Ulisse Cecini

Introduction

A prominent feature by which the qur'anic revelation defines itself is its clarity. This characteristic is exemplified, for instance, at the outset of the *Sūrat Yūsuf* (Q. 12:1–2), where the text underscores the lucidity of its message: "These are the signs –or verses– (*āyāt*) of the Clear Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*). Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic recitation –or an Arabic Qur'an– (*qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan*) so that –or: maybe so– (*laʿalla*) you will understand (*taʿqilūn*[*a*])."[1] Despite the Qur'an's self-ascribed clarity, the endeavor to render its verses in English—and specifically in a clear, plain, and accessible form of English, in keeping with the Qur'an's own claims[2]—has encountered notable challenges. These difficulties are evident in the need to offer, at times between dashes, alternate lexical solutions to convey the meanings of specific terms. Words that appear conceptually straightforward and form the semantic core of the Qur'an—such as *āyāt* and *qurʾān*—resist being "grasped," "hobbled" or "encompassed" by the intellect, i.e. "understood." These, in fact, are the meanings conveyed by the verb *ʿaqala*, which appears at the close of Q. 12:2 in the form *taʿqilūn(a)* ("you will *understand*")[3].

Rather than lending itself to straightforward translation, such terms require comprehensive exegetical engagement if one is to uncover the manifold layers of meaning and semantic richness they encompass. Moreover, the qur'anic text contains rare words or *hapax legomena*, elusive expressions whose contextual refer-

1 Arabic text of Q. 12:1–2: "Alif–lām–rāʾ. Tilka āyātu l-kitābi l-mubīn. (1) Innā anzalnā–hu qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan laʿalla-kum taʿqilūn(a). (2)"

2 Cfr. also Q. 39:28 (*sūrat az-zumar*, "The Throngs"): "qurʾānan ʿarabiyyan ghayra dhī ʿiwajin laʿalla-hum yattaqūn(a)." (An Arabic recitation –or Qur'an– which does not possess any crookedness, so that –or: maybe so– they will fear God.)

3 The first meaning of the verb *ʿaqala* according to Wehr's dictionary is "to hobble with the *ʿiqāl* [i.e. a cord used for hobbling the feet of a camel]; to confine, to detain," and only secondarily "to be endowed with (the faculty of) reason; to realize, comprehend, understand"). Hans Wehr. *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J Milton Cowan, 3rd edition (Ithaca: Spoken Language Services, 1976), *s.v.*

Note: Ulisse Cecini is Ramón y Cajal Researcher at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and his research activity, of which this publication is a result, is currently funded by the Spanish State Research Agency [*Agencia Estatal de Investigación*] (RYC2020-029328-I/ AEI / 10.13039/501100011033). Prior to this affiliation, the research leading to these results was supported by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant agreement no. 810141, project EuQu: "The European Qu'ran. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850."

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111444352-001

ents remain opaque, and terms whose Arabic root etymology appears incongruent with their surrounding semantic environment, or insufficient to explain it.[4]

Additional complexity arises from the very nature of the Qur'an as a corpus of orally delivered revelations. This is compounded by the historical processes of its canonization and redaction, and by the orthographic characteristics of the Arabic script. Notably, the script omits short vowels—and sometimes, in earlier stages, long vowels as well, which are typically indicated by consonants functioning as *matres lectionis*.[5] Moreover, certain consonants are distinguished from one another only by diacritical marks, which were absent in the earliest manuscripts. These factors allowed for multiple interpretations of the *rasm* (lit. "drawing"), the "skeletal" consonantal text, thereby adding further layers of ambiguity and interpretive possibility to the qur'anic text.[6]

Thus, from the earliest dissemination of the qur'anic message, there emerged a recognized need for a range of interpretive tools to facilitate its comprehensive understanding by recipients. This necessity gave rise to the disciplines collectively

