

## The Qur'an in Europe, A European Qur'an: A History of Reading, Translation, Polemical Confrontation and Scholarly Appreciation

*Al-Qur'an di Eropa, Al-Qur'an Eropa: Sejarah Pembacaan, Terjemahan, Konfrontasi Polemis, dan Penghargaan Ilmiah*

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### Abstract

The broad interest in the emergence and presence of Islam and Muslims by Europe goes back to the centuries immediately following Muslim conquests and spread through the Mediterranean (from the 1st cen. AH / 7th cen. AD). A number of studies in the previous decades have discussed the perceptions and evaluations of Islam by Europeans from the Middle Ages till modern times, at times focusing on the Qur'an. How the Islamic holy text was known, collected in manuscripts, translated, read, used and polemically discussed in its contents from the 12th century until contemporary times is a chapter of European intellectual activity. Recent research and above all the projects financed by the European commission, which are currently being carried out, are a contribution to the study of the Qur'an and in particular to the history of the presence of the Qur'an in European consciousness. In this field the project "EuQu – The European Qur'an" is particularly significant; it has the ambition to demonstrate how the reading and uses of the Qur'an were important in the intellectual, cultural and religious developments of Europe through the ages.

Keywords: Islam in Europe; Intellectual History; European Qur'an; EuQu - European Qur'an Project.

### Abstrak

Minat yang luas terhadap kemunculan dan keberadaan Islam serta komunitas Muslim di Eropa telah ada selama berabad-abad setelah penaklukan yang dilakukan oleh umat Muslim dan penyebaran agama ini ke seluruh wilayah Mediterania (mulai dari abad ke-1 Hijriah atau abad ke-7 Masehi). Beberapa penelitian dalam beberapa dekade terakhir telah mengkaji cara orang Eropa memandang dan menilai Islam mulai dari Abad Pertengahan hingga era modern, sering kali dengan fokus pada Al-Qur'an. Bagaimana teks suci Islam ini diakui, disalin dalam manuskrip, diterjemahkan, dibaca, digunakan, dan kadang-kadang dibahas secara polemis sejak abad ke-12 hingga masa kontemporer menjadi bagian dari aktivitas intelektual Eropa. Penelitian terkini, terutama proyek-proyek yang didukung oleh Komisi Eropa, sedang dilakukan untuk berkontribusi pemahaman terhadap Al-Qur'an dan sejarah kehadirannya dalam kesadaran Eropa. Salah satu proyek yang signifikan dalam konteks ini adalah "EuQu - The European Qur'an." Proyek ini memiliki tujuan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana pembacaan dan penggunaan Al-Qur'an telah memainkan peran penting dalam perkembangan intelektual, budaya, dan agama di Eropa selama berabad-abad.

Kata kunci: Islam di Eropa; Sejarah Intelektual; Al-Qur'an Eropa; EuQu - European Qur'an Project.

## Introduction

The origin and expansion of Islam had a strong impact on the political and cultural arrangements of the Mediterranean and Late Antique conditions throughout the Mediterranean. Since the 8<sup>th</sup> century European people had to face this new actor bringing its presence to Europe (Iberian peninsula, Sicily, then the Balkans) and changing the religious conditions of a world where Christianity had been dominant. This took place with a feeling of general uneasiness mixed with fear until the retreat of the Ottoman Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century which opened the way to the affirmation of European colonial expansion. The relations between Europe and the Muslim world crossed, consequently, different times with different attitudes, where the religious and political rivalries were dominant in a warfare situation but in which the desire to know better the “other” was also no less present and significant.

A number of studies have outlined and described the history of the perception by Europeans and Westerners of Islam and Muslims and also, in some cases, focusing on the Qur’an. The approach in these studies has mainly been that of giving a description of the vision of the Muslim “other” by European culture ranging from the Middle Ages and going through the first confrontations and relations in the modern and contemporary times. The list of publications in this regard that cross the history of Oriental studies from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the last decades is large and displaying a variety of perspectives (cultural, literary, linguistical, religious, political, polemical etc.). The two most influential works in this regard and that have marked the way such a subject has been discussed, and also criticized prompting the need of a revision of European attitudes, are *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* by Normal Daniel (Edinburgh 1960), and *Orientalism*, by Edward W. Said (New York 1978).

The book of Daniel has been for decades the reference work on the history of the distorted Western views of Islam, examining Christian-Muslim interaction from Medieval times to the modern world. Until the more recent growing production in the field, few other works were added on this topic.<sup>1</sup> The second book, *Orientalism*, has changed the field of studies, give strength to post-colonial approaches even obtaining the effect to impose a negative meaning on terms such as Orient or Orientalism. Said evidenced how the Western scholarship about the Eastern world was tied to the colonial attitudes and policies and as such worked mainly as a political tool for the European imperialism of the last two centuries at least. Many and many studies have come after these works and mainly in the last twenty years have changed the perspective not in terms to overturn the limits and stereotypes of Western perception

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1 For instance R. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA, 1962.

of Islam but to better qualify differences and the meaning of all this in European history which saw a variety of attitudes and not a unique and straight polemical approach.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these studies have further discussed the question of the knowledge and reception of the Qur'an in European history. The general question of the attitude towards Islam is the broad picture and the one inspiring attitudes and approaches, but in the case of the Qur'an much more has been argued in recent years. Studies, as we shall see, have discussed how Qur'anic manuscripts were spoiled and collected by European noblemen and churchmen or how, before this, the first translations into Latin in the 12<sup>th</sup> century permitted the circulation of Western versions of the Qur'an. Through the study of translations and the uses of the Qur'an, these recent studies have focused on differing attitudes ranging from censure and general appreciation of the Arabic Qur'an, also leading to the printing of the original Arabic Qur'an in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. New works, further, have open the door to new lines of research and inquiry, able to revise the simple vision of a distorted approach to Islam running through European history until contemporary times.

Before discussing the new approach prompted by current European research projects, a review of the more recent works on the Qur'an in Europe is necessary and will help to better understand the new perspectives in the field on the history of the Qur'an in European culture.

### **Europe, Islam and the Qur'an before the 19<sup>th</sup> century: recent research and state of art**

In the last twenty years, the question of the Western or European vision of the Muslim "other" has been discussed in a number of studies. To list all the works spanning from Middle Ages to modern and contemporary times, covering the differing attitudes from northern or southern Europe or the Americas towards Islam, would not be possible. A comprehensive dictionary of the literature on this and also listing the Muslim works on the West through the ages is being published and coming soon to an end when I am writing this paper. This is the *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History* edited by David Thomas and John Chesworth with many collaborators in many volumes (Leiden 2009–). The amount of the Western works dealing with or also mentioning Islam collected in this *magnum opus* is impressive such as the scholarly literature dedicated to most of the works and the authors, with

2 On the significance and impact of these two works in relation to the topics dealt with in this paper, see J. Tolan, "The historiography of Medieval Christian-Muslim relations (1960-2020), *De Medio Aevo*, 12/1 (2023), 115-124; J. Tolan, "Edge People: Außenseiter", in *Zwischenwelten: Grenzüberschreitungen Europäischer Geschichte*, eds. T. Serrier and E. Makhotina, Darmstadt, 2023, 73-87.

a clear increase in the publications appeared in the last twenty years.

Works and studies on the Qur'an in Western history and literature constitute a consistent and significant part of this recent research. We can firmly state that, thanks to the research of the last decades, we know much more on this topic. The history of the Qur'an in Europe and in the West comprises various sub-topics, notably the translations into Latin and then into the European vernaculars, and the efforts made for producing sound translations. The knowledge of the Qur'an and the capability of the scholars to have Qur'anic manuscripts, to study them and to be able as scholars to understand it was also fundamental for translation and for polemical purposes, or for the study of the Arabic language. What has also become clearer and clearer in this regard is that the conditions and the significance of the circulation of the Qur'an in Europe are very different from the Middle Ages to modern times, and inside these periods between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The evolution of the knowledge and some lines of continuity were no less significant than the changing inner conditions of Europe before and after 1500 (printing, Reform etc.) and in relation to Islamic world. While at the end of Middle Ages, the Muslim presence in Iberia was coming to an end and surviving in the Morisco experience for no more than another century, the emergence and affirmation of the Ottoman Empire brought a major Muslim actor on the European political scene.

In any case, since the appearance of Islam, Christian living in Europe saw in translation the favourite access to Islam and to the meaning of the holy text of this new religious community, the Qur'an. The aim was to understand the Muslims better for purely polemical purposes. People conquered by Muslims and also those coming into contact with them came probably to know very early that Muslims' faith was based on a written holy text – something that recalled the role of the Bible for Christians and Jews and that did not constitute something strange. Studies now agree that translations of the Qur'an, even partial ones, were surely already in circulation in the Byzantine empire, which was in more direct contact with the Islamic world, while the first Latin translation was inspired by Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), the abbot of Cluny, and carried out by Robert of Ketton (fl. 1136–1157) in the Iberian Peninsula in the 12th century. It was characterized by strong anti-Islamic content, just like the translation by Mark of Toledo (d. ca. 1216), which, though very different in terms of approach and literal fidelity to the text, aspired to serve the cause of culturally assimilating Muslims to Christianity.

On these first translations we have now a number of studies which have helped us reconsider what was in the past simply dismissed as faulty and problematic renderings of the Arabic Qur'an. In this regard, while until a few decades ago we

could count only on the pioneering works of Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny (d. 1991),<sup>3</sup> recent studies have added new perspectives and cleared for instance the reliance of the first translators on Islamic exegetical literature. Further, the supposed mistakes in some passages of the translations have been discussed in terms of relation to the Latin style, highlighting how some problems in the comprehension, which were no doubt present, were in some cases due to the few sources and tools at disposal and a consciousness of the problems of the style of the destination language.<sup>4</sup> Further, what is even more significant is that in the last years these first Latin translations of the Qur'an have been published or given in new critical editions offering the scholars a direct approach to them as had not been possible so far.<sup>5</sup>

In the Middle Ages and before the first Latin translations, the knowledge of the Qur'an was not the main and first factor in the approach to Islam, since the figure of the Prophet Muhammad and his advent in history was the first target of attention and polemics. Not even in Iberia, before the 11<sup>th</sup> century, do we have significant evidence of a specific interest in the Muslim holy book by Christians.<sup>6</sup> This situation also changed through the contribution of converts who knew Arabic and were able to serve as mediators for their knowledge. It is for instance the case of Petrus Alfonsi (d. 1140 ca.), a Jewish convert who attacked the Saracens in his *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* displaying a good knowledge of Islam and pointing to the textual transmission of the Qur'an as one argument of criticism.<sup>7</sup> He in fact quoted a few Qur'anic passages in

3 Collected in *La connaissance de l'Islam dans l'Occident médiéval*, Aldershot, 1994, collecting her articles on the subject-matter. Among recent works we mention L. Hagemann, "Die erste lateinische Koranübersetzung – Mittel zur Verständigung zwischen Christen und Muslimen im Mittelalter?", in A. Zimmermann and I. Craemer-Ruegenberg, eds., *Orientalische Kultur und Europäisches Mittelalter*, Berlin, 1985, 45-58.

4 The most influential recent studies on these subjects are T.E. Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560*, Philadelphia, 2007; U. Cecini, *Alcoranus latinus. Eine sprachliche und kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse der Koranübersetzungen von Robert von Ketton und Marcus von Toledo*, Berlin-Münster, 2012; see also the first part of O. Hanne, *L'Alcoran. Comment l'Europe a découvert le Coran*, Paris, 2019.

5 Apart from the historical edition in T. Bibliander's *Machumetis saracenorum principis, eiusque successorum vitae, doctrina ac ipse Alcoran...*, Basileae, 1543, 1550, the translation by Robert of Ketton has been recently re-published by A.J. Lappin, *Alcoran Latinus. Volume III. Editiones Theodori Biblianderi (1543 et 1550)*, Roma, 2011 and given in new edition by J. Martínez Gázquez and F. González Muñoz, *Alcoran siue lex Saracenorum: edición crítica y estudio*, Madrid, 2022.

The translation by Mark of Toledo has also been edited by N. Petrus Pons, *Alchoranus Latinus quem transtulit Marcus Canonicus Toletanus: estudio y edición crítica*, Madrid, 2016. A first Italian translation of excerpts from that by Mark of Toledo has been edited and published in L. Formisano, *Iddio ci dia buon guadagno. Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms. 1910 (Codice Vaglianti)*, Firenze, 2006. On the impact and importance of Ketton's translation, see C. Ferrero Hernández and J. Tolan, eds., *The Latin Qur'an, 1143-1500 Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, Berlin, 2021.

6 As maintained and discussed by F. González Muñoz, "El conocimiento del Corán entre los mozárabes del siglo IX", in *Sub luce florentis calami: Homenaje a Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz*, Santiago Compostela, 2002, 390–409. On the situation in Iberian polemical literature, see also T.E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200*, Leiden 1994.

7 J. Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers*, Gainesville, 1993; cf. also C. Burnett, "The works of Petrus



a personal translation which preceded Robert of Ketton's one.

