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ISLAMIC HISTORY, DOCTRINES AND SOURCES
التاريخ والعقائد والمصادر الإسلامية

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Articles

Does the Qur'an Belong to Biblical Literature?
Response to a Denial

Devin J. Stewart

In *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, Mark Durie argues that the Qur'an has only a superficial connection with the Bible, despite containing much material *apparently* indebted to texts from Jewish and Christian tradition. In his view, while Christianity represents an organic growth out of Judaism, so that the New Testament has a family resemblance with the Hebrew Bible, a parallel argument cannot be made that the Qur'an resembles the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, implying that Islam is an outsider to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. This essay argues that Durie has mischaracterized and misconstrued the relevant evidence. After providing an overview of the ways in which the Qur'anic text is related to biblical and extra-biblical ones, it critiques Durie's discussions of Qur'anic concepts and lexical items that are apparent – and in his view, superficial – evidence of biblical influence. Contrary to his view, it is appropriate to consider the Qur'an as belonging to biblical literature and participating in biblical tradition.

Keywords: Abrahamic faiths, Judaeo-Christian Tradition, Qur'an, Bible, Theology, Late Antiquity

1. *Introduction*

A major subfield within Western Qur'anic studies has focused on the relationship between the Qur'an and biblical tradition. This subfield may be said to have existed already in the Near East in the early Islamic centuries as part of polemics between Christians and Muslims and in medieval Europe with the polemical portrayal of Muḥammad as an impostor who drew on heretical Christian doctrines. However, the foundation of a more scientific, modern approach, less informed by religious polemics – though not devoid of ideological biases – is

generally recognized as beginning in the first half of the 19th century. In 1833 Abraham Geiger published *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen*, in which he identified the sources in Jewish religious texts of much material and many concepts found in the Qur'an. Subsequent investigation in this subfield has proceeded unevenly. It was pursued by many scholars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily in Germany, and it included attention to both Jewish and Christian traditions. The demise of leading scholar Josef Horovitz in 1931 and the establishment of Nazi control over German universities in 1933–1935 meant that research in this area nearly came to a halt, and it was relatively ignored in the latter half of the 20th century, with a few notable exceptions.[1] Following the publication of *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* by Christoph Luxenberg in 2000, which provoked a vigorous reaction on account of its bold claims and polemical approach, it has been taken up again with great industry.[2]

Throughout the history of these investigations, scholars have characterized the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible, and by extension the relationship between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, in a variety of ways. While there are important areas of disagreement, there has arisen some consensus, at least within this subfield in Qur'anic studies, regarding the elements of the Qur'an that indicate its participation in the religious culture of Late Antiquity and particularly in the currents of thought embedded in Jewish and Christian biblical literature.[3] Especially since 2000, the strong relationship between

[1] Notable exceptions are J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977; Id., *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978; M.R. Waldman, "New Approaches to 'Biblical' Materials in the Qur'an", *The Muslim World* 75/1 (1985), pp. 1–13.

[2] C. Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Berlin, Das Arabische Buch, 2000; D.J. Stewart, "Ignoring the Bible in Qur'anic Studies Scholarship of the Late Twentieth Century", *Re-Orient: The Journal of Critical Muslim Studies* 9/1 (2024), pp. 131–169.

[3] R. Firestone, "The Qur'an and the Bible: Some Modern Studies of Their Relationship", in *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. by J.C. Reeves, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 1–22, esp. 11–16; G.H. Böwering, "The Qur'an as the Voice of God", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 147/4 (2003), pp. 347–353; M.E. Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Quran: The Problem of the Jewish 'Influence' on Islam", *Religion Compass* 1/6 (2007), pp. 643–659; M. Goudarzi, "Review Essay: Peering Behind the Lines", *Harvard Theological Review* 113/3 (2020), pp. 421–435; J.E. Brockopp, "The Rise of Islam in a Judaeo-Christian Context", in *Light upon Light:*

