# European Muslims and the Qur’an

# The European Qur'an

Edited by
Mercedes García-Arenal, Jan Loop,
John Tolan, and Roberto Tottoli

## Volume 5

# European Muslims and the Qur’an

Practices of Translation, Interpretation, and Commodification

Edited by
Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Gerard Wiegers

DE GRUYTER

The research leading to these results has been funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, SyG grant agreement no. 810141, project EuQu: "The European Qu'ran. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850."

ISBN 978-3-11-109603-2
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-114079-7
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-114084-1
ISSN 2701-0554

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2023942760**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

© 2024 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Cover image: A colophon of a Qur'an copy. Dagestan, the Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography of the Dagestan Federal Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, MS F14, op. 1, no. 289. Courtesy of the Institute. Photo made by Shamil Shikhaliev.
Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

# Acknowledgments

This edited volume has been prepared within the research project "The European Qur'an: Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion, 1150–1850 (EuQu)," financed by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, grant agreement no. 810141. The editors would like to express their gratitude to the following colleagues for their valuable contributions and support throughout the development of this volume.

Firstly, we extend our special thanks to Mercedes García-Arenal and Jan Loop for their unwavering support of the volume idea and their extensive comments on the theoretical conceptualisation of this work. The editors' contributions have greatly benefited from the insightful conversations with many other colleagues participating in the EuQu project. These conversations took place during project conferences, individual meetings, and consultations, and the ideas and feedback gathered during these events have been instrumental in shaping this book.

A significant portion of the chapters in the volume were initially presented and discussed at the colloquium "Qur'an Translations and Interpretations by European Muslims." This event was hosted by the European Qur'an team at the University of Amsterdam and took place online on March 5, 2021. Despite the challenges posed by the mounting Zoom fatigue during the second year of the global pandemic, the participants joined us for a whole-day discussion, demonstrating remarkable patience, commitment, and hard work. Their invaluable comments and engagement during the colloquium greatly enriched the contributions included in this book. We would like to extend our thanks also to the colloquium participants, including Kasia Starczewska, John Tolan, and Federico Stella, who are not featured in this volume but provided valuable ideas and remarks during the colloquium.

We are very grateful to Elly Dutton for her meticulous and impressive editorial work, which has significantly improved the quality of this volume. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Emma Post in compiling the index, as well as the accompanying support throughout the publication process provided by Teresa Madrid Álvarez-Piñer.

Lastly, we express our sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the edited volume. Your dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit have made this work possible.

Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Gerard Wiegers
Amsterdam, 2023

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-202

# Contents

**Acknowledgments —— V**

Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Gerard Wiegers
**The European Qur'an: Towards an Inclusive Definition —— 1**

## Part 1: **At the Interreligious Nexus**

Gerard Wiegers
**Muslims in Christian Iberia and Translations of the Qur'an in Europe: From Subordinate Informants to Participants in the Republic of Letters —— 23**

Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias and Maxime Sellin
**Links Between Morisco and Early Modern European Interpretations: The Case of "Ālif Lām Mīm" (Q 2:1) —— 55**

Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz
**An Interplay Between Muslim and Christian Cultures: Polish Qur'an Translations Between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries —— 77**

## Part 2: **Regional Diversity**

Enes Karić
**The Qur'an in the Manuscript Tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina —— 101**

Shamil Shikhaliev and Ilona Chmilevskaia
**The Qur'ans of Dagestan: Practices of Copying, Using, and Translating —— 117**

Mykhaylo Yakubovych
**Commenting, Publishing, and Translating: Evolution of Qur'anic Traditions in Crimea from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century —— 143**

Alfrid Bustanov
**On Qur'anic Culture in Inner Russia between the Seventeenth and Twentieth Centuries —— 165**

## Part 3: **The Qur’anic Text and Language Ideologies**

Gulnaz Sibgatullina
**On Translating the Qur’an into Turkic Vernaculars: Texts, Ties, and Traditions —— 189**

Johanna Pink
**The Inimitable Qur’an and the Languages of Empire: Muslim Qur’an Translation in the Languages of Western Europe in the Early Twentieth Century —— 219**

**List of Figures and Tables —— 257**

**Notes on Contributors —— 259**

**Index —— 261**

Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Gerard Wiegers

# The European Qur'an: Towards an Inclusive Definition

## 1 Introduction

As another volume in the book series of the international research project *The European Qur'an: Islamic scripture in European culture and religion, 1150–1850 (EuQu)*, funded by the European Research Council (ERC), the present collection seeks to shine a light on the agency of Muslim communities and individuals in Europe with regard to the Qur'an, including its use and dissemination across the continent. By employing such terms as "European Muslims" and "European Qur'an," we aim to contribute to the debate regarding the belonging of Muslims and Islam to Europe, a debate that has intensified with Muslim migration, the emergence of the European Union project, and various attempts to construct a shared European identity.

The ongoing discourse surrounding the concept of European Islam[1] and its defining characteristics has generated scholarly interest in certain Muslim communities that, unlike those that have emerged as a result of migration since the 1960s, can be considered historically "European"; these include communities in the Iberian Peninsula and the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, other communities with deep historical roots in the continent, such as the Bosnian and Dagestani Muslims, have remained relatively unknown to wider scholarly audiences. By bringing diverse cases together, this volume explores the significant role played by Muslim communities in copying, disseminating, using, interpreting, and translating the Qur'an throughout Europe. This approach not only sheds light on the role of Muslims in shaping the culture that we consider European, but also highlights how contact between Muslim and non-Muslim populations has led to the development of distinctive features and traditions of European Muslim communities.

**1** To name just a few major works on the topic: Jørgen Nielsen, *Towards a European Islam* (Basingstoke: Pallgrave, 1999); Xavier Bougarel, "Bosnian Islam as 'European Islam': Limits and Shifts of a Concept," in *Islam in Europe*, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96–124; Jocelyne Cesari, "Conclusion: Is There a European Islam?," in *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 802–6; Ertuğrul Şahin, *Europäischer Islam: Diskurs im Spannungsfeld von Universalität, Historizität, Normativität und Empirizität* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017); Mohammed Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2019).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-001

## 2 On the Concept of the *European Qur'an*

In this volume, we propose to contribute to the study of Islam in Europe in general and to the definition of the *European Qur'an* concept in particular by analyzing Muslims' engagement with the Qur'an, specifically through their practices of reading, copying, interpreting, translating, and utilizing the scripture. Our central question is whether there is a distinct phenomenon that can be characterized as the *European Qur'an*. If so, what does this notion mean? And, importantly, what can and cannot be considered part of this phenomenon?

While we consider "Europe" as primarily a narrative construct that implies cultural, physical, and religious homogeneity in a region that is, in fact, incredibly diverse, the practical significance of belonging to "Europe" or enjoying "Europeanness" cannot be ignored. In the past, Europeanness was thought to be marked by sociocultural qualities – and in some cases, even physical qualities – which were deemed superior to the qualities ascribed to others. This was particularly evident where Europeanness was viewed as being closely connected to Christianity and when, in the nineteenth century, racialized views on non-Europeans started to influence cultural production.[2] Recently, Europeanness has come to also involve the possession of certain political rights. Consequently, exclusion from Europeanness and the European project is now associated with othering in terms of citizenship and various forms of discrimination and exclusion on legal grounds.

The applicability of the term "European" to Islam has been a topic of debate for several decades, with the notion of *European Islam* generating significant controversy and discussion, particularly since the 1990s. In interwar Europe, the term was used descriptively by Muslims in Albania to describe their (national) form of Islam as belonging to the shared European culture.[3] In recent decades, it has been used in public debates to refer to the practices and communities of Muslim migrants in Western Europe, often in a strongly normative manner. Rather than simply describing reality, the term "European Islam" has come to suggest what this reality ought to be, transmitting to the broader public the expectation that Muslim

**2** Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzaubering Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2010), posits that eighteenth-century Enlightenment writings were marked by the relative absence of such notions of superiority. We thank Jan Loop for drawing our attention to this publication.

**3** Nathalie Clayer, "Behind the Veil. The Reform of Islam in Inter-war Albania or the Search for a 'Modern' and 'European' Islam," in *Islam in Interwar Europe,* edited by Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 151.

migrants should adopt and adjust to the dominant "European" norms and institutions, which are often perceived as culturally liberal and secular.[4]

Academic discourse has done much to challenge this normative understanding and has invited a reconsideration of the history of European Islam to contest the idea of Islam as something imported and foreign to Europe.[5] Scholars have emphasized the centuries-long history of Muslim-Christian relations in Europe, the impact of European colonialism on Muslim countries, and the history of indigenous Muslim communities in Europe. By exploring these historical and cultural contexts, a broad range of works have sought to deconstruct the narrow and homogenizing view of Islam in Europe and to recognize the diversity and richness of Muslim experiences and practices on the continent.[6]

It is in this historical vein that this volume aims to explore the notion of the *European Qur'an*. A relatively recent concept, it has not yet acquired a clear and commonly accepted definition. In the academic field of Qur'anic studies, "European" has so far been discussed in two ways.

Firstly, Angelika Neuwirth argues that the Qur'an can and should be considered part of European cultural heritage. Her detailed 2010 study of the Qur'an's historical genesis suggests that the text of the Qur'an is a product of the shared cultural heritage – Christian, Jewish, and Muslim – of the late antique period of the Mediterranean world. Neuwirth asserts that the failure of scholars to approach the Qur'an in this manner has resulted in Islam and the Qur'an being perceived as "outsiders" to European civilization. A European approach to the Qur'an, according to Neuwirth, means acknowledging the shared roots of both Christianity and Islam in the cultural and historical context of late antique society.[7] In another study (2016), she shows how the character of the Qur'an as a coherent and wide-ranging critical commentary on the Jewish and Christian scriptures was prevented from be-

---

**4** Jørgen Nielsen, "European Islam (as a concept), " in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Devin J. Stewart. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27822.

**5** This has also been the primary goal of the ERC-Synergy project *The European Qur'an: Islamic scripture in European culture and religion, 1150–1850 (EuQu).*

**6** E.g., John Victor Tolan et al., *Europe and the Islamic World: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); Maurits Berger, *A Brief History of Islam in Europe: Thirteen Centuries of Creed, Conflict and Coexistence* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014); Nathalie Clayer and Xavier Bougarel, *Europe's Balkan Muslims: A New History* (London: C. Hurst & Company Limited, 2017); Cesari, *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam.*

**7** For the discussion on the Qur'an's embeddedness in the religious and ethical ethos of late antique Christianity and Judaism, see also Guy G. Stroumsa, *The Making of the Abrahamic Religions in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

coming widely known in Europe because of the rise of the philological method and its detailed, piecemeal, critical approach to Islam's sacred scripture.[8]

Secondly, a definition of the European Qur'an concept has been suggested by Jan Loop in his introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* (2018). Loop defines it as a *sui generis* text genre that emerged as a result of "the transformations that the Qur'an underwent in its transition from the Islamic-Arabic world to the various Latin and vernacular versions in Europe, as well as with regard to the ways that the Qur'an is read, used and adapted in Christian and Jewish European contexts."[9] Elsewhere in his article, Loop remarks: "that the European Qur'an constitutes a textual tradition of its own is reinforced by the fact that already in the earliest manuscripts, but also in the printed editions throughout the centuries, the *text of the Qur'an was framed by a battery of varying and changing paratexts – prefaces, refutations, annotations – which put it into ideological perspectives* [emphasis added]."[10] As an example of the European Qur'an in this definition, Loop discusses the publication of Ketton's Qur'an translation with the Cluniac paratextual materials by the Protestant Theodor Bibliander (first edition 1543). The European Qur'an, according to Loop, thus primarily constitutes a translation of the Qur'an into Latin or a European vernacular, accompanied by an extensive corpus of additional texts aimed at clarifying and/or refuting the Islamic scripture.

Both Neuwirth and Loop's original approaches serve primarily to stimulate new research and to point out that the use of the Qur'an in Christian polemics in fact represents a degree of inclusion of Islam into what will later be seen as the basis of European culture. Neuwirth focuses on the emergence of distinct Christian and Islamic religious traditions that stem from the shared cultural and historical context of the late antique period of the Mediterranean world. Meanwhile, Loop emphasizes the early modern use of the Qur'an in interconfessional and anticonfessional polemical discourse.[11] Overall, this inclusion of the Qur'an in

**8** Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010); "Qur`ānic Studies and Historical Critical Philology. The Qur'ān's Staging, Penetrating and Eclipsing of Biblical Tradition," *Philological Encounters* 1 (2016): 31–60. Also, Paderborner, "The Qur'an Also Counts as European Cultural Heritage," *Paderborner "SJ" Blog*, April 18, 2015, https://sjpaderborn.wordpress.com/2015/04/18/the-quran-also-counts-as-european-cultural-heritage-award-for-angelika-neuwirth-goethe-de.

**9** Jan Loop, "Introduction: The Qur'an in Europe – the European Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 3.

**10** Loop, "Introduction", 5–6.

**11** An example of the first are the references to the Qur'an in Catholic anti-Protestant discourse, such as *Calvino-Turcismus*, and analogous Protestant phenomena. We may observe that this type of use indeed builds on the Cluniac model, preserved in Bibliander's translation and paratexts (1543). We also find this model in later translations which continued to build on it. Like the origi-

Christian European culture challenges the notion of a clear division between Christian and Islamic cultures, highlighting the complex and intertwined nature of their histories.

Though intellectually stimulating, both understandings of the Qur'an in relation to Europe – whether reading the text purely within the historical context of its origination, as in the case of Neuwirth, or through translations and early modern European Christian polemics, as in the case of Loop – have their shortcomings. Andrew Rippin notes that modern studies on the philology and historical evolution of the Qur'anic text cannot "escape the assumptions of the Muslim tradition" and an "objective study of the Qur'an purely within its historical context of origination" is deemed extremely difficult.[12]

Loop's definition, although inclusive of the variety of European Christian readings of the Qur'an, cannot be easily applied to European Muslim practices.[13] For instance, as vernacular translation with paratexts became a prevailing model in Christian and Orientalist circles, similar phenomena emerged among Muslims in Europe. The Mudejars produced codices consisting of selected verses and consecutive *sūra*s, and these Arabic textual models were frequently accompanied by Romance translations and interpretations.[14] It is worth noting that these texts can be found in mixed manuscripts, unlike *muṣḥaf*s, which, to the best of our knowledge, are never bound together with other texts. Enes Karić's contribution to this volume reveals that comparable works containing selected Qur'anic verses are

---

nal translation, all these vernacular translations served the main goal of polemicizing against Islam. This model remained dominant during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**12** Andrew Rippin, "Review: Der Koran Als Text Der Spätantike. Ein Europäischer Zugang," *Religion* 41, no. 3 (2011): 526.

**13** A point that requires further discussion is to what extent Loop's definition covers translations produced in the modern period. Starting with André Du Ryer's original translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into French, published in 1647, another approach also became important. New translations came into being, which supplanted Ketton's version and its model of text plus paratexts. The new model is exemplified by the Dutch translation of the Qur'an by the Cartesian and Spinozist Jan Hendrik Glazemaker, published by Jan Rieuwertsz in 1657. As Van der Deijl has demonstrated, this translation, based on Du Ryer's French translation, was undertaken with Enlightened, anti-authoritarian aims, and it stressed rational autonomy in the pursuit of truth. A century later, the Enlightened approach would become even more dominant in Europe. Lucas van der Deijl, "Orientalist Ambivalence: Translating the Qur'an in the Dutch Republic," *Early Modern Low Countries* 6, no. 2 (2022): 176–200.

**14** See Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias, "New Models of Qur'an Abridgement among the Mudejars and Moriscos: Copies in Arabic Containing Three Selections of Suras", in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 165–98.

also found among Bosnian Muslims and known as *enʿām* (Arabic *anʿām*), a term signifying a selection or collection of parts of the Qur'an.

## 3 Towards a New Definition

The question that arises is whether such texts, written by Muslims in what is now considered part of the European continent, can also be regarded as European texts. This volume aims to develop a definition of the European Qur'an that is inclusive of a range of practices related to reading and using the Qur'an and, importantly, acknowledges the role of Muslims in shaping the phenomenon. In selecting the case studies presented in this volume, we were guided by several considerations:

– **Geography:** One of the initial considerations in defining the European Qur'an was the issue of geographical borders. Where does Europe begin, and where does it end? How has the perception of boundaries changed over time, and why? How do physical borders between states or regions correspond to mental maps of neighboring peoples?
– **Temporality:** Secondly, we sought to determine *when* the idea of belonging to a shared European space becomes a dominant trope in the identification of "us" and "them," and what interpretations this imagined common space entails.
– **Practice:** Finally, we looked at whether there are any elements of using the Qur'an (such as copying, translating, and commenting on the sacred scripture) that distinguish European Muslim cultures from coreligionists elsewhere.

The discussion in this volume on the practices of copying, reading, translating and using the Qur'an among Muslims in Europe places us in the midst of long-standing and complex debates that lie at the heart of Europe's struggle to define itself as a coherent entity, which often involves stigmatizing and excluding groups perceived as the Other. Drawing a line between "us" and "them" inevitably emphasizes differences while downplaying commonalities. By analyzing the phenomenon of the European Qur'an, we aim to expand the historically exclusive boundaries of Europe to include Muslim communities and to acknowledge the complex history of Occidental-Oriental, Muslim-Christian relations in Europe that have existed for centuries. However, we also recognize that casting the European Qur'an as a narrative construct risks reinforcing existing power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South by perpetuating a Eurocentric view of the history of interfaith relations. This exercise in the theoretical conceptualization of the European Qur'an does not seek to establish new boundaries between

practices of Muslims in different geographical areas, but rather contributes to deconstructing "Europeanness" as an exclusively Christian, Bible-centered cultural identity.

## 3.1 Geography

As outlined above, the first consideration in defining the European Qur'an concerns the geographical boundaries of Europe. In other words, we pondered which Muslim communities should and should not be included in the scope of this volume based on their geographical location within the cultural space of Europe.

The notion of Europe has always entailed a set of intertwined discourses, giving rise to a definition in political, economic and ethnological as well as geographic and religious terms.[15] In the words of Klaus Eder, "Europe has accumulated an immense history of images of its boundaries that are used selectively to define its borders."[16] The intersection of geography and religion, in particular, historically played a significant role in the semantic constructions of Europe (and still does). On the one hand, determining Europe's geographical borders with Africa and Asia was closely linked to the production of cultural and political discourses surrounding the shared European civilization. Nature and climate were considered important factors in shaping the distinctive character of European states and their populations. On the other hand, religious differences prompted a reconsideration of Europe's north-south division, particularly following the Wars of Religion and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Europe was also frequently framed in terms of its relationship with Islam, and Muslim-Christian relations lie at the heart of envisioning Europe's southern and eastern frontiers.[17]

The southern frontier,[18] in particular, has been portrayed as a significant defense line against the Muslim world – whether through the natural boundary

---

**15** Shane Weller, *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 2–5.

**16** Klaus Eder, "Europe's Borders: The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (2006): 256.

**17** Weller, *The Idea of Europe*, 2–5; Eder, "Europe's Borders," 264.

**18** For instance, in the sixteenth century, Nicholas Cleynaerts (d. 1542) described his experience of being at the border of Europe while waiting to cross the Strait of Gibraltar in order to study the Qur'an in Fez with his liberated Tunisian Muslim slave, Kharūf. Nicolaes Cleynaerts to his teacher Jacobus Latomus, Gibraltar, 7 April 1540, Dutch translation in: Jan Papy and Joris Tulkens, *In de ban van Mohammed. Nicolaes Cleynaerts' (1493–1542) brieven uit de Arabische wereld* (Gorredijk: Sterck en De Vreese, 2021), 253. Latin original: "Desedi hic in Europae finibus in oppido Gibalaltar hedomadis tribus . . . " (Alphonse Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard*,

posed by the southern shoreline of the Mediterranean which separates the European from the African continent,[19] or through less fixed boundaries[20] with the Turkish Other. In this volume, two chapters – by Gerard Wiegers and Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias & Maxime Sellin – examine Qur'an translation and annotation practices by the Muslims of Europe's southernmost frontier, the Iberian Peninsula. These chapters shed light on a religious tradition that has had a significant impact on European Islam as a minority religion and on the first Qur'an translations by non-Muslim Europeans. The contribution by Karić on Muslim communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlights the mediating role played by frontier communities between Christian and Muslim/Turkish cultural spaces.

The eastern frontier of Europe has historically been defined by the dominance of Russia with its often-changing boundaries and spheres of influence.[21] Despite being a major European power deeply involved in European cultural processes, Russia was historically associated with the East due to the Mongol invasions, and later viewed as a competitor to Europe in terms of claims to true Christian Orthodoxy. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was regarded as an ideological antagonist. Romanticization and fear of the counterpart have not only occurred on the side of (undisputedly) European countries. Russia's culture, history, and politics reflect the country's turbulent relations with Europe's cultural centers. During the imperial period, seeing itself in an inferior position, Russia sought to establish dominance over its sizable Muslim population, particularly in Central Asia, which it conquered in the nineteenth century. Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) famously remarked, "in Europe

---

T I (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1940), 161/ French translation, Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard,* T III (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1941), 105: "Voici trois semaines que je suis, tout au bout de l'Europe, dans la forteresse de Gibraltar."

**19** E.g., Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); for a view of the same frontier from the opposite side: Oumelbanine Zhiri, "Mapping the Frontier between Islam and Christendom in a Diplomatic Age: Al-Ghassânî in Spain," *Renaissance Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (2016): 966–99.

**20** E.g., Palmira Johnson Brummett, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty Territory and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Charles Sabatos, *Frontier Orientalism and the Turkish Image in Central European Literature* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020).

**21** E.g., William Hardy McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Thomas McLean, *The Other East and Nineteenth-Century British Literature: Imagining Poland and the Russian Empire* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we will be masters. In Europe we were Tatars, and in Asia we are Europeans."[22]

This volume contains several case studies that examine Muslim communities that were once part of the Russian Empire, with some still being associated with Russia today. The chapters by Alfrid Bustanov and (to some extent) Gulnaz Sibgatullina discuss the Muslims of the Volga-Ural region, itself a frontier region bordering Asia. While the contribution of the Volga-Ural community to the dissemination of printed Qur'ans across Europe and beyond is relatively well-known,[23] the impact of this community on the vernacularization of Qur'an translations and on the creation of a distinct Muslim subjectivity remains an understudied area, addressed in this volume. There was also another Turkic-speaking group in close contact with the Muslim centers in the Volga-Urals, such as Kazan and Orenburg: the Crimean Tatars. Mykhaylo Yakubovych's contribution highlights how the strategic location of this community at the crossroads between Turkic, Arab, and non-Muslim worlds has placed it at the forefront of many innovations concerning translation, copying, and printing.

The volume also includes a case study on Dagestani Muslims in the North Caucasus, by Shamil Shikhaliev & Ilona Chmilevskaia. Due to the region's location in a hard-to-reach mountain area, Dagestani Muslims have long remained oriented towards the Arab-speaking world rather than to Europe. Nevertheless, we invite the reader to view this case, too, through the lens of the European Qur'an. Dagestani practices of copying and ornamenting the Qur'an have been influenced by the region's inclusion in the European technological, trade, and cultural spheres, following the Russian conquest of the area in the first half of the nineteenth century. This has led to a distinct form of the Qur'an known among manuscript collectors as the "Dagestani Qur'an."[24]

Also featured in this volume is a discussion of practices of reading and translating the Qur'an among Slavic-speaking Muslims of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska & Czesław Łapicz. In many respects, this community exemplifies how interactions between Muslim and Christian communities in Cen-

---

**22** Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "Denvink za 1881 g.," in *Polnoe sobranie khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1929), 454. Also, Mark Bassin et al., *Between Europe & Asia: The Origins Theories and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism* (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

**23** For the list of references, see Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Iazgul Rakhimova, "Arabic Edition of the Qurʾān, Kazan, 1803," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān Brill*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_055207.

**24** See Annabel Gallop, "From Caucasia to Southeast Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic Manuscript Tradition in Brunei and the Southern Philippines. I," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 14, no. 1 (2008): 32–56, and 14 no. 2 (2008): 3–20.

tral Europe were mutually influential in terms of language, everyday practices, and political institutions. Kulwicka-Kamińska & Łapicz provide a detailed analysis of some of these aspects.

As evidenced in the chapters in this volume, Muslim communities in Europe, particularly those at its frontiers, have played a crucial intermediary role in shaping Muslim-Christian relations in premodern and modern periods, both within and across empires. While these Muslim communities were part of broader Islamicate networks – the Persianate world in the case of the Volga and Crimean Tatars, or the Arab world in the case of Dagestan – they also developed traditions and practices specific to their liminal position (discussed further in section 3.3 below). Similarly, the Bosnian Muslim and Polish-Lithuanian Tatar communities, whose origins have been a much-debated and politically sensitive issue,[25] exhibit distinct traits in which Christian and Muslim elements interact in complex ways. With technological advancements and European colonialism, the boundaries between regions have become even more blurred. Johanna Pink's contribution stretches the notion of "Europe" beyond geographical boundaries by discussing the proliferation of Qur'an translations into European languages by Muslims both in continental Europe and in former European colonial territories.

Two points need to be made at this juncture. Firstly, while we acknowledge the significant contribution made by Muslims from the Ottoman Empire to the phenomenon of the European Qur'an, we do not directly address the case of Muslim Turks, who were the most influential Muslim community within the Empire. The Islamic and Qur'anic traditions of Muslim communities within the Ottoman Empire have long constituted a field of study in their own right,[26] and findings in this area are yet to be integrated into broader intellectual frameworks analyzing European Islam. Geographically, the Muslim Turks dominated territories that extended well beyond the European continent, and the interplay of different regional traditions with respect to the Qur'an remains to be studied. Some effects of the Ottoman political, cultural, and religious practices on regional traditions are discussed by Karić, whose contribution to this volume focuses on the frontier Bosnian Muslim commu-

**25** E.g., Veneta Yankova, "The Tatars in Lithuania and their ethnohistory," *Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic studies* 4, no.1 (2021): 298–316; Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

**26** M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Susan Gunasti, *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: An Exegetical Tradition* (New York, NY : Routledge, 2019).

nity, and by Sibgatullina, who touches upon Ottoman Turks in her analysis of broader translation traditions among Turkic-speaking Muslims.[27]

Secondly, it is important to note that the notion of "Muslims" is not only used in reference to religious practices and worldviews of particular communities, but increasingly also forms a category of social analysis.[28] When used in this function, the notion emphasizes a single religion that supposedly defines many communities with various histories and experiences of living on the European continent. We realize that such an approach in itself can be limiting, as we are bringing together communities that – despite their commonalities – also have substantial differences that are potentially downplayed when viewing them through the lens of religious affiliation.[29] However, this approach also makes it possible to highlight a certain solidarity shared by Muslims from different geographical areas, as will be discussed in several of the chapters. Moreover, "Muslims" here is not an exclusive category, as we do not construct it as "Other" vis-à-vis European, Christian culture. On the contrary, the chapters in this volume show that there has been a continuous interchange between Muslim minority and Christian majority communities, where the former adopted an active stance rather than being merely a passive witness.

An aspect that remains beyond the scope of this volume is the problem of racialization and how the idea of Europe and Europeanness has historically been shaped by it. Muslims have historically been excluded from the shared culture not only due to religious affiliation and lifestyle, but also due to perceived racial differences relating to physical and behavioral traits. This exclusion is reinforced by imagining geographical borders like mountains, seas, channels and rivers to be natural barriers that separate a supposedly superior race from inferior ones ("Arab" or "Asian").[30] The concept of racialization may explain how

---

**27** A discussion that does not feature in our volume, and remains, by and large, understudied in the field of European Qur'an pertains to the Qur'an translation and commenting practices of Albanian Muslims, also strongly influenced by the Ottoman cultural sphere. For an overview of potential research avenues, see İsmail Bardhi, "The *Sayfah*s of the Translation and *Tafseer* of the Noble Qur'an into Albanian Language," *Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4, no. 2 (2018): 167–220.

**28** Rogers Brubaker, "Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 1–8.

**29** Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Oxford: Princton University Press, 2016).

**30** This issue forms part of the broader scholarly debate on whether concepts of "race" and "racialization," critically analyzed in the context of North America, can be applied to the European context: Markus Balkenhol and Katharina Schramm, "Doing Race in Europe: Contested Pasts and Contemporary Practices," *Social Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2019): 585–93. The interplay between Islamophobia and racialization has been analyzed in Saher Selod and David G. Embrick, "Racializa-

religious markers gain racial meanings[31] and function as a driving force in cultural politics.

By excluding certain groups based on their perceived racial characteristics, Europe reinforces the perception that it has always been a coherent and unchallenged unit. This perspective disregards the effects of continuous migration into and out of Europe, whether voluntary or forced. For example, the role of Muslim slaves in medieval and early modern Europe is an area of scholarship that promises to reveal how Europe repressed the confessional (viz. Muslim) identity of a sizable group of migrants (see Wiegers' contribution in this volume).[32]

## 3.2 Temporality

When examining historical developments spanning centuries, one needs to be attuned to changes in the meaning of words over time. Interpretations of both "European" and "Qur'an" have never been static – neither for those who saw themselves as belonging to Europe, nor for those who saw themselves as (or were seen as) outsiders.

European identity, as discussed above, has often been structured along religious lines. However, the strict division between arguably united Christian Europe and its non-Christian (viz. Muslim) neighbors is a relatively recent construct. According to Isabella Walser-Bürgler, the notion of "Europe" was not prominent even during the time of the crusades (eleventh to thirteenth century), although various European peoples were engaged in the war against the common Muslim

---

tion and Muslims: Situating the Muslim Experience in Race Scholarship," *Sociology Compass* 7, no. 8 (2013): 644–55; Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, "The Racialization of Muslims," in *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives,* Salman Sayid and AbdoolKarim Vakil (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 69–84. For an in-depth historical analysis of the phenomenon: Jocelyne Dakhlia and Bernard Vincent, *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*: *Une intégration invisible*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011); Jocelyne Dakhlia and Wolfgang Kaiser, *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe: Passages et contacts en Méditerranée,* Vol 2 (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013); Mercedes García-Arenal and Felipe Pereda, *De sangre y leche: raza y religión en el mundo ibérico moderno* (Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2021).

**31** Valérie Amiraux and Pierre-Luc Beauchesne, "Racialization and the Construction of the Problem of the Muslim Presence in Western Societies," in *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh, (London: Routledge, 2020), 363–82.

**32** Ariel Salzmann, "Migrants in Chains: On the Enslavement of Muslims in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe,".*Religions 4 (2013),* 391–411; Tijana Krstić, "Islam and Muslims in Early Modern Europe," in *Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750, Vol. I: Peoples & Places,* ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 670–93.

enemy; "in this context, it was customary instead to speak of *ecclesia occidentalis* or *Christianitas* instead of *Europa*."[33] Fourteenth-century, fifteenth-century and especially sixteenth-century sources reveal the emergence of ideas about shared "Europeanness": for example, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (c. 1400–1458) in his *De Europa* uses *Europaei* ("Europeans") to refer to the peoples of the geographical realm called "Europe"; but even in these periods, the role of religion in shaping the sense of common belonging remained complex.[34]

European practices of identifying "us" in relation to Muslims clearly have some roots in the premodern period. The two chapters on Muslims in Iberia illustrate the dominance of Christian polemics in the construction of Muslims as the Other. Wiegers shows in his contribution that such distinctions in this period were predominantly confessional; once converted, an ex-Muslim could participate in Christian social networks. From the eighteenth century and in connection with the educated elites and scholarly knowledge production, "Europeanness" acquired additional connotations, including racial ones, when contrasted with the Orient. In the nineteenth century, with growing industrialization, colonialism, and globalization, the concepts of Europe and Europeanness left "the narrow circles of the educated elite to become a more meaningful category of attribution and differentiation," although the two concepts remained plural, fragmented, and polyvalent in definition.[35]

As for the meaning of the term "Qur'an," it is important to mention the following. Since the focus of this volume is mainly on Sunni Muslim communities, it can be argued that the sacred status of the Qur'an remained a stable and core notion for all the communities under discussion, regardless of changing social or political contexts. Instead, it was the traditions of reading the Qur'an, dominant ideologies around translating and commenting on the text, and particular rituals in which the Qur'an was used that were subject to change over time. In her contribution, Sibgatullina discusses how the translation of the Qur'an at different points in time was undertaken in pursuit of different goals. Additionally, the expression of Muslim piety through engagement with the Qur'an also evolved over time, as discussed in Bustanov's chapter on the individualization of Qur'an study among Tatars.

A common theme throughout the volume is the reflection of ethnic identities through practices of translating and using the Qur'an, particularly in response to the emergence of nation-states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Trans-

**33** Isabella Walser-Bürgler, *Europe and Europeanness in Early Modern Latin Literature: Fuitne Europa Tunc Unita?* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 30.

**34** Walser-Bürgler, *Europe and Europeanness*, 33.

**35** Patel, "The Making of Homo Europaeus," 22, 27.

lations of the Qur'an into vernacular languages, such as the Spanish Romance vernacular, already existed in the medieval period (Wiegers). Additionally, scholars have shown that the vernacularization of Islamic scholarship was already underway in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, developing independently of processes in Europe.[36] Nevertheless, many translations were produced in local languages, such as Polish dialects (Kulwicka-Kamińska & Łapicz) or Crimean Tatar (Yakubovych), mirroring the period when smaller states like the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (until 1795) or empires like Russia were struggling to define their (proto-)national ideas. This process coincided with the decline of the Persian world – the pre-national Muslim linguistic cosmopolis – which also played a role in legitimizing translations into languages other than Persian.[37] Amid the emergence of alternative identities and solidarities, such as pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic, Muslim reformist elites worked to define Muslim identity in relation to new modern realities, including closer social, political, and intellectual ties with Western Europe, as well as the expansion and transformation of the empires in which they were included. These new realities required a significant alteration of traditional Muslim institutions and hierarchies.

With the exception of a few chapters, this volume does not extensively discuss developments after 1950. While the idea of a united Europe faded in the wake of nation-state building, it resurfaced after World War II, particularly as part of the European Union's identity-building projects. The imaginations of contemporary Europe as an entity are significantly different from the connotations that existed before the end of the long nineteenth century and during the interbellum. The participation of Muslims in shaping these novel identities therefore requires careful analysis that is beyond the scope of this volume.[38]

**36** Michiel Leezenberg, "The Vernacular Revolution: Reclaiming Early Modern Grammatical Traditions in the Ottoman Empire," *History of Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2016): 251–75; Paolo Sartori, "Between Kazan and Kashghar: On the Vernacularization of Islamic Jurisprudence in Central Eurasia," *Die Welt Des Islams* 61, no. 2 (2020): 216–246.

**37** On how the decline of the Persianate world affected Qur'an translation practices into a Turkic vernacular, see Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur'an: Rethinking Mūsā Bīgī's Translation into Türki-Tatar," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 46–69.

**38** Weller, *The Idea of Europe*; also Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (London: Routledge, 1996); Yilmaz Hakan and Aykaç Çagla E., *Perceptions of Islam in Europe: Culture Identity and the Muslim 'Other'* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

## 3.3 Practice

Oral and textual instances of the Qur'an have continually been interconnected with and reliant upon the historical and social context of Muslim societies. As such, the temporal and geographical contexts outlined above have given rise to certain practices of Qur'an production and usage that can be associated with European Muslims.

Regional practices of Qur'an reading are closely linked to the spread of particular *madhhab*s or schools of law followed by European Muslims. The Ḥanafī *madhhab* is traditionally observed by Crimean, Volga, and Polish-Lithuanian Tatars as well as Bosnian Muslims, while the Shafiʿi *madhhab* is followed by the majority of Dagestani Muslims, and the Maliki *madhhab* was adhered to by Iberian Muslim communities. In addition to *madhhab*-specific provisions, local traditions and customs of using the Qur'an have been shaped by geographical location, such as a community's proximity to important centers of Islamic education in Central Asia, or historical factors, such as migration and coexistence with other religious communities.

Although the content of the Qur'anic revelation remains unchanged, the design and materials of Qur'an manuscripts may be modified to meet the diverse needs of users. Oral practices such as *tajwīd* (the art of Qur'anic recitation), vocalization of the text, and different readings (*qirā'āt*) have been incorporated into the design of Qur'an manuscripts to facilitate memorizing and recitation. In their contributions, Shikhaliev & Chmilevskaia and Karić discuss Dagestani and Bosnian regional specifics of producing the Qur'an, including variations in ornamentation, paper, format, and writing style. As the authors demonstrate, these different characteristics may combine a multitude of different forms suited to different purposes and audiences.[39] For example, memorizing the Qur'an is facilitated by manuscripts that are well laid out and where pages end at the end of verses. In addition, there are forms of the Qur'an specifically designed for different audiences, such as in clear writing for seniors or large formats for children. Karić covers the tradition of copying the Qur'an in *juzʾ* format, which was evidently important in religious customs and proved to be an invaluable tool for more efficient copying of the sacred text.[40]

The perception and treatment of the Qur'an are intrinsically tied to its context, and may exhibit significant variability. The handling of this sacred text may

**39** See also François Déroche, "Manuscripts of the Qurʾān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00110.

**40** See also Mercedes García-Arenal, "The Inquisition and the search for Qur'ans," in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 245–85.

range from venerating it as a symbol of divine guidance to treating it as a commodity, or even as spoils of war or an art object in a museum. In the everyday life of Muslims, the Qur'an is believed to be divinely protected and a conduit for various forms of divine intervention, such as conferring success and prosperity, preventing misfortune, or shielding the owner from the envy of others.[41] Hence, forms and excerpts of the Qur'an have been widely used for centuries to decorate living rooms, to serve as talismans worn near the heart, or as essential objects that must be present during ceremonies such as naming, marriages, and funerals. The materials and ornamentation of Qur'an manuscripts can also signify the owner's wealth, as discussed by Shikhaliev & Chmilevskaia, who describe exceptionally large Qur'an manuscripts with richly illuminated *sūra* titles, which imply considerable investment.

Another significant aspect evident in the materiality of the European Qur'an is the tangible presence of translation. Given that the Muslim communities in question were often multilingual and Arabic was not the mother tongue of most members, written translations became a necessity. There are different types of translation, and the intended audiences for these translations also differ. For instance, interlinear translations may exist alongside *tafsīr*s and explanations in the margins, which may be presented in either a carefully planned page layout or a more informal manner. Furthermore, translations may be produced for personal use or given as a gift or *baraka* to members of the elite. The ideologies behind translation, the coexistence of the original and its translation, and the rules for utilizing such translations have sparked wide-ranging debate and discussion (see the contribution by Pink). The study of socio-cultural and historical "ecologies" in which these Qur'an translations were produced and which were influenced by a multitude of intersecting factors such as Christian-Muslim polemics, Orientalist scholarship, Christian mission endeavors, and modernizing imperial governance of religious and ethnic minority populations, among others, offer a rich research direction that holds great potential for gaining deeper insights into the nature of the European Qur'an phenomenon.[42]

With the development of recording technology – beginning with the printing press and the gramophone – Muslims became concerned about the application of

**41** See discussion in Gregory Starret, "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo," *American Anthropologist* 97, no.1 (1995): 53.

**42** E.g. Samuel Jonathan Ross, "The Biblical Turn in Modern Qur'an Commentary," PhD diss., Yale University, 2018; Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur'an: Rethinking Mūsā Bīgī's Translation into Türki-Tatar," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 46–69.

new media.[43] Such technologies pose a broader challenge: namely, how can the practical and institutional conditions that ensure an ethical response to the divine revelation be upheld across new and rapidly changing media environments? The contributions by Yakubovych and Bustanov touch upon the evolution of standards in Qur'an copying and printing and discuss the roles of individual visionaries in bringing about important changes.[44]

Lastly, it is important to note that the European Qur'an is intimately tied to the position of European Muslims, setting them apart from their counterparts in Muslim-majority countries such as Morocco or Turkey. As a minority group in predominantly Christian Europe, European Muslims have developed distinctive cultural, literary, and theological practices that reflect their position within a pluralistic European society.[45]

## 4 Volume Outline

The book is divided into three parts, each exploring different aspects of the European Qur'an. **Part 1** focuses on the interplay between Christian and Islamic traditions on the European continent, highlighting the role of European Muslims in the evolution of Christian Qur'an studies and translations. **Gerard Wiegers** examines the relationships between Muslims of al-Andalus and Christian Iberia and the Christian elites, both voluntary and forced. He argues that given their extensive contributions to the scholarship of the Early Modern period, some of these Iberian Muslims deserve to be considered members of the Republic of Letters. **Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias and Maxime Sellin** explore the issue of the so-called *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* ("the isolated/disconnected letters") in Mudejar and Morisco translations into Spanish, and trace impact of these translations on medieval and early modern European translations into Latin and the vernacular. **Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz** discuss two Qur'an translations into Polish to exemplify the linguistic, theological, and political interplay between Muslim and Christian cultures in Eastern Europe during the modern period.

43 Charles Hirschkind, "Media and the Qurʾān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00117.

44 Compare with the case outlined by Anouk Cohen, "What is a 'Moroccan Qur'an'?" *Cahiers d'études africaines* 236 (2019): 1119–54.

45 For the discussion of contemporary lived Islam, see, e.g., Nathal M. Dessing, Nadia Jeldtoft, and Linda Woodhead, *Everyday Lived Islam in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2016); Erkan Toguslu, *Everyday Life Practices of Muslims in Europe* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015).

**Part 2** presents individual regional case studies, expanding the European Qur'an notion further to the southeast and east of Europe. **Enes Karić** provides an overview of the Qur'an manuscript tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, arguing that the historical position of the Bosnian Muslim community in the borderlands of the Ottoman Empire makes it a valuable case for understanding European Muslims' engagement with the Qur'an. **Shamil Shikhaliev and Ilona Chmilevskaia** cover the history of the Qur'an in Dagestan and prompt us to reconsider the place and role of this mountainous region in the history of Europe's Muslims, as Dagestan served as a natural point of contact between Arab and non-Arab Muslims. **Mykhaylo Yakubovych** focuses on the case of Crimea, where the Islamic tradition has roots in medieval times, and demonstrates how the attitude towards the Qur'anic text among the educated scholarly class shifted from the classical exegetical tradition to modern approaches. Finally, **Alfrid Bustanov** presents an overview of the cultural dynamics underlying Muslim engagement with the Qur'an in Inner Russia from the late seventeenth to the late twentieth century.

**Part 3** provides theoretical and more geographically expansive considerations on Qur'an translation practices. **Gulnaz Sibgatullina** offers preliminary considerations for a broader study of practices of Qur'an translation among Turkophone Muslims, drawing on examples from the history of translations into Turkic languages and delineating major phases that informed the relationship between the sacred text, literary traditions, and vernacular languages. **Johanna Pink** examines the beginnings of Muslim efforts to translate the Qur'an into the languages of Western Europe between 1905 and 1960. In doing so, she explores the ways in which Muslim translators had to navigate local and global as well as premodern and modern Muslim exegetical traditions, and position themselves vis-à-vis the legacy of non-Muslim European Qur'an translation.

This volume thus offers a diverse range of perspectives and case studies on the European Qur'an, exploring its historical, cultural, and linguistic dimensions. By examining regional case studies, Qur'an translation practices, and the interplay between Islamic and Christian traditions, the contributing authors invite readers to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted role of the Qur'an in European societies. We hope that this collection will inspire further research and discussions on this important topic and encourage scholars to explore new avenues of inquiry into the rich history of the Qur'an in Europe.

# Bibliography


Castilla, Nuria de. "An Aljamiado Translation of the 'Morisco Qur'an' and Its Arabic Text (c. 1609)." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 22, no. 3 (2020): 35–62.

Cesari, Jocelyne. "Conclusion: Is There a European Islam?" In *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari, 802–6. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Clayer, Nathalie. "Behind the Veil. The Reform of Islam in Inter-war Albania or the Search for a 'Modern' and 'European' Islam. In *Islam in Interwar Europe*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain, 128–55. London: Hurst and Company, 2008.

Cohen, Anouk."What is a 'Moroccan Qur'an'?" *Cahiers d'études africaines* 236 (2019): 1119–54.

Deijl, Lucas van der. "Orientalist Ambivalence: Translating the Qur'an in the Dutch Republic." *Early Modern Low Countries* 6, no. 2 (2022): 176–200.

Eder, Klaus. "Europe's Borders: The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe." *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (2006): 255–71.

García-Arenal, Mercedes, "The Inquisition and the search for Qur'ans." In *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, 245–85. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

García-Arenal, Mercedes, and Gerard A. Wiegers, eds. *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Loop, Jan. "Introduction: The Qur'an in Europe – the European Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 1–20.

Neuwirth, Angelika. *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: ein europäischer Zugang*. Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010.

Osterhammel, Jürgen. *Die Entzaubering Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert.* (1. Auflage in de Beck'schen Reihe). München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2010.

Nielsen, Jørgen S. "European Islam (as a Concept)." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Devin J. Stewart. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27822.

Patel, Kiran K. "The Making of Homo Europaeus: Problems, Approaches and Perspectives." *Comparativ: Zeitschrift Für Globalgeschichte Und Vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 25 (2015): 19–37.

Rippin, Andrew. "Review of: *Der Koran Als Text Der Spätantike. Ein Europäischer Zugang*." *Religion* 41, no. 3 (2011): 524–27.

Rodríguez Iglesias, Adrián. "New Models of Qur'an Abridgement among the Mudejars and Moriscos. Copies in Arabic Containing Three Selections of Suras". In *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, 165–98. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Roersch, Alphonse (ed.) *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard*. Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1940–1.

Starret, Gregory. "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo." *American Anthropologist* 97, no.1 (1995): 51–68.

Şahin, Ertuğrul. *Europäischer Islam: Diskurs im Spannungsfeld von Universalität, Historizität, Normativität und Empirizität*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017.

Toguslu, Erkan. *Everyday Life Practices of Muslims in Europe*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015.

Walser-Bürgler, Isabella. *Europe and Europeanness in Early Modern Latin Literature: Fuitne Europa Tunc Unita?* Leiden: Brill, 2021.

Weller, Shane. *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

# Part 1: **At the Interreligious Nexus**

Gerard Wiegers

# Muslims in Christian Iberia and Translations of the Qur'an in Europe: From Subordinate Informants to Participants in the Republic of Letters

In Muslim Iberia, the southernmost part of the European continent bordering on Africa, Muslim and Christian translations of the Qur'an were entangled phenomena. The picture involves a complex interplay of various perspectives: the history of Islam in al-Andalus and Nasrid Granada, the history of the Muslims in Christian Iberia as a recognized and visible minority, the history of the Mudejars, and the history of the Moriscos, whose repression and persecution ended with their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula to North Africa and the Ottoman Empire between 1609 and 1614.

In this chapter I study these entanglements with a focus on the Qur'an in its symbolic form as a sacred revealed text, as well as its material form as the *muṣḥaf* and translated manuscripts which circulated among Christians. I offer a diachronic long-term analysis in which I apply some of the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu and Volkhard Krech, in particular their notions of field, praxis and agency. The notion of *religious field* refers to an approach where religions are understood as societal fields which are continuously being reconstituted, reproduced and changed by interactions between different elements such as concepts, agents, institutional settings, experiences, and physical objects. That these elements constitute a "field" implies that the different elements are related to each other, in such a way that we can speak of an energy that keeps the elements together and referring to each other, be that consensual or contested.[1] Contestation

**1** Volkhard Krech, "What are the Boundaries of Religion? Considerations on the Emergence of a Global Religious Field and on Processes of Sacralization," Unpublished Paper given at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. March 11, 2013; idem, "Relational Religion: Manifesto for

**Note:** The research leading to these results has been partly funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, grant agreement no. 810141, project EuQu: "The European Qurʾan. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850." I would like to thank Mercedes García-Arenal (CSIC-Madrid), the project leader, for her valuable comments on an earlier draft of this chapter and Teresa Madrid Álvarez-Piñer (CSIC-Madrid) for her help during its preparation.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-002

between the elements may take the form of interreligious polemics and struggles over power and authority, as well as economic, social and symbol capital. Until the Middle Ages it is possible to speak of different regional religious fields, which may or may not be in contact with one another. The Mediterranean may be considered one such regional field which interacted with the Asian and European fields. In the late medieval and early modern period, the interaction between the regional fields began to increase in such a way that a global religious field came into being. Following Bourdieu, we may also speak of *agents* who act in a field to strive for (positions of) power.

The entanglements between the fields mentioned above indicate that Islam, Christianity and Judaism existed in the Mediterranean, Asian and European religious fields. Between the Islamicate and Christian worlds there was political and military rivalry, in which the frontier shifted to the advantage of the Christian political and military field. As such, the battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571 marked a turning point. The way actors moved in the religious field was restricted by their position in the political and military field. Those who held positions of authority and power moved more freely than those in the margins, men more than women, and free people more than enslaved persons. While some Muslims in Spain were free, many were captives or enslaved persons. Enslavement ended by being ransomed and returning home. Conversion would be another route to freedom, although it would not lead to a return to a place of origin. For example, harsh conditions on Muslim-owned galleys led to numerous conversions of Christian slaves in the latter half of the sixteenth century.[2]

A historical case of entanglement and contestation in the Mediterranean field in relation to the Qur'an is found in the writings of the Merinid chronicler Ibn Abī Zarʿ (d. between 1310–1320). In his chronicle, Ibn Abī Zarʿ mentions a peace treaty in 1285 between the Merinid ruler Abu Yūsuf Yaʿqūb and the king of Castile, Sancho IV. A condition of this treaty was that Sancho would collect and hand over "the books in the possession of Christians and Jews." Thirteen loads of books were sent to Morocco, including copies of the Qur'an and works on *tafsīr*, includ-

---

a Synthesis in the Study of Religion, *Religion* 50, no. 1 (2020): 98; Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing faith and Legitimacy* (London: Equinox, 2007), 39–56.

**2** Ariel Salzmann, "Migrants in Chains. On the enslavement of Muslims in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe," *Religions* 4 (2013): 401; Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea. Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Eloy Martín Corrales, *Muslims in Spain, 1492–1814. Living and Negotiating in the Land of the Infidel,* trans. Consuelo López-Morillas (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

ing those by al-Thaʿalabī and Ibn ʿAṭiyya.[3] These books were stored in a *madrasa* in Fez. However, as Van Koningsveld argues, these books had very likely not been in Christian or Jewish possession but rather owned by Muslims living in Castile (Mudejars, from Arabic *al-dajn*, "treaty"). Indeed, the profile of the collections closely matches the kinds of codices that were in the possession of the Mudejars and not those owned by Christians and Jews. The reason why Ibn Abī Zarʿ refers to Jews and Christians is very likely ideological: the negative attitudes among the general Moroccan population towards the minority status of the Muslims would not be conducive to increasing the prestige sought by the Merinids. Finally, in this case, the author presents the books (including copies of the Qur'an) as being redeemed from Christian territory. How should we understand this?

First, there were reservations about teaching the Qur'an to non-Muslims, and about taking the *muṣḥaf* to Christian territory, with the risk that it could fall into Christian hands. There were also reservations in Morocco, al-Andalus and Christian Spain with regard to translating the Qur'an into the Romance vernacular, as we will also see below.[4] Muslims displayed reservations with regard to the (ritual) use of (literal) translations of the Qur'an, while *tafsīr*s in the Romance vernacular were generally accepted.

Secondly, confession-based slavery was an important dimension of the Muslim presence in Europe and the Mediterranean area as a frontier zone from the medieval to the modern period. Both Christians and Jews owned Muslim slaves. Meanwhile, Muslims in Christian Spain were not allowed to have Jewish slaves.

---

**3** Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "Andalusian-Arabic manuscripts from Christian Spain: a comparative intercultural approach," *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992): 78. On Ibn ʿAṭiyya, see Rashid El Hour, "Ibn ʿAṭīya al-Muḥāribī," in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus,* ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vílchez (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl, vol. 3, 2009), 409–14. Other studies on the Arabic manuscripts circulating in Christian Spain, and the Qur'an: Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "Andalusian-Arabic Manuscripts from Christian Spain: Some Supplementary Notes," in *Festgabe für Hans Rudolph Singer zum 65. Geburtstag, am 6. April 1990 überreicht von Seinen Freunden und Kollegen*, ed. Hans-Martin Forstner (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1991), 811–23; Nuria Martínez de Castilla Muñoz, "Qur'anic Manuscripts from Late Muslim Spain: The Collection of Almonacid de la Sierra," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, no 2 (2014): 89–138; idem, "Les Manuscrits du Coran Andalusīs, Mudéjars et Morisques de la Biblioteca Nacional de España," *Journal Asiatique* 309, no 1 (2021): 5–31. A (still) valuable overview can be found in: Leonard Patrick Harvey, "The Literary Culture of the Moriscos 1492–1609: A Study Based on the Extant Manuscripts in Arabic and Aljamía," DPhil diss, Magdalen College, University of Oxford, 1958.

**4** See Gerard Wiegers, "The Office of the Four Chief Judges of Mamluk Cairo and their views on Translating the Qur'an in the Early Sixteenth Century. Iberian Islam in a Global Context," in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard* Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 151–63.

The enslavement of Muslims arose due to the war between the Christian north and the Islamicate south. In particular, the move southward by Castile and Aragon, which often took the form of a crusade and colonization of the conquered territories, resulted in either the domination of the Muslim populations (who became Mudejars), or their enslavement.[5] Enslavement also took place when people were taken captive by Christians or Muslims as a result of raids on the coasts, or the capture of ships at sea. Upon being enslaved, Muslims were registered, and their names, places of origin and distinguishing features were recorded. When they were sold at auction, their buyers would select them based on their characteristics. The slave's background would determine his or her suitability and price, in view of the intended labor or the ransom amount.[6] Relevant factors might also include the enslaved's level of education; some enslaved Muslims were selected for their ability to copy out Arabic manuscripts or teach the Arabic language. The colophons of the manuscripts copied by Muslim captives in Christian Iberia attest to the copyists' feelings of frustration at being held against their will, and their hope to regain freedom.[7] One such captive was the Andalusian Mughīth ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣaffār, who was held captive in Toledo for a time and, after being ransomed (likely by the Toledan Mudejar community), married there and taught the Qur'an in the quarter of the Muslims (*ʿallama al-Qurʾān fī rabaḍ al-muslimīn*).[8]

The borders between Muslim and Christian territories were permeable. Mudejars traveled to Granada in pursuit of learning and guidance, including on the topic of the Qur'an. Twenty fourteenth-century *fatwa*s issued by the Granadan *muftī* al-Ḥaffār (d. 811/1408–9) also indicate that this guidance covered the interpretation of the Qur'an.[9] Mudejars also went on *hajj* and returned from Mecca to

**5** Salzmann, "Migrants in Chains," 393.

**6** Salzmann, "Migrants in Chains," 396.

**7** Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "Muslim Slaves and Captives in Western Europe During the Late Middle Ages," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 6, no. 1 (1995): 11, and the sources referred to there. Enslaved Muslims also copied talismans which included Qur'anic verses; see Mercedes García-Arenal, "The Inquisition and the search for Qur'ans," in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 245–85, 264–66 (Francisco de Córdoba was a slave; Mercedes García-Arenal, personal communication).

**8** Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "Muslim Slaves and Captives," note 23. The source is Abū Jaʿfar ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Zubayr, *Kitāb Ṣilat al-ṣila. Al-qism al-thālith*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Harrās and Saʿīd Aʿrāb (Rabat: wizārat al-awqāf wa ʻl-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 1993), 68–69. On captives and the slave trade between al-Andalus and Christian Spain in general and on Ibn al-Zubayr in particular, see: Manuela Marín and Rachid El Hour, "Captives, Children and Conversion. A Case from Late Naṣrid Granada," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 4 (1998): 458.

**9** Gerard A. Wiegers, *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado: Yça of Segovia (fl. 1450), His Antecendents and Successors* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 83. The first four questions concern the Qur'an.

their places of origin. There was an extensive literary culture in Mudejar Spain, which included copying and translating the Qur'an into the Romance vernacular. Many manuscripts copied or written by Mudejars have been identified, and there remain more yet to be discovered. This literary culture in turn remained closely connected to the Andalusi written culture.

## 1 The Qur'an in al-Andalus

The Islamic modes of transmission and learning regarding the Qur'an in al-Andalus were marked by their orientation towards the Medinan tradition. In addition, two approaches to dividing the Qur'an spread from al-Andalus all over the Muslim West and beyond: a division in four parts (*rubʿ*) originating in the work of the Andalusian scholar al-Dānī (d. 444/1053), and a division into twenty-seven *tajziʾāt Ramaḍān* (singular *tajziʾa*), which was meant to serve recitation during the month of Ramadan, ending on *laylat al-qadr*.[10] In al-Andalus, the ritual and political status of the Qur'an was also connected to public power configurations, as has been discussed by, among others, Travis Zadeh amd Amira Bennison.[11]

These characteristics are also found among Mudejar and Morisco copies of the Qur'an and its Romance translations, such as the Qur'an of Toledo, to which we will return below (although the power configurations were of course absent).[12] What these translations also seem to have in common is that they continue to adhere, directly or indirectly, to the *qirā'a* of Warsh, transmitted on the

With Mònica Colominas Aparicio (University of Groningen) I am preparing an edition and a study of these *fatwas*.

**10** Note that this is different from the division into thirty *ajzāʾ/juzʾ*. Umberto Bongianino, "A Rediscovered Almoravid Qurʾān in the Bavarian State Library, Munich (Cod. arab. 4)," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 11, no. 3 (2020): 263–91, 283.

**11** Amira Bennison, "The Almohads and the Qurʾān of ʾUthmān. The Legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in the Twelfth-Century Maghrib," *Al-Masaq*, 19 no 2 (2007): 131–54; Travis Zadeh, "From Drops of Blood. Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the *translatio* of the ʿUthmānic Codex of Al-Andalus," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39, no. 3 (2008): 321–46.

**12** Consuelo López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo. Edición y estudio del manuscrito 235 de la Biblioteca de Castilla-la Mancha* (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2011); Juan Pablo Arias Torres, "*Sicut Evangelia sunt quatuor, distribuerunt contentiam eius in quatuor libros*: On the Division of Iberian Qur'ans and Their Translation into Four Parts," in *The Latin Qurʾan*: *Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, ed. Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021): 425–55; Juan Pablo Arias Torres, "Review of López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo*," *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos, Sección árabe-islam* 65 (2016): 283–96.

authority of his teacher Nāfiʿ of Medina.[13] Most Muslim translations into Romance, often written using the Arabic script (*aljamiado*), were composed between the fifteenth century – when the Muslim minority populations started to use Romance as a literary language – and the seventeenth century.[14]

The most famous Muslim literal (*de pe a pa*) translation into Spanish (now lost) was that by the Segovian Mudejar scholar Iça of Segovia, or Iça Gidelli. This translation of the Qur'an into Romance was undertaken for and in cooperation with the Roman Catholic theologian John of Segovia in about 1456. Iça, whose Latinized *nisba* Gidelli (or Cuidili) possibly derives from the Arabic al-Shādhilī (i.e., a member of the Shādhiliyya Sufi order), was a *faqīh* (Spanish *alfaquí*) in Segovia, a city in Castile. Segovia had both Muslim (Mudejar) and Jewish minority populations, as did many Castilian and Aragonese settlements. Iça, who was a member of the (Muslim) *aljama* in Segovia the middle of the fifteenth century, traveled in 1455 from Segovia to Aiton (Savoy) to collaborate with theologian John of Segovia in the production of a trilingual (Arabic, Spanish and Latin) Qur'an. While we do not know where and when Iça was born, he very likely died in Tunis where he was buried, according to another Castilian Mudejar pilgrim, ʿOmar Paṭōn. We do not know what brought him there, but perhaps he had been on his way to or from the *hajj*, which many Muslims from Christian Iberia performed.[15]

The earliest evidence suggests that, for some time during the first half of the fifteenth century, Iça was part of the existing official Islamic judicial hierarchy in Castile, which consisted of an *alcalde mayor* ("chief judge"), an official close to the Crown of Castile, and local *alcalde*s in the towns and other places who were subordinate to those officials.[16] It appears that, from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, the Mudejars of Segovia no longer recognized the authority of the *alcalde mayor* over the Muslims of Castile, and after a number of internal conflicts which resulted in the death of some members of the community and the emigration to Granada of a number of Segovian Mudejars – the king granted

**13** Daniela-Corina Chiru, "*Influencias lingüísticas del árabe en las traducciones coránicas aljamiado-moriscas*" (PhD diss., University of Bucharest, 2015); Arias Torres, "Sicut Evangelia," 425–26.

**14** Consuelo López-Morillas, "Secret Muslims, Hidden Manuscripts: Spanish Translations of the Qur'ān from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," in *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und außereuropäische Fallstudien*, ed. Reinhold Glei (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2012), 99–116. The only comparative overview to date of Arabic manuscripts circulating among the Muslims, Jews and Christians in Christian Spain is provided by Van Koningsveld in "Andalusian-Arabic Manuscripts from Christian Spain: A Comparative Intercultural Approach" and "Andalusian-Arabic Manuscripts from Christian Spain: Some Supplementary Notes."

**15** Pablo Roza Candás, *Memorial de ida i venida asta Maka: La peregrinación de ʿOmar Paṭṭón* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo 2018), 321.

**16** Wiegers, *Islamic Literature*, 147.

them the concession of being judged by the ordinary local Christian justice.[17] These conflicts were therefore very likely also connected to Iça as *alcalde*, who was subordinate in the hierarchy to the Castilian *alcalde mayor*, and who may perhaps have sided with the king against opponents of the *alcalde mayor* in the city. Direct historical evidence about Iça's role in this conflict is lacking, however.

## 2 Works of Iça Gidelli

In addition to his remarkable translation of the Qur'an into Castilian, Iça Gidelli is best known for a work called *Breviario sunní* (written in Segovia in about 1462), a treatise on ethics, Maliki law and theology. He was also engaged in religious polemics. The catalog of the library of Leonor de Pimentel, duchess of Arévalo, drawn up in 1468, mentions two works by him. One of these works is described as "written by don Yça Guidili, *faqīh* of the Moors [sic] of Segovia, which he wrote against the faith, to which Juan Lopes responds." This description refers to a polemic by the well-known Dominican Juan López de Salamanca (c. 1389–1479). The historian Gil González Dávila described this work – which is now lost – as "a treatise by Juan López against another, written by a Moorish inhabitant of Segovia, Cidili. The scholar had tried to make him [. . .] a child of the light, but failed, because Cidili preferred to remain in the mist and blindness of his sect."[18] Since public polemics against the Christian faith by were prohibited and might be punished by death under blasphemy rules, writing and disseminating such a work may have had consequences for the author. However, we have no sources that confirm this.

The second work is described as "a manuscript by don Caguidili, mufti of the Moors of Segovia" (*libro de coberturas moradas escripto de mano ques el que hiso don caguidili mofti de los moros de Segovia*); this may refer to his well-known *Breviario sunní* of 1462. It is interesting that the description refers to him as a *mofti* (Arabic *muftī*). This suggests that Iça issued *fatwas*, though none are known. In addition, Iça wrote several other, less important religious works, all probably in Castilian.[19]

17 Ana Echevarría Arsuaga, "Las aljamas castellanas en el siglo XV. Redes de poder y conflictos internos," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Sección 3–Historia Medieval* 14 (2001): 93–112.

18 Wiegers, *Islamic literature*, 135–39.

19 See Wiegers, *Islamic literature*, 69–150.

## 2.1 Iça's Castilian translation of the Qur'an

In 1455, Iça traveled to Aiton (Savoy). It is likely that the Castilian king mediated between John of Segovia and his future Muslim translator. John had had great difficulties in finding a suitable and willing Muslim translator and was very pleased that Iça was prepared to undertake the work. He describes Iça as "very famous among the Saracens of Castile."[20] We do not know to what extent the king played a role in this decision to collaborate, but it might well be that Iça's position within the official hierarchy described above played a role. In Aiton, Iça translated the Qur'an into Castilian. According to John, Iça also brought with him to Aiton a treatise on abrogation (*al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*) and a copy of the creed in thirteen articles which he had composed in Spanish, a well-known work that circulated widely.[21] Another work that John mentions is one that Iça began before traveling to Aiton and gave to John in a completed form upon arrival. John of Segovia notes:

> He [Iça] gave to me here in a completed form a summary of the explanation of all the psalms of the Qur'an, which he had begun to compose for me in Spain.[22]

This summary was later included in the manuscript of the (lost) trilingual Qur'an, as is apparent from a description of the manuscript when it entered the library of the University of Salamanca, which also states that it was written in the Spanish language.[23] Further study is needed to determine whether this work could be related to what is often called the "abbreviated Qur'an."[24]

While working on his translation of the Qur'an, Iça also consulted *tafsīr* works. He translated the Qur'an in four months, having arrived in Aiton on December 5, 1455 and working every day except for the birthday of the Prophet (*mawlid al-nabī*). The result was a trilingual Qur'an, including literal translations into Spanish and Latin, which John wished to use in his missionary effort to convert the Muslims by way of peace and doctrine (*per viam pacis et doctrinae*). The trilingual manuscript is no longer extant, except for the Latin introduction by John of Segovia[25] and some

**20** Wiegers, *Islamic literature*, 71.

**21** José Martínez Gázquez, "El Prólogo de Juan de Segobia al Corán (*Qur'ān*) trilingüe (1456)," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 38, no. 2 (2003): 402 (lines 285–300); see also Wiegers, *Islamic Literature,* 92–8.

**22** Wiegers, *Islamic Literature,* 73.

**23** See Wiegers, *Islamic Literature*, 72.

**24** See Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias, "New Models of Qur'an Abridgement among the Mudejars and Moriscos," in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022): 165–98.

**25** Martínez Gázquez, "El Prólogo de Juan de Segobia al Corán (*Qur'ān*) trilingüe (1456)."

verses included in John of Segovia's Latin translation.[26] The lengths John went to in order to achieve a literal translation, actively adapting and even infringing upon Latin grammar, can be seen from passages in the Latin introduction.

Attempts to trace the Castilian translation, or its influence on later interlinear Mudejar and Morisco translations and commentaries, have not proved fruitful so far.[27] John died soon after the completion of the translation, in 1458. We do not know whether Iça continued working on his translation or the glosses after he returned to Castile.

Sources that reveal Iça's view on translating the Qur'an for John of Segovia are scarce. From a letter he wrote to John in 1454 we gain the impression that he may have had missionary motives for cooperating.[28] Being aware of John's request for a literal (Spanish *de pe a pa*) translation, he appears to connect the preparation of a (Spanish) translation to mystical and missionary notions. In the aforementioned letter, he describes himself also as an "interpreter of the Qur'an" (Latin *interpres*) and a "reciter" (Latin *elocutor*; the translation is tentative). In the introduction to his *Breviario sunní* (1462), Iça reflects on his reasons for translating the Qur'an into Romance. In this regard, he mentions that he had wished to remedy the decline of the social position of Muslims living under Christian rule, their loss of wealth as a result of heavy tax burdens, and the loss of (Arabic) learning, as well as to respond to "calumnies" – probably anti-Islamic polemical writings or performances (such as sermons) by theologians and preachers. This, again, is an indication that the Muslim minorities were under pressure from the Christian majority.

The last Romance translation of the Qur'an in Muslim circles was written by Moriscos in the diaspora in Salonica in about 1612 (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, MS II-IV-701). Salonica was a place where Moriscos had settled in the previous century, as is attested by another (partial) translation of the Qur'an into Romance by Ybrahim Isquierdo (Paris, BNP MS Arabe 447).[29] In addition to partial translations, more or less structured selections of *sūra*s also came into being.[30]

**26** Roth and Glei, "Die Spuren," and "Eine Weitere Spur"; an overview of these verses is found in Roth, "Juan de Segovia's translation," 569.

**27** See Roth, "Juan de Segovia's translation," and López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo.*

**28** For an English translation, see Wiegers, *Islamic Literature*, 230–5.

**29** See Moukhles Hajri, "*Un Corán Aljamiado. MS II-IV-701 de la Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana de Florencia*," (PhD diss, University of Oviedo, 2005).

**30** Rodríguez Iglesias, "New Models of Qur'an abrdigment."

## 3 Christian and Christian Humanist translations

The earliest Christian translation of the Qur'an is the well-known, influential Latin translation by Robert of Ketton (1143), titled *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete*, produced under the supervision of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny. Ketton's activities were firmly based in the Ebro valley, where he found the Arabic manuscript(s) he needed and a man referred to as Mahumeth (i.e. Muhammad), who was involved in the translation.[31] In their recent edition of the Cluniac translation of the Qur'an, Martínez Gázquez and González Muñoz do not give further evidence about Mahumeth's background, stating that he was probably "an assistant" to Ketton and the team.[32] While probably a learned person, we may wonder whether this Mahumeth was a free Muslim. As Martínez Gázquez points out, the language of the prologue of Ketton's translation is full of violence towards Muslims (and towards Jews and heretics) in line with its polemical goals.[33] In view of this discourse and the evidence that enslaved Muslims were used in learning and teaching Arabic in medieval Europe, it is questionable whether Mahumeth would have been cooperating of his own free will. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, numerous learned Muslim captives or slaves copied Arabic manuscripts in captivity. It might well be, therefore, that Mahumeth was another learned enslaved Muslim.

The following are subsequent translations related to the Iberian context. In 1210, during the time of Almohad rule in al-Andalus, Canon Mark of Toledo produced a second Latin translation (*Liber alchorani*) at the request of the archbishop of Toledo Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and Archdeacon Maurice. This translation used an approach that remained much closer to the Arabic-Islamic idiom than the one by Ketton.[34] Unlike the Ketton translation, this Latin translation was almost unknown in later times. It is not known to have had any Muslim involvement.

As already discussed above, in 1456 John of Segovia (building on the Spanish translation produced by Iça Gidelli) produced a Latin translation that aimed to be literal (and an improvement upon Ketton's translation) and which he hoped

**31** Margarida Castells Criballés, "Alguns aspectes formals de la traducció llatina de l'Alcorà de Robbert de Ketton (ca. 1141–1143) i la seva relació amb el text original àrab," *Faventia* 29, no. 2 (2007): 79–106.

**32** José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz, eds., *Alchoran, siue lex Sarracenorum. Petro Cluniacensi Abbate precipiente a Roberto Ketensi translatus. Glossae in Alchoran fortasse a Petro Pectauiense redactae. Edición crítica y estudio* (Madrid: CSIC, 2022), 26.

**33** Martínez Gázquez, "El lenguaje de la violencia." See also Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner.*

**34** Cecini, *Alchoranus.*

would be acknowledged by a Muslim readership whom he aimed to convert "by way of peace and doctrine" (*per viam pacis et doctrinae*).

In 1518, Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo produced another Latin translation, with the help of Juan Gabriel (a converted *faqīh* from Teruel in Aragon whose Muslim name was ʿAli al-Ayzar)[35] and the famous learned convert captive in Rome, Yuhanna al-Asad (al-Hasan al-Wazzan) from Granada.[36] This new Latin translation was intended to aid in preaching to the Mudejars in the kingdoms of Valencia and Aragon, by such preachers as the bishop Martin Garcia (ca. 1441–1521) and Johan Martí Figuerola (1457–after July 1532).[37] Juan Gabriel converted in 1525,[38] when all Mudejars of Aragon and Valencia, as well as those of Teruel and (Gea de) Albarracín, were forced to convert by the authorities. Apparently, Gabriel converted of his own free will and allegedly successfully encouraged many of the Mudejars of the community to convert.

We should also mention the enigmatic figure called Juan Andrés, known as the author of the *Confusión o confutación de la secta mahomética y del alcorán*, a work that was printed in Seville in 1515.[39] The author of this anti-Muslim polemic, one of the so-called *anti-alcoranes*, claimed to have been a Mudejar religious scholar from Xátiva, succeeding his father (the *faqīh* Abdallah) as *faqīh* of the town.[40] He states that he converted to Christianity in 1487 upon hearing a sermon by the Dominican preacher Juan Márquez (d. 1499), confessor to King Ferdinand.

**35** Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias and Maxime Sellin point out in their contribution to this volume that the family indeed originated in this region and was also known under the name of Isquierdo. It is possible that Ibrahim Isquierdo, the copyist of Paris, BNP MS Arabe 447, was a member of the same family.

**36** Starczewska, *Latin Translation of the Qurʾān;* Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels. A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Van Koningsveld, "Muslim Slaves and Captives," 10–11.

**37** Starczewska, *Latin Translation of the Qurʾān,* xxxv ff.

**38** Starczewska, *Latin Translation of the Qurʾān,* lxxii–iii.

**39** Juan Andrés, *Confusión o confutación de la secta Mahomética y del Alcorán. Estudio preliminario: Elisa Ruiz García, transcripción del texto: María Isabel García-Monge* (Mérida: Editorial Regional de Extremadura, 2003). On this work, see also Szpiech, "Preaching Paul to the Moriscos: The *Confusión o confutación de la secta mahomética y del alcorán* (1515) of 'Juan Andrés'"; idem, "A Witness of Their Own Nation: On the Influence of Juan Andrés"; Larson, *A Study of the Confusión de la secta mahometica of Juan Andres.* On Andrés as a Granadan canon, see Gerard Wiegers, "Moriscos and Arabic Studies in Europe," *Al-Qantara: revista de estudios árabes,* 31, no. 2 (2010): 598.

**40** On the *anti-alcoranes* and the work of Juan Andrés, see Ryan Szpiech, "Sounding the Qur'an: The Rhetoric of Transliteration in the *Antialcoranes*," in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 285–318.

He then assumed the name of Juan Andrés, was ordained priest, and preached to the Mudejars in Valencia and Granada, allegedly succeeding in converting many of them. He was appointed canon of the Granadan cathedral, before being called upon by the Catholic monarchs to return to Aragon to preach to the Mudejars of that kingdom. He claimed to have cooperated closely with the aforementioned bishop of Barcelona and inquisitor of Aragon, Martin Garcia (he calls him his "patron"), as well as translating a work by Garcia on the Qur'an from Arabic into Aragonese and producing translations of the Qur'an. He reports that Martin Garcia possessed two *glosas* (Qur'anic commentaries, works of *tafsīr*) in Arabic by Azamahxeri and Buhatia, which are the commentaries by al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn ʿAṭiyya.[41] He even says that he had, in order not to be lazy, translated the "Qur'an with its *glosas* [i.e., works of *tafsīr*] and the six books of the Sunna" (*el Alcorán con sus glosas y los seis libros de la Çuna*) into Aragonese. There is no evidence to support this extravagant claim.

The *Confusión o confutación de la secta mahomética y del alcorán* is an attempt to show – allegedly on the basis of the Qur'an, Muslim Tradition, *tafsīr* works, works of Islamic Law, the biography of the Prophet Muhammad and Islamic history – that Islam is a distorted and vile religion, and that Muslims had better turn to Christianity to find the truth. Interestingly, the author enumerates a list of sources that an *alfaquí* would master and know, among them the following authors of *tafsīr*: Buhatia (Ibn ʿAṭiyya), Buzamamin (Ibn Abī Zamanīn), Azani Ahxari (al-Zamakhsharī), Açahalabi (al-Thaʿalabī) and Mahoma Miqui, who may be the Cordoban Qur'anic scholar Makkī Ibn Abī Ṭālib.[42] Unlike many other contemporary anti-Islamic polemical treatises, in this book we find scattered transliterated quotations in Arabic; many are from the Qur'an, but some are from other sources such as works on *fiqh*, e.g., *Arricele*, which may be identified as the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, an authoritative work on Maliki *fiqh*.[43] In many cases, these quotations of the Qur'an are followed by paraphrases and translations in Spanish. The quotations were undoubtedly meant to add to the credibility of the text and serve its polemical goals. Among works on the Prophet, the author frequently mentions two sources in particular: the book of *Acear* (probably a reference to the *Sīra*) and *Assifa*, which is the *Kitāb al-shifāʾ bi-taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭāfā* by al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ.

41 Juan Andrés, *Confusión*, 216.

42 Juan Andrés, *Confusión*, 184. José María Forneas Besteiro, "Ibn Abī Ṭālib Makkī," in *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*. Vol.1, ed. Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vílchez (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2012), 734–42 (no. 242).

43 Juan Andrés, *Confusión*, 105.

Another interesting case of cooperation in the study of the Qur'an, and a new attempt to have the sacred scripture translated, took place in the 1530s. In these years, when all Mudejars had been converted, and only Moriscos – the forcibly converted descendants of the Mudejars – remained, the Flemish Catholic Latinist and humanist Nicholas Cleynaerts traveled from Leuven to Spain in the company of Hernando Colón, Christopher Columbus' son, who needed his help for his library in Seville, the Biblioteca Colombina. Cleynaerts then also set out to study the Arabic language in order to better understand Hebrew, and sought to bring back a teacher of Arabic to Leuven, whether a free person or a slave. He had first tried to find such a teacher among the Moriscos of Seville. The first teacher he found refused to teach him, for fear of the consequences of being associated with forbidden learning, and having, he said, become a believing Christian himself.[44] Cleynaerts was then able to find a slave who appeared to be a famous and well-versed religious scholar from Fez. The man in question had been captured and come into the ownership of the governor of Granada, Luis Hurtado de Mendoza, and the second marquess of Mondéjar (1489–1566), who was also the *alcaide* of the Alhambra, providing the opportunity for Cleynaerts to study the Qur'an under qualified guidance. This took place in the Alhambra, where Cleynaerts taught Mendoza's son Greek in exchange for the services of the slave, whom they had found in Almeria.[45] The name of this slave, as Van Koningsveld has shown, was Kharūf al-Tūnisī.[46] He had a Tunisian background. Enslaved during the conquest of Tunis by Charles V in 1535, he had been brought to Spain as a captive of war and had been sold on the slave market in Malaga, where his learning was noted. Cleynaerts started his study of Arabic grammar and the Qur'an under Kharūf's guidance in about 1540. Later, having bought the slave himself, Cleynaerts was paid by the sultan to liberate Kharūf, and the two traveled to Fez. Cleynaerts spent a year and a half studying Arabic and attempting to purchase books. The latter proved difficult, as Cleynaerts remarks, due to the protective attitudes of the people. With indignation, he notes how books that had been acquired as

**44** Cleynaerts, Letter to Jacobus Latomus, 12 July 1539. Alphonse Roersch, ed., *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard.* Vol. 1 (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1940–41), 151; Jan Papy and Joris Tulkens, *In de ban van Mohammed. Nicolaes Cleynaerts' brieven uit de Arabische wereld* (Gorredijk: Sterck and De Vreese 2021).

**45** Cleynaerts, Letter to Jacobus Latomus, 12 July 1539. Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard.* Vol. I, 152; Papy and Tulkens, *In de ban van Mohammed,* 242.

**46** Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "'Mon Kharûf.' Quelques remarques sur le maître tunisien du premier arabisant néerlandais, Nicolas Clénard (1493–1542)," in *Nouvelles approches des relations islamo-chrétiennes à l'époque de la Renaissance (Actes de la Troisième Rencontre Scientifique tenue du 14 au 16 mars 1998)* (Zaghouan: CEROMDI, 2000), 123–41; idem, "Arabic Manuscripts of the Tunisian teacher of Clenardus in Leiden, Vienna and Uppsala," *Omslag* 3 (2010): 3–4.

booty during the conquest of Tunis were later sold by Christians to Morocco, making it even more difficult to find them in Spain and elsewhere in Europe.[47] Somewhat enigmatically, he remarks that the same happened to books from Aragon, which were sold in Morocco. It is not clear if he is referring here to other purchases, viz. the ransoming of Arabic books, or to the selling of books that had been confiscated by the Inquisition.