The picture coming after the two Latin translations by Ketton and Mark of Toledo does not fundamentally change, though the 13<sup>th</sup> century sees the irruption of missionary religious orders. As we now know in a clearer way, they at least introduced the deliberated necessity to study languages and, for confronting Islam, learning Arabic. Consequently, a number of these friars are remarkable contributors towards a better appreciation of the Qur'an in Latin Europe. As pointed out by recent studies, Dominican Ramon Martí (d. 1284 ca.), for instance, quotes briefly the Qur'an in his *Capistrum Judeorum* (1267) and in his *Pugio fidei* (1278) in which he demonstrates a good knowledge of the Qur'an, though the works are mainly destined to the anti-Jewish polemics; he also wrote two anti-Muslim works, the *De Seta Machometi* (composed before 1257) and the *Explanatio symboli apostolorum* (written in 1257).<sup>8</sup> William of Tripoli (d. after 1273) displays this attention and attitude towards the Muslim holy text in two of his works, the *Notitia de Machometo* and his *De statu Sarracenorum* where he also deals with questions on the compilation and history of the Qur'an. He displays a rather good knowledge of the questions surrounding the canonization brought by caliph 'Uthmān and the problems connected to the various readings of the text which evidence a good knowledge of exegetical traditions and the typical Qur'anic sciences attested in Muslim literature.<sup>9</sup>

In this story the most significant figure and one who has received and goes on receiving a lot of critical attention by scholars is Riccoldo da Montecroce (d. 1320) who moved inside the typical polemical literary clichés of the time. After years spent in mission in the Near East and thus a fairly good knowledge of Arabic and of Islamic peoples he came back to Florence and produced his works.<sup>10</sup> His major work on the Qur'an is *Liber contra legem sarracenorum* which was a comprehensive treatment of the Qur'an useful for missionaries and for polemical confrontations. He also dealt with the Qur'an in another shorter treatise, whose attribution to Riccoldo is doubtful,

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Alfonsi: questions of authenticity", *Medium Ævum*, 66 (1997), 42 -79; Bobzin, *Der Koran in Zeitalter der Reformation* (quoted below), 44-46.

- 8 Pierre Courtain is preparing a critical edition of the two anti-Islamic texts and a study of Medieval Dominican approaches to the Quran as his dissertation in the EuQu project.
- 9 Wilhelm von Tripolis, *Notitia de Machometo, De statu sarracenorum*, ed. P. Engels, Altenberg 1992. On these questions see also J.V. Tolan, *Saracens. Islam in Medieval European Imagination*, New York, 2002, 203-9; T. O'Meara, "The theology and times of William of Tripoli, OP. A different view of Islam", *Theological Studies* 69 (2008), 80-98; cf. also S. Mossman, "The Western understanding of Islamic theology in the later Middle Ages. Mendicant responses to Islam from Riccoldo da Monte di Croce to Marquand von Lindau", *Recherches de Theologie et philosophie médiévale*, 74/1 (2007), 169-224.
- 10 On him see Tolan, *Saracens*, 245-54; and R. George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq. Riccoldo da Montecroce's Encounter with Islam*, Turnhout, 2012. The edition of his *Contra legem sarracenorum* has been carried out by J. Mérigoux, "L'ouvrage d'un frère prêcheur florentin en orient à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: le *Contra legem sarracenorum* de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce", *Memorie domenicane*, n.s. 17 (1986), 1-142.

the *Tractatus seu disputatio contra Saracenos et Alchoranum*, also edited, and recently, his annotated Qur'an has been identified and described.<sup>11</sup>

Other figures are of some significant as regards the question of the Qur'an. Ramon Llull (d. 1315-16) is no doubt one of these, in connection to his knowledge and his efforts to learn Arabic and to read the Qur'an in Arabic. If a list of all those who deal with the Qur'an before the modern age would be too long and would reserve quite a few surprises, apart from the figures who will be dealt with in the next chapters, one deserving a special attention is no doubt Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464). The literature on all his activities is large and getting larger and larger in recent times. His main work dealing with the Qur'an was the *Cribratio Alkorani* ("The Sifting of the Qur'an", written in 1460-61), underlining the truth contained in the Qur'an and the proposal to guide the Muslims to recover it and discharge what is falsely inserted in this truth.<sup>12</sup>

The fifteenth century before the Modern age is indeed a century leading Europe in another condition in relation to Islam and to the search for knowledge of the Qur'an. Recent research, notwithstanding scarcity of sources, has in general successfully underlined how the interest for the Qur'an was growing. The years of the fall of Constantinople (1453), of the papacy of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pius II, reg. 1458-64), the climate leading Nicholas of Cusa to write on the Qur'an, were also times confronting Christianity with the growing expansion of the Muslim Ottoman presence and that prompted a new cultural operation on the Qur'an. Juan de Segovia

11 See the edition by D. Pachurka: Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, *Tractatus seu disputatio contra Saracenos et Alchoranum*, Wiesbaden, 2016. His annotations on an Arabic Qur'an have attracted critical attention: see T.E. Burman, "How an Italian friar read his Arabic Qur'an", *Dante Studies*, 126 (2007), 93-109, and "Two Dominicans, a Lost Manuscript, and Medieval Christian Thought on Islam", in R. Szpiech (ed.), *Medieval Exegesis and Religious Difference. Commentary, Conflict, and Community in the Premodern Mediterranean*, New York 2015, 71-86, 230-3; and above all Déroche, F. and Martínez Gázquez, J., "Lire et traduire le Coran au Moyen Âge. Les gloses Latines du manuscrit Arabe 384 de la BnF", *Comptes Rendus des Séances - Académie des inscriptions & belles-lettres*, 2010, 3, 1021-1040.

12 As regards recent studies on the *Cribratio Alchorani*, we refer to W. Knoch, "Verteidigung als Annäherung? Die Auseinandersetzung des Nikolaus von Kues mit dem Islam im Spiegel der *Cribratio Alkorani*", in Aertsen J. and M. Pickavé, eds., *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. Und 15. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2004, 393-405; J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and Cribratio Alkorani. Translation and Analysis*, Minneapolis, 1990; M. Costigliolo, "Qur'anic Sources of Nicholas of Cusa", *Medievalistik*, 24 (2011), 219-38. J. Hopkins, "The role of 'pia interpretatio' in Nicholas of Cusa's hermetical approach to the Koran", in G. Piaia, ed., *Concordia Discors. Studi su Niccolò Cusano e l'umanesimo europeo offerti a Giovanni Santinello*, Padua, 1993, 251-73; D. Scotto, "Sulla soglia della 'Cribratio'. Riflessi dell'Islam nell'esperienza di Niccolò Cusano", *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, 45/2 (2009), 225-281. The question of Nicholas of Cusa and Islam has been the subject of four specific recent collections of studies: H. Pasqua, ed., *Nicolas de Cues et l'Islam*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2013; R. George-Tvrtković and D.F. Duclow, eds., *Nicholas of Cusa and Islam. Polemic and Dialogue in the Late Middle Age*, Leiden – Boston, 2014; and W.A. Euler, and T. Kerger, eds., *Cusanus und der Islam*, Trier 2010; J. Hollman, *The Religious Concordance: Nicholas of Cusa and Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. Leiden, 2017; *Responding to the Qur'an. Cusanus, his Contemporaries and Successors*, by eds. D.F. Duclow, R. George-Tvrtković, and T.M. Izbicki, monographic issue of the *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval*, 26 (2019).

(d. 1458) conceived, prepared and completed a trilingual edition of the Qur'an with the support of a Muslim scholar from al-Andalus, 'Īsā Gidelli (fl. 1450 ca.) which has unfortunately been lost.<sup>13</sup> He came to the decision to translate the whole Qur'an with a some marginal notes by strongly criticizing Robert of Ketton's translation as not faithful to the original.<sup>14</sup> The activities and efforts of Juan de Segovia are the best example of the fact that someone in Western Europe was starting to express the need to have a direct and more detailed approach to the Qur'an.

Recent studies have also highlighted how other figures between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, while printing revolution had just started to change the production of culture and its diffusion, thought about or did the same as Juan de Segovia. One is a figure on whom a lot has been written in the last twenty years at least, Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada alias Flavius Mithridates (d. 1489?). The other one is Egidio da Viterbo (d. 1532). Moncada was a Sicilian Jew converted to Christianity who had some fortune at Rome in the 1480s., Along with a famous sermon before the Pope, also including quotation of two passages of the Qur'an in original Arabic, two further manuscripts connect him to the Qur'an: one Qur'an in Hebrew characters preserved in Vatican Library (Ms Vaticana Ebr. 357, on this see below) and a Latin translation of the suras 21 and 22 with the Arabic text preserved in another manuscript (Ms. Vat. Urb. Lat. 1384, 63r-88v).<sup>15</sup> The environment prompting Monchates' editions and translations was the one in Renaissance Italy, looking for Islamic manuscripts as gifts or for collections.<sup>16</sup>

The acquisition of Islamic manuscripts and thus also copies of the Qur'an was of capital significance for scholars. One specific way of acquisition of manuscripts was

13 Among the recent works on Juan de Segovia, see A.M. Wolf, *Juan de Segovia and the Fight for Peace. Christians and Muslims in the Fifteenth Century*, Notre Dame, 2014. Juan de Segovia's relation to feelings and politics towards islam of his time are discussed in A. Echevarria, *The Fortress of Faith. The Attitude towards Muslims in fifteenth Century*, Leiden 1999. The relation and connection with Nicholas of Cusa are specifically dealt with in a number of papers, see for ex. J. Biechler, "A new face toward islam. Nicholas of Cusa and John of Segovia", in Christianson G. and T. Izbicki, eds., *Nicholas of Cusa in search of God and Wisdom. Essays in honour of Morimichi Watanabe by the American Cusanus Society*, Leiden, 1991, 185-202; V. Sanz Santacruz, "Juan de Segovia y Nicolás de Cusa frente al Islam: su comprensión intelectualista de la fe Cristiana", *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 16 (2007), 181-194.

14 See J. Martinez Gazquez, "El Prólogo de Juan de Segovia al Corán (Qur'an) trilingüe. (1456)", *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch*, 38 (2003), 389-410; U. Roth, "Juan de Segovia's Translation of the Qur'an", *al-Qanṭara*, 35 (2014), 555-578. For his use of Ketton's translation, see A. Bündgens et al., "Die *Errores legi Mahumeti* des Johannes von Segovia", *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch*, 15 (2013), 27-60.

15 On his figure see the recent collections of studies: M. Perani, ed., *Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada alias Flavius Mitridate. Un ebreo converso siciliano*, Palermo, 2008; M. Perani and G. Corazzol, eds., *Flavio Mitridate mediatore fra culture nel contesto dell'ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo*, Palermo, 2012. See also Piemontese, M.A., "Il Corano latino di Ficino e i Corani arabi di Pico e Monchates", *Rinascimento*, 36 (1996), 227-273.

16 A.M. Piemontese, "Il Corano in Italia umanistica", *Bibbia e Corano. Edizioni e ricezioni*, C. Baffioni et al., eds., "Accademia Ambrosiana", Roma, 2016, 31-66. Cf. on this also Jones, "Piracy, war, and the acquisition of Arabic manuscripts in Renaissance Europe", *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 2 (1987), 96-110.



given by warfare and armed confrontation in the Mediterranean and on Ottoman border. Religious and civil authorities in Spain sometimes obtained (or seized) from Moriscos Qur'anic manuscripts in Arabic or Aljamiado (Spanish written in Arabic script), up until the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609-1612. Piracy in the Mediterranean Sea and raids on the Ottoman border were the two favorite places for confrontation. In particular, it is now clear that war and fighting on the field were particularly productive in relation to Qur'ans and prayerbooks that Muslim soldiers often carried with them and, as regard the Qur'ans, that European soldiers considered as more fruitful as booty to be resold when back in their countries.<sup>17</sup> Some specific major historical episodes provided Arabic manuscripts and copies of the Qur'an to Europe, for instance the sack of Tunis by Charles V which took place in 1535 with the help of Genoese fleet. Among the spoils that were taken we find manuscripts and valuable Qur'ans that were to be attested later on in the hands, for example, of J.A. Widmanstetter, J. Hottinger and others.<sup>18</sup> Another major episode in the history of the diffusion of Arabic manuscripts was the capture of a ship of the Moroccan ruler Mulay Zaydān in 1612, which was transporting thousands of manuscripts. The manuscripts then ended up in the hands of the king Philip III, king of Spain, and he handed them to Escorial collection. Exact number, the nature of the theft, the history of the many attempts on Moroccan side to have them back are all discussed in a number of studies.<sup>19</sup> The battle of Lepanto of 1571 over the Ottoman fleet also brought Arabic and Islamic manuscripts. Other Qur'an manuscripts and further religious texts were acquired on another front, in north-western Hungary by the Habsburg forces during differing campaigns and conquests of fortresses, and also Malta was on this map in relation to the acquisitions of manuscripts taken by the Chevaliers of Malta from Muslim ships, and brought to Rome, which included

17 Jones, "Piracy, war, and the acquisition of Arabic manuscripts in Renaissance Europe". See also S.H. Aufrère, *La momie et la tempête: Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc et la curiosité égyptienne en Provence au début du XVIIe siècle*, Avignon, 1990, 236 on Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (d. 1637) trying to find something curious in Cairo, including a Qur'an.

18 Jones, "Piracy, war, and the acquisition of Arabic manuscripts in Renaissance Europe", 98-100. Coming from the sack of Tunis, there is the so-called "purple Qur'an" written in silver ink and in five volumes. See Laura Hinrichsen, "Looted Letters. Book Culture of Ḥafṣid Ifrīqiya (1229-1574) and Arabic Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe after the Sack of Tunis (1535)", PhD dissertation, Wolfson College, University of Oxford, 2021.

19 F. Déroche, N. de Castilla and L. Tahali, *Les livres du sultan: Matériaux pour une histoire du livre et de la vie intellectuelle du Maroc saadien (XVIe siècle)*, 2 vols., Paris, 2022 ; D. Hershenzon, "Title: Traveling Libraries: The Arabic Manuscripts of Muley Zidan and the Escorial Library", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 18 (2014), 535-558. See also M. García-Arenal and G. Wieggers, eds., *A man of three worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe*, Baltimore – London, 2003, 79-81; N. Matar, "Arabic Books and a Moroccan Treasure: Colonel Percival Kirke and Mulay Ismail, 1682–1683", *The Seventeenth Century*, 26 (2011), 119-129.