Qur'anic and biblical material has been emphasized, specific connections have been examined intensively, and tangible advances have been made. A grand project of detecting and explaining elements of Jewish and Christian influence in the Qur'an that was abandoned in the 1930s has been taken up again.[4] In recent decades many scholars have emphasized the Late Antique background of the Qur'an, stressing that it not only borrowed from biblical texts but also participated in a wider system of religious ideas that had currency in Middle Eastern societies.[5] Scholars have eschewed the reticence seen in works such as William Montgomery Watt's reworked version of Richard Bell's *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, which, for the sake of interfaith dialogue, avoided mention of sources of the Qur'an in biblical literature.[6] They have generally recognized the importance, for an understanding of the Qur'an, of biblical literature in a broader sense, including extra-biblical and non-canonical works such as Bereshit Rabbah, The Life of Adam and Eve, The Cave of Treasures, The Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. Scholars have pointed out that Christian Syriac texts shed light on such aspects of the Qur'an as anti-clerical discourse, dietary law, the story of "The Men of the Cave", the story of Ḏū al-Qarnayn or Alexander the Great, and so on.[7] In much recent

Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Böwering, ed. by J.J. Elias and B. Orfali, Leiden, Brill, 2019, pp. 25–44.

[4] See especially the introductions to G.S. Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext*, London, Routledge, 2010; E.I. El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, London, Routledge, 2014.

[5] *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*, ed. by G.S. Reynolds, London, Routledge, 2008; Id., *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context 2*, London, Routledge, 2014; *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, ed. by A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai and M. Marx, Leiden, Brill, 2010; S.L. Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives*, Leiden, Brill, 2006; C. Bakhos, *The Family of Abraham: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Interpretations*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2014; M. Pregill, *The Golden Calf between Bible and Qur'an: Scripture, Polemic, and Exegesis from Late Antiquity to Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

[6] See Stewart, "Ignoring the Bible".

[7] See Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and its Biblical Subtext*; El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*; Id., "From Clerical to Scriptural Authority: The Qur'an's Dialogue with the Syriac New Testament", in *New Trends in Qur'anic Studies: Text, Context and Interpretation*, ed. by M. Sirry, Atlanta, Lockwood Press, 2019, pp. 83–93; H.M. Zellentin, *The Qur'ān's Legal Culture: The* Didascalia Apostolorum *as a Point of Departure*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2013; J. Witztum, "The Foundations of the House Q 2:127", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72/1 (2009),

work, scholars have avoided characterizing discrepancies between biblical stories and their counterparts in the Qur'an as the results of clumsy borrowing or mistakes in understanding. In order better to describe the Qur'anic use of biblical material, Emran El-Badawi has proposed the term "dogmatic re-articulation", which is useful in that it recognizes the Qur'an's use of biblical material to make specific, distinct, and in some cases novel arguments.[8]

A number of scholars now working on the relationship of the Qur'an to biblical literature have not only made specific contributions to an understanding of the Qur'anic text but also have characterized the relationship between the Qur'an, on the one hand, and biblical literature, on the other, as particularly close. Michael E. Pregill presents a summative statement: "So many of the basic themes of these stories are clearly held in common between the Quran and the canonical Bibles of both Judaism and Christianity that many commentators have correctly discerned that these scriptures are essentially of one voice, at least as pertains to these individuals and their stories."[9] The point he stresses is that not only specific figures and stories are shared but also their themes and the lessons that they convey. For this reason, they may be said to belong to the same tradition and to speak with one voice.

Angelika Neuwirth has argued forcefully that the Qur'an belongs to biblical tradition and that it therefore ought to be viewed as an integral part of European culture: "Because the Qur'an emerged out of an engagement with Late Antique discourses and inscribed itself in those already extant Christian and Jewish traditions commonly held to be a European heritage, it too is itself a part of the historical legacy of Late Antiquity to Europe".[10] She aims in her work to empower European

25–40; Id., *The Syriac Milieu of the Qur'ān: The Recasting of Biblical Narratives*, PhD Diss., Princeton University, 2011; Id., "Joseph among the Ishmaelites: Q 12 in Light of Syriac Sources", in *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān*, pp. 425–448; S. Griffith, "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur'an: 'The Companions of the Cave' in *Surat al-Kahf* and in Syriac Christian Tradition", in *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*, pp. 109–137; T. Tesei, "The Prophecy of Ḏū-l-Qarnayn (Q 18:83–102) and the Origins of the Qur'ānic Corpus", in *Miscellanea Arabica 2013–2014*, ed. by A. Arioli, Rome, Aracne, 2014, pp. 273–290; K. van Bladel, "The *Alexander Legend* in the Qur'an 18:83–102", in *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, pp. 175–203.

[8] El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, pp. 5–10.