As a result of discussions and reading the Qur'an and the Sunna, as well as the advice of his friend Francisco de Vitoria in Salamanca, Cleynaerts became passionate about converting Muslims to Christianity.[48] Theodor Dunkelgrün argues that the Qur'an manuscript that was with Kharūf in Spain is still extant, and is currently held at the Leiden University Library.[49] This copy of the Qur'an was probably part of the booty captured by Charles V during the conquest of Tunis in 1535 which also brought Kharūf himself to Spain. Interestingly, Cleynaerts himself taught Arabic to a Granadan Morisco in these years, probably Alonso del Castillo (born in about 1525), who later became a licensed Arabic-Spanish translator in the city of Granada and was involved in the case of the Lead Books, discussed later in this chapter.[50] Cleynaerts, unaware of the existence of earlier Latin translations of the Qur'an, hoped to translate the Qur'an into Latin as well, but unexpectedly died in Granada in 1542 and was buried near the Alhambra.

This is an interesting case of a humanist pursuit of Qur'an study that took place in the context of slavery and religious repression. Cleynaerts frequently laments how difficult it is to find Arabic books and teachers while the Inquisition persecutes those who are able to teach Arabic or Hebrew. In contrast to the Mudejar period, the religious field was now monopolized by the Christian majority, which had a hegemonic position. Being suspected of assisting North African raiders on the Spanish coasts, Moriscos were no longer allowed unlimited freedom of movement. However, as the next case shows, there were instances of remarkable resilience during the latter part of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century.

**47** Cleynaerts to Charles V, Granada, 17 January 1542. Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard.* Vol. I, 203ff; Papy and Tulkens, *In de ban van Mohammed*, 313.

**48** Cleynaerts, Letter to Jacobus Latomus, 12 July 1539. Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard,* I, 203; Papy and Tulkens, *In de ban van Mohammed*, 244.

**49** Leiden, LUB, Or 24. See Theodor Dunkelgrün, "From Tunis to Leiden across Renaissance Europe. The curious career of a Maghribi Qur'ān," *Omslag* 3 (2009): 7–8.

**50** Aḥmad Ibn Qāsim Al-Ḥajarī, *Kitāb Nāṣir al-Dīn ʿalā ʾl-Qawm al-Kāfirīn (The supporter of religion against the infidel). General introduction, critical edition and annotated translation. Reedited, revised, and updated in the light of recent publications and the primitive version found in the hitherto unknown manuscript preserved in Al-Azhar,* ed. Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, Gerard A. Wiegers and Qasim al-Samarrai (Madrid: CSIC, 2015), 36ff.

# 4 The Qur'an of Toledo

The title often used for this manuscript, the Qur'an of Toledo, is slightly misleading. Copied by a Morisco scribe from an interlinear manuscript with a Qur'anic text and an *aljamiado* translation and commentary in 1606, the manuscript is strictly speaking not a Qur'an, but a translation of the Qur'an into Romance originally done by an anonymous Mudejar or Morisco, which attests to the intellectual activity of Iberian crypto-Muslims a few years before their expulsion from Spain (1609–1614). The manuscript represents an important point in European history, being the earliest surviving complete version of a translation of the Qur'an in the Spanish language copied by an Iberian Muslim.

## 4.1 The manuscript: material aspects, dates and copyist

The manuscript, MS 235 of the Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha in Toledo, was copied in Villafeliche (Aragon) between April and June 1606, i.e., within a period of three months. The village of Villafeliche, close to Daroca and Zaragoza, was home to many Mudejars and later Moriscos.[51] The manuscript follows the reading customs that were used in al-Andalus, such as the *qirā'a* of Warsh, following Qalūn, and the division into four parts, as Juan Pablo Arias Torres has shown.[52] It is interesting that it bears four colophons, which include important information about both the copyist and the manuscript. Each colophon was written after one of the quarters (*rubʿ*) had been completed. In the first colophon, the anonymous copyist, who copied the Romance text while having the manuscript on loan for a brief period, writes: "here ends the first quarter of the Qur'an, and one should not cast doubt on it for being written in Christian letters, since the one who copied it, copied it from another Qur'an which was in its own Arabic language" (*otro Alcorán que estaba en su proprio lengua de arabigo*) and "explained word by word" (*declarado palabra por palabra*). It should be noted that the word *declarar* ("declare") suggests that the author of these lines was aware that the Romance text was an explanation and interpretation rather than a literal rendering. Moreover, he justifies his use of "Christian letters" by saying that his work was undertaken in the framework of his study of Arabic (so the Romance served an instrumental purpose only), and that he

---

**51** López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo*, 27.
**52** Arias Torres, "Review of López-Morillas," 283–96; see also Arias Torres, "Sicut Evangelia sunt quatuor," 425–55.

only had a limited period in which to work with it and using the Latin script took less time. As the scribe goes on to state in the first colophon, the use of Latin script has another advantage: it is "better accessible to those Muslims who know how to read the Christian but not Muslim script."[53] In other words, the scribe was aware of a group of Moriscos who were better acquainted with the Latin script than with *aljamiado*. Interestingly, he frames the use of Latin characters in terms of letters of Christians and Muslims, justifying his use of the Latin script with reference to a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, who "said that the best language is the one that one understands" (see Figure 1).[54]

The existence of such a group of Moriscos who read and used manuscripts in the Latin script is, according to López-Morillas, attested by the fact that the copyist of BCLM MS 235 also copied two other known manuscripts. These are Islamic texts in Romance that are also written in the Latin script. The first is Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha MS T 232, a copy of *al-Tafrīʿ fi ʾl-fiqh* by Ibn al-Jallāb al-Baṣrī, a work on *fiqh* that was quite popular among the Mudejars and Moriscos.[55] The second is MS 11/9396 (olim S-3) of the Real Academia de la Historia, a copy including the well-known *Breviario sunní* (1462). This manuscript also belonged to an owner in Villafeliche.[56]

López-Morillas argues that the copyist of BCLM 235 might have been the wealthy Morisco called Muhammad Rubio.[57] We know that Muhammad Rubio indeed originated from Villafeliche and, following the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609, lived in Tunis but also traveled to other places, including Istanbul.[58]

After the expulsion, Rubio commissioned the Morisco al-Ḥajarī, a key figure in the forced migration of the Morisco communities from Spain to North Africa,

53 . . . *más a vista de los muçlimes que saben leer el cristiano y no la letra de los muçlimes*.

54 A reference to a Prophetic tradition from al-Bukhārī; see BCLM MS 235, folios 81v–82r. The last lines of the colophon seem to betray the involvement of another person: in these lines it is explained in Spanish that the preceding Arabic text included the dating of the manuscript to 1606. Or does the scribe include this for Moriscos who do not have a good command of Arabic?.

55 Soha Abboud Hajjar, "El tratado jurídico islámico de Al-Tafrī ʿ en el ms. Morisco T232 de la B.P. de Toledo, en caracteres latinos, fechado en 1607," in Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala and Manuel Marcos Aldón, eds., *Grapheion: códices, manuscritos e imágenes: estudios filológicos e históricos* (Córdoba, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 2003), 241–57. Ibn al-Jallāb's text was introduced in al-Andalus by Ibn ʿAṭiyya; see El Hour, "Ibn ʿAṭīya al-Muḥāribī."

56 Wiegers, *Islamic Literature*, 117, see also 118, where Inquisition evidence about Moriscos from Villafeliche teaching their fellow Moriscos in Segovia is discussed.

57 López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo*, 27–28.

58 Nezha Norri, *Edición y estudio sociolingüístico del Manuscrito D. 565 de la Biblioteca Universitaria de Bolonia* (Córdoba: UCO Press / Editorial Universidad de Córdoba, 2017), folio 227r, where it is mentioned that Rubio stayed in Istanbul.

**Figure 1:** Toledo, Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha, Colección Borbón-Lorenzana, MS 235 (The Qur'an of Toledo), folios 81v-82r. Courtesy of the Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha.

to translate religious works from Arabic into Spanish for aged Moriscos who only read that language.

The Spanish Islamic texts that were written by Moriscos and circulated among the communities in Tunis were also nearly all written in the Latin script. As we have seen, already at the end of the sixteenth century Moriscos were making increasingly frequent use of Latin characters for their religious works in Spanish and continued to do so after their expulsion from Spain. Therefore, we can see BCLM MS 235 as indicative of a shift away from the (traditional) use of *aljamiado* to Latin script. It seems that BCLM MS 235 never left Spain. It was owned for some time by a branch of Spain's ruling Bourbon dynasty and is now preserved at the Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha in Toledo.[59] If it belonged to Rubio, he must have left it behind when he went to Tunis.

The manuscript is thus material evidence of a development within the Morisco communities in the early seventeenth century towards the use of the Latin script for their Islamic writings, and a clear sign of a process of acculturation to the majority Spanish culture that continued in the North African and Ottoman Morisco diaspora.[60] From this development we should not conclude that *aljamiado* and Arabic were no longer used. In fact, some of the most beautiful manuscripts in *aljamiado* and Arabic date from this late period. For example, a manuscript held by the National Library in Madrid which comprises an *aljamiado* version of *Tanbīḥ al-ghāfilīn* by al-Samarqandī dates from this period.[61] The same is true of a splendid manuscript of the Qur'an copied out in 1597, perhaps in Aranda de Moncayo, by Muḥammad Ballester b. Muḥammad Ballester, held in the library of the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid (Figure 2).[62] This list could be expanded with many other examples that show the resilience of the Moriscos as it appears from their written literary culture.

**59** López-Morillas, *El Corán*, 11, 29.

**60** Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, eds., *The Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain: A Mediterranean Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

**61** See the discussion in Harvey, *Muslims in Spain,* 152.

**62** For a description of this manuscript, see: Cristina Álvarez Millán, "Un Corán desconocido de Don Pascual de Gayangos en la Real Academia de la Historia," in *Memoria de los libros. Estudios sobre la historia del escrito y de la lectura en Europa y América*, vol. II., ed. Pedro M. Cátedra (Salamanca: Instituto de Historia del Libro y de la Lectura, 2004), 367–83.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العلمين الر
حمن الرحيم ملك يوم
الدين اياك نعبد
واياك نستعين
اهدنا الصراط
المستقيم صراط
الذين انعمت عليهم
غير المغضوب عليهم
ولا الضالين

© Real Academia de la Historia. España

**Figure 2:** Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, MS 11/10619, folio 2v. Qur’an copied by Muḥammad Ballester in Aranda de Moncayo in 1597. Courtesy of the Real Academia de la Historia.

## 4.2 Characteristics and the question of authorship

BCLM MS 235 comprises a complete translation of the Qur'an and consists of about 347 folios. It was copied, as we have seen above, from an interlinear manuscript with a Qur'anic text in Arabic and an *aljamiado* translation and glosses. The Qur'anic text and glosses have been demarcated from the main text, which is written in black, by using a red color until folio 86r. In addition, the copyist sometimes uses horizontal slashes; from folio 86r onwards, he starts only using horizontal slashes to demarcate glosses. This was probably done in order to speed up the copying; as we have seen above, the copyist's time was limited. In any case, the manner in which the Qur'anic text is presented and the way it is distinguished from the glosses suggest that the main text is an attempt at a literal rendering of the Arabic text in Romance. In an earlier publication, I argued that the translation included in BCLM MS 235 might well have been based on Iça of Segovia's famous translation into Romance.[63]

To trace the authorship of the Romance translation found in BCLM MS 235, López-Morillas used a method of textual comparison between the manuscript and several other Spanish and *aljamiado* commentaries (including translations). The outcome of these investigations remained inconclusive with regard to the question of whether it is Iça's translation or not.[64] In 2009, however, Ulli Roth and Reinhold Glei identified some (hitherto unidentified) fragments of texts as small parts of the Latin translation made by John of Segovia on the basis of Iça's Spanish version,[65] which resulted in the trilingual Qur'an discussed above. Based on their reading of these new fragments, Roth and Glei excluded the possibility of BCLM MS 235 being linked to the translation by Iça.

Who, then, was the author of the translation in BCLM MS 235 and what was his religious profile? Firstly, López-Morillas' study of the text reveals how, in Mudejar and Morisco Spain, Qur'an manuscripts, translations and commentaries cir-

**63** Iça's translation is usually said to be the first translation of the Qur'an into a European vernacular, but Nikolas Jaspert shows that at the end of the fourteenth century the king of Aragon, Peter the Ceremonious, gave the order to translate the Qur'an into Catalan based on a Latin translation (perhaps that of Robert of Ketton). That translation indeed came into being, but is considered lost. See Nikolas Jaspert, "Mendicants, Jews, and Muslims at the Crown of Aragon. Social Practice and Inter-Religious Communication," in *Cultural brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marc von der Höh, Nikolas Jaspert, and Jenny Rahel Oesterle (Paderborn: Fink/Schöningh, 2013), 107–47.

**64** López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo*, 42: ". . . no es posible ni confirmarla ni negarla en el estado actual de nuestros conocimientos."

**65** They are included in Seville, Biblioteca Colombina MS 7-6-14, folio 21r; see Roth and Glei, "Die Spuren", "Eine Weitere Spur."

culated, were lent to others for study, and were copied and further commented upon in a piecemeal and highly eclectic way.[66] Furthermore, it is known that different works of *tafsīr* circulated among Mudejars and Moriscos, both in Arabic and in *aljamiado* versions. Of these, Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás MS 51, a translation of the *tafsīr* by the Andalusian author Ibn Abī Zamanīn, is important for its closeness to BCLM MS 235. When in an earlier publication I argued the case for identifying BCLM MS 235 as Iça's translation, my point of departure was the observation that both were literal translations. The roughly twenty-six other extant *aljamiado* interlinear versions invariably offer partial paraphrases and do not follow the Arabic text as literally as BCLM MS 235 does. Moreover, BCLM MS 235 includes the only extant complete manuscript of the Qur'an. However, BCLM MS 235, we can conclude, continuing López-Morillas' work, is not a literal translation into Romance that meets John of Segovia's criteria either. We have seen that John had stipulated as a condition for his work the faithful rendering of each word.[67] But BCLM MS 235, as López-Morillas demonstrates, shows no similarities with other translations produced by converted Mudejars, and thus stands alone. The question of the identity of the author, and the period in which he lived, remains unresolved.

I will now discuss a few representative and interesting examples to illustrate the nature of the translation offered in BCLM MS 235. First, I will discuss the *sūrat al-Qadr* (Q 97). This is a short *sūra*, and as such, it enables us to look at an entire textual unit. The edition reads as follows:

> El açora la cantidad. Es cinco aleas. En el nombre de Al*l*ah, piadoso de Piedad. /Dixo Allah/: Que nós lo deballemos/ el Alcorán / en la noche de la gran cantidad. Y ¿no sabes /ye Muhamed/ q*ué* es la noche de gran cantidad? La noche de la grande cantidad es mejor q*ue* mil meses. Deballan los almalaques y Chibril en ella, con liçençia de su Señor, a todo mandamiento. /Diçen los almalaques/: ¡La salbaçión sea a vosotros en ella, hasta el sallir del alba!

In the first two verses, slashes indicate glosses: the phrase "Allah says" and the word "Qur'an" are marked as such; the same holds true for "Oh, Muhammad," and "the Angels say." However, in other cases, the fact that we are dealing here with an explanation of the text is not made explicit. This can be seen in verse 4 where the Arabic text speaks of the angels (*al-malā'ika*) and the spirit (*al-rūḥ*); here, BCLM MS 235 simply uses the name Jibrīl instead of "the spirit" (*al-rūḥ*). This identification is indeed suggested by some commentators, but this point is not explicitly indicated here. The author interprets the fifth verse as a pious wish

**66** López-Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo*, 78.
**67** Scotto, "De pe a pa."

by the angels. This coincides with Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana MS II-IV-701, in which we find the same interpretation.[68]

Another interesting aspect is the use of words which are taken from the author's own historical context. An example of this is the translation and contextualization of the word *aʿjamī* "non-Arabic," which appears in Q 41:44. In BCLM MS 235, the word *aʿjamī* is translated as *rromançe* ("Romance"):

> Y si lo pusiéramos este Alcorán en rromançe, dixeran: ¿Por qué no son declaradas sus aleas en r*r*omançe y en @rabiya?" Diles/ye Muhamed: "Es /para aquellos q*ue* creen guiamiento y salud.[69]

Did the author really think that "Romance" would be the best way to interpret "non-Arabic" in this case, or does he wish to convey another idea?[70] Another example is the author's use of the word *parrias* for Arabic *jizya* (the poll tax), for example in Q 9:29. The word *parrias* (also spelled *parias*) is interesting in this context because it was used in medieval Christian Iberia to refer to the tribute that Nasrid Granada had to pay to the Christian states in the North.[71] Both of these examples indicate that the author is interpreting rather than translating literally, even in those parts which are demarcated as corresponding with the Arabic original.

At the present stage of research into BCLM MS 235, it is still not possible to say more about the identity and religious profile of the author based on the lexical choices he makes. Indeed, based on her research into the available texts, López-Morillas has not been able to say whether he was a Mudejar or a Morisco.[72]

---

**68** Hajri, "*Un Corán Aljamiado*, 185.

**69** López Morillas, *El Corán de Toledo*, 462. The symbol @ represents the ʿayn, and it is also used in the manuscript and edition followed here.

**70** The word is also used by Iça of Segovia in his *Breviario sunní* (1462) to indicate a spoken vernacular of medieval Christian Spain; see Wiegers, *Islamic Literature*, 236 (quoting Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás MS 1). The forgers of the parchment found in the Turpiana Tower in 1588 suggested that Romance had been the spoken language of Christians in the south of Iberia in the first century; see Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, *The Sacromonte Parchment and Lead Books. Critical Edition of the Arabic Texts and Analysis of the Religious Ideas. Presentation of a Dutch research project, Granada, 19 March 2019,19.00–21.00 hours, with images of the original Lead Books and the Parchment* (Rijswijk: Uitgeverij Avondrood, 2019).

**71** See also Roth, "Juan de Segovia's translation," 572. Iça apparently translated *yawm al-akhir* into Romance in a way that leads in the Latin text to the reading *die postremo* ("last day"). BCLM MS 235 renders it, less correctly, as *día del judiçio* ("Day of Judgement"). It should be noted that the *Breviario sunní* also uses the word *parias* as a translation of the Arabic word *jizya*. See Wiegers, *Islamic Literature*, 131.

**72** López-Morillas, "Secret Muslims, Hidden manuscripts."

Let us now turn to the wider context of BCLM MS 235. We have seen that it does not aim to present a literal translation, *de pe a pa*, *de verbo ad verbum*, but rather an interpretation that is as close as possible, indicated in the text by the use of colored ink and/or slashes. We have also seen that BCLM MS 235 was copied for the purpose of private study of Arabic by a scribe who lived in Villafeliche in Aragon. The Morisco scribe copied it from a manuscript that included the complete Arabic Qur'an text and an interlinear Spanish translation written in Arabic script, i.e., *aljamiado.* As mentioned above, López-Morillas has argued that the scribe in question was Muhammad Rubio.

As we have seen above, the Muslim inhabitants of Villafeliche were in close contact with those living in Castile. It has become increasingly clear in the last few decades that the expulsion of the Granadan Moriscos to Castile after the suppression of their revolt in 1570 had important consequences. Such places as Pastrana in Castile became centers of intellectual and religious Morisco life when they were populated by Moriscos from Granada. In fact, it has often been said that Spain only began to have a political and social problem with the Moriscos after the Granadan revolt. Rich and wealthy Moriscos started to organize their networks both within Spain and in the wider Mediterranean world and other parts of Europe. Those outside the Peninsula remained in contact with those who were still in Spain, even after the general expulsions between 1609 and 1614.[73] Muhammad Rubio, who is thought to have copied BCLM MS 235 and 232 in Villafeliche, was one such wealthy Morisco. In Tunis, following the expulsion, Rubio retained this status and functioned as a promotor of manuscript production and translation. As we have seen above, one of the works included in the mixed manuscript Bologna, BUB MS 565, which was compiled on his behalf, was *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* by al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, and this had been translated by the Morisco al-Ḥajarī.

Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Ḥajarī al-Andalusī was a colorful diplomat, scholar and translator, who was born in about 1570 in the village of Hornachos in Extremadura. His Spanish Christian name was Diego Bejarano. At a time in which it was forbidden to practice Islam, he (as well as many other new Christians of Muslim descent, the so-called Moriscos) was raised secretly as a Muslim in his Arabic-speaking family and as a child was taught to memorize the Qur'an.[74] In about

**73** For example, see William Childers, "An Extensive Network of Morisco Merchants," in *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond. Vol. II. The Morisco Issue*, ed. Kevin Ingram (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 135–60; Gerard A. Wiegers, "Managing disaster. Networks of the Moriscos During the Process of the Expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula around 1609," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 36, no. 2 (2010): 141–68.

**74** See al-Ḥajarī, *Kitab nāṣir al-dīn ʿalā al-qawm al-kāfirīn*, 255. Juan Carlos Villaverde Amieva, "Desde el exilio morisco: las glosas de al-Ḥağarī Bejarano al códice Leidense del kitāb al-

1598, al-Ḥajarī was involved in interpreting a parchment found in the Turpiana Tower, perhaps once the minaret of the great mosque of Granada, and some of the Lead Books, famous Morisco forgeries which had been found in the slopes of the Valparaíso hillock (the later Sacromonte) near to the city of Granada. Shortly afterwards he fled to Morocco, where he became secretary and Spanish interpreter to Sultan Mawlāy Zaydān in Marrakesh. He was entrusted with a mission to France in 1611, in order to recover goods stolen from fellow Moriscos who had been transported from Spain to Morocco on board French ships during the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609–1610. He also visited the Netherlands, and returned in 1613. He left Morocco in 1634 and performed the *ḥajj*. In about 1635 in Egypt, he wrote a work called *Riḥlat al-shihāb ilā liqā al-aḥbāb*, "The journey of the meteor to meet his beloved" (al-Ḥajarī's *laqab* was Shihāb al-dīn). In 1046/1637 he composed a summary of that – now lost – work titled *Kitab nāṣir al-din ʿalā al-qawm al-kāfirīn*, "The supporter of religion against the infidel," focusing on his polemical encounters with Christians and Jews in Spain, the Netherlands and France. In about 1641, al-Ḥajarī was living in Testour (and perhaps Tunis), and it seems likely that he died in that region as well.[75]

Al-Ḥajarī translated several works into Arabic, including a Spanish treatise on gunnery and an astronomical treatise. He also translated from Arabic into Spanish a letter that he had originally sent from Paris in 1611 to fellow Moriscos in Istanbul, and several parts of the aforementioned *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* by al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria de Bolonia MS 565, folio 116r–145v).

The translation of this work – more precisely, the parts devoted to the miracles performed by the Prophet Muhammad – was motivated by the perceived lack of miracles in the Qur'an. In the Bologna manuscript, the translated passages from *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* are followed by an autobiographical narrative of al-Ḥajarī about a discussion that took place between himself and a physician in Leiden, when he visited that city in 1613 after he had been in France on a mission to retrieve goods stolen from Moriscos aboard French ships. The topic of that discussion was the Qur'an, which the physician had read in a Latin translation, and its alleged lack of miracles compared to the Gospels (Bologna, BUB MS 565, folio 148r). Al-Ḥajarī denied to the physician that the Qur'an lacks narratives of miracles, but also referred,

Mustaʿīnī de Ibn Buklāriš," *Mediterranea. International Journal on the transfer of knowledge* 8 (2023): 171; Adrián Rodríguez and Pablo Roza Candás, "Morisco Methods for Memorizing the Qur'an: Fragmentary Copies with the Suras in Reverse Order," in *The Iberian Qur'an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 222.

75 See al-Ḥajarī, *Kitab nāṣir al-dīn ʿalā al-qawm al-kāfirīn*, 67.

so he tells his Muslim readers, to *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* as a work in which these miracles are described.[76]

In Tunis, discussions about the contents of the parchment of the Turpiana Tower and the Lead Books of Sacromonte took place in the same circles and al-Ḥajarī played an important role in them. The Lead Books of Sacromonte were a series of forged texts in Arabic discovered in caves in the slopes of Mount Valparaíso (later Sacromonte) near Granada, which formed another remarkable element of Morisco literary culture in the last years before the expulsion. The Lead Books describe the sending down (*nuzūl*) of a heavenly scripture to Mary on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, titled *the Essence of the Gospel* (*Ḥaqīqat al-Injīl*). The Books then narrate how James, accompanied by a number of Jesus' disciples, took a copy of the scripture engraved on lead to a holy mountain in the south of Spain and hid it there together with the other Lead Books. The original *Essence of the Gospel* had miraculously disappeared on the Mount of Olives. Its message, the Books predict, will be revealed at a council at the end of time. The scripture in question appears to share so many characteristics with the Qur'an that it is almost identical to it. For example, like the Qur'an, it is said to be the eternal word of God.[77] As such, the Lead Books represent a highly original and creative engagement of Moriscos with the Qur'an.

## 5 Conclusions

I began this chapter by arguing that the medieval traditions regarding the Qur'an in al-Andalus, Nasrid Granada and Christian Spain were entangled and presented a continuum. The same held true for other aspects of the religious lives of the Andalusi Muslims in Islamic Iberia on the one hand and Mudejars on the other. The religious fields of Muslim-ruled and Christian-ruled Iberia interacted. People traveled back and forth and were in contact with one another. Enslaved and captive Muslims and free Mudejars in Christian territories can all be considered Europeans and as residing on European soil. All engaged with the Qur'an in the Christian religious field, and did so under different circumstances.

Christian scholars of the Qur'an, *tafsīr*, and the Sunna, made use of enslaved Muslims, and, as recent research has shown, Muslim confession-based slavery represents a very important dimension of the history of Muslims in (Catholic) Europe until well into the modern period. We have seen a number of such captives

**76** About his visit to the Dutch Republic, see al-Ḥajarī, *Nāṣir al-dīn*, Chapter 11.
**77** Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, *The Sacromonte Parchment and Lead Books*.

in this chapter; the freedom of choice of these individuals to cooperate was probably extremely limited, and they likely hoped for a return to Islamic territories. Throughout the long period discussed here, it seems that Christians encountered difficulties in finding Muslim scholars who could interpret the Qur'an and copy Qur'anic manuscripts. Wars impeded free exchange, but also offered possibilities to take manuscripts as spoils of war. Muslims hesitated against the backdrop of religious rulings regarding the teaching of the Qur'an to unbelievers, as well as regarding selling the *muṣḥaf* or making it available to Christians and traveling with it to Christian lands. When they cooperated, they did not do so as equals but as subordinates. Their agency was severely limited. The case of Iça of Segovia is illustrative of this situation. Conversion to Christianity offered a way out of such a position of subordination, and we see various converted Muslims cooperating with Christians in translating and interpreting the Qur'an, such as Juan Andrés and Juan Gabriel. However, conversion also came at a cost. Iça of Segovia did not convert when apparently pressured to do so. Yuhanna al-Asad did convert, but disappeared to an unknown location after the Sack of Rome in 1527 and was never heard of again.[78]

The general, forced conversions of the Mudejars, which gave rise to the crypto-Islam of the Moriscos, led in the first decades of the sixteenth century to an even greater limitation of Islamic practice. The Muslim religious field ceased to exist in public, but Muslim culture and learning was transmitted in secret. Muslim resilience led to a revival throughout Spain, especially after the expulsion of the Granadan Moriscos to Castile. Muslim learning persisted not only thanks to an intensification of contact between Muslims within the Spanish kingdoms, but also to increasing contact with Muslims outside the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, the Morisco elites became increasingly powerful and wealthy. The Qur'an of Toledo and the Qur'an manuscript copied by Muḥammad Ballester in 1597 may serve as case studies of the resilience and survival of crypto-Islamic culture and the transmission of Qur'anic learning. The Lead Books also attest to that resilience with regard to the Qur'an, albeit in a very different way.

The newly forged networks also reinforced older international ties between communities within and outside the Peninsula, which had come into existence in earlier periods when Muslims migrated to Islamic lands. After the expulsion from Spain between 1609 and 1614, Moriscos regained a freedom of movement that brought them into contact with many parts of the world. Some Moriscos acquired important positions in the Maghrib. One of those who was able to move and became quite influential was al-Ḥajarī, who with his continuous quest for learning –

**78** Davis, *Trickster Travels*, 247.

which transpires from his life story and writings – became secretary to the Moroccan sultan Zaydān and traveled to France and the Dutch Republic. Al-Ḥajarī engaged not only in Morisco international politics, but also in Arabic and Islamic scholarship. He was for a long time in close contact with European Muslim and non-Muslim students of Arabic, such Alonso del Castillo in Granada, Etienne Hubert in Paris and the Leiden scholars of Arabic, Thomas Erpenius and Jacobus Golius; he exchanged views with all of them on a wide range of scholarly matters, including the Qur'an, which played an important role in the contact between Muslim scholars and their non-Muslim counterparts in Spain, France the Netherlands and Morocco."[79] In view of all this, it seems justified and perhaps even imperative to think of al-Ḥajarī – a European student of Arabic and Islam – and some of his coreligionists as members (though not publicly recognized) of the Republic of Letters.[80] This "entangledness" may enable us to rethink Muslim agency with regard to the Qur'an in Europe and overcome the somewhat artificial gap which exists in the literature between Muslim and non-Muslim European students of the Qur'an. The expulsions of 1609–1614 marked an end, but for many also a new beginning.

## Bibliography

Abboud Hajjar, Soha. "El tratado jurídico islámico de Al-Tafrīʿ en el ms. Morisco T232 de la B.P. de Toledo, en caracteres latinos, fechado en 1607." In *Grapheion: códices, manuscritos e imágenes: Estudios filológicos e históricos*, edited by Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala and Manuel Marcos Aldón, 241–57. Córdoba, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 2003.

Álvarez Millán, Cristina. "Un Corán desconocido de Don Pascual de Gayangos en la Real Academia de la Historia." In *Memoria de los libros. Estudios sobre la historia del escrito y de la lectura en Europa y América*, vol. II, edited by Pedro M. Cátedra, 367–83. Salamanca: Instituto de Historia del Libro y de la Lectura, 2004.

---

**79** See al-Ḥajarī, *Kitāb Nāṣir al-Dīn Alā 'l-Qawm al-Kāfirīn*; Villaverde Amieva, "Desde el exilio morisco," Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, Qasim al-Samarrai and Gerard Wiegers, "Diego Bejarano aka Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī al-Andalusī (1569–after 1641), a bio-bibliographical essay," in *A Beautiful Friendship: Exchanges between Golius and al-Hajari in Morocco 1622–1624*, ed. Léon Buskens (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

**80** For this involvement, see Wiegers, "Moriscos and Arabic Studies." On the Leiden scholarly milieu around 1600, see the recent study by Willem Otterspeer, *De Stad, de dood, en de dichters. Hoe in Leiden rond 1600 alles bij elkaar kwam wat de wereld wist* [The City, Death and the Poets. How in About 1600 Everything the World Knew Came Together in Leiden"] (Amsterdam: Prometheus 2022), 283–313.

Arcas Campoy, María. “Ibn Abī Zamanayn/Zamanīn.” In *Biblioteca de al-Andalus*, vol. I, edited by Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, 757–61. Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl, 2012.

Arias Torres, Juan Pablo. “Review of López-Morillas, El Corán de Toledo.” *MEAH*, Sección árabe-islam 65 (2016): 283–96.

Arias Torres, Juan Pablo. “Sicut Evangelia sunt quatuor, distribuerunt contentiam eius in quatuor libros: on the Division of Iberian Qur’ans and their Translation into Four Parts.” In *The Latin Qurʾan. Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, edited by Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan, 425–55. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

Benison, Amira K. “The Almohads and the Qur’ān of ʾUthmān. The Legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in the Twelfth-Century Maghrib.” *Al-Masaq*, 19 no. 2 (2007): 131–54.

Bongianino, Umberto. “A Rediscovered Almoravid Qurʾān in the Bavarian State Library, Munich (Cod. arab. 4).” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 11 (2020): 263–91.

Burman, Thomas. *Reading the Qurʾān in Latin Christendom 1140–1560*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007.

Castells Criballés, Margarida. “Alguns aspectes formals de la traducció llatina de l’Alcorà de Robbert de Ketton (ca. 1141–1143) i la seva relació amb el text original àrab.” *Faventia* 29, no. 2 (2007): 79–106.

Cecini, Ulisse. *Alcoranus Latinus. Eine sprachliche und kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse der Koranübersetzungen von Robert von Ketton und Marcus von Toledo*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012.

Chiru, Daniela-Corina. “*Influencias lingüísticas del árabe en las traducciones coránicas aljamiado-moriscas*.” PhD diss., University of Bucharest, 2015.

Childers, William. “An Extensive Network of Morisco Merchants.” In *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond. Vol. II. The Morisco Issue*, edited by Kevin Ingram, 135–60. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Trickster Travels. A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006.

Dunkelgrün, Theodor, “From Tunis to Leiden across Renaissance Europe. The curious career of a Maghribi Qur’ān.” *Omslag* 3 (2009): 7–8.

Echevarría Arsuaga, Ana. “Las aljamas castellanas en el siglo XV. Redes de poder y conflictos internos”. *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Sección 3–Historia Medieval* 14 (2001): 93–112.

Echevarría Arsuaga, Ana. “De cadi a alcalde mayor. La elite judicial mudéjar en el siglo XV.” *Al-Qanṭara* 24 (2003): 139–68 (part I); 273–90 (part II).

Ferrero Hernández, Cándida, and John Tolan, eds. *The Latin Qurʾan*: *Translation, Transition, Interpretation*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

Fournel-Guérin, Jacqueline. “Le livre et la civilisation écrite dans la communauté aragonaise (1540–1620).” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 15 (1979): 241–91.

García-Arenal, Mercedes. “The Inquisition and the Search for Qur’ans.” In *The Iberian Qur’an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, 245–81. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

García-Arenal, Mercedes, and Gerard Wiegers, eds. *The Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain: A Mediterranean Diaspora*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

García-Arenal, Mercedes, and Gerard Wiegers, eds. *The Iberian Qur’an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Glei, Reinhold F. “*Dixit Apostoli.* The Word-by-word Principle in Latin Translations of the Qur’an.” In *The Latin Qur’an, 1143–1500. Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, edited by Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan, 57–69. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

Hajri, Mokhles. "Un Corán Aljamiado. MS II-IV-701 de la Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana de Florencia." PhD diss., University of Oviedo, 2005.

Harvey, Leonard Patrick. "The Literary Culture of the Moriscos 1492–1609: A Study Based on the Extant Manuscripts in Arabic and Aljamía." 2 vols. DPhil diss, Magdalen College, University of Oxford, 1958.

Harvey, Leonard Patrick. *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990.

Hershenzon, Daniel. *The Captive Sea. Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.

Hour, Rashid El. "Ibn ʿAṭīya al-Muḥāribī." In *Biblioteca de al-Andalus, vol. 3*, edited by Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, 409–14. Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl, 2009.

Ibn al-Zubayr, Abū Jaʿfar ibn Ibrāhīm. *Kitāb Ṣilat al-ṣila. Al-qism al-thālith*, edited by ʿAbd al-Salām al-Harrās and Saʿīd Aʿrāb. Rabat: wizārat al-awqāf wa 'l-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 1993.

Iogna-Prat, Dominique. *Ordonner et exclure. Cluny et la Société chrétienne, face a l'hérésie, au judaïsme et à l'islam*. Paris: Flammarion, 1998.

Jaspert, Nikolas. "Mendicants, Jews, and Muslims at the Crown of Aragon. Social Practice and Inter-Religious Communication." In *Cultural brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*, edited by Marc von der Höh, Nikolas Jaspert, and Jenny Rahel Oesterle, 107–47. Paderborn: Fink/Schöningh, 2013.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van. "Andalusian-Arabic manuscripts from Christian Spain: a comparative intercultural approach." *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992): 75–109.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van. "Andalusian-Arabic manuscripts from Christian Spain: Some Supplementary Notes." In *Festgabe für Hans Rudolph Singer zum 65. Geburtstag, am 6. April 1990 überreicht von Seinen Freunden und Kollegen*, edited by Hans-Martin Forstner, 811–23. Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1991.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van. "Muslim Slaves and Captives in Western Europe During the Late Middle Ages." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 6, no. 1 (1995): 5–23.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van. "'Mon Kharûf.' Quelques remarques sur le maître tunisien du premier arabisant néerlandais, Nicolas Clénard (1493–1542)." In *Nouvelles approches des relations islamo-chrétiennes à l'époque de la Renaissance (Actes de la Troisième Rencontre Scientifique tenue du 14 au 16 mars 1998)*, 123–41. Zaghouan: CEROMDI, 2000.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van. "Arabic Manuscripts of the Tunisian teacher of Clenardus in Leiden, Vienna and Uppsala," *Omslag* 3 (2010): 3–4.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van, and Gerard A. Wiegers. *The Sacromonte Parchment and Lead Books. Critical Edition of the Arabic Texts and Analysis of the Religious Ideas. Presentation of a Dutch research project, Granada, 19 March 2019, 19.00–21.00 hours, with images of the original Lead Books and the Parchment*. Rijswijk: Uitgeverij Avondrood, 2019.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van, and Gerard Wiegers. *The Lead Books of the Sacromonte and the Parchment of the Torre Turpiana: Granada, 1588–1606. General Introduction, Critical Edition, and Translation*. Leiden: Brill (in press).

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van, Gerard A. Wiegers and Qasim al-Samarrai, eds. *Aḥmad Ibn Qāsim Al-Ḥajarī: Kitāb Nāṣir al-Dīn ʿalā 'l-Qawm al-Kāfirīn (The supporter of religion against the infidel). General introduction, critical edition and annotated translation. Reedited, revised, and updated in the light of recent publications and the primitive version found in the hitherto unknown manuscript preserved in Al-Azhar*. Madrid: CSIC, 2015.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd van, Qasim al-Samarrai and Gerard Wiegers, "Diego Bejarano aka Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī al-Andalusī (1569–after 1641), a bio-bibliographical essay." In *A Beautiful*

*Friendship: Exchanges between Golius and al-Hajari in Morocco 1622–1624*, edited by Léon Buskens. Leiden: Brill (forthcoming)

Krech, Volkhard. "What are the Boundaries of Religion? Considerations on the Emergence of a Global religious Field and on Processes of Sacralization." Unpublished Paper given at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. March 11, 2013.

Krech, Volkhard. Relational Religion: Manifesto for a Synthesis in the Study of Religion." *Religion* 50, no. 1 (2020): 97–105.

Larson, Everette. "A Study of the Confusión de la secta mahometica of Juan Andres." PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1981.

Loop, Jan. "Introduction. The Qur'an in Europe–the European Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 1–20.

López-Morillas, Consuelo. "The Genealogy of the Spanish Qurʾān." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 17, no. 3 (2006): 255–94.

López-Morillas, Consuelo. *El Corán de Toledo. Edición y estudio del manuscrito 235 de la Biblioteca de Castilla-la Mancha*. Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2011.

López-Morillas, Consuelo. "Secret Muslims, Hidden manuscripts. Spanish Translations of the Qurʾān from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries." In *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und außereuropäische Fallstudien*, edited by Reinhold Glei, 99–116. Trier: WVT Wissenschaftliches Verlag, 2012.

Losada Campo, Teresa. "Estudios sobre Coranes Aljamiados." PhD diss., Barcelona, 1975.

Martín Corrales, Eloy. *Muslims in Spain, 1492–1814. Living and Negotiating in the Land of the Infidel.* Translated by Consuelo López-Morillas. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

Martínez de Castilla Muñoz, Nuria. "Qur'anic Manuscripts from Late Muslim Spain: The Collection of Almonacid de la Sierra." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16, no. 2 (2014): 89–138.

Martínez de Castilla Muñoz, Nuria. "Les Manuscrits du Coran Andalusīs, Mudéjars et Morisques de la Biblioteca Nacional de España." *Journal Asiatique* 309, no. 1 (2021): 5–31.

Martínez Gázquez, José. "El Prólogo de Juan de Segobia al Corán (*Qurʾān*) trilingüe (1456)." *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 38, no. 2 (2003): 398–410.

Martínez Gázquez, José. "El lenguaje de la violencia en el prólogo de la traducción Latina del Corán impulsada por Pedro el Venerable." *Cahiers d'etudes hispaniques médiévales* 28 (2005): 243–52.

Martínez Gázquez, José, and Fernando González Muñoz, eds. *Alchoran siue lex Sarracenorum. Petro Cluniacensi Abbate precipiente a Roberto Ketensi translatus. Glossae in Alchoran fortasse a Petro Pectauiense redactae. Edición crítica y estudio*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2022.

Marín, Manuela and Rachid El Hour, "Captives, Children and Conversion. A Case from Late Naṣrid Granada." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 4 (1998): 453–73.

Otterspeer, Willem, *De Stad, de dood, en de dichters*. *Hoe in Leiden rond 1600 alles bij elkaar kwam wat de wereld wist*. Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2022.

Petrus Pons, Nàdia. *Alchoranus Latinus quem transtulit Marcus canonicus Toletanus. Estudio y edición crítica*, Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2016.

Norri, Nezha. *Edición y estudio sociolingüístico del Manuscrito D. 565 de la Biblioteca Universitaria de Bolonia*, Córdoba: UCO Press / Editorial Universidad de Córdoba, 2017.

Roersch, Alphonse, ed. *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard*. 3 vols. Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1940–1.

Papy, Jan, and Joris Tulkens. *In de ban van Mohammed. Nicolaes Cleynaerts' brieven uit de Arabische wereld*. Gorredijk: Sterck and De Vreese, 2021.

Rey, Terry. *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy*. London: Equinox, 2007.

Rodríguez Iglesias, Adrián. "New Models of Qur'an abridgement among the Mudejars and Moriscos." In *The Iberian Qur'an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, 165–98. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Rodríguez Iglesias, Adrián, and Pablo Roza Candás. "Morisco Methods for Memorizing the Qur'an: Fragmentary Copies with the Suras in Reverse Order." In *The Iberian Qur'an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, 217–44. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Roth, Ulli, "Juan de Segovia's Translation of the Qur'ān." *Al-Qantara* 25, no. 2 (2014): 555–78.

Roth, Ulli and Reinhold Glei. "Die Spuren der lateinischen Koranübersetzung des Juan de Segovia – alte Probleme und ein neuer Fund." *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 11 (2009): 109–154.

Roth, Ulli and Reinhold Glei. "Eine weitere Spur der lateinischen Koranübersetzung des Juan de Segovia." *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 13 (2011): 221–28.

Roza Candás, Pablo. *Memorial de ida i venida asta Maka: La peregrinación de ʿOmar Paṭṭōn*. Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 2018.

Salzmann, Ariel. "Migrants in Chains. On the enslavement of Muslims in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe." *Religions* 4 (2013): 391–411.

Scotto, Davide. "'De pe a pa'. Il Corano trilingue di Juan de Segovia (1456) e la conversazione pacifica dei Musulmani." *Rivista di Storia i Letteratura Religiosa* 48, no. 3 (2012): 516–76.

Szpiech, Ryan. "Preaching Paul to the Moriscos: The *Confusión o confutación de la secta mahomética y del alcorán* (1515) of 'Juan Andrés'." *La Corónica* 41 (2012): 317–43.

Szpiech, Ryan. "A Witness of Their Own Nation: On the Influence of Juan Andrés." In *After Conversion: Iberia and the Emergence of Modernity*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal, 174–98. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Villaverde Amieva, Juan Carlos. "Desde el exilio morisco: las glosas de al-Ḥağarī Bejarano al códice Leidense del kitāb al-Mustaʿīnī de Ibn Buklāriš." *Mediterranea. International Journal on the transfer of knowledge* 8 (2023): 89–192.

Wiegers, Gerard A. *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado: Yça of Segovia (fl. 1450), His Antecedents and Successors*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

Wiegers, Gerard. "Moriscos and Arabic studies in Europe." *Al-Qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 31, no. 2 (2010): 587–610.

Wiegers, Gerard. "Managing disaster. Networks of the Moriscos during the process of the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula around 1609." *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 36, no. 2 (2010): 141–68.

Wiegers, Gerard A. "The Office of the Four Chief Judges of Mamluk Cairo and their views on Translating the Qur'an in the Early Sixteenth Century. Iberian Islam in a Global Context." In *The Iberian Qur'an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, 151–63. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Zadeh, Travis. "From Drops of Blood. Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the *translatio* of the ʿUthmānic Codex of Al-Andalus." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39, no. 3 (2008): 321–46.

Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias and Maxime Sellin

# Links Between Morisco and Early Modern European Interpretations: The Case of "Ālif Lām Mīm" (Q 2:1)

## 1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the variety of meanings attached to the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* (lit. "isolated/disconnected letters") which are found in European translations of the Qur'an into Latin and vernacular languages, undertaken by Muslims and non-Muslims in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, these letters have received many interpretations. Abu Bakr al-Ṣadīq, one of the first Meccans to convert at the time of Prophet Muhammad, is reputed to have said that "God put a secret in every book; his secret in the Qur'an is the first [verse] of the *sūra*."[1] This cryptic reference reveals the enigma surrounding the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*, which appear at the beginning of twenty-nine of the *sūra*s of the Qur'an.[2] In scholar Keith Massey's words, the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are:

> The alphabetic characters of the Arabic language that appear in non-verbal combinations at the beginning of certain sūras of the Qur'ān, just after the *basmala* [. . .] To the faithful Muslim, these letters are part of the divine revelation of the Qur'ān itself. In the recitation of the Qur'ān, these 'openers' or 'beginnings' of the sūras [*fawātiḥ as-suwar; awaā'il as-suwar*] are recited as letters of the alphabet.[3]

European scholars of the Qur'an, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who engaged in translating the text into vernacular languages had to either render these letters in the target language or explain their meaning to the reader. As a case study, in this chapter, we will examine the translation of Q 2:1 (*ālif lām mīm*) in Morisco translations of the Qur'an as well as in a number of medieval and modern European translations. We will analyze different strategies and discuss reasons for variations

**1** Fakhr ad-dīn ar-Razī, *At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 2 (Beyrouth: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 3.

**2** These *sūra*s are Q 2, 3, 7, 10–15, 19, 20, 26–32, 36, 38, 40–46, 50, and 68.

**3** Keith Massey, "Mysterious letters," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān,* ed. Johanna Pink (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 471–72.

**Note:** This contribution is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (SyG grant agreement no. 810141), project EuQu "The European Qur'an. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850."

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-003

in translation. In our analysis, we draw on various classical Islamic studies of the Qur'an (such as al-Suyuṭi's *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qur'ān*) as well as Morisco *tafsīr* translations into Spanish. Comparing sources and linguistic usages, we note that some of the medieval and modern European translations were written in contact with Iberian Muslims or were directly based on the works and scholarly activities of Moriscos. Finally, we look at how traditions followed by Moriscos had an influence on later Orientalist scholarship

## 2 The *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* in Morisco Translations

The oldest recorded Qur'an translation into Spanish made by a Muslim is that of ʿĪsā bin Jābir, who translated the sacred text into Spanish for Juan de Segovia's famous trilingual edition of the Qur'an in the middle of the fifteenth century.[4] The cultural phenomenon of Muslims translating the Qur'an into Romance vernaculars in the Iberian Peninsula traces back to the Mudejar period (until 1502 in Castile and 1525 in Aragon). Most surviving manuscripts that include translations date from the Morisco period, the period that followed the forced conversion of Muslims to Christianity at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, and lasted until the expulsion of the Moriscos between 1609 and 1614.

These manuscripts usually show the Qur'anic text in Arabic followed by its translation (either interlinear or consecutive) into Spanish, usually in *aljamiado* (i.e., Arabic characters) or Latin script; a few of them display only the Spanish version. Among such manuscripts, we will consider thirteen that contain a translation of the beginning of the second *sūra*, in which the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are mentioned and/or translated.

4 On the Arabic-Latin-Spanish translation by Juan de Segovia, see also: Darío Cabanelas Rodríguez, "Juan de Segovia y el primer Alcorán trilingüe," *Al-Andalus* 14 (1949): 149–73; Gerard Wiegers, "'Isà b. Yabir and the origins of Aljamiado literature," *Al-qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 11 (1) (1990): 155–92; Gerard Wiegers, *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado: Yça of Segovia (Fl. 1450), His Antecedents and Successors* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Consuelo López-Morillas, "Lost and Found? Yça of Segovia and the Qur'an amoung the mudejars and moriscos," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 (3) (1999): 277–92; José Martínez Gázquez, "Las traducciones latinas medievales del Corán: Pedro el Venerable-Robert de Ketton, Marcos de Toledo y Juan de Segovia," *Euphrosyne* 31 (2003): 491–503; Uli Roth, "Juan of Segovia's Translation of the Qur'an," *Al-Qanṭara* 35 (2) (2014): 555–78.

## 2.1 Overview of the Corpus

In this chapter, we investigate thirteen manuscripts. Among them, the only one containing a complete translation into Spanish is the so-called Toledo Qur'an, named after the city in which it is kept (Toledo, Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha, MS T235). The rest of the manuscripts in the corpus contain selections of the Qur'anic text often referred to by nineteenth-century Spanish scholars as "abbreviated Qur'ans."[5] These twelve manuscripts[6] all include a Romance translation of Q 2:1. The manuscripts are: Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás (CCHS-CSIC) RESC/3, RESC/25, RESC/39, RESC/58 and RESC/101; Real Academia de la Historia T5, T13 and T18; Biblioteca Nacional de España 4963 and 5078; Bibliothèque Nationale de France arabe 447 and Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze II-IV-701.

Most of these Morisco[7] Qur'an translations are found in manuscripts of mixed content (Arabic: *majmūʿa*), produced mostly by Spanish Muslim communities in the Kingdom of Aragon. However, two of the works were written by communities in exile (BNF MS arabe 447 and Flo. II-IV-701), both produced in the city of Salonica (Thessaloniki).

The corpus encompasses manuscripts of two types: bilingual, where the Arabic text and its translation coexist, and monolingual (i.e., in which the text appears only in Spanish; these are manuscripts (RAH MS T5 and BCLM MS T235).

## 2.2 Typology

The *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* appear in the original text of Q 2:1 as three letters: *ālif*, *lām* and *mīm*. The Qur'an translations in our corpus tend to give these three letters in Arabic in the middle of the target language text and then provide a commented translation (however, this is not true in all cases, as we will see below). Since the commentary does not exist in the source text, this kind of commented translation

5 On different names and treatments of manuscripts containing selections of Qur'anic text, see: Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias, "New Models of Qur'ān Abridgment among Mudejars and Moriscos," in *The Iberian Qur'an,* ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 165–72.

6 Six manuscripts of this kind were excluded, as they do not contain the fragment of interest due to the state of preservation; these are manuscripts BNE 4938, BNF arabe 425, RAH T19, RAH V8, RAH V9 and RAH V10.

7 All manuscripts in this corpus were written during the Morisco period. Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia T5 could be an exception because its paper dates to the late fifteenth century; however, this does not necessarily refute the claim that it was written during the Mudejar or Morisco period. Therefore, we will consider all manuscripts to be Morisco translations.

is better classified as a *tafsīr*. In the analysis that follows, we will describe the ways in which the three letters are translated and explained in vernacular renderings. In addition, an analysis of meanings referred to by the Moriscos translators/copyists will allow us to relate their translations to the exegetical sources they used.

Our analysis of the corpus reveals that whereas some Romance translation-cum-commentaries explain the mysterious letters, other manuscripts do not. As for the monolingual Spanish manuscripts, BCLM MS T235 includes an explanation, but RAH MS T5 does not include any additional commentary. Similarly, two manuscripts with both Arabic text and Spanish translation (BTNT MS RESC/3 and MS RESC/25) do not contain any explanation, while the rest of the manuscripts do. It therefore seems that there is no relationship between the presence or absence of an explanation for the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* and the language in which the manuscript is written. In what follows, we will first cover the manuscripts in which no description of the meaning is given, and then proceed to discuss those documents that do offer an explanation.

Interpretation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* is absent in three manuscripts: one is a monolingual text, the Toledo Qur'an, while the two others, manuscripts BTNT MS RESC/3 and BTNT MS RESC/25, are bilingual, both containing Spanish *aljamiado* interlinear translations. In the Toledo Qur'an, the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are generally written in Arabic in the margins, but there is often also a transliteration of the names of the letters, usually in black ink. In this manuscript, black ink is used for normal text, while red is commonly used for titles and emphasis. This is, for instance, the case for *álif lem mim* in *sūra*s 30, 31 and 23 and *álif lem ra* in *sūra*s 10 and 15, all of which are written in black ink.[8] Remarkably, in the second *sūra*, the disconnected letters appear in their Arabic form twice. They are written in the left margin in black ink and then, for the second time, within the main text in red ink, followed by the next word in the Qur'anic verse, *ḏālika*, also written in rubricated characters and without a transliteration or translation into Latin script (see Figure 3). The line begins in Spanish with the Romance translation of the *basmala* in black ink. The second line begins with *ye Muhammed* in rubricated characters in red; the line then continues in black ink with *aqueste Alcorán, no hay duda en el* (lit. "this Qur'an, there is no doubt in it").

It is not the only time that the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are written in this manuscript in red ink. The same practice can be found in *sūra* 3: there they are written as

**8** We can see a similar strategy of rendering the transliteration of the letters in black ink in BCLM MS T235 in *sūra*s 19, 26–29, 40–46 and 68. In Q 7, Latin transliteration coexists with the letters written in Arabic script in the margin. Moreover, we observe that the Latin transliteration is not repeated, as for instance in Q 20 (*tta he*), 36 (*ye çin*), 38 (*ççad*) and 50 (*ccaf*) where there are only the Arabic characters added in the margin in black ink.

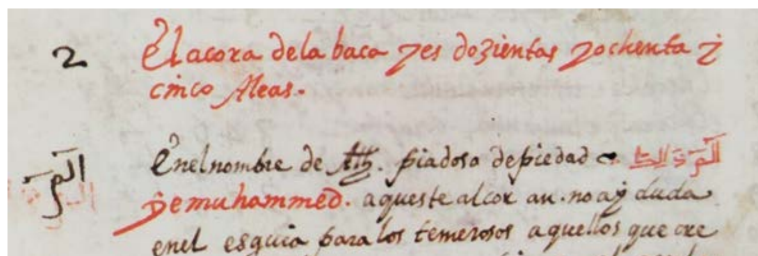


**Figure 3:** BCLM MS T235, fol 3v, detail. Courtesy of the Biblioteca de Castilla La-Mancha.

Arabic characters, while a transliteration in Latin characters as *álif lem mim* is located in the margin, written in black ink. Such usage of different colors of ink, even if not always consistent, serves to signal the special status of these letters; as does the use of Arabic characters in the middle of a vernacular translation that is written in Latin script. It Is remarkable to observe this phenomenon in this manuscript, given that it dates from the beginning of the seventeenth century (as such, it is one of the latest copies preserved from the Iberian Peninsula).

Now let us consider the manuscripts with Spanish *aljamiado* interlinear translations (BTNT MS RESC/3 and BTNT MS RESC/25). In these manuscripts, the three disconnected letters in Q 2:1 are written in Arabic; the Spanish text begins directly with the words of the first verse: *este alkitāb qu-es l-al Qur'an no ay ḏubḏa*[9] *en-él y-es guía* ("this book that is the Qur'an in which there is no doubt and it is a guide"). That is, the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are only found in the original text, and no reference is made to them in the translation. One difference between these manuscripts is that the *basmala* is translated into Spanish in BTNT MS RESC/3, while in BTNT MS RESC/25 (Figure 4) it appears only in Arabic under the *sūra* heading.

At this point, we can establish that the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are always present in these manuscripts. They are usually given as part of the text or in the margin in Arabic; in some cases, there is also a transliteration into Latin script. It is interesting to take note of the fact that the letters (the signifier) are preserved in the manuscript, while their meanings (the signified) are purposely omitted. In this regard, we should remind the reader that some schools of Qur'an interpretation intentionally refrain from explaining these letters.[10] However, the absence of explanation could also be related to cultural practices that existed among the Morisco

9 In the manuscript RESC/25 this appears as *ḏuḏa*.

10 According to classical scholars of Islam, the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* count among the equivocal verses (*al-mutashābihāt*). Some scholars believe that it is permitted to interpret these verses, and therefore give numerous explanations for the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*. Meanwhile, others think that it is not possible

**Figure 4:** BTNT MS RESC/25, fol. 2r, detail. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás.

communities at the time. These are practices related to magic, soothsaying and fortune telling that relied on ideas about numerical and mystical meanings of individual Arabic letters. The *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*, along with other letters, featured in various divination and esoteric practices, as well as letterism – known as *abjadiyya* or *ʿilm al-ḥurūfiyya* ("science of letters"). These practices were prominent in the sociocultural context of Mudejars and Moriscos.[11] Therefore, when no specific explanation is given for *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* in vernacular Qur'an translations – translations that probably formed a major source for Qur'an interpretation among these Muslim communities – we may assume that the omission is intentional, to enable such esoteric practices and allow for divergent interpretations of the Qur'an in non-liturgical contexts.

In the case of Morisco translations into Spanish that do provide an interpretation for these letters, the commentary is always the same: it states that the letters stand for the names of Allah, Jibril, and Muhammad. However, the copyist or

---

to give an interpretation of this type of verse and they therefore "leave the interpretation to God." Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beyrouth: Mu'assasa al-Risala), 436–45.

**11** See further: Mayte Green Mercado, *Visions of Deliverance: Moriscos and the Politics of Prophecy in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019). Mercado discusses *ʿilm al-ḥurūfiyya* practices among Morisco communities in the sixteenth century; see, for example, page 4. Likewise, Esther Fernández Medina, "La magia morisca entre el Cristianismo y el Islam" (PhD diss., Universidad de Granada, 2014) is a work entirely devoted to Morisco magical practices and their connections with Christian and Jewish magical practices. About letterism and its development in al-Andalus, see Michael Ebstein, "The word of God and the Divine Will," in *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 33–76 and Michael Ebstein and Sara Sviri, "The so-called *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (Epistle on letters) ascribed to Sahl al-Tustarī and letter mysticism in al-Andalus," *Journal Asiatique* 299, no. 1 (2011): 213–70.

translator may express this interpretation in different ways. To discuss this variation in detail, we propose to classify the manuscripts into two categories. Category 1 contains manuscripts in which the commentary is extensive and indicates the source of the interpretation, while Category 2 comprises manuscripts with a minimal explanation and without reference to a source.

**Category 1**. The interpretation appears in the form of hypotactic clauses in which the letters are related one by one to Allah, Jibril, and Muhammad, and the meanings of these names. This interpretation is then attributed to *los ʿalimes* – a generic name for Islamic scholars – and introduced by the verb *ḏīxeron* ("they said"). The verb informs the reader that the information is not derived from the Qur'an but draws on the knowledge of human interpreters, though the names of those individuals may not be specified. This formula is the dominant way of dealing with the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* in Q 2, as it is found in eight of the thirteen manuscripts: Flo. II-IV-701, RAH T5, RAH T13, BTNT RESC/39, BTNT RESC/58, BTNT RESC/101, BNE 4963 and BNE 5078.[12]

As an example, let us consider BTNT RESC/58 (see Figure 5). The text in Arabic letters reads: *ḏīxeron los ʿalimes qu-el-ālif es Allāh i el lām es Ŷibrīl y-el mīm es Muḥammad* "the *ʿalimes* said that the *ālif* is Allah and the *lām* is Ŷibrīl and the *mīm* is Muḥammad." The only exception to this trend is RAH T18, which contains the following commentary: "*el ālif es Allāh, el lām es Ŷibrīl, el mīm es Muḥammad* ("the *ālif* is Allah, the *lām* is Ŷibrīl and the *mīm* is Muḥammad"). Here, there is no attribution for the interpretation or any verb introducing it. There is also a difference in terms of syntax: while the majority of manuscripts have commentaries that are hypotactic (i.e., with subordinated clauses), this one is paratactic (with juxtaposed clauses). Lastly, although this interpretation is shorter, the content remains the same, which makes this manuscript part of Category 1, but also related to Category 2 (to be discussed below).

Which *tafsīr* works did Moriscos rely on when providing an interpretation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* in a way that is specific to Category 1? In answering this question, we find some insight in the translation of Muḥammad Ibn Abī Zamanīn's (d. 399/1008) *tafsir*, kept in manuscript BTNT MS RESC/51. In it, we find the following passage:[13] *i recontó por ᶜAṭāʾ i ḏixo en* الم *que el ālif es Allāh i el lām es Ǧibrīl, y-el mīm es Muḥammad, ṣallā* ("and it was narrated by ᶜAṭāʾ, and he said about الم that the *ālif* is Allah and the *lām* is Ŷibrīl and the *mīm* means Muḥammad,

12 Consuelo López-Morillas has already indicated that the five manuscripts closest to RAH T5 are Flo. II-IV-701, RAH T13, RESC/39, RESC/58, and BNM 5078; Consuelo López-Morillas, "The Genealogy of the Quran," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17, no. 3 (2006): 2.

13 We reproduce the transcription of this passage as given in Teresa Losada, "Estudios sobre coranes aljamiados" (PhD diss., Universidad de Barcelona, 1975), 121.

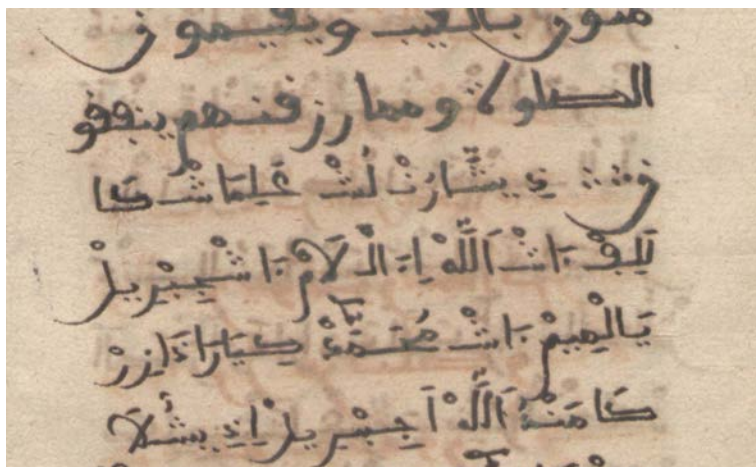


**Figure 5:** BTNT MS RESC/58, fol. 4v, detail. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás.

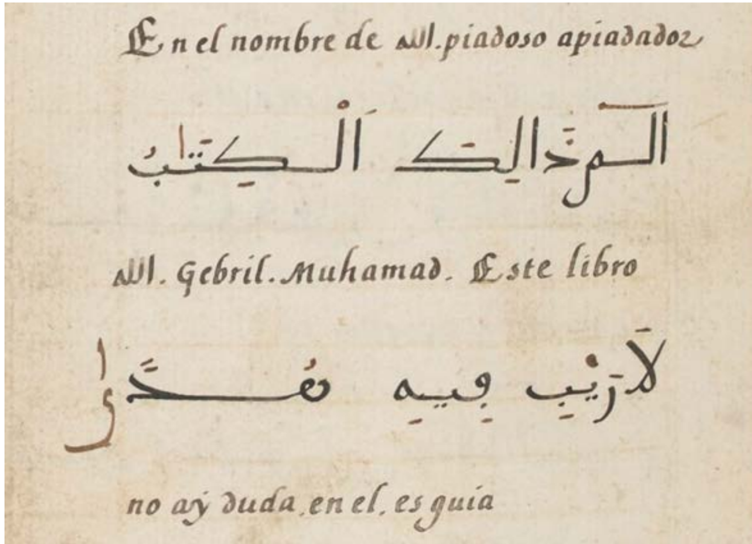
peace be upon him”). The reference to ʿAṭāʾ made here by Ibn Abī Zamanīn, the author of the source text, probably concerns ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. 25/646–115/773).[14] This passage thereby provides evidence of one of the possible chains of transmission for the interpretation given in this Morisco Qur’an translation into Spanish – a subject that we hope to deal with in a future study.

**Category 2.** This category comprises manuscripts where minimal explanation of the three letters is given, and no reference is made to any source. At the beginning of the Spanish translation, they are presented merely as three anthroponyms; that is, the meanings are simply presented without any further explanation or reference to a source. Among the manuscripts analyzed, the only manuscript of this type is BNF MS arabe 447[15] (see Figure 6).

---

14 We are grateful to Prof. Johanna Pink for pointing out to us that the true identity of this author is not ʿAbd al-Haqq ibn Ghālib Ibn ʿAṭīyya (d. 541/1146), as we had previously assumed. Our assumption was based on the fact that this Nasrid scholar is one of the exegetical sources commonly used in Morisco translations; however, the interpretation found in this translation does not correspond to that of Ibn ʿAṭiyya, but rather to that of the Meccan mufti under the Umayyads, ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ. On his role on early fiqh development see Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 246–62.

15 This is a manuscript copied by Muḥammad Rabaḍān in 1568 while in exile in *dār al-Islām,* since Thessaloniki became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1430. The linguistic panorama of the city is meaningful in the sense that Jews and Muslims, both hispanophone communities, were living there in this period. Some terms used in this manuscript coincide with the Bible of Ferrara manuscript, as Pablo Roza Candás has recently pointed out in “Dialectal Variations in Aljamiado Translations of the Qur’ān,” in *The Iberian Qur’an*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard


En el nombre de الله.piadoso apiadador

الم ذالك الكتاب

الله. Gebril. Muhamad. Este libro

لا ريب فيه هدى

no ay duda en el, es guia

**Figure 6:** BNF MS arabe 447, fol. 2r, detail. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

The division into two categories made here is important for the following section of our discussion, where we provide evidence of connections between the Morisco Qur'an translations and other Modern European translations into vernacular languages. As will be discussed in the next section, the two types of interpretation found in Categories 1 and 2 are also present in other European translations.

## 3 The *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* in Latin and Vernacular Translations of the Qur'an

From the twelfth century, Iberian Muslims played a significant role in the spread of Qur'an translations across Europe. In this section, we examine connections that were engendered by this phenomenon, focusing particularly on the handling of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* in translations by Morisco and Mudejar communities on

Wiegers (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 212. By and large, using Latin characters for Spanish translation is frequent in manuscripts written in exile. However, in this manuscript the name Allah is written in a special manner that preserves the Arabic tradition. This symbolic adaptation allows the copyist to continue writing from left to right, as Juan Pablo Arias Torres points out in "Traducir al Uno: de la palabra a la imagen," *Al-Qanṭara* 41, no. 1 (2020): 51–68.

the one hand, and by non-Muslim Europeans on the other. We argue that a few Early Modern Qur'an translations produced by non-Muslims were influenced by the scholarly traditions of Morisco and Mudejar communities.

## 3.1 Translations without Interpretations

In several Early Modern translations, the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* are not rendered at all, as if it is not in the Qur'anic text. These translations introduce the second *sūra* with the *basmala* and continue with the translation of the second verse. We find examples of this practice in several copies of Robert of Ketton's Latin translation (1143).[16] BNF Bibliothèque de l'arsenal MS 1162 is known as the earliest copy of Ketton's translation. This manuscript contains rich marginalia, yet since the *incipit* of the translation is replaced with another folio, we are likely missing some valuable information about the handling of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*, that we are going to deal with in the next section. A few later copies of Ketton's translation contain some commentary on the first verse,[17] which will be discussed later in the section.

Ketton's translation later served as the basis for Bibliander's edition.[18] Bibliander's edition reads:[19] "in the name of the Lord, the Virtuous, the Merciful, the book in which there is no falsehood, nor error, truthful for those who have love for the divine"[20] [our translation]. The absence of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* is noticed in the translation by Mark of Toledo (d. 1216)[21] and that of Giovani Battista Castrodardo (d. 1588) in Arrivabene's edition.[22]

**16** We consulted Paris BNF Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 1162, fol 25; Paris, BNF, MS latin 3390, fol 16; Paris, BNF, MS latin 3668, fol 29; Paris, BNF, MS latin 3669, fol 39; Paris, BNF, MS latin 3393, fol 29; Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS lat.4071, fol 24. The recent publication *Alchoran Siue Lex Saracenorum*, ed. José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz (Madrid: CSIC, 2022) provided new information: of the twenty-five conserved manuscripts, only eight signal the presence of the *muqaṭṭaʿāt*. See, Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran Siue*, 211.

**17** Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran Siue*, 211.

**18** "Bibliander, 1550," *Coran 12–21. Traductions du Coran en Europe, XIIe-XXIe siècles*, https://coran12-21.org/fr/editions/bibliander/alcoran/s2. Last accessed October 24, 2022.

**19** The same text is also found in the six aforementioned manuscripts.

**20** *In nomine domini pii et misericordis. Liber hic absque falsitatis, uel erroris annexu, ueridicus eis quibus inest amor diuinus.*

**21** Nàdia Petrus Pons, *Alchoranus Latinus, quem transtulit Marcus canonicus Toletanus. Edición integral de la traducción, el prólogo y las glosas* (Madrid: CSIC, 2016), 14.

**22** "Arrivabene, 1547," *Coran 12–21. Traductions du Coran en Europe, XIIe-XXIe siècles*, https://coran12-21.org/fr/editions/arrivabene/corano-1/s2. Last accessed October 24, 2022.

Another essential source for our analysis of correlations between Morisco translations and Early Modern non-Muslim translations are works by Christian polemicists from the Iberian Peninsula and humanists. We have found that in these works, there is usually no interpretation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt.*[23] For instance, the Qur'an of Bellús[24] is an early sixteenth-century Mudejar copy of the Qur'an that was annotated around 1518 by various individuals. The similarities between these annotations and the translation by Juan Gabriel de Teruel for Egidio da Viterbo (d. 1532) suggest that the annotators may have been associated with Juan Gabriel de Teruel and Martin Garcia (d. 1521), the bishop of Barcelona. In this manuscript, which contains Romance[25] and Latin annotations, Q 2:1 is not commented upon. A possible explanation for this is the function of this manuscript: since not every word is annotated, we assume that the manuscript served either to assist in preaching to the Mudejar community of Aragon, who were not obliged to convert until 1525, or to teach the preachers some Arabic vocabulary.[26] An interpretation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* would not have served either of these two needs and was possibly omitted for that reason.

Another remarkable case to analyze is the *Refutatio alcorani*, a Latin translation of the Qur'an with polemical commentaries, by Ludovico Marracci (d. 1700). In this work, which took him forty years to complete, Marracci draws on various sources, such as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, Ibn Abī Zamanīn's *tafsīr*, and al-Thaʿlabī's (d. 427/1035) *Kashf wa al-bayān*. Marracci's copy of Ibn Abī Zamanīn's *tafsīr* is preserved at the Biblioteca Mater Dei in Rome. Roberto Tottoli discusses the importance of this manuscript in Marracci's translation, and argues that Ibn Abī Zamanīn's text served "as the basis for [Marracci's] first translation of the Qur'anic text."[27] Tottoli further shows that this copy of Ibn Abī Zamanīn's *tafsīr* came from the Iberian Pen-

**23** See also Xavier Casassas Canals, "The Bellús Qur'an, Martín García, and Martín de Figuerola: The Study of the Qur'an and Its Use in the Sermones de La Fe and the Disputes with Muslims in the Crown of Aragon in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Latin Qur'an, 1143–1500: Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, ed. Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 455–74.

**24** Munich, BSB, Ms cod. arab 7.

**25** In Castillian-Aragonese and Catalan.

**26** Xavier Cassasas 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): 155–77. This manuscript was certainly used by Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter, the humanist who later had it in his library. The fact that the Qur'an is completely vocalized and contains repetitive vocabulary facilitates the learning of much vocabulary.

**27** Roberto Tottoli, "New Light on the Translation of the Qur'ān of Ludovico Marracci from His Manuscripts Recently Discovered at the Order of the Mother of God in Rome," in *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World*, ed. Andrew Rippin and Roberto Tottoli (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 102.

insula. Ibn Abī Zamanīn's *tafsīr* was well-studied and, as discussed above, widely translated by the Moriscos. This provides more evidence of the connections between the Iberian tradition and the non-Muslim European translations of the Qur'an.

In dealing with Q 2:1, Marracci first transcribes the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* as "A.L. M,"[28] where Latin letters stand for the Arabic letters *ālif lām mīm*. Then, he continues with a note that the meaning of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* is not known and that most Muslim scholars ignore them: "the commentators admit naively that they do not know what these three letters mean nor other similar letters that introduce some *sūra*s."[29] Marracci refers to the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and the *tafsīr* by Ibn Abī Zamanīn as proof for his argument that the meaning of these letters is unknown. He then quotes Abu Isḥaq al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035–1036), who gives a more general explanation. However, Marracci is quite critical of the latter, saying that "he accumulates the countless absurdities of [previous] scholars."[30] And although al-Thaʿlabī gives a number of different interpretations for the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt,*[31] Marracci provides[32] only the opinion of *tafwīḍ* advocates who believe that deciding on the meaning of ambiguous verses in the Qur'an should be "left to God."

*Refutatio alcorani*, as the title suggests, aims to discredit the Qur'an as a divine message. Therefore, when providing the reference to the *mutafawiḍūn* – the exegetes who adopt the *tafwīḍ* methodology – Marracci emphasizes their intellectual incapacity. For Marracci, the very fact that al-Thaʿlabī provides multiple opinions implies the *ineptiae* (absurdities) of Muslim exegetes. That is, the multiplicity of meanings is

**28** Ludovico Marracci, *Refutatio Alcorani: in qua ad Mahumetanicae superstitionis radicem securis apponitur & Mahumetus ipse gladio suo iugulatur* (Padua: Seminarii, 1698), 9–11.

**29** *Quid significant tres isti characteres; quemadmodum, et alii similes, qui nonnullis suris praemittuntur; fatentur ingenuè expositores, se ignorare*. Marracci, *Refutatio,* 11.

**30** *Thalebiensis innumeras hic congerit doctorum suorum ineptias: verum in hoc ipse minus ineptire videtur, quod primo loco ponit sententiam eorum, qui asserunt* [. . .]. Marracci, *Refutatio,* 11.

**31** In his exegesis, al-Thaʿlabī quotes dozens of different opinions and notes that the scholars diverge in their interpretations (*ikhtalafa al-ʾulama'*). He first gives the opinion of the scholars who adopted the *tafwīḍ* methodology, then the opinion of the scholars who adopted the *ta'wīl* methodology. Aḥmad al-Thaʿlabī, *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayān ʿan Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Salih Ba 'Othman et al., vol. III (Jedda: Dār al-tafsīr, 2015), 19–39; also online: https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=75&tSoraNo=2&t-AyahNo=1&tDisplay=yes&Page=1&Size=1&LanguageId=1. Last accessed October 24, 2022. As mentioned before, *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* belong to *al-mutashābihāt* (lit. "equivocals") type of verse. The *tafwīḍ* methodology consists to only affirm that God revealed the verse and only He knows the meaning of the verse. As for the *ta'wīl*, methodology, it assumes that these verses can be interpreted.

**32** Marracci, *Refutatio*, 11.

deemed to support the argument that the Qur'an is a text that even Muslims can not understand, contributing to the general Christian polemic against the Qur'an.[33]

## 3.2 Translations with an Interpretation

MJC MS 1235 (see Figure 7) is a copy of Ketton's translation and dates from the fourteenth century. This manuscript is one of the copies that does deal with the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt.*[34] In this copy, the Arabic letters are rendered not phonetically by transliteration, but visually with the Latin letters "p. d. l", intended to be read from right to left. The "l" graphically resembles the *ālif*, the "d" represents the *lām* and the "p" stands for the *mīm*. It seems that also other codices tried to follow a similar strategy: for example, in CCC 184, the copist does the same but the letter *mīm* is actually written in Arabic instead of the Latin letter "p".[35]

In MJC MS 1235, there is a note above the letters that reads: "mim means king, lem means knowledgeable, elif means God. The light of God to Mahomet

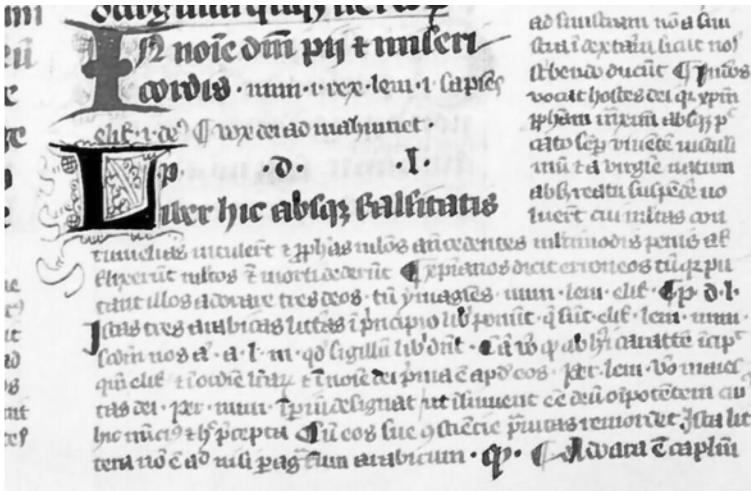


**Figure 7:** MJC MS 1235, fol. 35r, detail. Courtesy of the Médiathèque Jacques Chirac.

**33** Further study may reveal whether other polemicists also adopted this perspective.

**34** MS Troyes, Médiathèque Jacques Chirac, 1235, fol 35. See Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran Siue lex Sacarenorum*, 211.

**35** MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 184, fol. 50.

[Muhammad]."[36] This explanation relates to two different narrations of interpreting the *muqaṭṭaʿāt* in Islamic theology. These can be found in al-Thaʿlabī's commentary mentioned in the previous section. The first of these is a narration of Muḥammad ibn Kaʿab, saying: "*ālif* for Allah, *lām* for *laṭīf* ["most kind," i.e., one of the names of God] and *mīm* for his Lordship."[37] Except for the letter *lām*, Muḥammad ibn Kaʿab's interpretation is close to the one given in MJC 1235. However, where does the interpretation "lem means knowledgeable" come from? The second of these is when al-Thaʿlabī narrates: "according to Ibn ʿAbbas [with regard to] the word of God *ālif lām mīm*: I am Allah, the most knowledgeable."[38] Thus, we can deduce that the note in MJC 1235 is probably a combination of at least two different interpretations.

Another explanation of the *muqaṭṭaʿāt* in the same manuscript is given in the marginalia: "p. d. l. At the beginning of the book, these three Arabic letters that are elif, lem, mim [sic], for us [who write in Latin] a, l, m, announce the seal [*sigillum*]of the book."[39] Here, the glossator of this manuscript explains that the *muqaṭṭaʿāt* are a "*sigillum*." It is difficult to know exactly what is meant here by *sigillum*, which can be translated as "seal." Did the annotators consider it to refer to a metaphorical seal, or a physical seal that was used on the charters? It could indicate that they believed that Muḥammad placed a physical seal with A.L.M. on the Qur'an. Note that during the Middle Ages, such seals used to be composed of a few letters, standing for a person's initials.

MJC MS 1235 is regarded as a complete copy of the manuscript BNF MS latin 3390[40] and is related to six other similar manuscripts. Together they form one group of copies of Ketton's translation.[41] Several manuscripts in this group – as well as in some other groups – have detailed annotations, similar to MJC 1235.[42] Notably, the oldest manuscript of Ketton's Latin translation – BNF Bibliothèque de l'arsenal MS 1162 – lacks the incipit of the translation; a folio substitute it with

**36** *mim id est rex. lem id est sapiens. elif id est deus. Lux dei ad Mahumet.* MS Troyes, Médiathèque Jacques Chirac, 1235, fol 35.