Qur'ans.<sup>20</sup>

Well into the printed book era we have another significant episode of the translation plus editing of the Arabic text of the Qur'an, the one sponsored by cardinal and humanist Egidio da Viterbo (d. 1532), also with an Iberian imprint. This was a more informed attempt, though not widely disseminated. Among the various recent studies upon him and his works in relation to the Qur'an and Islam, the most significant is the edition of the translation edited from the two extant manuscripts and published by Katarzyna K. Starczewska.<sup>21</sup> A number of other studies have highlighted the connection of Egidio with the important "Corán de Bellús", bearing the signs of various hands commenting and working on it.<sup>22</sup>

In the cultural fervor which marked the end of Middle Ages and crossed with varying intensity the 16th and then the 17th centuries, a small though a significant part was also played by the emergence of a new interest in the "Oriental languages" and inside of this in Arabic. The Renaissance saw the emergence of a new interest into Arabic as a vehicle of culture along as the language of Islamic religious literature and above all of the Qur'an. If Spain had been the natural and main reference in the approach to Arabic and Islam till the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, things changed thereafter, when, after the conquest of Constantinople and the foundation of the new Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire was the Islamic power facing Europe. This power proved to be harmful and dangerous till the failed siege of Vienna of 1683 which changed the situation. But till that date, Islam continued to be a sensitive question.<sup>23</sup>

The history of the Qur'an in Europe is also strictly connected with the introduction of printing with movable type since the printing of the first Arabic

20 Jones, "Piracy, war, and the acquisition of Arabic manuscripts in Renaissance Europe", 100-103.

21 See Katarzyna K. Starczewska, *Latin Translation of the Qur'ān (1518/1621) Commissioned by Egidio da Viterbo. Critical Edition and Case Study*, Wiesbaden, 2018. On the interest for Arabic and the Qur'an attested from Egidio throughout all his life, see F.X. Martin, *Friar, Reformer, and Renaissance Scholar. Life and Works of Giles of Viterbo*, Villanova, 1992. See also the studies of K. Starczewska quoted in her edition; and Bobzin, *Der Koran in Zeitalter der Reformation*, 84-88.

22 X. Casassas Canals, "El Alcorán de Bellús: un alcorán mudéjar de principios del siglo XVI, con traducciones y comentarios en catalán, castellano y latín", *Alhadra*, 1 (2015), 155-78. This Bellús Qur'an is another important testimony we have about the process of collective and individual study of the text of the Qur'an since it preserves traces of all the phases and figures involved in this process. This copy of the Qur'an (now in Munich), during its circulation outside of Spain, appears in Egidio da Viterbo's intellectual circle. All evidence points to its ownership by the Orientalist Johann Albrecht von Widmanstetter (1557) of Heidelberg, who would have acquired it from the library of Egidio da Viterbo following the latter's death, see M. García-Arenal, "The Double Polemic of Martin de Figuerola's *Lumbre de fe contra el Alcorán* (1519)", in *Polemical Encounters: Polemics between Christians, Jews and Muslims in Iberia and beyond*, University Park, 2019, 155-78; M. García-Arenal, and F. Rodríguez Mediano. "Los libros de los moriscos y los eruditos orientales", *Al-Qanṭara* 31, no. 2 (2010), 611-46.

23 See for instance A. Hamilton, "The study of Islam in early modern Europe", *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 3 (2001), 169-182.

Qur'an in Italy in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A comprehensive appreciation of this actual enterprise has been made possible only recently since the only surviving copy of it was brought to light in 1987. This is a complete Qur'an consisting of 232 sheets printed by Alessandro Paganini in 1537-38 in Venice and discovered by Angela Nuovo in the Franciscan Library in San Michela in Isola.<sup>24</sup> We still have no clear idea first of all of the informants who took care to instruct Paganini on the text, and further if it was really printed in many copies and traded to Ottoman Empire or not and if the copies were meant to be illuminated.<sup>25</sup> Other details evidenced by recent research such as the handwriting on this copy by Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi, the orientalist from Pavia (d. 1540 ca.), and the fact that he was in Venice in 1537 where he met Guillaume Postel, further add to the significance of this Qur'an in the political and religious setting of that time.

Now, we know much better than in the recent past the history of the knowledge of the Qur'an in all its forms in this period, the 16<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the groundbreaking essay *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation* by Harmut Bobzin who has brought to light, in an unparalleled manner, the reasons regarding the desire for knowledge and for the translation of the Qur'an at the dawn of Modern age.<sup>26</sup> Though some years have passed since its publication, this work, along with the studies of Alistair Hamilton have opened the space for further research and in some way created the field, in which many other recent studies have contributed with more specific inquiries.

The Iberian peninsula played a specific role in this literature on Islam and also on the Qur'an all the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in connection to what from the Christian point of view was the Morisco problem after the Reconquista. One effect of this situation was first of all the contribution of Morisco figures to the circulation and spread of materials such as manuscripts in Iberian Peninsula and then elsewhere in

24 The discovery was announced in Angela Nuovo, "Il Corano arabo ritrovato (Venezia, Paganino e Alessandro Paganini, tra l'agosto 1537 e l'agosto 1538)", *La Bibliofilia*, 99 (1987), 237-271 (Engl. Version: "A lost Arabic Koran rediscovered", *The Library*, 6th series, 12 (1990), 4, 273-292). The article was then included in A. Nuovo, *Alessandro Paganino (1509-1538)*, Padova, 1990.

25 See Nuovo, *Alessandro Paganino*, 118-9; M. Borrmans, "Observations à propos de la première édition imprimée du Coran à Venise", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 8 (1990), 3-12; M. Borrmans, "Présentation de la première édition du Coran à Venise", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 9 (1991), 93-126; on the debated question of the origin and destiny of this Qur'an bibliography is consistent, see in particular, among recent works, H. Bobzin, "Jean Bodin über den Venezianer Korandruck von 1537/38", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 81 (1991), 95-105: 98; H. Bobzin, *Ließ ein Papst den Koran verbrennen? Mutmaßungen zum Venetianer Koranausdruck von 1537/38*, München, 2013, 29-30; A. Nuovo, "La scoperta del Corano arabo, ventisei anni dopo: un riesame", *Nuovi Annali della Scuola speciale per archivisti e bibliotecari*, 27 (2013), 9-23. On the harsh polemical debate on the significance of this copy, see also M.S. Elsheikh, "I manoscritti del Corano conservati nelle biblioteche pubbliche di Firenze", *La Bibliofilia*, 115 (2013), 553-615: 553-61.

26 *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa*, Beirut, 1995.

Europe, contributing to the development of the knowledge of Arabic and Islam.<sup>27</sup> As regards the Qur'an, the most significant effect of this situation was the production of polemical works which have been broadly classified by recent research as *antialcoranes* ("anti-Qur'ans"). Studies discussing this literature have focused on issues such as the Spanish translations used for such works; the Islamic sources dealt with as a whole; and the religious, cultural and political meaning and features behind these complex enterprises. The principal works considered to belong to this genre are the *Confusión o confutación de la secta mahometica* by Juan Andrés (publ. 1515), the sermons of Martín García (active until 1515, d. Zaragoza 1520), the *Lumbre de fe contra la secta mahometana* by Joan Martín de Figuerola (unpubl., writ. 1521), the *Antialcorano* (publ. Valencia 1532) by Bernardo Pérez de Chinchón, and the *Confutación del alcorán y secta mahometana* (Granada 1555) by Lope de Obregón.<sup>28</sup> Juan Andrés reportedly produced an Aragonese translation of the Qur'an for Martín García, the inquisitor of Aragon, which is now lost. The *Lumbre de fe* by Figuerola and the *Confutación* by Lope de Obregón were deliberately conceived to include quotations of Qur'anic material in Arabic characters.<sup>29</sup> Most of these works have been recently edited or their editions are on the way while I am writing this paper.

One significant figure connected to Iberia at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is Nicholas Cleynaerts (Clenardus) (d. 1542), humanist, grammarian and also traveler. He left some significant letters on his interest in Arabic, his travel to learn it and his difficulties to purchase manuscripts while in Fes, Morocco. The man who in Granada studied classical Arabic with Cleynaerts was the Granadan Morisco physician Alonso del Castillo (*al-Ukaybil*), "interprete real," one of the most important royal translators of Arabic.<sup>30</sup> Further, the 16<sup>th</sup> century scene of Arabic studies is often considered as dominated by the figure of Guillaume Postel (d. 1581), a prolific author, a complex personality, adept in various languages including Arabic. In his works he displayed a specific interest in the Qur'an as, for instance, exemplified in a number of works such

27 See on this G. Wieggers, "Learned Moriscos and Arabic studies in the Netherlands, 1609-1624", in *Romania arabica. Festschrift für Reinhold Kontzi zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Lüdtkke, Tübingen, 1996, 405-417; Idem, "Moriscos and Arabic studies in Europe", *al-Qanṭara*, 31/2 (2010), 587-610; M. García-Arenal, "Los libros de los Moriscos y los eruditos orientales", *al-Qanṭara*, 31/2 (2010), 611-646. On the Morisco manuscripts brought in Rome in the 17th century, for instance, which also influenced the sources used by Ludovico Marracci in his work (see below, see P.S. van Koningsveld, "Andalusian-Arabic manuscripts from Christian Spain. A comparative intercultural approach", *Israel Oriental Studies*, 12 (1992), 75-110.

28 R. Szpiech, K. Starczewska and M. García-Arenal Rodríguez, "'Deleytaste del dulce sono y no pensaste en las palabras.' Rendering Arabic in the *Antialcoranes*," *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies*, 5(1) (2018), 99-132.

29 See J. Andrés, *Confusión o confutación de la secta Mahomética y del Alcorán*, preliminary study by E. Ruiz García, transcription of the text by M.I. García-Monge, Mérida, 2003.

30 On him see M. García-Arenal and F. Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Lead Books of Granada and the Rise of Orientalism*, Leiden, 2013.



as the “Excussio Alcorani” in his *De orbis terrae concordia* of 1544 where he discusses of the Qur'an inserting quite a number of translations from the Qur'an carried out by him which have been discussed in a number of recent studies.<sup>31</sup> One year before he had published the *Alcorani seu legis Mahometi*, which appeared in 1543, whose main purpose is to show that the similarities of the beliefs of the Reformers and of the Muslims, thus not being a detailed analysis of the Qur'an.<sup>32</sup>

The works of Postel attest, on the Catholic side, the significance of the knowledge of Islam and of the contents of the Qur'an in inter-Christian polemics that took place after the reform, as was described by Bobzin and studies of the last twenty years have confirmed. The case of Martin Luther is emblematic: he brought in a strong attention on Islam and the Qur'an in his works, such as a German translation of Riccoldo da Montecroce's *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, or writing a preface for the influential printed edition of Ketton's Latin translation in Basel (1543, 1550) by Theodore Bibliander (d. 1564).<sup>33</sup> This influential edition was further used for the first extant translation into a European language, the Italian rendition of Giovanni Battista Castrodardo (d. ca. 1588), which had been commissioned by the Venetian printer Andrea Arrivabene (d. ca. 1580). The identity of the translator and the meaning of this edition has been discussed and recently identified by Pier Mattia Tommasino.<sup>34</sup> This Italian Qur'an enjoyed a large diffusion in European readership. It was translated into German by Salomon Schweigger (d. 1622) and Schweigger's translation, first published in Nuremberg in 1616, was re-edited throughout the seventeenth century and was the basis of an anonymous Dutch translation (1641).

31 The translation of sura 1 by Postel and in particular of a pair of words are at the origin of the recent debate on his knowledge of Arabic; on this see the detailed discussion in A. Hamilton, “The Qur'an as chrestomathy in early modern Europe”, in *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, eds. J. Loop, A. Hamilton e C. Burnett, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2017, 214-229. On Postel's Latin translation of the Qur'an see also Ó. de la Cruz Palma and M. Planas, “Sobre el Corán latino de Guillaume Postel”, *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, 51/3 (2015), 515-539; Idem, “Los primeros orientalistas frente al islam: la traducción latina del Corán de Guillaume Postel (1544)”, in *Religio in Labyrintho*, ed. J.J. Caerols, Madrid 2013, 167-179.

32 On Postel see above all Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 365-497; see also Marion L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel. Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought*, The Hague - Boston - London, 1981; R.J. Wilkinson, *Orientalism, Aramaic and Kabbalah in the Catholic Reformation. The First Printing of the Syriac New Testament*, Leiden - Boston, 2007, 95-125. On Postel's later messianic beliefs, see Y. Petry, *Gender, Kabbalah and the Reformation. The Mystical Theology of Guillaume Postel (1510-1581)*, Leiden - Boston, 2004; J. Balagna Coustou, *Arabe et humanism dans la France des derniers Valois*, Paris 1989, 39-77.

33 On Luther, Islam and the Qur'an, see the comprehensive and exhaustive discussion by Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 13-156, in part. 95f. See also, among the more recent studies, J. Ehmann, *Luther, Türken und Islam: eine Untersuchung zum Türken- und Islambild Martin Luthers (1515-1546)*, Heidelberg, 2008; see also A.S. Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam. A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics*, Leiden - Boston, 2007; P.-O. Léchet, *Luther et Mahomet: Le Protestantisme d'Europe Occidentale Devant l'islam, XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle*, Paris, 2021.

34 P.M. Tommasino, *L'Alcorano di Macometto. Storia di un libro del Cinquecento europeo*, Bologna 2013 (Eng. Ed.: P.M. Tommasino, *The Venetian Qur'an. A Renaissance Companion to Islam*, Philadelphia, 2018).