[9] Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Quran", p. 647.

[10] A. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang*, Berlin, Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010, pp. 21–22 (English trans. by S. Wilder, *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 3).

readers "to grasp the Qur'an as a vital part of the reception history of their own familiar texts".[11] Thus, in her view, the Qur'an is biblical in a triple sense, not only in the basic sense that it contains material related to biblical tradition. More importantly, it forms part of biblical literature since, like such texts as The Testament of Abraham or The Protevangelion of James, it originated in conversation with and against the background of earlier texts and elements of Jewish and Christian tradition. Furthermore, on account of this last point, it should properly be treated by modern Europeans as part of biblical heritage and European culture.

While Neuwirth and others have presented strong arguments for the inclusion of the Qur'an within biblical tradition, this understanding of the Qur'an's background has not gone unchallenged. One of the most concerted efforts in Western scholarship to refute this view to date is Mark Durie's *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes: Investigations into the Genesis of a Religion*.[12] Durie recognizes that the Qur'an contains material related to the Bible, but he rejects the idea that the Qur'an engages with biblical religious literature in a profound sense. His main argument is that the theological ideas that characterize biblical tradition have been ruptured in the Qur'an, so that evidence of apparently biblical elements is superficial and deceptive because it is not accompanied by the adoption of similar theological conceptions. Ultimately, Durie's argument rests on assumptions regarding biblical theology that are only true from a particular modern Protestant viewpoint. He assumes an unquestioned continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, theological unity among Christian sects that historically held, and continue to hold, incompatible Christological doctrines, and meaningful theological continuity over lengthy time spans, fierce theological controversies, and ruptures in tradition. In his view, Qur'anic theology differs sufficiently from Jewish and Christian theology to render it alien to the biblical tradition. Therefore, the Qur'an cannot be said to have grown out of biblical tradition in the way that the New Testament may be said to have done, and Islam cannot be considered to belong to Judaeo-Christian tradition.

[11] *Ibid*.
[12] M. Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes: Investigations into the Genesis of a Religion*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2018.

In the course of the argument, Durie analyzes specific passages, terms, concepts, and language, stressing that his approach is objective, but in the end the principal criterion for an assessment of the Qur'an's relationship to the Bible is conformity to a particular Christian view of biblical tradition. I cannot claim to refute Durie's theology. It is undeniable that Qur'anic theology does not conform to Protestant Christian theology, and if Durie believes that Qur'anic theology is incorrect, he is entitled to do so. However, his work presents a challenge to the field of Qur'anic studies and an opportunity to assess the evidence assembled to date regarding the relationship of the Qur'an to biblical literature. I will argue that, despite its theological idiosyncrasies, the Qur'an may properly be considered part of biblical tradition. Just as the Infancy Gospel of Thomas did not make it into the Christian canon but belongs to biblical literature in an obvious manner, so, too, may the Qur'an be considered a sacred text that presents an Arabian commentary on biblical tradition. It is distinctive and perhaps foreign to Durie's understanding of what passes doctrinal muster, but it is nevertheless a work of biblical interpretation.

My approach here is not that of the general history of religions, showing that the Qur'an shares widespread religious general concepts such as fasting, salvation, liturgy, or dietary restrictions. Nor is the goal interfaith dialogue, which often avoids contentious topics. The goal here is narrower: to show that the Qur'an, on account of its content, rhetoric, concepts, and themes, and especially on account of its self-representation, belongs to the category of biblical literature that includes the Jewish and Christian versions of the Bible, along with other texts recognized to form part of the broader category of biblical literature in Jewish and Christian traditions. The following essay discusses broad conceptions of and evidence for the place of biblical material in the Qur'an, addresses Durie's assumptions and approaches to this question, and then analyzes the specific claims Durie makes about Qur'anic terms and concepts.

2. *A Disputed Relationship*

The Qur'an is intimately related to the Bible in some obvious ways. Most of the characters that appear in the Qur'an are well-known figures from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The biblical books of the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel are mentioned frequently in the

Qur'an and are described as authentic biblical scriptures revealed by the one, true God and conveyed to the world by former messengers or prophets. Jewish and Christian concepts such as the Day of Judgment, the afterlife, paradise and hell, the Garden of Eden, angels, and Satan are invoked throughout the Qur'an. There is thus no doubt that the Qur'an is in some fashion connected to biblical tradition. Despite the abundance of evidence, however, the assessments of scholars regarding the implications of the appearance of biblical figures and material in the Qur'an have varied widely: some emphasize the continuities and similarities between the corpora, while others suggest significant discontinuities.