**37** *Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb: (al-Ālif) Ala' Allah, wa (al-Lām) luṭfuh, wa (al-Mīm) Mulkuh.* al-Thaʿlabī, *Al-Kashf*, 36.

**38** *ʿAn ibn ʿAbbās fī qawl Allah taʿālā: {ālif Lām Mīm} qāl: anā Allah a'lam.* al-Thaʿlabī, *Al-Kashf*, 136.

**39** *p. d. l. Istas tres Arabicas litteras in principio libri ponunt, que sunt elif, lem, mim, secundum nos autem a, l, m, quid sigillum libri dicunt.* MS Troyes, Médiathèque Jacques Chirac, 1235, fol 35. See also: Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran Siue*, 211.

**40** Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran*, 114.

**41** Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran*, 112–13.

**42** Gázquez and González Muñoz, *Alchoran*, 211.

a layout of a different shape and a different hand of copy. It has been added later with only Ketton's translation of the first *sūra* and the beginning of the second *sūra*, without any glosses. We have seen in the previous section that the explanation is absent in this manuscript. Based on this, we can suggest that these explanations of *ālif lām mīm* may have been written in the original folio of the earliest preserved manuscript of Ketton's translation instead of the absence of explanation that we have noticed before.

Let us now turn to another text, a Latin translation of the Qur'an authored by Juan Gabriel de Teruel (d. early sixteenth century). The text was commissioned by Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, who traveled to Spain in 1518 on a diplomatic mission.[43] Juan Gabriel de Teruel was an Aragonese convert, formerly a Mudejar *faqīh*[44] of Teruel, who's name before conversion was ʿAli al-Ayzar, which he assumed in 1502.[45] He assisted Juan Martí de Figuerola, a priest from Valencia (d. 1532), in preaching to the Mudejar communities of Aragon.[46]

The fact that Juan Gabriel came from a Mudejar community means, we can assume, that his translation of the Qur'an into Latin was, to a certain extent, inspired by the Andalusi exegetical tradition discussed in the previous section of this chapter. In this text, the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* of Q 2:1 are translated as: "A.L.M" standing for "Alla, Gibril, Machoma."[47] Then, in the commentary section of Egidio's translation, another interpretation is given: "Aleph signifies 'Allah,' Lamed – Gabriel and Mem – Melac, an angel. Because they think that Gabriel brought this scripture [i.e., the Qur'an] to Mahomet from the heavens and from God, if it pleases the gods."[48] Remarkably, Juan Gabriel gives the Hebrew names of the Arabic letters. Moreover, he uses the Arabic words *Melac* and *Alla* instead of their Latin translations to show that these words correspond to the letters in the abbreviation. As for translating *mīm* as "angel" (*Melac*), we have not been able to uncover the origin of this interpretation. The name "Gabriel" is in its Latin form rather than the Arabic *Jibrīl*, probably because both the original and translation end in the same

43 Katarzyna K. Starczewska, ed., *Latin translation of the Qur'an (1518/1621): Commissioned by Egidio da Viterbo. Critical edition and case study* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), xiv.

44 *Faqīh* is an Islamic jurist or authority; in an Iberian context, an *imām* and community leader.

45 Mercedes García-Arenal and Katarzyna K. Starczewska, "'The Law of Abraham the Catholic': Juan Gabriel as Quran Translator for Martín de Figuerola and Egidio Da Viterbo," *Al-Qantara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 35, no. 2 (2014): 409–59.

46 García-Arenal and Starczewska, "The Law," 412.

47 Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS D 100, fol 8. In the edition of Katarzyna Starczewska we find the annotation: "A.L.M *add.* Alla, Gibril, Machoma." Starczewska, *Latin translation of the Qur'an*, 11.

48 *Aleph significare "Alla," اللّٰه, et Lamed Gabrielem, et Mem, Melac, angelum. quia putant Gabrielem detulisse ad Machometum scripturam hanc e caelis et a Deo, si diis utique placet.* Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ms D 100, fol. 16. Starczewska, *Latin translation of the Qur'an,* 777.

letter, "l". As indicated in the second sentence of the explanation, the interpretation implies that "A.L.M" is the chain of transmission of the Qur'an: the Qur'an is the word of Allah, transmitted to Gabriel, who transmitted it to Muhammad. However, in order for this interpretation to work, the only possibility is to take the letter *lām* from the last letter of the word *Jibrīl*. Meanwhile, the use of *detulisse* (which means "has been descended") seems surprising as it translates almost exactly the meaning of the Arabic word *nazzala* ("to descend," i.e., from the heavens) used in the same context referring to the Revelation. It is used for example in Q 3:3, where it is proclaimed that "the book has descended (*nazzala*) upon you . . ."[49] Juan Gabriel seems to have mainly used the exegetical works of Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 541/1147) and al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)[50] and may have used the commentary section to show that different interpretations are possible. Similar interpretations can be found in other Morisco manuscripts, such as BTNT RESC/51 and BNF arabe 447.

There is a peculiar relationship between BNF arabe 447 and Juan Gabriel's translation. According to the colophon, BNF arabe 447 was written or copied by Ybrahim Isquierdo, a Morisco in exile based in the Ottoman city of Thessaloniki.[51] Meanwhile, Juan Gabriel, before his conversion, had the name ʿAlī al-Ayzar. The two figures seem to be related: Isquierdo is the translation of the Arabic word *āysar*/*yasār*, meaning "left." Labarta and Barceló Torres identified the names Isquierdo, al-Ayzar and their variants as belonging to a family originally from Segorbe, a city near Valencia. This family is arguably of Aragonese ancestry, and was known for a number of Muslim community leaders (*faqīh*) and merchants involved in trade with Aragon.[52] Hence, we can deduce that these manuscripts follow an interpretation of *Ālif lām mīm* that was popular and well-known in the cities or villages inhabited by the Muslim communities (*morerias*) of Aragon.

A similar interpretation can also be found in an annotation written in the sixteenth-century manuscript BSB cod. arab. 1, which is a copy of a thirteenth-century Andalusian Qur'an that once belonged to Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (d. 1557), a German humanist and Orientalist.[53] This manuscript is annotated only on the first folio of the first half of the Qur'an and the first folio of the second half.[54]

**49** Translation of the verse is ours.

**50** Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qurʾān in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 161.

**51** Paris, BNF MS arabe 447, fol 107.

**52** Carmen Barceló Torres and Ana Labarta, *Archivos moriscos: Textos árabes de la minoría islámica valenciana, 1401–1608* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2009), 85.

**53** Robert Jones, *Learning Arabic in Renaissance Europe (1505–1624)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 31–32.

**54** Munich, BSB MS arab cod.1, fol.2v and fol. 64. About the division of Iberian Qur'ans see: Juan Pablo Arias Torres, "Sicut Euangelia Sunt Quatuor, Distribuerunt Continentiam Eius in Quatuor Libros: On the Division of Iberian Qur'ans and Their Translations into Four Parts," in *The Latin*

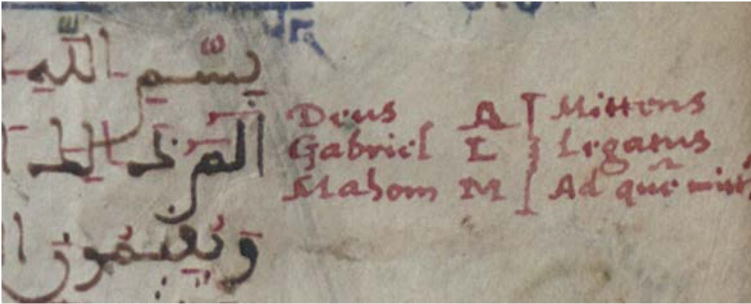



**Figure 8:** BSB MS cod. arab.1, fol.2v. Courtesy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

In Figure 8, we can see on the right side of the folio, in the margin, the following note written by Widmanstetter:

Deus / A / Mittens
Gabriel / L / Legatus
Mahom[et] / M / Ad quem mittur.[55]

We can divide this annotation into two parts. The first part is equivalent to “Deus for A, Gabriel for L and Mahomet for M,” which corresponds to the explanation that we have seen in Juan Gabriel’s translation of the Qur’an. Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, who commissioned Juan Gabriel’s translation, is known to have been one of Widmanstetter’s Arabic teachers. Widmanstetter studied with him between 1531 and the Cardinal’s death on November 13, 1532.[56]

The second part of the annotation is the ALM acronym in reverse, where M now relates to the original meaning of the A (*mittens*, “the sending,” which refers to God, i.e. Allah), and A relates to the original meaning of the M (*ad quem mittur*, “[the one] to whom [it] was sent,” which designates Muhammad). The L stands for *legatus*, the “envoy” or “ambassador,” which designates Gabriel. Put together, the expression corroborates the Islamic notion of Muhammad as the one who received the Revelation from God, transmitted by Gabriel.

A possible explanation for this interpretation is that Widmanstetter may have had an interest in linguistic correspondence and etymology even though he

*Qur’an, 1143–1500 Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, ed. Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 425–54.

**55** Munich, BSB cod. arab 1, fol.2v.

**56** Robert Wilkinson, *Orientalism, Aramaic and Kabbalah in the Catholic Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 139.

could be sometime audacious.[57] For example, in another manuscript, the Qur'an of Bellús,[58] Widmanstetter annotated in the margin next to the Arabic word *kāfirīn* the Hebrew word *kophrim*; the two words have the same meaning ("disbelievers") and share the same Semitic root (KFR/KPR).

This interest in linguistic correspondence can be traced back to Widmanstetter's fascination with Kabbalah and the study of semitic languages. Kabbalistic practices include engaging with letters and numbers to extract a spiritual or esoteric meaning from a word. We know that Widmanstetter studied Kabbalah with several teachers.[59] Widmanstetter used Kabbalistic practices in combining words and phrases from the Hebrew and Syriac languages, as well as in using numerical values of letters to extract hidden meanings. For example, he used the Hebrew verse Samuel 16:12, which contains the word *admoni* and is an anagram in Hebrew of part of his last name, "Widman."[60] Widmanstetter may have liked these games with words and letters, which we find in BSB cod. arab. 1, but it is difficult to tell if, for him, the *muqaṭṭaʿāt* carry a Kabbalistic or otherwise esoteric meaning.

## 4 Conclusion

Among Morisco Qur'an translations into the vernacular, some versions provide an explanation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*, while others do not. In the case of manuscripts in which we find no explanation, we have argued that this absence could be related to the position that expunges a meaning for these letters or even relates them to divination practices that may have consolidated blocking the signified of these *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*.

With regard to manuscripts in which an explanation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* is given, there are two different treatments, even if the interpretation given is always the same. One of these treatments seems to be related to Morisco translations of *tafsīr* works, while the other one, found only in a manuscript produced by a Morisco in exile, shows a treatment very similar to European Early Modern vernacular translations.

57 Hartmut Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1995), 323–24.

58 Munich, BSB, MS cod. arab 7.

59 Wilkinson, *Orientalism*, 137–69.

60 Wilkinson, *Orientalism*, 147.

The European medieval and early modern translations of the Qur'an authored by non-Muslims followed the same approaches as the Andalusi, Mudejar and Morisco interpretations. Some translators offered no interpretation, preferring to ignore these letters. The only exception is Marracci, who justified his choice not to interpret them based on the *tafsīr* literature as well as on his own polemical position. The other group of European translations discussed in this chapter do include an interpretation of the *ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt*. These interpretations can be traced back to such figures as Juan Gabriel de Teruel, a Mudejar convert, and his knowledge of the *tafsīr* literature. On the basis of our present research, it is possible to connect the translations by Juan Gabriel de Teruel and Ludovico Marracci directly to the Mudejar and Morisco traditions.

# Bibliography

## Manuscripts

Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale de Firenze, II.IV–701.
Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, 4938; 4963; 5078.
Madrid, Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás (CCHS – CSIC), RESC/3; RESC/25; RESC/39; RESC/51; RESC/52; RESC/58; RESC/101.
Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, T5; T13; T18; T19; V8; V9; V10.
Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, D 100.
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 A. Or. 47–1/3; cod. arab. 1; cod. arab. 7. Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 184.
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, arabe 425; arabe 447; latin 3394; latin 3390; latin 3390; latin 3668; latin 3669.
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162.
Toledo, Biblioteca de Castilla La-Mancha, 235
Troyes, Médiathèque Jacques Chirac, 1235
Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 4071.

## Secondary Sources

ʻAbd al-Raḥmān, Ibn Abī Ḥātim. *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-ʻAżīm*. Maktaba Nuzār Musṭafa al-Bāz, Riyad, 1997.
Arias Torres, Juan Pablo. "Traducir al Uno: de la palabra a la imagen." *Al-Qanṭara* 41, no. 1 (2020): 51–68.
Barceló Torres, Carmen, and Ana Labarta. *Archivos moriscos: textos árabes de la minoría islámica valenciana, 1401–1608*. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2009.
Bellamy, James A. "The Mysterious Letters of the Koran: Old Abbreviations of the Basmalah." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, no. 3 (1973): 267–85.

Bellamy, James A. "Some Proposed Emendations to the Text of the Koran." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 2 (1993): 562–573.

Bobzin, Hartmut. *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa*. Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1995.

Burman, Thomas. *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Burman, Thomas. "*Tafsīr* and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'an Exegesis and the Latin Qur'ans of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo." *Speculum* 73, no. 3 (1998): 703–732.

Cabanelas Rodríguez, Dario. "Juan de Segovia y el primer Alcorán trilingüe." *Al-Andalus* 14 (1949): 149–173.

Cassasas Canals, Xavier. "El Alcorán de Bellús: Un Alcorán Mudéjar de Principios Del Siglo XVI Con Traducciones y Comentarios En Catalán, Castellano y Latín." *Alhadra* 1 (2015): 155–177.

Castilla, Nuria de. "'*Dichos bien hermanados*'. Towards a typology of Mudéjar and Morisco multiple-text manuscripts." In *The emergence of Multiple-Text Manuscripts*, edited by Friedrich Bausi and Maniaci, 73–102. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

Ebstein, Michael. "The word of God and the Divine Will." In *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 33–76. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Ebstein, Michael and Sara Sviri. "The so-called *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (Epistle on letters) ascribed to Sahl al-Tustarī and letter mysticism in al-Andalus." *Journal Asiatique* 299, no. 1 (2011): 213–270.

Ferrero Hernández, Cándida, and John Tolan, eds. *The Latin Qur'an, 1143–1500: Translation, Transition, Interpretation*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021.

Fernández Medina, Esther. "La magia morisca entre el Cristianismo y el Islam." PhD diss., Universidad de Granada, 2014.

García-Arenal, Mercedes, and Katarzyna Starczewska. "'The Law of Abraham the Catholic': Juan Gabriel as Quran Translator for Martín de Figuerola and Egidio Da Viterbo." *Al-Qantara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 35, no. 2 (2014): 409–59.

García-Arenal, Mercedes, and Gerard Wiegers, eds. *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*. Boston, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

Green Mercado, Mayte. *Visions of Deliverance: Moriscos and the Politics of Prophecy in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019.

Hoover, Jon. *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Jeffrey, Arthur. "The Mystic Letters of the Koran." *Muslim World* 14 (1924): 247–260.

Jones, Alan. "The Mystical Letter of the Qur'an." *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962): 5–11.

Jones, Robert. *Learning Arabic in Renaissance Europe (1505–1624)*. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Ketton, Robert. *Alchoran Siue Lex Saracenorum: Edición Crítica y Estudio*. Edited by José Martínez Gázquez and González Muñoz. Madrid: CSIC, 2022.

Koningsveld, Pieter Sjoerd Van. "Andalusian-Arabic Manuscripts from Christian Spain: A Comparative Intercultural Approach." *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992): 75–110.

Ludovico Marracci. *Refutatio Alcorani: in qua ad Mahumetanicae superstitionis radicem securis apponitur & Mahumetus ipse gladio suo* iugulatur. Padua, Seminarii, 1698.

Lane, Andrew. *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'an Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

López-Morillas, Consuelo. "Lost and Found? Yça of Segovia and the Qur'an amoung the mudejars and moriscos," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 3 (1999): 277–92.

López-Morillas, Consuelo. "The Genealogy of the Spanish Qur'an." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17 (2006): 255–94.

Losada, Teresa. “Estudios sobre coranes aljamiados.” PhD diss., Universidad de Barcelona, 1975.
Martínez Gázquez, José. “Las traducciones latinas medievales del Corán: Pedro el Venerable-Robert de Ketton, Marcos de Toledo y Juan de Segovia.” *Euphrosyne* 31 (2003): 491–503.
Massey, Keith. “Mystery Letters of the Qur’an.” *Arabica* 43 (1996): 497–501.
Mopsik, Charles. *Cabale et cabalistes*. Paris: Bayard, 1997.
Motzki, Harald. *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
Nguyen, Martin. “Exegesis of the *ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*: Polyvalency in Sunnī Traditions of Qur’anic Interpretation.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 1–28.
Petrus Pons, Nàdia. *Alchoranus Latinus, quem transtulit Marcus canonicus Toletanus. Edición integral de la traducción, el prólogo y las glosas*. Madrid: CSIC, 2016
al-Razī, Fakhr ad-dīn. *At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Beyrouth, Dār al-Fikr, 1981.
Rodríguez Iglesias, Adrián. “New Models of Qur’an Abridgment among Mudejars and Moriscos.” In *The Iberian Qur’an*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, 165–98. Berlin, Boston: DeGruyer, 2022.
Roth, Uli. “Juan of Segovia’s Translation of the Qur’an.” *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de estudios árabes* 35, no. 2 (2014): 555–78.
Roza Candás, Pablo. “Dialectal Variations in Aljamiado Translations of the Qur’an.” In *The Iberian Qur’an*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, 199–215. Berlin, Boston: DeGruyer, 2022.
Shah, Mustafa. “Al-Ṭabarī and the Dynamics of *tafsīr*: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 83–139.
Starczewska, Katarzyna, ed. *Latin translation of the Qur’an (1518/1621): Commissioned by Egidio da Viterbo. Critical edition and case study*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018.
as-Suyūṭī, Jalāl ad-Dīn. *Al-Itqān fi ʿulūm al-Qurʾan*. Edited by Mustafa Sheikh Mustafa. Beyrouth: Muasasa al-Risala, 2008.
as-Suyūṭī, Jalāl ad-Dīn. *Le parfait manuel des sciences coraniques al-Itqān fi ʿulūm al- Qur’an de Ğalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (849/1445–911/1505)*. Translated by Michel Lagarde. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
Syamsuddin, Sahiron. “Muḥkam and Mutashābih: An Analytical Study of al-Ṭabarī’s and al-Zamakhsharī’s Interpretations of Q.3:7.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999): 63–79.
Thaʿlabī, Aḥmad al-. *Al-Kashaf Wa al-Bayān ʿan Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*. Edited by Salih Ba ’Othman, Hassan al-Ghazali, Zayd Maharsh, and Amin Basha. Jedda: Dār al-tafsīr, 2015.
Tottoli, Roberto. “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 *Books and Written Culture of the Islamic World*, edited by Andrew Rippin and Roberto Tottoli, 91–130. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
Ullah, Kifayat. *Al-Kashshāf: Al-Zamakhshari’s Mu’tazilite Exegesis of the Quran*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.
Wilkinson, Robert. *Orientalism, Aramaic and Kabbalah in the Catholic Reformation*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
Wiegers, Gerard. “’Isà b. Yabir and the origins of Aljamiado literatura.” *Al-qantara: Revista de estudios árabes* 11, no. 1 (1990): 155–92.
Wiegers, Gerard. *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado: Yça of Segovia (Fl. 1450), His Antecedents and Successors*. Leiden: Brill, 1993
az-Zarkashī, Muḥammad. *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qur’an*. Cairo: Dār at-Turāth, 1984.

Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz

# An Interplay Between Muslim and Christian Cultures: Polish Qur'an Translations Between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

## 1 Introduction

For over 620 years, a territory covering present-day Lithuania, north-eastern Poland, Belarus, and part of Ukraine – i.e., the area that once constituted the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) – has been inhabited by Tatars who follow Sunni Islam. Tatars first arrived here in the fourteenth century, fleeing from the Golden Horde. More arrived following the Russian invasion of the former Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates in the second half of the sixteenth century.[1] The material and spiritual heritage of this ethnic group includes religious texts composed in the Polish and Old Belarusian (Ruthenian) languages and penned in the Arabic script. *Tefsīr*s,[2] *kitāb*s, *chamail*s, and *tejvid*s,[3] among other literary genres, functioned not only as sources of knowledge:

---

**1** E.g., Czesław Łapicz, *Kitab Tatarów litewsko-polskich (Paleografia. Grafia. Język)* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 1986), 24–33.

**2** It should be noted that the Tatars rendered only one translation of the Qur'an into Polish. It has been kept in over 20 copies, which vary with regard to the time and place of origin (see footnote 11). This is why the term *tefsīr* is used in this chapter in both the singular and the plural.

**3** In Islam, *tafsīr* is a commentary on the Qur'an (Arabic: *tafsīr* "explanation, interpretation, clarification, or commentary – particularly that on or to the Qur'an"). GDL Tatars use the term *tefsīr* to refer to comprehensive manuscript containing the full text of the Qur'an with interlinear translation into Polish with Belarusian features, recorded in the Arabic script and supplemented with an exegetical layer. *Kitābs* are artifacts of diverse volume and content (usually of a religious

---

**Note:** The research was conducted by an interdisciplinary team of scholars from five countries, within the framework of a grant obtained from Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki (The National Programme for the Development of Humanities) titled *Tefsir – projekt filologiczno-historycznego opracowania oraz krytycznego wydania tzw. tefsiru Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego z 2. połowy XVI w. (pierwszego przekładu Koranu na język polski) [Tefsir – a project of philological and historical study and critical edition of the so-called tefsīr of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the second half of the 16$^{th}$ century (the first translation of the Qur'an into Polish)].* For a detailed description of the *Tefsir* project, see http://www.tefsir.umk.pl (Last accessed May 24, 2021). The research into the Tatar cultural legacy has since been expanded to encompass comparative studies conducted in the Balkans and Spain. Members of the *Tefsir* team carry out joint work with researchers from these countries under the auspices of the project *Aljamiado Literature in Renaissance Europe. A Comparative Study*.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-004

the written texts were also treated as amulets, revered objects, and items of family memory. Compared to the traditions of other European Muslims, GDL Tatar religious literature is a unique cultural phenomenon. It combines Islamicate elements – including aspects specific to Islamic mysticism (Sufism) – with the heritage of Turkic nomadic people, Christian culture, and Slavic folk beliefs. This amalgam of various types of content sets GDL Tatars apart from the rest of the Islamic world and constitutes a vital aspect of their self-identification.

The primary reason for GDL Tatars to engage in Qur'an translation was the gradual loss of their mother tongue, a Kipchak dialect of Turkic used by the first settlers who arrived from the Volga region (and later from the Golden Horde) in the fourteenth century. As Tatars acculturated to the Slavic environment, they adopted the languages spoken by indigenous inhabitants, i.e., variants of Belarusian and Polish. This process accelerated during the fifteenth century, later receding again during the second half of the sixteenth century.[4] Despite linguistic assimilation, the Tatars preserved their faith. A typical Tatar from the sixteenth-century GDL "spoke the Belarusian or the Polish language, considered himself a Pole, practiced the Muslim faith, and wrote using the Arabic script."[5] The use of the Arabic script places GDL Tatars' written heritage within the *aljamiado* type of literature, which denotes works written in the local language using an appropriately adapted Arabic alphabet and developed under strong influence from Islamic culture and tradition.[6]

GDL Tatars did not begin producing written work until the second half of the sixteenth century. The genesis of Tatar religious literature was partly associated with the transformations in the region ushered in by the Protestant Reformation,

---

character); they are a type of reading matter meant to enhance cognition (Arabic: *kitāb* "book"). *Chamail*s are the most popular type of Tatar writings (Arabic: *ḥamā'il* "things carried"). They are classified as prayer books, owing to their usage and content. The content of these books comprises diverse texts of religious character, including practical descriptions of Muslim rituals, and most importantly the essential duties of a Muslim, such as profession of faith, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. *Tejvid*s are textbooks for learning the recitation of the Qur'an with an explanation of grammatical rules – a type of specific oration in Turkish on the rules of articulation and recitation of the Qur'an with an interlinear translation into Polish and Belarusian (Arabic: *tajwīd* "recitation of the Qurʾān").

**4** Łapicz, *Kitab*, 33–60.

**5** Łapicz, *Kitab*, 32–33.

**6** For a broader characterization and comparison with *aljamiado* literature produced in other areas of Europe: Czesław Łapicz, "Czy piśmiennictwo Tatarów – muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego jest słowiańskim aljamiado?" in *W podróży za słowem: księga pamiątkowa z okazji jubileuszu 70-lecia urodzin profesora Emila Tokarza*, ed. Mateusz Warchał (Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Techniczno-Humanistycznej, 2014), 59–70.

which emphasized the significance of vernacular languages and religious individualism. Effects of the Counter-Reformation, in turn, contributed to the development of religious polemics genres, which were interconnected with apologetics – the genres that enabled a proliferation first of Christian and subsequently of Tatar Muslim literature. Tatars created original texts, as well as adapting fragments of Old Polish literature to the canons and doctrines of Islam or translating existing Islamic texts into Polish and Belarusian. The Islamic source texts were written in Arabic or variants of Turkic, such as writings from Central Asia in the Chagatay language. At the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, GDL Tatars also engaged with sources from the Ottoman Empire in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic-language texts circulating across the Volga-Ural region, Crimea, and Turkistan.[7]

This chapter aims to illustrate the interplay of various cultural traditions that have profoundly influenced the development of religious literature among GDL Tatars. In particular, we discuss the intricate relationship between Sunni Muslim and Catholic textual traditions – a relationship engendered by the distinctive ethnic and confessional composition of the GDL. The discussion draws on extensive research conducted between 2013–2022 by scholars in the *Tefsir* team, who study Tatar religious manuscript literature as part of broader Polish culture. The chapter thereby contributes to the growing field of Kitabistics[8] and to the field of Translation Studies more broadly.

In the following section, we elaborate on the philological and linguistic overlaps between Polish and GDL Tatar religious language. We discuss the influence of biblical exegetic traditions on the text composition and Qur'an rendering strategies used by GDL Tatars. As the examples will show, the process of interfaith impact developed bidirectionally: while Muslim Tatars borrowed terminology and syntactic structures from Christian sources, Polish Christian authors also enriched their vocabulary through contact with the Muslim minority. In the third section of this chapter, we provide an illustration of practices of Muslim-Christian collaboration by discussing a Qur'an translation into Polish printed in the nineteenth century.

---

7 Andrzej Drozd, *Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII wieku. Zagadnienia gramatyczne na materiale chutb świątecznych* (Warszawa: Dialog, 1999), 40–47.

8 Kitabistics is a relatively new philological discipline, combining Slavic (especially Polish and Belarusian) and Oriental (in particular, Arabic and Turkish) Linguistics with Cultural and Religious Studies, including Biblical and Qur'anic Studies. The principal area of research in Kitabistics is the material and immaterial cultural heritage of the Tatars of the former GDL. The academic foundations of Kitabistics were laid down by Anton K. Antonovich of Vilnius University. In Poland, research in Kitabistics was initiated in the mid-1980s by Czesław Łapicz of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

## 2 The Tatar *tefsīr* and European Biblical Literature

As a consequence of their unique socio-historical context, GDL Tatars were among the first to translate the Qur'an into a Slavic language. This translation was performed in the sixteenth century and took the form of a *tefsīr*. The original manuscript has not survived; members of the *Tefsir* project used two later handwritten copies to prepare a critical edition of this translation, accompanied by a philological and historical commentary on the text. The first handwritten copy is the oldest dated text of this translation (1723)[9] and is known as *Alytus tefsīr* (henceforth TAL). It is an unabridged translation of the Qur'an into the north-eastern variant of Polish, and the manuscript is currently held in a private collection in Lithuania. The second handwritten copy is the so-called *Józefów tefsīr* (henceforth TJW),[10] dated 1890 and currently held at the National Museum of Lithuania in Vilnius. Together, the two manuscripts comprise over 2,000 pages of source text, with rich glosses in the margins. There are other known copies of the original manuscript that were produced between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, but they do not vary from these two manuscripts in terms of content (although some may contain minor differences in glosses).[11] In preparing the critical edition, the *Tefsir* team also consulted several Tatar *kitāb*s and *chamail*s that contain fragments of the original *tefsīr*.[12]

---

**9** Only a part of the manuscript has its genesis in the eighteenth century. The corrected, supplemented, or added passages date to the nineteenth century, specifically to 1836, which was established on the basis of a colophon.

**10** The National Museum of Lithuania, MS НМЛ R–13.012.

**11** The *Minsk Tefsīr* (1686), Minsk, The Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, MS П16–18/Ср2 (Р 214); *Tefsīr* (eighteenth century), УКС, MS 11Рк 473 (МН 16 1–3) /positive/, 11Рк 474 (МН 16 1–3) /negative/); *Tefsīr* (eighteenth century), УКС, MS 11Н//230К; *Tefsīr* (last quarter of the nineteenth century), УКС, MS П19–20/Ср4 (Р 223); the *London Tefsīr* (1725), London, The Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum, MS 33264; the *Vilnius Tefsīr* (1788), Vilnius, the Vilnius University Library, MS F 3–392; *Tefsīr* (last quarter of the eighteenth century), Saint Petersburg, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, MS D 723; the *Petersburg Tefsīr* (1811–1825), Saint Petersburg, The Faculty of Asian and African Studies of the Saint Petersburg University, MS 867; the *Novahrudak Tefsīr* (early nineteenth century), a private collection in Belarus; the *Chalil Józefowicz Tefsīr* (the second half of the nineteenth century), a private collection in Belarus; the *Ali Jakub Żdanowicz Tefsīr* (1858), a private collection; *Tefsīr* (late nineteenth century), a private collection of Ibrahim Konopacki in Belarus; the *Hrodna Tefsīr* (late nineteenth century), Hrodna, the Hrodna State Museum of the History of Religion, MS КП 31388.

**12** The *Łuckiewicz Kitab* (first half of the eighteenth century), Vilnius, the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, MS F21–814; the *Milkamanowicz Kitab* (1782/1783), a private collection; *Kitab* (nineteenth century), London, the British Library, MS OR 13020; the *Aladdyn Kry-*

## 2.1 Biblical Elements in the Tatar *tefsīr*

Close analysis of the *tefsīr* manuscript reveals a significant influence of European biblical literature on both the composition and the linguistic peculiarities of the translation.[13] A distinctive result of this process is the adoption of the Protestant principle of making the religious message intelligible to a contemporary reader. In terms of translation techniques, Tatar authors relied on the experience of their Christian counterparts in the region. These methods were described as early as in the Middle Ages in the Latin work by Petrus Comestor[14] and are reflected in the oldest works of Polish religious literature. In the following, we will discuss commonalities that we have detected between Polish Bible translations and *tefsīr* literature. For this comparative analysis, we consulted the following Catholic and Protestant translations of the Bible into Polish, all rendered between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: *Biblia brzeska* (BB, Brześć Litewski [Brest-Litovsk], 1563),[15] *Biblia nieświeska*, also known as *Biblia Budnego* (BN, Nieśwież [Nyashvizh], 1572),[16] *Biblia* translated by Fr. Jakub Wujek (BW, Kraków, 1599),[17] and *Biblia gdańska* (BG, Gdańsk, 1632).[18]

The first area where the overlap between the two religious traditions becomes most obvious is vocabulary. Tatar translators used Polish synonyms when

---

*nicki Kitab* (1883), a private collection; the *Mustafa Żdanowicz Kitab* (1883), a private collection; the *Pastava Kitab* (late nineteenth–early twentieth century), a private collection; the *Semi-Kitab* (early nineteenth century), a private collection; *Chamail* (early nineteenth century), Hrodna, the Hrodna State Museum of the History of Religion, MS ЧЗ 1814; *Chamail* (1844), Kazan, the Kazan Federal University, MS 3246; the *Sulejman Bajraszewski Chamail* (1852), a private collection in Slonim.

**13** This section of the chapter draws on previously published work: Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Dialogue of Scriptures: the Tatar Tefsir in the Context of Biblical and Qur'anic Interpretations* (Berlin-New York: Peter Lang Verlag, 2018).

**14** Irena Kwilecka, *Studia nad staropolskimi przekładami Biblii* (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza. Wydział Teologiczny: Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Slawistyki, 2003), 157–71. See: Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica*. https://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/publication/20047/edition/46161/content. Last accessed February 24, 2022.

**15** *Biblia brzeska 1563* (Clifton–Kraków: Kalwin Publishing, 2003).

**16** Simon Budny, *Biblia to iest księgi Starego y Nowego przymierza znowu z ięzyka Hebrayskiego/ Greckiego y Łacińskiego na Polski przełożone* (Nieśwież, 1572). https://archive.org/details/BibliaNiewieska/page/n1509/mode/2up. Last accessed February 24, 2022.

**17** *Biblia w przekładzie ks. Jakuba Wujka z 1599 r.*, B-type transcription of the source text from the sixteenth century (Warszawa: Vocatio, 2000).

**18** *Biblia gdańska. The New Testament* (Kraków: ZWBPŚw „Na Straży," 1996); *Biblia gdańska. The Old Testament* (Kraków: ZWBPŚw „Na Straży", 2004).

providing equivalents for Arabic terms; some of the synonyms clearly stem from Bible translations. For instance, the meaning of the Arabic etymon *rasūl* ("envoy, messenger") is given using two equivalents in Polish: *pōsōl* ("envoy") and *prōrōk* ("prophet").[19] The latter of these is a commonly used word in Polish Bible translations. The same principle applies to phraseology. For example, Arabic *bashar* means (1) "man, human being" and (2) "people, humankind;" the second meaning is rendered as *lūʒe sinōwe člōweče* "people sons of man," a standard expression in Polish. It can also be seen that many Arabic words have several exponents in the Polish translation, while the same Polish lexemes are equivalents of various Arabic words.

Similar to biblical commentary, the *tefsīr* manuscript contains additional information. This information comes in the form of glosses and additions, as well as meta- or extra-textual commentaries, in a way which was typical of Renaissance translations of the Bible.[20] For instance, additional definitions and epithets appear next to doctrinally important names, e.g., Arabic *kitāb* + *mubārak* ("blessed"), as in *ks̱enge kur'an . . . jest* ***śwentij pōwažnij welḱij*** [book *kur'an* . . . is holy, respected, great]. Some additional details are intended to facilitate text comprehension: e.g., Arabic *sharīk* [companion, partner; participant] explicated as *rōwenniḱi* ***naše ōbrazi*** [our equals' images], whereas Arabic *allāh* is translated as ***bōg wjedōmij ime jegō*** *allah* [God omniscient his name *allah* (allāh)]. Introduced directly into the text of the translation, these numerous explanations are usually signaled by metalinguistic formulas, such as *to jest*, *a mianowicie* [that is, namely], which is typical of Latin commentaries, such as the ones by the twelfth-century French theological writer Petrus Comestor, the *Postillae* by the Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349), and medieval French translations, e.g., that of Raoul de Presles (1270–1329).[21]

**19** The examples from the Tatar *tefsīr* reflect a sixteenth-century north-eastern borderland variety of Polish. Consequently, the English translations here do not fully convey their semantics; only semantically close equivalents can be used. Still, Old Polish or original Arabic syntax is preserved.

**20** See Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, "O czym informują glosy w tatarskiej literaturze przekładowej? (na przykładzie tefsiru z Olity)," *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich* 2 (2015): 45–52. It is worth adding that the *Alytus Tefsīr* belonged to a family from the Winksznup parish, namely, to the Ułan officer family from Wiłkobole. The family also owned a copy of *Biblia nieświeska*, today held as part of the collection of the University of Warsaw Library, MS Sd 614.300. In the margins of the copy, there are both numerous notes in Polish (recorded in the Latin alphabet) and a number of remarks in Polish and Turkish (recorded in the Arabic script) as well as a number of Qur'anic quotations referring to Bible verses; see Andrzej Drozd, "Wpływy chrześcijańskie na literatury Tatarów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej: między antagonizmem a symbiozą," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 88 (1997): 10–11.

**21** More in Kwilecka, *Studia*.

In the GDL context, translating either the Bible or the Qur'an into a vernacular meant adapting the text to the culture of a given period and to local conditions. Strategies for making the texts intelligible to the faithful also included using colloquial language. For instance, Tatar translators employed diminutives and forms of address with the interjection *ej* (cf. Turkish particles *ay*!, *ey*!): *a jeʿkūb też sinow swojix ūmirajonc aj* ***sinačkowe*** [and *jeʿkūb* (Yaʿqūb) also his sons dying *aj* (ayy) little sons!].[22] The rhetorical function of the GDL Islamic texts is to make words with figurative meaning concrete (i.e., so-called modulation), e.g., ***ōʒeža z welni iz skōri*** *i pōžitḱi* ***z mleka is priplōdku mensō*** [garments from wool and from leather and crops from milk and meat from profit]. In the text of the Qur'an we find only Arabic *difʾ* "warmth" + *wa* "and" + plural of *manfaʿa*, meaning (1) "advantage, benefit, use, profit, usefulness;" (2) "comfort, convenience." Consequently, the *difʾ* abstractum was translated into "*garments from wool and from leather*" whereas the *manfaʿa* abstractum was rendered as "*crops from milk and meat from profit,*" specifying the type of warmth and profit.

The Tatar *tefsīr* also fits the biblical stylistic model. The essential features of the biblical style include typical lexis, phraseology, and syntax.[23] In terms of syntax, the exponents are:

– the usage of subordinating clauses with the conjunction *że* "that" to quote another person's statements (*oratio recta*), which is typical especially of faithful translation, e.g., ***mōw że*** *se ja pewne bōje śe žebi mjel zgrešic bōgū memū menḱī*; *i* ***priśengali*** *newernici panu bōgu sprawedliwōŋ priśengōŋ* ***że*** *ne wskreśi īx pan bōg z martwix* [say that I am certainly afraid of sinning against my God; and the non-believers swore before God with a just oath that Lord God will not raise them from the dead];
– final predicate order: in Tatar writing, this is a calque of the word order of the Polish text, e.g., *kōždej wjedōmōs̱ci čas i mejscō* ***jest*** [each message time and place is]. This is typical of fourteenth-century prose (e.g., Piotr Skarga's sermons) and Bible translations;[24]

22 Kwilecka, *Studia*, 171. The author states that this type of exclamation is yet another element adopted from colloquial Polish. The lexeme *synaczek* ("little son") can also be found on the pages of BB and BW. Cf. Tomasz Lisowski, *Sola Scriptura. Leksyka Nowego Testamentu Biblii Gdańskiej (1632) na tle porównawczym. Ujęcie kwantytatywno-dystrybucyjne* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Rys, 2010), 144–45.

23 This applies to translations of the Bible into vernacular languages. These translations often, especially in terms of syntax, mirrored the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The Septuagint is the first translation of the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish religious texts from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek.

24 More on the topic: Danuta Bieńkowska, *Styl językowy przekładu Nowego Testamentu Jakuba Wujka. (Na materiale czterech Ewangelii)* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1992), 171–76.

– an abundance of passive voice, e.g., *cō u pana bōga* ***jest nagōtōwanō*** [what is prepared at Lord God]. These linking participles (mainly nominative, singular and neuter) with the linking verb *jest* "is" are characteristic of sixteenth-century gospels;[25]
– numerous statements with participial gerund clauses (the *tafsīr* is particularly analogous to BN in this respect), e.g., BN ***Był*** *bo* ***uczący*** *je jako władze mając* [He was teaching them as authority having] (Mark 1:22), *I* ***byli*** *uczniowie . . .* ***poszczący się*** [And were disciples . . . fasting themselves] (Mark 2:18); cf. TAL *ja tō* ***bil mōwoncij***; ***bilī*** *ōnī* ***krijōncimi*** *pred tim* [it was I speaking; they were hiding before]. Originally, imbuing texts with participles was a feature of the biblical style and originated in the Vulgate. From the sixteenth century, it became typical of the Polish literary style. In the Tatar *tefsīr*, such participles are used very frequently. The frequency of their occurrence was stylistically conditioned – in the Polish language, they were a feature distinguishing the literary style from colloquial speech.[26]

One major challenge faced by the *Tefsir* project team in preparing the critical edition of the Tatar *tefsīr* was determining which specific Bible translation the Tatars relied on. Following a multifaceted analysis, we concluded that the Tatars must have primarily used Protestant translations, such BB and BG widely, but especially the Arian BN. This is because the author of the BN translation, Polish-Belarusian translator Simon Budny (1530–1593), shared the views of the GDL Muslims on such important issues as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and universal priesthood. According to Łapicz, "four polemical texts containing quotations from the Calvinist *Biblia brzeska* as well as approximately 140 verses from the Old Testament and 20 verses from the New Testament taken from the Arian translation of the Bible, called *Biblia nieświeska*, were identified in the Polish *semi-kitāb* from the collection of the Library of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences."[27] In other words, GDL Tatars largely drew on the literature of Reformed Christianity – specifically, on Arian religious texts (i.e., those related to Arianism). Their most widely used source was BN, the author of which relied on original Hebrew and Greek sources, meaning that this translation would be the

25 Alina Kępińska, "Z problematyki opisu składni XVI-wiecznych przekładów Ewangelii na język polski," in *Staropolskie spotkania językoznawcze* 1. *Jak badać teksty staropolskie?*, ed. Tomasz Mika, Dorota Rojszczak-Robińska, and Olga Stramczewska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Rys, 2015), 59–60.
26 See Bieńkowska, *Styl*.
27 Czesław Łapicz, "Chrześcijańsko-muzułmańska interferencja religijna w rękopisach Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego," in *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kalbos, kultūros ir raštijos tradicijos* (Vilnius: VU Leidykla, 2009), 304.

closest and the most faithful to the original text. This was extremely important to the Tatars, who paid particular attention to the purity of the message (cf. the *sola scriptura* principle). In addition, Budny used Old Church Slavonic manuscripts in producing the BN translation,[28] a probable explanation for the presence of Old Church Slavonic vocabulary in BN and the Tatar *tefsīr*.

It appears that the factors that directly influenced these types of "borrowings" were the religious and linguistic situation in the GDL, the education system at the time of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and religious polemics and disputes. Tatar religious texts often quote (for the sake of apologetics) arguments from religious polemics presented in original religious and moralizing texts, including Arab and Turkish writings. They also display an extensive knowledge of Polish Christian literature, such as Bible translations, hagiographies of saints and prophets, Christian tales, and legends (e.g., apocryphal gospels such as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, the apocryphal *Gospel of Matthew*, and the *Protoevangelium of James*), properly interpreted and confronted with the teaching of Islam. Previous research has revealed that Tatar manuscripts contain *Historyja barzo cudna* . . . by Krzysztof Pussman from 1543,[29] *Psalmy* (*Psalms*) translated by bishop Ignacy Krasicki,[30] *Legenda o św. Hiobie* (*The legend of St. Job*),[31] *Legenda o św. Grzegorzu* (*The legend of St. Gregory*),[32] and other sources from the Christian cultural sphere.

It must be noted that GDL Tatars engaged in dialogue with tradition: they did not mechanically rewrite the patterns found in Bible translations, but rather sought inspiration in them, modifying and confronting them with their own source texts and the premises of their own religion. Moreover, research shows that Tatar translations did not only follow this model – i.e., the paradigm of the Polish biblical style – but also contributed to shaping it.[33]

---

**28** Kępińska, "Z problematyki," 51.

**29** Maria Adamczyk, *Biblijno-apokryficzne narracje w literaturze staropolskiej do końca XVI wieku* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1980); Andrzej Drozd, "Staropolski apokryf w muzułmańskich księgach. (Tatarska adaptacja Historyji barzo cudnej o stworzeniu nieba i ziemie Krzysztofa Pussmana)," in *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka* 3 (1996): 95–134.

**30** Iwona Radziszewska, "Chamaiły jako typ piśmiennictwa religijnego muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (na podstawie słowiańskiej warstwy językowej)" (PhD diss., Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2010), 129–30.

**31** Andrzej Drozd, "Tatarska wersja pieśni-legendy o św. Hiobie," *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka* 2 (1995): 163–95.

**32** Krystyna Dufala, "Legenda o św. Grzegorzu w kitabie Tatarów–muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego," in *Chrestomatia teolingwistyki*, ed. Aleksander Gadomski and Czesław Łapicz (Symferopol [Simferopol]: Universum, 2009), 205–20.

**33** Cf. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Dialogue*, 121–98.

## 2.2 Borrowings from Tatar *tefsīr* Literature into Polish

As a consequence of Tatar translation activity, Polish religious terminology was enriched with vocabulary specific to the Islamic context.[34] The creation of this terminology can be attributed to Muslim translators, for no Polish Qur'an translation tradition existed prior to the sixteenth century. In researching this point, we limited our scope to so-called Islamicisms, i.e., lexemes with Arabic, Persian or Turkish etymology that are semantically linked to Islam and which exist particularly in GDL Tatars' written texts, in historical dictionaries of the Polish language, and in the oral tradition of the Tatar ethnic group. All Islamicisms constitute Polish Muslim terminology. For the analysis, we consulted *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku* (SPolXVI), *Słownik języka polskiego* (SWil) and *Słownik języka A. Mickiewicza* (SMick).[35]

In defining the scope of our analysis, we considered the chronological development of the Polish language, which is typically divided into three periods: Old Polish (from mid-twelfth century to the turn of the sixteenth century), Middle Polish (from the early sixteenth century to the eighth decade of the eighteenth century), and Modern Polish (from the eighth decade of the 18th century to the present).[36] Besides the term *sołtan* ("sultan") and the expression *Mahometowy grob* ("Mohameddan tomb") – no words related to Islam can be found in the Old Polish period, even though the translation of the Qur'an into Latin already existed in Europe at the time. The Middle Polish period saw the origin of Tatar manuscript literature and the recording of a larger amount of Islamic terminology in historical dictionaries of the Polish language, which are representative of the lexis of the period. The Modern Polish period saw the first translations of the Qur'an into Polish being printed and the number of words semantically related to Islam increased in the lexicon of the Polish language.

In this section, we focus on the Middle Polish period, i.e., the period when Tatar religious literature originated, including the translation of the Qur'an into Polish in the form of the *tefsīr* described at the beginning of section 2. Apart from dictionaries containing the lexis of the period, we consulted the glossaries of Mus-

**34** This section draws on previously published work: Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Kształtowanie się polskiej terminologii muzułmańskiej* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2004).

**35** *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku*, vols. 1–38 (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: IBL, 1966–2020); *Słownik języka polskiego*, vols. 1–2 (Wilno [Vilnius]: Maurycy Orgelbrand, 1861); *Słownik języka A. Mickiewicza*, ed. Karol Górski, vols. 1–11 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich–Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1962–1983).

**36** Zenon Klemensiewicz, *Historia języka polskiego*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: PWN, 1985), 31.

lim terminology created by Shirin Akiner and Ali Woronowicz,[37] who relied on linguistic material excerpted from the religious literature of GDL Tatars. Woronowicz described the vocabulary drawn from *tefsīr*s, *chamail*s, *kitāb*s, and tomb inscriptions, as well as from the colloquial speech of GDL Tatars; meanwhile, Akiner drafted her glossary on the basis of a nineteenth-century *kitāb* from the collection of the British Museum in London (Ms OR. 13,020). In total, the glossaries comprise 526 Islamic terms (with a total of over 800 terms when all variants are considered). We established that the lexemes constituting Polish Muslim terminology are of Arabic origin (452) and that these terms were incorporated into Polish directly or indirectly from Turkish, mainly Ottoman Turkish. There are fewer words of Turkic (51) and Persian (23) origin, most of which were borrowed through the medium of Turkish rather than directly. Although some of these Islamic terms actually originated in non-Islamicate languages, they were incorporated into the Tatar manuscripts through Islamicate languages. These terms are as follows: from Greek *drachma* "drachma, ancient Greek coin," *kalem* "quill pen," *kimijej* "chemistry," *talsim* "talisman," from Hebrew *dżehenniem* "hell, Gehenna," and from Ethiopian *mihrab* "temple," *szatan* "satan."

All Islamic terms of the Middle Polish period can be categorized as follows:

1. sporadically used (found only in some historical texts), e.g., *akinde* "mandatory afternoon prayer," *ʿarafat* "the mountain near Mecca," *dżahil* "ignorant, unaware (of something), uninformed," *firdews* "paradise," *sabach* "morning prayer": 59 words in total;
2. periodically used (typical only of a specific era, e.g., found only in Middle Polish or Modern Polish and recorded mainly in SMick, SWil, or other dictionaries where they are described as archaisms or labeled with terms such as *dated, historical, obsolete*, etc.), e.g., *adżem* "foreign, non-Arab," *aman* "peace, security, safety," *kadus* "judge," *rejs* "head of something," *surata* "sūra," *zjaret* "cemetery": 95 words in total;
3. frequently used (those functioning in Polish without interruption since their borrowing), e.g., *alim* "scholar," *bajram* "holiday," *chutba* "sermon," *fatwa* "legal opinion," *hadż* "pilgrimage," *kadi* "judge," *namaz* "mandatory prayer," *salat* "prayer": 80 words in total.[38]

Group 1 is clearly the most numerous and includes words found only in the literature of Polish Muslims. Most of these words – particularly proper names – lack a

**37** Shirin Akiner, "The Vocabulary of a Byelorussian K'it'ab in the British Museum," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1973): 55–84; Ali Woronowicz, "Kitab Tatarów litewskich i jego zawartość," *Rocznik Tatarski* 2 (1935): 376–94.

**38** For a full list and description, see Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Kształtowanie*, 126–49.

Slavic lexical equivalent. They cannot be classified as borrowings used in the Polish language; they are rather "foreign words used in Polish."[39] Their use cannot be limited to one period, either, for even though GDL Tatars' manuscripts originated in the second half of the sixteenth century, the original versions have not survived, and researchers studying Muslim religious literature must rely on copies of the original texts, which originate from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.

While some of the terms drawn from the literature of GDL Tatars can only be found in the pages of Tatar texts, others became a part of general Polish lexis, as described in the lexicographic literature. Indeed, the Islamicisms found in Akiner's and Woronowicz's glossaries are typical not just of the Tatar ethnolect, for some of them were incorporated into the Polish language. Most of these are recorded in dictionaries reflecting the Polish language used in the north-eastern borderland in the nineteenth century. In this way, Tatars – who had lived in the territory of the GDL since the fourteenth century – influenced the language of their Slavic neighbors.

## 3 The Nineteenth-Century Translation of the Qur'an into Polish

How these processes of mutual Christian-Muslim influence looked in practice is best exemplified by the history of a nineteenth-century Qur'an translation into Polish. The translation in question, which we will discuss in this section,[40] is recognized as the first printed rendering of the Qur'an into Polish. It originated in the north-eastern borderlands of the Kingdom of Poland; its two translators, Fr. Dionizy Chlewiński (1793–1870) and Ignacy Domeyko (1802–1889) – both Vilnius Philomaths – cooperated with the Tatar community while working on the translation.[41] Specifically, the Philomaths worked closely with a Tatar from Novahrudak, Józef Sobolewski, the contemporary writer of the first Muslim catechism, *Wykład*

**39** Ananiasz Zajączkowski, *Studia orientalistyczne z dziejów słownictwa polskiego* (Wrocław: Nakład *Wrocławskiego* Towarzystwa Naukowego, 1953), 78.

**40** This part of the paper was based on the following publications: Tamara Bairašauskaitė, "Pirmasis Korano vertimas Lietuvoje," *Mūsų Praeitis* 4 (1994): 5–18; Zbigniew J. Wójcik, "Filomacki przekład Alkoranu dla Tatarów nowogródzkich," *Literatura Ludowa* 39, no. 3 (1995): 15–28; Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, "Rękopis z Czombrowa. Z zagadnień edycji filomackiego przekładu Koranu," *NURT SVD* 2 (2019): 8–22.

**41** Wójcik, *Filomacki*.

*wiary machometańskiej czyli islamskiej* ("Presentation of the Mohameddan faith") in 1830.[42]

Until recently only one passage of the text, held at Kórnik Library,[43] was available, and the date of origin of the translation and the exact date of its printing were not known. This unfinished edition from Bernard Potocki's publishing house in Poznań was incomplete, comprising only the first eleven chapters – that is, approximately one quarter of the Qur'anic text. For a long time, another translation into Polish printed in Warsaw in 1858 was considered to be the first printed Qur'an in Polish. Until the 1990s, there existed a consensus among scholars that it was Józef Sobolewski or Jan Buczacki or – as implied by the publisher[44] – Buczacki's father Selim, or even his grandfather Jakub, who authored this (literary) translation of the Qur'an into the Polish language.[45] However, more recent academic works (published after 1990) showed that there was a connection between the Kórnik Library document – later recognized as the Philomaths' translation[46] – and the 1858 Warsaw edition.[47]

---

**42** Sobolewski's work contains passages of the Philomaths' translation. See Czesław Łapicz, "Źródła cytatów koranicznych w Wykładzie wiary machometańskiej czyli iślamskiej . . . Józefa Sobolewskiego z 1830 r.," in *Tatarzy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w historii, języku i kulturze*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz (Toruń: TNT, 2013), 185–202.

**43** Kórnik Library, katalog Druki XIX-wieczne [Kórnik Library, 19th-century prints catalog], http://baza1-bis.man.poznan.pl/cgi-bin/makwww.exe?BM=15&IM=02&WI=KORAN&NU=01&DD=1. Last accessed November 27, 2022.

**44** Cf. *Bibliografia Polska Estreichera XIX stulecia*, vol. 3 (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1876), 39; vol. 6 (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności 1881), 379; *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna Ilustrowana*, vol. 37–38 (Warszawa: Satrurnin Sikorski, 1905). Kórnik Library has not updated the description, which was adopted after Estreicher. Hence it is stated that it is a translation by Józef Sobolewski, published by Bernard Potocki in Poznań, without a title card, and is unfinished. Two probable printing dates are provided: 1828 and 1848. http://baza1-bis.man.poznan.pl/cgi-bin/makwww.exe?BM=15&IM=02&WI=KORAN&NU=01&DD=1. Last accessed November 27, 2022. See the article by Musa Çaxarxan Czachorowski, "Polskie tłumaczenia Koranu," *NURT SVD* 2 (2021): 138–58.

**45** As in Mazen Arafe, *Świat arabski w piśmiennictwie polskim XIX wieku* (Lublin: 1994), 171; cf. Drozd, *Arabskie*, 17.

**46** Wójcik, *Filomacki*.

**47** Cf. Bairašauskaitė, "Pirmasis"; Wójcik, *Filomacki*; Tamara Bairašauskaitė, *Lietuvos totoriai XIX amžiuje* (Vilnius: 1996); Andrzej Drozd, "W sprawie autorstwa Koranu Buczackiego," in *Z Mekki do Poznania*, ed. Henryk Jankowski (Poznań: Katedra Orientalistyki i Bałtologii. Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1998), 69–83; Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Kształtowanie*; Czesław Łapicz, "Niezwykłe losy pierwszego drukowanego przekładu Koranu na język polski," *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne Seria Językoznawcza* 20, no. 2 (2013): 129–43; Łapicz, *Źródła*, 185–202; Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Przekład terminologii religijnej islamu w polskich tłumaczeniach Koranu na tle biblijnej tradycji translatorycznej* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2013).

The questions that until recently remained unanswered were the following:

1. What was the source text that the Philomaths drew upon? It was suggested that the translators could have consulted the translation of the Qur'an into French rendered by Claude-Étienne Savary in 1821, and later, while preparing the Warsaw edition, the translation made by Wojciech Kazimirski-Biberstein in 1840. Moreover, some scholars believed that this Polish translation was modeled upon a Tatar *tefsīr*.[48]
2. What was the nature of the relationship between the Kórnik Library document and the 1858 Warsaw edition? Scholars suggested that two other documents could also be related: a manuscript of a Polish Qur'an translation from Chambrova, discovered in 2014,[49] and a Tatar *tefsīr* held at the Hrodna State Museum of the History of Religion, which is a Polish Qur'an translation (printed in 1858) that was transliterated from the Latin to the Arabic script.[50]

## 3.1 Recent Results of Interdisciplinary Research

The *Tefsir* project team conducted detailed research on the Chambrova manuscript and made several important discoveries. For instance, we established new facts concerning its authorship and the circumstances of its origin, and we conducted a historical and philological analysis of the text, showing that the Chambrova manuscript is the basis for all the texts mentioned above in question two. In addition, we uncovered new insight into the nature of the Philomaths' translation. It has been proven that the Qur'an was translated into Polish by two Philomaths from Vilnius. In particular, we have shown that the work, for the most part, was done by Fr. Dionizy Chlewiński, while Ignacy Domeyko improved the translation stylistically.[51] The Philomaths developed their interest in the Qur'an

---

**48** Wójcik, *Filomacki*; Drozd, *W sprawie*. However, Drozd reviewed this statement several years later when he wrote that the Philomaths translated the Qur'an from French, completed their translation in the years 1928–1929, and dedicated it to the Polish Tatars; cf. Drozd, *Arabskie*, 17.

**49** For more on the history of the discovery and comprehensive research on the matter, consult the following publications: Artur Konopacki, Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, and Czesław Łapicz, "Nieznany rękopis polskiego przekładu Koranu," in *Estetyczne aspekty literatury polskich, białoruskich i litewskich Tatarów (od XVI do XXI w.)*, ed. Grzegorz Czerwiński and Artur Konopacki (Białystok: 2015), 49–67; Artur Konopacki, Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, and Czesław Łapicz, "Cztery warianty filomackiego przekładu Koranu (XIX wiek)," in *Tatarskie dziedzictwo kulturowe*, vol. 2: *Historia. Literatura. Sztuka*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, Czesław Łapicz, and Galina Miškinienė (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2018), 7–33.

**50** Cf. MS КП 31388, fol. 4.

**51** Wójcik, *Filomacki przekład Koranu i jego losy*, 75–84.

largely thanks to their membership in the circle of professors and students at Vilnius University between 1815–1830 who engaged in comprehensive study of the history of Oriental languages.

However, we can assume that the Philomaths' interest in *Tatarism* – as it was termed by Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855)[52] – did not result solely from a Romantic fascination with the Orient. In fact, they also had daily contact with Muslims and their culture: the Polish nobility, of which these two individuals were members, maintained good neighborly relations with the Tatars.[53] This was the case in the settlements of Novahrudak and Vilnius, with which the Philomaths were connected, as well as in many other towns and villages in the Vilnius region.[54] Therefore, it appears that these two graduates of Vilnius University took upon themselves the mission of translating the holy book of Islam into Polish for the benefit of the Novahrudak Tatars. This can be deduced directly from their letters, written to other Philomaths from Vilnius, e.g.:

> Dyoniz will pay me a visit shortly so that we can finish our work for the Tatars, of which you are aware. As inaccurate and insufficient as this thing may be, it will meet their need to understand themselves and henceforth the language of their fathers will become even more precious to them.
>
> (An excerpt from Domeyko's letter to Pietraszkiewicz, 20 November/2 December 1828).[55]

The original date of the translation was another important point addressed by the *Tefsir* project. The watermark on the paper used for the manuscript shows the year 1821, so the translation could have been done after this date, but most probably no later than mid-1829. These facts were confirmed by an analysis of the language of the manuscript,[56] which demonstrated that the majority of the lin-

52 Adam Mickiewicz was a Polish national poet, dramatist, essayist, publicist, translator, and political activist.

53 Artur Konopacki, "Tatarzy w Nowogródku a rękopis tłumaczenia Koranu z Czombrowa," in *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019), 107–17.

54 For instance, in 1796, Novahrudak had a population of 424 Christians, 246 Jews and Karaites, and 173 Tatars. A similar ethnic composition could be found in the entire Novahrudak district at the turn of the nineteenth century. After Czesław Łapicz, "Geneza i źródła fascynacji Adama Mickiewicza Orientem," in *Krymsko-polskie zeszyty naukowe. Dni Adama Mickiewicza na Krymie*, ed. Aleksander Gadomski (Symferopol: Universum, 2004), 237.

55 *Archiwum Filomatów*, vol. 1: *Na zesłaniu*, ed. Czesław Zgorzelski (Wrocław: 1973), 144.

56 Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, "Filomacki przekład Koranu. Filologiczna analiza porównawcza rękopisu z Czombrowa i tzw. Koranu Buczackiego," in *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019), 181–90.

guistic features – orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical – were typical of the variety of the Polish language used in the north-eastern borderland in the first half of the nineteenth century.

A comparison of the Chambrova document and the Warsaw edition has proven that the two texts are related, the latter being a modernized version of the former. Obsolete grammatical and lexical forms found in the original version of the Philomaths' translation were replaced with newer ones in the Warsaw edition. In other words, the orthographic and grammatical layers underwent revision, obscuring the Polish linguistic features that had become outdated by the mid-nineteenth century.

In addition, we may conclude that the Tatar *tefsīr* held at the Hrodna State Museum of the History of Religion is another (formal) version of the Philomaths' translation, which an anonymous author provided in the form of a traditional Tatar *tefsīr*, recorded in the Arabic script. This *tefsīr* is a transliterated version of the Warsaw edition, written next to the Arabic-language text of the Qur'an.[57] The translation into Polish by the Philomaths has also been found in other Tatar manuscripts, including *kitāb*s and *chamail*s.[58] These findings lead us to the conclusion that the Tatar community fully accepted this "Christian" translation of the Qur'an.

Another question for this research project concerned the basis of the translation. In some of their letters, the Philomaths state that they translated the Qur'an from the French original while also consulting the source text in Arabic. A comparative analysis of the Polish text with the French translations of the time shows that the Philomaths relied on the translation by Claude-Étienne Savary, made in 1821.[59] Moreover, since some scholars have argued that the Philomaths may have used the Tatar *tefsīr*, we wanted to find evidence to support or reject this claim. Wójcik was the first to point to the relationship between the Tatar *tefsīr* and the translation

**57** Czesław Łapicz and Iwona Radziszewska, "*Tefsir* z Grodna a Koran Jana Murzy Tarak Buczackiego (studium porównawcze na podstawie sury 69)," in *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019), 191–207.

**58** Mihail Tarelka, "Пераклад карана на польскую мову 1858 г. выдання ў рукапісах татараў Беларусі, Літвы і Польшчы," in *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz (Toruń: 2019), 209–19.

**59** Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, Aleksandra Walkiewicz, "Dwa warianty filomackiego tłumaczenia Koranu w relacji do podstawy źródłowej," in *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, ed. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019), 153–80.

made by the Polish Philomaths.[60] In a paper published in 1995, he claimed that the Philomaths must have used the translation made by the Novahrudak Tatars as a means to verify more intricate passages from Claude-Étienne Savary's French translation. Andrzej Drozd shared this conviction in his paper from 1998.[61] Alternatively, this *tefsīr* could have become an inspiration for the editors of the Philomaths' translation, who prepared the Warsaw edition (1858).[62] Other scholars surmise that the Vilnius Philomaths did not rely on the GDL Tatars' religious books directly, even though their translation originated in the Tatar environment.[63] For instance, Łapicz[64] compared the *al-Fātiḥa* (opening) *sūra* from the Tatar *tefsīr* (1788)[65] and the Kórnik Library copy of the Philomaths' translation; the comparison showed little overlap. In our research, we also assessed the first verses of *sūra* 69 from the Tatar and Philomaths' translations side-by-side. Both comparative analyses showed that Tatar translators tended to resolve certain issues in the translation differently from the Philomaths. That is, despite certain similarities with regard to the method of translation, the two translations differ significantly from each other. Therefore, we may conclude that the Philomaths did not rely on GDL Tatars' translations in their work.[66]

The Philomaths from Vilnius were aware of imperfections in their translation, of which they informed their readers. At the same time, they announced that their translation would address the needs of Slavic Muslims embedded in the Christian environment. This seems to have influenced their choice of translation strategy – namely, adaptation, understood as translation of the unknown by means of what is known, when the situation in the original text is not familiar in the target culture (e.g. the introduction of local color). This can be seen in the fact that the translation abounds in expressions – even whole phrases – of Christian provenance, added by the translators to make the difficult text of the Qur'an intelligible to readers. For example, they described *allāh* as the "Highest" or "Only God," the books as the "Word of God," "Gospel," "Pentateuch," "Psalms" or "Book of Psalms," the angels as "guardian angel" or "devil," the prophets as "servant of God," "apostle" or "Jesus Christ," and Judgement Day as the "Last Judgement,"

**60** Wójcik, *Filomacki.*

**61** Drozd, *W sprawie.*

**62** Drozd, *Arabskie*, 17–18.

**63** Cf. Artur Konopacki, *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI–XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), 136–38; Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Przekład*, 41.

**64** Łapicz, *Niezwykłe*, 129–43.

**65** The *Vilnius Tefsīr*, dated 1788. MS F 3–392, the Vilnius University Library, Vilnius.

**66** Kulwicka-Kamińska and Walkiewicz, *Dwa.*

"doomsday" or the "day of resurrection." Despite this, Tatars accepted this translation, as evidenced by the circulation of the translation in the Tatar *tefsīr*.

# 4 Conclusion

For over 620 years, Muslim Tatars have coexisted with Christians in the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which spans present-day Lithuania, north-eastern Poland, Belarus, and part of Ukraine. This situation has fostered interaction not only between religions but also between cultures and languages. The Christian exegetical scholarship of the region had a profound impact on the non-Arabophone Muslim community. The amalgam of Christian elements with the Muslim tradition made the Qur'an in Polish unique for Muslims in Eastern Europe. The proximity of two religious systems that shared a common language paved the ground for a complex linguistic interaction: not only did Polish-speaking Muslims borrow expressions common in the Christian canon, but many Polish-speaking non-Muslims also began using words originating from Islamic literature. In the final section of this chapter, we described how Christians collaborated with Muslims to produce a translation for the benefit of the Muslim communities; as a result, the Muslim minority not only accepted the translation, but also actively incorporated it into their own literary practices.

# Bibliography

Adamczyk, Maria. *Biblijno-apokryficzne narracje w literaturze staropolskiej do końca XVI wieku*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1980.
Akiner, Shirin. "The Vocabulary of a Byelorussian K'it'ab in the British Museum." *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1973): 55–84.
Arafe, Mazen. *Świat arabski w piśmiennictwie polskim XIX wieku*. Lublin: 1994.
*Archiwum Filomatów*, vol. 1: *Na zesłaniu*. Edited by Czesław Zgorzelski. Wrocław: Wyd. J. Czubek, 1973.
Bairašauskaitė, Tamara. "Pirmasis Korano vertimas Lietuvoje." *Mūsų Praeitis* no. 4 (1994): 5–18.
Bairašauskaitė, Tamara. *Lietuvos totoriai XIX amžiuje*. Vilnius: Mintis, 1996.
*Biblia brzeska 1563*. Clifton–Kraków: Kalwin Publishing, 2003.
*Biblia gdańska. The New Testament*. Kraków: ZWBPŚw „Na Straży", 1996.
*Biblia gdańska. The Old Testament*. Kraków: ZWBPŚw „Na Straży", 2004.
*Biblia w przekładzie ks. Jakuba Wujka z 1599 r.*, B-type transcription of the source text from the sixteenth century. Warszawa: Vocatio, 2000.
*Bibliografia Polska Estreichera XIX stulecia*, vol. 3. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1876.
*Bibliografia Polska Estreichera XIX stulecia*, vol. 6. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1881.

Bieńkowska, Danuta. *Styl językowy przekładu Nowego Testamentu Jakuba Wujka. (Na materiale czterech Ewangelii)*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1992.

Czachorowski, Musa Çaxarxan. “Polskie tłumaczenia Koranu.” *NURT SVD* 2 (2021): 138–158.

Drozd, Andrzej. “Staropolski apokryf w muzułmańskich księgach. (Tatarska adaptacja Historyji barzo cudnej o stworzeniu nieba i ziemie Krzysztofa Pussmana).” *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne*. *Seria Literacka* 3 (1996): 95–134.

Drozd, Andrzej. “Tatarska wersja pieśni-legendy o św. Hiobie.” *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne*. *Seria Literacka* 2 (1995): 163–95.

Drozd, Andrzej. “W sprawie autorstwa Koranu Buczackiego.” In *Z Mekki do Poznania*, edited by Henryk Jankowski, 69–83. Poznań: Katedra Orientalistyki i Bałtologii. Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1998.

Drozd, Andrzej. “Wpływy chrześcijańskie na literatury Tatarów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej: między antagonizmem a symbiozą.” *Pamiętnik Literacki* 88 (1997): 3–34.

Drozd, Andrzej. *Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII wieku. Zagadnienia gramatyczne na materiale chutb świątecznych*. Warszawa: Dialog, 1999.

Dufala, Krystyna. “Legenda o św. Grzegorzu w kitabie Tatarów – muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego.” In *Chrestomatia teolingwistyki*, edited by Aleksander Gadomski and Czesław Łapicz, 205–220. Symferopol [Simferopol]: Universum, 2009.

Kępińska, Alina. “Z problematyki opisu składni XVI-wiecznych przekładów Ewangelii na język polski.” In *Staropolskie spotkania językoznawcze* 1. *Jak badać teksty staropolskie?*, edited by Tomasz Mika, Dorota Rojszczak-Robińska, and Olga Stramczewska, 51–62. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Rys, 2015.

Klemensiewicz, Zenon. *Historia języka polskiego*. Warszawa: PWN, 1985.

Konopacki, Artur, Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna, and Czesław Łapicz. “Nieznany rękopis polskiego przekładu Koranu.” In *Estetyczne aspekty literatury polskich, białoruskich i litewskich Tatarów (od XVI do XXI w.). Colloquia Orientalia Bialostocensia*, edited by Grzegorz Czerwiński and Artur Konopacki, 49–67. Białystok: 2015.

Konopacki, Artur, Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna, and Czesław Łapicz. “Cztery warianty filomackiego przekładu Koranu (XIX wiek).” In *Tatarskie dziedzictwo kulturowe*, vol. 2: *Historia. Literatura. Sztuka*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, Czesław Łapicz, and Galina Miškinienė, 7–33. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2018.

Konopacki, Artur. “Tatarzy w Nowogródku a rękopis tłumaczenia Koranu z Czombrowa.” In *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz, 107–17. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019.

Konopacki, Artur. *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI–XIX wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna and Aleksandra Walkiewicz. “Dwa warianty filomackiego tłumaczenia Koranu w relacji do podstawy źródłowej.” In *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz, 153–80. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna and Czesław Łapicz. “Interdyscyplinarne studia nad filomackim przekładem Koranu na język polski.” In *Pomiędzy Wschodem i Zachodem. Dzieje Tatarów wpisane w Europę Środkowo-Wschodnią*, edited by Artur Konopacki, 11–25. Warszawa: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Związek Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Oddział Podlaski, 2020.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna and Czesław Łapicz. *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury*

*narodowej*. vol. 1: *Komentarz filologiczno-historyczny*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2022.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna and Czesław Łapicz. *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury narodowej*, vol. 2: *Faksymile*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2022.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna and Czesław Łapicz. *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury narodowej*. vol. 3: *Transliteracja*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2022.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. "Filomacki przekład Koranu. Filologiczna analiza porównawcza rękopisu z Czombrowa i tzw. Koranu Buczackiego." In *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz, 181–90. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. "O czym informują glosy w tatarskiej literaturze przekładowej? (na przykładzie tefsiru z Olity)." *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich* 2 (2015): 45–52.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. "Rękopis z Czombrowa. Z zagadnień edycji filomackiego przekładu Koranu." *NURT SVD 2* (2019) vol. 146, no. 2: 8–22.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. *Dialogue of Scriptures: the Tatar Tefsir in the Context of Biblical and Qur'anic Interpretations*. Berlin-New York: Peter Lang Verlag, 2018.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. *Kształtowanie się polskiej terminologii muzułmańskiej*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2004.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. *Przekład terminologii religijnej islamu w polskich tłumaczeniach Koranu na tle biblijnej tradycji translatorycznej*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2013.

Kwilecka, Irena, *Studia nad staropolskimi przekładami Biblii*. Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza. Wydział Teologiczny: Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Slawistyki, 2003.

Lisowski, Tomasz. *Sola Scriptura. Leksyka Nowego Testamentu Biblii Gdańskiej (1632) na tle porównawczym. Ujęcie kwantytatywno-dystrybucyjne*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Rys, 2010.

Łapicz, Czesław, and Iwona Radziszewska. "Tefsir z Grodna a Koran Jana Murzy Tarak Buczackiego (studium porównawcze na podstawie sury 69)." In *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz, 191–207. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019.

Łapicz, Czesław. "Chrześcijańsko-muzułmańska interferencja religijna w rękopisach Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego." In *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kalbos, kultūros ir raštijos tradicijos*, edited by Sergejus Temčinas, Galina Miškinienė, Marina Čistiakova, and Nadežda Morozova, 293–310. Vilnius: VU Leidykla, 2009.

Łapicz, Czesław. "Czy piśmiennictwo Tatarów – muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego jest słowiańskim aljamiado?" In *W podróży za słowem: księga pamiątkowa z okazji jubileuszu 70-lecia urodzin profesora Emila Tokarza*, edited by Mateusz Warchał, 59–70. Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Techniczno-Humanistycznej, 2014.

Łapicz, Czesław. "Geneza i źródła fascynacji Adama Mickiewicza Orientem," In *Krymsko-polskie zeszyty naukowe. Dni Adama Mickiewicza na Krymie*, edited by Aleksander Gadomski, 235–43. Symferopol: Universum, 2004.

Łapicz, Czesław. "Niezwykłe losy pierwszego drukowanego przekładu Koranu na język polski." *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne Seria Językoznawcza* 20 (40), no. 2 (2013): 129–43.

Łapicz, Czesław. "Źródła cytatów koranicznych w Wykładzie wiary machometańskiej czyli iślamskiej . . . Józefa Sobolewskiego z 1830 r." In *Tatarzy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w historii, języku i kulturze*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz, 185–202. Toruń: TNT, 2013.

Łapicz, Czesław. *Kitab Tatarów litewsko-polskich. (Paleografia. Grafia. Język)*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 1986.

Radziszewska, Iwona. “Chamaiły jako typ piśmiennictwa religijnego muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (na podstawie słowiańskiej warstwy językowej).” PhD diss., Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2010.

*Słownik języka A. Mickiewicza*, edited by Karol Górski. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich–Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1962–1983.

*Słownik języka polskiego*. Wilno [Vilnius]: Maurycy Orgelbrand, 1861.

*Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku*. Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: IBL, 1966–2020.

Tarelka, Mihail. “Пераклад карана на польскую мову 1858 г. выдання ў рукапісах татараў Беларусі, Літвы і Польшчы.” In *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, edited by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz, 209–19. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2019.

*Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna Ilustrowana*, vol. 37–38.Warszawa: Satrurnin Sikorski, 1905.

Woronowicz, Ali. “Kitab Tatarów litewskich i jego zawartość.” *Rocznik Tatarski* 2 (1935): 376–394.

Wójcik, Zbigniew J. “Filomacki przekład Alkoranu dla Tatarów nowogródzkich.” *Literatura Ludowa* 39, no. 3 (1995): 15–28.

Zajączkowski, Ananiasz. *Studia orientalistyczne z dziejów słownictwa polskiego*. Wrocław: Nakład *Wrocławskiego* Towarzystwa Naukowego, 1953.

# Part 2: **Regional Diversity**

Enes Karić

# The Qur'an in the Manuscript Tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina

## 1 Introduction

Although Bosnia's place within the cultural space of Europe is debated, its geographical proximity to Central Europe, as well as its historical position in the borderlands of the Ottoman Empire, means that the Bosnian Islamic tradition is an important factor in understanding the Qur'anic practices of European Muslims. The Bosnian Muslim community dates from the fifteenth century, a point which marked the beginning of Islamization in the region. Over several centuries, the Slavic population of the area converted to Islam and, through the activities of its educated classes, contributed to the expansion and dissemination of Ottoman culture. As will be shown in this chapter, many forms of engagement with the Qur'an, although influenced by major trends in the Ottoman Empire, took a unique form specific to the region.

As in other places that came under the influence of Islam, the Qur'an became a cornerstone of many devotional, artistic and intellectual practices in Bosnia. The most important of these practices concern (1) a melodious reciting of the Qur'an, (2) the use of calligraphy in copying, and (3) scholarly engagements with Qur'an interpretation. This chapter will focus primarily on the second type of practice and discuss elements specific to Bosnian traditions of Qur'an manuscript production.

By and large, Bosnian Muslims followed the example set by their coreligionists in Muslim-majority countries. Hundreds of written Qur'an copies preserved in Bosnia today are richly decorated and embellished, demonstrating the copyists' knowledge of calligraphical methods of the traditional calligraphy schools. Alongside elaborately illustrated Qur'an manuscripts meant to please the reader's eye, we also find copies written in a "common" script. These manuscripts, produced primarily by students of Bosnian *madrasa*s, although lacking elaborated ornamentation, were nevertheless highly respected in the local Muslim community. Copying the Qur'an by hand continued even after the printing press had spread widely in Bosnia. Traditional Islamic calligraphy has even influenced the modern production of devotional texts: one of the most recent examples of this phenomenon is a bilingual Arabic-Bosnian edition of *al-Nasab al-sharīf* ("The noble lineage

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-005

of the Prophet Muhammad"),[1] where the seventeenth-century Arabic original is reprinted together with a translation written in stylized calligraphic Latin letters.

For the following discussion, it is helpful to introduce some notions related to Qur'an manuscript production that are specific to the Bosnian context. In Bosnia, the Qur'an was copied in its entirety or in parts. A complete copy – written by hand or printed – is called *mushaf* (Arabic *muṣḥaf* or *al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf,* "the holy Qur'an"). The word *enʿām* (Arabic *anʿām*) denotes a selection (or collection) of the parts of the Qur'an. It is believed that a home that contains an *en'am* receives God's blessing. Furthermore, the *ed'ije* (Arabic *ad'iyah*) is a collection of Qur'anic sentences and verses for prayers. The word *džuz'ovi* (Arabic *ajzā'*) denotes manuscripts of the Qur'an in thirty parts. Finally, the term *levhe* (Arabic *lawḥāt*) in this context refers to calligraphically written verses of the Qur'an (*āyā*s) containing a divine message, which adorn the walls of mosques, *tekke*s, *madrasa*s, *hanikah*s (Sufi lodges) or private homes. Typical examples of such texts are the verse *Kullu man 'alayhā fān* ("All that is on earth will perish," Q 55:26) or *Am li al-insān mā tamannā* ("Or shall man have what he wishes?" Q 53:24). Epigraphic uses of the Qur'an are also still commonplace in Bosnia. The word *tarih* (Arabic *ta'rīkh*) denotes inscription on a grave (*mezār*), which often includes a short excerpt from the Qur'an on the tombstone.[2] There are many exquisite examples of this use of Qur'anic verses. As we will see later in this chapter, all the aforementioned forms of reproducing and referencing the Qur'anic text (*mushaf, enʿam, ed'ije, džuz'ovi, levhe, tarih*) have an important role in the rituals of Bosnian Muslims and were believed to confer *bereket* (*al-baraka,* "God's blessing") upon both the observer and the beneficiary of the ritual.