One other major figure of the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was no doubt the German and catholic J. A. Widmanstetter (d. 1557), who was secretary of the Pope Clement VII.<sup>35</sup> In relation to the Qur'an he produced a work titled *Mahometis Abdallae filii theologia dialogo explicata* (1543), in which its most important part is the *Epitome Alcorani*, i.e. a summary of the Qur'an.<sup>36</sup>

Works and pamphlets mentioning even in the titles the Qur'an (mostly as Alcoran) are ubiquitous. This is the case for instance for the use and even description of some Qur'anic contents by Reformed European groups which used the Qur'an and its contents mainly in the anti-trinitarian polemics and divisions. Miquel Servet (d. 1553), for instance, quotes the Qur'an in his *De trinitatis erroribus* (1531) and then also in *Restitutio Christianismi* (1553) – something that was even used in the trial against him in Geneva that ended with his execution. As more recent researches are underlining more and more, contents of the Qur'an on the nature of God and Christ were at the origin of harsh debates, divisions and persecutions among the Christian churches and divisions brought by Reform.<sup>37</sup> Servet was not the only one to make use of Bibliander's edition: a Friulian miller known as Menocchio who was also sentenced to death as a heretic in 1599 had among the sources of his heretical beliefs his well-thumbed Italian translation of the Qur'an.<sup>38</sup>

One significant and important role in the knowledge of Islam and the Qur'an in the 16th century is to be ascribed to the Croatian Bartholomeus Georgevicz (1510-1556) who made a carrier as an author on *turcica* and on Islam and produced some of the most spread works on the topic. The relevance of his works cannot be diminished though use or mention of the Qur'an are strongly influenced by the anti-trinitarian tendencies emerging in heretical and reformed debates of the 16th

35 On him see above all Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 277-363, in part. 280-2 on his library, including a collection of printed books and manuscripts which represent better the extent of his knowledge and interests, and after constituted a significant patrimony for scholars and others; see also Wilkinson, *Orientalism, Aramaic and Kabbalah in the Catholic Reformation*, 137-169; and Burman, *Reading the Qur'an*, 103-110.

36 He also owned the so-called Qur'an de Bellús, see above.

37 See on this P. Hughes, "Servetus and the Quran", *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History*, 30 (2005), 55-70; Idem, "In the footsteps of Servetus: Biandrata, Dávid, and the Quran", *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History*, 31 (2006-7), 57-63. Antitrinitarian attitudes evidence a peculiar interest in the Qur'an, see for instance M. Mulsow, "Socinianism, Islam and the Radical Uses of Arabic Scholarship", *al-Qanṭara*, 31 (2010), 549-586. The Qur'an is also used in the *De falsa et vera unius Dei patri, filii et spiritus sancti cognitione* (1568) by Giovanni Giorgio Biandrata (d. 1588) and Ferenc Dávid (d. 1579), with reference to Bibliander's edition of Ketton's translation, and also the work of Servet, see P. Hughes, "In the Footsteps of Servetus"; see also L. Lisy-Wagner, *Islam, Christianity and the Making of Czech Identity, 1453-1683*, Farnham-Burlington, 2013, 75-80; Václav Budovec z Budova (d. 1621) and his *Antialkorán* (1614) was supposedly ready in 1593 but blocked by the censor's office till its final publication; he used Bibliander's edition which he mentions he had while in Istanbul (p. 78); J.V. Tolan, *Faces of Muhammad: Western Perceptions of the Prophet of Islam from the Middle Ages to Today*, Princeton NJ, 2019, 113-16.

38 C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, Translated by J.A. Tedeschi and A. Tedeschi, Baltimore, 1992; Tolan, 120.

century.<sup>39</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, interest for the Qur'an is more and more connected in northern Protestant Europe to the study of Arabic while in southern Catholic Europe missionary and polemical intents are served by various institutions and the contributes of Christian Maronites. Some scholars emerge in relation to the knowledge of the Qur'an as many recent studies have comprehensively discussed.

Thomas Erpenius (van Erpe) (d. 1624) was the leading Arabist of his time. His *Grammatica araba*, published first in 1613, was the first useful work on which to study Arabic. His figure, active in Leiden, was fundamental in many regards and he displayed a constant interest in the Qur'an displayed in his works and activity. Erpenius published a bilingual version of sura 12, the chapter on Joseph of the Qur'an (1617), the *Historia Josephi Patriarchae*, which made Qur'an a textbook for studying the Arabic language. He further inserted editions and translations of sura 64 in an edition of his grammar titled *Rudimenta linguae arabicae* (1620); sura 31 and 61 were added and given at the end of the *Arabicae Linguae Tyrocinium* (1656) posthumously edited by J. Golius (d. 1667), Erpenius' pupil and his successor in Leiden. Erpenius had indeed carried out a complete translation of the Qur'an.<sup>40</sup>

The Qur'an was also, for instance, part of the cultural points of reference of William Bedwell (d. 1632), who is considered the first significant British Arabist and that was also the master of Erpenius and on whom we have the monograph by Alastair Hamilton.<sup>41</sup> The Qur'an manuscript at the time he had it was a rare merchandise in his country and recent studies have underlined his interest in the Muslim holy text.<sup>42</sup> In the same environment, Oriental studies and study of Arabic,

39 See on him P.M. Tommasino, "Discussioni di confine sul dogma della trinità: l'uso della *basmala* in Bartholomaeus Georgievits (Transilvania, 1547) e nel monaco 'Anbāqom (Etiopia, 1540)", *Islamochristiana*, 35 (2009), 101-139. On his biography and one of his works and its various editions, translations and engravings, see N.M. Aksulu, *Bartholomäus Georgievics Türkenschrift 'De Turcarum ritu et caeremoniis' (1544) und ihre beiden deutschen Übersetzungen von 1545. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Türkenbildes in Europa*, Stuttgart, 2005; K.M. Setton, *Western hostility to Islam and prophecies of Turkish doom*, Philadelphia, 1992, 29-46.

40 Recent research has cleared the relation of Erpenius with a mother tongue informer, the Morisco or Andalusian Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Ḥajarī who helped him in the production of his grammar, see G.A. Wiegers, *A Learned Acquaintance of Erpenius and Golius: Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Andalusī and Arabic studies in the Netherlands*, Leiden, 1988; see also J. Jones, "Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624) on the value of the Arabic language", *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 1 (1986), 15-25 (see now R. Jones, *Learning Arabic in Renaissance Europe*, Leiden – Boston, 2020).

41 A. Hamilton, *William Bedwell, the Arabist, 1563-1632*, Leiden, 1985.

42 See also V. Salmon, "Arabists and linguists in Seventeenth-century England", in *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-century England*, ed. G.A. Russell, Leiden – Boston – Köln, 1994, 54-69; see also, in general, M. Feingold, "Learning Arabic in Early Modern England", in *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, eds. J. Loop, A. Hamilton and C. Burnett, Leiden - Boston, Brill, 2017, 33-56.

as highlighted in the fundamental work by G.J. Toomer, also included interest into the Qur'an and the need to study and edit it, as in the case of Abraham Wheelock (d. 1653), who was the first Adams Professor of Arabic in Cambridge. His main and serious attempt to publish something related to Arabic was a translation and refutation of the Qur'an of which he also produced a specimen.<sup>43</sup>

The interest in the Qur'an also emerges in scholars in other fields, such as medicine or astronomy, whose primary concern was Arabic. Wilhem Schickard (d. 1635), the scientist who also was professor of Hebrew and Astronomy in Tübingen, had cultivated his general interest in Oriental languages including Arabic. He mentions that he had seen a manuscript copy of the Qur'an and to have finally obtained one from Matthias Bernegger in 1624 (Stuttgart Landesbibl. Cod. Or. Fol. 1), though he finally used Ketton's translation in his works. This appears the procedure of other scholars who, without being perfectly versed in Arabic philology, used the Qur'an in translation and only later on made eventual use of the original Arabic Qur'an if their knowledge of the language permitted them so.<sup>44</sup>

The inevitable and strong relation between the study of Islam and the knowledge of the Qur'an is clear in the work of the Swiss Orientalist Johann Hottinger (d. 1669). His life and work have been comprehensively discussed by Jan Loop in a monograph which dealt at large also with the questions relating to Islam and the Qur'an. In particular, we know from the analysis of Hottinger's personal correspondence that the necessity to find good manuscript copies of the Qur'an crossed all his life and studies.<sup>45</sup> In particular, Hottinger used in his works and mainly in his *Historia Orientalis* (1651, 1660) direct references and quotations of the Qur'an.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, in Italy and Rome, the study of Arabic was prompted for missionary reasons and also in connection with the interest in producing printed works in Arabic type for Oriental Christians which took place especially after the foundation of Propaganda Fide in 1626. In this environment, in 1642, the professor of

43 See G.J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: the Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, 1996. On questions connected to the study of Arabic in relation to Hebrew in the case of Johann Hottinger, see also J. Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger* (quoted below), 76f..

44 See on Schickard M. Ullmann, "Arabische, türkische und persische Studien", in F. Seck, ed., *Wilhelm Schickard 1592-1635: Astronom, Geograph, Orientalist, Erfinder der Rechenmaschine*, Tübingen, 1978, 109-128. And cf. the case of John Selden: G.J. Toomer, *John Selden. A Life in Scholarship*, Oxford, 2009, 614-9: Selden quotes the Qur'an from Ketton's translation, but from 1628 onwards he started to use an original Arabic Qur'an.

45 J. Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger. Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 2013. See also J. Loop, "Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620-1667) and the 'Historia Orientalis'", *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88 (2008), 169-203.

46 Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger*, 204-216.

Arabic and Syriac at the Collegio della Sapienza in Rome, Filippo Guadagnoli, used Qur'anic verses in Arabic and Latin to illustrate rules of Arabic prosody in his *Breves Arabicae linguae institutiones*. Problematic knowledge and use of Islamic sources also appear in other Catholic works of the second part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, where Islam is described for travelers or missionaries. In some cases the Qur'an is also partially translated, but without prefiguring a better direct knowledge of the Arabic text.

Along with the interest into the Qur'an prompted by a variety of factors, the translation of the Qur'an was still the most significant aspect attracting scholars of the Republic of Letters in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. The first translation directly from Arabic in a vernacular European language, French, was realized by André du Ryer (d. 1660 ca.), a traveler and diplomat with a rather unusual knowledge of Islamic languages such as Arabic, Persian and Turkish.<sup>47</sup> His work, which appeared in 1647, constitutes evidence of a translator knowing Arabic, owning some materials such as exegetical literature to work on it though not being a specialist in the Qur'an. As Bibliander's and Castrodardo's editions and translations, the French translation by du Ryer is at the origin of further vernacular versions of the Qur'an which were directly translated from the French and not from the Arabic.<sup>48</sup> The most significant case in this regard is without doubt the one produced in English in London just two years after the appearance of the French translation (1649). As recent debates have underlined, it was a political case that reached the House of Commons with a request to burn this translation just printed and the intervention of the Council of State, but that finally ended with the permission accorded and a good sell success of it.<sup>49</sup>

A new edition and other studies have recalled attention to another translation of the Qur'an such as the famous Toledo one (Ms. T 235 of the Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha) in Latin characters coming from Morisco environment.

47 See now A. Hamilton, and F. Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France*, London – Oxford, 2004, in part. 91-118 on his translation of the Qur'an. On this see also A. Gerstenberg, "Stages of French orientalism in the Mirror of Koran Translations", in *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und aussereuropäische Fallstudien*, ed. R.F. Gleis, Bochum, 2012, 159-207; S. Larzul, "Les premières traductions françaises du Coran (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)", *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 54/147 (2009), 147-165. On the opposition to the publication of the translation, see A. Hamilton, *The Forbidden Fruit, the Koran in Early Modern Europe*, London, 2008, 6.

48 On the translation in other languages, see A. den Hollander, "The Qur'an in the Low Countries. Early Printed Dutch and French Translations", *Quaerendo*, 45 (2015), 209-39; A. Gerstenberg, "Stages of French orientalism in the Mirror of Koran Translations", in *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und aussereuropäische Fallstudien*, ed. R.F. Gleis, Bochum 2012, 159-207.

49 See on the English 1649 edition M. Feingold, "'The Turkish Alcoran': New Light on the 1649 English Translation of the Koran", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 75/4 (2012), 475-501; N. Malcolm, "The 1649 English translation of the Koran: its origins and significance", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 75 (2012), 261-295. See also N. Matar, "Alexander Ross and the first English translation of the Qur'an", *The Muslim World*, 88 (1998), 81-92; Idem, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685*, Cambridge, 1998, 76-82; Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: the Study of Arabic*, 200-1; Hamilton, Richard, *André Du Ryer*, 111-113; Tolan, *Faces of Muhammad*, 135-41.

Notwithstanding its great significance for the history of the last Spanish Muslim communities, it did not contribute to the knowledge of the Qur'an outside of Spain.<sup>50</sup>

Materials on what is preserved in libraries relating to translations of the Qur'an in the 17th century are still in need of a comprehensive scrutiny though in recent years some sources have been discovered, edited and further studied. Among the extant translations one significant is the Latin one attributed to the Greek orthodox Cyril Lucaris (d. 1638) recently edited and published by Óscar de la Cruz Palma (2006). Another translation recently edited, but which was never published at the time it was realized is the one by the Franciscan Germanus of Silesia (d. 1660). Though conducted directly on Arabic by a scholar well versed in the knowledge of Arabic Qur'an, it is actually attested in three manuscripts. His knowledge and work originated in the missionary environment of the Roman schools of Arabic, as a student of Tommaso Obicini in San Pietro in Montorio when also a figure like Abraham Echellensis (d. 1664) was there.<sup>51</sup> One more interesting case of this same kind is the Latin translation of the Qur'an, together with the Arabic text and a polemical refutation of each verse, prepared by the Jesuit Ignazio (Nicolò) Lomellini (d. 1645), who carried it out between 1618 e il 1622 for the Cardinal Alessandro Orsini (d. 1626). This work, preserved in only one manuscript, was only recently brought to attention by the late Paul Shore who has dedicated a number of studies before passing away in 2022.<sup>52</sup>

Before the successful realizes by Hinckelmann and Marracci at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we have today a clearer picture of the fact that there were various scholars of Arabic and Islam stating that they were preparing a translation or a translation

50 See on this translated Qur'an and the hypothesis about his author, the most recent edition by C. López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo: edición y estudio del manuscrito 235 de la Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha*, Gijón, 2011, and his studies such as C. López-Morillas, "El Coran romanceado: la traducción contenida en el manuscrito T 235", *Sbarq al-Andalus*, 16-17 (1999-2002), 263-284; Idem, "The genealogy of the Spanish Qur'an", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 17 (2006), 255-294. See, also G. Wieggers, "Translations of the Qur'an in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia", *Encounters: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue*, 21 (2015), 121-130. This manuscript had already been studied and edited by J. Vernet: *Alcorán: traducción castellana de un morisco anónimo del año 1606*, intr. and bibl. by J. Vernet Ginés, transcription by L.R. Figuls, Barcelona, 2001.