Even though the Qur'an appears to stress many shared elements between the religious movement of nascent Islam and Judaism and Christianity, later Islamic doctrine came to downplay or suppress similarities between Islam, on the one hand, and Judaism and Christianity, on the other. Just as the early Christian centuries witnessed the drawing of clearer doctrinal lines between Judaism and the new faith of Christianity,[13] the early centuries of Islamic history likewise reflected the drawing of increasingly stark distinctions between Islam and the preceding faiths of Judaism and Christianity. The latter process involved a complex of inter-related doctrinal and historical developments that worked to separate the Islamic scripture from biblical tradition. The elaboration of such theological doctrines and historical practices included emphasis on the Prophet Muḥammad's illiteracy and his status as the final and not just the most recent prophet. His prophetic mission was considered universal, despite Qur'anic evidence that the missions of earlier prophets were regularly focused on one nation or people and that the Prophet Muḥammad's mission was also focused on the Arabs of his region. Muslim theologians stressed the sacred status of the Arabic language and the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, which sets it apart not only from ordinary texts produced by humans but also from other scriptures. These doctrines were accompanied by that of *taḥrīf* (textual distortion), according to which the biblical texts had been subject to willful textual corruption on the part of Jews and Christians, with the result that, while the Torah and the Gospel portrayed in the Qur'an were legitimate scriptures of divine origin, the copies that were in the hands of contemporary Jews and

[13] D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Christians were considered unreliable, and recourse to them illegitimate for interpretations of Islamic sacred history. Muslim theologians similarly condemned the use of *Isrā'īliyyāt* or traditions drawing on biblical lore to aid in exegesis of the Qur'an.[14] Jews and Christians were restricted from much of the Arabian Peninsula, and an Islamic legal regime developed that subjected the Jews and Christians to many restrictive measures not mentioned in the Qur'an in order to create tangible, visible distinctions between them and the Muslims, and to indicate publicly the religious superiority and political dominance of Islam. These legal restrictions included the requirements that Jews and Christians wear distinctive clothing, avoid the adoption of Muslim names, not build new houses of worship, not bear arms or mount horses, make way for Muslims in public thoroughfares, provide quarter for Muslim troops, and so on. All these elements worked to set Islam apart from Judaism and Christianity, and they continued to do so in many contexts for centuries.

At the same time, Christian polemicists in modern times have taken to warning fellow Christians not to be fooled into thinking that the religion of Islam resembles their own. Christians should not think that the Muslims' deity, Allāh, is the same as the God of the Bible or that Islam belongs to the same tradition as Judaism and Christianity. Such authors have also stressed the salience of differences between Qur'anic material and biblical material.[15]

These perspectives, of similar effect despite being held by ideological opponents, have emphasized the dissimilarity of the two traditions against those who would emphasize their shared elements. The consequences of the ideology of partition are readily observable in translations of the Qur'an and other Islamic religious texts. They are seen most obviously in the name applied to God. Writers coming from both the Islamic and the Christian side argue that one cannot simply render Allāh as God. Their justification, if they explain it, is that the two terms merely overlap in some respects but not all. In other words, some Muslim thinkers argue that, since the Christians' conception of

[14] Of course, because much biblical material had already entered the genre of Qur'anic commentary early on, supporting this supposed ban did not prevent the widespread use of biblical stories in explaining the Qur'anic text.

[15] R.A. Morey, *The Islamic Invasion: Confronting the World's Fastest Growing Religion*, Eugene, Harvest House Publishers, 1992; N.L. Geisler and A. Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, Ada, Baker Books, 1993.