4 Examples of rare and difficult words appearing only once are the word *wazara* in Q. 75:11 (in Arberry's translation: refuge), and *aṣ-ṣamad* in Q. 112:2 (Arberry: the Everlasting Refuge). Unspecified expressions lacking context, also appearing once, are e.g. *al-nāziʿāt* in Q. 79:1 (Arberry: those that pluck out), and *al-ʿādiyāt* in Q. 100:1 (Arberry: the chargers). Among the words whose Arabic root has been considered insufficient in explaining the full extent of their meaning, also considering their surrounding context, one may consider *al-ḥawāriyyūna* (Q. 3:51, 3:52; 5:111; 5:112; 61:14, the word used to indicate Jesus' Apostles). It is commonly connected by commentators to the verbs *ḥawara*, 'to return', or *ḥawira*, 'to be glistening white', while likely being a word connected to Ethiopic *ḥawāryā*, 'messenger.' Another example is *al-furqān*, when applied to a revealed text (Q. 2:53, 2:185; 3:4; 21:48; 25:1). For this word, one should consider adding to the basic meaning of the root *f-r-q*, 'to divide, to partition, to distinguish' (hence *al-furqān* as 'distinction between Good and Evil or between Truth and Falsehood'), a possible influence of Syriac *purqanā*, 'salvation, redemption'. All Arberry's translations are quoted from A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1955). For the explanation of *al-ḥawāriyyūna* see Arne A. Ambros with Stephan Procházka, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 308, and Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary in the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 115–6. For *al-furqān*, see Ambros with Procházka, *A Concise Dictionary*, 212 and Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary*, 225–9. On *wazar*, see Hartmut Bobzin, *Der Koran. Eine Einführung* (München: C. H. Beck, 2004), 111.

5 E.g. the aforementioned word *al-ʿādiyāt* in Q. 100:1 does not have, in its consonantic *ductus* in the qur'anic text, the *alifs* which mark the long "a"s as *matres lectiones*, thus appearing as العديت (*ʾl-ʿdyt*), instead of العاديات (*ʾl-ʿādyāt*). The presence of the long vowel is signaled by a recitation sign in the form of a small vertical stroke usually called a "dagger alif" (Ar. *al-alif al-khanjariyya*), as follows: العٰديٰت.

6 Given the inherent complexity of the aforementioned issues, a comprehensive treatment falls beyond the scope of this discussion. For a recent and insightful overview of the current state of scholarship, along with extensive bibliographic references, see Roberto Tottoli, *The Qur'an: A Guidebook* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter, 2023).

known as the qur'anic sciences, with qur'anic exegesis (Ar. *tafsīr*, pl. *tafāsīr*) at their core.[7]

This foundational need also bears relevance in the context of Christian-Muslim relations, particularly regarding the Latin translations of the Qur'an. Here, one must consider the extent to which Christian scholars engaged with these interpretive tools—most notably *tafsīr*—as they sought to comprehend and articulate their perspectives on Islamic scripture. Such engagement often shaped the nature and depth of their textual interactions with Islam.

While previous scholarship has addressed the question of Christian use of Muslim *tafāsīr* —most notably in Thomas E. Burman's seminal article *Tafsīr and Translation* and his monograph *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560*—[8] this study seeks to place that inquiry at the center of its investigation. Moreover, it aims to broaden the scope beyond medieval Qur'an translation efforts in Western Europe, examining the varied roles of Muslim exegesis in Christian intellectual encounters with Islam throughout the Mediterranean world and across an expanded chronological framework.

The following section offers an overview of the individual contributions included in this volume. Rather than providing an exhaustive account of each chapter's content, the aim is to encourage engagement with the individual studies by outlining their central themes and identifying the guiding thread that connects them. The summaries and interpretive observations presented herein reflect the editor's own reading of each contribution and are offered in the spirit of fostering further inquiry and dialogue. The contributions have been arranged in chronological sequence, thereby allowing readers to trace the historical development and evolution of the issues addressed. As each chapter contains its own detailed bibliography, no further bibliographic references are provided here. The introduction concludes with a set of synthetic reflections, intended to distill the collective insights and interpretive outcomes generated by this collaborative scholarly endeavor.

The survey begins in the medieval Middle East, where the earliest instances of Christian engagement with Muslim Qur'an commentaries can be identified.

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7 Among the disciplines encompassed by the qur'anic sciences—particularly in relation to the aspects outlined above—one finds the science of qur'anic readings (Ar. *ʿilm al-qirāʾāt*), which addresses variant recitations of the text and the criteria by which certain readings are recognized as canonical. Closely related is the science of proper and aesthetically refined pronunciation and recitation of the qur'an (Ar. *ʿilm at-tajwīd*), which governs the phonetic and rhythmic articulation of the sacred text.

8 Thomas E. Burman, "*Tafsīr* and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qurʾān Exegesis and the Latin Qurʾāns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo," *Speculum* 73/3 (1998): 703–32; Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qurʾān in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

As David Bertaina outlines in his programmatic chapter, "*Qur'an Commentaries in Medieval Christian Arabic Texts,*" the study of Christian use of *tafsīr* in the Middle East is essential for understanding the subsequent development and diffusion of this phenomenon in Europe. Accordingly, Bertaina traces the historical evolution of this dimension of Christian-Muslim interaction, delineating its main stages.