In what follows, I will first discuss major centers of Qur'anic manuscript production in the territory of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. The second section will focus on the specifics of Qur'an embellishment in the region. Finally, the third section will look at the use of Qur'an copies in rituals. Unlike the other chapters in this volume focusing on specific regions, this contribution does not provide an overview of Qur'an translations into Bosnian during the Ottoman period; this is due to the scarcity of (known) sources. We know that premodern educated Bos-

**1** *Al-Nasab al-Sharīf* is a devotional work by Mahfûz bin-Mehmed Gülşenî dedicated to describing the noble lineage of the Prophet Muhammad. The manuscript in question originates from the early seventeenth century and was used in Sufi circles of piety and learning. In 1997, I translated the manuscript from Arabic into Bosnian; Amir Reko created the calligraphic typeface for the Latin script. See: Mahfûz bin-Mehmed Gülşenî, Enes Karić, Amir Reko, *An-Nasab aš-šarīf. Plemenita loza Božijega poslanika Muhammeda a.s.* (Zürich: Bošnjački Institut, 1998).

**2** Mehmed Mujezinović, *Islamska epigrafika Bosne i Hercegovine,* vols. I–III (Sarajevo: Sarajevo-Publishing, 1998).

nians were fluent in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian, and hence could fully participate in transnational Muslim intellectual production and activities without a reliance on local vernaculars. Bosnian manuscript libraries contain a number of Qur'an copies that contain interlinear translation in Ottoman Turkish and Persian,[3] which were probably used as instructional material in *madrasa*s. However, establishing the origin and circulation of these copies requires further research. Qur'an translations into Bosnian began appearing at the turn of the twentieth century, and their number has increased substantially in recent years.[4]

## 2 Centers of Qur'an Manuscript Production

Many Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts written in Bosnia starting from the sixteenth century, or brought to the region from different parts of the Ottoman Empire, suggest that several cities in Bosnia were key centers of Islamic education and scholarly activity. When it comes to Qur'anic calligraphy, Sarajevo was undoubtedly the primary center. The city had many religious schools, such as Firuz-begova *madrasa* (established 1507) and Gazi Husrev-begova *madrasa* (established 1537), as well as the Gazi Husrev-beg Library (established 1537, henceforth GHB). Of almost twenty detailed catalogs that describe the holdings of this library, at least three are dedicated entirely to manuscripts of the Qur'an (both complete and incomplete, as well as illustrated copies). Scholar Osman Lavić, who edited one of the catalogs – specifically the fifteenth volume, which deals primarily with Qur'an manuscript copies – notes the following:

> The volume lists 552 manuscripts, including 447 *muṣḥaf*, 52 *juz'*, 8 translations of the Qur'an and 45 *anām*. Together with the previous volumes [of the GHB catalogs where *muṣḥaf*s were also treated, e.g., volume I and XI] we can conclude that Gazi Husrev bey's Library contains

3 Osman Lavić, *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa* XV (London, Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka u Sarajevu, 1427/2006), 16.

4 The following translations of the Qur'an in Bosnian (Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin) were published between 1895–2004: *Коран,* trans. Mićo Ljubibratić (Beograd: Kolarčeva zaklada, 1895); *Prevod Kur'ana,* trans. Ali Riza Karabeg (Mostar: Prosvjeta, 1937); *Kur'an Časni,* trans. Muhamed Pandža and Mehmed Džemaludin Čaušević (Sarajevo: Džemaludin Čaušević, 1937); *Prijevod Kur'ana,* trans. Besim Korkut (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut, 1977); *Kur'an – prijevod*, trans. and publ. Mustafa Mlivo, (Bugojno, 1994); *Kur'an s prijevodom na bosanski jezik,* trans. Enes Karić (Sarajevo: Bosanska knjiga, 1995); Muhammed Asad, *Poruka Kur'ana,* trans. from English into Bosnian Hilmo Ćerimović (Sarajevo: el-Kalem, 2004); *Kur'an s prijevodom na bosanski jezik*, trans. Esad Duraković (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 2004). Also, Omer Nakičević, *Hafiz Seid Zenunović i njegov prijevod Kur'ana* (Sarajevo: Fakultet islamskih nauka, 2002).

> 636 codices of *muṣḥaf* and 144 complete or incomplete copies which were written and bound separately according to *juz*'.[5]

Catalogs of Qur'anic manuscripts, such as the GHB catalogs, shed light on the provenance and condition of these manuscripts. Many copies entered the library collection already lacking some parts; meanwhile, others – although complete – suffered damage from water, fire, and humidity, as well physical destruction during the 1992–1995 war.[6] The specific character of Qur'an manuscripts means that names of calligraphers and copyists are often omitted for reasons of piety and humility. Owing to the rich tradition of manuscript production in Sarajevo, the majority of copies held by the GHB were written in local mosques, *madrasa*s, *tekke*s, and *hanikah*s (Sufi lodges), as well as in private homes. These copies often have exquisite binding, most commonly a leather cover with etched rosettes.[7] The covers were most probably produced in the city itself: two streets in Sarajevo, the *Mudželiti Mali* ("Small Bookbinders Street") and *Mudželiti Veliki* ("Big Bookbinders Street"), both close to the GHB, testify to the widespread bookbinding activity in the area.

Although Sarajevo was the center of the Bosnian Muslim *ʿulamāʾ* and many prominent Islamic institutions, it was not the only city with a lively range of manuscript production activities. The scriptorium in Foča, a city in Eastern Bosnia, was the site of intensive copying activities already in the 1580s.[8] Kasim Dobrača (1910–1979), an eminent Bosnian scholar who specialized in the scientific cataloging of Islamic manuscripts, notes that libraries in smaller cities such as Foča emerged as a result of new converts to Islam showing an interest in religious literature. While some books were brought from the Ottoman Empire and the broader Middle East, many books "were copied in [Bosnian] *madrasa*s, which had been opened in large numbers in the sixteenth century and later. It can be said that many *madrasa*s – if not all of them – were also copyist schools, where pupils copied books, primarily for their own use. This is how many libraries appeared in Bosnia, both private and public . . ."[9] Manuscripts related to Islamic sciences indicate the names of the copyists, correctors and legators, who were

---

**5** Lavić, *Katalog*, 16.

**6** On the destruction of manuscript heritage in Bosnia, see Andras Riedlmayer, *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992–1996: A Post-War Survey of Selected Municipalities* (Cambridge, 2002). A documentary directed by Sam Hobkinson, *The Love of Books: A Sarajevo Story* (2011) features the attempt to preserve the GHB during the Bosnian War.

**7** Lavić, *Katalog*, 16.

**8** Kasim Dobrača,"Skriptorij u Foči u XVI stoljeću," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 1 (1972): 70.

**9** Dobrača, "Skriptorij u Foči u XVI stoljeću," 67.

often local Bosnians: inscriptions such as "the work was copied by *ʿālim* Hajji Omer in his own hand and donated," "donated by Mustafa, son of Ferhad Travničanin," or "*muderris* [teacher] Šaban compared the copy with the original" are very common.[10]

Another prominent city was Jajce, in central Bosnia, which was the seat of the Bosnian monarch before it fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1528. In the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, Jajce flourished as a center of Islamic education. In his book, *Kraljevski grad pod sultanima,* ("The kings' town under the sultans"), Ismet Bušatlić notes that, besides a prominent scriptorium, Jajce also had mosques, *madrasa*s, libraries, and *tekke*s.[11] Bušatlić mentions several complete and partial manuscripts of the Qur'an which were probably copied in the scriptorium in Jajce. A Qur'an copy from 1694 contains the following note: "I've bought this *mushaf* from a drunkard, and I give it to the mosque of Esma Sultanija in Jajce as an old and valuable object. God's mercy upon me and my parents . . . "[12] Another indicator of the long-standing tradition of Qur'an copying in Jajce is a note in a manuscript from 1861, left by the copyist Ibrāhīm, son of Fejzulah:

> This is the sixth copy of [the] *mushaf,* which was, with the help of God, copied by the hand of the weak and feeble Ibrahim, son of Fejzulah, Imamović from *džemat* [Arabic *jamāʿat*, here "community"] Dnoluka in Jajce [and who works now] in the *maktab* of Kamičak-mahala in Ključ [the note was written] on Sunday at the time of *ikindija* [the afternoon prayer] on 7 Muḥarram 1278 [July 15, 1861].[13]

Hifzija Hasandedić (1915–2003), who studied Ottoman heritage in Herzegovina, showed that Mostar was another prominent place for the training of copyists and calligraphers. In his study titled *Muslimanske biblioteke u Mostaru* ("The Muslim libraries in Mostar"), Hasandedić describes Karađoz-begova Library as "the first known library in Mostar." The foundation of this library "was laid by [Mehmed Karađoz Bey (d. 1564), a nobleman from Mostar and a relative of the Ottoman vizier Rüstem Pasha]. From his donation made at the beginning of [the month of] Ramadan 977 (7–16 February 1570), we find that he also gave 7 complete, bound and beautifully written *mushaf*s, 30 Qur'anic *juz'*s which were leather bound, for recitation in the mosque, as well as the commentary on the Qur'an by al-Zamakhsharī."[14]

---

**10** Dobrača, "Skriptorij u Foči u XVI stoljeću," 71.

**11** Ismet Bušatlić, *Kraljevski grad pod sultanima* (Jajce: Medžlis Islamske zajednice Jajce, 2011), 247–57.

**12** Bušatlić, *Kraljevski grad pod sultanima*, 257.

**13** Osman Lavić, "Prepisivači rukopisa iz Jajca," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 27–28 (2008): 159.

**14** Hifzija Hasandedić, "Muslimanske biblioteke u Mostaru," *Anali Gazi Husrevbegove biblioteke* 1 (1972): 107–8.

Based on his study of the *sijjil*s (court records) and *kassam defter*s (probate proceedings records), Hasandedić claims that private libraries of ordinary individuals almost always contained at least one manuscript copy of the Qur'an. The court documents from the Ottoman period use the Ottoman Turkish syntagm *kelāmi-kadīm* ("the eternal God's speech") to refer to a calligraphic copy of the Qur'an, or the word *mushaf*. For instance, a note from a *kassam defter* mentions the books left by a deceased person: "Zejneba Mušinović, the daughter of Salih from Husejn-hodža's *mahalla*, who died in 1284 [1864–5] left behind a *mushaf* and Bergivī *risāle*." Or: "Salih Mićijević, the son of Hajji Ali, who died in 1285 (1868–9), left a *mushaf* and *manāsik al-ḥajj* [guides to *hajj* rituals]."[15]

Many libraries were established in Bosnia and Herzegovina between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Among them are the library of Hasan Nazir (established 1550) in Foča, Mehmed Karađoz Bey's library (i.e. Karađoz-begova Library, established before 1570) and Derviš Pasha Bajezidagić's library (1593) in Mostar, the library of Husamudin Bošnjak (1630) in Banja Luka, Elči Ibrahim Pasha's library (1704) in Travnik, Hajji Halil Efendi's library (1737) in Gračanica and the library of Ibrahim Efendi Mostarac (mid-eighteenth century) in Počitelj. These libraries became home to a large number of Qur'anic manuscript copies during this period.[16] As the names of the libraries suggest, the founders of these libraries were pashas and learned men with access to financial and social means. The collections of these libraries grew through pious donations of books, as well as through trade.

## 3 Bosnian Muslim Calligraphy

Calligraphers in Bosnia, colloquially known as *hattāt*s (Arabic *al-khaṭṭāṭ*), went through rigorous training in Bosnian mosques, *tekke*s, *hanikah*s, libraries, and calligraphic guilds. All major towns in Bosnia had *hattāt*s. Đoko Mazalić (1888–1975), in his book *Leksikon umjetnika* ("The lexicon of the artists"), claims that Sarajevo alone had over a hundred *hattāt*s during the Ottoman period.[17]

Most of the Qur'an copyists belonged to *ʿulamāʾ* circles, Sufi networks, and other circles of educated elites. Ahmed Mehmedović, in his book *Leksikon bošn-*

**15** Hifzija Hasandedić, "Muslimanske privatne biblioteke na orijentalnim jezicima u Mostaru," *Anali Gazi Husrevbegove biblioteke* 15–16 (1990): 254–55.

**16** Mustafa Jahić, *Trajnost islamskog nasljeđa, rukopisi Gazi Husrevbegove biblioteke* (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2019), 15–18.

**17** Cf. Đoko Mazalić, *Leksikon umjetnika* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1967).

*jačke uleme,* provides several examples that illustrate this phenomenon. For instance, Derviš Pasha Bajezidagić (d. 1603) was an *ʿālim*, a pious endower, and a calligrapher while occupying the position of governor of the Bosnian eyalet (an administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire; the Bosnian eyalet covered roughly the territory of the modern state of Bosnia and Herzegovina). He also had a valuable collection of Oriental manuscripts, which he gave to his *madrasa* in Mostar. Also worth mentioning is Muhammed Nerkesi Sarajlija (d. 1635), who was not only a calligrapher but also one of the most prominent poets of his time. He was a *mudarris* ("teacher") in Istanbul and worked as a *qāḍī* in the Ottoman territories in the Balkans, including the cities of Mostar, Banja Luka, Novi Pazar, and Bitolj.[18] Katibi Derviš Mustafa Efendi Bošnjak (d. 1667) was a poet and a calligrapher, given the title *katibi* ("scribe") for his extraordinary skills as a copyist. Some art historians consider him one of the most talented copyists of the seventeenth century across the Islamic world. One of Bošnjak's calligraphic Qur'an copies is currently preserved in the renowned collection of the King Abdulaziz Library in Medina.[19] Shaykh Muhammed Mejli Gurani Sarajlija (d. 1781) was also a poet and a calligrapher. Most of his works are written in the *Taʿlīq* style, including his own *Divan* (GHB, manuscript R-2012). Sarajlija was also known for his *tarih*s – calligraphic tomb inscriptions.[20] Finally, Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi Šehović (d. 1810), the imam of the Emperor's Mosque in Sarajevo, was a distinguished calligrapher and copyist of the Qur'an. He produced at least sixty-six Qur'an manuscripts, some of which are currently held in the GHB (manuscripts R-9840, R-4371, R-7575, and others).[21]

As members of the educated elite, these calligraphers were deeply embedded within scholarly networks that extended across the Ottoman Empire. As a result, their work exhibits characteristics of Ottoman-style calligraphy. Although the gradual process of Islamization already began in the 1430s, we do not have many locally produced Qur'an copies from this period. Some manuscripts may have been lost as a result of violent conflicts, such as the 1697 incursion of Eugene of Savoy, whose forces burnt down Sarajevo and other settlements in the area.

One of the oldest Qur'an copies produced in Bosnia is that of Ahmed Hadžinesimović from Prusac and Husein, son of Alija, student of the aforementioned Hajji Muhamed Efendi Sarajlija; this copy dates from the first half of the eighteenth

**18** Ahmed Mehmedović, *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme* (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2018), 396–98.

**19** Mehmedović, *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme,* 295.

**20** Mehmedović, *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme,* 342–43.

**21** Mehmedović, *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme,* 490–91.

century.[22] Describing the manuscript, Haris Dervišević, a specialist in the aesthetics of the GHB manuscript collection, noted that on some pages the text is "written in [. . .] stiff letters, without consistent dimensions. The words are lined up almost without any space." For Dervišević, the manuscript represents "an example of a *mushaf* [produced by] a simple copyist without [reference to popular] calligraphic models . . . "[23]

Other significantly old copies preserved in Bosnia today were originally brought from different parts of the Ottoman Empire; for instance, the endowment of Mustafa Aga, analyzed by Haso Popara. At the turn of the seventeenth century, Mustafa Aga was the main imperial *haznadar* (i.e. chief royal treasurer) in Istanbul.[24] He was originally from the village of Žabice near Ljubinje, Eastern Herzegovina, and was the son of Mahmud, grandson of Abdulhamid, great-grandson of Hasan and great-great-grandson of Vukosav.[25] As his forefather's name indicates, Mustafa Aga hailed from a Bosnian Christian family. He built a mosque in Ljubinje to which he brought a calligraphic copy of the Qur'an. This manuscript was probably copied in Egypt during the Mamluk period, around 878/1474. It is now kept in the GHB and is considered to be the oldest manuscript in the library collection.[26]

Another prominent work is *Džuz'evi Mehmed-paše Sokolovića*, that is, *juz'*s of the Grand Mehmed Pasha Sokolović (1506–1579; see Figure 9), which dates from the sixteenth century. Sokolović was praised as the man who "renewed the Turkish fleet which was destroyed at Lepanto in 1571."[27] He donated this thirty-piece manuscript of the Qur'an to the mosque in his birthplace Sokolovići near Višegrad (Eastern Bosnia). The manuscript is illuminated with gold, red and floral ornamentation, as well as with white color for the text of the Qur'an. The Sarajevan artist Ismet Rizvić (1933–1992) describes the leather binding of the manuscript in the following words:

> The outer side of the binding is a leather relief which was accomplished by etching a metal or wooden mold onto the surface of the sodden leather, and then the whole page is gilded,

---

**22** Mahmud Traljić, *Kur'ān u životu bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana* (Sarajevo: Takvim, 1970), 112.

**23** Haris Dervišević, "Prilog likovnoj analizi arapskih rukopisa iz rukopisnog fonda Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke: rukopisi prepisivača mushafa," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 70 (2021): 224.

**24** Haso Popara, *Vakufi hadži Ahmed-age i Mustafa-age* (Mostar: Mostarsko muftijstvo, 2020), 29.

**25** Popara, *Vakufi hadži Ahmed-age i Mustafa-age*, 29.

**26** Popara, *Vakufi hadži Ahmed-age i Mustafa-age*, 58.

**27** Haso Popara, "Džuz'evi Mehmed-Paše Sokolovića," in *Iz rukopisnog blaga Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2019), 141.

except for a narrow strip which separates the central part from the outer [part]. The ornaments are a classical floral pattern, and the motifs are composed of the vine, leaves, buds and flowers.[28]

**Figure 9:** An excerpt from the *juz’s* of Mehmed Pasha Sokolović. Courtesy of Gazi Husrev-beg Library.

The manuscript remained in Sokolovići until 1902, after which it was transferred to Sarajevo to be protected from further deterioration. As of today, eight of the thirty pieces are considered lost.[29]

Rizvić also offers a description of a *mushaf* which Muhamed Fadil Pasha Šerifović, a noble from Sarajevo, gave to the GHB in 1872. In the words of Rizvić, “this manuscript was copied in 1849 by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Muhājir al-Dāgistānī al-Makkī, which indicates the origin of the document in Dagestan in the Caucasus.”[30] This *mushaf* is decorated with gilded ornaments containing floral motifs and ro-

**28** Ismet Rizvić, “Iluminirani rukopisi u Gazi Husrev-begovoj biblioteci,” *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 1 (1972): 78.

**29** Haso Popara, *Iz rukopisnog blaga Gazi-Husrev-begove biblioteke* (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2019), 139–46.

**30** Rizvić, “Iluminirani rukopisi,” 82.

settes; the text is written in *Thuluth-Naskh* style. The copy uses gold and red ink to indicate instructions for reciting (i.e. *tajwīd* symbols; see Figure 10).[31]

**Figure 10:** The Mushaf of Fadil Pasha Šerifović. Courtesy of Gazi Husrev-beg Library.

Among the calligraphic *mushaf* masterpieces kept in the GHB are the so-called *juz'*'s from Banja Luka and the Qur'an of the Ferhad Pasha mosque. This set of manuscripts must have been produced in the sixteenth century. They were kept in the Ferhad Pasha mosque in Banja Luka until the mid-twentieth century and later transferred to the GHB. The *juz'*'s are of large dimensions, written in large Arabic letters in *Thuluth* style (see Figure 11). Every line contains a Qur'anic verse, written in gold and black ink alternately.[32]

**31** Rizvić, "Iluminirani rukopisi," 82–83.

**32** Jahić, *Trajnost islamskog nasljeđa,* 43.

امنوا اذكروا الله ذكرا
كثيرا وسبحوه بكرة واصيلا
هو الذي يصلي عليكم
وملائكته ليخرجكم
من الظلمات الى النور وكان

**Figure 11:** An excerpt from the Qur'an of the Ferhad Pasha mosque. Courtesy of Gazi Husrev-beg Library.

The GHB is not the only repository of calligraphic masterpieces. Some works are kept in the National and University Library in Sarajevo, such as the *mushaf* copied by Ḥusayn al-Bosnawī (i.e., "the Bosnian") in 1169/1755–56.

Importantly, Bosnian women also contributed to the evolution of the local copyist tradition. The GHB holds a manuscript of the Qur'an copied by Amina, the

daughter of Mustafa Čelebi, from the *mahalla* Žabljak in Sarajevo. According to her note at the end of the *mushaf*, she completed the copy in the month of Rajab 1178/1764. The manuscript contains the following words in Arabic: “copied by the poor and humble Amina, daughter of Mustafa Čelebi from Sarajevo . . . ”[33] The cataloger of the manuscript, Zejnil Fajić, notes that the text of this manuscript is vocalized, and “the titles of the chapters, the *tajwīd* symbols and dots between the verses are written in red ink. The text is framed by a thin red line. The paper is dark white and sturdy, with some signs of humidity damage. The binding is leather, with etched ornaments in the middle of the cover pages, damaged.”[34]

This section has provided a brief survey of Bosnian Qur’anic calligraphic art and major contributors to its evolution. Developed in a transregional context, Bosnian manuscript production traditions evolved under strong Ottoman and – to a greater extent – Arabo-Persian influence, though with some influence from existing local practices too.[35] Calligraphic *mushaf* manuscripts were produced for the purposes of gift-giving and showing respect and prestige, as well as for domestic and personal use. Consistent with the historical context, the art of Islamic calligraphy in Bosnia was dominated by men; however, as discussed above, it also included women who, despite their minimal presence among the surviving manuscripts, nevertheless made an important contribution to the preservation of Islamic knowledge and practice in Bosnia.

## 4 The Use of Qur’an Copies in Rituals

Qur’an manuscripts and later printed copies have occupied a prominent position in the everyday life of Bosnian Muslims for centuries. Copies of the Qur’an were preserved and treated as treasured objects not only out of respect for the scripture, but also for a number of other reasons. For instance, many calligraphic copies of the Qur’an were written by learned *shaykh*s and noble teachers, and the desire to preserve their memory made these copies valuable items in *tekke*s, mosques, and private homes.

**33** Zejnil Fajić, *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa*, vol. IX. (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation; Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 1424/2003), 31.
**34** Fajić, *Katalog*, 31.
**35** Some similarity can be noted between ornaments in Bible and Qur’an manuscripts in the Bosnian context. For example, the artistic characteristics of the Čajniče Gospel or Miroslav Gospel are reflected in a number of Islamic manuscripts, particularly in the use of red and yellow colors. Cf. Erma Ramić-Kunić, ed., *Čajničko četveroevanđelje, bosanski rukopis s kraja 15. stoljeća* (Sarajevo: Institut za jezik Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2017).

Copies of the Qur'an were given as precious gifts that invited God's blessing upon both the giver and the recipient. The act of giving a Qur'an was closely tied to the institution of pious donations (*waqf*), and hence we find a large number of Qur'an copies gifted to local libraries and mosques.[36] The act of gifting a Qur'an copy, and the cultural relevance of that act, is also reflected in modern Bosnian literature. In his novel *Death and the dervish,* Meša Selimović (d. 1982) describes a scene from a Mevlevi *tekke* in Sarajevo. In the courtyard of the *tekke*, the *murīd* Mula Jusuf gifts a calligraphically written Qur'an to his *shaykh*, Ahmed Nurudin. When the *shaykh* offers to pay, the *murīd* refuses, saying that a Qur'an copy is a priceless gift.[37] Similarly, in present-day Bosnia, a copy of the Qur'an is given to people moving into a new home, conveying a wish for prosperity and wealth.

Qur'an copies have also been used as objects in a number of rituals, some of which have a long history, while others are only recent traditions. Elvir Duranović notes that Bosnian Muslims have long used the Qur'an – in a manuscript or printed form – in marriage rituals.[38] For instance, it is customary for the bride to kiss the Qur'an and put her forehead on it to indicate her respect and love for her religion. In addition, there is a custom for the bride to turn the pages of the Qur'an, thus evoking blessings on herself and her future family. Another custom is that the Qur'an is rotated three times around the bride's head. The origins of this particular tradition are not entirely clear, but it is possible that its roots lie in Ottoman culture – the custom of placing the Qur'an on the head of the bride is also present in other Muslim communities that were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire.[39]

Qur'an copies are also widely used during rituals of death and mourning. During a *tevhid* (mourning) ceremony, the family of the deceased organizes a recitation of the *sūra Ya-Sin*. This happens on several specific occasions: on the day of the funeral, on the seventh day after death, on the fortieth day, after six months, and after a year. The recitation of the *sūra* is done in both private and public spaces, such as

---

**36** This custom has been prominent throughout the history of Islam in Bosnia. There are many examples of people gifting the "illuminated *mushaf*" (*svijetli mushaf*) to mosques, in order for their good deeds to be recognized in the afterlife. See, for instance, the will by Hadži Ahmed Hodžić in: Šejh Sejfudin Kemura, "Hadži zade Hadži Ahmedova džamija u Hrvatinu," *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* (April-September, 1910): 217.

**37** Meša Selimović, *Derviš i smrt* (Sarajevo: Dani, 2004), 240.

**38** Elvir Duranović, *Bošnjačko življenje islama (običaji i pobožne prakse)* (Sarajevo: Institut za islamsku tradiciju Bošnjaka, 2021).

**39** In his book *Bošnjačko življenje islama (običaji i pobožne prakse)* (Sarajevo: Institut za islamsku tradiciju Bošnjaka, 2021), Elvir Duranović describes many wedding customs among Muslims in Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many of these customs are related to the use of the Qur'an during marriage ceremonies.

mosques and graveyards.[40] On each occasion, the Qur'an is read either from the *mushaf*, or from a copy containing only the *sūra Ya-Sin*.

The Qur'an is not only used as an object in rituals related to life events, such as marriage ceremonies, moving into a new house, blessing of a newborn child, and death. Muslims in Bosnia also resort to a *mushaf* when seeking protection against natural disasters and human-induced harm, such as the evil eye or a curse. For instance, on the night before Jurjevdan, celebrated on May 6, Bosnian villagers try to protect themselves against sorcery (*sihr*) by carrying a copy of the Qur'an wrapped in cloth around the house and pronouncing "*bismillah*." Importantly, Christians in Bosnia also have a similar ritual.[41]

## 5 Conclusion

The chapter has provided a brief overview of several major trends in which the production of Qur'an copies and traditions of using them influenced Bosnian culture, in both a historical and a contemporary perspective. During the Ottoman period, Bosnia was a regional center of copying activities, as evidenced by a number of calligraphers who either contributed to the local calligraphy guilds or operated as mediators between local institutions and the core of the Ottoman Empire. While numerous copies bear Bosnian-specific features, others were commissioned or bought elsewhere and later donated to the local libraries in Bosnia. In sum, the collection of Qur'an manuscripts in Bosnian archives, as well as the style of Qur'an ornamentation specific to this region, demonstrate how Muslim Bosnians belonged to the mainstream Ottoman culture and space, including Muslims living in Europe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Qur'an copies were also relevant beyond the scope of educated circles. They were used for devotional purposes – evidence of which, in the absence of historical sources, can be derived from contemporary practices. In that regard, we see that the Qur'an is used on a number of occasions related to key life events. Furthermore, Qur'an copies play a role in broader social rituals, such as on the occasion of Jurjevdan, an event which is shared among Muslims and Christians.

Research into the Bosnian Qur'an copying tradition is essential for understanding the broader history of Islam in Europe. Bosnian practices exemplify a complex interplay between Islamic tradition and Christian customs, as Bosnian

**40** David Henig, *Remaking Muslim Lives: Everyday Islam in Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 127.

**41** For more on this custom, see Henig, *Remaking Muslim Lives*, 96.

Muslims have historically lived in close proximity with the Christian and other religious communities. At the same time, living traditions around the Qur'an link Bosnian Muslims to many of their coreligionists across time

## Bibliography


Bušatlić, Ismet. *Kraljevski grad pod sultanima*. Jajce: Medžlis Islamske zajednice Jajce, 2011.

Dervišević, Haris. "Prilog likovnoj analizi arapskih rukopisa iz rukopisnog fonda Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke: rukopisi prepisivača mushafa." *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 70 (2021): 221–45.

Dobrača, Kasim."Skriptorij u Foči u XVI stoljeću." *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 1 (1972): 67–74.

Duranović, Elvir. *Bošnjačko življenje islama (običaji i pobožne prakse)*. Sarajevo: Institut za islamsku tradiciju Bošnjaka, 2021.

Fajić, Zejnil. *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa,* vol. IX. London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation; Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 1424/2003

Hasandedić, Hifzija. "Muslimanske biblioteke u Mostaru." *Anali Gazi Husrevbegove biblioteke* 1 (1972): 107–12.

Hasandedić, Hifzija. "Muslimanske privatne biblioteke na orijentalnim jezicima u Mostaru." *Anali Gazi Husrevbegove biblioteke* 15–16 (1990): 253–56.

Henig, David. *Remaking Muslim Lives: Everyday Islam in Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020.

Jahić, Mustafa. *Trajnost islamskog nasljeđa, rukopisi Gazi Husrevbegove biblioteke.* Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2019.

Kemura, Šejh Sejfudin. "Hadži zade Hadži Ahmedova džamija u Hrvatinu." *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* (April-September, 1910): 213–22.

Lavić, Osman. "Prepisivači rukopisa iz Jajca." *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 27–28 (2008): 145–162.

Lavić, Osman. *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa* XV. Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka u Sarajevu, 1427/2006.

Mazalić, Đoko. *Leksikon umjetnika*. Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1967.

Mehmedović, Ahmed. *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme*. Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2018.

Mujezinović, Mehmed. *Islamska epigrafika Bosne i Hercegovine*, vols. I–III. Sarajevo: Sarajevo-Publishing, 1998.

Popara, Haso. *Iz rukopisnog blaga Gazi-Husrev-begove biblioteke*. Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2019.

Popara, Haso. *Vakufi hadži Ahmed-age i Mustafa-age*. Mostar: Mostarsko muftijstvo, 2020.

Rizvić, Ismet. "Iluminirani rukopisi u Gazi Husrev-begovoj biblioteci." *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 1 (1972): 75–90.

Selimović, Meša. *Derviš i smrt*. Sarajevo: Dani, 2004.

Traljić, Mahmud. *Kur'ān u životu bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana*. Sarajevo: Takvim, 1970.

Shamil Shikhaliev and Ilona Chmilevskaia

# The Qur'ans of Dagestan: Practices of Copying, Using, and Translating

## 1 Introduction

Home to one of the oldest Islamic cultures in the world, Dagestan cherishes an extensive and exceptional history of engagement with the Qur'an. For scholars of European Islam, the region is of paramount importance as it offers a unique case study: local multilingual and multi-ethnic Muslim communities were practically fully proficient in written and spoken Classical Arabic from the eighth until the first half of the twentieth century, which resulted in practices of reading, understanding and using the Qur'anic text that differ from those of Volga-Ural Muslims or Belarusian Tatars, for example.[1] Although there has been a steadily growing academic interest in this region's linguistic and cultural past, the mediatory role of Dagestan in connecting the Arabic-speaking world with non-Arabophone Muslim communities in Europe remains largely understudied. In this contribution, as a way to address that lacuna, we aim to present a broad overview of local practices related to reading, copying, commenting on, and translating the Qur'an, as well as the use of the Qur'an as a sacred object. In addition, we aim to introduce the English-speaking reader to the existing literature, written mainly in Russian,[2] Qur'ans produced in Dagestan. Far from being an exhaustive survey of any sort, this contribution rather outlines specifics of engagement with the scripture on the southeastern frontiers of Europe from the early medieval to the modern period.

1 See the respective contributions in this volume.

2 Khulatta Omarov, "Spiski Korana, khraniashchiesia v Fonde vostochnyh rukopisei IIAE: obzor i opisanie," in *Islam i islamskaia kul'tura v Dagestane*, ed. Amri Shikhsaidov (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2001), 108–15; Shamil Shikhaliev, *Torzhestvo sviatosti i krasoty: Korany Dagestana. Katalog rukopisnykh Koranov iz sobraniia Rukopisnogo fonda IIAE DNC RAN*, ed. Damir Mukhetdinov (Nizhnii Novgorod: Izdatel'skii dom «Medina», 2008); Milena Osmanova, "Marginalii rukopisnykh Koranov nagornogo Dagestana kak istoricheskii istochnik," *Nauchnyi dialog* 2 (2021): 371–84.

**Note:** This contribution is part of the research project MIND: The Muslim Individual in Imperial and Soviet Russia, carried out at the University of Amsterdam and funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no 804083).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-006

The discussion of these topics unfolds as follows. Following this introduction, we provide a brief overview of the region and its history, focusing in particular on the spread of Islam and the use of Arabic alongside vernacular languages (Section 2). Sections 3 and 4 will elaborate on the phenomenon of the *Dagestani Qur'an*, i.e., exclusive features of Qur'an manuscripts produced in the region and the major types of collections in which these manuscripts are preserved today. Section 5 will discuss how the written and printed texts of the Qur'an have been used in educational, legal, and religious settings, and Section 6 will touch upon the practices of translating the scripture into the vernacular languages of Dagestan.

## 2 Dagestan: A Brief Survey

Today, Dagestan is a republic that is formally located within the boundaries of the Russian Federation. It is bordered to the south by Azerbaijan and Georgia and to the west by Chechnya, another Muslim-majority republic of Russia. Prior to the establishment of Russian rule in the region, which took place in the course of the nineteenth century, Dagestan was in turn part of the Sassanian, Umayyad, Abbasid, Safavid, and Ottoman empires. The region's unique cultural and linguistic characteristics were largely determined by the multinational and multireligious nature of these mighty empires, as well as by the historically multi-ethnic composition of Dagestan itself.

The myriad linguistic and confessional divisions that characterize the region today largely follow historical ethnic divides. Today, the republic is home to speakers of more than thirty languages and dialects that make up a distinct North Caucasian language family, consisting of the Avar-Andic, Dargin (Dargic), Lak, Turkic and Lezgic groups.[3] As far as religion is concerned, the majority of the population professes Sunni Islam and adheres to the Shafiʿi *madhhab* (school of law); the Ḥanafī school is common among a small Turkic group, the Nogais. In addition, there is a minority community of Shiʿa Muslims residing in the south of the republic. The indigenous forms of Islam have been shaped in continuous interaction with monotheistic and pagan communities local to the region, including Jews (mainly represented by the Tats), Orthodox Christians (Russians and Terek Cossacks), Georgian Christians, and Azeri Zoroastrians.[4] Remarkably, the process of

---

**3** For an overview of the linguistic situation in the Caucasus in general, see Maria Polinsky, *The Oxford Handbook of Languages of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

**4** Sergei Arutiunov, Ali Osmanov, and Galina Sergeeva, ed., *Narody Dagestana. Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Nauka, 2002). For an ethnographic essay that investigates the relations between past

Islamization in Dagestan spanned almost eight centuries, beginning in the mid-seventh century and finishing, to a large extent, by the end of the sixteenth century. The prolonged nature of this process is probably best explained by the geographic and ethnic composition of Dagestan: situated chiefly in the mountains, local settlements were often hard to reach, let alone govern; meanwhile, the existence of different ethnic groups resulted in persistent political fragmentation, embodied in an array of small appanage states with their own leadership, elites, and practices of statehood. Roughly, the spread of Islam in the region can be summarized in three phases:[5]

1. **From the mid-seventh till the early ninth century:** The end of the Sassanian Empire brought about by the Muslim conquest of Persia (633–654) transferred Dagestan from Iranian to Arab rule. Although the local population rose up against the Arabs settled in the city of Derbent in 905 and 913, Islam was eventually adopted in urban centers, from where it steadily penetrated the highlands. With the gradual settlement of the Arab population in the region, Muslim literature and artifacts, approaches to education, and systems of government became part of the local cultural landscape. As the newly settled Arabs continued using the Arabic language for everyday communication, administration, correspondence and worship, the local non-Arabophone communities had continued exposure to the language.
2. **From the tenth till the sixteenth century:** By the middle of the tenth century, the majority of the population in the southern parts of Dagestan had been converted to Islam. Under Seljuk rule (1038–1327), the Shafiʿi *madhhab* began to spread among the communities of central Dagestan, while conversions to Sufi Islam increased among both plain and mountain dwellers. The inclusion of Dagestan in the thirteenth century into the Golden Horde, which adopted Islam as a major religion a century later, was conducive to the spread of Ḥanafī Islam among the Nogais and Kumyks. The rise of the Ottoman Empire as a regional power in the Black Sea basin in the fifteenth century increased the influ-

and present forms of Islam in Dagestan, see Rebecca Gould, "The Modernity of Premodern Islam in Contemporary Dagestan," *Contemporary Islam* 5 (2011): 161–83.

**5** On the Islamization of Dagestan and the Caucasus in general, see Amri Shikhsaidov, *Islam v srednevekovom Dagestane (VII–XV vv.)* (Makhachkala: IIYAL DagFAN SSSR, 1969); Vladimir Bobrovnikov, "Novye epigraficheskie dannye po istorii islama v Severo-Zapadnom Dagestane," *Dagestanskii lingvisticheskii sbornik* 3 (1996): 6–14; Amri Shikhsaidov and Shamil Shikhaliev, "Arabskii period islamizatsii Dagestana (VII–IX vv.)," *Islamology* 3 (2010): 75–90; Shamil Shikhaliev, "Rasprostranenie islama v Dagestane v XI–XVI vv.," in *Islam na Severnom Kavkaze: Istoriia i vyzovy sovremennosti* (Liublin, Maikop: Izdatel'stvo KUL, 2014), 229–46; Galina Yemelianova and Svetlana Akkieva, "The Muslim Caucasus: The Role of 'adats and Shari'ah," in *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, ed. Galina Yemelianova (London: Routledge, 2020), 68–84.

ence of the Crimean Khanate, which was an Ottoman protectorate for 300 years (1475–1774); the Crimean rulers came to dominate the lowlands of the western and central Caucasus.

3. **From the end of the sixteenth till the beginning of the eighteenth century:** During this period, the inhabitants of northwestern Dagestan (Dido, Chamalals, Bagulals, etc.) adopted Islam as the dominant religion. Under Safavid rule, southern parts of Dagestan and neighboring northern Azerbaijan were coerced into adopting Shiʿa Islam. In the sixteenth century, the Shiʿa Safavid state began a policy of expansion into the Eastern Caucasus. In 1510, Ismail I (r. 1501–1524) captured the regions of Baku, Derbent and Shirvan, installing his governors in these regions. Dagestan, as a result, became the locus of overlapping political interests of the Ottomans and Safavids and later the Russian Empire, which pursued a policy of providing financial encouragement to local rulers in the Eastern Caucasus with funding in order to maintain their conquest in that region.

The contact with the Arabic speaking population, as well as the vibrant multilingualism of the region, led to an elevated status for the Arabic language, which functioned not only as the language of Islamic scholarship but also as a *lingua franca* for many centuries. As a result, Dagestan developed one of the richest and one of the richest and longest-standing traditions of Arabic learning in Europe. While folk literature was mainly transmitted in local vernaculars, and primarily orally, Arabic was instrumental for everything that needed to be written down. That is, Arabic “was the language par excellence for religious literature, education, and historiography, but it was also the main medium for correspondence between Dagestani local rulers (beks and khans) and village communities, for documenting contracts, testaments and pious donations as well as for genealogies, memorial inscriptions and epitaphs.”[6] Dagestani Muslim communities, like much of the non-Arab Islamic world, appropriated the Arabic script for writing

6 Michael Kemper, “An Island of Classical Arabic in the Caucasus: Dagestan,” in *Exploring the Caucasus in the 21st Century*, ed. Françoise Companjen, László Marácz, and Lia Versteegh (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 66. For overviews of Arabic literature in Dagestan, see Anatolii Genko, “Arabskii iazyk i kavkazovedenie,” in *Trudy vtoroi sessii Assotsiatsii arabistov* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1941), 81–110; Ignatii Iu. Krachkovskii, *Izbrannye sochineniia,* vol. 6 (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958); Anas Khalidov, “Arabskii iazyk,” in *Ocherki istorii arabskoi kul’tury (V–XV vv.),* ed. Oleg Bol’shakov (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 13–75; Alikber Alikberov, *Epokha klassicheskogo islama na Kavkaze: Abu Bakr Ad-Darbandi i ego sufiiskaia entsiklopediia “Raikhan al-khaka’ik”* *(XI–XII vv.)* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2003); Anna Zelkina, “The Arabic Linguistic and Cultural Tradition in Dagestan: A Historical Overview,” in *Arabic as a Minority Language*, ed. Jonathan Owens (Berlin,

local vernacular languages contributing to the rich tradition of *aljamiado* (*ʿajam*) literature. At the same time, local Muslim scholars developed an original system for reading Arabic texts, adding additional icons in the text to make it easier to understand the meaning of the text.[7] Written Arabic also functioned as the language of instruction in local village schools (*maktab*s and *madrasa*s), some of which became famous as centers of Islamic learning and maintained this status for many centuries. The level of language proficiency demonstrated by local Muslim scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) was so high that they became famous well beyond the Caucasus: for instance, the Tatar Naqshbandī *shaykh* Muḥammad Murād al-Ramzī (d. 1934), in his biography of another Tatar scholar, Ibrāhīm Efendi (d. approx. in the 1770s), posits that "[Efendi's] Arabic was perfect, as he studied it in Dagestan; and Dagestan at that time was a mine [*maʿdan*] for [learning Arabic]."[8]

Texts written in Arabic form the core of numerous manuscript collections preserved in state, mosque, and private collections across the region. Recent scholarship focusing explicitly on copies of the Qur'an held in these collections has distinguished a set of features unique to Qur'an manuscripts produced in Dagestan. This phenomenon of the *Dagestani Qur'an* helps to reveal the agency of local scribes, intellectuals, and ordinary Muslims in advancing a copying tradition without equivalents in other parts of the world. These Dagestani Qur'an manuscripts have enjoyed high prestige not only in neighbouring territories, but as far as Southeast Asia.[9] In light of this, we are prompted to reconsider the position of Dagestani Muslims, who until recently have been viewed as peripheral members of the Islamic World, and recognize their role as drivers of intellectual, cultural and political connections across Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

---

Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013), 89–112; Moshe Gammer, *Written Culture in Dagestan* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2015).

**7** On the unique orthographic system forged by Dagestani scholars to enable the pronunciation of Arabic terms by non-Arabs, see Aleksandr Barabanov, "Poiasnitel'nye znachki v arabskikh rukopisiakh i dokumentakakh Severnogo Kavkaza," in *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie III* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1945), 183–214.

**8** Muḥammad Murād Ramzī, *Talfīq al-akhbār wa-talqīḥ al-āthār fī waqāʾiʿ qāzān wa-bulghār wa-mulūk al-tatār*, vol. 2 (Orenburg: Karimov and Khusainov, 1908).

**9** Annabel Gallop, "From Caucasia to Southeast Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic Manuscript Tradition in Brunei and the Southern Philippines. I," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 14, no. 1 (2008): 32–56. See also Annabel Gallop, "From Caucasia to Southeast Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic Manuscript Tradition in Brunei and the Southern Philippines. II," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 14, no. 2 (2008): 3–20.

# 3 The Dagestani Qur'an

When Annabel Gallop came across Dagestani Qur'ans in the salerooms of London auction houses in the early 2000s, she described the characteristics of these manuscripts in the following words: "the distinctive small backward-sloping cursive script, with the frequent use of overlining, [is] a standard Dāghistāni hand, which is often accompanied by flamboyant and exuberant calligraphic headings sometimes infilled with floral scrolls and dashes of colour."[10] In her description, Gallop draws on earlier work by Amri Shikhsaidov (1928–2019), who made an important contribution to cataloging and describing numerous manuscript collections of Dagestan.[11] By and large, Dagestani Qur'ans can be characterized according to three aspects: (1) the type of paper that a given manuscript is written on, (2) the calligraphic style of annotations and inscriptions (if any) that accompany the Qur'anic text, and (3) the decorative elements used to adorn the manuscript.

## 3.1 Paper

Copies of the Qur'an produced in Dagestan appear on four main types of paper.[12] Establishing the type of paper enables scholars to provide a fairly precise dating of manuscripts, as each type predominated in a specific historical period.

1. **Eastern paper:** under the Abbasid rule (eleventh–twelfth century), the process for making paper spread through the Muslim-majority countries of Iraq, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Sicily, and finally to Spain;[13] in Dagestan, Eastern paper enjoyed widespread use from the eleventh till the end of the fifteenth/early sixteenth century.
2. **Dagestani paper:** from the mid-fourteenth till mid-eighteenth century, the region produced its own handcrafted paper. This paper differs across manu-

---

**10** Gallop, "From Caucasia to Southeast Asia. I," 43.

**11** Amri Shikhsaidov, "Muslim Treasures of Russia. II: Manuscript Collections of Daghistan. Part II," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 13, no. 1 (2007): 26–61; also Amri Shikhsaidov, Nataliia Tagirova, and Diana Gadzhieva, *Arabskaia rukopisnaia kniga v Dagestane* (Makhachkala: GUP "Dagestanskoe knizhnoe izatel'stvo," 2001).

**12** Zaira Ibragimova, "K voprosu ob identifikatsii i datirovke Dagestanskih rukopisei," *Acta Historica: Trudy po istorii, arkheologii, etnografii i obshchestvoznaniiu* 1, no. 2 (2018): 51–54; Zaira Ibragimova, "Bumaga dagestanskih rukopisei," in *Kavkaz i strany Vostoka: istoriia i sovremennost'* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2018), 22–25; Zaira Ibragimova, "Bumaga mestnogo kustarnogo proizvodstva v dagestanskih rukopisiakh XVII–XVIII vv.," *Aktual'nye nauchnye issledovaniia v sovremennom mire* 12, no. 5 (2020): 87–90.

**13** Sheila Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 47.

scripts in its density and quality, but in general, it does not have any watermarks or ribbed texture and remains inferior to Eastern paper.
3. **European paper:** Starting from the mid-seventeenth century, European paper – primarily manufactured in Italy and the Netherlands – entered the region presumably via the Ottoman Empire and remained in use till the first half of the eighteenth century. This type of paper can be easily distinguished from the other two types due to its high quality, the clear ribbed texture imparted by the manufacturing process, and quilling.
4. **Russian paper:** from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, Dagestani scribes increasingly began to use different paper types produced in the Russian Empire. Manuscripts dating from the 1760s, 1780s, and 1850s–60s are written on paper that resembles European paper; yet, although this Russian paper also has a clear ribbed texture, in terms of quality, it remains inferior to its imported counterpart. Manuscripts produced in the 1850s–60s use Russian paper but of different production technology: the paper from this period does not contain any stamps, vergers, or watermarks. Finally, the manuscripts dating from the 1860s–1915 use Russian paper with logos that indicate the embossing of Russian paper factories.

## 3.2 Calligraphy Style

Another, though less prominent feature that distinguishes Dagestani Qur'ans is the writing style used for annotations or inscriptions. In general, manuscripts produced in Dagestan are written in the *Naskh* script, though some are written in the *Thuluth* and Kufic scripts. From the sixteenth century onwards, local scribes developed a regional variation of the *Naskh* script, referred to as Dagestani *Naskh*. In the sixteenth century, this local variant was still hard to differentiate from the writing styles used in the production of Middle Eastern manuscripts; however, by the turn of the seventeenth century, it was increasingly becoming a distinct form. Scholars agree that this regional variant reached its final form in the second half of the seventeenth century and remained in use until the twentieth century.[14] Dagestani *Naskh* deviates from the classical style due to the nature of the calligraphy tool used by Daghestani scribes: they sharpened their canes (*qalam*) in a particular way which made vertical parts of letters appear thinner, while horizontal parts appeared broader and more pronounced. With the advent

**14** Magomed S. Saidov, ed., *Katalog arabskih rukopisei Instituta istorii, iazyka i literatury im. G. Tsadasy Dagestanskogo filiala AN SSSR*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1977).

of the Imperial Chancellery and metal pens, manuscript writing styles became standardized. However, some local publishing houses in Dagestan prolonged the life of this original script: Muhammad Mīrzā Mavraev's (Mawrayuf, d. 1964) enterprise that existed from 1905 till 1918 used Dagestani *Naskh* for lithographic printing.[15] Dagestani *Naskh* was not used for copying the text of the Qur'an – it was perceived as vernacular and therefore unsuitable for this purpose – but regularly featured in annotations or inscriptions.

## 3.3 Decoration

Dagestani Qur'an copies written in Kufic script reflect the early Qur'anic orthography. The *ālif* (ا) letter at the beginning of a word in these documents is indicated by a short vowel mark – *fatḥa* /a/, *kasra* /i/ or *ḍamma* /u/; while the graphemes أ ؤ ء ئ ى, characteristic of later handwritten copies, do not feature in these manuscripts. In addition, the letter combination إلا appears in its original morphological form, i.e., as two separate graphemes ان and لا. Similar spelling sometimes also appears in Dagestani Qur'an copies from the sixteenth century written in *Thuluth* and *Naskh* scripts.

As far as decorative elements are concerned, Dagestani Qur'an copies vary substantially in their design. Some documents follow a minimalist, austere style: black ink is used to write both the text of the Qur'an and the names of the *sūra*s, the latter having slightly larger font size and sometimes under- or overlining. Other manuscripts display rich, sophisticated ornamentation. *Sūra* names in such copies appear in color (usually red, blue, green, or gold); the text, while written in black, is often framed, and the margins are decorated. The first pages, which contain the text of Q 1 and the beginning of Q 2, are typically the most remarkable and exquisite in their decoration. The first *sūra* "*al-Fātiḥa*" and the beginning of the second *sūra* "*al-Baqara*" are divided by arcs and lines of different forms; the spaces between them are filled with red, yellow, or blue colors. The page margins also often feature colored vignettes, geometrical figures, teardrop-shaped rosettes, and floral ornaments. Pause marks (stops or ends of verses) often have a circle shape or a sun symbol painted in red, gold, or yellow. Intoning signs (*tajwīd*) are also highlighted either by individual letters (لا ج م س) or colored ink (usually red) and always appear as glosses between lines.[16]

15 Milena Osmanova, *Arabskaia pechatnaia kniga v Dagestane v kontse XIX–nachale XX veka* (Makhachkala: Nauka plius, 2006).

16 Omarov, "Spiski Korana," 110–14.

# 4 Qur'an Copies in Dagestani Manuscript Collections

Archaeographic expeditions to southern Dagestan, which underwent Islamization at the earliest stage, have turned up a large number of Qur'an copies, the oldest ones dating back to 626/1228–9 (a copy located in the village of Khili-Pendzhik in Tabasaranskii district), 815/1413 (a copy from Kumukh in Lakskii District), 889/1493 (a copy from Shiri in Dakhadaevskii district) and 922/1516–7 (a copy from Tpig in Agul district).[17] The centuries-old written tradition in Dagestan has resulted in sizeable manuscript collections across the region. A handwritten Qur'an is probably one of the most common artifacts in nearly all types of manuscript collections that exist in Dagestan today – whether those collections exist in state archives, private libraries, or mosque libraries.

## 4.1 State Archives

State archives constitute the first major type of manuscript collection in Dagestan. The state repositories together contain about four thousand manuscripts, which include: 3,061 items held at the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography, which is part of the Russian Academy of Sciences (*Institut istorii, arkheologii i etnografii*, henceforth IIAE);[18] 755 manuscripts in the collection of the Dagestan State University (*Dagestanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet*);[19] and more than 100 manuscripts in the collection of the National Museum of the Republic of Dagestan (*Natsional'nyi muzei Respubliki Dagestan im. A. Takho-Godi*). These three collections are the result of expeditions conducted during the Soviet era by staff members of these institutions, who collected parts of *waqf* libraries belonging to mosques and *madrasas* that were closed in the late 1920s–30s.

The original *waqf* collections that laid the basis for the state archives mainly contained textbooks and study literature typical of the Islamic education system of the seventeenth–early twentieth century. A unique manuscript is thus a rare find in this kind of collection. As for handwritten Qur'ans, these make up only 2.2% of the total number of manuscripts preserved in the state archives. A possi-

**17** Shamil Shikhaliev, "Sokrovishchnitsa vostochnyh rukopisei Dagestana," *Islamovedenie* 1 (2012): 75–82.

**18** Shamil Shikhaliev, *Kratkii katalog arabografichnykh rukopisey IIAE DFITS RAN* (forthcoming).

**19** Amri Shikhsaidov et al., ed., *Katalog arabskih rukopisei nauchnoi biblioteki DGU* (Makhachkala: Narody Dagestana, 2004).

ble explanation for this small number is the sacred status of the Qur'an: residents of Dagestani villages who donated parts of *waqf* and private manuscript collections to state institutions tended to keep Qur'an copies and pass the manuscripts on to their offspring. Moreover, Qur'an copies often contained important information written in the margins and were seen as legally binding (to be discussed further below), which was another reason for the locals' reluctance to give away these manuscripts.

Describing all handwritten Qur'an copies stored in state archives would be an enormous task, which remains beyond the scope of this study. Below, we will cover several of the most remarkable documents preserved in the IIEA collection. This collection contains 70 Qur'an copies, and the majority of the manuscripts are of Dagestani origin, dating from the fourteenth–twentieth centuries. Moreover, the collection also includes three Qur'an copies produced in the Ottoman Empire (from the eighteenth century), eleven Iranian copies (from the fourteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries), five copies made in the Middle East (from the fourteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries), and a Qur'an copy from Central Asia (1750–90).

Figure 12 shows the oldest Qur'an manuscript discovered in the North Caucasus so far. This manuscript, written in the Kufic script, was copied by a certain Muḥammad, son of Ḥusayn, son of Muḥammad on 11 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 400, which corresponds to 7 December 1009.[20] The scribe used gold ink to write the names of the *sūra*s and decorated the margins of the manuscript with stylized jugs and round rosettes. The manuscript is made of 300 folios of thick, Eastern paper with a 19 x 29 cm format. Another Qur'an copy which dates back to the beginning of the twelfth century and has been exhibited at The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, closely resembles this Dagestani copy in writing and decoration style.[21]

The IIEA collection also holds a Qur'an copy that comprises seven large-format volumes (47 x 66 cm; see Figure 13).[22] Beautiful handwriting and exquisite decoration indicate the hand of a professional scribe: his name was Muḥammad, son of Muḥammad, son of Aḥmad, and he held the position of *qāḍī* in the city of Saveh in Markazi province, Iran. Each of the volumes has a colophon that indicates the date of production. Copying and decorating these seven volumes took several years, from the month of Muḥarram 702 to Shawwāl 704 / 2 September 1302–4 May 1305.[23]

---

**20** Makhachkala, the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography (IIEA), Collection of Oriental Manuscripts, MS f. 14/2822.

**21** For the Houston copy, see David J. Roxburgh, *Writing the Word of God: Calligraphy and the Qur'an (Houston Museum of Fine Arts)* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

**22** IIEA, MS f. 14/288.

**23** Shikhaliev, *Torzhestvo sviatosti*, 61–65.

**Figure 12:** A Qur'an copy, MS f.14/2822. Courtesy of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography.

As a local legend goes, this Qur'an copy once belonged to the Iranian ruler Nader Shah (d. 1747). According to the legend, the ruler of the Gazikumukh Khanate in Dagestan, Surkhay Khan (1680–1748), once sent a delegation of Gazikumukh to pay respect to Nader Shah and take him gifts. The Shah, in turn, responded with a gift of his own: a miniature palm-sized copy of the Qur'an. Upon receiving this gift, Surkhay Khan expressed surprise: "How could such a big ruler give such a small gift?" he wondered. "Is there so little paper in his immense empire that he has to restrict the word of Allah to this miniature copy?" Having received word of this remark, Nader Shah sent the aforementioned seven volumes to prove that there was more than enough paper in the powerful Persian state.[24]

Until the early 1930s, the volumes were kept at a local mosque in Kumukh village; however, with the mosque's closure under the Soviet regime, the entire

**24** Omarov, "Spiski Korana," 112.

والضحى والليل اذا
سجى ما ودعك ربك وما قلى وللآخرة خير لك من الاولى
ولسوف يعطيك ربك فترضى الم يجدك يتيما فاوى ووجدك
ضالا فهدى ووجدك عائلا فاغنى فاما اليتيم فلا تقهر واما
السائل فلا تنهر واما بنعمة ربك فحدث
سورة الم نشرح ثمان ايات
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

**Figure 13:** A Qur’an copy, MS 288. Courtesy of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography.

manuscript collection, along with these seven volumes, was literally thrown out on the street. An IIAE employee, Gadji B. Murkelinskii (1908–1998), who was by chance visiting Kumukh, took the collection with him and delivered it to the IIAE.[25]

**25** Omarov, “Spiski Korana,” 112.

## 4.2 Private Libraries

Private libraries of Dagestani scholars from the seventeenth–twentieth century constitute the second major type of manuscript collection. Unlike *waqf* libraries, private collections survived the Soviet atrocities, which was possible thanks to generations of family members who preserved these manuscripts and passed them on. Private libraries tend to contain many Qur'an copies and much Qur'anic literature, which together occupy third place in terms of quantity after works on philology and Muslim law.

There are, in general, two kinds of private libraries. The first is the so-called "mothballed" collections that have been hidden from the public eye for many years and not expanded with new documents after the owner's death. An example of such a collection is the private library of Ibrāhīm-*ḥājjī* al-ʿUradī (d. 1771); descendants of this Dagestani scholar had concealed his collection for almost 250 years before giving access to Amri Shikhsaidov in 2013.[26] The heirs of al-ʿUradī probably did not want to allow anyone to see this collection, fearing that if someone asked them to sell or lend out the manuscripts, they would not be able to refuse. Permitting the study of these manuscripts also carried the risk of losing them to unreliable scholars who would not return borrowed items.

The second kind of private library comprises collections that have developed over a longer period of time, i.e., each subsequent descendant of a scholar has supplemented the inherited collection with new manuscripts. A good example of this is the collection of Magomed Abakarov (b. 1959), a resident of Kaspiisk. Figures 14 and 15 show a Qur'an copy from this collection. This copy dates back to the end of the month of Ṣafar 936 / late October–early November 1529. Based on the paleographic features of the manuscript design, we can confidently assume that the document traveled to Dagestan from Iran. The manuscript contains 356 folios and the format is 15 x 22 cm. Besides the complete text of the Qur'an, the manuscript also contains a *fāl-nāma* in Persian – a book of presages and omens based on the Qur'anic text that a reader may consult for divination purposes, either directly or through a fortune teller.[27]

**26** Amri Shikhsaidov, *Katalog arabskih rukopisei: kollektsiia Hadzhzhi Ibragima Uradinskogo* (Makhachkala: Mavraev, 2014); Amri Shikhsaidov, "Ibragim Uradinskii i ego rukopisnaia kollektsiia," *Vestnik Instituta IAE* 4 (2015): 9–12.

**27** Īraj Afšār, "Fāl-Nāma," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Leiden: Brill, 1999), accessible online via http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_9458. Last accessed November 24, 2022.

**Figure 14:** The colophon of a Qur'an from Magomed A. Abakarov's private collection.

## 4.3 Mosque Libraries

The third kind of manuscript collection takes the form of modern *waqf* libraries housed in mosques and *madrasa*s, many of which have been established relatively recently, i.e., in the post-Soviet period. Although these modern *waqf* libraries have been formed mostly in the last three decades, they nevertheless often contain old manuscripts and books: these are the documents rescued from religious institutions that existed in Dagestan before the 1920s but were later transformed into clubs and warehouses during the Soviet anti-religious campaign. In the 1920s, local village residents took away the libraries of these institutions for safekeeping and were able to gradually return the collections to public use starting from the late 1980s,[28] when Dagestan, along with the rest of the Soviet Union,

28 Data collected by the first author during his fieldwork in villages Dzhengutai (July 1998), Kakashura (August 1999), Karabudakhkent (July 2000), Kakhib (July 2001), Rugudzh (August 2002), Kaiakent (September 2006), Khuchni (August 2007), Khiv (August 2008), Kurakh (July 2009), Miskindzha (August 2010), Somoda (July 2011), N.Kazanishche (August 2012), Machada (July 2015), Shangoda (July 2018).

**Figure 15:** The front part (*ʿunwān*) of a Qur'an copy from Magomed A. Abakarov's private collection.

underwent waves of religious euphoria and witnessed the construction of new mosques and madrasas and the reopening of old ones. Along with the *waqf* collections, these post-Soviet establishments also received documents from private collections that were donated by descendants of Dagestani scholars.[29]

# 5 The Qur'an as an Object

## 5.1 Religious Settings

Similar to coreligionists in other parts of the world, Dagestani Muslims believe that a house that holds a copy of the Qur'an – usually wrapped in exquisite fabric or a special handmade cover – attracts God's grace (*baraka*) and scares off malev-

29 An interview with Sadrutdin Karanaev (1916–2004) conducted by the first author in Karabudakhkent on 2–14 July 2000.

olent *jinn*s.[30] Both pre-1917 and in recent times, it has been customary to read aloud parts of the text during religious celebrations, for instance, on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (*mawlid al-nabī*), as well as at major life events, such as weddings, seeing someone off to the army, housewarmings, and the birth of a child. As a rule, this practice begins with reading the first *āyā*s of *sūra* 48.

When a Muslim is on his or her deathbed, those present usually read *sūra* 36. After the person passes away, family and friends read the entire text of the Qur'an, so that the reward for their recitation will be conferred upon the soul of the deceased. Following local traditions, as the body is placed on its side into the grave during the burial ceremony, four *sūra*s are recited at each corner of the grave. Those at the head of the deceased, depending on the corner, read either *sūra* 36 (if on the side of the deceased's face) or *sūra* 32 (if facing the back of his/her head). Those at the foot recite either *sūra* 67 (facing the front of the body) or *sūra* 41 (facing the back of the body).[31] On the day after the funeral, family and friends of the deceased recite certain parts of the Qur'an twice over the grave: *sūra* 36 in the morning after sunrise, and *sūra* 78 before the evening prayer. This practice is repeated for seven days, and in some communities for 40 or 52 days. Moreover, Muslims of Dagestan tend to visit and recite parts of the Qur'an over graves of their close relatives just before the start of Ramadan and on the eve of major Muslim holidays – *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* (festival of the breaking of the fast) and *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā* (sacrificial feast).

Reciting the Qur'an has also been an integral part of Sufi ritual practices specific to the locally prominent Naqshbandiyya brotherhood. Local *shaykh*s instruct their students to read a section corresponding to one-thirtieth of the Qur'an (*juzʾ*) as a daily exercise; another individual practice requires recitation of a sequence of *sūra*s: Q 1, then three times Q 112, followed by Q 113 and Q 114. Similarly, in the Shādhiliyya – another significant Sufi brotherhood in Dagestan – alongside other prayers, a *murīd* (disciple) reads a sequence comprising Q 1 and three times Q 112 twice a day. A collective Naqshbandiyya prayer, called *Khatm-i Khwājagān* (liter-

**30** According to another local tradition, it is undesirable to keep the Qurʾān in a house where no one can read it. In such a case, a copy is either donated to a local mosque or given to relatives or neighbours who are able to read it. Remarkably, the older generation of Dagestani Muslims prefers to read from the edition of the Qurʾān printed in the imperial period in Kazan (*Kazan basmasī*), due to its simplicity and clarity. On Kazan Qurʾān editions, see Efim Rezvan, "A History of Printed Editions of the Qur'an," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 255–76.

**31** Although this particular practice has been subject to criticism and is seen by some Muslims as an invention that arguably has no precedent or support (*bidʿa*) either in the text of the Revelation or in juridical consensus, it remains widespread in Dagestan.

ally, "the seal [of the prayers] of the Masters"), comprises a repetition of Q 1 (seven times), Q 94 (79 times), and Q 112 (1,001 times).[32]

Certain *sūra*s or *āyā*s also feature on religious artifacts and in magical rituals.[33] The interior of Dagestani houses is often decorated with boards on which Qur'anic verses are embroidered or painted in calligraphic style. The most common verse used for this purpose is Q 68:51–52, also known as the "verse of the evil eye" (*āyā wa-in yukād*); as the title suggests, this verse is supposed to protect the inhabitants of the house against misfortune and illness brought by the evil eye. Another verse with a similar function is the "throne verse" (*āyāt al-kursī*; Q 2:255) which should ward off *jinn*s and bring a believer under the protection of God. The text of this verse can be found in decorative elements, as well as on objects used for rituals, for instance, in exorcism practices. Following local tradition, relatives of an individual who is believed to be possessed by a *jinn* visit a Muslim exorcist and bring a container of water from seven springs; the exorcist uses paper and ink to write out the throne verse and/or (parts of) other *sūra*s, primarily Q 1, 3, 7, 10, 20, 37, 55, 112, 113, and 114. The exorcist then dissolves the ink in the water that was brought. Subsequently, the possessed individual is required to drink from the container regularly in the morning and evening; on a Friday, their body is washed using the water.[34] Local Muslims also wear triangular leather necklaces that contain a piece of paper with the text of Q 112–114 or Q 68:51–52 on it; these amulets promise protection against bad luck, the evil eye, and the machinations of *jinn*s.

## 5.2 Education

Besides religious settings, the Qur'an has historically been actively used in Dagestan's centuries-old Islamic educational system. The first *madrasa* in the North Caucasus was built in the village of Tsakhur no later than the end of the eleventh century – even earlier than in Mecca (1183). By the thirteenth–fourteenth century, a flourishing system of Islamic education was established that trained the scholars and elites of southern Dagestan and neighboring regions. At its peak in the

---

**32** Shamil Shikhaliev, "Sufi Practices and Muslim Identities in Naqshbandi and Shādhili Lodges in Northern Dagestan," in *Islam and Sufism in Dagestan. Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae 352*, ed. Moshe Gammer (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2009), 43–56.

**33** Mariam Rezvan, *Koran v sisteme musul'manskih magicheskih praktik* (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2011).

**34** Fieldwork material collected by the first author in Khasaviurt in July 1998.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the educational system in Dagestan was comprised of Qur'an schools, *maktab*s and *madrasa*s; the highest level of Islamic education entailed individual training from a revered Muslim scholar, an *ʿālim*, in order to become such a scholar oneself.[35]

Prior to 1917, mastering the Arabic language primarily entailed acquiring skills and learning the rules for reciting the Qur'an (*tajwīd*) at a special school. Students were taught to memorize the Arabic script, enabling them to read the text without necessarily understanding it.[36] Moreover, systematic reading of the Qur'an was supposed to develop the student's visual memory to recognize Arabic words in other texts that did not contain vowel diacritics. Such lessons usually began with learning to read the last *sūra*s, Q 112–114, as these were the shortest and most often recited in daily practice. In many cases, students also memorized the entire text of the Qur'an by learning each of its thirty sub-parts (*juzʾ*) by heart.

As noted earlier, knowledge of the Arabic language was more widespread in Dagestan than in most Muslim countries with a non-Arab population. A careful analysis of the local Arabic-language manuscript heritage has led scholars to suggest that original literature by local Dagestani authors began emerging not later than the tenth century, continuing until the first half of the twentieth century. These works cover a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to history, Muslim law, Arabic grammar, Qur'an commentaries (*tafsīr*), poetry, ethics, logic, mathematics, and medicine, thus offering a rich resource for study.[37] *Tafsīr*s constitute an important proportion of such literature: for example, handwritten commentaries produced between the fourteenth and early twentieth centuries comprise about 3.9% of the entire manuscript collection hosted by the IIAE. Other literary works related to the study of the Qur'an include material on recitation rules and ethics of reading the scripture, as well as grammar companions; altogether, these make up about 1.7% of the IIAE collection.

---

**35** Akhmet Iarlykapov, "Islamskoe obrazovanie na Severnom Kavkaze v proshlom i v nastoiashchem," *Vestnik Evrazii* 3 (2003): 5–31; Michael Kemper and Shamil Shikhaliev, "Qadimism and Jadidism in Twentieth-Century Dagestan," *Asiatische Studien-Études Asiatiques* 69, no. 3 (2015): 593–624.

**36** In their argument that recitation of the Qurʾān without understanding was permitted, many Dagestani scholars drew on Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), one of the most widely read, respected and commented-upon Arab scholars in Dagestan between the fourteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**37** Krachkovskii, *Izbrannye sochineniia*; Shikhsaidov, Tagirova, and Gadzhieva, *Arabskaia rukopisnaia kniga.*

### 5.3 Record-Keeping

Copies of the Qur'an were also used for functions not necessarily connected to religious education or practice. The margins of manuscripts preserved in private collections reveal, for instance, purchase contracts, sales records, and acts of property transfer and inheritance. Until the second half of the seventeenth century, there was no widespread organized system of record-keeping, i.e., registering births, marriages, and deaths of members of the community; therefore, such inscriptions in the margins functioned as official records, and the special status of the Qur'an conferred a legally binding status upon these records. A close examination of some Qur'an copies shows that they often served as private notebooks containing various observations, ideas and memories, revealing a close and privileged relationship between the book and its owner.

The copies from *waqf* mosque libraries fulfilled a similar legal function but in matters important to the entire community. For instance, the margins of these manuscripts contain records in Arabic of various acts and norms related to the customary law (*ʿādat*).[38] Many *ʿādat* norms had been transmitted orally for many centuries and were only written down much later in the form of agreements.[39] Besides legal provisions, we also encounter information on litigation conducted with the help of a mediator, or historical records (*tawārīh*). As with privately owned copies, keeping records on the margins of a Qur'an copy meant not only endowing them with legal force but also ensuring the manuscript's safety: such a copy was unlikely to be stolen or lost.

## 6 *Tafsīr*s and Qur'an Translations into Local Dagestani Languages

Predictably, private and mosque manuscript collections in Dagestan contain not only Qur'an copies but also Arabic-language commentaries (*tafsīr*) on the text. Specific commentaries were part of the *madrasa* curriculum, and copies of them were used as textbooks, for instance, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* ("The Qur'anic commentary by the two Jalāls") and *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl* by al-Bayḍāwī (d. 719/1319). Moreover, Dagestani scholars wrote their own commentaries on the existing *tafsīr*s

38 Vladimir Bobrovnikov, ed., *Obychai i zakon v pis'mennyh pamiatnikah Dagestana V – nachala XX vv.: Do prisoedineniia k Rossii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Mardzhani, 2009), 11.

39 Michael Kemper, "Communal Agreements (*ittifāqāt*) and *ʿādāt*-Books from Dagestani Villages and Confederacies (18th-19th Centuries)," *Der Islam* 81 (2004): 115–51.

(*ḥāshiya*). *Tafsīr* authors who were particularly popular in Dagestan include Muhammad b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Qujuwi al-Ḥanafī (Shaykh-zāde, d. 951/1545), Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122, 515/1121, or 510/1117), Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan al-Khalkhālī (d. 1014/1605), ʿAbdullāh b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310), Aḥmad b. Muhammad al-Khaffaji al-Miṣrī (d. 1069/1659), Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad ad-Dariri (d. 431/1040), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Razi (d. 606/1210), Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Mūsili (d. 680/1282), and Ṣāliḥ b. Mahdī al-Maqbalī (d. 1108/1696). Manuscript collections also contain some of the earliest *tafsīr*s written by Arab authors. For instance, the IIAE holds a copy of *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210); this copy was produced in Central Asia on 20 Dhū l-Ḥijja 710 / 10 May 1311. Moreover, there is also a manuscript titled *al-Itḥāf li ṭalaba al-kashshāf* by Ṣāliḥ b. Mahdī al-Maqbalī, which is a supercommentary on the *Tafsīr al-kashshāf* (i.e., al-Zamakhsharī's Qur'an commentary). This copy was produced around 1690–1720, thus probably during the lifetime or immediately after the death of al-Maqbalī.[40]

Despite being inhabited by a largely non-Arabophone population, Dagestan yields no complete Qur'an translations into local vernacular languages produced before the 1920s. Several factors may explain this fact. First of all, the wide distribution and popularity of the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who opposed translation,[41] led to the dominance of a more conservative approach to rendering the Qur'an in vernacular languages. A document that proves this point is *Nātiqat al-ʿajamiyat fī bayān al-nasīhat al-adabiyyat* ("Non-Arabic speech in explanations of ethical instructions concerning the *āyā*s of the Qur'an," 1880–90) composed in the Lak language and written in the Arabic script. In the preface, the author notes that translating the Qur'an into other languages is usually harshly condemned by authoritative Dagestani scholars and theologians, which is why this tradition has not taken root in Dagestan. However, the author himself believes that commenting on certain *āyā*s using local languages is not a sinful act and, therefore, should not be forbidden.[42]

Another reason for the small number of vernacular translations and commentaries is the limited application of local languages. They were used only for daily communication and were barely written down, whereas Arabic functioned as the language of education, administration, and trade until the end of the 1920s. It is thus safe to assume that a significant part of the Dagestani population had

**40** IIEA, MS f.14/545.

**41** Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm Al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005), 341–47.

**42** Anonymous manuscript. IIEA, MS f.14/2889.

good proficiency in Arabic and simply did not need a translation in order to be able to read and understand the Qur'an.

The situation changed at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Dagestan witnessed widespread discussion among religious elites regarding the need to reform the existing system of Islamic education. As Naira Sahakyan puts it: "the language debate among the Daghestani intellectuals – reformers, traditionalists and socialists – had to do with the more complex issue of the envisioned futures; the various camps considered language as a vital precondition for, and, at the same time, the result of the concept of freedom."[43] For instance, the prominent Dagestani scholar ʿAlī al-Ghumūqī (1878–1943, better known by his Soviet name Ali Kaiaev) argued in favor of simplifying Arabic language lessons[44] and introducing local vernaculars into the school system. Emphasizing the role of a national language in preserving the Dagestani identity, which was threatened by Russian and Ottoman influences, al-Ghumūqī accepts Arabic as the *second* language "for the study of Arabic scholarship and religion, while other subjects can be studied in other languages."[45]

Throughout the 1910s–20s, new-method *madrasa*s – establishments similar to those that emerged earlier in the Volga-Ural region and Central Asia[46] – began popping up in Dagestan. These new schools had a revised curriculum that favored the inclusion of disciplines from the natural and social sciences.[47] Moreover, traditional educational literature was partially replaced by new textbooks explicitly designed for these schools and often written in local (Kumyk, Avar, Lak, and Dargin) languages using the Arabic script. Ideas promoted and disseminated by Muslim reformers that targeted the educational system had a significant influence on the development of the written tradition in vernacular languages. Soon, not only textbooks but also poetry and prose in local tongues began flourishing in the region.[48]

---

**43** Naira Sahakyan, *Muslim Reformers and the Bolsheviks: The Case of Daghestan* (London & New York: Routledge, 2022), 104.

**44** Kemper and Shikhaliev, "Qadimism and Jadidism."

**45** Sahakyan, *Muslim Reformers and the Bolsheviks*, 110.

**46** Mustafa Tuna, "Madrasa Reform as a Secularizing Process: A View from the Late Russian Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 3 (2011): 540–70; Mustafa Tuna, *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, Empire and European Modernity, 1788–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Danielle Ross, "Caught in the Middle: Reform and Youth Rebellion in Russia's Madrasas, 1900–10," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): 57–89; Danielle Ross, *Tatar Empire: Kazan's Muslims and the Making of Imperial Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020).

**47** Sahakyan, *Muslim Reformers and the Bolsheviks*; Kemper and Shikhaliev, "Qadimism and Jadidism".

**48** Shamil Shikhaliev, "Muslim Reformism in Dagestan (1900–1930)," *State, Religion and Church* 5, no. 1 (2018): 35–63.

This process also had a minor but crucial effect on the vernacularization of Qur'anic scholarship. In a departure from earlier periods, archival material dating back to the early twentieth century reveals discrete fragmentary translations of certain *sūra*s into local languages. For instance, the IIAE collection holds two manuscripts with translations of individual *sūra*s into the Lak and Dargin languages.[49] However, according to the available catalogs of books printed in Dagestani publishing houses in 1647–1917, the number of Qur'an translations into local languages remained limited. Out of 172 entries under the header "Hagiography, dogmatics, exegesis, Qur'anic *sūra*s," only 7% (12 books) are partial renderings of the Qur'an;[50] all of these renderings were produced relatively late, sometime in 1910–4. Based on these data, we can also conclude that the translated *sūra*s are usually Q 18 (rendered three times into Avar, once into Kumyk, and twice into Lak) and Q 36 (translated once into Avar). The most extensive of the existing partial translations are *Tafsīr suwar min al-Qur'an* ("Commentaries on *sūra*s of the Qur'an") in Avar[51] and *Faḍā'il al-aʿmāl* ("Virtues of deeds") in Kumyk.[52] The latter includes not only the translation of individual *sūra*s but also sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and prayers.

## 7 Conclusion

Culturally, the Qur'an has always played a pivotal role in the everyday lives of ordinary Muslims in Dagestan. This is similar to the contexts that can be observed, for instance, in the Volga-Ural region before the 1917 revolutions. Parts of the text were (and continue to be) recited in daily prayers, as well as during rituals marking the birth or death of a Muslim individual and complex Sufi practices; certain *sūra*s were also written out to protect a believer against the evil eye,

**49** IIEA, MSS f.14/ 2899 and f.14/2905.

**50** Amirkhan Isaev, *Katalog pechatnyh knig i publikatsii na iazykah narodov Dagestana (dorevoliutsionnyi period)* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii filial AN SSSR, 1989), 289. There are also several Qur'an manuscripts produced in Dagestan that contain (interlinear) translations into Persian and Ottoman Turkish. For Persian-language manuscripts, see IIEA, MS f.14/291 (copied in the first half of the seventeenth century); MS f.14/294 (first half of the sixteenth century); MS f.14/1870 (first half of the seventeenth century); MS f.14/2575 (first half of the eighteenth century); MS 2579 (from 1128/1715); for Turkic-language documents, see MS f.14/383a (copied between 1860–70); MS f.14/2416 (*tafsīr* by Abū l-Naṣr al-Qūrṣāwī (d. 1812) in Türki-Tatar, copied in the Volga-Ural region sometime between 1810–30).

**51** Isaev, *Katalog*, 42.

**52** Isaev, *Katalog*, 92.

bad luck, and the deeds of malevolent spirits. Besides religious tradition, the Qur'an also formed the groundwork for a flourishing culture of education and scholarship in Dagestan. High levels of proficiency in Arabic enabled the local population to continue reading the scripture in its source language well into the twentieth century, thus limiting the role and circulation of vernacular translations and commentaries. Richly decorated Dagestani Qur'an copies served not only as symbols of wealth and as precious possessions and heirlooms, but also as notarial record books that registered a wide range of important acts.

The history of the Qur'an in Dagestan therefore provides valuable insights for reconsidering dominant perceptions about the place and role of Islam in the history of European societies at large. This mountainous region functioned as a natural buffer zone between continental non-Arabophone Muslim communities on the one hand and the Arab world on the other, mediating and connecting the two. This situation of sustained contact gave rise to one of the longest and most complex traditions of non-Arabophone Muslim engagement with the scripture – a tradition that deserves long-overdue scholarly attention. Despite many existing works dealing with the history, linguistic landscape and manuscript collections of Dagestan, a number of avenues remain to be explored in future research. In order to lift the region from its "peripheral" status and integrate it into a broader and more inclusive concept of European Islam, the Dagestani Qur'an tradition needs to be analyzed and understood through the lens of comprehensive European history, Christian-Muslim relations, and the myriad connections that existed between communities of European Muslims before the modern period.

# Bibliography

## Manuscripts

Makhachkala, the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography (IIEA), Collection of Oriental Manuscripts, MSS f.14/ 291, 294, 383a, 545, 1870, 2416, 2575, 2822, 2889, 2899, 2905, 2579.