God includes Christ and the Trinity, Allāh may not be rendered as "God" in the Christians' language – that is, primarily, English but also in other European languages – without misleading the audience. The same argument is used in the reverse by Christians who argue that to think Allāh is equivalent to "God" in any of the Christians' languages would be to dismiss the crucial understanding of the Trinity and Christ's divinity. This is not to mention Evangelical, anti-Muslim authors such as Robert A. Morey, who characterizes belief in Allāh as adherence to a pagan cult of the pre-Islamic moon-god.[16]

A similar issue arises with the translation of the names of biblical characters who appear in the Qur'an. M.H. Šākir's translation of the Qur'an, for example, retains the Arabic forms of biblical names, as if to say to the readers that "our" Ibrāhīm is not the same as "your" Abraham, "our" Mūsā is not the same as "your" Moses, and "our" Sulaymān is not the same as "your" Solomon. Christian scholars also adopt the tactic of not "translating" biblical names, lest the reader assume that the two sets of characters are the same. Michel Lagarde's French translation of Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) comprehensive work of Qur'anic studies, *al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qur'ān*, does not translate Mūsā as Moïse, Ayyūb as Job, Sulaymān as Solomon, and so on, thus disrupting the connection.[17] Oliver Leaman addresses this issue in his essay: "Qur'anic and Biblical Prophets: Are They Really the Same People?" suggesting that one must think carefully before one equates the two sets of biblical and Qur'anic characters and concluding that they are in fact distinct. He argues: "Jesus cannot both 'have died' and 'not have died' and be the same person. The Job of the Bible could not have been as humble throughout as the Ayyūb of the Qur'an and still be the Job of the Bible".[18] Such authors adopt the position that when the Qur'anic portrayals of such biblical figures differ in crucial ways, they cannot be considered the same character, despite other indications that their names and stories are shared. This type of argument seems to confuse literary characters with historical persons, but even

[16] R.A. Morey, *The Moon-God Allah in the Archeology of the Middle East*, Newport, PA, Research and Education Foundation, 1994.
[17] Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Le parfait manuel des sciences coraniques al-Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qur'ān de Ǧalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī: Présentation, Traduction et Annotation*, 2 vols., trans. by M. Lagarde, Leiden, Brill, 2018.
[18] O. Leaman, "Qur'anic and biblical Prophets: Are They Really the Same People?", *al-Bayān* 11/2 (2013), pp. 107–113, here 113.

with a historical person, one could accept conflicting interpretations of that person's deeds or significance without assuming that two different people had to be meant.

The problem with such arguments for distinction is that they ignore the explicit, intentional Qur'anic strategy of invoking continuity and connection with the Bible, despite the existence of differences. Such manipulations of the past occur frequently not only between related religious traditions but also within single traditions. Salvation history is an archive on which theologians and believers draw to make novel arguments. One might compare this situation to that which obtains in other traditions, whether mythological, legendary, literary, or religious. If one examines the various portrayals of Santa Claus in Hollywood Christmas movies, or the various portrayals of Robin Hood or King Arthur in the history of English literature, one is bound to notice clear differences among them. The question then becomes what conclusion one ought to reach on account of these differences. One could argue that they are significant enough to warrant conceiving of the various portrayals of Santa Claus, Robin Hood, or King Arthur as entirely different characters. However, I would argue that they are all meant to invoke aspects of the same character; despite differences, they are intended to draw on and form part of the pre-existing tradition.

3. *Several Divisive Analogies*

In an intensive investigation of the Qur'an's relationship to biblical tradition, Mark Durie endeavors to show that despite superficial similarities, the Qur'an and the Bible are fundamentally different. His 2018 work *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes: Investigations into the Genesis of a Religion* presents a much more extensive and detailed version of Leaman's argument regarding biblical characters in the Qur'an. Durie's work focuses on theology and highlights doctrinal differences between Christianity and Islam. In part because of its attention to detail and its use of linguistic examples, the work has received positive assessments as a sophisticated analysis. David Marshall writes: "Mark Durie's '*The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*' is a highly original work and a substantial contribution to the field of Qur'anic Studies". Ian Hore-Lacy writes: "This is a substantial scholarly work that aims to set a benchmark in Qur'anic studies". Andrew O'Connor characterizes the work as "a welcome and thoroughly novel addition to the growing

field of Qur'anic Studies", adding that "Durie's innovative observations and rigorous analyses are of immense value to our understanding of the Qur'an's employment of biblical motifs". In *Key Terms of the Qur'an*, which represents the cutting edge of Qur'anic studies scholarship, Nicolai Sinai cites with approval Durie's analysis of the Qur'anic term *sakīna*. The reviews of his work to date have made a number of general criticisms, but with regard to the particular biblical "reflexes" – that is, elements of the Qur'an that appear to be related to biblical tradition – that Durie has noted, they have often simply reported his claims without critiquing them.[19] In response to the challenge that his work represents, this essay presents an overview of the relationship of the Qur'an to biblical tradition, focuses on the overall arguments made in Durie's work in light of that discussion, and then analyzes the specific examples presented. *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes* may be correct from the point of view of Christian theology, but it plays down and sometimes misconstrues Qur'anic uses of biblical material, thus driving a wedge between the Qur'an and the Bible and neglecting or obscuring Qur'anic strategies of citation, approval of, and engagement with biblical tradition.

