Lastly, I will recall briefly Rosa-Rodríguez's study of the Marian-like characterization of the prophet Muḥammad's mother, Āmina, in the Aljamiado-Morisco *Libro de las luces*. This work, based on the *Kitāb al-anwār* by Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Bakrī (d. c. 13th century), is contained, in part or in its entirety, in at least six extant Aljamiado manuscripts. Like the chronicling of Jesus' life in the *Libro de los actos de Nuestra Señora*, the *Libro de las luces* also presents Muḥammad as a prophetic descendant of the line of Adam. Consuelo López-Baralt has transcribed and edited parts of this text from Madrid, RAH, MS T18, fols. 91v-122r, dating to the sixteenth century. In this text, the narrator writes of Āmina, “dióle Al.lah donaire y fermosura y cumplimiento por lo que Al.lah sabia de su limpieza y castedad, porque tenía ordenado Al.lah que abía de sallir de allí su annabī Muḥammad.” In the subsequent lines, when Fātima—wife of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and mother of ‘Abdallāh, husband to Āmina and father of Muḥammad—enters to look upon the child for the first time, she asks, “«Y ¿de dó a ubido esta luz y fermosura y graçia?»” (López-Morillas, 69). Again, use of the words *limpieza*, *castedad*, and *graçia* reiterate the terminology of both the

Qur'ān, 3:42-45 and 19:19-21, and the first verse of the *Ave Maria*. Moreover, the overall syntax of the narrator's description, beginning with a description of Āmina (Qur'ān 3:42, Luke 1:28) followed by a recognition of her chosen role as vessel of a prophet of Allāh (Qur'ān 3:45, Luke 1:42) is congruent with that of the catechistic prayer. Once more, Christian elements consist only of the Gospel verses. The Trinitarian final verse of the *Ave Maria* does not appear.

A second key modification to the account of Gabriel's initial meeting with Mary in the *ḥadīṭ* of MS J57 involves the placement of the *Ave Maria* in this exchange. According to the account of Mary's conception in Luke 1:28, Gabriel speaks the initial phrase of the *Ave Maria* as a salutation upon appearing to Mary. The Morisco scribe, however, replaced this with a similar greeting derived from the Qur'ān 3:42-43: "Allāh te a eskojido i te alinpiyo / sobre todas las mujeres yā Mariyam umillate aḍa Allāh / iy-asajdate a el i seyle kon-las umildes" (Allāh has chosen you and purified you from among all women. Oh, Mary, humble yourself before Allāh and bow in praise to him, and be one of the humble) (MS J57, fol. 58r). The *Ave Maria* is repositioned at the end of Gabriel and Mary's exchange immediately prior to his departure. As the Qur'ānic account on which the *ḥadīṭ* is framed already contains a salutation to Mary, the scribe's decision to rebrand the Latin utterance as Gabriel's parting words carves out a place for them in the narrative. Logistically, this alteration preserves the integrity of the Qur'ānic verse. Additionally, the placement of both salutations flanking Gabriel and Mary's conversation on either side legitimizes both the Qur'ānic and the Gospel texts as equal partners in honoring the Virgin.

In light of the present analysis of the roles of linguistic diglossia and critical diglossia in this narrative specifically and in a Morisco context of textual production more broadly, I contend that the borrowing of non-Islamic elements and their incorporation into a primarily Islamic Morisco narrative exemplifies Saxena's notion of 'lifestyle diglossia.' "The changes we observe in people's language practices, and consequently language change or shift," writes Saxena, "are an extension of the changes brought about by changes in their lifestyle" (94). The manifestations of the *Ave Maria* or similar Marian-inspired passages in the works of the Mancebo de Arévalo, the *Libros plúmbeos*, and the *Libro de las luces* each exemplify careful attempts to adapt Christian prayers and spiritual exercises in ways that allow them to meld with non-Christian materials. In some cases, such as the Mancebo de Arévalo's reinvention of Kempis's writings, this adaptation meant the translation of selected texts and the omission of those texts that presented a challenge to Islamic dogma. In others, like the *Libros plúmbeos*, adaptation was more complex, involving the largescale deconstruction and careful selection of specific fragments of both Christian and Islamic texts and ideas. These were then woven together to create a new narrative, neither identifiably Islamic nor Christian, but a syncretistic melding of the two.

The insertion of the *Ave Maria* in the *ḥadīṭ* of MS J57 is an altogether different, and in some ways more complex, form of textual appropriation and 'lifestyle diglossia.' While the angelic salutation of the *Libros plúmbeos* and the descriptions of Āmina in the *Libro de las luces*, partially mimicking the vocabulary and sentiment of the *Ave Maria*, are translated into the languages of their respective texts, thereby rendering them linguistically indistinguishable from the words that surround them, the *ḥadīṭ* quotes the catechistic Latin verbatim. There is no attempt here at religious syncretism or hybridization beyond the aforementioned omission of the concluding Trinitarian verse. The linguistic shift from Castilian Aljamiado to Latin Aljamiado, in this case, preserves a clear delineation between the otherwise Islamic *ḥadīṭ* of Jesus' life and the Christian verses inserted into it. Moreover, the shared H-language prestige and comparable applications of the *Ave Maria* and the Arabic utterances found throughout the *ḥadīṭ* place them on comparable footing in terms of importance and function. With this exercise of 'lifestyle diglossia,' the Morisco scribe

appropriated a text that had become a somewhat normalized part of their lived experiences to supplement the Morisco religious idiom. In this way, the *Ave Maria* became a viable means of addressing the Virgin Mary, just as the phrase “*ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wasallām*” (May God honor him and grant him peace) follows mention of the name of Muḥammad or “*‘alayhi ssalām*” (Peace be upon him) that of any other prophets. At the same time, however, the composition of these verses on the manuscript page is a testament to the overlapping, competing, and continually evolving ideologies that characterized the Morisco religious experience. Composed in the graphemes of the Qur’ān and the H language of the Catholic Church, these two lines of text are at once part of two socio-cultural and religious dimensions that come together as a uniquely Morisco expression.

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