51 Ó, de la Cruz Palma, *La traducción latina del Corán atribuida al Patriarca de Costantinopla Cirilo Lúcaris (1572-1638)*, Madrid, 2006; Roberto Tottoli, "La traduzione latina del Corano attribuita a Cirillo Lucaris (m. 1638) nel Ms Berlin, SBPK ar. 1032 e in altri manoscritti," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 11 (2016): 135-148; A. García Masegosa, *Germán de Silesia. Interpretatio Alcorani Litteralis. Parte I: la traducción latina; introducción y edición crítica*, Madrid, 2009. On these translations see also H. Bobzin, "Ein oberschlesischer Koran gelehrter: Domenicus Germanus de Silesia, O.F.M. (1588-1670)", in G. Kosellek, ed., *Die oberschlesische Literaturlandschaft im 17. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld, 2001, 221-31; Idem, "Latin Translations of the Koran. A short overview", *Der Islam*, 70 (1993), 193-206.

52 See P. Shore, *A Baroque Jesuit's Encounter with the Qur'an. An Examination of Ignazio Lomellini's, S. J., Animadversiones, Notae ac Disputationes in Pestilentem Alcoranum*, Wiesbaden, 2023; Idem, "An early Jesuit encounter with the Qur'an: Ignazio Lomellini's *Animadversiones, Notae ac Disputationes in pestilentem Alcoranum*", *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 34, 1 (2017), 1-22.



plus an edition of the Arabic text of the Qur'an.<sup>53</sup> Franciscus Raphelengius (d. 1597), for instance, it is said, was engaged in a translation of the Qur'an and also worked on the printing of an Arabic edition of the Qur'an.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Erpenius, on the steps of Raphelengius, is often mentioned in connection to a complete translation and edition of the Qur'an (see above), and two famous scholar such as Christian Ravius (d. 1677) and Jacob Golius also expressed the intention to produce interlinear editions or editions of Qur'an, with only a partial result by Ravius.<sup>55</sup> We now know that In England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century this interest also prompted some projects to edit the Arabic Qur'an, but nothing came out of this.<sup>56</sup> The case of Germany and the interest in a publication of an edition and new translation of the Qur'an has been comprehensively discussed by Alastair Hamilton.<sup>57</sup> At the end of the 17th century,

53 As maintained by N. Malcolm, "The study of Islam in early modern Europe: obstacles and missed opportunities", in *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500-1800*, eds. P.N. Miller and F. Louis, Ann Arbor 2012, 265-288, this cannot be considered a simple failure to reach a deeper and more comprehensive knowledge of Islam. Feingold, "The Turkish Alcoran", 500, maintains that practical reasons were prevailing in the destiny of the "countless seventeenth-century Arabists who failed to deliver on their promise to produce an edition and/or a translation of the Koran. The reasons for such a collective failure were many and diverse".

54 Hamilton, "Nam tirones sumus' Franciscus Raphelengius' *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* (Leiden 1613)", *De Gulden Passer*, 66-67 (1988-89), 557-589: 567; E. Braches, "Raphelengius's Naschi and Maghribi. Some Reflections on the origins of Arab typography in the Low Countries", *Quaerendo*, 5/3 (1975), 235-245.

55 See Feingold, "The Turkish Alcoran", 499 with a detailed account on the projects by Ravius; see also Malcolm, "The study of Islam in early modern Europe", 271; G.J. Toomer, "John Selden, the Levant and the Netherlands in the History of Scholarship", in A. Hamilton, M.H. van den Boogert and B. Westerwell, eds., *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, Leiden – Boston, 2005, 53-76. On the opposition see also Feingold, "The Turkish Alcoran", 496-7: the project of an edition was obstructed by those who deemed this dangerous. Toomer, "John Selden, the Levant, and the Netherlands in the History of Scholarship," 59, quotes the opposition expressed by Adam Boreel in 1626 against editions of the Qur'an (taken from P.T. van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship, and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden, 1989, 61 n. 38).

56 N. Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685*, Cambridge, 1998, 74-5 on the difficulties in printing the Qur'an; Idem, "Alexander Ross and the first English translation of the Qur'an", 81: on Abraham Wheelock, and quoting from Samuel Hartlib who quoted two brothers who were planning a printing of the Qur'an, and cf. also Idem, 89-90, quoting the considerations by L. Addison in his *The First State of Mahumedism* (1679) on the lack of a true edition of the Qur'an in the European languages; see also Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer*, 92; Malcolm, "The study of Islam in early modern Europe", 271; Feingold, "The Turkish Alcoran", 499, on John Boncle who was preparing a concordance of the Qur'an.

57 A. Hamilton, "To rescue the honour of the Germans: Qur'an translations by eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German protestants", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 77 (2014), 173-209; Idem, "A Lutheran translator for the Qur'an. A late seventeenth-century quest", in A. Hamilton, M.H. van den Boogert and B. Westerwell, eds., *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, Leiden – Boston, 2005, 197-221. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and his circle showed a special concern for the translation of the Qur'an in the last decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; see also Malcolm, "The study of Islam in early modern Europe": 271-2: in 1680 Danz started with his project but then left it, Acoluthus planned a plurilingual editions. On similar concerns on the necessity by Catholic side to prompt studies of Arabic fearing reformed scholars were expressed in the 17th century by the Cardinal Du Perron, see M. Casari, "Eleven good reasons for learning Arabic in Late Renaissance Italy: A memorandum by Giovan Battista Raimondi", in M. Israels and L.A. Waldman, eds., *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, Florence, 2013, vol. 2, 545-557; On the German interest on editing and translating the Qur'an and the role of Leibniz in this, see also G. Varani, "Leibniz und Islam: Die Betrachtung des Korans als erster Ansatz zu einer Kulturbegegnung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert", *Studia Leibnitiana*, 40/1 (2008), 48-71.

scholars returned to the task of producing a scholarly edition of the Qur'an. In German lands, this work was fueled by the circulation of hundreds of Islamic manuscripts looted from Ottoman Europe in the years after the 1683 Siege of Vienna. Matthias Friedrich Beck (d. 1701), Johann Andreas Danz (d. 1727) and Sebastian Gottfried Starcke (d. 1710) produced Latin specimens of single suras (*Specimen arabicum*, 1688; *Specimen Alcorani Arabico-Latini*, 1690; *Specimen Versionis Coranicae*, 1698). Theodor Hackspan (d. 1659) and Johann Georg Nissel (d. 1662) were active in this regard, while Andreas Acholutos (d. 1704), in his *Tetrapla Alcoranico, sive Specimen Alcorani quadrilinguis* (Berlin 1701) edited and published the Arabic, plus Persian and Turkish translations, of the text of sura 1 along with three separated Latin translations.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, the most significant work on the Qur'an at this time is due to Johann Zechendorff (1580-1662) who published two booklets on the Qur'an and whose manuscript including the Arabic text plus a Latin interlinear translation of the whole Qur'an has been only recently discovered (2014).<sup>59</sup>

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the years preceding and following the Ottoman siege of Vienna, interest in the Qur'an and Protestant and Catholic rivalries brought to the publication of the edition of the Arabic Qur'an by Abraham Hinckelmann (1694) and the edition, translation and commentary by Ludovico Marracci (1698).

The Pietist pastor Abraham Hinckelmann (d. 1695) sought to complete an edition and translation of the entire Qur'an in the German environment described above. Though Hinckelmann's translation was never completed, he produced the first widely available Arabic edition of the Qur'an. The few biographical sources concord on the fact that he was a gifted Orientalist and owned an amazing collection of manuscripts ranging from Japanese to Hebrew codices, but Islamic and above all Arabic manuscripts were the most consistent part.<sup>60</sup>

The apex of these activities was the Latin translation, along with edition of

58 See in particular Hamilton, "A Lutheran translator for the Quran", 209-12; Bobzin, H., "Die Koranpolyglotte des Andreas Acoluthus (1654-1704)", in *Germano-Turcica. Zur Geschichte des Türkisch-Lernens in den deutschsprachigen Ländern*, Bamberg, 1987, 57-59; Bobzin, "Latin Translations of the Koran. A short overview", *Der Islam*, 70 (1993), 193-206.

59 See R. Tottoli, "The Latin translation of the Qur'an by Johann Zechendorff (1580-1662) discovered in Cairo Dar al-Kutub", *Oriente Moderno*, 95 (2015), 5-31; R. Gleis, "A presumed lost Latin translation of the Qur'an (Johann Zechendorff, 1632)", *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch. Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature*, 18 (2016) 361-72. On Zechendorff see now A. Ben-Tov: "Johann Zechendorff (1580-1662) and Arabic Studies at Zwickau's Latin School", in *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, eds. J. Loop, A. Hamilton e C. Burnett, Leiden - Boston, 2017, 57-92; Idem, "Historia literaria Alcorani: two Lutheran scholars chronicling Oriental scholarship at the turn of the eighteenth century", in *Scholarship between Europe and the Levant. Essays in Honour of Alastair Hamilton*, eds. J. Loop and J. Krayer, Leiden - Boston, 2020, 195-216.

60 See on him M. Mulsow, "Kabbala, Hellenisierungsthese und Pietismusstreit bei Abraham Hinckelmann", in G. Frank, A. Hallacker and S. Lalla, eds., *Erzählende Vernunft*, Berlin, 2006, 91-104.

the Arabic text and commentary, of Ludovico Marracci (d. 1700). Shortly before his death, he was able to see the final result of decades of efforts and studies on the Qur'an. The evolution of Marracci's versions of translation – preserved in his personal manuscripts discovered in 2010 and brought to the attention of scholars – highlights a progressive and continuous reworking influenced by the challenges posed by the contrasting aspirations to a proper Latin style and to the greatest possible fidelity to the original Arabic structure.<sup>61</sup> With the Qur'an translated by Marracci, the community of European scholars received the ultimate product of medieval and pre-contemporary erudition. Accordingly, good use of it was made by others, particularly by George Sale (d. 1736) in his influential English translation.<sup>62</sup> Besides, the advent of the Enlightenment and the transition to 19<sup>th</sup> century introduced new attitudes and innovated approaches to the traditional, polemical view of the Qur'an.

Beginning in the 18th century, English and French emerged as the languages of widest use in translation of the Qur'an. This was due to significant colonial interests, in addition to academic purposes, but it occurred more often for practical reasons. Islam and Muslims became a less dangerous enemy with the retreatment of Ottoman empire while manuscripts and materials were acquired in an easier way. This was a new season where translations, in many cases, based on previous ones, were realized and the attention on the Qur'an did not prompt such a competition as in the past. The last great European edition of the Arabic Qur'an, that of Gustav Flügel in 1834, shared many of the characteristics of the previous ones.

61 See Reinhold F. Gleis and R. Tottoli, *Ludovico Marracci at Work: The Evolution of His Latin Translation of the Qur'an in the Light of His Newly Discovered Manuscripts with an Edition and a Comparative Linguistic Analysis of Sura 18*, Wiesbaden, 2016; R. Tottoli, "New light on the translation of the Qur'an of Ludovico Marracci from his manuscripts recently discovered at the Order of the Mother of God in Rome", in A. Rippin and R. Tottoli, eds., *Books and Written Culture of Islamic World. Studies Presented to Claude Gilliot on the Occasion of His 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Leiden – Boston, 2015, 91-130. On Marracci's life and various aspects of his work and activities see above all M. Borrmans et al., *Il Corano. Traduzioni, traduttori e lettori in Italia*, Milano, Milano, 2000; and G.L. D'Errico, ed., *Il Corano e il pontefice. Ludovico Marracci tra cultura islamica e Curia papale*, Roma, 2015; R. Gleis, "Arabismus latine personatus. Die Koranübersetzung von Ludovico Marracci (1698) und die Funktion des Lateinischen", *Jahrbuch für Europäische Wissenschaftskultur*, 5 (2009), 93-115; M.P. Pedani Fabris, "Ludovico Marracci e la conoscenza dell'islam in Italia", *Campus Major* 16 (2004), 6-23. See also Z. Elmarsafy, *The Enlightenment Qur'an: the Politics of translation and the Construction of Islam*, Oxford 2009.

62 On Marracci and Sale we have now the works of Alexander Bevilacqua: "The Qur'an translations of Marracci and Sale", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 76 (2013), 93-130 and his monograph *The Republic of Arabic Letters. Islam and the European Enlightenment*, Cambridge, MA, 2018. The translation of Marracci in relation to the other ones quoted has attracted the attention of many scholars, see for ex. A. Hamilton, "The study of Islam in early modern Europe", *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 3 (2001), 169-182; R.F. Gleis, "Der Mistikafer und andere Missverstaendnisse. Zur Frühbyzantinischen Koranübersetzung", in *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und aussereuropäische Fallstudien*, ed. R.F. Gleis, Bochum, 2012, 9-24; J. Loop, "Divine poetry? Early Modern European Orientalists on the beauty of the Qur'an", *Church History and Religious Culture*, 89 (2009), 455-488; see also R.F. Gleis, e S. Reichmuth, "Religion between Last Judgement, Law, and Faith: Koranic *din* and its rendering in Latin translations of the Koran", *Religion*, 42,2 (2012), 247-71.