While Durie does not deny the presence of biblical material in the Qur'an, he argues that such material is not evidence of a profound historical, genealogical relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible, and, by extension, between Islam on the one hand and Judaism and Christianity on the other. He uses several analogies to explain the relationship that he considers as obtaining between Islam and the earlier monotheistic religions. The first analogy is that of the haphazard reuse of found materials. According to the example he introduces, the presence of biblical material in the Qur'an resembles the reuse of Roman columns to construct the Great Mosque of Kairouan. The columns have been taken out of their original context and now serve a quite different purpose in a new and radically different context. While they remain identifiable as Roman columns, one cannot extrapolate from

[19] See the reviews of *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes: Investigations into the Genesis of a Religion*, by D. Marshall, *Review of Qur'anic Research* 6/4 (2020); I. Hore-Lacy, available at http://www.ethos.org.au/online-resources/blog/book-review-the-quran-and-its-biblical-reflexes (20 November 2024); G.S. Reynolds, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 141/2 (2021), pp. 482–485; A. O'Connor, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 80/1 (2021), pp. 218–221. See also N. Sinai, *Key Terms of the Qur'an: A Critical Dictionary*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2023, pp. 390–391.

their presence to claim that there is something Roman about the entire new edifice.[20]

The second analogy is that of borrowing vs. inheritance. In Durie's view, Islam is the result of "disruptive" or "destructive" borrowing from the earlier traditions of Judaism and Christianity. It is not the result of organic growth within one tradition or inheritance between related traditions. To illustrate this argument, he provides an example of linguistic borrowing. The English word "juggernaut" means an overwhelming, unstoppable force, and it is now often used without any understanding on the part of English speakers that the word derives from the Sanskrit *Jagganath*, which refers to a Hindu deity and is associated with the huge carts used to parade the idols of the god on festival days. In modern English usage, the connection with the Hindu origin has been lost. In Durie's view, the biblical material in the Qur'an resembles the word "juggernaut" in English, in that it derives from the Bible but has lost its connection with the original context.

The third analogy derives from historical linguistics. Islam, in Durie's view, is not part of the ancestral family to which Judaism and Christianity belong. It is not like Italian, which is closely related to Latin because it derives from that ancestral language through a historical process of linguistic development. Rather, it resembles a creole, in which a substrate language picked up elements from another language to which it was not closely related, producing a hybrid form in which there are many apparent similarities to the language from which the borrowings occurred, but whose deep, grammatical structure is quite different. As Durie presents them, all these analogies serve one purpose: to demonstrate that the Qur'an is fundamentally not biblical where it counts, even though certain elements in the Qur'anic text may derive from biblical texts. And where it counts, according to Durie, is in theology.

The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes aims to show that Qur'anic theology is incorrect from a Protestant Christian point of view and to argue, therefore, that the Qur'an does not properly belong to the family of biblical scripture. Consequently, Islam does not belong to the religious tradition that includes Judaism and Christianity. In pursuing this argument, Durie elides a set of unspoken assumptions. Perhaps

[20] One would have a more difficult time making a similar argument about the Aya Sofya mosque in Istanbul, in which the original church has been transformed into an Islamic place of worship, but most of the original edifice is intact, and the Greek name of the building has even been retained.

most important is the idea that the elements from the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament and the Jewish elements in Christianity are, in contrast, not at all like the re-use of the columns in the Great Mosque of Kairouan. They represent a case of legitimate inheritance. Christianity and Judaism are related in the way that the Romance languages are related to Latin: they belong to the same family. The elements that are reminiscent of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible that appear in Christian tradition have not been violently wrested from their original context and put to unfamiliar use. They are not cases of disruptive or destructive borrowing but rather of organic growth, and so they may properly be said to belong to the same tradition.