In the earliest phase (2nd–3rd centuries AH / 8th–9th centuries CE), Christian authors primarily employed qur'anic citations as proof texts, largely devoid of contextual analysis or reference to Muslim exegetical traditions.[9] By the 3rd / 9th century, however, an intermediate stage emerges, marked by a growing familiarity with Islamic interpretive literature.[10] This trajectory culminates in the 5th / 11th century with a mature and nuanced appropriation of *tafsīr*, which not only enriched Christian understanding of the Qur'an but also began to influence Islamic exegetical approaches themselves.

Bertaina identifies the various functions and motivations underpinning the use of *tafsīr* throughout these periods, with particular attention to notable figures of the mature phase such as Elias of Nisibis (d. 438 AH / 1046 CE) and Būluṣ ibn Rajāʾ (d. after 403 AH / 1012 CE). In their writings, one observes a detailed and authoritative engagement with Qur'an commentaries, including explicit references to Muslim exegetes by name. Their use of *tafsīr* is both methodical and dialogical, forming the basis for sophisticated arguments and active intellectual exchange with their contemporary Muslim interlocutors. This attests to the high level of scholarly awareness and intertextual competence exhibited by Middle Eastern Christians in the 5th / 11th century, and to the central role that Islamic exegesis played in shaping their approach to the Qur'an and Islam.

Finally, Bertaina explores how these Christian Arabic works, composed in the East, eventually circulated westward—reaching the Iberian Peninsula, where they were initially read in Arabic and subsequently translated into Latin during the 12th century. These texts played a formative role in mediating Christian-Muslim relations in the Latin West, marking a significant chapter in the transregional transmission of Islamic exegetical knowledge.

It is precisely within this 12th-century Iberian milieu that J. L. Alexis Rivera Luque's contribution, "*Towards the Identification of the Exegetical Material Used by Robert of Ketton in His Latin Translation of the Qur'an (536–37/1142–43),*" is situated itself, examining one of the most consequential moments of Christian engagement

9 Representative figures of this phase include John of Damascus (d. 132 AH / 749 CE), Patriarch Timothy I (d. 207 AH / 823 CE), and Theodore Abū Qurra (d. after 214 AH / 829 CE).

10 Among the noteworthy authors in this context is ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī, who flourished during the reign of Caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 218 AH / 833 CE) and is renowned for his influential *Risāla* (Letter).

with the Qur'an: its first full translation into Latin. Building upon the foundational scholarship of Thomas E. Burman—who demonstrated that Robert of Ketton relied on Muslim exegetical sources in his translation of the Qur'an for Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny—Rivera Luque probes further, shifting attention to the specific *tafāsīr* that may have shaped Robert's interpretive framework.

In consonance with the broader objectives of this volume, and echoing Bertaina's approach in the preceding chapter, Rivera Luque foregrounds exegetical literature that has long remained on the periphery of studies focused primarily on the Latin Qur'an. He poses a critical and nuanced question: can we identify the precise *tafsīr* or *tafāsīr* that underpinned Robert's translation choices? Through an integrative inquiry that weaves together historical developments, the evolution of Muslim exegesis, and the migratory trajectories of books and libraries, Rivera Luque succeeds in narrowing the field of potential sources—thus offering a concrete and intellectually compelling account of the textual corpus that may have informed Robert's translation practice.

The following chapter, authored by Thomas E. Burman—whose pioneering studies laid the groundwork for much of the present volume—turns to the figure of Ramon Martí and his engagement with Islamic exegetical sources, under the title "*Ramon Martí and Tafsīr.*" Advancing the inquiry from the 12th to the 13th century, Burman's contribution offers a refined investigation of the continued transmission of Islamic interpretative traditions from the Christian Arabic East—previously examined by Bertaina—to the intellectual milieu of the Latin West. His analysis enables a comparative examination of the qur'anic interpretations articulated by the Catalan Dominican Ramon Martí and those found in the writings of Būluṣ ibn Rajāʾ, one of his key sources.