## Secondary Sources

Afšār, Īraj. "Fāl-Nāma." In *Encyclopædia Iranica*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater, IX/2:172–76. Leiden: Brill, 1999. Available online via http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_EIRO_COM_9458.

Alikberov, Alikber. *Epokha klassicheskogo islama na Kavkaze: Abu Bakr Ad-Darbandi i ego sufiiskaia entsiklopediia"Raikhan al-khaka'ik"' (XI-XII vv.)*. Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2003.

Arutiunov, Sergei, Ali Osmanov, and Galina Sergeeva, eds. *Narody Dagestana. Entsiklopediia*. Moscow: Nauka, 2002.
Barabanov, Aleksandr. "Poiasnitel'nye znachki v arabskikh rukopisiakh i dokumentakakh Severnogo Kavkaza." In *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie III*, 183–214. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1945.
Blair, Sheila. *Islamic Calligraphy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
Bobrovnikov, Vladimir. "Novye epigraficheskie dannye po istorii islama v Severo-Zapadnom Dagestane." *Dagestanskii lingvisticheskii sbornik* 3 (1996): 6–14.
Bobrovnikov, Vladimir, ed. *Obychai i zakon v pis'mennyh pamiatnikah Dagestana V–nachala XX vv.: do prisoedineniia k Rossii*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Mardzhani, 2009.
Gallop, Annabel. "From Caucasia to Southeast Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic Manuscript Tradition in Brunei and the Southern Philippines. I." *Manuscripta Orientalia* 14, no. 1 (2008): 32–56.
Gallop, Annabel. "From Caucasia to Southeast Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic Manuscript Tradition in Brunei and the Southern Philippines. II." *Manuscripta Orientalia* 14, no. 2 (2008): 3–20.
Gammer, Moshe. *Written Culture in Dagestan*. Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2015.
Genko, Anatolii. "Arabskii iazyk i kavkazovedenie." In *Trudy vtoroi sessii Assotsiatsii Arabistov*, 81–110. Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1941.
al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm Al-Dīn*. Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005.
Gould, Rebecca. "The Modernity of Premodern Islam in Contemporary Dagestan." *Contemporary Islam* 5 (2011): 161–183.
Iarlykapov, Akhmet. "Islamskoe obrazovanie na Severnom Kavkaze v proshlom i v nastoiashchem." *Vestnik Evrazii* 3 (2003): 5–31.
Ibragimova, Zul'fiia. "Bumaga dagestanskih rukopisei." In *Kavkaz i strany Vostoka: istoriia i sovremennost'*, 22–25. Makhachkala: Dagestanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2018.
Ibragimova, Zul'fiia. "Bumaga mestnogo kustarnogo proizvodstva v dagestanskih rukopisiakh XVII–XVIII vv." *Aktual'nye nauchnye issledovaniia v sovremennom mire* 12, no. 5 (2020): 87–90.
Ibragimova, Zul'fiia. "K voprosu ob identifikatsii i datirovke dagestanskih rukopisei." *Acta Historica: Trudy po istorii, arkheologii, etnografii i obshchestvoznaniiu* 1, no. 2 (2018): 51–54.
Isaev, Amirkhan. *Katalog pechatnykh knig i publikatsii na iazykakh narodov Dagestana (dorevoliutsionnyi period)*. Makhachkala: Dagestanskii filial AN SSSR, 1989.
Kemper, Michael. "An Island of Classical Arabic in the Caucasus: Dagestan." In *Exploring the Caucasus in the 21st Century*, edited by Françoise Companjen, László Marácz, and Lia Versteegh, 63–90. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010.
Kemper, Michael. "Communal Agreements (*ittifāqāt*) and *ʿādāt*-Books from Dagestani Villages and Confederacies (18th–19th Centuries)." *Der Islam* 81 (2004): 115–51.
Kemper, Michael, and Shamil Shikhaliev. "Qadimism and Jadidism in Twentieth-Century Dagestan." *Asiatische Studien-Études Asiatiques* 69, no. 3 (2015): 593–624.
Khalidov, Anas. "Arabskii iazyk." In *Ocherki istorii arabskoi kul'tury (V – XV vv.)*, edited by Oleg Bol'shakov, 13–75. Moscow: Nauka, 1982.
Krachkovskii, Ignatii Iu. *Izbrannye sochineniia*. Vol.6. Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958.
Omarov, Hadzhimurad. "Spiski Korana, khraniashchiesia v Fonde vostochnyh rukopisei IIAE: obzor i opisanie." In *Islam i islamskaia kul'tura v Dagestane*, edited by Amri Shikhsaidov, 108–15. Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2001.

Osmanova, Milena. *Arabskaia pechatnaia kniga v Dagestane v kontse XIX–nachale XX veka*. Makhachkala: Nauka plius, 2006.
Osmanova, Milena. "Marginalii rukopisnyh Koranov nagornogo Dagestana kak istoricheskii istochnik." *Nauchnyi dialog* 2 (2021): 371–384.
Polinsky, Maria. *The Oxford Handbook of Languages of the Caucasus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
Ramzī, Muḥammad Murād. *Talfīq al-akhbār wa-talqīḥ al-āthār fī waqāʾiʿ qāzān wa-bulghār wa-mulūk al-tatār*. Vol. 2. Orenburg: Karimov and Khusainov, 1908.
Rezvan, Efim. "A History of Printed Editions of the Qur'an." In *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, edited by Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, 255–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
Rezvan, Mariam. *Koran v sisteme musul'manskih magicheskih praktik*. Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2011.
Ross, Danielle. "Caught in the Middle: Reform and Youth Rebellion in Russia's Madrasas, 1900–10." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 1 (2015): 57–89.
Ross, Danielle. *Tatar Empire: Kazan's Muslims and the Making of Imperial Russia*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020.
Roxburgh, David J. *Writing the Word of God: Calligraphy and the Qur'an (Houston Museum of Fine Arts)*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.
Sahakyan, Naira. *Muslim Reformers and the Bolsheviks: The Case of Daghestan*. London & New York: Routledge, 2022
Saidov, Magomed S., ed. *Katalog arabskih rukopisei Instituta istorii, iazyka i literatury im. G. Tsadasy Dagestanskogo filiala AN SSSR*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Nauka, 1977.
Shikhsaidov, Amri, Hulata Omarov, Diana Gadgieva, and Patimat Alibekova, eds. *Katalog arabskikh rukopisei nauchnoi biblioteki DGU*. Makhachkala: Narody Dagestana, 2004.
Shikhaliev, Shamil. "Muslim Reformism in Dagestan (1900–1930)." *State, Religion and Church* 5, no. 1 (2018): 35–63.
Shikhaliev, Shamil. "Rasprostranenie islama v Dagestane v XI–XVI vv." In *Islam na severnom Kavkaze: istoriia i vyzovy sovremennosti*, 229–46. Liublin, Maikop: Izdatel'stvo KUL, 2014.
Shikhaliev, Shamil. "Sokrovishchnitsa vostochnyh rukopisei Dagestana." *Islamovedenie* 1 (2012): 75–82.
Shikhaliev, Shamil. "Sufi Practices and Muslim Identities in Naqshibandi and Shadhili Lodges in Northern Dagestan." In *Islam and Sufism in Dagestan. Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae 352*, edited by Moshe Gammer, 43–56. Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2009.
Shikhaliev, Shamil. *Torzhestvo sviatosti i krasoty: Korany Dagestana. Katalog rukopisnykh Koranov iz sobraniia Rukopisnogo fonda IIAE DNC RAN*. Edited by Damir Mukhetdinov. Nizhnii Novgorod: Izdatel'skii dom «Medina», 2008.
Shikhsaidov, Amri. "Ibragim Uradinskii i ego rukopisnaia kollektsiia." *Vestnik Instituta IAE* 4 (2015): 9–12.
Shikhsaidov, Amri. *Islam v srednevekovom Dagestane (VII–XV vv.)*. Makhachkala: IIYAL DagFAN SSSR, 1969.
Shikhsaidov, Amri. *Katalog arabskih rukopisei: kollektsiia Hadzhzhi Ibragima Uradinskogo*. Makhachkala: Mavraev, 2014.
Shikhsaidov, Amri. "Muslim Treasures of Russia. II: Manuscript Collections of Daghestan. Part II." *Manuscripta Orientalia* 13, no. 1 (2007): 26–61.
Shikhsaidov, Amri, and Shamil Shikhaliev. "Arabskii period islamizatsii Dagestana (VII–IX vv.)." *Islamology* 3 (2010): 75–90.

Shikhsaidov, Amri, Nataliya Tagirova, and Diana Gadzhieva. *Arabskaia rukopisnaia kniga v Dagestane*. Makhachkala: GUP "Dagestanskoe knizhnoe izatel'stvo," 2001.
Tuna, Mustafa. *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, Empire and European Modernity, 1788–1914*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
Tuna, Mustafa. "Madrasa Reform as a Secularizing Process: A View from the Late Russian Empire." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 3 (2011): 540–570.
Yemelianova, Galina, andSvetlana Akkieva. "The Muslim Caucasus: The Role of 'adats and Shari'ah." In *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, edited by Galina Yemelianova, 68–84. London: Routledge, 2020.
Zelkina, Anna. "The Arabic Linguistic and Cultural Tradition in Dagestan: A Historical Overview." In *Arabic as a Minority Language*, edited by Jonathan Owens, 89–112. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013.

Mykhaylo Yakubovych

# Commenting, Publishing, and Translating: Evolution of Qur'anic Traditions in Crimea from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century

## 1 Introduction

The Islamic culture of the Crimean Peninsula can be considered an important part of the Muslim legacy of east-central Europe. Following the early Islamization of the Crimean *ulus* as part of the Golden Horde in the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century, the area became a point of connection between various sections of the Islamicate world: from Central Asia to the territories of the Mamluk Sultanate (including Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Hijaz). Developed in strong connection with the Central Asian Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition and Sufi preaching, the Islamic culture of Crimea reached its peak during the times of the Crimean Khanate (1441–1783), a state under the Ottoman protectorate located on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Positioned at the crossroads between Ruthenian lands, the Balkans, Anatolia and the Caucasus, Crimea has been strongly influenced by neighboring areas. Biographies of Muslim scholars who lived in the late Golden Horde (fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century) and early Khanate (mid-fifteenth to sixteenth century) period demonstrate that Crimea was a key transitory place for many intellectuals traveling from Central Asia to Syria and Egypt, and, much later, to Anatolia.[1] Enduring links between Crimean scholars and Muslim scholarly circles in other parts of the world resulted in a productive intellectual exchange, allowing Crimea to stay connected to the development of Islamic learning in the broader Muslim world.

In addition to the well-established traditions of Islamic jurisprudence and theology (integrated within post-classical Islamic intellectual discourse), Crimea engendered a locally-specific Qur'anic culture that encompassed practices of copying, commenting on (*tafsīr*) and translating (*tarjama*) the Qur'an. To address several sig-

1 Mykhaylo Yakubovych, "Crimean Scholars in Mamluk Syria ($13^{th}$–$14^{th}$ centuries): Careers and Legacy," *Golden Horde Review* 6, no. 4 (2018): 719–27.

**Note:** This publication is a product of the project "GloQur – The Global Qur'an" that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 863650).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-007

nificant transformations in the Islamic legacy of the peninsula, this chapter considers the local Qur'an-related activities during the period from the Russian annexation of the peninsula in 1783 till the late 1990s.

The first key development was the local hermeneutical pursuits, which started during Golden Horde times and reached their peak in the "long eighteenth century," to use Clinton Bennett's term.[2] These pursuits are best reflected in the growing number of commentaries, translations, glosses, and paraphrases on the fundamental works in exegetics, jurisprudence, Arabic language, logic and other fields. This chapter aims to trace how those trends were engaged in the Crimean representation of the classical medieval Islamic legacy, which mostly exists in manuscript form and includes handwritten works from the most important Crimean religious schools, such as the Zincirilī madrasa (established in 1500) in Bakhchysarai.

The second important change was the printing of the Qur'an in the Russian Empire in 1787. The printing press enabled mass dissemination of religious books, as in the Persian and Ottoman Empires, for example. Together, this fueled the printing activities of Ismail Gasprinskii (1851–1914), one of the most important figures of Islamic modernism and revivalism in the Turkic-Tatar world, who issued a new edition of the Qur'an in 1898. Finally, the twentieth century brought new challenges for the Crimean Tatar Muslim community: the famine of 1921, the mass deportation of 1944 (when almost 300,000 Crimean Tatars were displaced by Stalin's regime to Central Asia), and the return to the homeland after 1989. These events severely disrupted the continuity of traditions, but also inspired interest in translating the Qur'an into the Crimean Tatar language.

This chapter draws on available manuscripts (mostly *tafsīrs*, translations, and *ḥawāshī*, i.e., additional commentaries or "glosses" on the *tafsīr* works) and printed materials to answer the following question: how did the Crimean Tatar Muslim community copy, interpret, print, and translate the Qur'an under changing social, political and cultural conditions in the eighteenth to twentieth century? It is also important to consider how the Crimean Qur'anic culture was related to changes in Muslim Qur'anic practice taking place in other parts of the Islamic world, following the widespread introduction of print culture and the struggle for a national revival.

---

**2** Clinton Bennett, "Introduction: Western Europe and Islam in the Long 18th Century. Demonisation to Dialogue," in *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (1700–1800)*, ed. David Thomas and John A. Chesworth (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1–18.

# 2 Qur'anic Hermeneutics in the Late Crimean Khanate

It is hard to say when exactly the first Qur'an copies appeared on the peninsula. The evidence suggests that the rise of "high" Islamic culture in the region, associated with copying out and interpreting the Qur'an, coincided with the Islamization of Crimea between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Early processes of conversion to Islam in the western part of Eurasia were closely linked to Sufi preaching; in particular, the semi-legendary figure of Sufi Sarı Saltuk (Ṣarı Ṣalṭūq, d. 697/1297)[3] and the local Muslim presence (mainly Seljuks) on the southern shore of Crimea. Crimea arguably already had a well-developed system of Islamic religious education during the reign of the Golden Horde Khan Uzbek (1313–1342). Most Crimean scholars, who were associated with the peninsula but built their careers in the Mamluk Sultanate, engaged in learning Islamic jurisprudence, mostly *fiqh* and *hadith*. Probably the earliest complete *tafsīr* copied in Crimea is *al-Talkhīs fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīz* ("Short commentary on the Great Qur'an") by Muwaffaq al-Dīn al-Kawwāshī (d. 680/1281). The two-volume manuscript of this text is currently held in the Gazi Husrev-beg Library (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina). The manuscript was copied by a certain Nabī b. Aḥmad al-Mujallad in Rabīʿ al-Awwal 793/February 1391 in the city of Qirīm (now Staryi Krym in Crimea).[4] This manuscript shows copious usage of black, brown, and red ink. It contains ownership statements, as well as other inscriptions such as quotations from the poetry of the Central Asian Sufi Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221).[5] This artifact therefore also demonstrates a persistent role of Sufi scholarship and Sufi brotherhoods in the development of the Islamic tradition in the area.

According to my estimate, up to forty complete, handwritten Qur'ans from Crimea are preserved in various libraries in Ukraine.[6] The most extensive collection is currently stored in the Bakhchysarai Museum.[7] The oldest copies date back to the

3 Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde. Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1994), 251–56.

4 Sarajevo, the Gazi Husrev-beg (GHB) Library, MS 3804/1–2, *Al-Talkhīs fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīz*.

5 GHB MS 3804/1–2, f. 251a–b.

6 Mykhaylo Yakubovych, *Koran v Ukraini: Rukopysy, komentari, pereklady* (Kyiv: UCID, 2020), 135–38.

7 Ul'ker Ramazanova, *Rukopisnye i staropechatnye Korany v sobranii Bahchisaraiskogo muzeia-zapovednika. Katalog* (Belgorod: Konstanta, 2016).

sixteenth century; one of these copies includes an interlinear Persian translation.[8] Some *sūra*s of the Qur'an used in ritual practices (Q 1, 36, 48, 67, 78, 105–114) were also widely copied in special prayer collections. Many such documents, such as the prayer collection dating from 1190/1776,[9] are preserved in the Bakhchysarai Museum. Although many manuscripts contain *duʿā*'s (invocations) in the Crimean Tatar language as core texts, the Qur'anic texts are given in Arabic only. One exception is a manuscript from the eighteenth century, preserved in the Lviv Museum of the History of Religion (Lviv, Ukraine) that has glosses on the last *sūra*s and notes on grammatical issues of the text in the Türki language.[10] Most of the Qur'an copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generally follow the Ottoman style of handwriting. Some ornate copies with golden ornaments (mostly using the *Naskh* and *Muḥaqqaq* scripts) date back to the eighteenth century; for example, the impressive works of the calligrapher Masʿūd.[11] Most of the Qur'ans preserved are quite large in size (about 21 x 30 cm), as they were usually used in schools or mosques. In terms of orthography, they recall the classical tradition of Qur'anic writing that follows the *Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim* reading and includes *tajwīd* signs of different kinds to denote pauses or continuous reading. When comparing some later Crimean copies to copies written by local Tatars in Anatolia and the Great Duchy of Lithuania (written by local Tatars), it becomes clear that there are overlaps between the manuscripts. The resemblances in style show possible connections that would indicate continuous cultural transfer between different states (the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean Khanate and Poland). For example, an analysis of late eighteenth-century copies from Istanbul, Bakhchysarai, and Ostroh (in the Rivne region of Ukraine) reveals that Crimean and "Lithuanian" copies had much in common: for instance, both use a simplified system of pause signs (Arabic letters *ṭa, jīm, mīm, qāf*) and adhere to a similar positioning of *waqf muṭlaq,* the absolute stop when reciting the Qur'an.[12] This finding may be evidence that the Islamic culture of the Crimean Tatars was one of the main sources of influence for the Tatar culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Figure 16). This could be easily explained by the geographical and historical closeness of those groups, with mutual contacts preserved even across the political borders of the different states.

**8** Ramazanova, *Rukopisnye i staropechatnye Korany*, 31.

**9** Bakhchysarai, Bakhchysarai Museum Collection, MS 115, [*Collection of prayers*].

**10** Lviv, Lviv History of Religions Museum Collection, MS СД 11881, *Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.

**11** Ramazanova, *Rukopisnye i staropechatnye Korany*, 25–30.

**12** Copies used for comparison here: Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha Collection, MSS 1, 2, 3, *Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*; Lviv, Lviv History of Religions Museum Collection, MS СД 1687, [*Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*]; Ostroh, Ostroh Museum of Books and Printing, MS КН 20366.

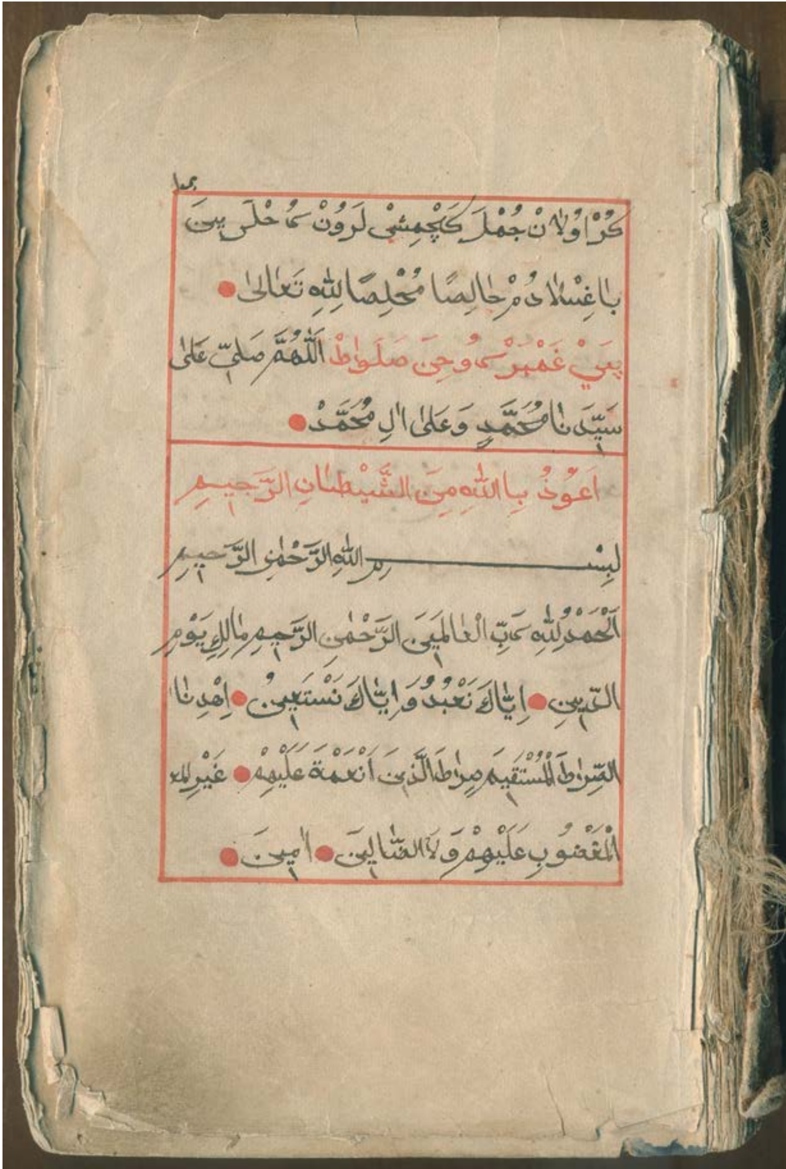


**Figure 16:** First *sūra* of the Qur’an from a bilingual (Arabic-Turkic) collection of prayers by Polish-Lithuanian Tatars, 19th century. From the author’s private collection.

Apart from the developing local traditions of Qur'an copying, Crimean Muslim scholars made significant contributions to Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*). For example, a certain Rukn al-Dīn bin ʿAbd al-Mūʾmin al-Qirīmī (d. 784/1382), who went to Egypt around 767/1365, is reported to have spent thirty years in the function of "judge" (*qāḍī*) on the peninsula. His only preserved work is a commentary on the *sūra Yūsuf* (Q 12); this document was written in 768/1367 and is currently held in the King Abdulaziz Public Library in Medina, Saudi Arabia.[13] The work, which contains sixty-four folios, lists the author's comments on most of the verses from a theological perspective, mentioning the classical *tafsīr*s of al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 541/1147), and al-Bayḍāwī (d. 719/1319), among others.

IIn 1402–1404, the great Ḥanafī scholar Ḥāfiz al-Dīn Ibn al-Bazzāz (d. 816/1413) visited Crimea. He taught *fiqh* and *kalām* works, written mainly by the Central Asian Māturīdīs, like al-Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) and Burhān al-Dīn al-Marginānī (d. 593/1197); surprisingly, he does not appear to have produced any *tafsīr* works.[14] However, there were a number of Qur'an commentaries written by other notable figures during this period: among these was Aḥmad al-Qirīmī (d. 879/1474), the author of a *ḥāshiya* (i.e., gloss) on al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār al-Tanzīl* ("Lights of the Revelation"), with the title *Miṣbāḥ al-ta'dīl fi asrār anwār al-Tanzīl* ("Lamp revealing the secrets of the lights of the Revelation").[15] Relocating from Crimea to the Ottoman Empire in around 1440, the author wrote this gloss on the first three *sūra*s of al-Bayḍawī's commentary, though it is not clear if he wrote it before or after he traveled. He relied mostly on theological and philological approaches but also consulted Sufi literature, such as al-Qushayrī's (d. 465/1072–3) *tafsīr*.[16] The source text of *Anwār al-Tanzīl* probably did not gain broad scholarly attention until around the mid-fifteenth century, as indicated in a recent study by Walid A. Saleh.[17] Al-Qirīmī was among the first Ottoman scholars to compose a

---

**13** Part of this manuscript was studied by Mājid al-Shamarrī, "Tafsīr sūrah Yūsuf li-l-muʾallif al-ʿAllamah Aḥmad bin ʿAbd al-Muʾmin al-Ḥanafī al-Qirīmī al-mutawaffā sana 783 h. min awwala-hu ilā ayah 42: dirāsah wa taḥqīq" (MA diss., Qassim University, 2016).

**14** For the list of books taught by al-Bazzāz (as mentioned in his *ijāza* to Sirāj al-Dīn al-Qirīmī from 1404), see Maḥmūd al-Kaffawī, *Katāʾīb ʿAllām al-Akhyār min fuqahāʾ Madhhab al-Nuʿmān al-Mukhtar*, ed. Ṣafūt Kūsā et al. (Istanbul: Maktabah al-Irshād, 2017), 3, 114–17.

**15** For a copy of the document: Istanbul, Hacı Selim Ağa Library, Nurbanu Collection, MS 32, Al-Qirīmī, *Hāshiyah ʿālā Anwār al-Tanzīl.*

**16** Süleyman Gür, "Osmanlı Döneminde Yetişen "Kırımî" Nisbeli Müfessirler ve Eserleri: Bir Literatür İncelemesi," *Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi* 19 (2019): 383.

**17** Walid A. Saleh, "The Qur'an Commentary of al-Bayḍāwī: A History of *Anwār al-tanzīl,*" *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2021): 71–102.

gloss of *Anwār al-Tanzīl,* thereby starting a larger trend.[18] Another *ḥāshiya* on al-Bayḍawī's work by a Crimean scholar was written in 888/1483. It is entitled *Lawāʾiḥ al-faʾīqa* ("The highest tabernacles") and signed by someone with the *nisbah* al-Qirīmī.[19] The question remains, however, whether these commentaries were used in Crimea at all. The library of the famous Zincirilī madrasa, for example, contained many popular glosses written by late Ottoman authors, including those of Muḥī l-Dīn Shaykh-Zāde (d. 950/1544),[20] with no evidence of early Crimean commentaries written outside the peninsula.

Manuscript collections indicate that eighteenth-century glosses produced in Crimea were developed in an original way. They embodied a multi-dimensional framework that aimed to cover as many interpretations as possible in one work. A good example is a manuscript from Kefe (now Feodosia), one of the larger cities of Crimea controlled directly by the Ottomans from the fourteenth century until 1783. In 1145/1732, Aḥmad al-Kafawī produced a compilation of glosses on the thirtieth (and last) part of the Qur'an. The only original manuscript of this work is preserved in the Turkish city of Balıkesir;[21] it includes a basic gloss of *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by ʿIṣṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāʾinī (d. 945/1538), as well as by seven other scholars, some of whom can be identified as Saʿdī Çelebī (d. 945/1538), Mustafa Shaykh-zāde (al-Qūjawi, d. 951/1544) and a few lesser-known authors, such as Muḥammad al-Qāsim (d. 903/1498) and Muḥammad al-Shiranshī (d. 1016/1607). Apart from the fact that Aḥmad al-Kafawī was active in Crimea in the first half of the eighteenth century, almost nothing is known about his life. In addition to the compiled glosses of other authors, there are further glosses located in the margins of the text that discuss the vocabulary of the Qur'an and some theological issues.

Traditional glosses of the Qur'anic commentaries (principally al-Bayḍāwī's commentary) were not the only examples of the Qur'anic learned tradition in Crimea. The Qur'an was also used for non-exegetical purposes, such as for the production of works on *fiqh*, *kalām*, and the grammar of Arabic, as well as for Sufi literature. For example, this kind of approach can be found in *Mawāhib al-Raḥman* ("Gifts of the Merciful") by Ibrāhīm al-Qirīmī (d. 1001/1593) from the

---

**18** See one of the most complete lists of the glosses in *al-Fihris al-Shāmil lil-Turāth al-Arabī al-Islāmī al-Makhṭūṭ* (Amman: Muʾasasah Al al-Beyt, 1987), 2, 321–43.

**19** Istanbul, Suleymanie Library, Esad Efendi Collection, MS 420, Al-Qirīmī, *Lawāʾiḥ al-Faʾīqa.*

**20** Consider, for instance, a copy dated by the late eighteenth century: Lviv, Lviv Museum of the History of Religions Collection, MS CD-1683, [*Ḥāshiyah Shaykh-Zāde*].

**21** Balıkesir, Balıkesir İl Halk Library Collection, MS 357, *Tafsīr juzʾ ʿamma.*

Khalwatī Sufi brotherhood, mostly inspired by the Qur'anic story of the prophet Ibrāhīm and his search for truth (reflected in the *sūra al-Anʾām*).[22]

Another use of the Qur'anic text is exemplified by the anti-Sufi polemics produced by the Ottoman Kadizadelis, a puritanical movement rooted in the legacy of the sixteenth-century Ottoman scholar Mehmet Bigrivi (Birgili, d. 981/1573) and his student Mehmet Qādīzāde (d. 1045/1635). This movement must have influenced Crimean scholars,[23] though it is sometimes hard to distinguish between Ḥanafī religious puritanism as a moral trend in general, and the doctrines of the Kadizadelis as a kind of semi-organized movement.[24] In this regard, an illuminating case is the "exegetical lamentation" of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Qirīmī (d. 1205/1791), who wrote a small treatise *Rāḥat al-ummah fī dār al-mu'amminah* ("Calmness of the *umma* in the safe land") in 1204/1789 after emigrating from Crimea to the Ottoman Empire. The only known manuscript of this work is preserved in the Ankara National Library, Turkey.[25] The author mentions that he left his homeland under pressure from the "Cossacks" (viz. *qazaq*, a popular Crimean Tatar word to denote Muscovites/Russians). In al-Qirīmī's opinion, his people suffer because of their own sins, and in his work, he explains the verse Q 30:41.[26] Providing a selection of commentaries and traditions to interpret this verse, al-Qirīmī refers to the most popular *tafsīr*s of his time, starting from the one written by al-Bagawī (d. 516/1122) and finishing with *Rūḥ al-maʿānī* ("The spirit of the meanings") by al-Burūsawī (d. 1137/1725). All the commentaries are structured around a general argument: the Muslims' loss of their lands is the result of their "evil deeds," and the main 'sins' of the age include "adultery, consumption of alcohol," and "visiting of tombs with special religious invocation (*ṭalbiyāt*)."[27] This argument generally corresponds to the mainstream Kadizadeli

---

**22** Mykhaylo Yakubovych, "A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise from the 16th century: *Mawāhibal-Raḥman fī bayān Marātib al-Akwān* by Ibrāhīm al-Qirīmī," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 45 (2015): 137–61.

**23** Mykhaylo Yakubovych, "Crimean Scholars and the Kadizadeli Tradition in the 18th Century," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 49 (2017): 155–70.

**24** For a discussion on this, see Jonathan Allen, "Self, Space, Society, and Saint in the Well-Protected Domains: A History of Ottoman Saints and Sainthood, 1500–1780" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2019), 320.

**25** Ankara, Ankara National Library Collection, MS 3577/1, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Qirīmī, *Raḥatu l-Ummah fī Dār al-Muʾamminah*.

**26** The verse reads: "corruption has flourished on land and sea as a result of people's actions, and He will make them taste the consequences of some of their own actions so that they may turn back." Here and elsewhere, the English translation draws on Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), unless stated otherwise.

**27** ANL, MS 3577/1, f. 4a.

renunciation of Sufism, especially in the first half of the eighteenth century.[28] It shows a reformist trend in approaching classical issues: firstly, the original commentaries are consulted (rather than numerous glosses); secondly, these interpretations with subsequent conclusions are applied to contemporary situations. The new trends in Qur'anic culture flourished in the nineteenth century, mostly as a result of the particular cultural situation, in which the secular and religious elite of the Crimean Tatars came under the modernizing influence of both the Russians and the Ottomans.

## 3 Age of Print, Age of Translation: The Qur'an and Its Commentaries

As Brett Wilson rightly notes in his study of late Ottoman / early Turkish Qur'an translations, the age of printing brought about many new realities in Qur'anic reading practices for Turkic-language speaking Muslim communities, such as those on the Crimean Peninsula.[29] However, Crimea had become acquainted with printed Qur'ans (and other Islamic literature) long before "official" permission was given to print the Qur'an in the Ottoman Empire in the late 1870s. The developments in the Ottoman Empire took place thanks to the printing of the Qur'an in Saint Petersburg in 1787 and, soon afterwards, in Kazan.[30] Many Kazan Qur'ans (*Kazan basmasī*) are still preserved in private collections of Crimean Tatars as family heirlooms. Printed Qur'ans were also good assets for smuggling: for instance, in 1863, a Crimean refugee named Emir Salih attempted to pass customs in Istanbul with thirty-six printed copies of the Qur'an and more than a hundred copies of *juzʾ amma* (issued separately).[31]

The material evidence from the Crimean Karaite community shows that early printed books existed already in the 1730s; the Karaites owned the first printing

**28** Nikita Kraiushkin, "Antisufiiskaia polemika v Osmanskoi Sirii nakanune vozniknoveniia vakhkhabitskogo vtorzheniia (1620–1730-ye gg.)," *Vostok (Oriens)* 2 (2020): 18–27.
**29** Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
**30** For a brief history of both editions, see Mykhaylo Yakubovych, "History of Printing the Qur'an in Europe: Editions, their Quality and Accuracy," *Procceeding of the Symposium on Printing the Qur'an* (Madinah: King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex, 2016), 51–76.
**31** Brett Wilson, "The Qur'an after Babel: Translating and Printing the Qur'an in Late Ottoman and Modern Turkey" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2009), 59.

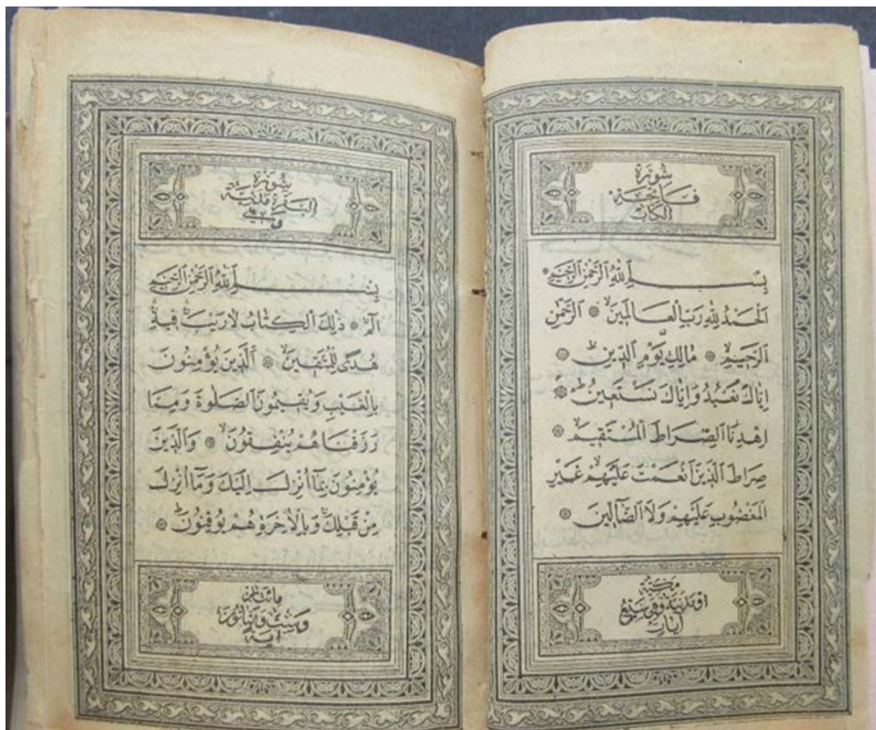


**Figure 17:** Ismail's Gasprinskii's printed edition of the Qur'an. From the author's private collection.

house in Crimea, located in Çufut Qale village.[32] However, no attempts to run a Muslim press were made before the establishment of the Tercüman publishing house in 1883 by the prominent Crimean Tatar scholar and writer Ismail Gasprinskii (1851–1914). Nonetheless, books written by Crimean scholars were printed before that. For example, Abū l-Baqāʾal-Kafawī's (d. 1094/1684) dictionary *Kulliyāt* was first published in the Egyptian publishing house Bulāq in 1837; later, the Turkish publishing house Maṭbaa-yi Âmire issued copies in Istanbul (1869, 1871).[33] Apart from the explanation of many logical, juridical and theological terms, each chapter of this dictionary listed the words found in the Qur'an based on the corresponding letter of the alphabet. The practical usability of *Kulliyāt* gained the at-

32 Philip E. Miller, "Agenda in Karaite Printing in the Crimea During the Middle Third of the Nineteenth Century," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 20 (1998): 83.
33 Mykhaylo Yakubovych, "Ot slova k smyslu: Germenevticheskaia teoriia Abū l-Baqāʾ al-Kafawī," in *"Rassypannoe" i "sobrannoe": kognitivnye priemy arabo-musul'manskoi kul'tury*, ed. Andrei Smirnov (Moscow: Sadra, 2017), 258–60.

tention of Qur'anic scholars.[34] Other books by Crimean Tatar scholars were of no less importance, such as the well-known text *Tafsīr al-mawakīb* by Ismāʿīl Ferrūkh Efendi (d. 1256/1840). This is an Ottoman translation of the *tafsīr* in Persian *Mawāhib' aliyā* by Sufi-Naqshbandī scholar Ḥusayn Kāshifī (d. 910/1505).[35] Ferrūkh Efendī's work was first published in 1830;[36] its later Ottoman editions (1903, 1905) were widely sold in Crimea as well, advertised by various bookstores through the first Crimean Tatar newspaper.[37] There are no data on Qur'an commentaries printed in Crimea at the time of the Russian Empire, and it seems that most printed literature was of non-Crimean origin. Ferrūkh Efendī's translation is innovative in many aspects. In his translation, Ferrūkh Efendī aimed to make a large corpus of exegetics available in simple and accessible language. His translation is innovative in many respects, several of which he mentions in his work. First of all, he sought to make a "word-by-word" (*kalimah kalimah*) translation that would use simple words and pay special attention to the historical context of the Qur'an ("reasons of revelation," *asbāb al-nuzūl*); in complex cases, he opted for the most widespread interpretation. These goals were achieved not only by a faithful rendition of the source text but also with the usage of other *tafsīr*s – such as *al-Tibyān* by al-Ayıntābī, the classical *al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by al-Bayḍāwī, and *Lubāb al-tāʾwīl* by al-Khāzin – to enable better comprehension of the exegetical material.[38] It is hard to say whether Ferrūkh Efendī was influenced by any Western theories on language and translation, although he knew some basic English. Nevertheless, his approach manifests a novel perspective on translation rather than being just a reproduction of old traditions. As Susan Gunasti notes, "Ismāʿīl Ferrūkh Efendi was not a religious scholar, but rather a litterateur and bureaucrat,"[39] and thus did not approach the Qur'an as a trained theologian but as a lay intellectual.

A new era in the Crimean Qur'anic culture came with the rise of Ismail Gasprinskii, one of the leading proponents of Islamic reform in Russia. The person-

---

**34** For a work that looks at *Kulliyāt* from the perspective of Qur'anic Studies, see M. Halil Çiçek, "Ebü'l-Bekā el-Kefevî'nin *Külliyât*'ında Tefsir ve Kur'an İlimleri" (PhD diss., Selçuk Üniversity, 1992).

**35** On Kāshifī and his *tafsīr*, see Adnan Karaismailoğlu, "Hüseyn Vaiz-i Kaşifi," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1999), 16–18.

**36** Hüseyin Vaiz el-Kaşifi, *Tefsir-i Mevakib: Tercüme-i Tefsir-i Mevâhib*, trans. İsmail Ferruh Efendi (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1246/1830).

**37** See, for example, the announcement "I'lân, Kitâbhâne-i Tefeyyüz," *Tercüman* 12, Muharrem 25/Fevral' 15 (1326/1908): 1.

**38** El-Kaşifi, *Tefsir-i Mevakib*, 4–6.

**39** Susan Gunasti, *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (London: Routledge, 2019), 192, 193.

ality of Gasprinskii, who propagated mass literacy and education, among other reforms, has been discussed widely in academic scholarship. Most studies deal with his views on Islamic renewal and modernization, paying less attention to his efforts in publishing the Arabic Qur'an.[40]

The first officially approved Ottoman edition of the Qur'an in Arabic was published in 1288/1871, based on the manuscript copies of calligrapher Hafiz Osman (d. 1110/1698).[41] The publication opened the gates to new copies being published every few years in the 1880s, 1890s and beyond by the imperial press Maṭbaa-yi Âmire, based on different handwritten works. The official recognition of printed Qur'ans and the high demand for them impressed Ismail Gasprinskii during his stay in the Ottoman Empire (1874–1875 and thereafter). Gasprinskii's struggle to establish a national Muslim publishing house in Crimea should be regarded as an important part of his secular and religious reform plans and efforts to promote mass literacy.[42] Moreover, with a growing Crimean Tatar diaspora in the Ottoman Empire after 1783, the Crimean Tatar religious elite adopted an "Anatolian" orientation. This, in turn, strongly influenced the emerging Crimean Tatar movement of religious modernization. Ottoman religious literature had much in common with Crimean religious literature; this was primarily due to the high level of mutual intelligibility between the Crimean Tatar and Ottoman Turkish languages, as well as historical ties. Committed to his "Pan-Turkic" idea of Muslim unity, Ismail Gasprinskii was interested in strengthening ties not only amongst the Muslims within the Russian Empire (Crimea, Caucasus, Central Asia, the Volga-Urals, Poland, and Lithuania) but also globally. In 1907–1908, while visiting Cairo, Gasprinskii dreamed of hosting a global congress of Muslims, though the idea was realized only in 1926.[43]

The first known copy of the Qur'an printed in Crimea appeared in Bakhchysarai in Jumādā al-Thānī 1316/November 1898 (Figure 17),[44] just after permission was granted by the imperial censors in Saint Petersburg (dated 21 October 1898).

**40** For a general review of the twentieth-century Western scholarship on Gasprinskii, see Alan Fisher, "Ismail Gaspirali, Model Leader for Asia," in *Tatars of the Crimea: Their Struggle for Survival*, ed. Edward Allworth (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1988), 11–26; a more recent article on his reform project: Mustafa Özgür Tuna, "Gaspirali v. Il'minskii: Two Identity Projects for the Muslims of the Russian Empire," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 2 (2002): 266–289.

**41** Mahmut Gündüz, "Matbaanın Tarihçesi ve İlk Kur'an-ı Kerim Basmaları," *Vakıflar Dergisi* 12 (1978): 335–350.

**42** Fahri Solak, "Doğumunun 150. Yılında Gaspıralı İsmail Bey *Tercüman* Gazetesi Bibliyografyası ve Türkçe Yayınlar," *Müteferrika* 20, (2001): 79–104.

**43** On this idea, see Thomas Kuttner, "Russian *jadîdism* and the Islamic world: Ismail Gasprinskii in Cairo, 1908," *Cahiers du monde Russe et Soviétique* 16, no. 3–4 (1975): 383–424.

**44** *Kelām-ı Kadīm* (Bakhchysarai: Tercümān, 1315/1898).

A limited number of advance copies were issued in 1896.[45] The script of this Qur'an is a rather illegible *Naskh*, which corresponds to the *muṣḥaf* from Istanbul dated 1305/1887–1888 and is based on a handwritten copy of the Qur'an by Mustafa Nazif Efendi Kadırgalı (d. 1331/1913). The Crimean edition has the same characteristics as the Istanbul version, including the dimensions (18.5 x 12.5 cm) and the number of lines on a page (fifteen).

However, there is a difference in the title: unlike titles of printed Qur'ans in the Ottoman Empire (*Qurʾān Karīm*, "The Glorious Qur'an") and in Kazan (*Kalām sharīf*, "The Noble Word"), Gasprinskii's version uses the expression *Kalām qadīm* (translated into Russian as *Drevnee Slovo*, "The ancient Word").[46] This term occurs in some classical Ḥanafī-Māturīdi sources, for example, in al-Taftāzāni's (d. 792/1389) commentary on *al-ʿAqāʾid al-nasafiyah,* one of the most popular compendiums of the Islamic doctrine written by Abu l-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310).[47] A possible explanation for Gasprinskii's choice of title is that he wanted a commercially exclusive name for his *muṣḥaf*. Other copies of the "Crimean Qur'an" were printed in 1909–1914 and later appeared in a large format (20 x 30 cm) with indication stating that the correctness of the Arabic text was approved by "two *shaykh al-Islām*s" from Istanbul and Cairo, unfortunately unnamed. As Amin al-Kasem notes, Gasprinskii devoted much effort to correcting printed mistakes in his edition, especially between 1909 and 1911.[48] A small-format edition (10.2 x 6.5 cm) of the Qur'an was printed in 1898 and reproduced several times after. The Qur'ans published in Crimea were popular across the Russian Empire and abroad, probably due to Gasprinskii's well-developed network built during his trips to Istanbul and Cairo. As documents from the Russian Consulate in Bombay indicate, copies were even sold in India.[49]

The edition is a typical *Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim* reading of the Qur'an. It provides headings in Arabic for every *sūra* and indicates the number of verses. *Āya*s are divided by typical asterisks without any numbers inside. The script is rather illegible and would present difficulties especially for those just beginning to study the Arabic alphabet. In general, it is hard to find any shortcomings of the edition, but some of the word conjunctions are not typical for traditional Ottoman calligraphy. For instance, final *nūn* and *alif* are written without a pause before the next word, such as

---

**45** Selvina Seitmemetova, "Kollektsiia araboiazychnoi i tiurkoiazychnoi literatury religioznoi tematiki v lichnoi biblioteke Ismaila Gasprinskogo," *Skhidniy Svit* 1 (2014): 62.

**46** Ismaʿil Gaspiralı, "Drevnee slovo 'Kalām Qadīm'," *Tercümān* 8 (1908): 2.

**47** Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzāni, *Sharḥ Al-ʿAqāʾ īd al-Nasafiyah,* ed. ʿAlī Kamāl (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāh, 2014), 70.

**48** al-Kasem, "Sviashhennyi Koran," 173–75.

**49** Seitmemetova, "Kollektsiia araboiazychnoi i tiurkoiazychnoi literatury," 61–62.

*mina l-nās . . .* (Q 2:8), *yukhd'awna illā . . .* (Q 2:9). Some of the words are also difficult to correctly decipher in print: for instance, the word *al-thamarāt* in Q 2:22 could be read as beginning with *shīn* instead of *thā,* and the letter *mīm* in the middle position is hardly detectable at all. It must be added that the edition also contains *tajwīd* signs that fully correspond to the widely accepted Ottoman reading signs (pauses, continuations, etc.) that are still used in the Qur'ans printed in Turkey.[50] In 1910, Gasprinskii also published a small textbook on the science of the recitation of the Qur'an *(tajwīd*),[51] using some of the late Ottoman sources.

In general, *Kalām qadīm* (printed between 1898 and 1914) could be regarded as the first successful attempt to print the Arabic text of the Qur'an in Crimea, though it was ultimately down to the individual initiative of Gasprinskii, rather than a wider movement. Hardly competing with the Qur'ans printed in Kazan, the edition, however, followed a good path to the readers inside Crimea and abroad.

Although the printing press and newspaper established by Gasprinskii were called *Tercüman*, "The Translator," it seems that the question of Qur'an translation had no significance for him. This is remarkable, since a number of Muslim elites from the Russian Empire had been particularly interested in rendering the Qur'an into the vernaculars (e.g., the cases of Mūsā Bīgī[52] or Mīr Muḥammad Karīm Bākūwī[53]). In addition, Gasprinskii himself informed the readers of *Tercüman* about the publication of the first modern exegesis in the Azerbaijani language (1904).[54] Whether Gasprinskii considered that there was any demand for a Crimean Tatar translation of the Qur'an is difficult to say. In his own writings (such as the treatise on Islamic values, *Risāle i-qawwām-i Islām*),[55] Gasprinskii usually cites the Qur'an in Arabic, then paraphrases the meaning of the citation or explains particular words in the Crimean Tatar language. He therefore follows the typical Ottoman style of dealing with the Qur'anic text in vernacular preaching and lessons. This trend also continued in early Soviet times in Crimea: for example, a small textbook teaching how to read the Qur'an published in 1926

**50** *Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Istanbul: Hizmet Vakfi, 2008).

**51** *Tajwīd risalesi* (Bahçesarāy: Tercümān, 1328/1910).

**52** Bīgī was dubbed the "Luther of Islam" for his attempt to translate the Qur'an into the Türki–Tatar language. Doğan Gürpinar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1860–1950* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 73.

**53** Mīr Muḥammad Karīm Bākūwī, thanks to his *Tafsīr kashf al-ḥaqā'īq* ("Exploration of the facts") is regarded as the first Azerbaijani translator of the Qur'an. For a modern edition of his *tafsīr*, see *Kəşfül-Həqayiq (ayələrin məna və İncəlikləriylə həqiqətlərinin açıqlanması): Azərbaycan türkcəsində Qurani-Şərifin təfsiri /müəllif və naşir Əl-Bakuvi Hacı Mirməhəmməd Kərim,* transliterated by Əli. Fərhadov, ed. Allahsukur Paşazadə et al. (Baku: İpəkyolu, 2014).

**54** See his small note: İsmaʿil Gaspiralı, "Bakı Qazısı," *Tercüman* 77 (1904): 2.

**55** İsmaʿil Gaspiralı, "Risāle i-Qawwām-i Islām," *Tercüman* 12 (1908): 2.

includes short Qur'anic verses, *ḥādīth* and common religious formulas translated into Crimean Tatar language.[56]

Though it would be incorrect to say that the Qur'an was represented only in Arabic during the early twentieth century, the appearance of Qur'anic translations in the modern sense, i.e., as a standalone work, happened only during the national revival and repatriation movement in Crimea in the 1990s, when Crimean Tatars gained the opportunity to leave Central Asia for their homeland.[57]

## 4 Modern Translations of the Qur'an into the Crimean Tatar Language

The history of the first translation of the Qur'an into Crimean goes back to late Soviet Uzbekistan – the place where CrimeanTatars resided after the deportation. The only Soviet newspaper in CrimeanTatar, *Lenin bayrağı* ("Lenin's banner"), was oriented primarily toward the promotion of communist ideology. However, the editorial board often used this platform as a vehicle to preserve the Crimean Tatar identity. The newspaper's interest in Muslim primary texts coincided with developments within the larger Central Asian Muslim community: Crimean Tatars lived alongside other peoples who shared a similar cultural tradition of Türki-Ḥanafī Islam. This is the reason why the first translation of the Qur'an into Crimean Tatar was not based on the Arabic original, but rather relied on earlier Uzbek, Turkish, and Russian renderings. The author of the Crimean Tatar translation, writer Riza Fazıl (1926–2016), was associated with *Lenin bayrağı* and, in the late 1980s, with the *Yıldız* ("Star") journal. Fazıl started his translation after the first partial publication of *Qur'oni Karim: O'zbekcha izohli tarjima* ("The Holy Qur'an. An annotated translation into Uzbek") by Alouddin Mansur (1952–2020) in *Sharq yulduzi* ("Star of the East").[58] Fazıl also drew on the Turkish *Kur'an-i Kerim ve Türkçe açıklamalı meali* under the editorial guidance of Ali Özek (1932–2021).[59]

---

**56** Mahmud Refat, *Qur'ane hazırlıq içün Elifbe* (Aqmescit: GosTipLit, 1926).

**57** Edward Allworth (ed.), *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland. Studies and Documents* (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 1998).

**58** The Uzbek translation of the Qur'an was published across several issues of *Sharq yulduzi* between 1990 and 1992. The complete translation first appeared as *Qur'oni Karim. O'zbekcha izohli tarjima*. Trans. Alouddin Mansur. Tashkent: Cho'lpon, 1992.

**59** Continually published by both the King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex (since 1987) and the Turkish Religious Foundation (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, since 1993, widely known as the TDV translation), this edition was available in the post-Soviet space already in the early 1990s. *Kurăn-ı*

Another source that Fazıl consulted[60] was the well-known rendering into Russian (1963) by Russian and Soviet Orientalist Ignatii Krachkovskii.

This translation was printed in installments in *Lenin Bayrağı* until 1994; a complete translation appeared as a separate book only in 1998. A short introduction reveals the sources used for the translation and discusses the translator's approach (mainly concerning insertions and commentaries by Fazıl, as well as the special usage of the Latin letter "h" for the Arabic *hā* because the translation was published in the Cyrillic alphabet). If one compares the text of the translation to the three sources mentioned, the closest version to Fazıl's rendering is the translation by Alouddin Mansur. The two texts have many similarities: for instance, (1) having a structure that provides translation not verse-by-verse, but rather paragraph-by-paragraph, where a few verses constitute one textual block, and (2) in the organization of commentaries that start with the word *izaat* (*izoh* in Uzbek, both meaning "footnote"). The wording also shows a number of parallels, as can be seen in Table 1

**Table 1:** Translation of Q 2:14–15 into Uzbek (1990)[61] and Crimean Tatar (1998).

| Uzbek translation, Mansur (1990) | Crimean Tatar translation, Fazıl (1998) | English Translation by Abdel Haleem (Q 2:15–16) |
|---|---|---|
| Alloh ularning ustidan kuladi va ŭz tughonlarida adaşib-uloqib jurişlarini davomli qiladi. Ular haq jŭlning ŭrniga zalolatni sotib olgan kimsalar bŭlib, bu savdolarida fojda qilmadilar va Tŭghi Jŭlga juruvcilardan bŭlmadilar. | Olarğ̆a da Allah qılınır ve adaşıp-şaşırıp yürgenleri alda daha ziyade adaştırıp bıraqır. Olar haq yol yerine adaşuvnı satın alğ̆an kimseler olıp, bu alış-verişleri kãr ketirmedi ve doğru yolnı bulamadılar.[62] | God is mocking them, and allowing them more slack to wander blindly in their insolence. They have bought error in exchange for guidance, so their trade reaps no profit, and they are not rightly guided. |

The Crimea Tatar translation depends much less on the original Arabic vocabulary that exists in abundance in other Turkic languages. For instance, the translation of Q 2:24 in Uzbek contains the expression *kofirlar uçun tayyorlab kŭyilgan dŭzahdan kŭrking* ("fear the Fire that is prepared for the disbelievers") for the

*Kerim ve Türkçe Açiklamalı Meăli,* ed. Ali Özek et al. (Medine: Hădimül-haremeyn eśerîfeyn Kral Fehd Mushaf-ı śerif Basım Kurumu, 1407/1987); (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993).

**60** *Qurʾăn-ı Kerim Qırımtatarca Izaatlı Tercimesi,* trans. Riza Fazıl (Aqmescit: Dolya, 1998), 2–4.

**61** "Qurʾoni Karim," trans. Alouddin Mansur, *Sharq Yulduzi* 3 (1990): 167–73.

**62** The Latin transliteration of Crimean Tatar is given in accordance with modern Crimean Tatar Latin alphabet rules; note that both Cyrillic and Latin alphabets are currently in use.

Arabic *u'iddat li-l-kāfirīna.* The text in Crimean Tatar gives *inkar etkenler* ("those who deny faith"), while the commentary has a variant *kafirler* (and *kufr ahli* in the Uzbek text). Some of the differences between the Uzbek and Crimean Tatar translations suggest that Fazıl may have consulted another source besides the three translations mentioned. The notion *māliki yawm al-dīn* ("Master of the Day of Judgment") is translated as *qiyamet kunünin malikdir* ("Master of the Day of Resurrection"), while all three of the other translations use words that could be interpreted only as "judgment" (*sud* in Russian, *ceza* in Turkish, and *zhazo* in Uzbek). The source of the Crimean Tatar variant is not clear.

The Crimean Tatar translation appeared in another edition in 2006, which enabled it to continue reaching new readers well into the 2000ss. In the popular perception, this was a long-awaited symbol of national and religious revival.[63] Another translation of the Qur'an into the Crimean Tatar language resulted from a collaboration between the contemporary Turkish theologian Said Dizen and Crimean Tatar writer Zakir Kurtnezir (1933–2016). Their translation received approval from the Religious Board of Crimean Muslims and was first printed in 1998.[64] The translation became available both in hard copy and digitally after its publication on several Muslim websites. In 2015, this edition was also issued by the Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanı*) in Ankara, which makes it the only Crimean Tatar interpretation officially published by a foreign Muslim institution.[65]

In addition to a formal introduction by Crimean mufti Emirali Ablaev, the text provides a foreword by the translators. They emphasize that ritual recitation of the Qur'an should be done only in Arabic, and that the purpose of their work is to provide an interpretation of the text. The translators used three publications in Turkish (primarily the aforementioned TDV translation from 1993) and two in Russian, by Ignatii Krachkovskii (first published in 1963) and Valeriia Porokhova (1991). As the guiding method, the translators followed a popular twentieth-century Turkish textbook *Tefsir usulü* ("Methodology of *tafsīr*") by İsmail Cerrahoğlu.[66] More than a theoretical treatise, this book provides plenty of examples of how to interpret particular verses.

**63** "12 interesnyh faktov o Rize Fazile," *Avdet* 48/937 (2006): 2.
**64** *Qur'ǎn-ı Kerim ve Iizaatlı Manası,* trans. Zakir Kurtnezir & Said Dizen (Aqmescit: Dolya, 1998).
**65** In the title, however, *Tatarca* is used to denote the language, which may create confusion over the exact language it refers to (i.e., Crimean Tatar or the Volga-Ural Tatar language): *Kur'ǎn-ı Kerim ve Tatarca meali. Meali Hazirlayan Zakir Kurtnezir* (Ankara-Istanbul: Diyanet İşleri Başkanı, 2015).
**66** İsmail Cerrahoğlu, *Tefsir usulü* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Ilahiyat Fakültesi yayinlari, 1971).

As mentioned, Dizen and Kurtnezir's translation draws largely on the TDV translation into Turkish. Though there are many places where the Crimean Tatar translators have modified the style, many verses with insertions and commentaries follow the Turkish text very closely, as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Translation of Q 68:1–3 into Turkish (1993) and Crimean Tatar (1998).

| Turkish translation, TDV (1993) | Crimean Tatar translation, Dizen and Kurtnezir (1998) | English Translation by Abdel Haleem |
|---|---|---|
| Nûn. Kaleme ve (kalem tutanların) yazdıklarına andolsun ki (Resûlüm), sen – Rabbinin nimeti sayesinde – mecnun değilsin | Nûn. Qalemğe ve (qalem tutqanlarnıñ) yazğamlarına ant olsun ki (Resûlım), sen – Rabbinının nimeti sayesinde – mecnun degilsin | Nun. By the pen! By all they write! Your Lord's grace does not make you [Prophet] a madman |

In general, the modern Turkish tradition of Qur'an interpretation influenced Dizen and Kurtnezir's Crimea Tatar translation greatly. Among the main borrowed features, one could name the following: short introductions to *sūra*s, frequent exegetical insertions, and original Qur'anic vocabulary that is part of the lexicons of Turkish and the Crimean Tatar language. In this way, the approach of the Dizen and Kurtnezir edition contrasts with the earlier translation where original "Turkic" religious vocabulary was used. An example is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Two translations of Q 2:11 into Crimean Tatar.

| Fazıl (1998) | Dizen and Kurtnezir (1998) | English Translation by Abdel Haleem |
|---|---|---|
| Olarğa: "Yer yüzünde bozğguncılık yapmañız", denilgende: "Bizler eyilik yapqanlardanmız", – deyler. | Olarğa: "Yer yüzünde fesat çıqarmañ", denilgen vaqıtta: "Biz yalıñız islâh eticilermiz", derler. | When it is said to them, 'Do not cause corruption in the land,' they say, 'We are only putting things right' |

One can see the usage of Arabic roots (*fesat*, *islâh*) in the Dizen and Kurtnezir translation which follows the original Qur'anic wording: "*wa-idhdhā qīla lahum la tufsidū fī l-arḍi qalū innama nahnu muṣliḥūn.*" The translators realize that some of the words of Arabic origin may be incomprehensible to parts of their readership, as this vocabulary was replaced during the twentieth-century linguistic "secularization" of some Turkic languages. To assist such readers, the translators provide explanatory footnotes. Also, the appendix to the translation contains explanations of more than 500 religious terms – this could be useful for readers not

well-versed in the Arabic language and religious terms. Following this appendix, one may see an invocation upon completing the reading of the Qur'an (*duʿāʾ khatm al-Qurʾān*), written in Crimean Tatar. Thus, apart from the rendition of Riza Fazıl, the translation of Dizen and Kurtnezir seems to be the only domestic alternative to the widely-read Turkish and Russian translations in Crimea. Despite news in 2012 of a plan to publish a new edition of the Dizen and Kurtnezir translation (revised by the Muslim Religious Board of Crimea),[67] nothing has appeared in print as of 2022. The last impression from 2015 (along with the Arabic text) by TDRA in Ankara was no more than a reproduction of the Dizen and Kurtnezir edition from 2006.[68]

# 5 Conclusion

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that the Crimean Qur'anic culture has developed in connection with the neighboring areas of the Islamicate world. In the periods of the Golden Horde and the Crimean Khanate, the peninsula served as a connection point for many Islamic scholarly circles. In general, the local Qur'anic tradition has been shaped as part of an extensive Islamic learning framework within Crimea, characterized by all the dimensions of late Islamic intellectual history. For instance, the usage of various techniques of textual commentary (mainly gloss, *ḥāshiya*) indicates that Crimea was part of the dynamic post-classical Islamic tradition.[69] Some of the eighteenth-century manuscripts discussed in this chapter show important changes in how the Qur'an was commented upon: for instance, there was a shift from a one-dimensional approach (one commentary – one gloss) to a multi-dimensional and even critical one (one commentary – many glosses), thus making the role of the compiler more significant (e.g., the case of Aḥmad al-Kafawī).

Although in the eighteenth to twentieth century an increasing number of religious practices (such as *duʿāʾ*, a special religious invocation) relied on vernaculars, the production of Qur'an translations was not part of the local Islamic tradition until the 1990s. The surviving Qur'anic manuscripts also suggest that interlinear

67 "DUMK gotovit 3-e izdanie smyslov Korana na krymskotatarskom iazyke," *Islam v Ukraine*, February 27, 2012, https://islam.in.ua/ru/novosti-v-strane/dumk-gotovit-3-e-izdanie-smyslov-korana-na-krymskotatarskom-yazyke. Last accessed November 24, 2022.

68 *Kerim ve Tatarca meali*. Meali Hazirlayan Zakir Kurtnezir (Ankara-Istanbul: Diyanet İşleri Başkanı, 2015).

69 Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin, "The Ḥāshiya and Islamic Intellectual History," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 213–16.

translations were not so popular in Crimea. Instead, all Islamic learning related to Qur'anic studies was based on a student's knowledge of the Arabic language. Even the introduction of the printing press to the peninsula in the nineteenth century did not bring many changes in this regard; indeed, the leading promoter of Islamic reform in Crimea, Ismail Gasprinskii, used his publishing house Tercüman to introduce locally printed Qur'ans in Arabic, showing little interest in translating the text. Printing the Arabic Qur'an locally based the Ottoman print edition maintained a strong cultural connection between Crimea and Anatolia that survived under Russian imperial rule.

Among other Muslim cultures in Eurasia, the Crimean culture stands apart due to the mass deportation of Crimean Tatars to Central Asia in 1944. The deportation caused a profound demographic and cultural loss that interrupted the main traditions of Islamic learning. The active and familiar Muslim-Ḥanafī milieu of Uzbekistan enabled Crimean Tatars to preserve and develop the remnants of their religious culture. The return back to the peninsula in the 1990s made it possible to renew the ties to the Islamicate world. These factors explain the strong influence of Uzbek and Turkish traditions on the modern Qur'anic translations into Crimean Tatar.

The question remains open whether complete interlinear translations into Türki-Tatar/Crimean Tatar existed before the twentieth century. This is possible, for very similar works were widespread among Polish-Lithuanian Tatars. Further research on the Crimean Tatar manuscripts preserved in many libraries around the world would help to answer this question. At the same time, more research is needed on the available manuscripts and printed sources that show significant developments in the Qur'anic culture of Crimean Tatars in the eighteenth to twentieth century, as these documents enable us to contextualize the Islamic culture of the peninsula within the more extensive Islamic frameworks of the east-central European and Black Sea regions.

# Bibliography

## Manuscripts

Ankara, Ankara National Library Collection, MS 3577/1. Al-Qirīmī, *Quṭb al-Dīn, Raḥatu l-Ummah fī Dār al-Muʾamminah*.

Bakhchysarai, Bakhchysarai Museum Collection, MS 115. [*Collection of prayers*].

Balıkesir, Balıkesir İl Halk Library Collection, MS 357. *Tafsīr juzʾ ʿamma*.

Istanbul, Hacı Selim Ağa Library, Nurbanu Collection, MS 32. Al-Qirīmī, *Hāshiyah ʿālā Anwār al-Tanzīl*.

Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi Collection, MS 420. Al-Qirīmī, *Lawāʾiḥ al-Faʾīqa wa ʿAlāʾīq al-Rāʾīgah*.

Lviv, Lviv History of Religions Museum Collection, MS 11881. *Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.
Lviv, Lviv History of Religions Museum Collection, MS CD–1683. *Ḥāshiyah Sheikh-Zāde*.
Sarajevo, The Gazi-Husrev-beg Library Collection, MS 3804/1–2. *Al-Talkhīs fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīz*.
Ostroh, Ostroh Museum of Books and Printing, MS KH 20366. *Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*.

## Secondary Sources

"12 interesnyh faktov o Rize Faile." *Avdet*, 48/937 (2006): 2.
Ahmed, Asad Q. and Margaret Larkin. "The Ḥāshiya and Islamic Intellectual History." *Oriens* 41 (2013): 213–16.
*Al-Fihris al-Shāmil lil-Turāth al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī al-Makhṭūṭ.* Amman: Muʾ asasah Al al-Beyt, 1987.
Al-Kaffawī, Maḥmūd. *Katāʾīb ʿAllām al-Akhyār min fuqahāʾ Madhhab al-Nuʾmān al-Mukhtar*. Edited by Ṣafūt Kūsā et al. Istanbul: Maktabah al-Irshād, 2017.
Al-Kasem, Amin. "Sviashhennyi Koran, izdavaemyij tipografiei 'Terdzhiman' v Krymu v kontse XIX – nachale XX vv." *Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie* 2 (2019): 165–79.
Allen, Jonathan. "Self, Space, Society, and Saint in the Well-Protected Domains: A History of Ottoman Saints and Sainthood, 1500–1780." PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2019.
*Al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*. Istanbul: Hizmet Vakfi, 2008.
Al-Shamarrī, Mājid. "Tafsīr sūrah Yūsuf li-l-mu'allif al-ʿAllāmah Aḥmad bin ʿAbd al-Mumin al-Ḥanafī al-Qirīmī al-mutawaffā sana 783 h. min awwala-hu ilā ayah 42: dirāsah wa taḥqīq." MA diss., Qassim University, 2016.
Al-Taftāzāni, Saʿd al-Dīn. *Sharḥ Al-ʿAqā'īd al-Nasafiyah*. Ed. ʿAlī Kamāl. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāh, 2014.
Clinton, Bennett. "Introduction: Western Europe and Islam in the long 18th century. Demonization to dialogue." In *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (1700–1800)*, edited by David Thomas and John A. Chesworth, 1–18. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
Çiçek, M. Halil. "Ebü'l-Bekā el-Kefevî'nin Külliyât'ında Tefsir ve Kur'an İlimleri." PhD diss., Selçuk Üniversity, 1992.
DeWeese, Devin. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde. Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 1994.
El-Kaşifi, Hüseyin Vaiz. *Tefsir-i Mevakib: Tercüme-i Tefsir-i Mevâhib*. Translated by Ismāʿīl Ferrūkh Efendī. Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1246/1830.
Fisher, Alan. "Ismail Gaspirali, Model Leader for Asia," in *Tatars of the Crimea: Their Struggle for Survival*, edited by Edward Allworth, 11–26. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1988.
Gaspiralı, Ismaʿil. "'Bakïı Qazïısïı'." *Tercüman* 77 (1904): 2.
Gaspiralı, Ismaʿil. "Drevnee slovo '*Kalām Qadīm*'." *Tercümān* 8 (1908): 2.
Gaspiralı, Ismaʿil. "Risāle-i Qawwām-i Islām." *Tercüman* 12 (1908): 2–4.
Gunasti, Susan. *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*. London: Routledge, 2019.
Gündüz, Mahmut. "Matbaanın Tarihçesi ve İlk Kur'an-ı Kerim Basmaları." *Vakıflar Dergisi* 12 (1978): 335–50.
Gür, Süleyman. "Osmanlı Döneminde Yetişen 'Kırımî' Nisbeli Müfessirler ve Eserleri: Bir Literatür İncelemesi." *Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi* 19 (2019): 357–95
Gürpinar, Doğan. *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, *1860–1950*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013.
"Iʿlân, Kitâbhâne-i Tefeyyüz." *Tercüman* 12, (1326/1908): 3.

Karaismailoğlu, Adnan. “Hüseyn Vaiz-i Kaşifi.” In *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 19, 16–18. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1999.

*Kelām-ı Qadīm*. Bakhchysarai: Tercümān, 1315/1898.

Kraiushkin, Nikita. “Antisufiiskaia polemika v Osmanskoi Sirii nakanune vozniknoveniia vakhkhabitskogo vtorzhenika (1620 – 1730-ye gg).” *Vostok (Oriens)* 2 (2020): 18–27.

*Kur‘ăn-ı Kerim ve Türkçe Açıklamalı Meăli*. Edited by Ali Özek et al. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993.

*Kurʿăn-ı Kerim ve Tatarca meali*. Edited by Zakir Kurtnezir. Ankara-Istanbul: Diyanet İşleri Başkanı, 2015.

*Kurʿăn-ı Kerim ve Türkçe Açıklamalı Meăli*. Edited by Ali Özek et al. Medine: Hădimül-haremeyn eśerıfeyn Kral Fehd Mushaf-ı śerif Basım Kurumu, 1407/1987.

Kuttner, Thomas. “Russian jadîdism and the Islamic world: Ismail Gasprinskii in Cairo, 1908.” *Cahiers du monde Russe et Soviétique* 16, no. 3–4 (1975): 383–424.

Miller, Philip E. “Agenda in Karaite Printing in the Crimea During the Middle Third of the Nineteenth Century.” *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 20 (1998): 82–88.

*Qur‘ăn-ı Kerim Qırımtatarca izaatlı tercimesi*. Translated by Riza Fazıl. Aqmescit: Dolya, 1998.

*Qur‘ăn-ı Kerim ve izaatlı manası*. Translated by Zakir Kurtnezir and Said Dizen. Aqmescit: Dolya, 1998.

“‘Qur’oni Karim’.” Translated by Alouddin Mansur. *Sharq Yulduzi* 3 (1990): 167–73.

Ramazanova, Ul’ker. *Rukopisnye i staropechatnye Korany v sobranii Bahchisaraiskogo muzeia-zapovednika. Katalog*. Belgorod: Konstanta, 2016.

Refat, Mahmud, *Qur’ane hazırlıq içün Elifbe*. Aqmescit: GosTipLit, 1926.

Rezvan, Efim. *Koran i jego mir*. Sankt Petersburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 2001.

Seitmemetova, Selvina. “Kollektsiia araboiazychnoi i tiurkoiazychnoi literatury religioznoi tematiki v lichnoi biblioteke Ismaila Gasprinskogo.” *Skhidniy Svit* 1 (2014): 61–72.

Solak, Fahri. “Doğumunun 150. Yılında Gaspıralı İsmail Bey Tercüman Gazetesi Bibliyografyası ve Türkçe Yayınlar.” *Müteferrika* 20 (2001): 79–104.

*Tajwīd risalesi*. Bakhchysarai: Tercümān, 1328/1910.

Tuna, Mustafa Özgür. “Gaspirali v. Il’minskii: Two Identity Projects for the Muslims of the Russian Empire.” *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 2 (2002): 266–89.

Walid A. Saleh. “The Qur’an Commentary of al-Bayḍāwī: A History of *Anwār al-tanzīl*.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2021): 71–102.

Wilson, Michael Brett. “The Qur’an after Babel: Translating and Printing the Qur’an in Late Ottoman and Modern Turkey.” PhD diss. Duke University, 2009.

Wilson, Michael Brett. *Translating the Qur’an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Yakubovych, Mykhaylo. “Ot slova k smyslu: Germenevticheskaia teoriia Abū l-Baqā’ al-Kafawī.” In “*Rassypannoe” i “sobrannoe”: Kognitivne priemy arabo-musul’manskoi kul’tury*, edited by Andrei V. Smirnov, 258–60. Moscow: Sadra, 2017.

Yakubovych, Mykhaylo. “A Neglected Ottoman Sufi Treatise from the 16th century: *Mawāhibal-Raḥman fī bayān Marātib al-Akwān* by Ibrāhīm al-Qirīmī.” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 45 (2015): 137–161.

Yakubovych, Mykhaylo. “Crimean Scholars in Mamluk Syria (13th –14th centuries): Careers and Legacy.” *Golden Horde Review* 6, no. 4 (2018): 719–27.

Yakubovych, Mykhaylo. “History of Printing the Qur’an in Europe: Editions, their Quality and Accuracy.” In *Proceedings of the Symposium on Printing the Qur’an*, edited by S. al-‘Awfi et al., 51–76. Madinah: King Fahd Qur’an Printing Complex, 2016.

Yakubovych, Mykhaylo. “Crimean Scholars and the Kadizadeli Tradition in the 18th Century.” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 49 (2017): 155–70.

Yakubovych, Mykhaylo. *Koran v Ukraini: Rukopysy, komentari, pereklady*. Kyiv: UCID, 2020.

Alfrid Bustanov

# On Qur'anic Culture in Inner Russia between the Seventeenth and Twentieth Centuries

## 1 Introduction

Like their coreligionists elsewhere in the world, the Muslims of Russia have historically been engaged with the Qur'an – as text, metaphor and material object – in the course of their daily lives. Alluding to Qur'anic themes in everyday speech, explaining life events in the light of the Book, or using the calligraphic rendering of particular verses for the ornamentation of valued objects – all these and many other aspects of cultural engagement with the Qur'an merit their own detailed investigation.[1] I propose in this chapter to conceptualize the complex everyday treatment of the Qur'an by Russia's Muslims as a historically distinct Qur'anic culture that developed over centuries in Inner Russia.[2] As we shall see, it is instructive to explore the dynamics of Qur'anic culture as practiced by generations of Muslims in imperial and Soviet contexts.

The present chapter is based on an extensive investigation of manuscript materials from state and private collections across the Russian Federation. In what follows, I will present a tentative overview of the cultural dynamics underlying

**1** To this end, a wealth of evidence has been gathered by Russia's Muslims. For example, Guzel Saifullina's groundbreaking research marked an important step towards our understanding of Qur'anic culture in Russia: Guzel Saifullina, *Muzyka sviashchennogo slova. Chtenie Korana v traditsionnoi tataro-musul'manskoi kul'ture* (Kazan: Tatpoligraf, 1999); Guzel Saifullina, *Bagyshlauga bagyshlau: bagyshlau (posviashcheniia) v kontekste kul'tury narodnogo islama volzhskikh tatar* (Kazan: Iman, 2005).

**2** "Inner Russia" refers here to the regions colonized by the Russians in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, i.e., the Volga-Ural region and Western Siberia, which have a significant Muslim population.

**Note:** This research was undertaken within a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 804083), titled *MIND: The Muslim Individual in Imperial and Soviet Russia* (mind-archives.com), carried out at the University of Amsterdam (2019–2024). I would like to thank Iazgul' Rakhimova for fruitful discussions on the tradition of Tatar-language commentaries on the Qur'an. For proofreading on an earlier draft, I am indebted to Thomas Welsford.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-008

Muslim engagement with the Qur'an in Russia over a long period spanning from the late seventeenth to the late twentieth century. My primary aim is to trace the shifting social function and significance of the Qur'an among Muslims in Inner Russia and to show, in particular, how the Qur'an became scriptualized: that is, how it moved from simply being part of a broader aesthetic culture to becoming the object of dedicated translation and commentary, as well as a literary model for new modes of life-writing. This evolution reflects the dynamic changes that occurred within Qur'anic culture in Inner Russia over an extended period of time. These changes took place independently of state politics and reflected changes in literary sensibilities and consumption. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that the evolution of Qur'anic culture can only be meaningfully explained by looking at the history of Islamic manuscript production.

I begin in section 2 with an analysis on the micro level, considering the paleographic features of the Qur'anic manuscripts produced in regions of Inner Russia. Beginning from the late seventeenth century, this analysis covers the spread of the printing style known as "Kazan printing" (*Kazan basmasī*)[3] in the course of the nineteenth century and the continuation of Qur'an copying throughout the Soviet era. Circulation of the Qur'an among Russia's Muslims reflected changes in material culture, such as the switch from Dutch paper to paper of Russian provenance, as well as the transformation of approaches to the text from performative to more textually centered. I discuss the first known Tatar Qur'anic commentaries, produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in the broader context of vernacularization. In this section, I try to demonstrate that the first Tatar translation of the Qur'an shared a great deal with other literary genres and relied on short stories to illustrate or contextualize the Qur'anic verses. This practice proved instrumental in making Qur'anic motifs and symbols part of upbringing and daily life. These early translations, many of which lack any indication of authorship, reveal a linguistic and conceptual dependency on Persianate models that shared with Central Asian peers.[4]

In section 3, I discuss the implications of the intellectual turn toward the Qur'an in the twentieth century as part of the decline of Persianate culture in Russia and the rise of the Ottoman cultural models.[5] This cultural turn resulted in

---

3 Gulnaz Sibgatullina, Iazgul Rakhimova, "Arabic Edition of the Qur'ān, Kazan, 1803," *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān,* ed. Johanna Pink; online http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_055207. Last accessed November 24, 2022.

4 On the concept of the Persianate world: Kaveh Hemmat, "Completing the Persianate Turn," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 3–4 (2021): 633–46.

5 Allen Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012).

a radical change in practices associated with the Qur'an: from then on, it became fashionable and prestigious to memorize the Qur'an in Mecca and Medina and to perform Qur'anic recitations back home. With the help of several examples, I demonstrate how the Qur'an turned into a key tool of self-fashioning and was placed at the center of new life-writing practices. The twentieth century truly became the age of the Qur'an in Soviet Russia: the sheer number of commentaries and translations that were produced exceeded everything that had been written previously. Based on the available evidence, we may suggest that these scholarly writings developed a discursive space and language in which the Qur'anic text and imagery were transformed into instruments of self-reflection, going beyond the description of one's life towards the conceptualization of the ideal Muslim personality. Strikingly, Qur'anic culture in Russia reached its zenith amid the displacement, repression, destruction, and prohibition of the Muslim intellectual tradition in the Soviet Union. This seeming paradox of both rise and fall invites us to think further about how anti-religious spaces may serve as spheres for active intellectual work.[6]

## 2 Copying the Qur'an in Russia

Although a number of historians have produced fascinating work about both the development of Russian Orientalist interest in the Qur'an[7] and the history of Muslim printing (which was also strongly bound with colonial initiatives and institutions),[8] little is known about the circulation and manuscript production of Qur'anic texts in Russia.[9] This can be explained by a number of factors. In particular, for much of the twentieth century, political considerations meant that studying the history of the Qur'an was highly sensitive and was possible only within the framework of atheist propaganda. As I hope to show, studying the circulation of Qur'anic manuscripts can yield invaluable information about the life of the Qur'an in Mus-

**6** One parallel that comes to mind in this regard is a study devoted to the Gulag as a literary space: Andrea Gullotta, *Intellectual Life and Literature at Solovki 1923–1930: The Paris of the Northern Concentration Camps* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2018).

**7** Efim Rezvan, *Koran i ego mir* (St Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2001), 383–455.

**8** Abrar Karimullin, *Tatarskaia kniga poreformennoi Rossii* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1983).