Overall, specialized studies in various subfields in the last twenty years at least have contributed to greatly widening the horizon of knowledge of the Qur'an outside the Islamic world until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have examined the circulation of translations that bear the mark of different approaches and solutions, being inspired by profoundly different purposes. What historians or historians of ideas have brought to light is that interest in the Qur'an, Arabic, and the disciplines connected to the "Oriental" languages reflect, since the advent of the Modern age, a variety of objectives that cannot possibly be relegated to a reiterated, oversimplified attitude towards the "other." The interplay of European alliances with the Ottoman empire, together with the bloody divisions in post-Reformation Christianity, along with general ignorance regarding Islam, exerted, no less than the polemical aims, considerable influence on the circulation of translations and works on the Qur'an in different historical periods.<sup>63</sup> Further, apart from questions relating to contents, the last years of research have contributed to edit a substantial number of fundamental sources and also in the discovery of works considered lost. On the basis of these recent researches, what appeared clear was the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches and the usefulness of going through funds and libraries where many sources are still preserved and, in many cases, unnoticed.

### **The European Qur'an 1150-1850: the research project and new lines of research**

European commission, as the expression of nations of the European Union, which has been financing research on Europe for decades through different programs, displays a growing interest in the study of Islam and Muslims. Aiming to write a counter-narrative of the history of previous studies going back to colonial periods and facing the novelty of a consistent presence of Muslim immigrants after the WWII, there is a clear political intent to finance research helping to build a new perception of the cultural history of Islam and Muslims and of the centuries-old relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In this regard, it is particularly significant the number of projects focusing on the Qur'an being financed while I am writing these pages which, as a whole, give the impression of a comprehensive design.

At the moment these are the active projects on the Qur'an, financed a total of 20 million Euros/Dollars ca.:

- ERC-Consolidator "The Qur'ān as a Source for Late Antiquity", Principal Investigator Holger Zellentin, Tübingen, 2010-2025;

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Reinhold F. Gleis, ed., *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und außereuropäische Fallstudien*, Trier, 2012.

- ERC-Consolidator “The Canonization of Qur’anic Reading Traditions”, P.I. Marijn van Putten, Leiden, 2023-2027;
- ERC-Consolidator “Qur’anic Commentary: An Integrative Paradigm”, P.I. Nicolai Sinai, Oxford, 2018-2025
- ERC-Consolidator “The Global Qur’an. Shared Traditions, Imperial Languages and Transnational Actors”, P.I. Johanna Pink, Freiburg, 2020-2025.
- ERC-Synergy “The European Qur’an: Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150-1850”, 2019-2025, P.I.s Mercedes García Arenal, Madrid, John Tolan, Nantes, Jan Loop, Copenhagen, and Roberto Tottoli, Naples.

It is interesting to underline how this group of projects covers a large historical and cultural trajectory: the origin, the canonization, the development of classical exegesis and finally the contemporary translations and exegetical efforts, with the major project of the history of presence of Qur’an in European medieval and modern history which is the richest and more comprehensive project. These resources and projects imply that at the moment there are, active, in Europe more than 60 PhD students and post-docs from all over the world working on different topics related to the Qur’an – all this along with the individual and “normal” programs in the Near Eastern and religious studies departments in Europe.

In all this activity around the Qur’an, the project “The European Qur’an” is the most ambitious, the most politically sensitive and the largest one according to the financial impact and number of researchers. As a synergy-type project it connects four different institutions and PIs coordinating almost 40 researchers bringing the question of the Islamic holy text to the core of European history, opening new perspectives, and trying to give a new historical perception of the constant rivalries which crossed the cultural and religious scene in the Mediterranean Sea in view of a growing reciprocal understanding. In 2023, while I am writing this paper, more than half of the research period of this project has been completed and the first results can be outlined or at least brought to attention to the community of scholars. As such, this paper is the occasion to explain what the project is achieving in relation to the previous research described above and to underline the new lines of research that all the scholars working in this are developing.

Let’s start from the beginning. The idea at the origin of the project was a



challenge: to increase and improve our knowledge of the role that the Qur'an played in the formation of European culture, religion, scholarship and politics in different regions and times. The European Qur'an project sought to investigate the place of the Qur'an particularly (but not exclusively) in scholarly circles, between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries. The goal was to fundamentally change the way academics and the larger European public perceive the construction of European religious identity and to show how the Qur'an, rather than just being only a tool for Christians to question Islam, has always provoked questions about the history of Christianity, the historicity of religions in general and, in particular, the historicity of sacred scriptures.

The Qur'an has been exploited in arguments about the Crusades, Ottoman expansion, European colonialism, decolonization and immigration. But most specially, it has served as a polemical tool in the confessionally-fragmented European landscape and has been deeply entangled in European religious, political and cultural conflicts and debates. The Qur'an has played a crucial role in confirming Christian theological ideas, has been used to contest and refute religious adversaries within Christianity and to support or undermine historical assumptions. In other words, since the Middle Ages, the Qur'an has played a pivotal role in the construction of Christian European cultural, religious and political identities as well as in the construction and deconstruction of boundaries among them.

The recent studies discussed in the first part of this paper demonstrate the growing interest into this topic but the project EuQu-The European Qur'an has the ambition to go beyond what has been investigated and discovered so far by the possibilities prompted by a Synergy project connecting differing disciplines and prompting all the researchers involved to cooperate and share information. For sake of this, we put together a team of scholars who combine complementary expertise in the fields of intellectual, cultural and religious history, philology (Arabic, Latin and European languages), codicology, theology and polemics.

As one of the four co-partners in the Synergy project and Coordinating Principal Investigator, Mercedes García-Arenal has worked on the Muslim minorities in Iberia, on religious conversion, on polemics and on Qur'an translations made by Muslim minorities and converts in Christian Spain. She and her team work on the relations between religions and on their porous boundaries. John Tolan (Université de Nantes) is a medievalist who has published widely on medieval European anti-Muslim polemics. His last book is dedicated to European perceptions of Muhammad from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries and his team is devoted to the study of the reception of the Qur'an in the Middle Ages and among French scholars and travel writers of the early modern period. Roberto Tottoli (Università di Napoli

L'Orientale) has worked on vernacular and Latin translations of the Qur'an in Early Modern Catholic Europe and he is an expert in Arabic Qur'anic traditions. He and his team work on the Arabic Qur'an and Europe and on manuscript collections in southern Europe. Jan Loop (University of Copenhagen) is an expert in the history of European scholarly interactions with the Islamic world. Particularly, he has studied the impact of early modern Christian confessionalization on European interest in the Qur'an, in Islam and the Arabic language. Associated to the project are also Gerard A. Wiegiers, Islamologist and expert in comparative religions, at the University of Amsterdam, Cándida Ferrero Hernández, a Latinist at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona where she is the head of the Islamolatina team, and Ferenc Tóth, at the Research Center for Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest.

One of the peculiarities of the research and of the teams is that of not only focusing on the periods and approaches which distinguish one team from the other. This was very important to broaden the perception of the teams themselves and for creating a fruitful relation between the different groups in the sharing of information. The PIs, PhD students and post-doc scholars who have worked or are working in the teams have contributed to produce knowledge on the topic and what follows is a preliminary discussion of the results produced, in relation to previous research and to the future.

### ***Madrid***

Madrid coordinates the work of all the units. Its specific topic is Islam in Iberia and more broadly the border regions between Islamic and European Christian lands; they also study the Muslim presence across Europe and the contribution of Muslims and converts from Islam to the knowledge of the Qur'an in Europe. Many elements are significant in this: the physical presence of Muslims, the fate of the Moriscos and how their Muslim knowledge slowly disappeared but before disappearing was a relevant element crossing Europe, and the significance of similar dynamics in Eastern Europe from the Balkans to northern Slavic lands reaching the Baltic Sea and Russian Tatars.

A first result has been the volume *The Iberian Qur'an*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegiers which have deepened our knowledge of these topics.<sup>64</sup> This book contains much that is new and suggests that connections between Muslim and Christian translations of the Qur'an are of great interest and significance. Further, the enormous holdings of archival documents extant in Christian Spain

<sup>64</sup> *The Iberian Qur'an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, eds. M. García-Arenal and G. Wiegiers, "The European Qur'an" n. 3, Berlin – Boston, 2022.

allow us to know a great deal about Iberian Islam, in a way that stresses its unique character. Inquisition sources, though biased, shed light on these lived religious practices. Christian Iberia offers insight into an Islam that is in a sense devoid of the Islamic authority structures that support most of the Islamic world. Another important contribution of this book is that it unveils a number of aspects that appear in need of further or deeper consideration, including the unearthing of new materials. Other aspects to be considered are the collection and circulation of Arabic manuscripts among Christian scholars and bibliophiles, the potential prestige as well as the risks for their owners in a country in which these pursuits were prestigious but also dangerous. In fact, Arabic books were simultaneously collected and prized, but also censored and destroyed.

Pablo Roza Candás, one of the post-doctoral researchers of the project, though formally belonging to the Naples team, has mainly carry out research in relation to Iberia and in particular to his specialization in the study of the Aljamiado manuscript production of the Mudejar and Morisco minorities. Besides the edition and study of the Aljamiado corpus, his research interests focus on the cultural and religious practices of the Iberian Crypto-Islamic communities and for the project he has focused on the Qur'anic translations and Qur'anic material preserved in the Morisco materials. Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias is also following this line of research since his PhD project deals with some specific textual production of the Qur'an among mudéjares and Moriscos: the abbreviated Qur'ans.

A further volume to appear is connected to the work of the team in studying the dynamics of the presence of Muslim minorities in Europe, not only in Iberia but also in Eastern Europe. This volume, edited by Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Gerard Wiegers, also contextualizes and discusses the concept of a "European Qur'an" by emphasizing the agency of Muslim communities and individuals in Europe with regard to the Qur'an. By using such terms as "European Muslims" and "European Qur'an", the work as a whole aims to contribute to the debate on Muslims' and Islam's belonging to Europe, the debate that has particularly intensified with the emergence of the European Union project and various attempts to construct a shared European identity.<sup>65</sup>

The ongoing discourse surrounding the concept of "European Islam" and its defining characteristics has generated attention for some historical Muslim

65 To name just a few major works on the topic: J. Nielsen, *Towards a European Islam*, Basingstoke, 1999; X. Bougarel, "Bosnian Islam as 'European Islam': Limits and Shifts of a Concept," in *Islam in Europe*, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh and E. Fokas, Cambridge, 2007, 96–124; J. Cesari, "Conclusion: Is There a European Islam?," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, ed. J. Cesari, Oxford, 2014, 802–6; E. Şahin, *Europäischer Islam: Diskurs im Spannungsfeld von Universalität, Historizität, Normativität und Empirizität*, Wiesbaden, 2017; M. Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity*, London, 2019.

communities that can be considered indigenously “European”, such as those in the Iberian Peninsula and what was known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, other “indigenous” communities, such as the Bosnian and Dagestani Muslims, have remained relatively unknown to wider audiences outside of specialized circles. The volume includes several case studies that examine Muslim communities that were once part of the Russian empire, with some still being associated with Russia today, such as the Muslims of the Volga Urals,<sup>66</sup> Crimean Tatars, or Daghestani Muslims in the North Caucasus. While these Muslim communities were part of broader Islamicate networks, they also developed specific traditions and practices due to their liminal position. Similarly, Bosnian Muslims and Polish-Lithuanian Tatars, whose genesis has been a much-debated and politically sensitive issue, are other actors in this.<sup>67</sup>

The affiliated unit in Barcelona, AUB, contributes with a number of researchers and with the typical attention to textual condition and editing of texts. Ulisse Cecini, who has contributed in many regards to Christian-Muslim and Christian-Jewish relations, Oriental studies, Arabic/Hebrew to Latin translations, Medieval translation theories and interreligious cultural transfer and has recently produced the critical edition of the Arabic *Masā'il Abdallāh Ibn Salām*.<sup>68</sup> He is currently working on the Latin translation by Germanus of Silesia with in-depth analysis of exegetical works and other sources quoted and used in such translation, thus adding a more comprehensive evaluation of such a work which has been recently edited and published (see above). This approach follows what is emerging from other studies, i.e. the fundamental role of Qur'anic exegetical works in the approach and reading of the Qur'an in Europe during centuries.

The PhD dissertation of Irene Vicente López de Arenosa focuses on the religious polemic between Fray Pedro de Alcántara and Talbe Abdalá Oropesa, in Marrakesh (S.XVII), preserved, as far as we know, in two different manuscripts, and which fall within a historical context dominated by the processes of confessionalization and the emergence of modern European Orientalism. This was a time when there was a strong transfer of the European population to North Africa, with the consequent collective experience of captivity and conversion. This makes the North African

66 For the list of references, see G. Sibgatullina and I. Rakhimova, “Arabic Edition of the Qur'ān, Kazan, 1803,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān Brill*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at [https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922\\_q3\\_EOCOM\\_055207](https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EOCOM_055207).

67 E.g., V. Yankova, “The Tatars in Lithuania and their ethnohistory,” *Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic studies* 4, 1 (2021), 298–316; F. Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation*, Boulder, CO, 1996.

68 U. Cecini, *Masā'il 'Abdallāh ibn Salām Doctrina Mahumet. Kritische Edition des arabischen Textes mit Einleitung und Übersetzung. Mit einem Anhang zur lateinischen Doctrina Mahumet von Concetta Finiello und Reinhold F. Glei*, Wiesbaden, 2021.

dimension (that interest her more in her upcoming critical edition she is working on) particularly relevant to the understanding of the process of European apprehension of Islam between polemic and scholarship.