Burman highlights Martí's remarkable command of Arabic and his methodical engagement with the sources. He demonstrates how Martí judiciously selected and condensed their material, adapting it to serve his polemical aims. Of particular significance is Burman's evidence of Martí's use of *tafsīr*—sometimes indirectly, mediated through texts such as those by Būluṣ ibn Rajāʾ or the anonymous treatise *as-Sayf al-murhaf fī ar-radd ʿalā al-Muṣḥaf* (*The Whetted Sword in Refutation of the Book*)—but at times, and no less remarkably, through direct engagement with Islamic commentarial traditions.

Indeed, even in instances where quotations appear to be mediated, Burman suggests that Martí may well have verified and supplemented the material by consulting the primary exegetical sources himself. This hypothesis is supported by the frequent integration of additional commentary, occasionally derived from works beyond those cited in the intermediary texts. This methodological approach underscores Martí's scholarly autonomy and his strategic use of Islamic sources in the service of his theological and polemical objectives.

The survey of Christian engagement with *tafsīr* across different historical contexts continues with two subsequent contributions situated in 15th-century Italy. These focus on the figure of Guglielmo Raimondo de Moncada, also known as Flavius Mithridates—a Sicilian convert from Judaism—whose efforts to translate and interpret the Qur'an deserve particular attention in connection to his use of *tafsīr*. In fact, while previous scholarship has predominantly concentrated on Mithridates' translations of the qur'anic text itself, significantly less attention has been devoted to his engagement with *tafsīr* literature and the extent to which exegetical sources may have informed his interpretive strategies.

The first of the two contributions, co-authored by Benoît Grévin and Katarzyna K. Starczewska and entitled "*Reading Qur'an and Tafsīr from a Hebrew Perspective? Remarks on Flavius Mithridates' Translations and Commentaries in Manuscripts Urb. Lat. 1384 and Vat. Ebr. 357*," investigates both of the extant qur'anic translations produced by Mithridates, which are preserved in the manuscripts identified in the title. Both codices feature exegetical annotations accompanying the translations: in Urb. Lat. 1384, the notes are compiled as a glossarium appended to the end of the work, whereas in Vat. Ebr. 357 ––an as-yet inedited text––, they appear as marginalia interspersed throughout the text. Through a comparative analysis of the two manuscripts, with particular focus on the glosses, the authors trace the evolving sophistication of Mithridates' philological competence. In his later translation, Mithridates demonstrates increased proficiency not only in Arabic but also in the use of *tafsīr*, and possibly draws upon his Jewish intellectual heritage—including his command of Hebrew—as an auxiliary interpretive resource in his engagement with the Qur'an.

The second contribution, "*Latin Translation of Muslim Exegesis in the Margins of the 'Qur'an of Flavius Mithridates' (Manuscript Vat. Ebr. 357, fol. 51r–156r): Content, Preliminary Analysis and Questions*," authored by Benoît Grévin, provides a deeper philological and historiographical investigation into Vat. Ebr. 357. Through the edition and translation of selected glosses, Grévin reveals that Mithridates not only refers to certain exegetes by name but also appears to have drawn explicitly from identifiable *tafāsīr*. Nevertheless, this chapter also underscores a recurring methodological challenge evident throughout this volume: the difficulty of precisely identifying the sources cited by Christian authors. Even when a source is named, side-by-side comparison often reveals discrepancies—whether through partial quotations, altered phrasing, or interpretive shifts—that obscure a direct line of transmission.

This phenomenon, already noted in the case of Ramon Martí, prompts Thomas E. Burman to exercise considerable caution in attributing specific sources—compounded by the fact that some texts, such as *The Whetted Sword*, have only survived in an indirect, fragmentary form. Similar complexities emerge in the case

of Mithridates and, as will be further explored, in the work of the 17th-century translator Dominicus Germanus de Silesia. Such discrepancies can often be attributed to the composite nature of the source base, in which different exegetical voices are conflated without explicit acknowledgement, as well as to a tendency among translators to adapt, summarize, or strategically rephrase their sources. Moreover, one cannot entirely exclude the presence of interpretive bias, as some Christian authors—notably Germanus de Silesia—explicitly argue that even Muslim commentators fail to fully comprehend the Qur'an, presenting instead contradictory interpretations, speculative reasoning, or mythical narratives.