**9** Salim Giliazutdinov, *Opisanie rukopisei Korana iz khranilishch Tsentra pis'mennogo i muzykal'nogo naslediia IIaLI im. G. Ibragimova Akademii nauk RT* (Kazan: Akademiia nauk Respubliki Tatarstan, 2013); Nuriia Garaeva, *Korany iz sobraniia IIaLI im. G. Ibragimova Akademii Nauk Respubliki Tatarstan* (Kazan: Akademiia nauk Respubliki Tatarstan, 2022).

lim communities of the Volga-Urals, as well as its role in conceptualizing and performing the ideal Muslim personality. The Qur'an, as a text and material object, formed a key framework for introspection.

The oldest manuscript copy of the Qur'an produced by Muslims in Russia, to my knowledge, can be dated paleographically to the late seventeenth century. Similar to other manuscripts crafted before the second half of the eighteenth century, this Qur'anic manuscript was written on Dutch paper bearing the characteristic watermark of the arms of Amsterdam. The copyist seems to have been untroubled by the fact that this watermark featured images of creatures (lions, foolscap watermark) and Christian symbols (the cross). This indicates a Muslim perceptual culture[10] that accommodated those visual elements as part of the everyday norm, integrating global commercial interactions into the world of engagement with the sacred.

This seventeenth-century example of Qur'anic manuscript production demonstrates that the Book was copied in an elegant manner used specifically for transcribing the words of the divine Revelation. The script employed for copying Qur'ans was also used for reproducing Qur'anic excerpts in other, non-Qur'anic writings, with the shift from one script to another serving as a form of visual code-switching to convey the distinctness of the words of God.

Among the features of this handwriting, typical of other local Qur'anic manuscripts of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, are the peculiar form of *kāf* in middle and final positions, the large form of the *lām-ālif* ligature, and the disproportionally tall letters *dhāl* and *dāl*. The letter *sīn* is always rendered in toothed form. Verses are divided from each other only by *tajwīd* symbols that aid recitation. This tells us something about the likely functions of such manuscripts: they were not meant for direct citation or for quickly consulting particular verses, but rather for oral performance;[11] therefore, the rules of *tajwīd* were often indicated right there on the manuscript, including short notes in Tatar.[12] Given the frequency with which we encounter these copies meant for performance, it is unsurprising that we also encounter a large number of texts on

**10** Wendy M.K. Shaw, *What is 'Islamic' Art? Between Religion and Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 33–56.

**11** On the relationships between written and oral texts: Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield, ed., *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015). In 1886, ʿAbd al-Qayyūm al-Shirdānī observed that even specialists in Qur'an recitation where not able to tell the exact number of a particular verse. This prompted al-Shirdānī to compile a concordance in the same year. The manuscript was recently published in facsimile: *Miftakh al'-Kur'an*. Vol. 2. *Nasyri L. Miftakh al'-Kur'an*, ed. Aidar Khairutdinov (Kazan: Izdatel'stvo Poznanie, 2015).

**12** For example: KFU, MS 7158 Ar., fol. 32b.

the art of recitation copied in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Arabic, Persian and Turkic.[13] Subsequently, local authors produced poems in the vernacular to explain the subtleties of the art of Qur'anic recitation.[14]

The rules of copying Qur'anic texts remained stable for a long period of time. Even copies dating from the nineteenth century retained some of the paleographic features of the manuscripts produced in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Still, certain manuscripts demonstrate some visual innovation: for example, one copy produced on Russian paper in the second half of the eighteenth century has a distinctively angular style of writing.

By the early nineteenth century, the copying of the Qur'an became highly standardized. A wide network of *madrasa*s started to produce a massive number of Qur'anic manuscripts, many of which were almost identical. Some variation in the script was always possible, but the particular form of *Naskh* script described above became more or less standard. This visual standardization laid the ground for the visual forms of Qur'anic printing that emerged in the 1800s.[15] The intensive copying of the Qur'an resulted in the formation of a scriptural canon that was subsequently adopted in print. As such, the later successful dissemination of the printed Qur'an was largely based on the manuscript tradition that had developed over the two preceding centuries.

It is important to note that the mass printing of the Qur'an in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not interrupt the copying of the Book by hand, which continued in parallel. Moreover, the manuscript tradition also lived on through the Soviet era, when the printing and distribution of religious literature was officially forbidden. This is attested by the existence of multiple Qur'anic manuscripts produced locally in late Socialist Russia[16] as well as copies of Tatar *tafsīr*s.[17] Further evidence regarding the production and circula-

**13** One Turkic-language work on *tajwīd* was copied in 1770: *Qawāʿid dar bayān-i qanūn-i qariyyān*, KFU, MS 7079 Ar., fols. 33a–37a. This copy was acquired by a manuscript expedition in 2000 from Vakhida Mukhtasimova, a resident of Samar village in the Perm region.

**14** For example: Hibatullāh al-Qārghālī (1794–1867), *Tuhfat al-awlād*, KFU, MS 6143 Ar., fols. 98b–109a. This manuscript was acquired by a manuscript expedition from Äminä Arifjanova of Semenovka village in the Nizhnii Novgorod region in 1990.

**15** For a very detailed treatment of Qur'anic printing in Kazan: Nuriia Garaeva, *Kazanskie izdaniia Korana iz sobraniia muzeiia-zapovednika 'Kazanskii Kreml'. Katalog* (Kazan: Kazanskii Kreml', 2019).

**16** KFU, MS 6479 Ar. This item was acquired by a manuscript expedition from Mahirä Khasanshina in the Tatar district of Kostroma in 1976. The manuscript bears no date, but can be dated paleographically to the late 1960s or early 1970s.

**17** One example is a two-volume copy of Sungatullah Bikbulat's commentary on the Qur'an preserved in the possession of Naqi Isanbet's descendants in Kazan.

tion of manuscripts may be gleaned from documents as yet unknown to scholarship. Although Kazan Federal University Library contains the largest repository of Arab-script writings in Russia, the proportion of Qur'anic items preserved and cataloged in this collection is small. This can be attributed to the inclination of Soviet scholars to only collect books that would be informative for writing ethnicized national histories, which was the primary concern of Soviet Oriental studies.[18] Another powerful factor here is that the physical manuscripts are strongly associated with the divine blessing that they are believed to contain. Therefore, not every owner of such sacred objects would be inclined to donate them to secular archives, where they could potentially be treated disrespectfully – for example, that men might touch these books without having performed the necessary ablutions, or that women might do so while in a state of ritual impurity. With a decrease in Arabic-language literacy among the descendants of manuscript owners, the sacred status of the physical Qur'an manuscript was extended to any piece of paper with Arabic letters on it.[19]

## 3 *Tafsīr* as a Literary Genre

My observations on the large-scale production of manuscripts in the Volga-Urals suggest that the Arabic text of the Qur'an circulated in the region according to a pattern similar to that of other Arabic- and Persian-language literary classics. For example, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Saʿdī's *Bustān* circulated only in the original, albeit sometimes with partial interlinear translations.[20] However, in the early nineteenth century, the book was fully rendered into Tatar with a translation of every *misrāʿ* (line).[21] During this period, the works of Farīd al-Dīn

**18** Michael Kemper and Stefan Conermann, ed., *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies* (London: Routledge, 2011).

**19** The sacredness of the Qur'anic manuscripts clearly had to do with occult practices that are described in detail in more specialized treatises, such as the *Durr al-Nazīm* by al-Yāfiʿī (National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, MS B-21351, early nineteenth century, from an unknown collection). This book was apparently popular in Inner Russia: I have recently consulted another two manuscript copies of local provenance.

**20** For example: KFU, MS 997F. This item was obtained from the mosque of Pel'dinka village in the Penza region in 1993.

**21** This anonymous translation exists in multiple copies, but remains completely unstudied: KFU, MS 6346T. This item was acquired by Al'bert Fathi from Naqiya Sagitova of Olï Chaqmaq village in the Möslüm district of the Tatar ASSR in 1972, but remained uncataloged until recently.

ʿAttār,[22] Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī[23] and Abū Jaʿfar al-Tabarī[24] were similarly translated into Türki-Tatar.[25] In the same vein, some Qur'an copies produced in the region in the late eighteenth century bear sporadic interlinear translations in Persian;[26] meanwhile Tatar-language translations of the Qur'an began to be composed around the same time. As a result, we should analyze these Qur'anic manuscripts as part of the broader process of translating and domesticating the Arabic and Persian literary canon in Muslim Russia. This literary evolution was broadly similar to a comparable process that took place in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, where there was overlap in the methods used to compose Qur'an translations and literary works.[27]

The early nineteenth century saw the emergence of Turkic-language translations of the Qur'an in Inner Russia. To this day, remarkably little is known about this program of Qur'an translation or the multiple Turkic-language renditions of the Qur'an that circulated among Muslims in the Russian Empire. Although many manuscript copies of such renditions are known to exist, they are frequently defective and difficult to attribute to a particular translator. Moreover, authorship as such was not considered very important: portions of texts, similar stories, and allusions traveled from one translated work to another. In this respect, the genre of Qur'an translations is united with the broader field of literary texts translated into Turkic, most of which lack any indication of the translator. One such example is a fragment of an unattributed Qur'an manuscript that was discovered by a manuscript expedition from Kazan University.[28] This manuscript contains eighty-

---

**22** *Pand nāma-yi ʿAttār*, KFU, MS 6642T; 6690T.

**23** Al-Ghazālī, *Ayyuha-l-walad*, KFU, MS 6882T, fols. 1a–25a.

**24** KFU, MS 6662T, *Al-jild al-khāmis min tawārīkh al-Tabarī*. This item was acquired by a manuscript expedition from Ruzaliia Muhammatjanova of Alat village in the Biektau district of the Republic of Tatarstan in 2012.

**25** Paolo Sartori, "From the Demotic to the Literary: The Ascendance of the Vernacular Turkic in Central Asia (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)," *Eurasian Studies* 18 (2020), 213–254.

**26** A copy of the Qur'an preserved in the private collection of Kamil Samigullin, the mufti of the Republic of Tatarstan. The book was written on Russian paper in 1194/1780–81.

**27** Jamal J. Elias, "Commentary as Method vs Genre: An Analysis of Isma'il Haqqi Bursawi's Commentaries on the Qur'an and the *Mathnawi-yi ma'nawi*," in *From the Khan's Oven: Essays on the History of Central Asian Religions in Honor of Devin DeWeese*, ed. Eren Tasar, Allen J. Frank and Jeff Eden (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 237–57.

**28** KFU, MS 6741 T, [*Tafsīr*] (from Menglijihan Fakhrazieva of the village of Däwek in the Tatar Autonomous Socialist Republic (TASSR)). The exact date of acquisition remains unknown. Manuscript expeditions were first launched by the university workers in 1963 and since then took place almost annually to collect old Islamic books from the Tatar villages in Soviet Russia. As a result, Kazan University doubled its holdings of Arabic-script manuscripts and now hosts the largest such collection in the country.

one folios, lacks the incipit and the end, and covers translations of and commentaries to *sūra*s 36–41. The language of this work corresponds with the norms of the literary language used in the Volga-Urals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Paleographical features, including the use of white Russian paper, the script and the book's format, support this dating. There is a clear visual differentiation between the Qur'anic text and the commentaries: all Qur'anic verses are marked by red lines and written in clear *Naskh*, while the commentaries are written in a simple cursive script that leans to the left. As noted above with regard to manuscripts from the seventeenth century, this visual differentiation is a form of code-switching from the language of humans to the language of God (*kalām Allāh*). The practice of visual differentiation between Arabic and Turkic can also be seen in a late eighteenth-century copy of a Persian commentary: the Qur'anic text is written in bold, clear *Naskh*, while the commentaries are smaller, simpler, and written in a strongly left-leaning hand.[29] In addition, one can clearly see the difference in the forms of *kāf* between Qur'anic verses and commentaries.

A better-preserved copy of the above-mentioned work was obtained by a manuscript expedition in 1971.[30] This copy, written on late eighteenth-century Russian paper, is defective and includes only Q 39–53. The surviving parts of the *tafsīr* suggest that it must have originally been a commentary on the entire Qur'an. The remaining text may be contained in other manuscripts preserved at the Kazan University library.[31] Visually, the commentaries are written in a right-leaning hand, while the Qur'anic text is rendered in straighter *Naskh*. Interestingly, the Turkic text bears vocalization for short vowels, which is rare for local manuscript production.

Beyond the visual aspects of these manuscript copies, the actual text of the *tafsīr* has its own distinct features. Unlike other Tatar commentaries, which adopt a rigorously philological approach in translating every word, the commentary in question instead contains detailed explanations of individual verses. What unites all known commentaries from the early nineteenth century is the inclusion of separate narratives (*riwāyāt, hikāyāt, qasā'is*) into the main body of texts to explain the context of individual verses.[32] Some of these stories reflect the intertex-

**29** KFU, MS 994 F, [*Tafsīr*], fols. 1a–31a.

**30** KFU, MS 6427 T, [*Tafsīr*] (from Kalimullah Khairullin in Bolïn Balïqchï village of the TASSR).

**31** For example, there is another manuscript from the same era (KFU, MS 6735 Ar.) which contains commentaries on Q 61–67 and does not resemble any of the known Tatar *tafsīr*s. Given that all known copies of the work are defective, it remains unclear whether this can be considered another part of the same commentary, or if it is an entirely different work.

**32** For example: KFU, MS 6741 T, fols. 12b–13b, 15a–16b, et al.

tual character of commentaries, which simply reproduced certain narratives almost word by word. For example, we can find such instances in the commentaries of Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghārī, Abū Nasr al-Qūrṣāwī and al-Nuʿmānī, all writing at the turn of the nineteenth century. Needless to say, such literature could similarly exist separately from Qur'anic exegesis strictly defined. This aspect reminds us again of the need to view each *tafsīr* in the literary context of manuscript circulation at the time it was produced.

## 4 The Persianate Legacy: Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghārī

Based on this selection of copies of Tatar translations and commentaries, it is clear that at the turn of the nineteenth century, Qur'anic exegesis in the vernacular formed an important part of Islamic knowledge production in the Volga-Urals. The commentaries of al-Qūrṣāwī and his disciple al-Nuʿmānī, for instance, became famous during this time. There were many texts in Turkic that provided readers with a range of possible approaches to the Qur'an. One anonymous commentary[33] outlined the need for an explanation of God's speech (*kalām rabbānī*) in a Turkic language (*lisān türkī ilä täfsīr qïlmaqqa*). This work contains a commentary on one-seventh of the Qur'anic text and reveals a significant dependence on Persianate tradition; indeed, it may even be a Tatar translation of a Persian *tafsīr*. For example, the heavenly Preserved Tablet (*lawḥ al-maḥfūz*) is translated surprisingly as a "shining book" (*ber rawshān däftär*),[34] while the gardens of paradise (*jannāt* are simply rendered as *chahār bāgh*, which denotes the quadrilateral Persian garden.[35] In terms of ideological approach, it is interesting to see how the author claims that the right path can only be pursued by the spread of legal knowledge of Islam (*ʿulūm shar'iyya*) and avoidance of philosophy and speculative theology (*falsafa*, *kalām*). This legalist rigor notwithstanding, the commentary is full of hagiographic narratives very similar to those associated with the Islamization of Bulghar, namely the story of a ruler and his helplessly sick daughter who is cured by holy individuals.[36] A deeper investigation into the language use,

**33** KFU, MS 6715 T, [*Tafsīr*] (provenance unknown); 6877 T (from Khazirä Jamaletdinova of Suïqsu village in the Nizhnii Novgorod region in 1988). Both manuscripts were copied in the early nineteenth century. I am confident that further archival research will reveal additional copies of this anonymous work.
**34** KFU, MS 6877 T, [*Tafsīr*], fol. 56a.
**35** KFU, MS 6877 T, [*Tafsīr*], fol. 59a.
**36** KFU, MS 6877 T, [*Tafsīr*], 56b–57b. On conversion narratives in the Bulghar region: Allen Frank, "The Development of Regional Islamic Identity in Imperial Russia: Two Commentaries on

sources, and ideological stance of the early Tatar commentaries and translations of the Qur'an will yield much useful information.

While the commentaries of al-Qūrṣāwī and al-Nuʿmānī have been the focus of earlier work,[37] I would like here to focus instead on a Qur'anic commentary that has been almost entirely disregarded by previous scholars. The *Sidrat al-muntahā* was composed by the Naqshbandī *shaykh* Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghārī (1768–1838) in 1244/1829. It is a commentary on one-seventh of the Qur'an without the symbolic separation of individual verses. Moreover, in the manuscript we can see that the Qur'anic text is written in the same manner as the commentary, unlike the *tafsīr*s of the previous era. Al-Bulghārī's commentary is of particular interest not only due to his observations concerning medicine, the occult, and regional identities in Bulghar, but also due to the linguistic features of the text. Unlike many of his contemporaries, al-Bulghārī did not study in Central Asia but spent a few years in the Ottoman Empire. His experiences there left a clear mark on his subsequent writings, the language of which is full of forms characteristic of Anatolian Turkish, as well as numerous Persian loanwords.

The *Sidrat al-muntahā* has a remarkable story. The author's son Jalāl al-Dīn made a copy of the autograph dated July 15, 1846, about a decade after al-Bulghārī's death. Jalāl al-Dīn's intent was to publish the book, and indeed the manuscript[38] contains numerous editorial emendations by both the copyist and the Russian imperial censor Joseph Gottwald (1813–1897), a professor at Kazan University. Gottwald took care to ensure that the commentary contained no hints of disrespect or criticism of Christianity.[39] In a few instances, al-Bulghārī made certain observations that Gottwald found suspicious, and as a result, those portions

the Tavarix-i Bulgariya of Husamaddin al-Muslimi," in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Michael Kemper, Anke von Kuegelgen and Dmitriy Yermakov (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1996), 113–27.

**37** For example: Gabdunnasyr al-Kursavi, *Tafsir al-baian*, transl. R.A. Adygamov (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2012); Timur Batyrkaev, "Koranicheskaia ekzegetika musul'man Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia (konets XVIII–nachalo XX vv.)," *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* 2, no. 9 (2008), 104–30; Iazgul' Rakhimova, "Tatarskie tafsiry kontsa XIX–nachala XX vv.: 'Tafsir Nu'mani' Nu'mana b. Sabita as-Samani i 'Tafsir Fawa'id' Muhammad-Zarif Amirkhana," Unpublished PhD dis., Kazan University, 2018.

**38** Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghārī, *Sidrat al-muntahā*, St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, B3060, fols. 108b–109a.

**39** Gottwald's suspicion was not baseless, as throughout the nineteenth century the Tatar *ʿulamāʾ* developed an entire tradition of debate and refutation of Orthodox Christianity in response to the politics of forced Christianization in the region. For an introduction to the topic: Dinara Mardanova, "Khasan-Gata Gabashi protiv missionera Evfimiia Malova: Primer musul'mano-khristianskoi polemiki kontsa XIX v.," *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 38, no. 4 (2020): 343–72.

of the text did not make it to publication. The book was submitted for censorship in 1864 but was not published until 1876,[40] when it appeared under a different title, *Kitāb sharaf mäāb*. The poet ʿĀlī al-Chuqrī (1826–1889) had access to some items from al-Bulghārī's library and was interested in his written oeuvre. At one point, he expressed his puzzlement at the multiple titles of al-Bulghārī's work:

> He [Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghāri] commented in the Turkic language [*türkī telenchä tafsīr itmesh*] on the Qur'an. It contains a commentary on [the *sūra*] *Baqara*. I have seen the author's original in Yanga Kisher village. The size [of this book] is similar to *Jāmiʿ al-rumūz*. Maybe it is the *tafsīr* called *Sidrat al-muntahā*. His *tafsīr* on one-seventh of the Qur'an [*haft-i yāk*] must be a different [work]. His *haft-i yāk* has been accepted and praised [by the authorities?] and was printed in Kazan for the use of common folk. This book became famous in other places.[41]

Al-Chuqrī does not mention, however, that both the printed and manuscript versions of al-Bulghārī's commentary contain the title *Sidrat al-muntahā* on the first pages. Although the printed edition of this work circulated widely, the failure to identify its author on the title page, together with the absence of identifiable manuscript copies, meant that the *Sidrat al-muntahā* remained entirely unstudied until recently.[42]

Al-Bulghārī described his primary audience thus: "this translation (*tarjama*) has been carried out for boys and girls, old men and women of Bulghar."[43] Several points can be made here. First, al-Bulghārī always refers to his work as a translation[44] and never calls it a commentary or *tafsīr*. In the eighty-five instances where al-Bulghārī uses the term *tafsīr*, he does so to denote either the science of Qur'anic commentary in general or somebody else's individual opinion. For example: "such is the commentary [*tafsīr*] of ʿAtā b. Rubāʿ, but the commentary of Hasan [al-]Basrī

---

**40** I used the following edition: *Kitāb sharaf mäāb haft-i yāk täfsire türkī telendä* (St Petersburg, 1883). Michael Kemper wrote that the book was published in 1859, but this is impossible due to the known date of censorship. Michael Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, 1789–1889: der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin: Schwarz, 1998), 101.

**41** KFU, MS 6870 T [*Majmū'a*], fols. 11ab. The book contains several works, including the biography of Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghāri, copied by his son Sharaf al-Dīn in 1834. At some point the item was in the possession of ʿĀlī al-Chuqrī, who left extensive notes and commentaries. This manuscript was acquired by Masgud Gainetdinov from Ashrafulla Sharifullin of Igänäbash village in the Sarman district of the TASSR in July 1975.

**42** The only other manuscript copy of this *tafsīr* known to me was produced in the late nineteenth century and remains in a private collection. For the publication of the book: Tadzh ad-Din b. Ialchygul al-Bulgari. *Sidrat al-muntakha (Lotos krainego predela)*, 2 vols., ed. Alfrid Bustanov and Iusuf Kuriaev (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2022).

**43** This sentence appears twice: al-Bulghārī, *Sidrat al-muntahā*, fols. 5b and 189a.

**44** The same word features at the beginning of the Turkic commentary of *Thabāt al-ʿājizīn*: Täjeddin Ialchigol, *Risaläi Gazizä*, ed. Khatip Iu. Minglegulov (Kazan: Khozur, 2014).

has it differently."[45] Some commentators writing long after al-Bulghārī explicitly claimed that any translation of the Qur'an is impossible and limited themselves to interpretations of its meaning.[46] Other authors distinguished clearly between translation and commentary as two separate methods of working with the Qur'anic text, and were engaged in both. For example, in his unfinished work, the Muslim reformist Muhammad Tāhir al-Taysugānī (1877–1962) accompanied each Qur'anic verse with a translation (*tarjama*) and an extensive explanation (*idāh*, *mafhūm*).[47]

Secondly, what can be inferred from al-Bulghārī's short note is the binary character of the potential readership: the book could be read differently by youth and adults. This can be seen in the light of Mana Kia's observation on different readings of *Gulistān* by children (*sabïy*) and adults (*qart*):[48] for beginners, this work should be read as a collection of entertaining stories (hence the abundance of stories in *tafsīr*s); meanwhile, adults were expected to recognize the important messages that could be comprehended by educated Muslims (in the *Sidrat al-muntahā*, these are the subtleties of legal and inter-faith debates). In a similar vein, al-Bulghārī also authored a commentary on *Thabāt al-ʿājizīn* by Sūfī Allāhyār and devoted that book to his daughter ʿAzīza.[49] The *Sidrat al-muntahā*, doubtless like other Qur'an commentaries of the era, thus lent itself to being read and heard in different ways by different audiences.

In addition to the above-mentioned features of the text that unite it with broader trends in integrating the Persianate literary legacy in the Volga-Urals, the *Sidrat al-muntahā* contains numerous linguistic and symbolic references that openly reflect various cultural trends. For example, the vocabulary of the *tafsīr* features a great number of Persian loanwords, which is particularly striking

---

**45** al-Bulghārī, *Sidrat al-muntahā*, fol. 144b.

**46** Aidar Khairutdinov, "Rukopisnyi perevod Korana Musy Bigeeva: novye svidetel'stva i napravleniia dal'neishego poiska," *Minbar. Islamic Studies* 11, no. 4 (2018): 807.

**47** Muhammad Tāhir was a hereditary imam of the village of Taysugan located in the vicinity of present-day Al'met'evsk in the eastern part of Tatarstan. In 1929, he was forced to leave the village and settle in Zlatoust. There he embarked upon the grand project of translating and commenting upon the Qur'anic text. The only extant manuscript of this work remains in the possession of al-Taysugānī's descendants in Chelyabinsk and was recently published: Mukhammadtakhir bin mella Äkhmädzäki Baitukali Taisugani, *Kor"äni Kärim. Tärdzhemä vä izakh*, ed. Il'fat Söleimanov (Kazan, Konya: Tasarim, 2022). A smaller part of his manuscripts, containing moral prescriptions for true believers, has been edited: Mukhammad Takhir b. Ahmad Zaki Baitukali Taisugani, *Mäsa'il vägaz*, ed. Il'fat Söleimanov (Kazan: Idel-Press, 2021).

**48** Mana Kia, "Adab as Ethics of Literarry Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistan in Late Mughal India," in *No Tapping around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday*, ed. Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), 289.

**49** Ialchigol, *Risaläi Gazizä*, 38.

given that these could have easily been replaced by Tatar equivalents: *hūsh-rūy* for "handsome," *bäche* for "boys," *bā-dūrūstī* for "truly," and so forth. The Persianate influence is best illustrated by the abundance of references to gardens as the central symbol of salvation in the afterlife as well as the main space for the cultivation of a pious Muslim persona in this world.[50] Strikingly, for instance, the term *baqcha* (a Turkic form for Persian *bāgh*) appears in the partial commentary of the Qur'an no fewer than 117 times and *bāgh* itself features five times. This is no surprise since Muslim culture in Russia for much of the nineteenth century remained in the orbit of the Persianate world;[51] thus even original Tatar-language works such as al-Bulghārī's commentary reveal this cultural orientation.

## 5 The Qur'an as a Life Practice

So far, we have looked at multiple ways of engaging with the Qur'an through the production of manuscripts as well as the composition of commentaries and translations in the vernacular. Additional practices made the Qur'an part of individual consciousness. The twentieth century was the era of reciters of the Qur'an: the practices of Qur'an memorization and giving public and private recitations became very popular. Individuals investing in their professionalization as Qur'an reciters fashioned themselves in terms of bearers of the Holy Book and described their life accordingly as a narrative befitting the verses of the Qur'an. In his memoirs, ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qādirī (1881–1962) wrote of the difficulties on his path to becoming a Qur'an reciter in the following fashion:

> [I] prayed, crying: "Oh God, may I safely go to Medina the Radiant, memorize the entire Qur'an and return to perform recitation at this mosque." And it turned out as I envisaged. People say rightly that if you cry, tears drop even from a blind eye. As God says in the Book: "And when My servants question thee concerning Me – I am near to answer the call of the caller, when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me; haply so they will go aright."[52]

---

**50** Alfrid Bustanov, "A Space for the Subject: Tracing Garden Culture in Muslim Russia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 65, no. 1–2 (2022): 74–125.

**51** Devin DeWeese, "Persian and Turkic from Kazan to Tobolsk: Literary Frontiers in Muslim Inner Asia," in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Nile Green (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2019), 131–55.

**52** Alfrid Bustanov and Vener Usmanov, ed., *Muslim Subjectivity in Soviet Russia. The Memoirs of ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qadiri* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 100.

The genre of life writing among Russia's Muslims, therefore, proves to be crucial for our understanding of the performance of Qur'anic culture on the individual level. What did it actually mean to live a life according to the word of God's Revelation?

**Figure 18:** Carrying out the printed version of the ʿUthmān copy of the Qur'an at the celebration of ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā. The Leningrad mosque, 1956.[53]

Let us consider the evidence documented in Muslim photography. In one such example (Figure 18), participants in the annual festival, including imam ʿAbd al-Bārī Isaev (1907–1983) in white clothes in the middle, are depicted reciting certain formulas. Strictly speaking, this was a religious innovation of the Soviet era, because no similar practices were known in the Leningrad region in previous times. This suggests that in the new circumstances after World War II, when official Islamic institutions were allowed to operate, educated individuals raised under the influence of the reformist agenda tried to introduce new public practices that reinforced communal Muslim identity through the sacredness of the Qur'an; these

53 This item forms part of a photo album highlighting the life of the Muslim community at the Leningrad mosque in the 1950s. Preserved in the private archive of ʿAbd al-Bārī Isaev, inherited by his son ʿĀlī.

included the veneration of objects and the creation of new ceremonies associated with them, as well as the demonstration of such practices to foreign delegations or to the public during festivals.

**Figure 19:** A recitation gathering (*khätm mäjlese*) at the Marjani mosque in Kazan, September 1967.[54]

Another example comes from the only mosque in Kazan that remained open after Stalin's repressions of the 1930s (Figure 19). Qur'an recitations took place during the month of Ramadan and were performed by members of the congregation who had received a *madrasa* education in their youth, many of whom may have been village imams forced to resettle in the city after they were stripped of their rights in the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast to the Leningrad scene depicted above, this rite took place inside the building without the presence of large crowds. The necessity of collective oral recitation of the Book gave a new impulse to the usage of Qur'ans that had the thirty subsections (*juz'*) printed separately

**54** This photograph is preserved in the private archive of ʿAbd al-Khabīr Iarullin (1907–1994), inherited by his grandson Nail. Iarullin performed the role of mosque imam from 1967 up to his death.

(*parä*). The particular space, objects, dress, sitting arrangement, and soundscape all played a part in this very special event centered on the Qur'an. Adding yet another layer to this, the production of photographs was key in memorializing the performance of a new aesthetics of Soviet Islam and legitimizing it in the eyes of new generations.

Many of those who were now present at such gatherings had memorized the Qur'an in their youth, while others did so during sojourns in the holy enclaves of Mecca or Medina. Among the latter was the above-mentioned ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qādirī, a remarkable figure who was the son of a school teacher in Istärlibash in the South Urals. He first studied in his local region and then went to Medina to memorize the Qur'an between 1904 and 1908. Upon his return to Russia, al-Qādirī busied himself with entrepreneurship and continued to recite the Qur'an during the Ramadan night prayers. He was repeatedly imprisoned in Soviet labor camps (1928–1935, 1942–1952); once set free, he compiled a detailed autobiographical account of his experiences.[55]

Throughout this autobiographical narrative, al-Qādirī presents himself as a *qārī*. In al-Qādirī's usage, this term is intended to imply not only a professional reciter of the Qur'an, but also someone who has made a conscious effort to memorize the Qur'anic text. This combined meaning is a feature of the particular context – one would not normally expect that reciters are necessarily memorizers of the Qur'anic text (*ḥāfiz kalām Allāh*). Al-Qādirī's early life up until his first imprisonment in 1928 was marked by his devotion to the Qur'an as well as to the authority of the Prophet as an embodiment of ideal personhood (*al-insān al-kāmil*). As al-Qādirī claimed, in voicing support for the highly contested celebration of the Prophet's birthday:[56] "especially today, in this time of weakness of religion, there is a dire need to tell the younger generation in their mother tongue in general terms about the personality (*nindi keshe bulgan*) of the Prophet and how he spread Islamic religion all over the world."[57] It was this conviction that led al-Qādirī to devote himself so wholeheartedly to mastering the Arabic language, studying the *hadith*, and engaging in social activism.

In his memoirs, al-Qādirī identified himself by a variety of different names, demonstrating his mastery of both Russian and Islamic cultural rubrics and situ-

---

**55** The only copy of this work remains in the private archive of al-Qadiri's granddaughter, Zuhra Valiullova, in Ufa.

**56** Some believers disagreed on the religious legitimacy of this festival; see Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger. The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 144–58.

**57** ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qādirī, [*Memoirs*], fol. 152a. The original manuscript does not contain a title.

ating himself within both traditions. He refers to himself twice in the colophons as "ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Shaykh al-Islām Qadïrov known as [*al-mashhūr*] Majīd *qārī* of Istärlibash" and "ʿAbd al-Majīd *qārī* b. Shaykh al-Islām Qadïrov." When inserting his reminiscences in the chronological register (fols. 52a–70a) that precedes the main narrative, al-Qādirī refers to himself in various ways, including the slightly Russified Arabic form ʿAbd al-Majīd Qadïrov, the more traditionally Muslim ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Shaykh al-Islām Qādirī, or simply Qādirī.[58]

The epigraphic traditions of his native Istärlibash in Bashkiria, to which al-Qādirī felt a strong personal attachment – in his narrative, he regularly refers to the inscriptions on gravestones in Istärlibash, and notes that he produced a number of such inscriptions himself – prescribed the traditional formula *hājj al-haramayn* ("a pilgrim to the two Sacred Places").[59] Hence ʿAbd al-Majīd *qārī* envisaged that his own future epitaph would mention his Meccan pilgrimage and that it would read, in Arabic script: "ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Shaykh al-Islām al-Qādirī al-Istärlibāshī, a pilgrim to the Sacred Places and a bearer of the Qur'an, is buried here." In fact, this epitaph was never produced, even after the reburial of his ashes in Istärlibash in 1990.[60] Occasionally, one can encounter the same title of *hājj al-haramayn* in colophons of Tatar manuscripts dating from the nineteenth century,[61] but it is only in the twentieth century that this title becomes a standard found on gravestones[62] and in commemorative photographs.

Strikingly, before the turn of the twentieth century, we do not hear of individuals describing themselves explicitly as reciters of the Qur'an, because knowledge of the Book was considered part of the standard training of *ʿulamāʾ*. For example, the merchant Niyāz Aytikin (d. 1847) went to Cairo to learn the skills that would

---

**58** Ibid., fols. 53b, 58b, 62a. Allen Frank and Ashirbek Muminov noted the evolution in the rendering of Saduaqas Ghïlmani's personal name in the course of his lifetime: Saduaqas Ghïlmani, *Biographies of the Islamic Scholars of Our Times*. Vol. 1: *Arabic Script Kazakh Text*, ed. Ashirbek Muminov, Allen J. Frank and Aitzhan Nurmanova (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2018), 18, n.1.

**59** Until the 1960s, traditions of Arabic-script epigraphy were practiced in Istärlibash by ʿAbd al-Rahīm Aydabulov (1867–1966), a great calligrapher (*munaqqash*) and close friend of ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qādirī, and a figure who is mentioned regularly throughout al-Qādirī's memoirs. Vener Usmanov, *Tarikhi yadkärlär*, vol. 1 (Ufa: DizainPoligrafServis, 2005), 56–57, 105–106, 128.

**60** ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Qādirī, *Memoirs*, fol. 207b. Only one gravestone in a neighboring village, Yashergän, dated 1339/1920 bears the title *hāfiz kalām Allāh*: Usmanov, *Tarikhi yadkärlär*, 135–36.

**61** Epigraphic materials of the era show that *al-hājj* was preferred as a stable formula. For example: Alfrid Bustanov, "Rukopis' v kontekste sibirskogo islama," Aleksandr Seleznev, Irina Selezneva, Igor' Belich, *Kul't sviatykh v sibirskom islame: spetsifika universal'nogo* (Moscow: Mardjani Publishing House, 2009), 190.

**62** Usmanov, *Tarikhi yadkärlär*, 18 (*hājj al-harāmayn*, dated 1915), 71 (*al-hājj bi-l-harāmayn*, 1337/1918).

enable him to excel in Qur'an recitation, but neither his grave inscription in Säbäläk village in the Omsk region nor the biographical dictionaries refer to him as a *qārī*.[63] When advances in long-distance transportation made it accessible for more people to journey to Medina to memorize the Holy Book at the Mosque of the Prophet, some individuals started to fashion themselves as bearers of the Qur'an and took pride in the chains of transmission that they shared with famous scholars. Al-Qādirī states that he received his first *ijāza*, a document stating his qualifications in Qur'an recitation, from his teacher Muhammad Shukrī in Medina in 1908. In the 1920s, he asked for additional certificates from ʿĀlimjān al-Bārūdī.[64] Another person known to collect similar documents certifying mastery of Qur'anic sciences was Abū Bakr al-Shāhmirzāwī (d. 1904). Al-Shāhmirzāwī had also studied in Cairo and possessed at least two *ijāza*s for recitation. It seems that only documents from abroad were deemed prestigious.[65] From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, we regularly encounter individuals who invested in learning the Qur'an, even in their later years in the Gulag setting.

Being a *qārī* became al-Qādirī's main identity, reflecting a dream that only partly came true: due to his long imprisonment (five years in Solovki and ten years near Tashkent), al-Qādirī ceased reciting the Qur'an regularly. This evidently caused him much sorrow: "having performed the Qur'an recitation ten times, after 1927, I could not continue because following the Great Russian Revolution, I stopped performing the recitation. Many troubles befell me, as I have written above."[66]

The rise of *qārī* as a self-designation coincided with the paradigmatic shift towards translation and commentary of the Qur'an in the Tatar language: a whole series of works in this genre were composed between the 1880s and 1970s. These developments are representative of the formation of a new Qur'anic culture in which memorization and recitation were distinctly valuable practices and, therefore, crucial for individual consciousness. Al-Qādirī was part of this emerging culture, and the Qur'anic text played a pivotal role in the formation of his core self.

---

**63** Alfrid Bustanov, "ʿAbd al-Rashid Ibrahim's Biographical Dictionary on Siberian Islamic Scholars," *Kazan Islamic Review* 1 (2015), 29, 70.

**64** al-Qādirī, [*Memoirs*], fol. 92a.

**65** Note that even though ʿAbd al-Bārī Isaev was very proud of his *qārī* status, I have been unable to find a formal *ijāza* from his teachers to confirm this status.

**66** al-Qādirī, [*Memoirs*], fol. 165b.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the cultural dynamics of engagement with the Qur'an among Russia's Muslims. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Qur'an was part of the aesthetic manuscript culture that developed in the Volga-Ural region in the aftermath of the Russian conquest. At that time, little original work was being composed, and the texts in circulation were produced elsewhere. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a move towards both translating Qur'anic texts and commenting on them in the Volga-Ural Türki-Tatar language. The emergence of the first Tatar *tafsīr*s can be linked to the broader process of vernacularization of Islamic literature at the turn of the nineteenth century: many Arabic and Persian texts at that time were rendered into the local tongue. In particular, the active usage of Turkic-language narratives in exegesis became a prominent aspect of engagement with the Qur'an. Further, the sources presented here reveal the increased prominence of the Qur'an in the self-fashioning of Muslim individuals throughout the twentieth century – despite the fact that this century was ostensibly an era of secularism in Russia.

The present chapter has explored two important aspects of this development. One aspect marks the move from the literature-like commentaries of the previous period toward more philologically focused translations and more detailed exegesis linked with *hadith* studies. Another aspect reflects the incorporation of the Holy Book in life-writing, as in cases where Muslim individuals fashioned life narratives that were a performance of the Qur'an. Private photography, the composition of literary works, and annual ritual ceremonies all supported the development of Qur'anic culture in Soviet Russia. The sound and materiality of the Book became increasingly meaningful to individuals who fostered their (Muslim) identities with the help of the Qur'an. I suggest that we view these changes in the social meaning and function of the Qur'an as emanating from the broader developments reflected in the manuscript sources. The earlier stages should be seen in the context of the aesthetic culture and circulation of Arabic and Persian texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The subsequent development by which the Qur'an became the central (and, in some cases, only) text for Muslims was a consequence of the reorientation of Russia's Muslims towards Ottoman centers of learning, as well as the cultural primacy that Arabic gained in the late nineteenth century.

# Bibliography

## Manuscripts

Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 6143 Ar., fols. 98b–109a, [al-Qārghālī, Hibatullāh. *Tuhfat al-awlād*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 6479 Ar.; MS 7158 Ar., [a copy of the Qur'an].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 6642T; 6690T, [*Pand nāma-yi ʿAttār*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 6662T, [*al-Jild al-khāmis min tawārīkh al-Tabarī*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 6870 T, [*Majmūʻa*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 6882T, fols. 1a–25a., [al-Ghazālī, *Ayyuha-l-walad*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 7079 Ar., fols. 33a–37a, [*Qawāʿid dar bayān-i qanūn-i qariyyān*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 994 F, fols. 1a–31a; MS 6427 T; MS 6715 T; MS 6741 T; MS 6735 Ar.; MS 6877 T., [*Tafsīr*].
Kazan, Kazan Federal University, MS 997F; MS 6346T, [Saʿdī, *Bustān*].
Kazan, National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, MS B-21351, [al-Yāfiʿī, *Durr al-Nazīm*].
St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, B3060, [Tāj al-Dīn al-Bulghārī, *Sidrat al-muntahā*].

## Secondary Sources

al-Bulgari, Tadzh ad-Din b. Ialchygul. *Sidrat al-muntakha (Lotos krainego predela)*, 2 vols. Edited by Alfrid Bustanov and Iusuf Kuriaev. Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2022.
al-Kursavi, Gabdunnasyr. *Tafsir al-baian*. Translated by Ramil' Adygamov. Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2012.
Batyrkaev, Timur. "Koranicheskaia ekzegetika musul'man Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia (konets XVIII – nachalo XX vv.)," *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* 2, no. 9 (2008): 104–30.
Bustanov, Alfrid. "Rukopis' v kontekste sibirskogo islama." In *Kul't sviatykh v sibirskom islame: spetsifika universal'nogo*, edited by Aleksandr Seleznev, Irina Selezneva, and Igor' Belich, 156–192. Moscow: Mardjani Publishing House, 2009.
Bustanov, Alfrid. "A Space for the Subject: Tracing Garden Culture in Muslim Russia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 65, no. 1–2 (2022): 74–125.
Bustanov, Alfrid. "Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim's Biographical Dictionary on Siberian Islamic Scholars." *Kazan Islamic Review* 1 (2015): 10–74.
Bustanov Alfrid, and Vener Usmanov, eds. *Muslim Subjectivity in Soviet Russia. The Memoirs of ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qadiri*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.
DeWeese, Devin. "Persian and Turkic from Kazan to Tobolsk: Literary Frontiers in Muslim Inner Asia." In *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, edited by Nile Green, 131–55. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2019.
Elias, Jamal J. "Commentary as Method vs Genre: An Analysis of Ismaʻil Haqqi Bursawi's Commentaries on the Qur'an and the *Mathnawi-yi maʻnawi*." In *From the Khan's Oven: Essays on the History of Central Asian Religions in Honor of Devin DeWeese*, edited by Eren Tasar, Allen J. Frank and Jeff Eden, 237–57. Leiden: Brill, 2022.

Frank, Allen. "The Development of Regional Islamic Identity in Imperial Russia: Two Commentaries on the Tavarix-i Bulgariya of Husamaddin al-Muslimi." In *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, edited by Michael Kemper, Anke von Kügelgen and Dmitriy Yermakov, 113–27. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1996.

Frank, Allen. *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012.

Garaeva, Nuriia. "Stareishii spisok Korana v sobranii Nauchnoi biblioteki im. N.I. Lobachevskogo Kazanskogo (Privolzhskogo) Federal'nogo universiteta." In *Vostochnye rukopisi*, edited by Ramil' Islamov and Salavat Galimov. Kazan: Akademiia nauk Respubliki Tatarstan, 2011.

Garaeva, Nuriia. *Kazanskie izdaniia Korana iz sobraniia muzeiia-zapovednika 'Kazanskii Kreml'. Katalog*. Kazan: Kazanskii Kreml', 2019.

Garaeva, Nuriia. *Korany iz sobraniia IIaLI im. G. Ibragimova Akademii Nauk Respubliki Tatarstan*. Kazan: Akademiia nauk Respubliki Tatarstan, 2022.

Ghïlmani, Saduaqas. *Biographies of the Islamic Scholars of Our Times*. Vol. 1: *Arabic Script Kazakh Text*. Edited by Ashirbek Muminov, Allen J. Frank and Aitzhan Nurmanova. Istanbul: IRCICA, 2018.

Giliazutdinov, Salim. *Opisanie rukopisei Korana iz khranilishch Tsentra pis'mennogo i muzykal'nogo naslediia IIaLI im. G. Ibragimova Akademii nauk RT*. Kazan: Akademiia nauk Respubliki Tatarstan, 2013.

Gullotta, Andrea. *Intellectual Life and Literature at Solovki 1923–1930: The Paris of the Northern Concentration Camps*. Cambridge: Legenda, 2018.

Hemmat, Kaveh. "Completing the Persianate Turn," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 3–4 (2021): 633–46.

Ialchigol, Täjeddin. *Risaläi Gazizä*. Edited by Khatip Iu. Minglegulov. Kazan: Khozur, 2014.

Karimullin, Abrar. *Tatarskaia kniga poreformennoi Rossii*. Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1983.

Kemper, Michael, and Stefan Conermann, eds. *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Kemper, Michael. *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, 1789–1889: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft*. Berlin: Schwarz, 1998.

Khairutdinov, Aidar. "Rukopisnyi perevod Korana Musy Bigeeva: novye svidetel'stva i napravleniia dal'neishego poiska." *Minbar. Islamic Studies* 11, no. 4 (2018): 805–18.

Kia, Mana. "Adab as Ethics of Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistan in Late Mughal India." In *No Tapping around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday*, edited by Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield, 281–308. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014.

*Kitāb sharaf mäāb haft-i yāk täfsire türkī telendä*. St Petersburg, 1883.

Mardanova, Dinara. "Khasan-Gata Gabashi protiv missionera Evfimiia Malova: Primer musul'mano-khristianskoi polemiki kontsa XIX v." *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 38, no. 4 (2020): 343–72.

*Miftakh al'-Kur'an*. Vol. 2. *Nasyri L. Miftakh al'-Kur'an*. Edited by Aidar Khairutdinov. Kazan: Izdatel'stvo Poznanie, 2015.

Orsini, Francesca and Katherine Butler Schofield, eds.. *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015.

Rakhimova, Iazgul'. Tatarskie tafsiry kontsa XIX–nachala XX vv.: 'Tafsir Nu'mani' Nu'mana b. Sabita as-Samani i 'Tafsir Fawa'id' Muhammad-Zarif Amirkhana. Unpublished PhD diss., Kazan University, 2018.

Rezvan, Efim. *Koran i ego mir*. St Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2001.

Saifullina, Guzel. *Muzyka sviashchennogo slova. Chtenie Korana v traditsionnoi tataro-musul'manskoi kul'ture*. Kazan: Tatpoligraf, 1999.

Saifullina, Guzel. *Bagyshlauga bagyshlau: bagyshlau (posviashcheniia) v kontekste kul'tury narodnogo islama volzhskikh tatar*. Kazan: Iman, 2005.
Sartori, Paolo. "From the Demotic to the Literary: The Ascendance of the Vernacular Turkic in Central Asia (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)." *Eurasian Studies* 18 (2020): 213–54.
Schimmel, Annemarie. *And Muhammad is His Messenger. The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
Shaw, Wendy M. K. *What is 'Islamic' Art? Between Religion and Perception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
Sibgatullina, Gulnaz and Iazgul Rakhimova. "Arabic Edition of the Qurʾān, Kazan, 1803." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, edited by Johanna Pink. Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_055207.
Taisugani, Mukhammad Takhir b. Ahmad Zaki Baitukali. *Mäsa'il vägaz*. Edited by Il'fat Söleimanov. Kazan: Idel-Press, 2021.
Taisugani, Mukhammadtakhir bin mella Äkhmädzäki Baitukali. *Kor"äni Kärim. Tärdzhemä vä izakh*. Edited by Il'fat Söleimanov. Kazan, Konya: Tasarim, 2022.
Usmanov, Vener. *Tarikhi yadkärlär*. Vol. 1. Ufa: DizainPoligrafServis, 2005.

# Part 3: **The Qur’anic Text and Language Ideologies**

Gulnaz Sibgatullina

# On Translating the Qur’an into Turkic Vernaculars: Texts, Ties, and Traditions

## 1 Introduction

The question of whether the Holy Qur’an can be translated is by no means an original one: practically every period in the history of Islam has seen Muslims, and later non-Muslims, posing and answering this question anew. Any answer to the question has always entailed an interrogation on at least two levels. First, one must address whether the meanings of the Revelation delivered in Arabic are transferable into another language; and secondly, what status does a vernacular translation have in relation to the source text? The (in)separability of the sign (Arabic) and the signified (the Qur’anic Revelation) has formed the crux of theological disputes since the early years of Islamic civilization. A variety of factors within the Islamic milieu, and later increasingly outside it, have shaped Muslims’ understanding of the supremacy of Arabic and the notions around (un)translatability and (in)imitability of the Qur’an.

However, the fundamentally hermeneutic nature of Islam – it is directed towards the production of meaning through processes of interpretation, as well as cultural specificity and fluidity of translation practices – implies that for Muslims, the rendering of a religious text always denotes more than just an attempt to replicate. In the academic works that examine Qur’anic exegesis among early non-Arabophone Muslim societies, it has become almost a truism to say that translating the Holy Book into languages other than Arabic has been a routine activity for centuries. Although the use of vernacular Qur’an translations in regular prayers remained a much-debated subject, the text of the Revelation *was* indeed accessible for study in vernacular languages. Jumping forward to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we see that this knowledge of previous translation practices is practically absent (or intentionally ignored) in the debates regarding the translatability of the Qur’an among Muslims at that time.[1] Instead, in these

**1** E.g., Torsten Tschacher, “‘Extraordinary Translations’ and ‘Loathsome Commentaries’: Quranic Translation and the Politics of the Tamil Language, c. 1880–1950,” *Religion* 49, no. 3 (2019): 458–80;

**Note:** This contribution is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (SyG grant agreement no. 810141), project EuQu “The European Qur’an. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850.”

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-009

debates, the argument that other languages are incapable of adequately representing the Arabic source – and thus that translating the Qur'an into other languages should not be permitted – occupies a central position. Was there a theological revolution? Or does the opposition to Qur'an translation lie in the radical change in how the act of translation has come to be interpreted in the modern period?

By engaging with these questions, this chapter offers some preliminary considerations for a broader study of practices of Qur'an translation among non-Arabophone Muslims. It draws on examples from the history of translations into Turkic languages and delineates major phases that informed the relationship between the sacred text, literary traditions and vernacular languages. The goal of this chapter is twofold. First, I aim to bring together scholarship on Qur'an translations into Turkic languages, which has so far been dispersed across a range of fields (linguistics, history, and to a lesser extent, theology), scholarly traditions (Soviet, Turkish, European/Western), and generations of scholars (with peaks of academic output in the 1960–70s, the early 2000s, and the late 2010s). The point of departure is the fourteenth-century region of Islamic Transoxiana (*Mā Warāʾ al-Nahr*), where the first written Qur'an translations into Turkic were composed. Further, the analysis will turn to the evolution of distinct Eastern and Western Turkic translation traditions in the fifteenth to eighteenth century and, finally, it will focus on the changes in translation norms that emerged from the proliferation of printing and the overarching industrialization of Muslim societies in the nineteenth century. By tracing the history of translation practices, this chapter aims to illuminate the interplay between texts, languages, and the changing political, geographical and social circumstances. In particular, attention will be paid to the transformations that have occurred in the language ideologies of Arabic, Persian (the other "sacred language" of Islam[2]), and variants of Turkic languages in the six centuries since the first written Qur'ans in Turkic.

The second aim, coupled with this analysis, is an attempt to trace and examine how Muslims understood the act of translation and its outcomes, as well as the role of translator in different periods during the long history of translation into Turkic vernaculars. Who engaged in the rendering of the Qur'an into languages other than Arabic? Why and how did they perform that role? What functions did these renderings fulfill? In addressing these questions, I seek to problematize the applica-

Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur'an: Rethinking Mūsā Bīgī's Translation into Türki-Tatar," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 46–69.

**2** Mohammad Amir-Moezzi, "Persian, the Other Sacred Language of Islam: Some Brief Notes," in *Fortress of the Intellect: Ismaili and Other Islamic Studies in Honour of Farhad Daftary*, ed. Omar Ali-de-Unzaga (London: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2011), 59–75.

bility of the term "translation"[3] to the analysis of translation practices in non-Arabophone Muslim contexts. My argument is that the translation epistemology of the Turkic-speaking cultural and geographical area should not be regarded as fixed, but rather as ever-changing. In the case of the Turkic Qur'an renderings, this fluidity of notions and functions of an act of translation is rooted in the Turkic "interculture,"[4] that is, the fact that Turkic-language-speaking translators have been operating within a tri-cultural setting where Turkish, Persian and Arabic influences overlap.

This chapter will be limited to sketching a bird's-eye view of these rich and complex processes. More detailed accounts of some processes are provided in other contributions to this volume. Such a sketch – while it inevitably risks simplifying and generalizing processes that are complex and multifaceted – enables illuminating connections between regions and religious communities that derive from prevalence of specific translation practices. Moreover, this approach enables us to bring more nuance to our understanding of how the Qur'an has been read and rendered across time and space.

# 2 Theoretical Considerations

Before embarking on the examination of translation practices, it is necessary to elaborate on three theoretical pillars that the analysis will rest upon: (1) the notion of "translation" as it is used here, (2) the understanding of Islam as an inherently discursive and hermeneutics-centered tradition, and (3) the fundamentally vernacular and cosmopolitan nature of the so-called "Balkans-to-Bengal complex" – that is, the region that hosts most of the cases analyzed here.

## 2.1 Translation as an Analytical Category

In this chapter, the notion of translation, in its simplest sense, will refer to an act of conveying a message from one language, in which the message is produced, into another linguistic code (*translatio*). Further analysis will show that until the

---

**3** In the present-day functional definition of the term, which corresponds to *translatio* as discussed by André Lefevere, "Translation: Its Genealogy in the West," in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), 14–28.

**4** Saliha Paker, "Translation as Terceme and Nazire Culture-Bound Concepts and Their Implications for a Conceptual Framework for Research on Ottoman Translation History," in *Crosscultural Transgressions. Research Models in Translation (v. 2): Historical and Ideological Issues*, ed. Theo Hermans (London: Routledge, 2002), 120–43.

modern period, there was no rigid source-target binary. Instead, the act of translation inherently meant *traductio*,[5] where equal if not more importance is placed on the linguistic, cultural, and ideological components of the translation process than the literalness of the translation. The *traductio*-related activities were performed at not only an *interlingual* level, but also an *intralingual* level. The latter relates to the adaptation of a text to changing sociopolitical contexts. The primary focus of this paper will be *interlingual* translations; the *intralingual* type will be discussed in detail only in Section 4.4.

The evolution of translation practices and functions does not happen at random but follows a logical path. Therefore, translation acts should be seen, first of all, as being "intimately linked with the way in which different cultures, at different times, [come] to terms with the phenomenon of translation, with the challenge posed by the existence of the Other and the need to select from a number of possible strategies for dealing with that Other."[6] Such encounters with the Other and the need to deal with the Other through translation arose originally in non-religious settings (mostly in the context of trade). Those encounters defined the primary role of a translator as a mediator and interpreter who supplemented texts or made them available in a vernacular for those not fully proficient in the target language. Thus, the faithfulness of a translation – a central notion in the translation epistemology of the post-Enlightenment West – was accorded much less importance in the pre-modern period. Early Islamic translations primarily addressed the context of an encounter, forming a new meaning of a text on each occasion, whereby connections to the past, present, and future were articulated anew each time.

Especially in the analysis of Qur'an translations, attributing characteristics such as "(in)correct" or "(un)faithful" to a given translation can be misleading, as the majority of Muslims have always regarded any rendering of the sacred text as a form of exegesis, an interpretation that conveys *an* understanding of the text. While technically conceived as commentaries, such texts nonetheless contain a significant amount of word-for-word interlingual translation. However, practically all Qur'an translations analyzed in this chapter must be regarded as more than simply an act of transferring the message from the source to the target language, even though this intention may have underpinned the endeavor. Instead, a translation often implied creating a patchwork of various texts, where renderings of the Qur'an became intertwined with historical records, references to

---

**5** Lefevere, "Translation".

**6** André Lefevere, "Chinese and Western Thinking on Translation," in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 12.

other works, and personal considerations of the translator, thereby disclosing an intimate relationship that existed between literal translation, commentary, and exegesis. The choice of texts and strategies of translation, as well as the purposes of translation, were thus contextually redefined. In this way, the translation process has always been closely linked to the idea of cultural transmission, as texts were (re)introduced into new or changed linguistic and cultural surroundings and made to take on unique characteristics each time.

## 2.2 Islam as a Discursive Practice

This continuous engagement with a body of texts beyond just the Qur'an and the *hadith* collections, as well as with the highly diverse and changing circumstances in which Muslims live, is what gives Islam its diverse and sometimes contradictory nature. In his *magnum opus*,[7] Shahab Ahmed defined Islam as a discursive tradition. For Ahmed, Islam is characterized primarily by its discursivity, which does not necessarily aim at producing orthodoxy. A kaleidoscope of possible meanings emerges as a result of Muslims' engagement with "Pre-Text", "Text", and "Con-Text". These engagements, according to the scholar, result in discourse and meaning production, as well as dynamic, dialectical relationships between the individual believer, community, and tradition. The notion of Pre-Text refers to the Unseen: a vibrant, dynamic divine reality that lies behind the Text. Con-Text, for Ahmed, is not just the historical circumstances in which the interpretation happens; rather, it is the whole range of meanings: "a synchronic and diachronic snapshot of the world of Islam at the time of the interpretation of the text."[8] Finally, the notion of Text does not refer only to the Qur'an and *hadith*s, the founding texts of Islam: Qur'an translations in Turkic, for instance, are rooted within the historic-linguistic phenomenon of the Persianate that Ahmed calls the "Balkans-to-Bengal complex." This notion decenters the Arab experience and emphasizes the significance of Persian culture and its texts, such as Rūmī's *Masnavī* and Ḥāfiẓ's *Dīvān*, some of which were as significant to Muslims as the Arabic Qur'an (see also Section 2.3).[9] Thus, in the Islamic context, translations were never held up as the independent work of a single author. Instead, they al-

7 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016).

8 Sajjad Rizvi, "Reconceptualization, Pre-Text, and Con-Text," *Marginalia*, August 25, 2016, https://themarginaliareview.com/reconceptualization-pre-text-con-text-sajjad-rizvi/. Last accessed November 24, 2022.

9 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, Ch. 5; Rizvi, "Reconceptualization, Pre-Text, and Con-Text."

ways existed in a web of other discourses and were intended to be recognized through these links to other texts. In such a way, multiple meanings of the text were not merely accommodated, but even encouraged.[10]

## 2.3 Persian Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Orders

A few more words must also be said about the Balkans-to-Bengal complex, and particularly the Turkic part of it, which defined the context in which traditions of translation into Turkic vernaculars emerged and evolved. The Balkans-to-Bengal complex comprises territories spanning from Eastern Europe across the Middle East, including Anatolia and Iran, all the way to Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The term refers particularly to the network of Islamic societies where, for centuries, not Arabic but Persian was the *lingua franca* of Islam. In this extremely diversified, multilingual context, Arabic remained at the top of the language hierarchy; however, at the written level, it interacted closely with other idioms – Persian, and later also the Turkic vernaculars – giving rise to a complex and evolving interplay of these three linguistic modes.[11]

The first written Qur'an translations in Turkic emerged in close association with early Persian vernacular exegesis; therefore, a brief digression into the history of the Persian Qur'an is necessary at this point. The rise of Persian Qur'an commentary emerged amid the struggle of the Persian courts to challenge Arabic as the language of learning, prestige, and the means of spreading Islam among non-Arab peoples.[12] The sheer number of Qur'anic commentaries and partial translations produced by and for non-Arab Muslims, as Travis Zadeh demonstrates in his work, suggests that these texts emerged in a context preoccupied with issues around the inimitability of the Qur'an and its translation into other languages. Zadeh shows conclusively that the discussions in the early period of Islamic civilization centered on whether it was permissible for Muslims to use

**10** Chase F. Robinson, "Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences," in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. Herbert Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 116–17.

**11** For an overview of and a comparison with similar vernacularization processes in Medieval Europe, see Benoît Grévin, "Comparing Medieval 'Latin' and 'Arabic' Textual Cultures from a Structural Perspective," in *Latin and Arabic: Entangled Histories*, ed. Daniel G. König (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2019), 3–30.

**12** See also Nile Green, ed., *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019); Hamid Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

translations to perform ritual prayers. The pragmatic value of translation – for understanding the scripture and in missionary activities – was barely questioned.[13] The trilingual cultural setting where Persian was simultaneously both a cosmopolitan and a vernacular language mediated and impacted the relationship between the sacred texts of Islam and the Turkic vernaculars, paving the way for the emergence of Turkic translation traditions.[14]

## 3 Early Qur'an Translations into Eastern Middle Turkic, 1300–1500

The emergence of Qur'an translations as part of a broader literary production in Turkic vernaculars accompanied the process of Islamization and Turkification of Central Asia. As a result of the Muslim conquests in Central Asia in the first part of the eighth century, Muslim rulers came to govern lands that currently constitute the territories of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. The Muslim empire ruled by the renowned Sāmānid dynasty (819–999) came to an end following an invasion by the Qarakhānid Turks, who subsequently established a series of states led by Turkish military elites. The latter adopted Islam and the Persianate Muslim administrative culture left behind by the Sāmānids. Muslims continued to govern these territories also under the first Mongol emperors, who conquered most of Asia and reached eastern Europe by the mid-thirteenth century. With the subsequent division of the Mongol empire into different states in the second half of the century,

**13** Travis Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

**14** Some scholars tend to attribute the flourishing of literature in Turkic vernaculars to what Sheldon Pollock has described as the "vernacular millennium" – the rise of vernaculars that occurred in both Europe and South Asia in approximately the same period (starting from the eleventh century) and supplanted cosmopolitan languages, such as Sanskrit and Latin. Cf., e.g., Michiel Leezenberg, "'A Rare Pearl Passed from Hand to Hand': Cosmopolitan Orders and Pre-Modern Forms of Literary Domination," *Journal of World Literature* 5, no. 2 (2020): 253–77 and Andrew C. S. Peacock, *Islam, Literature and Society in Mongol Anatolia* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 150–1. On Pollock's concept of "vernacular millennium," see his *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

the rulers of the newly emerged Īlkhānid state, the Chaghatay Khanate and the Golden Horde soon also converted to Islam.[15]

The communication of religious law and scripture to non-Arabophone converts to Islam naturally followed an oral path of transmission. There is strong evidence that this form of transmission and communication was a popular medium among non-Arab Muslims who translated and commented on the Qur'an through the production of verbal narratives.[16] As Eleazar Birnbaum suggests, the first interlinear translations in Turkic languages, where Arabic words are glossed with explanations in Turkic, reflect oral language learning practices. Those texts seem to be a physical embodiment, a written record of something like reading lessons, where "the teacher would have recited each Arabic word, followed by its literal translation in Turkic, almost without regard for the norms of Turkic syntax."[17]

One of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the Qur'an containing interlinear translations in Eastern Middle Turkic[18] dates back to the fourteenth century (see Table 4). In this type of translation, the Arabic text occupies the central position, while glosses in Turkic and sometimes also in Persian are written in a smaller script. The glosses are not necessarily related to one another by grammar and syntax rules. This kind of manuscript has so far mostly attracted the attention of scholars in historical linguistics, as the textual material reflects particularities of various Turkic dialects and sheds light on the structural, semantic, and lexical development of early Turkic vernaculars. However, the findings of these scholars also enable us to make some assumptions about the practical use of these manuscripts.

By and large, these translations exhibit three distinctive features. First of all, these Turkic translations arose in the context of vernacularizing Islam, where non-Arabic texts often functioned as sources. The lexical and syntactic structures found in these translations suggest that the translators drew on the Persian translation more frequently and must have consulted the Arabic origi-

---

**15** Cf. Paul Wormser, "The Spread of Islam in Asia through Trade and Sufism (Ninth–Nineteenth Centuries)," in *Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia*, ed. Oscar Salemink and Bryan S. Turner (Routledge, 2014), 110–22.

**16** Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 254–55.

**17** Eleazar Birnbaum, "On Some Turkish Interlinear Translations of the Koran," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (1990): 114.

**18** The term "Middle Turkic" denotes a period in the development of the Turkic language family (thirteenth–seventeenth centuries) and comprises various early Islamic varieties spoken during this period in Central Asia, Iran, and other parts of the Middle East.

**Table 4:** Early Eastern Turkic translations of the Qur'an.[19]

| № | Date | Bi- or trilingual | Dominant variant of Middle Turkic | Language period | Type of translation | Manuscript location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 734/ 1333–4 | 2 | Qarakhānid | 12–13th c. | Interlinear | Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, MS T 73 |
| 2. | 14th c. | 3 | Qarakhānid | 12–13th c. | Interlinear | Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Rylands Arabic 25–38[20] |
| 3. | 14th c. | Mostly 2, some parts 3 | Qarakhānid | 13th c. | Interlinear | Tashkent, Al-Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies, MS 2008[21] |
| 4. | 764/1364 | 2 | K̲h̲wārazm, Og̲h̲uz | 14th c. | Interlinear | Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library, MS Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa 2[22] |

nal only occasionally. Even in the bilingual Turkic-Arabic editions, the Persian interpretation lingers in the background. The lexical and grammatical connections that exist between the four manuscripts listed in Table 4 have led some scholars to suggest that these texts go back to an original from the eleventh

**19** Abdülkadir İnan, *Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Türkçe Tercemeleri Üzerinde Bir Inceleme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1961); János Eckmann, "Eastern Turkic Translations of the Koran," in *Studia Turcica*, ed. Lajos Ligeti (Budapest: Akadémisi Kiadó, 1971), 149–59; Halil Şimşek, "Turks and Their Translations/ Commentaries on the Qur'ân: An. Historical and Bibliographical Survey," *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2019): 395–419. For an extended reference list of early Qur'an translations into Turkic, see Gülden Sağol, "Kur'an'ın Türkçe tercüme ve tefsirleri üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar," *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8 (1997): 379–96.

**20** János Eckmann, "Doğu Türkçesinde Bir Kur'an Çevirisi (Rylands Nüshası)," *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı – Belleten* 15 (1968): 51–69; János Eckmann, *Middle Turkic Glosses of the Rylands Interlinear Koran Translation* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1976).

**21** Aleksandr A. Semenov, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, vol. IV (Tashkent, 1957), No 2854, inv. no 2008. Also Bakhtiiar Babadzhanov, "Islam i filosofiia," in *Sokrovishchnitsa vostochnykh rukopisei Instituta Vostokovedeniia Imeni Abu Raikhana Biruni Akademii Nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan*, ed. Bakhrom Abdukhalimov and Jorge Ivan Espinal (Tashkent: UNESCO, 2012), 58–78.

**22** Gülden Sağol, *An Interlinear Translation of the Qur'an into Khwarazm Turkish: Introduction, Text, Glossary and Facsimile* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

century.[23] It has also been argued that the same polyglot translators may have engaged in the creation of both the Persian and Turkic interlinear translations.[24]

Secondly, the glosses accompanying the Arabic words were not supposed to exist independently of the source text: alone, they would not constitute a coherent, intelligible message. Based on this observation, scholars have suggested that these translations served primarily as some sort of course material for *ʿulamāʾ* and Muslim political elites who were not yet fully proficient in Arabic. Rather than being literary translations, these manuscripts facilitated the reader in comprehending the Arabic text rather than simply learning to recite it.[25] Such copies of the Qur'an that assisted understanding of the Revelation must have also been used as a tool for conducting religious missions in non-Arab settings.

Finally, the argument that these translations were intended for those not yet proficient in Arabic receives additional credibility if one looks at the vocabulary used for rendering the text. Specifically, these early translations express Islam-specific notions using pre-Islamic religious terminology and neologisms.[26]

## 4 The Rise of the Turkic *tafsīr* Tradition, 1600–1700

By the sixteenth century, translations of the Qur'an seem to increasingly acquire functions beyond facilitating the comprehension of discrete linguistic units. That is, the renderings of the sacred text become supplemented with an extended range of available interpretations of the Qur'anic lexicon, or with possible understandings of complete *āya*s and *sūra*s. These practices prepared the ground for the subsequent growth of the genre of commented translations and, later, of *tafsīr*[27] in Turkic. In

23 Hendrik Boeschoten, "Translations of the Koran: Sources for the History of Written Turkic in a Multilingual Setting," in *Turkic-Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects*, ed. Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 75–76.

24 Zeki Togan, "The Earliest Translation of the Qur'an into Turkish," *İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergis* 4 (1964): 1–19.

25 Hendrik Boeschoten, "Mittelalterliche Koranübersetzungen Als Quelle Für Die Türkische Sprachgeschichte," in *Religiosität und Sprache. Teil 2/3: Religiolekte und Metasprache(n)* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 9–19.

26 Boeschoten, 11–12. See also Andres Bodrogligeti, "Islamic terms in Eastern Middle Turkic," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1972): 355–67.

27 It is often problematic to draw a clear-cut functional and technical distinction between commented translations and *tafsīr*s. The texts that deal with interpretations of the Qur'an are frequently embedded in a composite literary genre where paraphrase, exegesis and translation

this period, the rift between eastern and western regional standards of Middle Turkic also widened exponentially, both in terms of linguistic characteristics and usage, eventually resulting in the formation of different languages and translation traditions.

## 4.1 Eastern Turkic: Under the Tīmūrids

Under the Tīmūrid dynasty (which flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), which ruled vast territories from what is now the South Caucasus to parts of present-day India, the spoken language was mostly Chaghatay. This composite Eastern Turkic idiom, with a Uyghur core and elements of Kipchak, also flourished as a literary language in the cultural centers of the empire, especially in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. With waves of Turkic-speaking nomads entering a symbiotic relationship with the sedentary Iranian population, the language contact between Turkic and Persian was at its peak.

However, in the region at large, the period under the Tīmūrids saw only a handful of Turkic-language works produced, because it was Persian-language literature that received extensive sponsorship. As Devin DeWeese summarizes it: "despite the translation program and the patronage of Turkic literature, which seems to have reached its peak in the 1520s, the brief experiment in promoting or sponsoring Turkic literature seems to have come to an end by the second half of the sixteenth century."[28] Only in Khwārazm – the major oasis region on the Amu Darya river delta in western Central Asia – more literature was produced in Turkic languages than in Persian, though both still were limited.[29]

The two Qur'an translations into Eastern Turkic known from this period are regarded as *tafsīr*s or "commented translations," where additional commentaries accompany the translation of the source text. The *Central Asian Tafsīr* (also known as *Anonymous Tafsīr*, Table 5, row 1) is an interlinear translation, very

proper are inseparably intertwined. For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to stress that *tafsīr*s and super-commentaries served as "the intellectual meta–language of Islam and the font of its pietistic sensibilities" and "the arena for the cultural appropriation and Islamization of other disciplines." Walid A. Saleh, "Medieval Exegesis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. Mustafa Shah and Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 666.

**28** Devin DeWeese, "Persian and Turkic from Kazan to Tobolsk: Literary Frontiers in Muslim Inner Asia," in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Nile Green (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 135.

**29** DeWeese, 136.

similar to the manuscripts from the earlier period. Lexicological analysis of the text has shown that the Turkic glosses constitute a mix of several Turkic languages, some of which draw on the lexical layers of the twelfth-century translations. However, the grammatical features of the commentaries have led János Eckmann to suggest that this particular copy was not created earlier than the fifteenth century.[30] The second manuscript, the *Chaghatay Tafsīr*, is a monolingual text, and two libraries in Turkey have a copy of it. The text has been identified as a translation from Persian into Chaghatay of *Mawāhib-i ʿaliyya* ("Lofty Gifts"), also known as *Tafsīr-i Ḥusaynī*, completed in 1493–94 and named after its author, Naqshbandī Sufi scholar ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn Wāʿiẓ al-Kāshifī (1463–c. 1532) from western Khurāsān.

**Table 5:** Commented translations.

| № | Date | Bi- or tri-lingual | Dominant variant of Middle Turkic | Language period | Type of translation | Manuscript location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 15th c. | 2 | Qarakhānid, Chaghatay Kh̲ʷārazm | 12–13th c. | Interlinear translation + *tafsīr* | St Petersburg. Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, MS C 197[31] |
| 2. | 16th c. (1544) | 2 | Chaghatay | Translation (Earlier East. Middle Turkic), commentary (later Turkic) | *tafsīr* | 1) Topkapi Sarayi Library, Ahmed III, MS 16<br>2) Konya, Library of the Mevlana Museum, MS 6624/921[32] |

Both manuscripts must have been composed for members of the ruling dynasty, like many other literary works of the period. Such translations were supposed to combine Persian and Turkic literary traditions, as well as their audiences in pre-

**30** Eckmann, "Eastern Turkic Translations."

**31** Wilhelm Barthold, "Ein Denkmal aus Der Zeit der Verbreitung des Islams in Mittelasien," *Asia Major* 2, no. 1 (1925), 125–139; Aleksandr K. Borovkov, *Leksika sredneaziatskogo tefsira XII–XIII vv.* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 1963); Halil Ibrahim Usta, *Orta Asya Kur'an Tefsiri* (Ankara: Poyraz Ofset Matbaacılık, 2011).

**32** Saidbek Boltabayev, "Çağatayca Tefsir-i Hüseynî (Mevahib-i Aliyye) Tercümesi ve Farsça Dil Özellikleri Üzerine," *Journal of Old Turkic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 287–309.

dominantly Turkophone regions. Some other works produced in this period include explicit explanations for the need to "make [Persian and Arabic works] Turkic," *türkī qïlmaq,* which means, in fact, "to translate."[33]

## 4.2 Western Turkic: Under the Ottomans

Unlike the small-scale literary production in Eastern Turkic, in the same period a significant number of manuscripts were written in Old Anatolian and later in Ottoman Turkish. The literary tradition in these Western Turkic idioms developed first under the Turkoman principalities that emerged in Anatolia (present-day Turkey) after the collapse of the Rūm Seljuk Empire toward the end of the thirteenth century. Translations of the Qur'an produced during the era of principalities were limited mainly to individual chapters. The earliest manuscripts date to the fourteenth century; however, as has been seen in the previous examples, the lexical elements in those manuscripts appear to be considerably older. Following his analysis of dozens of manuscripts preserved in libraries and private collections both in Turkey and abroad, Eleazar Birnbaum was among the first to suggest grouping the Qur'an translation texts in Western Turkic languages according to several translation traditions. This classification enabled Birnbaum to elaborate on the relationships between individual texts and between several old Ottoman translation traditions.[34] Similar to the earlier Eastern Turkic translations, these manuscripts in older variants of Turkish refrain from excessive use of Persian and Arabic loanwords, instead employing native vocabulary in order to facilitate the understanding of the text by non-Arabophone Muslims.[35]

The Ottoman principality, initially a weak political entity, had grown in power by the end of the fourteenth century. Although the dynasty was of Turkic origin, it soon became heavily Persianized in terms of language, culture, literature, and customs. The official language of the empire became Ottoman Turkish, an Oghuz Turkic idiom strongly influenced by Persian and Arabic. In the early period of the Ottoman Empire, the translation of central religious works into the vernacular was encouraged, with the aim of forming a strong religious identity. Alongside the tradi-

**33** Devin DeWeese, "Chaghatay Literature in the Early Sixteenth Century: Notes on Turkic Translations from the Uzbek Courts of Mawarannahr," in *Turkish Language, Literature, and History: Travelers' Tales, Sultans, and Scholars Since the Eighth Century*, ed. Bill Hickman and Gary Leiser (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 110.

**34** Birnbaum, "On Some Turkish Interlinear Translations of the Koran."

**35** Yaşar Şimşek, "Satirarasi Türkçe Kur'ân Tercümelerinin Birbiri ile Ilgisi ve Tasnifi Üzerine," *Gazi Türkiyat* 24 (2019): 47–65.

tion of interlinear translations that flourished well into the seventeenth century, the production of monolingual *tafsīr*s was also gaining a solid foothold. Though exegesis was undertaken mostly in Arabic – the language of learning in Ottoman madrasas – commentaries in Old Anatolian and Ottoman Turkish were far from uncommon.[36] For a long time, more *tafsīr*s were translated from Arabic and Persian than were composed directly in Ottoman Turkish. Side by side with complete *tafsīr* translations, there were also works that offered only excerpts of the Qur'an in Turkish, summarizing and often commenting on parts of the text.[37] Susan Gunasti, in her work on the Qur'an commentary tradition among the Ottoman Turks, argues that – at least until the fifteenth century – *tafsīr* practice was dominated by the "Samarqandī tradition". This tradition is associated with a *tafsīr* by a Ḥanafī scholar from Samarqand, Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 983), which was popularized due to the influence of Ottoman Turkish scholars trained in Central Asia.[38]

The reasons for translating religious works into Ottoman Turkish become apparent if we look at the prefaces of other manuscripts written during this period. The Turkish translators anticipated detractors who could argue against using Turkish for rendering religious knowledge. After all, in terms of available vocabulary and means of expression, Turkish was perceived to be at a disadvantage compared to Arabic and Persian.[39] The reason commonly given in favor of rendering texts into Turkish was the argument that knowledge should be spread to the masses. A good example is *Manẓūm fiqıh* ("Fiqh in verse"), composed by a certain Devletoğlu Yūsuf Balıkesrī and dedicated to the ruling Ottoman sultan Murād II. The manuscript, written in Anatolian Turkish, constitutes an abridged and easy-to-remember versed version of the influential Ḥanafī law manual *al-Hidāya fī sharḥ al-bidāyat al-mubtadī* ("The guidance into commentary on the first step of the novice"). In an opening statement that demonstrates awareness of this issue, Balıkesrī offers a de-

**36** Halil Şimşek, "The Missing Link in the History of Quranic Commentary: The Ottoman Period and the Quranic Commentary of Ebussuud/Abū Al- Suʿūd Al-ʿImādī (d. 1574 CE), *Irshād Al-ʿaql Al-Salīm Ilā Mazāyā Al-Kitāb Al- Karīm,*" PhD diss. (University of Toronto, 2018).

**37** Mustafa Öztürk, "Osmanlı Tefsir Kültürüne Panoramik Bir Bakış," in *Osmanlı Toplumunda Kur'an Kültürü ve Tefsir Çalışmaları*, vol. 1, ed. Bilal Gökkır et al. (Istanbul: İlim Yayma Vakfı, 2011), 91–160.

**38** Susan Gunasti, "Political Patronage and the Writing of Qura'n Commentaries among the Ottoman Turks," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2013): 335–57. For a critique of this argument, see Şimşek, "The Missing Link," 77–8.

**39** Sara Nur Yıldız, "A Hanafi Law Manual in the Vernacular: Devletoğlu Yūsuf Balıḳesrī's Turkish Verse Adaptation of the Hidāya-Wiqāya Textual Tradition for the Ottoman Sultan Murad II (824/1424)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 2 (June 2017): 283–304.

tailed and sophisticated argument for the use of Turkish as a language also accessible to less educated Muslims.[40]

However, the "Samarqandī tradition" lost its prominence by the late sixteenth century due to the overall Ottomanization of the intellectual culture of the empire. As a result, the Central Asian dominance over the cultural and intellectual life of the empire diminished, whereas Persian and Arabic cultures gained increased presence.[41] The new classical Ottoman exegetical tradition initially favored the works of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), a scholar of Persian origin whose Qur'an commentary, *al-Kashshāf*, was used in the Ottoman madrasas throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The favoring of al-Zamakhsharī was also short-lived, and soon gave way to the tradition centered around the texts of medieval Persian scholar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286). Al-Bayḍāwī's commentary on the Qur'an, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-taʾwīl* ("The lights of revelation and the secrets of interpretation") prepared the ground for the flourishing of the genre of super-commentaries *(ḥāshiya)*. This practice entailed glossing the popular Qur'an commentaries, commenting upon every word; these comments were typically reiterations of statements of many previous authors who had written on the subject.[42] Super-commentaries on al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* produced under the Ottomans received wide circulation within as well as outside of the empire.[43]

Religious works written in vernacular Turkish served the dual purpose of translation and exegesis: such translators not only elucidated but also expanded upon the prominent Qur'an commentaries. In some cases, the translated works may have had a rather distant relationship with their source texts, as some vernacular translations were abridged to merely renditions of the original *tafsīr*s.[44] When the Ottoman sultan claimed the title of "Caliph" – ruler over the Sunni Muslim world – following the 1774 treaty with the Russian Empire, the readership of Ottoman religious scholarship expanded to include other Turkic-language-speaking peoples. The discovery of a large number of *tafsīr* manuscripts in the Ottoman-Turkish language confirm their popularity, in particular among Tatars.[45]

---

**40** Yıldız, 297–98.

**41** Gunasti, "Political Patronage," 342–43.

**42** Walid A. Saleh, "The Gloss as Intellectual History: The Ḥāshiyahs on Al-Kashshāf," *Oriens* 41, no. 3–4 (2013): 217–59.