### *Nantes*

The research of the Nantes group under the guidance of John Tolan focuses on the Medieval and early modern periods. The first book of the series “The European Qur’an” dedicated to the Latin Qur’an is the product of collaborations between Nantes and the UAB Islamolatina team. John Tolan has already described the work of the group in a recent article and here I rely on to this adding a few data.<sup>69</sup>

Production of critical editions and analysis and the various uses of the Qur’an in the reception of Medieval Europe and in the intertextual relations in European literature through the circulation of translations or production of new ones distinguish the activity of the group and their interconnection with the work of the other teams. Irene Reginato is preparing a critical edition of books 1 and 2 of the *Trésor des simples* (also known as *Débat du chrétien et du sarrasin*), by Jean Germain (1396-1461) for his patron Philip the Good (r. 1419-1467), preceded by a monographic study concerning the whole treatise. The choice to concentrate on books 1 and 2 is due to their special interest in the perspective of the EuQu project since they constitute the first French translation – albeit reworked and expanded – of the *Epistula Sarraceni et rescriptum Christiani*, the Latin translation of the Arabic *Risālat al-Kindī* included in Peter the Venerable’s 1143 *Corpus islamlatinum*.<sup>70</sup>

Pierre Courtain is carrying out his research on the “Dominican Qur’an”. He is producing a critical edition of two key works on Islam: *Explanatio symboli apostolorum* and *De seta Machometi*, by the thirteenth-century Dominican friar Ramon Martí. He is also studying the reception of the Qur’an among Dominicans as a whole, also including Riccoldo da Montecroce. An important part of his work involves the study of Qur’anic manuscripts, in both Arabic and Latin, from Dominican collections, which often offer clues as to how they were read and what elements of the text interested its readers.

Florence Ninitte is studying the knowledge of the Qur’an in medieval French texts. So far her work has mainly focused on two French texts containing Qur’anic material, Jean de Vignay’s *Miroir historial* and Jean Germain’s *Trésor des simples* (see above). Her work shows how the Qur’an was often received through multiple filters

69 J. Tolan, “The European Qur’an: the Place of the Muslim Holy Book in European Cultural History”, *Medieval Worlds*, 13 (2021), 296-307. The book is *The Latin Qur’an, 1143-1500. Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, eds. C. Ferrero Hernández and J. Tolan, “The European Qur’an” n. 1, Berlin -Boston, 2021.

70 Provisional title of the monograph: “An interreligious debate for the court of Burgundy: Jean Germain’s



in Europe: first, the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>-century Christian author of the *Risālat al-Kindī*, who deploys selected verses from the Qur'an to defend Christian belief and practice and to provide polemical arguments against Islam; secondly, Peter of Toledo translates this text into Latin in the twelfth century (as part of the *corpus cluniacense*). Florence Ninitte's close textual analysis of the transmission and transformation of Qur'anic passages between the texts provides examples of how the Muslim holy book was understood by medieval readers and how they made sense of what partial and partisan information was available to them.

Attention to the sources, circulation of texts and, consequently, of notions and knowledge, are common ground of the researchers who in the team are dealing with topics going beyond medieval times. The significance of having researchers not only devoted to the topic originally deemed for each team is of great significance for the interaction of researchers.

Maurizio Busca's research has focused on the dynamics of the transmission of knowledge about the Qur'an in 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century France, in particular in the field of its mediated reception. The corpus analysed by Busca is composed of texts pertaining to different literary and documentary genres (travel narratives, historical and geographical summae, treatises on the history of religions, encyclopaedias and dictionaries, etc.) that provide extensive presentations of the Qur'an, detailing the circumstances of its composition as a book, its formal aspects, its content, and its implications and uses in the daily life of Muslims. Most of these texts have been written not by orientalist scholars, but by authors who had very limited knowledge of Islam and the Qur'an. As a matter of fact, this literature based on "second-hand" knowledge has been rather neglected, until now, in academic research on cultural relations between Christian and Muslim civilizations.

Emmanuelle Stefanidis has focused on scholarly circles in France during the reign of Louis XIV (d. 1715), examining the emergence of a new literary and philological curiosity for the Qur'an in the French *Grand siècle*. The monograph she is working on consists in the edition and the study of an unpublished French translation that she has discovered in the National Library of Paris which reorganizes the narrative parts of the Qur'an to produce a linear salvation history. This translation, starting with the creation of heaven and earth, moving on to the creation of angels and Adam, and recounting the successive prophetic stories, provides readers with a mediated and accessible vision of the Qur'an's moral and theological world. This would suggest that, at the turn of the eighteenth century, a new interest in the Qur'an as a narrative storehouse and as wisdom literature was beginning to crystallize

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*Trésor des simples*. Monographic study and critical edition of books I-II<sup>a</sup>.

alongside the still-dominant polemical concerns. The translation was found among Antoine Galland's papers at the time of his death in 1715, but it was penned by his contemporary Louis de Byzance, an Ottoman Jew who had converted to Catholicism.

To these lines of research we can also add the work of three PhD students: Javier De Prado García is also editing a critical edition: the 10th book of the *De procuranda salute omnium gentium* (1613) by the Spanish Carmelite Tomás de Jesús. Yaser Gün's PhD thesis examines the place of the Qur'an in the *Tableau Général de l'Empire Ottoman*, written by historian, orientalist and diplomat Ignace Mouradgèa d'Ohsson (1740-1807). D'Ohsson's *Tableau Général* deals with Ottoman religion (creed, religious laws and practices, mosques, tombs and so on), institutions and history. It was a fundamental vehicle for the transmission of knowledge about the Ottoman Empire. Islam and the Qur'an in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Maxime Sellin is studying the Qur'an of Bellus, a manuscript copied in 1518 near Valencia. This manuscript contains many annotations in different languages which can be studied from different points of view (historical, theological, linguistical). Taken first to Rome and then to Bavaria, it testifies to the transmission of knowledge about the Qur'an and Islam among Catholic scholars of the sixteenth century.

### *Copenhagen*

The Copenhagen team is mainly working on the history of early modern Qur'anic studies and translations, with a focus – but not exclusively – on Protestant Northern Europe. The significance of the Ottoman retreat for the acquisition of materials by German and Austrian lands and scholars is also one topic significant in this regard and connecting the team with the work of other researchers from the other teams. A consistent number of seminars and conferences being held in Copenhagen have had the function to connect and prompt collaboration.

Jan Loop is studying the influence of the medieval translation of Robert of Ketton after its print by the Reformer Theodor Bibliander in 1543/1550. He and the researchers in the team are conducting a copy census, locating all the existing copies in libraries in and outside Europe, digitizing those with interesting annotations. A close study of marginalia and reading notes will allow researchers to analyse the uses of Bibliander's edition in different scholarly, theological and missionary contexts. The edition, they argue, plays an important role in the 'confessionalisation' of Islam in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century and is read mainly in theological circles. Because of its paraphrasing character, scholars and philologists, who were trying to get access to the original Arabic text, were rather frustrated with this translation and sought help in other, more literal translations. Asaph Ben-Tov and Jan Loop are jointly writing a

book on the Qur'an in Germany, with the title "Uses of the Qur'an in early modern Germany". They study how the Qur'an was used in confessional debates, as a key text to learn and teach Arabic, as a linguistic and cultural archive in the context of Old Testament studies, as a material object and a literary, poetical text that inspired poetical translations and number of German works of poetry and literature in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The group is also working on a special issue that collects articles on the significance of "Türkenbeute" for the study of Islam in Early modern Europe. A long introduction assesses the use of looted Qur'an manuscripts, as well as Muslim captives, for the study of Islam from the re-conquest of Iberia to the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon's troops. Focused contributions survey the manuscripts taken from Tunis in 1535, the presence of Türkenbeute Qur'an in Halle, and the significance of 'Türkenbeute' in the work of Sebastian Tengnagel, Sigismund Seebisch and others. Together with Alastair Hamilton, the group is also preparing an edition of a newly found, independent Latin translation (Royal Library, Copenhagen), made at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century most probably by the Danish orientalist Matthias Anchersen (d. 1741), who studied with Heinrich Sieke (Henry Sike) (d. 1712) and Adrian Reland (d. 1718). The translation is remarkable for the many references to commentaries made after each Sura.

Paul Babinski is writing a history of how orientalist read the Arabic Qur'an in the early modern period, on the basis of a survey of annotated Qur'an manuscripts and printed books in European collections. He focuses on scholarly practices, tracing the shifting intellectual contexts of orientalist Qur'anic study from the reception of medieval Latin translations to the production of the major printed Qur'an editions.

Phd students have further focused on some specific topics. Kentaro Inagaki's Doctoral dissertation is on the works of Levinus Warner (d. 1665), the German-born Orientalist scholar and Dutch diplomat to the Ottoman Empire. In his PhD dissertation, special attention is paid to Warner's reading of the Qur'an, Hadith, and early Arabic poetry. It will be argued that by reading the Qur'an, Hadith, Arabic poetry with the aid of commentary, Warner aimed to reconstruct the pre-Islamic Arab culture (*jāhiliyya*). Naima Afif investigates two indirect translations of the Qur'an into Hebrew from the 17th and the 18th centuries. The first is a 17th century translation from the Italian version by Castrodardo who relied on the Latin version by Ketton. The second is dated from the 18th century and is based on the Dutch translation by J.H. Glazemaker (d. 1682) who used the French translation by du Ryer. Her project aims at studying these translations in order to shed light on the transfer of the Qur'an among Jews and in Hebrew language in early modern Europe.

She is also leading the scientific contribution to the exhibition (see below) at the Weltmuseum in Vienna, autumn 2024.

Finally, Octavian-Adrian Negoită is writing on a book that discusses narratives of polemical, anti-Islamic literature in early modern Greek Christianity. The book focuses on the notion of diglossia, meaning how different registers of discourse could be employed for different audiences, and on canonization of polemical, anti-Islamic and anti-Qur'anic texts after 1453. Additionally, the book focuses on individuals and clusters of people or networks within which individual texts circulated, and particular contexts in which these texts were then used and given meaning. The research is revealing exciting episodes and entanglements across time and space. Negoită is also editing a collection of articles on *Eastern Christians' Engagement with Islam and the Qur'an (c. 8th–18th Centuries). Texts, Contexts and Knowledge Regimes*.<sup>71</sup>

### *Naples*

The core of the research of Naples team is the Arabic sources and the Arabic Qur'an as a source for scholars translating, editing, printing, quoting and using the Qur'an. This means, first of all, an inquiry into library collections of southern Europe and in particular Italy and Catholic countries focusing on some specific collections. Sara Fani, for instance, has furthered her research on the Tipografia Medicea identifying documents demonstrating that the mentor of the typography, Giovan Battista Raimondi (d. 1614), had planned an edition and translation of the Qur'an. The idea, which never substantiated, left some traces on a number of manuscripts.<sup>72</sup> Sara Fani has further carried out a comprehensive research in Florence libraries and in particular the Laurenziana Library where the manuscripts owned by Raimondi are kept along with a lot of other material.

A similar approach is followed by Michele Petrone who is focusing his research on the Marsili collection in Bologna which is an amazing collection of hundreds of manuscripts and also a substantial part of the materials that reached Western Europe when Ottoman Empire began to retreat in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a growing number of manuscripts were acquired. The collection of manuscripts of Vienna, also taken into consideration in this research, is another important sample of manuscripts coming from Balkans and the European regions previously under Ottoman control. The significance of the origin of this material, and consequently the state of the Qur'ans that readers and scholars had at disposal is another part of the

71 "The European Qur'an", Berlin/Boston: DeGruyter, 2024 (forthcoming).

72 The work by Sara Fani on the Tipografia Medicea was *La via delle lettere. La Tipografia Medicea tra Roma e l'Oriente*, eds. S. Fani e M. Farina, Firenze 2012. Other works and papers are appearing in the publications connected to the project.

research of Michele Petrone who is also working on the formal conditions of Qur'an manuscripts coming from Ottoman lands or being produced from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This is important aspect of the history of the diffusion of the Qur'an in Europe since Europeans had access to a few Qur'anic manuscripts which displayed different calligraphic features that Europeans in some cases did not fully understand.

The PI, Roberto Tottoli, is also working on this aspect, carrying out a systematic analysis of the Qur'an quoted in Arabic from the first attestations in European literature and in the European Arabic Qur'ans (starting from Paganini's edition) to better understand the sources they used and how they read them. As a general introduction to these and all the problems related to the study of the Qur'an and of the text, Tottoli has also produced in the series of the project a general introduction to the Qur'an.<sup>73</sup>

One of the PhD students who recently joined the project is also specifically working on this. Oliver Salem aims to investigate the relationship between the recitation of the Qur'an and the codification of its written signs in the manuscript which were not always comprehensible to European readers. Though more rooted in Islamic studies tradition, this research has a strong reflection on the status of the Qur'anic manuscripts circulating in Europe that Europeans consulted and read. The period considered is roughly between the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> cen. and 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> cen. and the choice of starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century is due to the introduction in that period of the (usually coloured) signs that indicate pauses and starting points and modes, along with signs of recitation and orthoepy that are fixed scripturally in the manuscripts of the Qur'an in the centuries that followed, till nowadays in printed editions. Another PhD student, Sabrije Hoxhaj, looks eastward and in particular at the collection of the Qur'ans preserved in the Bushatlinj family manuscripts fund. The Bushatlinj was a noble family that ruled the Sanjak of Shkodra, a city in north Albania, during the second half of the eighteenth century. The project gives a special regard to the Qur'ans preserved, aiming to shed light on how the Qur'an was considered by the different Albanian communities, both Muslims and Christians.

The history of the Qur'an in southern Europe and Italy is mostly the history of the materials related to the Qur'an preserved in Roman libraries. Here Christian and then Catholic Papacy plus religious Orders still preserve many materials connected to collection (such as by the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) or missionary intent. Federico Stella is the Post-Doc studying the documents of Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667) on Islam and the Qur'an. A Muslim of Moroccan descent, Baldassarre converted to Christianity in 1656, and joined the Society of Jesus in 1663.

<sup>73</sup> R. Tottoli, *The Qur'an: A Guidebook*, Berlin – Boston, 2023.