The following two contributions focus on Ludovico Marracci, a pivotal figure in 17th-century oriental scholarship, examining his engagement with *tafsīr* within two distinct contexts. The first, by Gerard Wiegers and titled "*Ludovico Marracci's Use of Tafsīr and His Interpretation of Jesus' Demise in the Sacromonte Lead Books*," and the second, by Loriana Salierno, "*Between Exegesis and Linguistics: Ludovico Marracci's Latin Translation of the Qur'an*," collectively explore the central role of Muslim exegesis in Marracci's scholarly enterprise. Marracci's Latin translation of the Qur'an, published in 1698, is widely regarded as the most refined product of the early modern Latin tradition of qur'anic translation and a culmination of Christian knowledge of Islam in early modern Europe. His erudition was highly esteemed by his contemporaries, as evidenced by his appointment to the commission responsible for evaluating the so-called Lead Books of Granada.

Wiegers demonstrates that Marracci employed *tafsīr* literature as an authoritative source in navigating the complex issue of the origins and authenticity of the Lead Books. In this context, Muslim exegesis is not merely a target of critique or a repository of tradition, but a legitimate interpretive instrument mobilized by a Christian scholar to adjudicate a delicate historical-religious controversy. Salierno, in turn, invites the reader into Marracci's intellectual atelier, examining in detail how he engaged exegetical sources in the process of producing his Latin Qur'an translation. Her study reveals a mode of *tafsīr* usage distinct from the polemical or doctrinally comparative frameworks previously discussed in this volume—namely, the application of *tafsīr* in the service of philological precision and linguistic refinement. Salierno highlights Marracci's meticulous attention to lexical and syntactic nuance, noting his frequent revisions and self-corrections, many of which derive from a close reading of Muslim exegetical material, synthesized with his mastery of Latin rhetorical and grammatical style.

The subsequent chapter, "*An Analysis of Dominicus Germanus de Silesia's Incorporation of Tafsīr in His Interpretatio Alcorani Litteralis (ca. 1652–70)*," authored by Ulisse Cecini, turns to the lesser-known but intellectually rich figure of Dominicus Germanus de Silesia. Unlike Marracci, Dominicus did not see his Qur'an translation printed, and much of his extensive scholarly engagement with

Islam—including grammars, dictionaries, philosophical treatises, and theological works in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish—remains preserved in manuscript form at the Royal Monastery of El Escorial. Nonetheless, Dominicus possessed substantial expertise in *tafsīr*, acquired during years of travel and residence in Palestine, Syria, and especially Persia, and later refined through his work in the well-endowed Arabic manuscript collections of El Escorial, which included numerous qur'anic commentaries.

Cecini's chapter investigates how Dominicus integrated *tafsīr* into his Qur'an translation, highlighting a sophisticated methodology that extends far beyond mechanical transcription or literal translation. While Dominicus often cites his exegetical sources explicitly, the analysis reveals a layered editorial process, comparable to that identified in the work of Flavius Mithridates. Rather than relying on verbatim quotations, Dominicus appears to engage in selective synthesis, reinterpretation, and in some cases augmentation of his sources. Cecini proposes an interpretive hypothesis regarding the translator's intentions, though it should be noted that any definitive conclusions must await a comprehensive critical edition and systematic study of Dominicus Germanus' entire corpus.

The following chapter, "*Fábulas de Mahoma: A Late Antialcorán Literature Work by the Franciscan Pedro de Alcántara, Marrakech (17th Century)*," authored by Irene Vicente López de Arenosa, shifts the geographical and historical focus to Morocco and to a literary product emerging from the Franciscan missionary presence in North Africa. In contrast to figures such as Marracci and Dominicus Germanus de Silesia, whose scholarship entailed a direct and technically proficient engagement with *tafsīr*, Vicente López de Arenosa examines a previously unpublished text in which the use of Islamic sources is largely indirect. Pedro de Alcántara's work is situated within the tradition of *Antialcoranes*, a genre of polemical Christian literature that flourished on the Iberian Peninsula during the 16th century.

Whereas Marracci and Dominicus Germanus incorporated *tafsīr* not solely for polemical purposes but also out of linguistic, historical, and hermeneutical interest, Pedro de Alcántara's engagement is characterized by an overtly polemical orientation. Vicente López de Arenosa's contribution thereby underscores a broader interpretive insight: that throughout the 17th century, diverse and even conflicting approaches to Muslim exegesis persisted, shaped by the intentions, locations, and theological imperatives of individual authors. This variability serves as a caution against overgeneralizing the intellectual or ideological posture of Christian engagement with *tafsīr* during this period.