**43** Samuel J. Ross, "The Importance of Ottoman Tafsir: A Codicological Perspective," in *Osmanlı'da Ilm–i Tefsir*, ed. Muhammed Taha Boyalık and Harun Abacı (Istanbul: ISAR Yayinlari, 2019), 521–37.

**44** Susan Gunasti, *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: An Exegetical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2019), 42–44.

**45** See, e.g., Iazgul Rakhimova, "Tatarskie tafsiry kontsa XIX–nachala XX vv.: "Tafsir Nu'mani" Nu'mana bin Sabita as-Samani i "Tafsir Fava'id" Muhammad-Zarif Amirhana," Unpublished PhD diss. (Kazan Federal University, 2018).

## 4.3 Tatars

### Volga Tatars

Between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, the Volga Tatars used the Türki-Tatar language for literary production. This language, according to Strauss, represented "a more or less [T]atarised version of the Chaghatay language."[46] It was written in a variant of the Arabic script and contained a broad set of Arabic and Persian loanwords, although the actual spelling of these terms varied regionally. As a result of the historical bonds between the Volga-Ural Muslims and Central Asia, Tatar Islamic practices were permeated by religious traditions that originated in Transoxiana, particularly Sufi ones.[47] Being part of the "Balkans-to-Bengal" complex, the territory inhabited by the Tatars enjoyed widespread circulation of Persian literature, and it was not until the eighteenth century that "we can trace substantial literary production with Turkic ('Tatar') well represented alongside Persian and Arabic."[48]

Among the oldest Qur'an translations in Türki-Tatar is a manuscript dating back to 1507. This 856-page manuscript translates and comments upon the text of the Qur'an, beginning with the 36th *sūra* (*Yā Sīn*) and proceeding until the 114th (*An-Nās*), which makes it probably the second part of a two-volume *tafsīr*.[49] There exist two other Qur'an tafsīrs dated 1653 and 1661, also partial translations; however, little information is available regarding these works.[50] Another contemporary work, the Turkish language madrasa-style *tafsīr* work *Tercüme-i Tibyān* (also known as *Tafsīr-i Tibyān*) by Ayıntābī Mehmed Efendi (d. 1699), was among the works that enjoyed widespread readership among the Tatars. This commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* was intended as an abridgment in basic Turkish with a particular emphasis on *fiqh* issues. Later, in the nineteenth century, it served as

**46** Johann Strauss, "Language Modernization: The Case of Tatar and Modern Turkish," *Central Asian Survey* 12, no. 4 (1993): 565.

**47** Allen J. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

**48** DeWeese, "Persian and Turkic from Kazan to Tobolsk," 139.

**49** Enze Kadirova, "Rukopisnyi tafsir Korana (XVI v.)". In *Filologiia v polietnicheskoi i mezhkonfessional'noi srede: sostoianie i perspektivy*, ed. Rafik Mukhametshin, 266–76. Kazan: RII.

**50** Gabdulziamil G. Zainullin, "Tatarskaia bogoslovskaia literatura XVIII – nachala XX vekov i ee stile–iazykovye osobennosti," PhD diss. (Kazan State University, 1999), 30.

the primary source for Ottoman Turkish translations of the Qur'an,[51] as well as several Tatar translations (to be discussed in Section 5).[52]

### Belarusian/Polish Tatars[53]

Two waves of emigration from the Golden Horde, at the beginning and the end of the fourteenth century, resulted in the emergence of a Muslim Tatar community in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). These Tatar settlers managed to preserve their religion despite existing in a milieu dominated by a Christian majority; however, as far as language was concerned, they adopted the locally spoken languages of Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Polish, though they continued writing in the Arabic script. In contrast to Volga Tatars, the Belarusian/Polish communities had weaker literary ties to Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire, being instead strongly influenced by the surrounding Christian scholarly and exegetical traditions.

Though their literary production was predominantly in Slavic and not Turkic languages, the case of the GDL Tatars offers some valuable insights for tracing the evolution of Qur'an translation traditions among the Turkic peoples. In particular, it is remarkable that GDL Tatars continued writing interlinear translations well into the nineteenth century – a tradition that was prominent in the early pre-modern period, but which had diminished in other Turkic-language-speaking Muslim communities by the end of the seventeenth century. The GDL *tafsīr* collection contains manuscripts where the Arabic text of the Qur'an is glossed with mixed dialects of Slavic languages written in a smaller script. There are a few manuscripts that can be dated, tentatively, to the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the main body of the texts comes from the nineteenth century. The Slavic glosses draw on a mixture of local languages, and "it is often impossible to draw a distinction between Polonized Belarusian and Belarusianized Polish."[54] Some manuscripts contain fairly lengthy passages in Arabic and, less commonly, in Turkic languages. The grammar, vocabulary, and spelling of the glosses reveal a heavy influence of Turkic on the language(s) of GDL Tatars. Though the majority of the population no longer spoke any Turkic language, the scribes continued to be educated in Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. It has been argued that the Qur'an translations and *tafsīr*s in Turkic languages – imported from the Otto-

---

**51** Gunasti, *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 43–44.

**52** For a detailed discussion of the translation and manuscript culture among Tatars, see Alfrid Bustanov's contribution in this volume.

**53** See also the contribution by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz in this volume.

**54** Shirin Akiner, *Religious Language of a Belarusian Tatar Kitab: A Cultural Monument of Islam in Europe* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 73.

man Empire or Russia – served as companion texts or even formed the source text for the Qur'an translations produced in the GDL.[55] According to Andrzej Drozd, the GDL Tatars made extensive use of works in Chaghatay dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as literature in Ottoman Turkish and classical literary Arabic written in Anatolia, the Volga Region, Crimea, and Turkistan.[56]

Johanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, in her recent monograph, has demonstrated that despite the linguistic and cultural influences from other Muslim communities, the GDL Tatars often modeled their translations after the standards that dominated Polish medieval biblical and psalter literature. It is not uncommon for GDL Qur'an translations to contain passages from the Bible (especially from the Old Testament) and excerpts from Christian religious literature, showing that the GDL Tatars, in their exegetical traditions, tended to embrace the didacticism articulated in locally produced Bible translations.[57]

## 4.4 Vernacularization

Close study of the translation activities undertaken by Turkic peoples in the period from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries reveals the vocabulary used to denote these activities. Analysis of the pre-modern Turkic texts yields such verbs as *döndürmek* ("translate"), often accompanied by *tasnif itmek* ("arrange") and *tağyir itmek* ("to change"). The translation process is thereby associated with three operations, intrinsically intertwined: interlingual translation proper, compilation, and change. In the context of rendering the Qur'an, translation traditions followed the practices prominent in the literary genres of commentary and exegesis (*tafsīr*). Rewriting and reorganizing parts of a book, as well as the inclusion of translations from other manuscripts, was a form of translation-related text production. Interlingual rendering from Arabic and Persian into Turkic implied Turkification of the text; therefore, the act of translation is commonly referred to as *türkiye döndürmek* ("to turn into Turkish"), or *türkice şerk eylemek* ("to comment on in Turkish").[58]

55 Joanna Kulwicka–Kamińska, *Dialogue of Scriptures: The Tatar Tefsir in the Context of Biblical and Qur'anic Interpretations* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 70–75.
56 Andrzej Drozd, *Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII w.: zagadnienia gramatyczne na materiale chutb świątecznych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 1999), 42. Quoted from Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Dialogue of Scriptures*, 76.
57 Kulwicka-Kamińska, *Dialogue of Scriptures*, 133.
58 Yves Gambier, "Chapter 1.1. Concepts of Translation," in *A History of Modern Translation Knowledge: Sources, Concepts, Effects*, ed. Lieven D'hulst and Yves Gambier (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018), 30.

The term *terceme* (*tercüme* in present-day Turkish orthography), an umbrella term that indicates a spectrum of literary translational activities in Turkophone settings, functions as a productive theoretical notion. This term was originally adopted from Arabic into Turkic before the thirteenth century. Today it continues to denote an act of translation in many Turkic languages, as well as in Persian, though its meaning has been in flux throughout the centuries. In the scholarly works that analyze translation practices and discourses in Turkophone Islamic settings, especially the Ottoman literary tradition, *terceme* has been used as a term and conceptual framework to challenge the application of Europe-centered approaches to translation. This framework centers on the intercultural and multilingual context where Turkic-speaking translators continuously interacted with Persian and/or Arabic source texts and the linguistic hierarchies and ideologies that shaped the evolution of Turkic vernaculars.[59]

In the period under consideration, alongside interlingual translations, intralingual renderings were also important. By the sixteenth century, translated works ceased to function primarily as a point of access to Persian and Arabic texts: together with Turkic, Persian and Arabic by then belonged to the same epistemic domain and were mutually intertwined, meaning that there was much less need for interlingual translation.[60] What we find instead is an increasing role for renderings that performed cultural appropriation; that is, texts that were rewritten with the aim of fitting into the new linguistic landscape. In such a role, an act of translation meant adapting a text to the requirements of a society of a specific time and space.[61] Islamic scholars, as well as poets and storytellers, were instrumental in mediating between Persianized variants of Turkic idioms spoken by the elites on the one hand, and the language of the populace on the other.[62]

In terms of functions, the manuscripts of this period that contain Qur'an translations can generally be divided into performance-oriented and content-oriented translations. Performance-oriented translation implies rendering the source text with goals not directly related to conveying the content of the text. For example, we may imagine a scribe who, out of gratitude, wishes to perform a pious work of with the aim that the religious benefit of this work will be bestowed on his ruler. This type of translation involved writers taking more liberties in terms of recasting the material in a particular style. Content-oriented

**59** Paker, "Translation as Terceme and Nazire." Also, Cemal Demircioğlu, "From Discourse to Practice: Rethinking 'Translation' (Terceme) and Related Practices of Text Production in the Late Ottoman Literary Tradition," PhD diss. (Bogaziçi University, 2005).

**60** Paker, "Translation as Terceme and Nazire," 135.

**61** Demircioğlu, "From Discourse to Practice," 120.

**62** Paker, "Translation as Terceme and Nazire," 136.

translation, on the other hand, entails transferring the meaning of the text. This type of translation can be further differentiated into texts that demonstrate strict adherence to the original and texts that seek to enhance the impact of the text by supplementing it. As suggested by Gottfried Hagen, the types of translation and differences between them should be analyzed in terms of their function, or the "slots" they aim to fill in in the target culture.[63]

The increasing proliferation of vernacular literary production in the Ottoman Empire and post-Timurid Central Asia from the sixteenth century onwards threatened the interregional hegemony of written Persian. The gradual shift from Persian to Chaghatay, Türki-Tatar, and Ottoman Turkish reflected a more complex change in patterns of textual consumption. As the Turkic vernaculars began to play a dominant role in local manuscript cultures, Persian came to be seen as a barrier to knowledge and to the popular consumption of literature. The significance of Turkic vernaculars grew significantly following a dramatic wave of vernacularization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as spoken vernaculars started being used for scholarly communication. Simultaneously, the vernaculars became an object of study (through the production of grammar books) and consequently of governmental concern (through their use in administrative bodies and the propagation of native language education).[64]

## 5 Printing, Nation-Building and Islamic Reformation, 1800–early 1900

The processes of vernacularization and governmentalization of languages were boosted by two important changes in Muslim communities that came into full force in the nineteenth century: the introduction of printing, and the secularization of Islamic religious education. These transformations fed into one another with an intensifying effect, eventually radically transforming the cultural and intellectual contexts of Muslim communities, not only in Eurasia but across the globe.

**63** Gottfried Hagen, "Translations and Translators in a Multilingual Society: A Case Study of Persian-Ottoman Translations, Late 15th to Early 17th Century," *Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 95–134.

**64** For the case of the Ottoman Empire, see Michiel Leezenberg, "Vernacularization as Governmentalization: The Development of Kurdish in Mandate Iraq," in *Arabic and Its Alternatives*, ed. Heleen Murre-van den Berg, Karène Sanchez Summerer, and Tijmen Baarda (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 50–76.

Translations in manuscript form were regarded as "translations of restricted access"[65] due to their manner of production and limited target readership – that is, the particular ruler or *shaykh* to whom they were devoted or at whose request they were produced. Printing, on the other hand, from its inception envisioned the production of texts and translations for broader consumption. The dissemination of print among Turkic-speaking Muslim communities primarily followed the Russian imperial frontiers. That is, most of Central Asia and at some point also Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, as well as Muslim communities within the Russian imperial territory, relied on Turkic and Arabic printed books produced in the vibrant private Tatar publishing houses, located chiefly in Kazan and Bakhchysarai.[66] The printing revolution also brought about widespread accessibility of the Arabic Qur'an and commentaries in vernaculars. The owners of publishing houses – whose output addressed not only the religious elites but, to a greater extent, "ordinary" Muslims – favored simplicity in the language used for Qur'anic commentary, emphasizing the importance of comprehending the meaning of the text. The meaning of the Qur'anic text did not only interest Muslims; the same period had seen an increasing number of translations from the Arabic original into European languages, including Russian, by renowned Orientalists and Christian missionaries. An impressive range of scholars also engaged in textual study of the Qur'an, which resulted in the production of dictionaries, lexicons, and concordances directly related to the text of the Revelation.

Another significant development that fostered the rise of Turkic vernaculars was the reformation of curricula taught in madrasas. Advocates of schooling reform in the Russian Empire spoke in favor of introducing secular subjects and using Islamic vernaculars and Russian as languages of instruction. As a result, the Islamic vernaculars, viewed as more "modern" and "progressive" than classic Islamic languages, were preferred over Persian, which was by that time mostly seen as outdated. By the turn of the twentieth century, the standardization of these Islamic vernaculars became inseparable from the new ideology of nationalism shaped by the notion of "one people, one language."[67] Moreover, the prestige of Bukhara – formerly the beating heart of Islamic education for Russia's Mus-

**65** Strauss Johann, "Turkish Translations from Mehmed Ali's Egypt: A Pioneering Effort and Its Results," in *Translations: (Re)Shaping of Literature and Culture*, ed. Saliha Paker (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2002), 108–47.

**66** Nile Green, "Introduction. The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900)," in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 46. On Qur'an translation and printing among Crimean Tatars, see the contribution by Mykhaylo Yakubovych in this volume.

**67** Green, 48.

lims – was in drastic decline. The expanding economic and political power of the Russian empire in Central Asia, as well as the rise of Islamic modernism that chastised the existing *ʿulamāʾ* networks, led to the reorientation of Russia's Muslims to new centers.[68] In the Ottoman Empire, the vernacularization wave that emerged in the late seventeenth century and got into full swing in the eighteenth century was also increasingly fueling nation-building projects. The nineteenth-century governmentalization of Ottoman Turkish occurred in close relationship with the flourishing of modern European philology, when Ottoman Turkish became an instrument for *belles lettres* and learning and, consequently, an object of standardization and regimentation.[69]

Overall, a number of factors contributed to the formulation of the need for "unmediated" comprehension of the Qur'anic text and, consequently, to the efforts to fulfill this need. These factors included increased affordability of copies of the Qur'an, the individual ownership of books, and Muslim participation in knowledge networks stretching across the East and some European countries that disseminated modern ideas of religiosity, such as France.

## 5.1 Vernacular *tafsīr*

The early nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the sub-genre of the vernacular paraphrastic commentary. Although the authors of such works sometimes preferred to refer to them as translations of popular Qur'an commentaries, these were in fact abridgments and adaptations. In Ottoman Turkey in the 1820s, Ismāʿīl Ferrūkh Efendi (1747–1840) composed *Mevākib* (published posthumously in 1864), which for a while served as an important source of information on the Qur'an in Turkish. The text was an adapted version of the famous Persian Qur'an commentary *Mawāhib-i ʿaliyya* by Ḥusayn Vāʿiẓ Kāshifī's (1426–1504/5).[70] Beginning with Ferrūkh Efendī, a number of non-*ʿulamāʾ* authors entered the realm of Qur'anic interpretation, most often as translators and compilers of classical *tafsīr* works.[71] Such paraphrastic commentaries on the Qur'an reached new levels of

**68** Allen J. Frank, "The Decline of Bukharan Prestige in Russia: The Economic and Political Eclipse of Central Asia," in *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 151–89.
**69** Michiel Leezenberg, "The Vernacular Revolution: Reclaiming Early Modern Grammatical Traditions in the Ottoman Empire," *History of Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2016): 251–75.
**70** For more details, see M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 90–95.
**71** Wilson, 95–104.

simplicity after the 1850s, when short commentaries in Turkish on particular chapters of the Qur'an received widespread acclaim.

Among the first to translate parts of the Qur'an into Tatar was the prominent theologian ʿAbd al-Naṣīr al-Qūrṣāwī (1776–1812). The University Library in Kazan, capital of the present-day Republic of Tatarstan, Russia, holds several manuscripts of his Qur'an commentary *Haftiyak sharīf*. This commentary on the seventh part of the Qur'an (*haftiyak*) was intended as an explanation of the meanings of the Qur'an outside the *kalām* methodology. The text appeared in print only in 1861. After al-Qūrṣāwī's death, his *tafsīr* was expanded by his disciple Nuʿmān b. Thābit al-Thamʿānī and issued as *Tafsīr-i Nuʿmāni.* Historian and writer Tājaddin Yalchigul (1768–1838) completed another commentary on the seventh part of the Qur'an, printed in 1876. These works were followed by the two-volume *tafsīr* titled *Fawā'id* ("Benefits") by Husain Amīrkhān (1814–93) and *Tashīl al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* ("Facilitating the process of the Qur'an interpretation") by Muḥammad-Ṣādiq Imānqulī (1870–1932); the latter was a translation and adaptation of Ḥusayn Kāshifī's Persian-language *tafsīr*.[72]

In the early twentieth century, two vernacular Qur'an commentaries were also produced in Azerbaijani, an Oghuz language within the Turkic language family. As a result of the Russo-Persian wars in the first half of the nineteenth century and the subsequent rise of Azerbaijani as one of the Transcaucasian *lingua francas* under Russian rule, the Azerbaijani language was increasingly acquired in schools and more intensively used in administrative settings. The first of these Azerbaijani commentaries is *Kitāb kashf al-haqāʾiq* ("The book that discloses the truths"), authored by *qāḍī* Mīr Muḥammad Karīm Mīrzā, which was published in three volumes in Baku (1907–8).[73] In line with Islamic modernist discourses, the translator expresses in the introduction his concern about the alleged backwardness of Muslims and the growth of superstition and illiteracy in the Islamic world. To combat intellectual degradation, he suggests that Muslims should also study secular sciences, such as astronomy, geography, mathematics, and medicine.[74] The other work in Azerbaijani is Muḥammad Ḥasan Mawlāzāde Shakwī's two-volume *Kitāb al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* ("The book of explanations on the

---

**72** Jämil G. Zäynullin, *XVIII yöz– XX yöz bashïnda tatar rukhani ädäbiyatï: Qor' än täfsirläre, khädislär h.b. chïganaqlar* (Kazan: Mäg' ärif, 1998), 35; Timur Batyrkaev, "Koran i religiozno–politicheskaia bor'ba sredi rossiiskiikh musul'man v kontse XVIII– nachale XX vv.," PhD diss. (Institut istorii AN RT, 2005).

**73** Ismet Binark and Halit Eren, *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Printed Translations: 1515–1980* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1986), 462, n. 1643/46.

**74** Hamlet Isaxanli, *Elm ve senet meclisi 1–10* (Baku: Xəzər Universitəsi Nəşriyyatı, 2008), 73.

commentary of the Qur'an"); it was published in Tiflis (present-day Tbilisi, Georgia) in 1908.[75]

However, neither in the Ottoman Empire nor among Russia's Muslims did any of these vernacular translations rise to prominence above all others; that is, there was no single authoritative translation and/or commentary in a Turkic Islamic vernacular. This meant that the space remained open for new translation endeavors.

## 5.2 Qur'an Translations

The changes of the nineteenth century that amplified transnational knowledge transfer forced the rapid modernization and secularization of Muslim communities and challenged traditional hierarchies of Islamic authority, resulting in a radical transformation of how Islam was understood and lived. This changing context set the stage for a new understanding of Qur'an translation practices and exegesis. In the pre-modern period, non-verbatim renderings were considered a valid form of translation (understood as *terceme*); however, toward the end of the nineteenth century, a translation was increasingly expected to be as literal as possible in its rendering of the source text. The first literary translations into Turkic vernaculars were not religious in content but concerned classic novels from European languages. Along with access to European literature came the prestige of Western literary models and canons, which were praised as examples to emulate. As a result, the very act of translating literary, scientific, and religious works into vernaculars became synonymous with progress and evolution. The accessibility and availability of key works in Muslims' native languages became a symbol of cultural development, and new approaches to translation were supposed to mark a political and cultural break with the past.[76]

Never politically neutral, translation by the early twentieth century evolved into a bone of contention which deepened the rifts between rival camps within the Islamic elite. In this period, a new type of Islamic intellectual took the stage: having received education in both classical Islamic and secular sciences, this new Muslim was well-traveled and deeply embedded in the trans-imperial networks. After the revolutions in 1905 in Russia and 1908 in Turkey, Muslims acquired their first media outlets and access to political power.

75 Binark and Eren, *World Bibliography,* 464, n. 1649/52.
76 Cemal Demircioğlu, "Chapter 10. Altaic Tradition," in *A World Atlas of Translation*, ed. Yves Gambier and Ubaldo Stecconi (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019), 215–42.

Translation, in this modernist discourse, symbolized an activity inherently different from Islamic exegesis and its outputs (*tafsīr*s). The major drawback of the *tafsīr* tradition, according to the proponents of translation, lies in its subjectivity. Firstly, *tafsīr*s draw heavily on the existing *ʿulamāʾ* interpretations, thereby replicating a narrow approach to the Qur'anic text. Secondly, they manifest a subjective and inherently human – and therefore inevitably flawed – reading of the text; regardless of a *mufassir*'s intellectual merit, these interpretations of the Qur'an are biased towards the interpreter's school of Islam. Translation, on the other hand, arguably enables a direct, unprejudiced transfer of the Qur'anic meaning from Arabic into Turkic vernaculars. While translation advocates recognized the as-yet limited capacities of the vernaculars to communicate complex meanings, they argued that this transfer was of crucial importance for the development and very survival of the emerging Turkic nations. If the Qur'an were available to read in the vernacular and thus open for individual interpretation, the power of the traditional *ʿulamāʾ* as the sole authority on the Islamic scripture would inevitably be diminished. For Muslims under both Russian and Ottoman rule, the development of vernaculars became associated with Muslims' political survival: it came to symbolize the struggle against rising Middle Eastern nationalism, as well as the threats from European colonial powers.

Among the first to undertake the translation of the Qur'an into a Turkic vernacular was Mūsā Bīgī (1874–1949). This highly controversial theologian and philosopher gained widespread recognition both in Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Already in 1908, the Tatar reformist newspapers announced Bīgī's plans to compose a Turkish translation of the Holy Book. In parallel, Ḍiyāʾ Kamālī (1873–1943), a Tatar philosopher and educator, was also busy working on a two-volume literal translation of the Qur'an into Tatar.[77] Bīgī's work was eventually completed in 1911/12, but was denied publication by Russia's Islamic authorities; the same fate befell Kamālī's work. The search for Bīgī and Kamālī's original manuscripts has so far been in vain.[78]

In response to the debates that took place in early twentieth-century Russia regarding the translatability of the Revelation, Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935), one of the most influential authors and advocates of Islamic reform, issued a *fatwā* on May 30, 1908. On the pages of his journal *al-Manār,* he spoke vehemently against vernacular translations. According to Riḍā, such endeavors were inherently disrup-

77 Selcuk Altuntas, "A Public Discussion over the Sacred among the Muslims of Imperial Russia: Ziyaeddin Kamali'sAttempt to Translate the Qur'an into the Tatar Language (1911–12)," a paper presented at Fifth CESS (Central Eurasian Studies Society) Regional Conference at Kazan Federal University, June 2–4, Kazan, 2016.

78 Sibgatullina, "The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur'an."

tive to the unity of the global Muslim community, for local ethnic nationalism risked weakening the power of the *umma* to resist the tide of European colonialism and imperialism. Riḍā's intervention bolstered anti-translation forces, which put a stop to the production of literal Qur'an translations in the Ottoman Empire. The first translation in the empire would not occur until World War I: madrasa-trained and associated with the Young Turks, Mehmed Ubeydullah (1858–1937) translated the entire text of the Qur'an during his imprisonment on the island of Malta, following the Allied occupation of Istanbul. However, his work was never published.[79] Under the Turkish Republic, which took a far more aggressive approach to nation-building projects and the reformation of Islamic institutions, the first translations to appear in print were those of Suleyman Tevfik (1861–1939) and Huseyin Kazim Kadri (1870–1934), both published in 1924.[80]

# 6 Conclusions

The analysis in this chapter has provided an overview of the evolution of Qur'an translation traditions among the Turkic peoples. From the pre-modern period, the renderings of the Qur'anic text, first in the form of interlinear translations and later as *tafsīr* renderings, shaped the development of Türki as a written Islamic idiom. This development, importantly, took place in the context of Islamization and, subsequently, the evolution of vernacular Islam among non-Arabophone Muslim Turks. That is, from the early written renderings dating back to the fourteenth century until the production of literary translations of the Qur'an in the twentieth century, Qur'anic exegesis in Turkic languages existed in an ongoing relationship with Arabic and in juxtaposition to Persian, the cosmopolitan vernacular of the Balkans-to-Bengal complex. The linguistic development of these languages, and the hierarchical relationships between them, closely followed the sociopolitical transformations in the region. Aside from theological debates on the (in)imitability of the Qur'an, the production of vernacular renderings was more often defined by imperial aspirations of competing courts and regional patterns of proselytism and conversion.

During this process of evolution, the forms that translation could take, and the roles it could play was in flux. As the preceding discussion has shown, ideas regarding the translatability of the Qur'an adapted to changing ethnic and linguistic compositions of Muslim communities, as well as to reforms in religious educational institutions and the consumption of religious literature. Transla-

**79** Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an,* 151.
**80** Wilson, 162–4.

tions of the Qur'an served as a means to integrate and teach non-Arabophone Muslims through interlinear renderings; the excerpts from the Qur'an in *tafsīr*s, as well as in broader Islamic religious literature and poetry, saturated the literary output of the time and and gave cohesion to the kaleidoscopic and often contradictory nature of Islamic discourses. Finally, the literary Qur'an translations in the modern period marked Muslims' involvement in global networks of knowledge transfer, as well as their attempts to reconcile Islamic teaching with the new realities of modernity. Translation was always been part of negotiating the intercultural space – whether mediating between the Persianized Turkish elites and the Ottoman populace, or preserving the Islamic faith and connections to Islamic centers amid a dominant Christian society.

The act of translation among Muslim Turks, especially regarding renderings of the Qur'an, therefore demands critical investigation as an example of translation activity embedded in a multicultural setting. The view of translation as a universal supralingual concept risks imposing Europe-centered paradigms and thereby concealing the culture-bound understandings of the act. Instead, we should adopt a dynamic approach that regards translation as an object of cultural manipulation reflecting sociopolitical undercurrents of a given society; such an approach allows us to pay sufficient attention to the inherent intertextuality and fluidity that has always characterized translations of the Qur'an into Muslim vernaculars.

## Bibliography

Ahmed, Shahab. *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Akiner, Shirin. *Religious Language of a Belarusian Tatar Kitab: A Cultural Monument of Islam in Europe*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009.

Altuntas, Selcuk. "A Public Discussion over the Sacred among the Muslims of Imperial Russia: Ziyaeddin Kamali's Attempt to Translate the Qur'an into the Tatar Language (1911–12)." Paper presented at Fifth CESS (Central Eurasian Studies Society) Regional Conference at Kazan Federal University, June 2–4. Kazan, 2016.

Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad. "Persian, the Other Sacred Language of Islam: Some Brief Notes." In *Fortress of the Intellect: Ismaili and Other Islamic Studies in Honour of Farhad Daftary*, edited by Omar Ali-de-Unzaga, 59–75. London: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2011.

Babadzhanov, Bakhtiiar. "Islam i filosofiia." In *Sokrovishchnitsa vostochnykh rukopisei Instituta Vostokovedeniia imeni Abu Raikhana Biruni Akademii Nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan*, edited by Bakhrom Abdukhalimov and Jorge Ivan Espinal, 58–78. Tashkent: UNESCO, 2012.

Barthold, Wilhelm "Ein Denkmal aus der Zeit der Verbreitung des Islams in Mittelasien." *Asia Major* 2, no. 1 (1925), 125–139.

Batyrkaev, Timur. "Koran i religiozno-politicheskaia bor'ba sredi rossiiskiikh musul'man v kontse XVIII–nachale XX vv." PhD diss., Institut istorii AN RT, 2005.

Binark, Ismet and Halit Eren. *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Printed Translations: 1515–1980*. Istanbul: IRCICA, 1986.
Birnbaum, Eleazar. "On Some Turkish Interlinear Translations of the Koran." *Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (1990): 113–38.
Bodrogligeti, Andres. "Islamic Terms In Eastern Middle Turkic." *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1972): 355–67.
Boeschoten, Hendrik. "Mittelalterliche Koranübersetzungen als Quelle für die türkische Sprachgeschichte." In *Religiosität und Sprache. Teil 2/3: Religiolekte und Metasprache(n)*, 9–19. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008.
Boeschoten, Hendrik. "Translations of the Koran: Sources for the History of Written Turkic in a Multilingual Setting." In *Turkic-Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects*, edited by Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut, 69–89. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006.
Boltabayev, Saidbek. "Çağatayca Tefsir-i Hüseynî (Mevahib-i Aliyye) Tercümesi ve Farsça Dil Özellikleri Üzerine." *Journal of Old Turkic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 287–309.
Borovkov, Aleksandr K. *Leksika sredneaziatskogo tefsira XII-XIII vv*. Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 1963.
Dabashi, Hamid. *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
Demircioğlu, Cemal. "Chapter 10. Altaic Tradition." In *A World Atlas of Translation*, edited by Yves Gambier and Ubaldo Stecconi, 215–42. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019.
Demircioğlu, Cemal. "From Discourse to Practice: Rethinking 'Translation' (*Terceme*) and Related Practices of Text Production in the Late Ottoman Literary Tradition." PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2005.
DeWeese, Devin. "Chaghatay Literature in the Early Sixteenth Century: Notes on Turkic Translations from the Uzbek Courts of Mawarannahr." In *Turkish Language, Literature, and History: Travelers' Tales, Sultans, and Scholars Since the Eighth Century*, edited by Bill Hickman and Gary Leiser, 99–117. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017.
DeWeese, Devin. "Persian and Turkic from Kazan to Tobolsk: Literary Frontiers in Muslim Inner Asia." In *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, edited by Nile Green, 131–56. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019.
Drozd, Andrzej. *Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII w.: zagadnienia gramatyczne na materiale chutb świątecznych*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 1999.
Eckmann, János. "Doğu Türkçesinde Bir Kur'an Çevirisi (Rylands Nüshası)." *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı – Belleten* 15 (1968): 51–69.
Eckmann, János. "Eastern Turkic Translations of the Koran." In *Studia Turcica*, edited by Lajos Ligeti, 149–59. Budapest: Akadémisi Kiadó, 1971.
Eckmann, János. *Middle Turkic Glosses of the Rylands Interlinear Koran Translation*. Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1976.
Frank, Allen J. *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
Frank, Allen J. "The Decline of Bukharan Prestige in Russia: The Economic and Political Eclipse of Central Asia." In *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige*, 151–89. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
Gambier, Yves. "Chapter 1.1. Concepts of Translation." In *A History of Modern Translation Knowledge: Sources, Concepts, Effects*, edited by Lieven D'hulst and Yves Gambier, 19–38. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018.

Green, Nile. "Introduction. The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900)." In *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, 1–71. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019.

Green, Nile, ed. *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019.

Grévin, Benoît. "Comparing Medieval 'Latin' and 'Arabic' Textual Cultures from a Structural Perspective." In *Latin and Arabic: Entangled Histories*, edited by Daniel G. König, 3–30. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2019.

Gunasti, Susan. "Political Patronage and the Writing of Qur'an Commentaries among the Ottoman Turks." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2013): 335–57.

Gunasti, Susan. *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: An Exegetical Tradition*. London: Routledge, 2019.

Hagen, Gottfried. "Translations and Translators in a Multilingual Society: A Case Study of Persian-Ottoman Translations, Late 15th to Early 17th Century." *Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 95–134.

İnan, Abdülkadir. *Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Türkçe Tercemeleri Üzerinde Bir Inceleme*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1961.

Kulwicka-Kamińska, Joanna. *Dialogue of Scriptures: The Tatar Tefsir in the Context of Biblical and Qur'anic Interpretations*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018.

Leezenberg, Michiel. "'A Rare Pearl Passed from Hand to Hand': Cosmopolitan Orders and Pre-Modern Forms of Literary Domination." *Journal of World Literature* 5, no. 2 (2020): 253–77.

Leezenberg, Michiel. "The Vernacular Revolution: Reclaiming Early Modern Grammatical Traditions in the Ottoman Empire." *History of Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2016): 251–75.

Leezenberg, Michiel. "Vernacularization as Governmentalization: The Development of Kurdish in Mandate Iraq." In *Arabic and Its Alternatives*, edited by Heleen Murre-van den Berg, Karène Sanchez Summerer, and Tijmen Baarda, 50–76. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Lefevere, André. "Chinese and Western Thinking on Translation." In *Constructing Cultures : Essays on Literary Translation*, edited by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, 12–25. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998.

Lefevere, André. "Translation: Its Genealogy in the West." In *Translation, History and Culture*, edited by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, 14–28. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990.

Öztürk, Mustafa. "Osmanlı Tefsir Kültürüne Panoramik Bir Bakış." İn *Osmanlı Toplumunda Kur'an Kültürü ve Tefsir Çalışmaları*, vol. 1, edited by Bilal Gökkir et al., 91–160. Istanbul: İlim Yayma Vakfı, 2011.

Paker, Saliha. "Translation as Terceme and Nazire Culture-Bound Concepts and Their Implications for a Conceptual Framework for Research on Ottoman Translation History." In *Crosscultural Transgressions. Research Models in Translation (v. 2): Historical and Ideological Issues*, edited by Theo Hermans, 120–43. London: Routledge, 2002.

Peacock, Andrew C. S. *Islam, Literature and Society in Mongol Anatolia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Pollock, Sheldon. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2006.

Rizvi, Sajjad. "Reconceptualization, Pre-Text, and Con-Text." *Marginalia*, August 25, 2016. https://themarginaliareview.com/reconceptualization-pre-text-con-text-sajjad-rizvi/.

Robinson, Chase F. "Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences." In *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, edited by Herbert Berg, 101–34. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Ross, Samuel J. “The Importance of Ottoman Tafsir: A Codicological Perspective.” In *Osmanlı’da Ilm-i Tefsir*, edited by Muhammed Taha Boyalık and Harun Abacı, 521–37. Istanbul: ISAR Yayinlari, 2019.

Sağol, Gülden. *An Interlinear Translation of the Qur’an into Khwarazm Turkish: Introduction, Text, Glossary and Facsimile*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Sağol, Gülden. “Kur’an’ın Türkçe tercüme ve tefsirleri üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar.” *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8 (1997): 379–96.

Saleh, Walid A. “Medieval Exegesis.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Qur’anic Studies*, edited by Mustafa Shah and Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem, 666–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Saleh, Walid A. “The Gloss as Intellectual History: The Ḥāshiyahs on al-Kashshāf.” *Oriens* 41, no. 3–4 (January 1, 2013): 217–59.

Sibgatullina, Gulnaz. “The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur’an: Rethinking Mūsā Bīgī’s Translation into Türki-Tatar.” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 46–69.

Şimşek, Halil. “The Missing Link in the History of Quranic Commentary: The Ottoman Period and the Quranic Commentary of Ebussuud/Abū al- Suʿūd al-ʿImādī (d. 1574 CE), *Irshād al-ʿaql al-Salīm Ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm*.” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2018.

Şimşek, Halil. “Turks and Their Translations/ Commentaries on the Qur’ân: An. Historical and Bibliographical Survey.” *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2019): 395–419.

Şimşek, Yaşar. “Satirarasi Türkçe Kur’ân Tercümelerinin Birbiri İle İlgisi ve Tasnifi Üzerine.” *Gazi Türkiyat* 24 (2019): 47–65.

Strauss, Johann. “Language Modernization: The Case of Tatar and Modern Turkish.” *Central Asian Survey* 12, no. 4 (1993): 565–76.

Strauss, Johann. “Turkish Translations from Mehmed Ali’s Egypt: A Pioneering Effort and Its Results.” In *Translations: (Re)Shaping of Literature and Culture*, edited by Saliha Paker, 108–47. Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2002.

Togan, Zeki. “The Earliest Translation of the Qur’an into Turkish.” *İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergis* 4 (1964): 1–19.

Tschacher, Torsten. “‘Extraordinary Translations’ and ‘Loathsome Commentaries’: Quranic Translation and the Politics of the Tamil Language, c. 1880–1950.” *Religion* 49, no. 3 (2019): 458–80.

Usta, Halil Ibrahim. *Orta Asya Kur’an Tefsiri*. Ankara: Poyraz Ofset Matbaacılık, 2011.

Wilson, M. Brett. *Translating the Qur’an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Wormser, Paul. “The Spread of Islam in Asia through Trade and Sufism (Ninth–Nineteenth Centuries).” In *Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia*, edited by Oscar Salemink and Bryan S. Turner, 110–22. London: Routledge, 2014.

Yıldız, Sara Nur. “A Hanafi Law Manual in the Vernacular: Devletoğlu Yūsuf Balıḳesrī’s Turkish Verse Adaptation of the Hidāya-Wiqāya Textual Tradition for the Ottoman Sultan Murad II (824/1424).” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 2 (2017): 283–304.

Zadeh, Travis. *The Vernacular Qur’an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis*. Qur’anic Studies Series. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Zainullin, Gabdulziamil G. “Tatarskaia bogoslovskaia literatura XVIII–nachala XX vekov i ee stile-iazykovye osobennosti.” PhD diss., Kazan State University, 1999.

Zäynullin, Jämil G. XVIII yöz– XX yöz bashïnda tatar rukhani ädäbiyatï: Qor’’än täfsirläre, khädislär h. b. chïganaqlar. Kazan: Mäg’’ärif, 1998.

Johanna Pink

# The Inimitable Qur’an and the Languages of Empire: Muslim Qur’an Translation in the Languages of Western Europe in the Early Twentieth Century

## 1 A Time of Transformation

Between the nineteenth and the twenty-first centuries, Muslim practices of Qur’an translation, as well as markets and audiences for such translation, changed profoundly. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, dozens of new translations into a variety of languages were being published every year. I argue that key characteristics of this phenomenon have their roots in the context of Western European colonial empires where, for the first time since the Muslim expulsion from Spain, Qur’an translations into Western European languages were written by Muslims. A closer look at the period of transformation in which the new genre of Qur’an translation started to take shape will allow us to better understand the nature and extent of the changes, the reasons why they occurred, and the audiences the translators were implicitly addressing.

For example, in 1911 and 1912, an Indian Muslim academic called Mirza Abu’l-Fadl (1865–1956) published a work entitled *The Qur’ân: Arabic text and English translation: Arranged chronologically: With an abstract* in his home town of Allahabad.[1] In

**1** Mîrzâ Abu’l-Fadl, *The Qur’ân: Arabic Text and English Translation: Arranged Chronologically: With an Abstract*, 2 vols. (Allahabad: G. A. Asghar, 1911).

**Note:** This publication is a product of the project “GloQur – The Global Qur’an” that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement n° 863650). I owe a debt of gratitude to the team of *GloQur* for their invaluable input and feedback when I was working on this article, especially to Kamran Khan, who not only engaged with many of my ideas but also looked up Urdu references for me, and Mykhaylo Yakubovych, who, among other things, procured a translation from South Asia that was hard to find. Elvira Kulieva, Yulia Riswan and Sohaib Saeed have been immensely supportive and helpful, too – as was our student assistant, Sophia Hiss, who patiently procured and scanned a great number of books for me. Special thanks to my colleague Aylin De Tapia for bringing me rare French Qur’an translations from the Strasbourg university library, and to Pieter Coppens for his input concerning the style of Soedewo’s Dutch translation. All of them have been incredibly helpful.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-010

this Qur'an translation, the *sūra* that appears first in the canonical arrangement – the *Fātiḥa* – appears forty-eighth. Instead, Abu'l-Fadl started his translation with *sūra* 96, commonly considered the first revelation that Muhammad received. With this choice, Abu'l-Fadl mirrored the Qur'an translation of clergyman and Orientalist John Medows Rodwell (1808–1900). However, far from copying Rodwell's translation, Abu'l-Fadl rendered Q 96 in a highly distinctive and expressive way:

1 Cry! in the name of thy LORD who created –
2 Created man from thick blood!
3 Cry! by thy LORD the most beneficent,
4 Who taught by the pen,
5 Taught man what he knew not.[2]

The peculiar choice to translate the Arabic imperative *iqraʾ* as "Cry!" is explained by Abu'l-Fadl in the very brief preface to his translation. He argues that "the Qur'ân was never given as a book: it is a Prophet's cry to his people."[3] This was implicitly also a criticism of previous English translators such as George Sale (1697–1736), Rodwell, and Edward Henry Palmer (1840–1882), all of whom had treated the Qur'an as a scripture that was meant to be either read or recited from a pre-existing, written source.[4]

Until the early twentieth century, the market for English Qur'an translations was dominated by the works of these English Orientalists, all of whom were non-Muslims. When Indian Muslim intellectuals such as Mirza Abu'l-Fadl started to challenge the non-Muslim monopoly over the presentation of the Qur'an to Western European readers and, in order to do so, braved languages that they had typically only acquired as adults, the Orientalist legacy was one issue they needed to deal with. Another legacy that had to be taken into consideration by these translators was that of Muslim Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsīr*). And finally, the Bible loomed large in Qur'an translations into languages such as English, where there was a long tradition of biblical translation and an active Christian mission but almost no religious vocabulary specific to Islam.

The way in which Muslim translators of the Qur'an into European languages navigated these legacies depended on their educational background and the audience they were addressing. Some saw the ever-increasing availability of printing

**2** Abu'l-Fadl, 1:1.

**3** Abu'l-Fadl, v.

**4** George Sale and Edward Henry Palmer translated *iqraʾ* as "Read!," while John Medows Rodwell translated it as "Recite!". See George Sale, *The Koran: Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed* (London: William Tegg, 1850), 494; Edward H. Palmer, *The Qur'ân* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1880), 2:336; John M. Rodwell, *The Koran* (London: Dent, 1909), 19.

presses as an opportunity to reach literate Muslims with a European-style education, while others reached out directly to non-Muslim Europeans. Through their pioneering efforts, the genre of the modern Muslim Qur'an translation took shape, and its contours slowly became visible in the course of the first six decades of the twentieth century.

In this chapter, I will analyze Muslim Qur'an translations that were published between 1905 and 1960 in Western European languages; for this period, the range of languages is limited to English, French, German, and Dutch. I choose to end the period of analysis at 1960 because from the 1960s onwards, the field of Islamic publishing changed significantly due to decolonization, migration, and the increasing importance of North American Muslims for global Muslim discourses and the dissemination of books. From the 1960s, the number of Qur'an translations skyrocketed and new authors and audiences entered the fray, making it much harder to undertake a comprehensive survey of the field. For the first decades of the twentieth century, however, such a survey is still possible. Consequently, I strive to consider the full range of Qur'an translations in the aforementioned languages, without prioritizing or excluding any of them based on their success, popularity, quality, or level of "orthodoxy."[5] This inclusive approach will enable a comprehensive understanding of the roads that were taken by Muslim translators, as well as those that were – consciously or inadvertently – *not* taken, those that turned out to be dead ends, and those that might have been premature, such as Abu'l-Fadl's chronological approach. Note, however, that an individual assessment of these translations is outside the scope of this chapter.

---

**5** To the best of my knowledge, I collected all complete published translations of the Qur'an into Western European languages up to 1960 that were at least partly authored by Muslims, as well as some unfinished ones. There are reports of two unfinished English translations, either unpublished or published in a small print run with a local Indian publisher, that I could not obtain and that have not been seen by any of the authors who mention them either. From the limited information that is available, these works do not seem to call into question the general patterns I am describing in this chapter. See Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan, "English Translations of the Holy Qur'an: A Bio-Bibliographic Study," *Islamic Quarterly* 30 (1986): 82–108, particularly the references to Bilgrami and Jafri. I also did not include the unfinished French Qur'an translation by Zainul Abedin Rajabalee, a Muslim with Indian roots, published on Mauritius between 1949 and 1951, because I obtained it too late. I excluded all translations of selected verses that do not follow the canonical arrangement of the Qur'an.

## 2 Empires Alive and Dying: British India, France, and the Ottoman Connection

Until the nineteenth century, there were no significant communities of literate Muslims in English, French, German or Dutch-speaking countries who would have produced Qur'an translations or commentaries. The situation changed drastically following the rise of colonial empires, in which an increasing number of Muslims came to speak and write the languages of the colonial rulers. The vast majority of these Muslims had a close connection to British India where, several decades after the British Empire had brought the territory under direct control in 1858, growing numbers of Muslims spoke and wrote in English as their second, third, or fourth language. Out of the twenty Qur'an translations into Western European languages published before 1960 that I have collected (both full and uncompleted), only three have no such connection, and all three of those are translations into French.[6] The rest – thirteen renderings into English,[7] two into

**6** Ahmed Laïmèche and B. Ben Daoud, *Le Coran (Lecture Par Excellence)* (Oran: Heintz Frères, 1932); O. Pesle and Ahmed Tidjani, *Le Coran*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Éditions Larose, 1954); Ameur Ghedira, *Le Coran: Nouvelle traduction par Ameur Ghedira* (Lyon: Éditions du Fleuve, 1957).

**7** Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan, *The Holy Qurán* (Patiala: Rajinder Press, 1905); Abu'l-Fadl, *The Qur'ân*; Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, ed., *Qur'ān-i Majīd: The Holy Qur-ān with English Translation and Explanatory Notes, Etc., Part I* (Madras: Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, 1915); Mirza Hairat, *The Koran. Prepared by various Oriental learned scholars and edited by Mirza Hairat*, 3 vols. (Delhi: I.M.H. Press, 1916); Maulvi Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur-án: Containing the Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* (Woking: The "Islamic Review" office, 1917); M. A. Rahman, *The Holy Quran: An English Version of the Holy Quran in Verse, Part I* (Adoni: Roujees, 1926); Ghulam Sarwar, *Translation of the Holy Qur-ân* (Singapore: self-published, 1929); Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, 1st ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930); Badshah Husain, *The Holy Quran: A Translation with Commentary According to Shia Traditions and Principles*, part 1 (Lucknow: Moayyedul-Uloom Association, 1931) and part 2 (Lucknow: Moayeddul-Uloom Association, 1936; incomplete, no further volumes available); ʿAbdullāh Yūsuf ʿAli, *The Holy Qur-ān: English Translation & Commentary. Parts I–XV* (Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, 1934); ʿAbdullāh Yūsuf ʿAli, *The Holy Qur-ān: Arabic Text with an English Translation and Commentary. Vol. II, Containing Sūras IX to XXIX* (Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, 1937); Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur-an: Text Translation & Commentary. Vol. III, Containing Suras XXIX to CXIV* (Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, n.d); Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *Tafsir-ul-Qur'an: Translation and Commentary of the Holy Qur'an*, 4 vols. (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1991); Ali Muhammad Fazil Chinoy, *The Glorious Koran: Translated with Commentary of Divine Lights* (Secunderabad: Hyderabad Bulletin Press, 1954), http://quran-archive.org/explorer/ali-muhammad-fazil-chinoy/1954; Maulawī Sher ʿAlī, *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text and English Translation* (Tilford, Surrey: Islam International Publications, 2004).

German,[8] one into Dutch[9] and one into French[10] – were either written by Muslims from British India or published in British India, or both.[11]

One of the most important reasons for the extraordinary productivity and influence of British Indian Muslims in the field of Qur'an translation was the fact that Qur'an translations into local languages, especially Urdu, were already widespread in India in the nineteenth century, as were publishing houses that printed literature in Arabic as well as Latin script, including the Arabic Qur'an (*muṣḥaf*). Already in the eighteenth century, the prominent reformer Shāh Walī Allāh ad-Dihlawī (1703–1762) had promoted the translation of the Qur'an for non-Arabic audiences and had produced a Persian translation himself. Urdu translations followed soon thereafter, including one authored by one of Walī Allāh's sons. Already by the mid-nineteenth century, Lucknow-Cawnpore, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, and Hyderabad were major centers of Muslim publishing with dozens of printing presses that put out hundreds of works of religious instruction, polemics,

---

**8** Maulana Sadr-ud-Din, *Der Koran: Arabisch-Deutsch*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Verlag der moslemischen Revue, 1964); Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, ed., *Der Heilige Koran* (Zürich: Der Islam, 1954). The publication history of Sadr-ud-Din's Qur'an translation is complex. The first edition of 1939 had footnotes and an introduction that were heavily influenced by the ideas of the German convert Hugo Marcus. It was subsequently withdrawn by the leadership of the Lahore Ahmadiyya and replaced in 1964 with a second edition that contained Sadr-ud-Din's original ideas. The changes were on the level of the paratexts, though, not the translation itself. I have used the 1964 edition for this chapter, despite the fact that it falls just outside the time span I am discussing here, because it is more easily accessible and reflects the agenda of the Lahore Ahmadiyya more accurately. (This information is taken from a talk given by Gerdien Jonker at the GloQur workshop "*Daʿwa* and Qur'an translations in the first decades of the twentieth century," Freiburg, June 2022. The publication is forthcoming.)

**9** Maulwi Moehammad Ali, *De heilige Qoer-an*, trans. Soedewo (Lahore: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1934).

**10** Muhammad Hamidullah, *Le Saint Coran* (Paris: Hadj Mohamed Noureddine Ben Mahmoud, 1963).

**11** One exception, a curious series of publications that does not fit the genre I am examining here but should nevertheless be mentioned, can be found in the works of a Turkish Muslim intellectual from British Cyprus, Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, who translated small parts of the Qur'an into English (and also into Turkish) in verse. Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, *The Gouran Versified: Together with an Essay Entitled, "Great Britain and the Moslems," and Poems* (Nicosia: Shakespeare School, 1934); Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, *The Gouran Versified: The First Part* (Nicosia: Shakespeare School, 1942); Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, *Freedom of Religion: The Gouran Versified. Chapter 2, 256. President Roosevelt Memorial Edition* (Nicosia: Shakespeare School, 1949); Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, "Al-Fatihah (First Chapter of the Qur'an)," *Islamic Review (Woking)* 51, no. July–September (1963); Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, "Sure 103: Tercüme ve Tefsir: Allahı Seviniz," *Istiklâl*, October 21, 1950; Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, "Sure 96 (İkra): Tercüme ve Tefsir 'Oku,'" *Istiklâl*, November 11, 1949; see also Hamidullah, *Le Saint Coran*, L.

Chap. II. SŪRA-TUL-BAQARAH. 39

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرّٰكِعِينَ ۝ أَتَأْمُرُونَ
النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتٰبَ ۚ أَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُونَ ۝ وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ۚ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى

44. *Wa aqī-muṣṣalāta wa ātuz-zakāta war-ka'ū ma'ar-rāki'īn.*
45. *A-ta'murū-nannāsa bil-birri wa tansauna anfusa-kum wa antum tatlūnal kitāb*; *a-fa-lā ta'qilūn.* 46. *Was-ta'īnū biṣ-ṣabri waṣ-ṣalāh*; *wa inna-hā la-kabīratun illā 'alal-*

44. And [a] observe prayer, and [b] give the **zakāt*, [1] and bow down with those who bow.[2]

45. [c] Do ye enjoin others to do what is good and forget your ownselves, [3] while ye read the Book? [4] Do ye not then understand?

* *i.e.*, legal alms.

1. As these two commandments form the essence of Islamic teachings pertaining to practice, therefore, an exhortation to observe prayer and pay the *Zakāt* (legal alms) amounts to an invitation to accept Islam.

2. Devote yourselves solely to the worship of God. ركوع (*Ruku'*) literally means "bowing down" and then, it means worship of God solely and entirely, without associating any thing or being with Him. In the *Haqīqatul-asās* it is written:—

كانت العرب تسمي من آمن بالله ولم يعبد الاوثان راكعا .

*i.e.*, the Arabs used the word راكع for one who worshipped God alone to the utter exclusion of idols. Similarly, we have the Arabic phrase ركع الى الله which means, "Breaking away from all the rest, he turned to God." A well-known pre-Islamic poet *Nābighah* says:—

سيبلغ عذرا او نجاحا من امرء – الي ربه رب البرية راكع

*i.e.*, "He who severs his connections from all earthly things and turns to God who is the Creator of the whole world (*i.e.*, not an idol) will have a good excuse or will obtain salvation.

Hence, in the verse under discussion, اركعوا مع الراكعين cannot mean 'bow down as in daily devotions,' as it will be a mere repetition of the injunction for prayers which goes before, but it means: "Spurning the fear of the world, join the true votaries of Islam in the sole worship of the one true God.'

3. That is, you exhort others to virtue, but you, for your own part, wilfully set aside the commandments of God for the sake of worldly ends.

4. This verse does not show that the Holy Qur-ān testifies to the truth of the present day Bible. It rather purports to be a reproach to the Jews who preached to others to follow virtue as enjoined on them by their scriptures, but never cared to practise what they preached. There is absolutely no reference here to the purity of the text of the scriptures, nor is it intended to convey that the Biblical law is operative even after the revelation of the Holy Qur-ān.

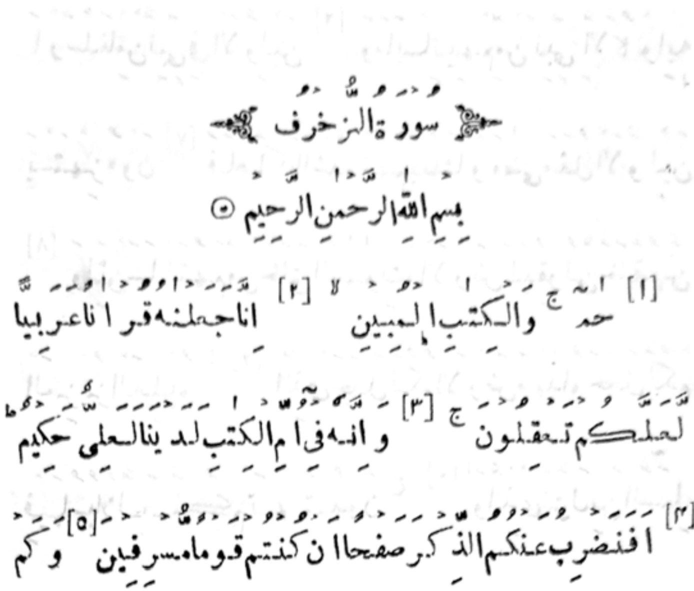
In verses 43 and 44 the Israelites are warned against hiding, through waywardness, the truths contained in their scriptures proving the truth of the new prophet.

Verses 45, 46, 47 contain a word of advice for the Israelites. They are warned against hesitating to accept a truth for fear of men, after they have understood it. This does not become them because, being the last heirs to the favours of God, they possess the truth to some extent and call people to virtue. They are exhorted to implore Divine

*a* see 2:4. *b* see 2:4. *c* 61:3; 26:227.

**Figure 20:** Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, ed., *Qur'ān-i Majīd*, 39.

REVEALED AT MAKKAH 351



سورة الزخرف

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

[١] حم والكتب المبين [٢] انا جعلنه قرءانا عربيا

لعلكم تعقلون [٣] وانه في ام الكتب لدينا لعلي حكيم

[٤] افنضرب عنكم الذكر صفحا ان كنتم قوما مسرفين [٥] وكم

61 GOLD ORNAMENTS.

*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*

(SU'RAH XLIII.)

1 *H.* M. By the plain Book !

2 Verily, WE have made it an Arabic Qur'ân, that ye may have wisdom.

3 And verily, it is in the Mother-Book, with Us,—certainly high and wise.

4 Shall WE then push aside from you the reminder, for that ye are an extravagant people ?

5 And how many prophets have WE sent among

**Figure 21:** Abu'l-Fadl, *The Qur'ân*, 351.

and scholarship, later joined by Bombay.[12] Given this lively field of publishing, it is perhaps unsurprising that, as the number of Muslims who had received a British education rose, so emerged a market for English Qur'an translations. Several of the very first English translations combined the Arabic *muṣḥaf* with Latin script, sometimes with great elegance[13] and sometimes with difficulty,[14] but either way, suggesting a Muslim target readership (see Figures 20 and 21). That assumption is supported by the fact that quite a few authors of English Qur'an translations were also authors of Urdu or Bengali translations.[15]

Following in the footsteps of the Indian model, the new genre also gained success in Southeast Asia. In 1934, a Dutch Qur'an translation by an Indonesian Muslim was published that was an exact rendition of the English Qur'an translation and commentary by the Indian Muhammad Ali (1874–1951), first published in 1917.[16] This work, too, emerged in a context where there was already a vibrant Muslim publishing market, heavily influenced by that of British India,[17] and in which graduates of colonial schools were eager to gain access to the Qur'an in the language and script they were familiar with, which in this case was Dutch.[18]

The situation in the French colonies and protectorates was quite different. Muslim translation activity in the colonial language started there more than twenty-five years later than in British India: while the first English Qur'an translation by a Muslim was published in 1905,[19] the first comparable work in French was published around 1931.[20] And only in 1959 was the Arabic *muṣḥaf* included for the first time in a French Qur'an translation by a Muslim, namely, Muhammad Hamidullah (1908–2002), who happened to be Indian.[21] In contrast to British

**12** Simon Leese, "Arabic Utterances in a Multilingual World: Shāh Walī-Allāh and Qur'anic Translatability in North India," *Translation Studies* 14, no. 2 (2021): 242–61; Harlan Otto Pearson, "Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth Century India: The Tarīqah-i Muhammadīya" (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University, 1979), esp. ch. 4; Ian Proudfoot, "Early Muslim Printing in Southeast Asia," *Libri* 45 (1995): 216–23.

**13** See, for example, Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, *Qur'ān-i Majīd*; Ali, *The Holy Qur-án*.

**14** For the latter, see Abu'l-Fadl, *The Qur'ân* where the Arabic Qur'an has been written by typewriter.

**15** This is true, as far as I could find, for Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, Mirza Hairat, the Qadian Ahmadiyya, Muhammad Ali, and Abdul Majid Daryabadi.

**16** Ali, *De heilige Qoer-an*; Ali, *The Holy Qur-án*.

**17** Proudfoot, "Early Muslim Printing."

**18** Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Sectarian Translation of the Qur'an in Indonesia: The Case of the Ahmadiyya," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 2 (2015): 251–82.

**19** Khan, *Holy Qurán*.

**20** Laïmèche and Ben Daoud, *Le Coran (Lecture Par Excellence)*.

**21** Hamidullah, *Le Saint Coran*.

India, the Maghreb had no flourishing Muslim printing industry in the nineteenth century; by the time *muṣḥaf* printing was taking place in the Ottoman Empire late in the century,[22] the Maghreb was already largely under French control. Furthermore, and maybe more importantly, there was no existing market for Qur'an translations: the Qur'an was read and recited in Arabic. While a substantial proportion of the Moroccan and Algerian population did not speak Arabic as their first language, their native Amazigh languages held little cultural and religious prestige, and if they were used to translating the Qur'an at all in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was orally. Therefore, the first French Qur'an translations by Muslims followed the model of European translations and were adapted to the means of French publishers. They included neither the Arabic text nor any meaningful amount of commentary. This was even true for one translation whose author had commissioned an illustrator with designing embellishments and had the result printed in artist quality on vellum paper; yet the book contains no Arabic.[23]

Besides the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires, the Ottoman Empire also deserves mention for its impact on Western European perceptions of Islam. Neither the Ottoman Empire nor the early Turkish Republic seems to have contributed to the emergence of Qur'an translations in Western Europe, at least not directly. Many Europeans who had close relations to the Ottoman Empire, such as the early British convert Abdullah Quilliam (1856–1932), who was nominated *şeyhülislam* of the British Isles by the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II (1842–1918), certainly saw the Qur'an as the most fundamental religious source in Islam. However, Quilliam, in his *The faith of Islam,* simply used the Qur'an translation by George Sale for his frequent quotations from the Qur'an.[24]

The Western European fascination with Turkish Islam was often satisfied in superficial ways with sometimes dubious appeals to the authority of Muslims in order to claim a certain degree of authenticity. This can be seen, for example, in a fake Qur'an translation in French by an equally fake Turkish lady named Fatma-Zaïda; the real author of the work was definitely neither a Muslim nor intimately familiar with Islamic teachings.[25] Another intriguing work that purported to give Europeans access to the Qur'anic message was published in Germany during

**22** M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

**23** Ghedira, *Le Coran.*

**24** William H. Quilliam, *The Faith of Islam. An Explanatory Sketch of the Principal Fundamental Tenets of the Moslem Religion* (Liverpool: Willmer Brothers, 1892).

**25** Fatma-Zaïda, *L'Alkoran! (Le livre par excellence)* (Lisbon: Imprimerie de la société typographique Franco-Portugaise, 1861).

World War I under the name of an Ottoman official, Mahmud Mukhtar Pasha (Katırcıoğlu). The book, whose editor cited the German-Ottoman alliance as a reason for Germans to become acquainted with Islam, contained a thematically arranged selection of translated verses from the Qur'an and *hadith*s with an extensive commentary.[26] Mahmud Mukhtar also wrote a French translation of selected verses of the Qur'an that was posthumously published in 1935 and translated to English two years later.[27] However, no complete Qur'an translation into a Western European language emerged from the Ottoman or Turkish context until much later.

Even in the Turkish language itself, Qur'an translations were slow to gain the status of a genre of religious importance. One of the reasons – although certainly not the only one – for this delayed development when compared to British India might have been the polemics in Istanbul and Cairo surrounding translation of the Qur'an. Prominent *ʿulamāʾ* and Muslim intellectuals feared that nationalists might use Qur'an translations to replace the Arabic Qur'an in ritual worship, and they also saw their own influence threatened, given that knowledge of Arabic and an understanding of the exegetical tradition would be made redundant if Muslims could access the meaning of the Qur'an in their native languages. Moreover, they advanced dogmatic arguments related to the doctrine of the Qur'an's inimitability (*iʿjāz*), which they understood to mean that the Qur'an is untranslatable, along with the fact that ambiguous Qur'anic verses might be reduced to an unambiguous meaning in translation, which in turn might cause readers to follow the translator's narrow opinion and fail to realize that the Qur'an has a much broader range of meanings.[28]

While the wholesale rejection of Qur'an translations started to crumble in the 1930s, even in Cairo where the opposition had been particularly fierce, it did have a lasting impact on the perception of Qur'an translation as a problematic activity. That perception was based on the assumption that the term "translation" implied the impossible claim of full and accurate transfer of the meaning and rhetoric of the Qur'an to a language other than Arabic. Ultimately, this distrust of the concept

---

**26** Mahmud Mukhtar Pascha, *Die Welt des Islam im Lichte des Koran und der Hadith*, Deutsche Orient–Bücherei 1 (Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1915).

**27** Mahmoud Mohtar Katirjoglou, *La sagesse coranique: éclairée par des versets choisis reflétant la philosophie morale, religieuse et sociale de l'Islam. Suivis d'un exposé synoptique des enseignements du Coran* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1935); Maḥmūd Muḫtār Kātircioglū, *The Wisdom of the Qur'ān: Set Forth in Selected Verses Conveying the Moral, Religious and Social Philosophy of Islam*, trans. John Naish (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

**28** Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism,* esp. ch. 4, 6; for parallel developments in the Dutch East Indies, see Nico J. G. Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: A Biography of Sayyid Uthman (1822–1914)*, Brill's Southeast Asian Library, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 198–199.

of translation led many translators and publishers to choose convoluted titles in order to deflect criticism. The first person to do so, by his own account due to pressure from al-Azhar in Cairo, was Marmaduke Pickthall, who called his book *The meaning of the glorious Koran: An explanatory translation*.[29] In the period under consideration here, this is a singular exception; all other works are unequivocally labeled as a translation of the Qur'an or as "the Qur'an, translated by . . .." Apparently, at the time, there were no sensitivities in either the French or the British Indian context regarding authoring and publishing translations or even non-Arabic "versions"[30] of the Qur'an. The only institution that voiced objections was al-Azhar, and Pickthall was the only translator who took notice.

## 3 *Daʿwa* and the Different Faces of Islam

*Daʿwa*, the call for Islam, was the main driver of early twentieth-century Muslim Qur'an translation, particularly into English, German, and Dutch, and this field was to a remarkable extent dominated by translators who did not come from the Sunni mainstream. This was also an important reason for the initial opposition of many Sunni *ʿulamāʾ* to translations of the Qur'an. In many languages, including German and Dutch, the very first Muslim Qur'an translations were linked to the Ahmadiyya movement, a revivalist movement from British India formed around Mirza Ghulam Ahmad from Qadian (1835–1908), which many non-Ahmadiyya Muslims considered heretical or even non-Muslim. The association of Qur'an translation – particularly into English – with the Ahmadiyya movement led many scholars and intellectuals to reject the practice altogether. The leadership of al-Azhar even went so far as to publicly burn copies of the Qur'an translation by Muhammad Ali of the Lahore Ahmadiyya.[31]

The publication of the first English Qur'an translation by a Muslim, that of Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan, was already linked to the Ahmadiyya, although Khan parted ways with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the same year and published a

**29** Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*; Anne Fremantle, *Loyal Enemy* (London: Hutchinson, 1938), 417–418.

**30** Rahman, *The Holy Quran*.

**31** Moch Nur Ichwan, "Differing Responses to an Ahmadi Translation and Exegesis: 'The Holy Qur'ân' in Egypt and Indonesia," *Archipel*, January 1 (2001), 143–61; Burhani, "Sectarian Translation of the Qur'an in Indonesia."

revised version that polemicized against the movement.[32] The Ahmadiyya split into two branches in 1914. The Qadian branch believed in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's messianic role in a rather far-reaching sense that involved according him prophetic status, while the Lahore branch under Muhammad Ali considered Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's status as the "promised Messiah" merely to mean that he was a reformer (*mujaddid*) with a mystical connection to earlier prophets. The Qadian branch established a caliphate, which the Lahore branch rejected. Both branches were extraordinarily active in the propagation of Islam, not only in India but also among non-Muslims residing in the center of the colonial world system; that is, in Western Europe. Following the model of Christian missions, they used the printing press, and especially the printing of Qur'an translations, to spread their beliefs.

The Qadian and Lahore Ahmadiyya each prepared their own English translations with extensive commentary, including the Arabic *muṣḥaf*, in a complex layout with high-quality typesetting. The Qadian Ahmadiyya had the first part of theirs printed in Madras in 1915, written "under the auspices of Mirzā Bashīr-ud-dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad," the second caliph of the Ahmadiyya. It only covered Q 1:1 through 2:141,[33] and it soon became clear that the task was too monumental to be completed fast. The final version of the translation-cum-commentary was only published between 1947 and 1963, and the translation without commentary was published separately in 1955.[34] The Lahore Ahmadiyya, on the other hand, published a translation and commentary of the entire Qur'an by their leader Muhammad Ali already in 1917.[35] As a consequence, the Lahore Ahmadiyya exerted a far bigger influence on the global field of Qur'an translation between the 1910s and 1950s than the Qadian Ahmadiyya, despite having fewer members. Moreover, the presence of the Lahore Ahmadiyya in Europe was stronger at the time; Muhammad Ali's translation was not printed in India but in England. This translation saw many subsequent editions, including a version with revised and much shorter notes that was first published in 1928[36] and translated partially or fully into numerous languages, including the

**32** Khan, *Holy Qurán*; Abdur R. Kidwai, "Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran (1930): An Assessment," in *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, ed. Geoffrey P. Nash (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 232–234.

**33** Throughout this chapter, I use the Kufan system of verse numbering that is common today and makes it possible to easily identify verses, but which differs from the systems that some translators use. For example, in the Kufan system the *basmala* is counted as a verse only in the *Fātiḥa* while the Ahmadiyya count it in every *sūra*.

**34** Khan, "English Translations of the Holy Qur'an," 31–32; Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, *Qurʾān-i Majīd*; Sher ʿAlī, *The Holy Qur'ān*.

**35** Ali, *The Holy Qur-Án*.

**36** Maulana Muhammad Ali, *Translation of the Holy Qur'an with Short Notes and Introduction* (Lahore: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam, 1951).

abovementioned Dutch translation prepared in the Dutch East Indies.[37] The Lahore Ahmadiyya furthermore published a German translation by Maulana Sadr-ud-Din in Berlin in 1939.[38] The first German translation by the Qadian Ahmadiyya was only published in 1954, but it soon overtook Sadr-ud-Din's translation, partly because the publisher had a better sales network among German bookstores.[39]

The Ahmadiyya thus had a monopoly on the German and Dutch market for Muslim Qur'an translations and a strong presence in the English market in the period before 1960. Moreover, the Ahmadiyya translations, especially that of Muhammad Ali, exerted a strong influence on other translators. One of them, Ghulam Sarwar, whose English translation was published in Singapore in 1929, frequently adopted Muhammad Ali's idiosyncratic translations. Yusuf Ali (1872–1953) quoted some of Muhammad Ali's opinions in his footnotes, while other translators, such as Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892–1977) and Badshah Husain, expended great effort in refuting those opinions in their notes.

Many idiosyncratic ideas expressed in Ahmadiyya Qur'an translations were not originally exclusive to the Ahmadiyya, but were shared by modernist circles in British India who advocated a rationalist reading of the Qur'an and who advanced natural explanations for miracles and supernatural events described in Qur'anic narratives, as will be discussed further below. In an era in which scientific paradigms were dominant, especially among Europeans, these interpretations seemed ideally suited for *daʿwa* purposes in order to present the Qur'an as a rational alternative to the Bible. Sadr-ud-Din tells an anecdote in one of his footnotes, according to which he was lecturing in London during World War I and met an Englishman who was reluctant to embrace Islam because he had perceived the Bible to be irrational and did not want to bind himself to another irrational scripture after that experience. Sadr-ud-Din was able to convince him of the superiority of the Qur'an in this regard.[40] This superior rationality was what the Ahmadiyya, and many other Muslim missionaries, wanted to project.

In some cases, specific rationalistic interpretations became so closely associated with the Ahmadiyya that they came to serve as an identity marker and were shunned by all other translators. The most famous example concerns Q 27:18,[41] where Solomon and his army arrive in *wādī an-naml,* which is conventionally

---

**37** Ali, *De heilige Qoer-an*.

**38** Sadr-ud-Drin, *Der Koran: Arabisch-Deutsch*.

**39** Ahmad, *Der Heilige Koran*.

**40** Sadr-ud-Din, *Der Koran: Arabisch-Deutsch*, 648–49.

**41** In this chapter, when I refer to translations of a specific verse of the Qur'an, I do not give individual references.

translated as “the valley of the ants.” There, one ant talks to another and is overheard by Solomon, who understands their speech. The Ahmadiyya translators unanimously render the Arabic word *namla* (“ant”) as “Namlite” and explain it as the name of a tribe after which the valley is named. The only other translator who adopts this interpretation is Ghulam Sarwar who, in the introduction to his translation, has nothing but the highest praise for Muhammad Ali, whom he knew personally from the time of their studies. He does not mention Muhammad Ali’s Ahmadiyya beliefs but, as his adoption of the Namlite paradigm shows, he was clearly influenced by the rationalistic tendencies in Muhammad Ali’s translation.[42]

Another remarkable feature of the early history of Muslim English Qur’an translation is the fact that, in contrast to the Ahmadiyya, Indian Sunni scholars jumped on the bandwagon rather late. Shiʿi scholars, on the other hand, were early adopters of the genre. The overall proportion of Shiʿi translators in my text sample is significantly higher than the proportion of Shiʿis in the total South Asian population was at the time.[43] Of the first five printed English Qur’an translations by Muslims, three were by Ahmadiyya translators, and the other two translators, Mirza Abu’l-Fadl and Mirza Hairat, were Imami Shiʿis. There does not seem to be any particular sectarian impetus behind their works. Abu’l-Fadl was mainly interested in a chronological translation of the Qur’an in the tradition of German Orientalism, particularly that of Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) whom he knew from his studies in Germany; meanwhile, Mirza Hairat emphasizes in his introduction the need to compete with Christian missionaries, and calls for donations to enable the publication of an introduction to the Qur’an.[44] The clearest Shiʿi tendency in their works is their translation of Q 5:6, a verse which gives instructions for ritual ablution (*wuḍūʾ*) that are understood differently by Sunnis and Imami Shiʿis.[45]

**42** Sarwar, *Translation of the Holy Qur-ân*, xxxvi–xlii.

**43** There appears to be a further Imami Shi’i work by S.N.A. Jafri, 1935. See Khan, “English Translations of the Holy Qur’an,” 39. That would make five out of fourteen English Qur’an translations Shi’i translations. While no exact numbers are available, the overall proportion of Shi’a Muslims among Muslims in the territories of British India seems to be somewhere around 10%, with significant regional differences.

**44** Abu’l-Fadl, *The Qur’ân*, v–vi; Hairat, *The Koran*, i–iv.

**45** The difference is immediately apparent when one compares Pickthall’s Sunni to Mirza Hairat’s Imami Shi’i translation. Pickthall writes “wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and lightly rub your heads and (wash) your feet up to the ankles,” whereas Mirza Hairat writes “wash your faces and your hands upto [sic] the elbows, and rub your heads and your feet up to the ankles.” In the Sunni tradition, the feet are the object of the imperative *ighsilū* (“wash”) whereas in the Shi’i tradition, they are the object of the imperative *imsaḥū* (“wipe, rub”).

This differs from two later works, namely Badshah Husain's aborted attempt to write a translation and commentary "according to Shiʿa traditions and principles," which ended after the fifth *sūra* and was published between 1931 and 1936, and Ali Muhammad Chinoy's Qur'an translation published in 1954. For example, Badshah Husain declares the belief in the Shiʿi imams to be a prerequisite for salvation,[46] and Chinoy misses no opportunity to refer to Shiʿi doctrines, such as the excellence of the prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) and martyrdom.[47] While the first two Shiʿi translators had pursued an ecumenical approach, without highlighting their denominational identity, the two later ones engaged in intense apologetics and polemics.

The earliest Sunni efforts at translating the Qur'an into English were all connected to the state of Hyderabad that was formally independent, though under British protection. Its ruler, the Nizam, owned massive wealth. He funded educational, cultural and academic activities and employed many Indian Muslims and foreigners to conduct them. A first Hyderabad-related effort to translate the Qur'an was made by a Shiʿi but was commissioned by the Nadwat ul-Ulama. Syed Hussain Bilgrami (1842–1926), a former high-ranking servant of the Nizam, is reported to have been working on it around 1912, but it was never completed or published. It later passed into the possession of ʿAbdul Majid Daryabadi, who used it for his own translation.[48] A rather inept attempt by one of the Nizam's educators in a district capital to compose a translation of the Qur'an in verse was aborted after the first two *sūra*s.[49]

The first successful, complete and published Sunni Qur'an translation into English was that of Marmaduke Pickthall, printed in 1930.[50] While it was sponsored by the Nizam and thus closely tied to the Indian context, Pickthall himself was a British convert. Shortly thereafter, the first full English translation by an Indian Muslim who was neither Ahmadi nor Imami Shiʿiwas completed: Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation, in three volumes, was first published between 1934 and

**46** Husain, *The Holy Quran*, 70.
**47** Chinoy, *The Glorious Koran*, 9, 15, 634.
**48** Zahid Aziz, *Centenary of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation of the Quran: Background, History and Influence on Later Translations* (Wembley: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, U.K., 2017), 11; Khan, "English Translations of the Holy Qur'an," 34.
**49** Rahman, *The Holy Quran*. He mentions that he showed the work to Pickthall who expressed his approval (p. 7).
**50** Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*.

1937.[51] Yusuf Ali came from an Isma'ili Shiʿi background.[52] While Isma'ili loyalties did not define Yusuf Ali's work as a Qur'an translator, he did not make a great effort to contribute to the construction of a Sunni orthodoxy either. Instead, he presented his own readings of Qur'anic stories and drew on a wide range of sources from Greek philosophers to Shakespeare, from premodern Arabic Qur'anic commentaries to the modern sciences. This translation was the work of a man who lived between India and Britain and held degrees in English literature and law, including two from the University of Cambridge. While Yusuf Ali's translation was accepted and even applauded by many Sunni Muslims, Ali could hardly claim the full authority of traditional Sunni scholarship; nor could Pickthall.

The first translator who came from the milieu of Sunni *ʿulamāʾ* – even though he was not himself a scholar with traditional religious training – was Abdul Majid Daryabadi, whose extensive *Tafseer-ul-Quran*, a Qur'an translation with notes, was published in installments between 1943 and 1956, in parallel with an Urdu *tafsīr* he wrote.[53] His English translation was later distributed by Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī Nadwī through the publishing house of the Nadwat ul-Ulama and was praised as the first reliable and satisfactory English Qur'an translation by Abdur Raheem Kidwai, a professor at Aligarh Muslim University and an authority in the field of English Qur'an translations with a firmly Sunni perspective.[54] In a way, this work mirrors the zealous, institutionally endorsed (and incomplete) Shiʿi project by Badshah Husain.

One of the reasons for the relatively late emergence of mainstream Sunni Qur'an translations into English might have to do with the fact that, although the field of Sunni Qur'an translation was well-established in India at a rather early time, those translations were done first in Persian, then in Urdu and, to a lesser extent, other local languages. Accordingly, the field was saturated, and the traditional Sunni religious institutions used texts in Urdu and other local languages. Non-Sunni translators who were not associated with these institutions might have found it easier to make a move to English. Moreover, in order to make that move, a certain missionary interest would have been helpful; this was the case

**51** ʿAli, *The Holy Qur-ān, Vol. I*; ʿAli, *The Holy Qur-ān, Vol. II*; Ali, *The Holy Qur-an*.

**52** Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Koran in English. A Biography*, Lives of Great Religious Books (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), xxv, 61–65.