Mainly kept in the archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University, the documents and letters belonging to Baldassarre are written in Arabic, Italian and Latin, and also contain Italian translations of the Qur'an.<sup>74</sup> Strictly connected to this was the conference organized in 2022 with the emblematic title "The Qur'an in Rome". This volume, edited by Stella and Tottoli and collecting almost twenty papers and appearing while this paper is written, brings to light the centrality of Catholic Rome and its religious Orders for the knowledge of Islam, Arabic and the Qur'an in the Modern age.<sup>75</sup>

The formation as Islamicist is also evident in the approach of Giovanni Maria Martini in the study of the figure of the Jesuit scholar and polymath Athanasius Kircher (d. 1680), unanimously considered one of the most important Catholic intellectuals of the 17th century. A lot of literature has been published on him but never by scholars of Islam and the Qur'an. Martini studies his use of the Qur'an and Arabic sources and the results of this research are contained in two substantial articles currently under publication.<sup>76</sup> Martini's research seeks to fill the gap in Kircherian studies on this relevant aspect of the intellectual activity of the learned German Jesuit by reconstructing his Arabic-Islamic library through the identification of the texts and manuscript copies Kircher materially used during the preparation of his own works.

17<sup>th</sup>-century Rome is also the period that saw the work of Ludovico Marracci. Lorian Salierno has added a new perspective to the numerous studies on Marracci's work in her forthcoming dissertation. As a Latinist, she analyzed the Latin style and the Latin sources used by Marracci, coming to a better assessment of the different versions of his translation and their relation to his classical education and final intentions. Working on Marracci and also other materials preserved in Roman archives connected to him she has also discovered significant testimony of the many questions that saw him involved for his proficiency in Arabic (for ex. The Lead Books of Sacromonte, the Arabic Bible etc.). This work has been realized under the joint tutorship of Reinhold Gleis from Bochum, affiliated to the project.

74 See for ex. F. Stella, "The *Mi'rāḡ* of Muḥammad according to Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667). Sources, Controversy and Christianization of an Islamic Tradition", *Al-Qanṭara* 42, 2 (2021), e18. Stella also moved beyond the 17<sup>th</sup> century and published a study of the Italian translation of the Qur'an made by the Pontifical Consul General of Algiers Vincenzo Calza in 1847, showing how it depended on the second revised and corrected edition of Albert Kazimirski's French translation (*Le Koran*, 1841), see F. Stella, "A Nineteenth-Century Catholic Translation of the Qur'an into Italian by Vincenzo Calza, Pontifical Consul General of Algiers," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, 3 (2022), 70-88.

75 *The Qur'an in Rome. Manuscripts, Translations, and the Study of Islam in Early Modern Catholicism*, eds. F. Stella and R. Tottoli, Berlin, 2023.

76 G.M. Martini, "The 'Magical Qur'an' of Athanasius Kircher," in *Studia Islamica*, forthcoming; G.M. Martini, "The Islamicate Occult Library of Athanasius Kircher," in *The Qur'an in Rome*, eds. F. Stella and R.

Rome or at least Vatican collection also appear as the reference center of other lines of research of the team. Katarzyna K. Starczewska, known for her edition of the translation of the Qur'an commissioned by Egidio da Viterbo which appeared a few years ago, has joined the Naples team to further her research on Latin Qur'ans and to open new avenues towards Eastern Europe. After a conference on multilingual manuscripts between Iberia and Slavic lands, she is preparing a volume which discusses written material, manuscripts, annotations and multilingualism on the presumed borders of Europe which were the most significant for contacts with Muslims and for the production of literature of various kind and in various languages. Further, she is working with Benoît Grévin on the unique manuscript Vat. Ebr. 357 with the aim to finally prepare a commented edition. This manuscript includes a Qur'an in Hebrew characters from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century with Latin interlinear translations and comments by different hands, involving the work of Flavius Mithridates (see above), Pico della Mirandola and possibly other humanists. The joint work of Starczewska and of other members of the team under the direction of Benoît Grévin, who has been working for almost fifteen years on this,<sup>77</sup> should permit to collect all the expertise needed for a much awaited edition.

15<sup>th</sup>-century Christian history is also the field of the research of Davide Scotto. His project is to trace the early development of the theological Christian debate on the Qur'an by comparing a variety of Latin sources produced from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century in an area ranging from the Iberian Peninsula to Southern Germany, and from Rome to the Near East. The project aims to overcome the static historiographic concept of polemics showing how it is extensively indebted to a binary opposition between Christianity and Islam that stems from twentieth-century perspectives. Under the assumption that medieval scholars instead looked at the Qur'an from a tripartite vision which embraced both Judaism and Islam, the research will discuss the ways in which Christians understood the Qur'an through the lens of the Bible and pondered, in particular, over the figure of Abraham as a point of departure, conciliation, or contention between faiths and scriptures. One case study regards the much-debated – and unfortunately lost – trilingual edition of the Qur'an (Castilian, Arabic, and Latin) issued in spring 1456 by the Castilian

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Tottoli, forthcoming.

77 Among the papers he dedicated to this, see B. Grévin, "Le 'Coran' de Mithridate" (Ms. Vat. Ebr. 357) à la croisée des savoirs arabes dans l'Italie du XVe siècle", *al-Qanṭara*, 31 (2010), 513-548; "Flavius Mithridate au travail sur le Coran", in *Flavio Mitridate mediatore tra culture nel contesto dell'ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo*, Palermo, 2012, 27-46; "Connaisance et enseignement de l'arabe dans l'Italie du XVe siècle: quelques jalons", in *Maghreb-Italie. Des Passeurs médiévaux à l'Orientalisme moderne (XIIIe-milieu XXe siècle)*, ed. B. Grévin, Roma 2010, 103-38; "Un témoin majeur du rôle des communautés juives de Sicile dans la préservation et la diffusion en Italie d'un savoir sur l'arabe et l'Islam au XVe siècle: les notes interlinéaires et marginales du

theologian from the University of Salamanca, Juan de Segovia (see above), on which Scotto has just published a monograph which will appear soon in English translation in the series “The European Qur’an”.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

These different projects have yielded significant new research in a variety of fields and have produced important new publications. Yet the EuQu program is more than a sum of its parts, and we can highlight several important research conclusions.

A first element is the realization of the profound impact of confessionalization on early modern European culture, that we can now calibrate in a better way through our work on the Qur’an. Even from the perspective of a study of the Qur’an in Europe, for most of the early modern period, the theological tension in Western and Central Europe did not primarily pivot on Christianity versus Islam, but rather on the confessional rift between Catholicism and various forms of Protestantism — and the latter among themselves. This becomes essential for the understanding of the significance of the Qur’an in many European debates in the aftermath of the Reformation. The Qur’an often played a role as an instrument in inter-confessional doctrinal debates. It becomes significant (surprisingly perhaps for modern observers) in early modern debates on Church history, exegesis, Mariology, the Trinity and other contested dogmas and topics in post-Reformation European Christianity. The Confessional culture reveals itself to be a pivotal aspect of the European Qur’an into which we are going to delve further but we can already see its importance every time there has been a need for redefining Christian identity, or better, different Christian identities.

A further important and understudied topic in which we are now involved is the role played by European Muslims, their books and their knowledge in the Christian study of the Qur’an, as well as the role played by Christian Arabs. We are focusing on Iberian Muslims living in Iberian territories before their forced conversion to Christianity (Mudejars) and after their conversion (Moriscos) as

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‘Coran de Mithridate’, in *Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans dans le Méditerranée médiévale. Etudes en hommage à Henri Bresc*, Paris 2008, 45-56.

78 D. Scotto, *Juan de Segovia e il Corano. Convertire i musulmani nell’Europa del Quattrocento*, Loveno di Menaggio, 2022. See also D. Scotto, “Projecting the Qur’an into the Past. A Reassessment of Juan de Segovia’s Disputes with Muslims in Medina del Campo (1431)”, *The Iberian Qur’an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, eds. M. García-Arenal and G. Wieggers, Berlin, 2022, 107-132; D. Scotto, “Tracce del Corano tra i libri di un cardinale romano. Domenico Capranica e l’Oriente nel riflesso del Vat. lat. 7317”, *Studi medievali*, 64/1 (2023), 205-228.

crypto-Muslims. And we are also focusing, with quite novel results, on Tatars and Byelorussians, unearthing unknown or understudied manuscript materials. These different groups of European Muslims translated and glossed the Qur'an into their own vernaculars written in the Arabic alphabet creating a particular genre that for the Iberian case is called *aljamía*. To this should be added the role played by Oriental Christians and their strong presence in Rome – as well as their less numerous but highly influential presence north of the Alps – from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards. The project is also studying the material and linguistic dimensions of the texts written by European Muslims, which are quite revealing when compared among the different Muslim minorities: Multi-alphabetism and interlinearity, multilingualism and multiple authorship all speak to the fact that most translations in Iberia, Poland, Russia etc. were the product of contact. The process of shaping a language into the alphabet of another is still in need of further scrutiny. In this context of contact and religious entanglement changing alphabets is not neutral, but rather a tool of identity formation. We will also see the need to continue our exploration of the impact of the translation of holy texts in the construction and definition of new local vernaculars, or of “religiolects.”

The comparative study of the translations and circulation of Qur'ans made by European Muslims and in particular by Iberian Muslims is enriching our discussion on censorship, authorship and dissimulation in Early Modern Europe including challenging questions about co-authorship, reciprocity and power dynamics since the collaboration between members of opposing religious communities (Christian and Muslim) in the translations of Qur'ans was often based on the subordination of one of the two subjects involved.

The collection and circulation of Arabic manuscripts are other significant chapters of this history. The double fact that Arabic books are collected and prized but are also censored and destroyed is being studied. The talismanic or the symbolic value of Qur'an manuscripts for Muslims of course, but also for Christian collectors – noblemen, churchmen, rich people, kings etc. – and as prestigious gifts in diplomatic missions is another aspect. The Qur'an circulated constantly among the members of the Republic of Letters.

Further, European scholars and writers used their knowledge of the Qur'an and of Islam for many different reasons. Particularly since the Reformation, the Qur'an helped scholars in other ways too, most importantly as a textbook to learn Arabic. Arabic was considered a very close relative, indeed a dialect, of Hebrew, in which the texts of the Christians' Old Testament were originally written. In the

wake of the Reformation, Biblical scholars who wanted to read the original Hebrew texts would often use Arabic in order to understand rare Hebrew words and phrases. The Qur'an was considered to be the norm and standard of the Arabic language, indeed a linguistic archive. Thomas Erpenius from Leiden, the author of a groundbreaking Arabic grammar from 1613, is said to have read through the Qur'an four times, combing it each time for some new grammatical points. In schools, universities and private settings, scholars used Qur'ans and individual Suras to learn and teach Arabic. In the 17th century, Protestant scholars published numerous Qur'an excerpts for teaching purposes, the so called *Specimen* that contained editions of one or two suras in Arabic and Latin.

The scientific results are proceeding along with the realization of other products. One of the principal activities of the EuQu teams is the creation of a database of information about the circulation of Qur'anic manuscripts in Medieval and early modern Europe, as well as data about published and unpublished European editions and translations of the Qur'an in Arabic, Greek, Latin and the European vernaculars. The database will also document anti-Qur'anic polemical tracts written and published in Europe between 1143 and 1800. The EuQu database will become an important research tool, allowing scholars to trace the development, spread and transformation of the European Qur'an from the Middle Ages to the modern period, and from Spain to Russia and to the borders of the Ottoman Empire. We hope that the European Qur'an database will support and generate new insights in a number of areas. It will offer new understandings of the social history of oriental manuscript collections, providing comprehensive information about the uses of Qur'an manuscripts, the social spaces in which they moved and the different actors involved in their production and procurement. It will make available information on the Arabic manuscripts European scholars had at their disposal and the reading(s) of the Qur'an they were acquainted with; as well as on how they approached the challenges posed by different scripts and the numerous formal devices they employed (verse divisions, partitions of the Qur'an, indications of variant readings, recitation signs, etc.) when reading, copying or printing the manuscripts. The information collected in the database will also permit new insights into the acquisition of manuscripts through travelers, diplomats, merchants, soldiers, and missionaries as well as through Muslims and converts. This will help us gain a better understanding of the role of Muslims and converts in producing copies of the Qur'an in Spain, in the Habsburg borderlands, and in other parts of Christian Europe where Muslim slaves and captives often acted as scribes. The inventory compiled for the database



will also allow us to assess the process of copying Qur'an manuscripts by Europeans, including Christians.

One other product of the project is a series of exhibitions in libraries and museums throughout Europe and North Africa, focusing on the presence of the Qur'an in a variety of forms and on its impact on European culture. The aim of these exhibitions is to give a visual sample deemed for a larger public of the results of the project and above all to give consistence of one of its aims: to change the narrative of the role of Islam and of the Qur'an in building the history of Europe. We will display (in physical and digital form) some of the most important manuscripts and printed editions of the Qur'an (in Arabic, Greek, Latin and various European vernaculars), as well as key works of exegesis, polemics, chronicles and material objects that show the place of the Qur'an in European cultural history. While the research of EuQu is focused on the Medieval and Early Modern periods, the exhibition will take the story up until the twentieth century, paying attention to the use of the Qur'an in European scholarship, in the context of European colonization of Muslim countries, and in the daily practice of European Muslims.

It is maybe too early to draw a line and to write proper conclusions on the project. This will be possible at the end of it and when all or almost all of the results of the various lines of research will be published. These four years of work are revealing a more complex and richer situation than expected and far more possible lines of research and interaction between them. We believe this is a first substantial result of this project. When on the way of the work something different or more substantial comes to the fore prompting a stimulating enlargement of the initial perspective this means that the project was necessary and successful. All of this, in general, is in any case confirming what we suspected: there is a lot more on the presence of the Qur'an in Europe than supposed by previous studies and much more on the use of it in inner European debates and uses. As such, what is going to take shape and will be in all probability confirmed at the end of it is that the project is demonstrating how the Qur'an was an actor on European scene during its century-old history beyond the polemical attitude marking medieval, modern and contemporary times.

### **Supplementary Materials**

The data presented in this study are available in [insert article or supplementary material here] (Usually the datasets were analyzed from library research can be found in the whole data references ).

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## Authors' contributions

I did this research by myself, from preparing the materials, writing the paper, reviewing, and revising.

## Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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