This plurality is further confirmed by the two subsequent contributions, which, while contemporaneous with Pedro de Alcántara, illustrate markedly different uses of Muslim exegetical literature. In "*Shaping a Christian Arabic Vocabulary through European Orientalism in the 16th–17th Centuries*," Patricia

Sánchez-García explores the development of a Christian Arabic vocabulary in the 16th and 17th century, inquiring about the role of works of Islamic tradition and *tafsīr* in the linguistic and cultural investigations of the Christian authors. Given the Qur'an's foundational role in shaping Arabic linguistic and cultural expression, its Muslim interpreters emerged as plausible interlocutors. Christian knowledge of interpretations presented inside *tafāsīr* can be deduced by reading their texts related to the Arabic vocabulary. Thus, it can be said that Muslim commentators took up a role in this Christian scholarly endeavor. An additional factor that Sánchez-García takes into account is the presence of shared cultural material between Christians and Muslims within the Qur'an itself, which makes Muslim interpretations relevant in the composition of a cross-cultural vocabulary. The shared material upon which both religious traditions draw is a feature that resonates as one of the key points in the case of evaluation of the Lead Books of Granada, thereby establishing a point of continuity with Wiegers' chapter.

Paul Babinski's chapter, "*The Orientalist Turn to Tafsīr: Abraham Wheelock's Qur'an*," centers on the efforts of Abraham Wheelock (d. 1653)—librarian of the University of Cambridge and its inaugural lecturer in Arabic and Anglo-Saxon—to produce a Latin and Greek translation of the Qur'an, accompanied by Arabic refutations. While this project ultimately remained unfinished, Babinski's reconstruction of Wheelock's intellectual trajectory sheds light on the study of *tafsīr* in 17th-century England. Crucially, Babinski highlights the material preconditions for such scholarship: access to *tafsīr* manuscripts, which only became feasible in England after 1630—unlike in other parts of Europe, such as Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, where such resources had circulated earlier, as we have seen.

The chapter also underscores the increasing importance of librarians trained in Near Eastern languages, and the networks—comprising figures such as Erpenius, Golius, and Bedwell—that facilitated the acquisition and study of Arabic manuscripts. Marginal annotations in these works, which included not only qur'anic commentaries but also historiographical and traditional Islamic literature, reveal the multiplicity of scholarly motivations: while some had apologetic or missionary aims, others were clearly driven by philological or historical inquiry. It seems apposite to note in this introduction, adopting an overarching perspective on the volume as a whole, that Babinski's chapter allows us to identify a further line of continuity with scholars such as Flavius Mithridates and Dominicus Germanus de Silesia—specifically, in the development of lexicographical tools and thematic indices through which knowledge derived from Arabic sources was catalogued, systematized, and rendered accessible for broader intellectual engagement.

The final chapter of the volume, Octavian-Adrian Negoiță's contribution entitled "*In the Workshop of an Eastern Christian Orientalist: Dimitrie Cantemir (d. 1723) and the Islamic Sources of the System or Structure of the Muḥammadan Religion*",

examines the Islamic sources utilized by the Moldavian prince and polymath Dimitrie Cantemir (d. 1723) in the composition of his treatise *The Book [Called] the System or Structure of the Muhammadan Religion*. Benefiting from his extended residence in Constantinople, Cantemir was uniquely positioned to integrate Islamic materials that had remained largely inaccessible or unused by other Eastern Christian theologians with traditional sources of Christian engagement with Islam. In doing so, he operated as a conduit for cultural transmission in Eastern Europe, facilitating the northward flow of Islamic knowledge—including qur'anic material—from Constantinople to Saint Petersburg.

To conclude, the studies presented in this volume challenge the assumption that not much can be known about the awareness and use of Muslim interpretations by Christian authors in their engagement with the Qur'an and Islam. As a matter of fact, the analyses presented herein demonstrate that the use of *tafsīr* can be traced and documented, even when situated in the background, whenever Christians interacted with the Islamic scripture. This pattern is evident from the earliest Christian-Muslim encounters in the Middle East to developments in Western and Eastern Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Indeed, these studies show—sometimes in ways that might come as a surprise—that *tafsīr* did not merely linger in the periphery but frequently moved into the foreground of Christian arguments. This occurred not just in the Early Modern period, but also during the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance, across both the Eastern and the Western Mediterranean.

Naturally, the extent to which *tafsīr* was directly known and cited varied. In Europe especially, such access often depended on proximity to major libraries and intellectual centers such as the Vatican Library or the library of El Escorial. Still, Islamic exegetical traditions—including those found in the *sīra* and Hadith literature—left a notable mark on Christian writings about Islam, even when that influence was indirect. This aspect deserves closer attention when reading Christian texts that engage with the Qur'an and Islam and should remain a focus for future research.

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