**53** Daryabadi, *Tafsir-Ul-Qur'an*; Khan, *Holy Qurán*, 39–40.

**54** Matthew J. Kuiper, *Daʿwa: A Global History of Islamic Missionary Thought and Practice*, The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 171; Matthew J. Kuiper, *Daʿwa and Other Religions: Indian Muslims and the Modern Resurgence of Global Islamic Activism*, Routledge Islamic Studies Series, v. 27 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 193–194; Abdur Raheem Kidwai, "Abdul Majid Daryabadi's English Translation of and Commentary on the Quran (1957): An Assessment," *Aligarh Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 36–55.

with the Ahmadiyya on a global level, and on a more local level with the Shiʿa who were very active and expanding in northern India from their center in Lucknow,[55] but initially much less so with Indian Sunnis.

In considering the success, or lack thereof, in completing and publishing a Qur'an translation, we must take into account the financial resources required to print such a translation. Some translations were commissioned through institutions. For example, Badshah Husain's translation was commissioned by the head of the Madrasa Nazimiyya, an Indian Shiʿi institution of higher learning founded in 1889, and funded by a donation from Zanzibar.[56] The Qadian Ahmadiyya was an organized community with members who paid tithes. The Lahore Ahmadiyya managed with some difficulty to recruit donors, as did Yusuf Ali. The wealthiest potential donor for Sunni Muslims, the Nizam, apparently preferred to sponsor an Englishman over an Indian, which might have contributed to the lag between non-Sunni and Sunni translations.

Once again, the situation for French is different. The authors of Muslim Qur'an translations into French who were active between the 1930s and 1950s were all Sunnis. No big donors or institutions seem to have been involved; the translators relied on existing publishing houses. Nor are denominational conflicts or polemics discernible in these works. Even Muhammad Hamidullah who, as an Indian, was perfectly aware of the existence of the Ahmadiyya translations, did not try to refute them. He merely included them dispassionately in the impressive list of Qur'an translations that precedes his own translation, without further comment.[57]

## 4 Christianity and the Bible

Under the conditions of colonialism, Christianity was a constant point of reference for most Muslim scholars and intellectuals. For example, the Ahmadiyya movement in its foundational period was deeply involved in disputes with Christian missionaries. Moreover, many translators into Western European languages had received a European education, studied at European universities, and were aware of European publications in religious studies, including fields such as biblical archeology.

**55** Justin Jones, *Shiʿa Islam in Colonial India: Religion, Community and Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

**56** Jones, 35–36; Husain, *The Holy Quran*, 1–2.

**57** Hamidullah, *Le Saint Coran*, xliii–lxvii.

Translators into Western European languages had an additional reason to consider their relationship to Christianity: they were working with languages that had evolved in a predominantly Christian setting and in which scriptural translation had hitherto mostly concerned the Bible, rather than the Qur'an.[58] Whereas in languages such as Urdu and Malay, it was no problem to use Arabic terms such as *zakāt,* and it was commonplace to use the Arabic names of biblical prophets such as Abraham (Ibrāhīm) or Moses (Mūsā), this was not an equally obvious choice for English or French Qur'an translations, especially when those translations targeted a readership of non-Muslim Europeans. Such readers were already acquainted with many Qur'anic motifs and narratives through the Bible, rather than the Qur'an itself, and their idea of scripture was shaped by biblical translations.

Engagement with Christianity and with the Bible thus took place on several levels: first, the choice of style; second, terminology; third, the use of the Bible as a reference, especially with regard to Qur'anic narratives; and fourth, apologetics and polemics against Christian missionaries. The third and fourth levels were closely intertwined and enriched by the reception of a wider array of contemporaneous literature on the Bible and the history of Christianity and Judaism.

## 4.1 Style

In no other Western European language were Qur'an translations as strongly and obviously influenced by the style of a formative early modern biblical translation as in English: the archaic style of the King James Bible was universally adopted by all Muslim translators in the period analyzed here, without a single exception. What might be translated into plain English as "the path of those You have blessed" (*ṣirāṭ alladhīna anʿamta ʿalayhim*, Q 1:7) becomes, in King James English, "the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours" (Muhammad Ali), "the path of those upon whom be Thy blessings" (Sarwar), "the path of those whom Thou hast favoured" (Pickthall), "the way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace" (Yusuf Ali), or "the path of those, on whom Thou hast endowed bounties" (Chinoy). The use of contemporary English in a Qur'an translation was first proposed in 1956 by N.J. Dawood, a non-Muslim who published a Qur'an translation with *Penguin Classics*, and the idea was probably only picked up by

58 I am using the term "Bible" in this chapter to denote the Christian scripture, i.e., the Old and New Testaments, because that was what the translators I am examining primarily engaged with. Judaism was rarely a point of reference except where details of certain stories from the Old Testament were concerned, but even then, the motive behind the discussion was usually a Christian-Muslim dispute.

Muslim translators in the 1970s.[59] The influence of earlier non-Muslim translations, namely those of Sale, Rodwell and Palmer, all of whom used the King James style, further contributed to the dominance of archaic English in Muslim Qur'an translations. Moreover, an educational system that heavily promoted the early modern writings of authors such as William Shakespeare and John Milton as the pinnacle of English literature was clearly at work here, too, as can be seen from the frequent references to the works of these authors found in several Qur'an translations. While early modern poetry was probably not the first point of reference of any Qur'an translator,[60] it might have reinforced their impression that this was the only appropriate style for a sacred scripture.

In the German Qur'an translations of the Ahmadiyya movement we find a similar phenomenon, namely, the style of the Luther Bible: outdated expressions, archaic syntax and verb forms, and copious use of the term *wahrlich* ("verily"). However, the language is far less archaic than that of contemporaneous English Qur'an translations, and it is also not as close to that of the Luther Bible as some earlier German Qur'an translations by non-Muslims, such as Max Henning (1901) and Lazarus Goldschmidt (1916).

Nothing comparable to the King James style can be found in the Dutch and French Qur'an translations from this period. The French translations, in particular, use contemporary French and do not aim for an archaic or literary style at all. Only one of them, that of Ben Daoud and Laïmèche, goes as far as using the *passé simple*, a form of the past tense that is common in formal and literary written language.

Another stylistic issue that Muslim translators had to resolve is the capitalization of words related to God; this is an issue with no precedent in Arabic or languages that use the Arabic script, such as Urdu. While the capitalization of "God" and other divine names such as "Lord" was an established convention in all languages examined here,[61] as it had been in Latin, the situation was not so unequivocal where pronouns were concerned.

In German and French, it was very uncommon to capitalize a third-person pronoun referring to God in either biblical or Qur'an translations by the time

**59** See N.J. Dawood, *The Koran* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1956). While this is not the focus of my research, it is my impression that Hilali and Khan, whose translation was first published in Istanbul in 1978 and later adopted by the Saudi King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex, might have been the first Muslims to translate the Qur'an into modern English.

**60** With the exception of those who, like Rahman and Bodamialisade, tried their hands at translations in verse.

**61** It should be noted that in German, all nouns are capitalized and the capitalization of *Gott* ("God") is therefore unremarkable.

Muslims started translating the Qur'an into these languages. In Dutch, by contrast, the capitalization of pronouns did occur, for example, in the seventeenth-century *Statenvertaling*, a widely used Bible translation.

The English King James Version of the Bible, which originated around the same time, did not capitalize pronouns; nor did the Qur'an translation of George Sale, first published in 1734. Doing so became more common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The nineteenth-century Qur'an translations by Rodwell and Palmer capitalized third-person pronouns referring to God, as did some Bible translations of the time – for example, Young's Literal Translation of 1862[62] – as well as many writings of Christian missionaries in India. It seems that Palmer and Rodwell set the precedent that all South Asian translators followed, using capitalization for pronouns referring to God. The German,[63] Dutch and nearly all French Qur'an translations follow the same approach, except that of Ben Daoud and Laïmèche. Apparently, in this regard, Muslim translators of the Qur'an into Western European languages established a distinct stylistic convention that was remarkably successful and consistent across several language boundaries, and more long-lived and pervasive than in biblical translation in English and Dutch, where the practice was often abandoned and is disputed today. In biblical translation, capitalizing pronouns referring to God was a fashion of sorts, but in Qur'an translations in the Latin script it became a formative practice, probably originating from English and taking root from there.

## 4.2 Terminology

A fundamental decision for Muslim Qur'an translators, which remains controversial today and is framed in different ways depending on language, concerns the translation of *allāh*. In Western European languages, the question was whether to use the same name that was used by Christians to denote God, namely, *God*, *Dieu*, or *Gott*, or whether to use the Arabic name "Allah." Among the translations examined here, there is no consensus in this matter. Nine use "Allah" and eleven use "God," and they do so across denominational boundaries. There is, however, a difference between languages. All four French translations use *Dieu*, whereas the majority of English translations – eight out of thirteen – use "Allah." All English Ahmadiyya translators use "Allah," but Sardar does not, despite having sympa-

**62** But many did not, including the New Testament published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, London, in 1916.

**63** This is even true of the 1915 book by Pascha, *Die Welt des Islam*. A purely South Asian origin of this convention therefore seems unlikely.

thies with some Ahmadiyya ideas; nor do the Dutch and German Lahore Ahmadiyya translations by Soedewo and Sadr-ud-Din, even though Soedewo generally aimed to faithfully render Muhammad Ali's choices into Dutch. There is thus a particularly strong preference among English translators for using "Allah" as God's name, which is quite unique in the Western European field of this period. This might have its roots in Urdu practices, while translators into French, German or Dutch might have had a stronger impetus to follow the choices made by previous non-Muslim Qur'an translators.

In contrast, there was little controversy about how to designate biblical figures. Jesus, Mary, Moses and so forth are almost universally called by the names that are used for them by Christians in the respective language, with only two exceptions: M.A. Rahman, whose incomplete translation in verse generally uses inconsistent and arbitrary terminology and switches between Moosa and Moses, Ibrahim and Abraham; and Daryabadi, who is the first to deliberately and consistently use Arabic names, thereby distinguishing Qur'anic from biblical stories and setting a trend that some later translators followed.

The inclination to use Arabic names is somewhat higher in cases where the identification of a name mentioned in the Qur'an with a biblical figure is not entirely clear or is open to debate for a variety of reasons, such as is the case with Idrīs/Enoch and ʿUzair/ Ezra. In these cases, there is a certain tendency, especially in later translations, towards a cautious or slightly skeptical approach.

The development from uncritical adoption of Christian or Orientalist conventions to a more critical and independent approach can also be seen in the translation of the term *rasūl*. The earliest translations in British India in the 1910s nearly all[64] render this term as "apostle," just like Sale, Palmer and Rodwell, whereas later translators, starting with Ghulam Sarwar in 1929, increasingly resorted to terms such as "messenger" and its equivalent in other languages, which have the same meaning but a less Christian connotation. This might be indicative of a growing awareness of the problems inherent in using Christian terminology.

## 4.3 Engagement with the Bible, Apologetics, and Polemics

Explicit engagement with the Bible, biblical studies, and the arguments of Christian missionaries is rarely discernible in the text of the translations. The following analysis, therefore, largely depends on the translators' commentaries and notes,

**64** The only exception is the 1915 Ahmadiyya translation.

which twelve of the translations contain.[65] In these paratexts, the discussion of biblical and Christian themes often goes far beyond what is necessary to make sense of the Qur'anic narratives and also far beyond the – generally extremely limited – reception of the Bible in the Muslim exegetical tradition before the nineteenth century.[66] References abound to Genesis and Exodus in particular, but also to many other books of the Hebrew Bible and Gospels. Among those translations that contain notes, there is not a single one that does not cite the Bible to provide background information on the Qur'an or to bolster arguments the translator makes about its meaning. Sometimes the references are implicit,[67] but usually they are explicit and specific. Moreover, some translations, especially the extensive works of Muhammad Ali, Yusuf Ali, Badshah Husain and Daryabadi, frequently cite sources such as the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In most annotated translations, such references are so abundant that they can be found by simply opening a page at random. Yusuf Ali and Daryabadi also cite secondary literature and translated source material from the fields of biblical studies and the history of antiquity, ranging from the Talmud and Flavius Josephus to Charles Merivale's *History of the Romans under the Empire* (1850). The biblical and secondary sources fulfill different functions for the translators, which can be roughly classified as *informative*, *apologetic*, and *polemical*.

The *informative* function consists of providing supplementary information on the Qur'anic narratives, for example, the names of unnamed persons, their genealogy, details of the story and so forth. Often, this has no interpretive function other than satisfying the readers' curiosity and educating them.

A problem occurs when the Qur'anic stories differ from the biblical narrative – a fact that was exploited by Christian missionaries to argue that the Qur'an was a corrupted and distorted version of the Bible. The *apologetic* components in the translations serve to counter that argument. For example, Abdul Hakim Khan and Sadr-ud-Din discuss the differences between the biblical and Qur'anic stories of Joseph. They argue that the biblical depiction of Jacob is entirely implausible

**65** These are all Ahmadiyya translations until the 1950s when the Qadian Ahmadiyya published the translation part of their extensive commentary without notes, as well as the translations by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, Badhshah Husain, Yusuf Ali, Daryabadi, Chinoy, and Hamidullah.

**66** While premodern Qur'anic commentaries often drew on some Jewish and Christian materials to give further information on Qur'anic narratives, direct recourse to the Hebrew or Christian Bible was extremely uncommon. See Walid A. Saleh, "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqāʿī and His Defense of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qurʾān," *Speculum* 83, no. 3 (2008): 629–54.

**67** For example in Sadr-ud-Din's German translation which has very concise annotation.

when measured against the prophetic status that Jacob holds according to Islam. For example, Jacob would have trusted in God, rather than despairing, and would have had some deeper understanding of the purpose of losing Joseph, as indicated in the Qur'an. They conclude that the Qur'anic narrative is the original and correct one: it is the Bible that has been corrupted, and the Qur'an has corrected it.[68]

Muhammad Ali repeatedly addresses Christian criticism of the Qur'an explicitly and in more detail. For example, according to the Qur'anic story of Moses' marriage to a woman from Midian, two sisters came to ask Moses for help with watering their flock, and he ended up marrying one of them on condition that he serve their father for eight years. In his note on the relevant verses (Q 28:23–28), Muhammad Ali writes:

> The Qur-án does not state how many daughters the man had; it only speaks of two of them being in charge of their father's flock. Hence the alleged confusion of this story with that of Laban's two daughters is itself due to a confusion. [. . .] Christian critical opinion discovers here another confusion. Because Jacob had made an agreement with Laban to serve him for seven years as a condition for marrying one of his daughters (Gen. 29:18), it is alleged that this fact in the *trustworthy* Bible history must have been present to the Prophet's mind in a confused state, giving rise to the story related to Moses' marriage. The slightest similarity in incidents, like similarity of names, gives rise – in the mind of the Christian critic – to a conclusion of confusion and anachronism where the Qur-án is concerned. According to Rabbinical accounts Moses lived with Jethro for ten years, which corroborates the Qur-ánic story in substance (see Jewish En.), and there is nothing improbable in the circumstance that he may have served him during that period in consideration of marrying one of his daughters.[69]

While the refutation of Christian polemics against Islam and the Qur'an was a particular concern of the Ahmadiyya translators, it was not exclusive to them, as is clear from the approach of several translators to Q 19:28, where Mary is addressed as *ukht Hārūn* or "sister of Aaron" by her folk. This gave rise to the idea that Muhammad might have confused her with Moses' and Aaron's sister Miriam. This argument is refuted not only by the Ahmadiyya translations but also by Hamidullah, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, and Daryabadi. Several of them directly attack named[70] or unnamed Christian interlocutors for using this passage to construct an argument against Islam. A common counterargument is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, might have had a brother whose name happened to be Aaron and who was not identical to Moses' brother but merely named after him. The Ahmadiyya

**68** Khan, *Holy Qurán*, 363–365; Sadr-ud-Drin, *Der Koran: Arabisch-Deutsch*, 389. It is unclear whether these translators were aware that Jews and Christians do not consider Jacob a prophet.
**69** Ali, *The Holy Qur-án*, 763.
**70** Muhammad Ali attacks Rodwell and Pickthall, and criticizes William Muir.

translators and Yusuf Ali present a different explanation: Mary belonged to the caste of priests whose head and ancestor was Aaron, for which reason *ukht Hārūn* was her title. Several translators point out that in Arabic and other Semitic languages, the term "sister" might be used loosely to denote general kinship or a common genealogy. Daryabadi proposes to read the term as a metaphorical expression meant to liken Mary to Aaron regarding her piety and virtue. Hamidullah even found a way to resolve the problem not only in the note but in the text of the translation: he renders *yā ukhta Hārūn* as *fille d'Aaron, ô Soeur* ("daughter of Aaron, o Sister") and explains in a note that the epithet "sister" denotes the general affiliation with a tribe. It is clear from this example that most translators from South Asia were aware of the arguments of Christian missionaries and were intent on proving them wrong.

The *polemical* or offensive function of quoting the Bible goes beyond defending against Christian accusations in cases of contradiction between the Qur'an and the Bible. Rather, translators use these contradictions to demonstrate that the Qur'an is more plausible, theologically more convincing and certainly more truthful than the Bible. Some of these polemical arguments take as their starting point the Islamic prophetology, according to which biblical figures such as Aaron, Jacob and Joseph are not merely patriarchs, but prophets who were sinless and concerned with spreading the belief in the one God to all people. For example, Hamidullah points out that the Qur'anic Joseph is more than the diviner and patriarch that the Bible describes; rather, he uses his prison term to spread the message of the one God to his fellow prisoners, which is appropriate to his prophetic status.[71] Daryabadi argues that the Qur'an describes Moses and Aaron as apostles who were sent to the Egyptians to convert them to the true faith (Q 10:75) and that it would be inconceivable for a messenger such as Moses to leave the irreligion of the Egyptians untouched.[72] This view is in conflict with the Jewish belief that Moses was sent to the Israelites only; from Daryabadi's point of view, however, it points to a serious omission in the Bible that is made good by the Qur'an. Likewise, Sadr-ud-Din claims that the Qur'an, when describing Bilqīs' conversion through Solomon, corrects the negative depiction of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible according to which he was seduced by his marriage to non-Israelite women to worship idols.[73]

Another point of criticism concerns the opponents of the Qur'anic prophets who, according to some translators, should not have powers or virtues compara-

**71** Hamidullah, *Le Saint Coran*, 253–54.
**72** Daryabadi, *Tafsir-Ul-Qur'an*, 2:302.
**73** Sadr-ud-Din, *Der Koran: Arabisch-Deutsch*, 632, n. 2.

ble to those of the prophets. According to Daryabadi, the "miracles" performed by Pharaoh's magicians are described as real in the Bible but not in the Qur'an, since it would be incorrect to believe that God would have granted Moses' opponents the power to perform true miracles.[74] The first Qadian Ahmadiyya translation argues that the Bible covers up some of the weaknesses of the Israelites that are truthfully portrayed in the Qur'an.[75] We also find attacks on the "absurdity" of the Christian belief in salvation through the suffering and death of Jesus,[76] as well as claims that Muhammad and Islam, in general, were predicted in the Bible.[77]

Even the Muslim exegetical tradition is sometimes used to attack the biblical narrative. For example, there is an important trend in Muslim Qur'anic exegesis that identifies the son whom Abraham was commanded to sacrifice (Q 37:99–111) not as Isaac, as the Hebrew Bible does, but as Ishmael. Qur'an translators could easily resolve the contradiction by opting for the opposite opinion, which many, especially early, Muslim exegetes do consider possible;[78] however, the only translator who at least entertains the notion that it might have been Isaac is Abdul Hakim Khan, who states that both options have their merits and it is possible that both sons might have been offered for sacrifice on different occasions. Many other translators[79] clearly and firmly assert that it was Ishmael who was sacrificed, that the Qur'an corrected the Bible in this regard, and that even the Bible indicates the truth while simultaneously contradicting itself: according to Genesis 22:2, God asks Abraham to sacrifice "his only son," which can only refer to Ishmael because he was older than Isaac. Muhammad Ali also entertains the idea that the "sacrifice" does not refer to any intention on the part of God or Abraham to have Ishmael slaughtered, but rather to the fact that he was exiled alongside his mother, Hagar. With this theory, he addresses concerns over what might be perceived as divine cruelty and Abraham's willing acceptance of that cruelty – and, in a particularly deft polemical move, he associates that cruelty with Judaism and Christianity, to which Islam offers an alternative.

---

**74** Daryabadi, *Tafsir-Ul-Qur'an*, 3:107.

**75** Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, *Qurʾān-i Majīd*, 60.

**76** Husain, *The Holy Quran*, 56.

**77** For example, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl identifies Muḥammad as the paraclete promised in the Gospel of John; Abu'l-Fadl, *The Qur'ân*, 2: notes, 25. Badshah Husain claims that there are biblical references to the Ka'ba in Psalms and the Gospel of Matthew; Husain, *The Holy Quran*, 126–127.

**78** For an extensive overview of the development of this debate in Islamic exegesis, see Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands. The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1990).

**79** Muhammad Ali, with an added polemical jab in the revised and condensed version of his translation; Yusuf Ali; Sadr-ud-Din; Chinoy; the German Ahmadiyya; Hamidullah; and Daryabadi.

# 5 The Orientalist Legacy

Until the second half of the twentieth century, discourses on Islam and the Qur'an in Western European languages were very much dominated by Orientalist scholarship. The first Muslim translators of the Qur'an into these languages only had the work of Orientalist predecessors to build on. This trend becomes particularly obvious when looking at the first Muslim Qur'an translations into French from North Africa, where no strong indigenous field of translation existed at the time. The impact of Orientalist conventions is visible from the stylistic influence of Kazimirski's nineteenth-century translation, the widespread use of Gustav Flügel's Qur'an edition (Leipzig, 1834) and his system of verse numbering,[80] the co-authorship between Ahmed Tidjani and the Orientalist Octave Pesle, and the lack of embellishment in the title (*Le Coran*, without any attributes). This changed only when Muhammad Hamidullah's French Qur'an translation was published in 1959, which was shaped by the far more well-established South Asian tradition.

Orientalist scholarship on the Qur'an, the Arabic language and early Islamic history had a strong impact on Muslim Qur'an translations, too. Most Muslim translators of the Qur'an into Western European languages were acquainted with the works of Orientalists through their education in European or colonial institutions, and through libraries, journals, and debates with Europeans.

Generally speaking, Muslim translators had an ambivalent relationship with Orientalist research on the Qur'an. On the one hand, it often informed their work. On the other hand, it was viewed with suspicion because it was based on the assumption that the Qur'an was not a divine revelation and because it questioned many ideas that were prevalent in Muslim scholarship. Moreover, many Orientalists displayed a condescending or negative attitude towards the Qur'an. Some were Christian clergymen, such as Rodwell or the Reverend Elwood Morris Wherry, whose *Comprehensive commentary on the Quran*, published in 1896,[81] was designed "to serve the greater convenience of missionaries, especially missionaries in India, in arguing with Muslims, with a view to induce them to abandon Islam and embrace Christianity."[82] Wherry's commentary is often cited – and sometimes attacked – by Muhammad Ali. Most translators, as far as their trans-

**80** This is true for Laïmèche/Ben Daoud and Ghedira, and also for the English translation by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl. Hamidullah adds the Flügel system of verse numbering to the Kufan one.

**81** Elwood M. Wherry and George Sale, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qurán: Comprising Sale's Translation and Preliminary Discourse, with Additional Notes and Emendations Together with a Complete Index to the Text, Preliminary Discourse, and Notes*, 4 vols. (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896).

**82** "Wherry's Commentary on the Quran," *The Old Testament Student* 5, no. 1 (n.d.): 46–47.

lations allow for conclusions regarding their sources, were highly aware of Orientalist scholarship. The ambivalence of their attitude towards that scholarship is expressed in Yusuf Ali's remark on Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qorāns*, which he lists as a major reference:

> A German Essay on the Chronology of the Qurān. Its criticisms and conclusions are from a non-Muslim point of view and to us not always acceptable, though it is practically the last word of European scholarship on the subject.[83]

For some translators, contact with Orientalist scholarship opened up venues for experimentation. For example, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, whose chronological Qur'an translation was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, had studied in Berlin and was strongly inspired by Nöldeke.[84] In a similar vein, a few early Muslim translators into English experimented with translations in verse,[85] a genre that had previously been a domain of Orientalists, especially German ones.[86]

Sometimes, however, Orientalist scholarship called into question dominant opinions in the Muslim tradition, and in these cases, it could become a source of contention. For example, the Qur'an refers to Muhammad as *ar-rasūl an-nabī al-ummī* (Q 7:157–158), "the messenger, the *ummī* prophet." Muslim exegetes tended to understand the attribute *ummī* to mean "illiterate," in line with the mainstream belief that Muhammad was unable to read and write. There were alternative opinions in the exegetical tradition; some commentators understood the attribute as a reference to "the *umma* of the Arabs" or to Mecca, whose epithet was *umm al-qurā*, But even then, this was usually seen as an implicit reference to Muhammad's illiteracy, if not throughout his life, then at least at the time of the first revelation. Nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship called into question the assumption that Muhammad was illiterate and therefore had to propose alternative readings. One of those readings understood *ummī* to mean "Gentile," indicating that Muhammad was sent to a people that did not believe in a previous divine scripture, as a parallel to Saint Paul's designation as the "Apostle of the Gentiles."[87] This was not per se incompatible with traditional Muslim interpreta-

**83** ʿAli, *The Holy Qur-ān*, vol. I, xvi.

**84** Nöldeke's chronology is quite different from Rodwell's. Abu'l-Fadl follows Nöldeke's arrangement of *sūra*s, with two small changes.

**85** Bodamialisade, *Gouran Versified* and subsequent works; Rahman, *The Holy Quran*.

**86** See the informative blog post by Devin Stewart, "Rhyming Translations of Qurʾanic Sūrahs," International Qur'anic Studies Association, last modified February 23, 2015, https://iqsaweb.wordpress.com/2015/02/23/stewart-rhyming-translations/, accessed November 24, 2021.

**87** Otto Pautz, *Muhammeds Lehre von der Offenbarung* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1898), 257–264; Sebastian Günther, "Ummī," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden:

tions of the verse. The problem was rather with the assumption that Muhammad was a literate person, possibly even well-acquainted with Jewish and Christian lore, which many Orientalists used to argue that there was nothing miraculous about the Qur'an and that Muhammad could have easily invented it. This was, of course, unacceptable to Muslim exegetes, and it is this conflict that is at play in translations of the term *an-nabī al-ummī*.

Sale still subscribed to the Muslim perspective and translated *ummī* as "illiterate." Rodwell opted for the more general term "unlettered," and explained it in a note as meaning "Gentile" in the sense of being ignorant of previous scriptures; the word thus does not refer to illiteracy but rather to a lack of learning, especially with regard to religion. Palmer translated it as "illiterate" but mentioned in a note that it might instead mean "apostle of the Gentiles."

Clearly, many Muslim translators were aware of this heritage and tried to deal with it in different ways. Out of the sixteen translations that contain this segment, four unambiguously render the term *ummī* as "illiterate" (or *illettré*).[88] Pickthall is even more unequivocal; he renders it as "who can neither read nor write."

The opposite tendency is represented by Hamidullah, who translates *ummī* as "Gentile" (*le messager, le prophète gentil*), explaining in a note that it might also mean "illiterate," but emphasizing the reference to the Gentiles, to whom Muhammad belonged, and mentioning the parallel to Paul.

Five translators opt for the more ambiguous term "unlettered" (or *inculte*)[89] and thereby do not exclude any of the above-mentioned options, except for Daryabadi, who specifies in a note that the verse refers to Muhammad's illiteracy. Chinoy renders *an-nabī al-ummī* as "the Prophet of Mecca," which is in line with the *tafsīr* tradition and may or may not imply illiteracy.

The Qadian Ahmadiyya translations by Sher Ali and the German Ahmadiyya choose an idiosyncratic interpretation of *ummī* as "the Immaculate One" (or *der Makellose*), a meaning they derive from the word *umm* ("mother"), arguing that *ummī* denotes someone who is "innocent like a child at his mother's breast." However, a note from the fourth caliph of the Ahmadiyya indicates that "the unlettered one" might be a preferable translation. The five-volume English commentary on the translation vehemently refutes the arguments against Muhammad's illiteracy posed by Orientalists in general, and Wherry in particular. Evidently, the choice of

---

Koninklijke Brill NV, 2006); Sebastian Günther, "Illiteracy," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002).

**88** Abdul Hakim Khan, Mirza Hairat, Laïmèche/Ben Daoud and Ghedira.

**89** Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, Ghulam Sarwar, Yusuf Ali, Pesle/Tidjani and Daryabadi.

to translate *ummī* with a term that did not clearly point to Muhammad’s illiteracy was seen as problematic enough to warrant an extensive discussion.[90]

The same strategy of proposing an idiosyncratic translation while emphasizing Muhammad’s illiteracy can be seen in the Lahore Ahmadiyya translations. Muhammad Ali and Soedewo retain the term *ummī* in their translations, with a footnote that provides a variety of options mentioned in the *tafsīr* tradition. Sadr-ud-Din renders *ummī* as “Arab.” However, all three make sure to point out in their notes that Muhammad was illiterate. Muhammad Ali in particular goes to great lengths to refute the translation of *ummī* as “Gentile” and the idea that Muhammad might have known how to read and write. The question was important because it was a common trope in apologetics and polemics. Evidently, few translators felt that they could afford to ignore or circumvent it.

## 6 *Tafsīr* and Muslim Modernism

Muslim Qur’an translation into Western European languages was more than a strategy of responding to Christian missionaries and Orientalists and of winning Europeans over to Islam. It was rooted in the Muslim tradition of interpreting the Qur’an (*tafsīr*). All Muslim translators were aware of at least parts of the Muslim exegetical tradition.

Consider, for example, Q 9:112: “Those who repent, those who serve, those who pray, those who journey [*as-sāʾiḥūn*], those who bow, those who prostrate themselves, those who enjoin good and forbid evil, and those who keep God’s bounds – and give thou good tidings to the believers.” The participle *as-sāʾiḥūn* poses an exegetical problem here, not because the term itself – which means “wandering” or “journeying” – is obscure, but because exegetes were puzzled regarding its place in a list of religious virtues. The most common explanation by far that is provided in the *tafsīr* tradition is based on a *hadith* that glosses *as-sāʾiḥūn* as *aṣ-ṣāʾimūn*: “those who fast.”

However, the *tafsīr* tradition is pluralistic by nature; exegetes rarely offer just one solution to a given exegetical problem. Consequently, there are some alternative explanations for *as-sāʾiḥūn*, such as jihad, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the hijra, and travel in the pursuit of knowledge. The term was also explained as a metaphor for introspective contemplation of God’s creation or a type of ascetic withdrawal from society, although not all exegetes considered asceticism an ac-

**90** Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Masroor Ahmad, ed., *The Holy Quran with English Translation and Commentary* (Farnham, Surrey: Islam International Publications, 2018), 2:1045–1050.

ceptable practice in Islam. In any case, none of these opinions were remotely as widespread as the one based on the fasting *hadith*.[91]

Consequently, a fair number of translators render *as-sāʾiḥūn* as "those who fast" without further comment or explanation.[92] Daryabadi adopts this opinion as well but provides two alternatives (jihad and the pursuit of knowledge) in a note, thereby delivering a fairly accurate summary of the *tafsīr* tradition. Interestingly, the fasting opinion had also been unequivocally adopted by Sale, Rodwell and Palmer, which demonstrates that the influence of the *tafsīr* tradition was not limited to Muslim translators.

Not all translators follow that opinion, though. We find one translation as "pilgrims" that follows a minority opinion,[93] and one strange translation as "early morning risers."[94] Two French translations[95] follow the example of Kazimirski's nineteenth-century translation and understand *as-sāʾiḥūn* to mean "those who celebrate God / spread His name."[96]

And finally, a substantial proportion of translators propose a more or less literal rendering of the term as "traveling" or "wandering" for the sake or cause of God.[97] All translators belonging to that group are South Asian. Their translation is in line with a reformist trend that strongly favors a literal translation wherever possible. This trend seems to have been dominant in South Asia at least since the times of Walī Allāh ad-Dihlawī (1703–1762), the renowned author of the first popular Qur'an translation in India mentioned above. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the literal reading of the verse was adopted by modernists who wanted to promote international travel, especially to Europe, since they argued that travel provides an opportunity to learn and benefit one's home nation.[98] For example, in his Urdu *tafsīr*, the influential Indian modernist Sayyid

**91** Johanna Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunni Tafsir. Towards a Typology of Qur'anic Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010): 65–67.

**92** Abdul Hakim Khan, Muhammad Ali, Ghulam Sarwar, Soedewo, and Sadr-ud-Din.

**93** Laïmèche and Ben Daoud.

**94** Chinoy.

**95** Ghedira; Tidjani and Pesle.

**96** While Kazimirski plays an important role for these translators, especially Ghedira, there are many instances in which they do not follow his choices but instead adopt an opinion from the repertoire offered by the *tafsīr* tradition. See, for example, their treatment of the *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* in Q 3:7.

**97** Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, Mirza Hairat, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Sher Ali, Hamidullah, and the German Ahmadiyya translation.

**98** Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation," 67.

Aḥmad Khān (1817–1898) interpreted *as-sā’iḥūn* as those who are traveling for God’s cause.

This example illustrates that the influence of the Muslim exegetical tradition on Qur’an translations into Western European languages is complex. It is not always possible to tell whether there was a direct reception of the *tafsīr* literature or whether it was mediated through previous translations, including works by Orientalists. Moreover, by the early twentieth century, the Muslim exegetical tradition had been expanded by a modernist trend that was particularly prominent in British India and that considerably extended the already rather large range of options offered by the *tafsīr* tradition.

As has already been described above, modernists in the vein of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, who wanted to harmonize the teachings of the Qur’an with modern scientific thought, were particularly concerned with rationalism. The clearest example is Muhammad Ali who, among other things, reinterpreted prophetic miracles. When the Qur’an describes Moses as striking a rock with his staff, whereupon springs of water come forth, Muhammad Ali translates the relevant verse as “seek with your staff a way into the mountain” (Q 2:60).[99] Regarding the story of how Joseph’s shirt was laid on his father Jacob’s face so he could see again, meaning that he would be cured of his blindness, Muhammad Ali translates this as “he [the messenger] cast it before him, and he became certain” (Q 12:96). In both cases, these translations had no basis in the premodern exegetical tradition, nor the Bible, but they did have a precedent in the work of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān.

Given Sayyid Aḥmad Khān’s affinity with British and European-style education, it is perhaps unsurprising that his ideas came to the fore in English Qur’an translations from the subcontinent. His more unusual interpretations are most consistently found in the translations of the Lahore Ahmadiyya and of Muhammad Ali’s sympathizer, Ghulam Sarwar, and a little less frequently in those of the Qadian Ahmadiyya.

But the modernist perspective of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān also left its trace in non-Ahmadiyya works, and not only because Daryabadi and Badshah Husain go to great lengths to refute it (partly because of its association with the Ahmadiyya). Mirza Hairat mentions in a footnote that Q 2:60 could be read as “go with thy people to the hill.” Yusuf Ali tries to harmonize the traditional understanding of Q 12:96 with the modernist one, arguing that Jacob, when the messenger held the shirt “before” his face, regained both his physical and his mental vision. Mirza Abu’l-Fadl identifies the Qur’anic figure Dhū l-Qarnayn as Qin Shi Huang, the Chi-

**99** He went back on this bold interpretation in the 1928 edition of his translation with abridged notes, proposing it as an alternative to the conventional translation.

nese emperor who started building the Great Wall, which was unprecedented in the *tafsīr* tradition until Sayyid Aḥmad Khān narrated the emperor's life story in his commentary on Q 18:94–97. And Pickthall, while not uncomfortable with mythological stories or miracles *per se*, entertains the notion that the jinn might denote a strange tribe of a different religion rather than "spirits" or any other kind of supernatural being, an idea that was shared by Yusuf Ali.

None of these interpretations made their way into French Qur'an translations of the period – not even Hamidullah's, despite his South Asian origin. Hamidullah clearly did not identify with the hyper-rationalistic school of exegesis that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān represented. Therefore, while premodern works of *tafsīr* are used – directly or indirectly – across the board, in addition to them we find a strong South Asian history of modernism that is particularly prominent in Ahmadiyya Qur'an translations, and to a lesser degree in some non-Ahmadi English Qur'an translations. However, it must be noted that the South Asian field is far from uniform. For example, Badshah Husain emphatically defends the innate "spiritualistic powers" of certain humans and adduces the descendants of the prophet, the *sayyids*, who are particularly revered by the Shiʿa, as a case in point. He affirms their verifiable power to do miracles and argues that the main goal of the Qur'anic stories of prophetic miracles was to prepare people to expect similar things from the descendants of the prophet and accept the spiritual superiority of the *sayyid*s.[100]

## 7 Invisible Translators, Conflicting Traditions: The Emergence of a New Genre of Islamic Literature

As this chapter has shown, when Muslims started translating the Qur'an into the languages of Western Europe in the early twentieth century, they already had a broad and diverse exegetical repertoire at their disposal, including a radically modernist trend. Through contact – and polemics – with Christian missionaries and Orientalists, the range of choices was further expanded.

When the Qur'an mentions an unnamed servant and travel companion of Moses (Q 18:60), translators are free to identify that servant in a number of ways: as "Joshua ben Nun," as per the *tafsīr* tradition; as Jesus, building on an interpre-

**100** Husain, *The Holy Quran*, 54.

tation of the scene as a vision in a dream;[101] or as Gilgamesh's companion Enkidu, and Moses himself as Gilgamesh,[102] based on a theory advanced by the Orientalist Arent Jan Wensinck in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.[103]

There is one aspect that might be easily overlooked here: it is entirely defensible to simply not mention the name of Moses' servant, because it is not mentioned in the source text either. Indeed, this is a choice that many translators make. Even those who mention the name do so in a note that is clearly separated from the text of the translation. The only translators who routinely provide names in the text that are not explicitly mentioned in the source text are Abdul Hakim Khan and Chinoy.

Including information that the source text does not contain, without marking it as an addition to the text, might seem like a strange and possibly misguided choice for a translator to make. It might even raise the question of whether a translator who does so is a translator at all, or rather some (other) type of exegete. However, this question only makes sense if we assume that there is only one legitimate model of translation and that it is identical to the dominant model of translation in modern Europe. That model is shaped by a particular mode of biblical translation that emphasizes "faithfulness" to the source text, strives to represent the literal meaning as closely as possible while creating a "fluent" text in the target language, and thereby minimizes the visibility and authority of the translator. The translator's invisibility is, in fact, seen as an ideal in the modern European model of translation.[104] By contrast, in Muslim traditions of translation until the early twentieth century, translators assumed the role of teachers or interpreters whose task was to explain the text to an audience in a way that was comprehensible for that audience. From this perspective, the translator is not supposed to be invisible: it is unavoidable or even imperative that the translator's voice be heard.[105]

However, in nearly all of the twentieth-century Muslim translations analyzed in this chapter, the translator's voice is – at least on the surface level – either care-

**101** This is the interpretation found in the German Ahmadiyya translation, embedded in the Ahmadiyya narrative of the history of revelation according to which earlier prophets had visions of subsequent prophets and were thus able to predict their coming.

**102** This is Hamidullah's interpretation.

**103** Arent Jan Wensinck, "Al-Khaḍir," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1927).

**104** Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

**105** Johanna Pink, "The Kyai's Voice and the Arabic Qur'an: Translation, Orality, and Print in Modern Java," *Wacana* 21, no. 3 (2020): 329–59.

fully separated from the translation proper or very well hidden.[106] This raises the following question: if translators of the Qur'an into Western European languages in the first decades of the twentieth century nearly unanimously adopted the European model of translation, does it even make sense to talk of *Muslim* translations and thereby implicitly construct a dichotomy between Muslim and non-Muslim translations? At the very least, the boundaries between these categories are fluid: the French translation by Pesle and Tidjani, for example, might just as well have been excluded from this chapter because, while one of the translators is Muslim, the other is not. Furthermore, some Muslim translators had positions in European academic institutions[107] or had received their academic training there.

Despite the fluidity and sometimes arbitrary boundary of such categories, the "Muslimness" of a translation can be signified intentionally or unintentionally in many ways, for example, by highlighting the translator's Muslim name and religious credentials, the inclusion of the Arabic text of the Qur'an or the use of Arabic terminology. However, as this chapter demonstrates, in the early twentieth century, there was no clear standard of "Muslimness" yet, let alone a set of criteria that a Muslim translator would have aimed to meet in order to position his translation as a work that is acceptable for Muslim readers. Should a translation include the Arabic text or not? Should it be called *Le Coran*, as was the case with most of the French translations, or *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, as was Pickthall's (not entirely voluntary) choice, or *The Holy Qur'an*, which was by far the most common option chosen by South Asian translators? Today, many Muslims might answer such questions more confidently than they would have in 1910, but there are still large differences between Western European languages. To this day, it is far more common for a Muslim-authored Qur'an translation into French to have the prosaic title *Le Coran* than it is in English, German or Dutch.

In some cases, practices that were customary in English Qur'an translation were adopted all over the world in the course of the twentieth century, at least in languages that used the Latin script. This is true, for example, for the habit of capitalizing pronouns referring to God. By contrast, the archaic King James style that the first Muslim translators into English unanimously favored, rather than having a strong impact on other languages, started to go out of fashion from the 1970s; meanwhile, the use of "Allah" rather than an indigenous name for God is still very much dependent on language and ideological orientation, rather than the

**106** This is especially true for Mirza Hairat and Ghulam Sarwar's translations and also the first three French ones by Laïmèche and Ben Daoud, Pesle and Tidjani, and Ghedira, all of which have no annotation.

**107** For example, Ameur Ghedira who was a native Tunisian and taught Arabic at the University of Lyon.

"Muslimness" of the translator. Despite the undeniable centrality of English translators from South Asia, it is difficult to establish universal patterns.

One pattern that seems relatively consistent from the analysis in this chapter, however, is the independence of early Muslim French Qur'an translations from the practices established by English translations from British India. These different strands were first joined by Hamidullah, an Indian, as late as 1959. At that time, Algeria was still fighting for independence; the religious elites in the Maghreb countries continued writing in Arabic; and Muslims who were writing in French drew on French Orientalist traditions because that was their social and educational context. Many translators from British India were embedded in international *daʿwa* networks. This affected English Qur'an translations but also, through the involvement of the Lahore Ahmadiyya, those into German and Dutch. However, French Qur'an translators before Hamidullah were not part of these networks. and the Ahmadiyya arrived on the French stage fairly late – the Qadian Ahmadiyya in 1985, and the Lahore Ahmadiyya in 1990. The globalization of practices and standards of Qur'an translation could only be achieved through international networks or institutions. The decades covered in this chapter were only the beginning of a development that led to the emergence of an identifiable genre of modern Muslim Qur'an translations. Besides the Ahmadiyya, there were not yet any publishers with a global agenda that could be compared to, for example, the King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex in Medina.

Given the limited range of transnational Muslim networks and institutions, it may be misleading to assume that there was a common denominator to Muslim translations of the Qur'an into Western European languages. However, one potential commonality – especially when comparing my corpus to translations into languages predominantly spoken by Muslims, such as Urdu or Javanese – is the nearly wholesale adoption of the model of the invisible translator (a feature that may also easily go unnoticed). The very few translations that do not fit this model, including the inconclusive attempts at translations in verse, had no impact and gained no popularity. In that sense, the Qur'an translations studied here contributed to the formation of a genre of modern Muslim Qur'an translation that did not remain limited to Western Europe; rather, it had an impact on many other languages, from Turkish to Indonesian, and gained a global dimension from the second half of the twentieth century.

# Bibliography


Abu'l-Fadl, Mîrzâ. *The Qur'ân: Arabic Text and English Translation: Arranged Chronologically: With an Abstract*. *2 vols.* Allahabad: G. A. Asghar, 1911.

Ahmad, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Masroor, ed. *The Holy Quran with English Translation and Commentary*. Farnham, Surrey: Islam International Publications, 2018.

Ahmad, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud, ed. *Der Heilige Koran*. Zürich: Der Islam, 1954.

ʿAli, A. Yūsuf. *The Holy Qur-ān: English Translation & Commentary. Parts I–XV*. Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, 1934.

ʿAli, ʿAbdullāh Yūsuf. *The Holy Qur-ān: Arabic Text with an English Translation and Commentary. Vol. II, Containing Sūras IX to XXIX*. Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, 1937.

Yusuf Ali, Abdullah. *The Holy Qur-an: Text Translation & Commentary. Vol. III, Containing Suras XXIX to CXIV*. Lahore: Muḥammad Ashraf, n.d.

Ali, Maulana Muhammad. *Translation of the Holy Qur'an with Short Notes and Introduction*. Lahore: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam, 1951.

Ali, Maulvi Muhammad. *The Holy Qur-án: Containing the Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary.* Woking: The "Islamic Review" office, 1917.

Ali, Maulwi Moehammad. *De heilige Qoer-an*. Translated by Soedewo. Lahore: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1934.

Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, ed. *Qurʾān-i Majīd: The Holy Qur-ān with English Translation and Explanatory Notes, Etc., Part I*. Madras: Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, 1915.

Aziz, Zahid. *Centenary of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation of the Quran: Background, History and Influence on Later Translations*. Wembley: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, U.K., 2017.

Bodamialisade, Nejmi Sagib. "Al-Fatihah (First Chapter of the Qur'an)." *Islamic Review (Woking)* 51, no. July–September (1963): 13.

Bodamialisade, Nejmi Sagib. Freedom of Religion: The Gouran Versified. Chapter 2, 256. President Roosevelt Memorial Edition. Nicosia: Shakespeare School, 1949.

Bodamialisade, Nejmi Sagib. "Sure 96 (İkra): Tercüme ve Tefsir 'Oku.'" *Istiklâl*. November 11, 1949: 1.

Bodamialisade, Nejmi Sagib. "Sure 103: Tercüme ve Tefsir: Allahı Seviniz." *Istiklâl*. October 21, 1950: 1.

Bodamialisade, Nejmi Sagib. *The Gouran Versified: The First Part*. Nicosia: Shakespeare School, 1942.

Bodamialisade, Nejmi Sagib. *The Gouran Versified: Together with an Essay Entitled, "Great Britain and the Moslems," and Poems*. Nicosia: Shakespeare School, 1934.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. "Sectarian Translation of the Qur'an in Indonesia: The Case of the Ahmadiyya." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 2 (2015): 251–82.

Chinoy, Ali Muhammad Fazil. *The Glorious Koran: Translated with Commentary of Divine Lights*. Secunderabad: Hyderabad Bulletin Press, 1954. http://quran-archive.org/explorer/ali-muhammad-fazil-chinoy/1954.

Daryabadi, Maulana Abdul Majid. *Tafsir-ul-Qur'an: Translation and Commentary of the Holy Qur'an*. 4 vols. Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1991.

Dawood, Nessim J. *The Koran*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1956.

Fatma-Zaïda. *L'Alkoran! (Le livre par excellence)*. Lisbon: Imprimerie de la société typographique Franco-Portugaise, 1861.

Firestone, Reuven. *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Fremantle, Anne. *Loyal Enemy*. London: Hutchinson, 1938.

Ghedira, Ameur. *Le Coran: Nouvelle traduction par Ameur Ghedira*. Lyon: Éditions du Fleuve, 1957.

Günther, Sebastian. "Illiteracy." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 2:492–500. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002.

Günther, Sebastian. "Ummī." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 5:399–403. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2006.

Hairat, Mirza. *The Koran. Prepared by various Oriental learned scholars and edited by Mirza Hairat*. 3 vols. Delhi: I.M.H. Press, 1916.

Hamidullah, Muhammad. *Le Saint Coran*. Paris: Hadj Mohamed Noureddine Ben Mahmoud, 1963.

Husain, Badshah. *The Holy Quran: A Translation with Commentary According to Shia Traditions and Principles*. Vol. 1: Lucknow: Moayyedul-Uloom Association, 1931; vol. 2: Lucknow: Moayyedul-Uloom Association, 1936.

Ichwan, Moch Nur. "Differing Responses to an Ahmadi Translation and Exegesis: 'The Holy Qur'ân' in Egypt and Indonesia." *Archipel*, January 1 (2001): 143–61.

Jones, Justin. *Shi'a Islam in Colonial India: Religion, Community and Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Kaptein, Nico J. G. *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: A Biography of Sayyid Uthman (1822–1914)*. Brill's Southeast Asian Library, volume 4. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Kātircioglū, Maḥmūd Muḫtār. *The Wisdom of the Qur'ān: Set Forth in Selected Verses Conveying the Moral, Religious and Social Philosophy of Islam*. Translated by John Naish. London: Oxford University Press, 1937.

Katirjoglou, Mahmoud Mohtar. *La sagesse coranique: éclairée par des versets choisis reflétant la philosophie morale, religieuse et sociale de l'Islam. Suivis d'un exposé synoptique des enseignements du Coran*. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1935.

Khan, Mofakhkhar Hussain. "English Translations of the Holy Qur'an: A Bio-Bibliographic Study." *Islamic Quarterly* 30 (1986): 82–108.

Khan, Mohammad Abdul Hakim. *The Holy Qurán*. Patiala: Rajinder Press, 1905.

Kidwai, Abdur Raheem. "Abdul Majid Daryabadi's English Translation of and Commentary on the Quran (1957): An Assessment." *Aligarh Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 36–55.

Kidwai, A.R. "Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran (1930): An Assessment." In *Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World*, edited by Geoffrey P. Nash, 231–48. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Kuiper, Matthew J. *Da'wa and Other Religions: Indian Muslims and the Modern Resurgence of Global Islamic Activism*. Routledge Islamic Studies Series, v. 27. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

Kuiper, Matthew J. *Daʿwa: A Global History of Islamic Missionary Thought and Practice*. The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.

Laïmèche, Ahmed, and B. Ben Daoud. *Le Coran (Lecture Par Excellence)*. Oran: Heintz Frères, 1932.

Lawrence, Bruce B. *The Koran in English: A Biography*. Lives of Great Religious Books. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Leese, Simon. "Arabic Utterances in a Multilingual World: Shāh Walī-Allāh and Qur'anic Translatability in North India." *Translation Studies* 14, no. 2 (2021): 242–61.

Palmer, Edward. H. *The Qur'ân*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1880.

Pascha, Mahmud Mukhtar. *Die Welt des Islam im Lichte des Koran und der Hadith*. Deutsche Orient-Bücherei 1. Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1915.

Pautz, Otto. *Muhammeds Lehre von der Offenbarung*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1898.

Pearson, Harlan Otto. "Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-Century India: The Tarīqah-i Muhammadīya." Duke University, 1979.

Pesle, Octave, and Ahmed Tidjani. *Le Coran*. 3rd ed. Paris: Éditions Larose, 1954.

Pickthall, Marmaduke. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. 1st ed. London: Allen & Unwin, 1930.
Pickthall, Marmaduke. "The Kyai's Voice and the Arabic Qur'an: Translation, Orality, and Print in Modern Java." *Wacana* 21, no. 3 (2020): 329–59.
Pickthall, Marmaduke. "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunni Tafsir. Towards a Typology of Qur'anic Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010): 56–82.
Proudfoot, Ian. "Early Muslim Printing in Southeast Asia." *Libri* 45 (1995): 216–23.
Quilliam, William. H. *The Faith of Islam. An Explanatory Sketch of the Principal Fundamental Tenets of the Moslem Religion*. Liverpool: Willmer Brothers, 1892.
Rahman, M. A. *The Holy Quran: An English Version of the Holy Quran in Verse, Part I*. Adoni: Roujees, 1926.
Rodwell, John M. *The Koran*. London: Dent, 1909.
Sadr-ud-Drin, Maulana. *Der Koran: Arabisch-Deutsch*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Verlag der moslemischen Revue, 1964.
Sale, George. *The Koran: Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed*. London: William Tegg, 1850.
Saleh, Walid A. "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqāʿī and His Defense of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qurʾān." *Speculum* 83, no. 3 (2008): 629–54.
Sarwar, Ghulam. *Translation of the Holy Qur-ân*. Singapore: self-published, 1929.
Sher ʿAlī, Maulawī. *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text and English Translation*. Tilford, Surrey: Islam International Publications, 2004.
Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2008.
Wensinck, Arent Jan. "Al-Khaḍir." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2:861. Leiden: Brill, 1927.
Wherry, Elwood M., and George Sale. *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qurán: Comprising Sale's Translation and Preliminary Discourse, with Additional Notes and Emendations Together with a Complete Index to the Text, Preliminary Discourse, and Notes*. *4 vols*. London: Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896.
"Wherry's Commentary on the Quran." *The Old Testament Student* 5, no. 1 (n.d.): 46–47.
Wilson, M. Brett. Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

# List of Figures and Tables

**Figure 1** Toledo, Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha, Colección Borbón-Lorenzana, MS 235 (The Qur'an of Toledo), folios 81v-82r. Courtesy of the Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha —— **39**
**Figure 2** Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, MS 11/10619, folio 2v. Qur'an copied by Muḥammad Ballester in Aranda de Moncayo in 1597. Courtesy of the Real Academia de la Historia —— **41**
**Figure 3** BCLM MS T235, fol 3v, detail. Courtesy of the Biblioteca de Castilla La-Mancha —— **59**
**Figure 4** BTNT MS RESC/25, fol. 2r, detail. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás —— **60**
**Figure 5** BTNT MS RESC/58, fol. 4v, detail. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás —— **62**
**Figure 6** BNF MS arabe 447, fol. 2r, detail. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France —— **63**
**Figure 7** MJC MS 1235, fol. 35r, detail. Courtesy of the Médiathèque Jacques Chirac —— **67**
**Figure 8** BSB MS cod. arab.1, fol.2v. Courtesy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek —— **71**
**Figure 9** An excerpt from the *juz's* of Mehmed Pasha Sokolović. Courtesy of Gazi Husrev-beg Library —— **109**
**Figure 10** The Mushaf of Fadil Pasha Šerifović. Courtesy of Gazi Husrev-beg Library —— **110**
**Figure 11** An excerpt from the Qur'an of the Ferhad Pasha mosque. Courtesy of Gazi Husrev-beg Library —— **111**
**Figure 12** A Qur'an copy, MS f.14/2822. Courtesy of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography —— **127**
**Figure 13** A Qur'an copy, MS 288. Courtesy of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography —— **128**
**Figure 14** The colophon of a Qur'an from Magomed A. Abakarov's private collection —— **130**
**Figure 15** The front part (*ʿunwān*) of a Qur'an copy from Magomed A. Abakarov's private collection —— **131**
**Figure 16** First *sūra* of the Qur'an from a bilingual (Arabic-Turkic) collection of prayers by Polish-Lithuanian Tatars, 19th century. From the author's private collection —— **147**
**Figure 17** Ismail's Gasprinskii's printed edition of the Qur'an. From the author's private collection —— **152**
**Figure 18** Carrying out the printed version of the ʿUthmān copy of the Qur'an at the celebration of ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā. The Leningrad mosque, 1956 —— **178**
**Figure 19** A recitation gathering (*khätm mäjlese*) at the Marjani mosque in Kazan, September 1967 —— **179**
**Figure 20** Anjuman-i Taraqqi Islam, ed., *Qurʾān-i Majīd*, 39 —— **224**
**Figure 21** Abu'l-Fadl, *The Qur'ân*, 351 —— **225**

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-011

**Table 1** Translation of Q 2:14–15 into Uzbek (1990) and Crimean Tatar (1998) — **158**
**Table 2** Translation of Q 68:1–3 into Turkish (1993) and Crimean Tatar (1998) — **160**
**Table 3** Two translations of Q 2:11 into Crimean Tatar — **160**
**Table 4** Early Eastern Turkic translations of the Qur'an — **197**
**Table 5** Commented translations — **200**

# Notes on Contributors

**Alfrid Bustanov** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Amsterdam and PI of the ERC Starting Grant “The Muslim Individual in Imperial and Soviet Russia”. He has published widely on the history of Islam in Russia. His current book project examines the history of Muslim book collections in Soviet Russia.

**Ilona Chmilevskaia** is an MA student and a research assistant at The Higher School of Economics in Moscow. She also works as a researcher at the Centre of Islamic Manuscripts at The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. She specializes in Islamic written culture in Russia, Islamic law, and cults of saints in the daily religious practices of Muslims.

**Enes Karić** is a Professor of Qur’anic Studies at the Faculty of Islamic Studies of the University of Sarajevo. He served as Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport for the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1994 and 1996. His main research interests include history of interpretation of the Qur’an, modern trends in Islamic thought, and Islamic heritage in the world literature. His numerous publications include a two-volume translation of the Qur’an into Bosnian (1995).

**Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska** is a University Professor and the director of the Centre for Kitab Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Her academic interests lie in the history of the Polish language, relations between Slavic and Islamic languages, and the translation of Islamic and Christian religious terminology into Polish. She has published several monographs and edited volumes and supervised the publication of Qur’an translations from the sixteenth (The Tefsir) and nineteenth (The Vilna Philomaths) centuries into Polish.

**Czesław Łapicz** is a Polish philologist, Slavic languages and Kitab Studies specialist. Łapicz holds the position of University Professor Emeritus at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. His scientific interests focus on Slavonic (mainly Polish and Belarusian) languages and dialects. He initiated Kitab Studies in Poland to research manuscripts of Tatars-Muslims of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

**Johanna Pink** is a Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her main fields of interest are the transregional history of *tafsīr* in the modern period and Qurʾan translations, with a particular focus on transregional dynamics. She is the Principal Investigator of the research project “GloQur – The Global Qur’an” and general editor of the Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān Online. Her most recent monograph is *Muslim Qur’ānic Interpretation Today* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2019).

**Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias** is a Romance philologist and Arabist. He is a researcher at ILC-CCHS-CSIC (Madrid) in the ERC-Synergy project “The European Qur’an” and a PhD candidate at the University of Oviedo and the University of Amsterdam, working on Qur’an manuscripts among Mudéjares and Moriscos. His recent publications deal with textual typologies of Qur’anic manuscripts produced by Muslim Hispanic minorities; together with Pablo Roza Candás, he worked on Morisco methods of Qur’an memorisation.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-012

**Maxime Sellin** is currently a PhD candidate at Nantes Université and a researcher in the ERC-Synergy project “The European Qur’an”. His primary research interest lies in intercultural encounters around the Mediterranean. His doctoral project focuses on the transmission of ideas from Mudejars and Moriscos to Iberian polemicists and humanists.

**Gulnaz Sibgatullina** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Amsterdam. Her research focuses on Islam in Europe, contemporary Islamic thought, state-church relations, and minority issues in Russia. Her recent monograph is *Languages of Islam and Christianity in Post-Soviet Russia* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2020).

**Shamil Shikhaliev** (Ph.D. in History) is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Amsterdam. He specializes in Sufism, Islamic law, networks of Islamic education and Islamic written culture in Russia. He is a co-author of *The History of the Life and Work of Ali Kayayev and Sayfulla-kadi Bashlarov: Documents and Materials* (with Amir R. Navruzov, in Russian), *Fiqh and Muslim Customary Law in Russian Daghestan: Sources and Studies* (with Vladimir O. Bobrovnikov and Magomed G. Shekhmagomedov, in Russian) and author of multiple articles.

**Mykhaylo Yakubovych** is a postdoctoral fellow affiliated with the ERC-funded “The Global Qur’an” project at the Orientalisches Seminar, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. He is the author of the first complete translation of the Qur’an into Ukrainian, among other books and academic articles. His main academic interests cover modern Qur’anic Studies and Islamic intellectual history in Central-Eastern Europe.

**Gerard Wiegers** is full Professor of History of Religions and the Comparative Study of Religion in the Department of History at the University of Amsterdam. His research concentrates on the relations between Islam and other religions in Europe and the Muslim West and the history of Muslim and Jewish minorities. He is a senior researcher in the ERC Synergy Project “the European Qur’an (EuQu).” Among his recent publications is Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A.Wiegers (eds), *The Iberian Qur’an. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2022). He has recently finished, with the late Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, a critical edition and translation of the Lead Books and Parchment of the Sacromonte (Granada) (Brill, in press).

# Index


Abbasid Empire 118, 122
Abdul Hakim Khan, Mohammad 226, 229, 240, 243, 246, 248, 251
Abdülhamid II 227
Ablaev, Emirali 159
Abu'l-Fadl, Mirza 219–221, 226, 232, 240, 243–246, 248–249
Açahalabi. *See* al-Thaʿalabī
Agra 223
Aḥmad Khān, Sayyid 249–250
Ahmadiyya 229–232, 235, 237–241, 243, 246, 248–249, 251, 253
– Lahore 223, 229–231, 235, 239, 247, 249, 253
– Qadian 226, 230–231, 235, 240, 243, 246, 249, 253
Aiton 28, 30
*ʿajam*. *See aljamiado*
al-Asad, Yuhanna 33, 48
al-Ayıntābī 153
al-Ayzar, ʿAlī. *See* Teruel, Juan Gabriel de
Albarracín 33
alcalde
– mayor 28–29
*aljamiado* 28, 37–38, 40, 42–43, 45, 56, 58–59, 78, 121
Allahabad 219
Almeria 35
Almohads 32
Amīrkhān, Husain 211
Amsterdam 168
*anʿām* 6, 102
Andrés, Juan 33–34, 48
Ankara 159, 161
Aragon, Kingdom of 26, 33–34, 36–37, 45, 56–57, 65, 69–70
Arévalo 29
Arianism 84
Astrakhan Khanate 77
ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, Abū Muḥammad 62
ʿAttār, Farīd al-Dīn 171
Aydabulov, ʿAbd al-Rahīm 181
Ayıntābī, Mehmed Efendi 106, 204
Aytikin, Niyāz 181
Azerbaijan 118, 120
Azerbaijani (language) 156, 211

al-Baghawī, Abū Muḥammad 136, 148, 150
Bajezidagić, Derviš Pasha 107
Bakhchysarai 144, 146, 154
Baku 120, 211
Bākūwī, Mīr Muḥammad Karīm 156
Balıkesir 149
Balıkesrī, Devletoğlu Yūsuf 202
Ballester, Muḥammad 40, 48
Banja Luka 106–107, 110
*baraka* 16, 102, 131
Barcelona 34, 65
al-Bārūdī, ʿĀlimjān 182
*basmala* 55, 58–59, 64, 230
al-Baṣrī, Ibn al-Jallāb 38
al-Bayḍāwī, Al-Qāḍī Nāṣir al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī 135, 148–149, 153, 203–204
Bejarano, Diego. *See* al-Ḥajarī al-Andalusī, Aḥmad b. Qāsim
Bellús
– Qur'an of 65, 72
Berlin 245
Bibliander, Theodor 4, 64
Bīgī, Mūsā 14, 156, 213
Bigrivi, Mehmet 150
Bilgrami, Syed Hussain 233
Bitolj 107
Bombay 155, 226
al-Bosnawī, Ḥusayn 111
Bosnia and Herzegovina 8, 18, 102–114, 145
Bošnjak, Katibi Derviš Mustafa Efendi 107
Buczacki, Jan 89
Budny, Simon 84–85
Bukhara 199, 209
Bulghar 173–175
al-Bulghārī, Tāj al-Dīn 173–177
al-Burūsawī, Ismāʾīl Ḥaqqī 150

Cairo 154–155, 181–182, 228–229
Castile, Kingdom of 24–26, 28, 31, 45, 48, 56
Castillo, Alonso del 36, 49


https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140797-013

Castrodardo, Giovani Battista 64
Çelebī, Saʿdī 149
Central Asia 8, 15, 79, 126, 136–137, 143–144, 154, 157, 162, 166, 174, 194–196, 199, 202, 204–205, 208–210
Cerrahoğlu, İsmail 159
*chamail* 77–78, 80, 87, 92
Chambrova 90
Charles V 35–36
Chinoy, Ali Muhammad 233, 236, 240, 243, 246, 248, 251
Chlewiński, Dionizy 88, 90
al-Chuqrī, ʿĀlī 175
Cleynaerts, Nicholas 7, 35–36
Cluny 4, 32
Columbus, Christopher 35
Comestor, Petrus 81–82
Cossacks
– Terek 118
Crimean Khanate 120, 143, 145–146, 161
Çufut Qale 152

Dagestan 10, 18, 109, 117–139
al-Dānī, Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān 27
Daoud, Ben 226, 237–238, 244, 246, 248, 252
al-Dariri, Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad 136
Daroca 37
Daryabadi, Abdul Majid 226, 231, 233–234, 239–243, 246, 248–249
*daʿwa* 229, 231, 253
Delhi 223
Derbent 119–120
ad-Dihlawī, Shāh Walī Allāh 223, 248
Dizen, Said 159–161
Domeyko, Ignacy 88, 90–91
*duʿāʾ* 146, 161
Dutch East Indies 231

Egypt 46, 108, 122, 143, 148
Erpenius, Thomas 49

*faqīh* 28–34, 69–70
Fazıl, Riza 157–160
Ferrūkh, Ismāʿīl Efendi 153, 210
Fez 7, 25, 35
Figuerola, Juan Martí de 33, 69
al-Fīrūzābādī, Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb 136
*fiqh* 62, 145, 148–149, 204
Flügel, Gustav 244
Foča 104, 106

Gabriel. *See* Jibrīl
Gabriel, Juan 33, 48
Garcia, Martin 33–34, 65
Gasprinskii, Ismail 144, 152–156, 162
Gazikumukh Khanate 127
Georgia 118, 212
al-Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid 134, 136, 171
Ghedira, Ameur 244, 246, 248, 252
Ghulam Ahmad, Mirza 229
al-Ghumūqī, ʿAlī 137
Gibril. *See* Jibrīl
Glazemaker, Jan Hendrik 5
Golden Horde 77–78, 119, 143–145, 161, 196, 205
Goldschmidt, Lazarus 237
Golius, Jacobus 49
Gottwald, Joseph 174
Granada 23, 26, 28, 33–36, 45–47, 49
Grand Duchy of Lithuania GDL. *See* Lithuania
Gülşenî, Mahfûz bin-Mehmed 102

*hadith* 145, 180, 183, 193, 228, 248
Hadžinesimović, Ahmed 107
al-Ḥajarī al-Andalusī, Aḥmad b. Qāsim 38, 45–49
al-Ḥanafī, Muhammad b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Qujuwi 136
Hamidullah, Muhammad 226, 235, 240–244, 246, 248, 250–251, 253
*hanikah* 102, 104, 106
*ḥāshiya* 136, 148–149, 161, 203
Henning, Max 237
Hubert, Etienne 49
*ḥurūf muqaṭṭaʿāt* 17, 55–61, 63–67, 69, 72–73
Husain, Badshah 231, 233–235, 240, 243, 249–250
Hyderabad 223, 233

Ibn Abī Zarʿ 24–25
Ibn al-Bazzāz, Ḥāfiz al-Dīn 148
Ibn ʿAṭiyya 25, 34, 38, 62, 70, 148
Ibrāhīm, Prophet 150
Iça Gidelli 28–32, 42–44, 48
Iça of Segovia. *See* Iça Gidelli
*ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā* 132

*ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* 132
*iʿjāz* 228
*ijāza* 148, 182
Īlkhānid state 196
Imānqulī, Muḥammad-Ṣādiq 211
India 155, 199, 222–223, 226, 228–230, 232, 234, 238, 244, 248, 253
Isaev, ʿAbd al-Bārī 178, 182
Isquierdo, Ybrahim 31, 33, 70
al-Isfarāʾinī, ʿIṣṣām al-Dīn 149
Istanbul 38, 46, 107–108, 146, 151–152, 155, 197, 209, 214, 228, 237
Istärlibash 180–181
ʿIyāḍ al-Qāḍī 34, 45–46

Jajce 105
Jibrīl 43, 60–61, 69–71
Juan Gabriel. *See* Teruel, Juan Gabriel de
*juzʾ* 15, 104–105, 108, 110, 132, 134, 151, 179

Kabbalah 72
Kadırgalı, Mustafa Nazif Efendi 155
Kadizadelis 150
al-Kafawī, Abū l-Baqāʾ 152
al-Kafawī, Aḥmad 149, 161
Kaiaev, Ali. *See* al-Ghumūqī, ʿAlī
*kalām* 148–149, 173, 211
Kamālī, Ḍiyāʾ 213
Karaites 151
Kāshifī, Ḥusayn 153, 200, 210–211
Kazan 9, 132, 151, 155–156, 166, 169, 175, 179, 209, 211
– *basmasī* 132, 151, 166
– Khanate 77
Kazim Kadri, Huseyin 214
Kazimirski de Biberstein, Albert 90, 244, 248
al-Kawwāshī, Muwaffaq al-Dīn 145
Ketton, Robert of 4–5, 32, 42, 64, 67–68
al-Khaffaji al-Miṣrī, Aḥmad b. Muhammad 136
al-Khalkhālī, Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan 136
Khalwatiyya 150
Kharūf al-Tūnisī 7, 35–36
Kidwai, Abdur Raheem 234
*kitāb* 77–78, 80, 87, 92
Krachkovskii, Ignatii 158–159
Krasicki, Ignacy 85
al-Kubrā, Najm al-Dīn 145
Kufic (script) 123–124, 126
Kumukh 119, 127–128
Kurtnezir, Zkir 159–161

Laïmèche, Ahmed 226, 237–238, 244, 246, 248, 252
Lavić, Osman 103
Leiden 36, 46
Leningrad 178–179
Lepanto 24, 108
Leuven 35
Lithuania
–Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) 1, 9, 14, 77, 79, 83, 85, 88, 94, 205–206
Ljubinje 108
London 231
Lucknow-Cawnpore 223, 235
Lyra, Nicholas of 82

*madhhab* 15
– Ḥanafī 15, 118
– Maliki 15, 29, 34
– Shafiʿi 15, 118–119
Madras 230
*madrasa* 25, 103–105, 107, 121, 125, 130, 133–135, 137, 169, 179, 202–204, 209, 214
– Nazimiyya 235
– Zincirilī 144, 149
Madrid 12, 40
Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Mirzā Bashīr-ud-dīn 230
Mahmud Mukhtar Pasha (Katırcıoğlu) 228
Mahomet. *See* Muhammad, Prophet
al-Makkī al-Muhājir al-Dāgistānī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad 109
*maktab* 105, 121, 134
Malaga 35
Mamluk Sultanate 108, 143, 145
Mansur, Alouddin 157–158
al-Maqbalī, Ṣāliḥ b. Mahdī 136
al-Marginānī, Burhān al-Dīn 148
Márquez, Juan 33
Marracci, Ludovico 65–67, 73
Marrakesh 46
Mavraev, Muhammad Mīrzā 124
*mawlid al-nabī* 30, 132
Mecca 26, 87, 133, 167, 180, 245–247
Medina 107, 148, 167, 177, 180, 182, 253

Mendoza, Luis Hurtado de 35
Merinid Sultanate 25
Mickiewicz, Adam 91
Mirza Hairat 226, 232, 246, 248–249, 252
Mongol Empire 195
Moriscos 5, 23, 27, 31, 35–38, 40, 43–48, 55–56, 58, 60–61, 63, 66, 70, 72–73
Mostar 105–107
Mudejars 5, 23, 25–28, 33–35, 37–38, 43–44, 47–48, 60, 63, 69, 73
Muhammad Ali, Moulana 226, 229–232, 236, 239–241 ,243–244, 247, 249
Muhammad, Prophet 34, 38, 46, 55, 58, 60–61, 68–71 ,102, 132, 138, 220, 241, 243 ,245–247
Muir, William 241
al-Mujallad, Nabī b. Aḥmad 145
Murād II 202
al-Mūsili, Aḥmad b. Yūsuf 136
*muṣḥaf* 5, 23, 25, 48, 102–103, 105–106, 108–114, 155, 223, 226–227, 230

Nader Shah 127
Nadwī, Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī 234
Naqshbandiyya 121, 132–133
al-Nasafī, Abu l-Barakāt 155
al-Nasafī, al-Najm al-Dīn 148
al-Nasafī, ʿAbdullāh b. Aḥmad 136
Naskh 123–124, 146, 155, 169, 172
Nogais 118–119
Novahrudak 88, 91
Novi Pazar 107
Nöldeke, Theodor 232, 245

Orenburg 9
Ostroh 146
Ottoman Empire 10, 18, 23, 62, 79, 101, 103–105, 107–108, 113–114, 118–119, 123, 126, 144, 146, 148, 150–151, 154–155, 171, 174, 201, 203, 205–206, 208–210, 212–214, 222, 227
Özek, Ali 157

Palestine 143
Palmer, Edward Henry 220, 237–239, 246, 248
Paris 46
Pastrana 45
Paṭōn, ʿOmar 28
Pel'dinka 170
Persia 119, 127, 144
Pesle, Octave 244, 246, 248, 252
Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny 32
Piccolomini, Aeneas Silvius 13
Pickthall, Marmaduke 229, 232–234, 236, 241, 246, 248, 250, 252
Pimentel, Leonor de 29
Počitelj 106
Poland 77, 79, 94
– Kingdom of 88
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 146
Porokhova, Valeriia 159
Potocki, Bernard 89
Poznań 89
Presles, Raoul de 82
Prusac 107
Pussman, Krzysztof 85

*qāḍī* 107, 126, 148, 211
Qadian 229
al-Qādirī, ʿAbd al-Majīd 177, 180–182
Qadïrov, ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Shaykh al-Islām 181
Qādīzāde, Mehmet 150
Qarakhānid Turks 195
al-Qāsim, Muḥammad 149
al-Qayrawānī, Ibn Abī Zayd 34
al-Qirīmī, Aḥmad 148–149
al-Qirīmī, Ibrāhīm 149
al-Qirīmī, Quṭb al-Dīn 150
al-Qirīmī, Rukn al-Dīn bin ʿAbd al-Mū'min 148
al-Qirīmī, Sirāj al-Dīn 148
Quilliam, Abdullah 227
al-Qūrṣāwī, Abū Nasr 138, 173–174, 211
al-Qushayrī, Abū l-Qāsim 148

Rabaḍān, Muḥammad 62
Rajabalee, Zainul Abedin 221
Ramadan 27, 105, 132, 179–180
al-Ramzī, Muḥammad Murād 121
*rasūl* 82, 239, 245
al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn 136
Riḍā, Muhammad Rashīd 213–214
Rieuwertsz, Jan 5
Rodwell, John Medows 220, 237–239, 241, 244–246, 248
Rome 33, 48, 65
Rubio, Muhammad 38, 40, 45

Rūm Seljuk Empire 119, 145, 201
Rūmī, Jalal ad-Din 193
Russia
– Empire 8–9, 14, 117, 120, 123, 144, 153–156, 171, 203, 209–210
– Soviet 117, 167, 171, 183
Ryer, André Du 5

Sadr-ud-Din, Maulana 223, 231, 239–240, 242–243, 247–248
al-Ṣadīq, Abu Bakr 55
Safavid Empire 118, 120
al-Ṣaffār, Mughīth ibn Aḥmad 26
Sagib Bodamialisade, Nejmi 223
Saint Petersburg 151, 154
Salamanca 36
Salamanca, Juan López de 29
Sale, George 220, 227, 237–239, 244, 246, 248
Salonica 31, 57
Sāmānid dynasty 195
Samarqand 199, 202
al-Samarqandī, Abū al-Layth 40, 202
Sancho IV 24
Saracens 30
Sarajevo 104, 106–107, 109, 111–113
Sarajlija, Hajji Muhamed Efendi 107
Sarajlija, Muhammed Mejli Gurani 107
Sarajlija, Muhammed Nerkesi 107
Sardar 238
Ṣarı Ṣalṭūq 145
Sarwar, Ghulam 231–232, 236, 239, 246, 248–249, 252
Sassanian Empire 118–119
Savary, Claude-Étienne 90, 92–93
Savoy, Eugene of 107
Segorbe 70
Segovia 28–29, 38
Segovia, John of 28, 30–32, 42–43, 56
Šehović, Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi 107
Šerifović, Muhamed Fadil Pasha 109
Seville 33, 35
Shādhiliyya 28, 132
al-Shāhmirzāwī, Abū Bakr 182
Shakwī, Muḥammad Ḥasan Mawlāzāde 211
Shaykh-Zāde, Muḥī l-Dīn 149
Shaykhzāde, Mustafa 149
Sher Ali, Maulawi 246, 248
Shiʿa 118, 120, 232–233, 235, 250
Shirvan 120
al-Shiranshī, Muḥammad 149
Shukrī, Muhammad 182
Skarga, Piotr 83
Sobolewski, Józef 88–89
Soedewo 239, 247–248
Sokolovići 108–109
Solovki 182
Soviet Union 8, 130, 167. *See* also Russia, Soviet
Spain, Kingdom of 24–27, 30, 35–38, 40, 42, 44–49, 69, 219
Stalin, Joseph 144, 179
Sufism 78, 102, 104, 106, 119, 132, 138, 143, 145, 148–149, 151, 153, 204
Surkhay Khan 127
al-Suyuṭi, Jalāl al-Dīn 56
Syria 122, 143

al-Tabarī, Abū Jaʿfar 171
al-Taftāzāni, Saʿd al-Dīn 155
*tafsir* 16, 24, 25, 30, 34, 43, 47, 56, 58, 61, 65, 66, 72, 73, 77, 84, 134–138, 143–153, 159, 169-183, 198–215, 234, 246–253
*tajwīd* 15, 77–78, 110, 112, 124, 134, 146, 156, 168–169
*tarjama* 143, 175, 207, 212
Tashkent 182
Tatars 9, 13, 77–79, 84–86, 88, 91–94, 146, 166, 168–171, 174, 177, 181–183, 203–205, 209, 213
– Crimean 9–10, 15, 144, 146, 150–154, 156–159, 162
– Polish-Lithuanian 10, 15, 78–80, 84–85, 87–88, 90–91, 93, 162, 205–206
– Volga 10, 15, 117, 159, 204–205
al-Taysugānī, Muhammad Tāhir 176
Tbilisi 212
*tekke* 102, 104–106, 112–113
*terceme*. *See tarjama*
Teruel 33, 69
Teruel, Juan Gabriel de 65, 69–71, 73
Tevfik, Suleyman 214
al-Thamʿānī, Nuʿmān b. Thābit 211
al-Thaʿlabī, Abu Isḥaq 25, 34, 65–68
Thessaloniki 57, 62, 70
Thuluth 110, 123–124

Tidjani, Ahmed 244, 246, 248, 252
Tiflis. *See* Tblisi
Tīmūrid dynasty 199, 208
Toledo 26, 37, 40, 48, 57–58
Toledo, Mark of 32, 64
Travnik 106
Tsakhur 133
Tunis 28, 35–36, 38, 40, 45–47

Ubeydullah, Mehmed 214
*ʿulamāʾ* 104, 106, 121, 174, 181, 198, 210, 213, 228, 229, 234
Umayyad Empire 62, 118
*umma* 150, 214, 245
al-ʿUradī, Ibrāhīm 129
Uzbekistan 157, 162, 195

Valencia, Kingdom of 33–34, 69
Villafeliche 37–38, 45
Vilnius 80, 88, 90–91, 93
Višegrad 108
Viterbo, Egidio da 33, 65, 69, 71
Vitoria, Francisco de 36
Volga-Urals 9, 154, 168, 170, 172–173, 176

*waqf* 113, 125–126, 129–131, 135, 146
Warsaw 89
Wensinck, Arent Jan 251
Wherry, Elwood Morris 244, 246
Widmanstetter, Johann Albrecht 65, 70–72
Wujek, Jakub 81

Yalchigul, Tājaddin 211
Yusuf Ali, Abdullah 231, 233–236, 240–243, 245–246, 248–250

Žabice 108
Zamanīn, Muḥammad Ibn Abī 34, 43, 61–62, 65–66
al-Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar 34, 70, 105, 136, 148, 153, 203
Zaragoza 37