Durie's approach may be likened to the adoption of a rigid, theological version of Walid Ahmad Saleh's concept of the etymological fallacy. In an insightful and influential study, Saleh pointed out that, when modern investigators of the Qur'an identify a particular Qur'anic term as deriving from a Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek term from Jewish or Christian tradition, they ought not to assume that it is being used with the same, or even with a similar meaning, without examining carefully the contexts in which it occurs.[21] Even if the term is clearly related to a biblical precedent, the Qur'anic text may be recognizing, accentuating, playing down, modifying, distorting, or even completely ignoring a term's biblical origin. Durie adopts a similar approach, but there are several crucial differences. First, he is concentrating not simply on the general or technical meaning of a term or element but rather on its significance for a particular understanding of biblical theology. Second, he is concentrating on terms that, he believes, show a great difference in theological meaning. Third, he is ignoring many others that would show the close connections between the Bible and the Qur'an, including similarities in the theological implications of those shared elements and a substantial awareness of the original context. Fourth, Durie intends a further step in his argument that Saleh did not entertain, drawing the conclusion that the Qur'an does not have a legitimate claim to form part of biblical tradition.

[21] W.A. Saleh, "The Etymological Fallacy and Qur'anic Studies: Muhammad, Paradise, and Late Antiquity", in *The Qur'ān in Context*, pp. 649–698; A. Rippin, "RḤMNN and the Ḥanīfs", in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. by W.B. Hallaq and D.P. Little, Leiden, Brill, 1991, pp. 153–168, here 161. On etymology and interpretation of the Qur'an, see also G. El Masri, *The Semantics of Qur'anic Language:* Al-Āḫira, Leiden, Brill, 2020, pp. 7–50.

4. *The Judaeo-Christian Tradition*

Many objections to this overall approach may be raised. The first is that only Christian theologians can argue that the New Testament and the Old Testament present the same theological concepts or that the ideas of the New Testament are simply natural developments of the legacy of theological concepts received from the Old Testament. To other observers, they appear to be quite distinct despite elements of continuity, in much the same way that the Qur'an displays distinct doctrines despite the existence of much material that is shared with biblical tradition. A conception of a unified Judaeo-Christian tradition thus lies behind Durie's analysis, but he assumes this background without explaining it directly. The concept of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is a modern invention that developed in two strands: the theological one, which grew out of the work of German Protestant critics of the Old Testament in the 19th century, and the political one, which stressed solidarity between Jews and Christians in the face of fascist terror and the threat of communist atheism in the 20th century. The latter became widespread in North America and Europe on account of World War II and became subject to a national cultural consensus in the United States from the 1950s on.[22]

However, not everyone agrees that Judaism and Christianity have a great deal in common. In the view of Nathan Rotenstreich, the notion of the Judaeo-Christian tradition was a ploy to convince Christians that they had a tradition in common with the Jews and to convince Jews that they could participate in the universal culture of a predominantly Christian society like that of the United States.[23] Jewish thinkers especially stressed that the two religions were separate and distinct.[24] John Courtney Murray held that in public life in the United States in 1960, there were three styles of religious belief: Protestantism, Cathol-

[22] M. Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America", *American Quarterly*, 36/1 (1984), pp. 65–85.
[23] N. Rotenstreich, "Emancipation and Its Aftermath", in *The Future of the Jewish Community in America*, ed. by D. Sidorsky, New York, Basic Books, 1973, pp. 46-61, here 52.
[24] T. Weiss-Rosmarin, *Judaism and Christianity: The Differences*, New York, The Jewish Book Club, 1943; A.H. Silver, *Where Judaism Differed: An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism*, New York, MacMillan, 1956; L. Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity: Essays*, trans. by W. Kaufmann, New York, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958.

icism, and Judaism. In his view, they did not belong within a common tradition, but were indeed radically different, and none of them was "reducible, or perhaps even comparable, to any of the others". They were destined to be in conflict; the best that one could expect was for them to be "creeds at war intelligibly".[25]

Jewish thinkers have stressed that Christian theology is incorrect from the Jewish point of view and that the Judaeo-Christian tradition is a construct that fails to recognize the very real differences between Jewish and Christian doctrine.[26] Several prominent thinkers, including Arthur A. Cohen and Jacob Neusner, have referred to the Judaeo-Christian tradition explicitly as a myth.[27] Neusner wrote: "Judaism and Christianity are completely different religions, not different versions of one religion. [...] The two faiths stand for different people talking about different things to different people".[28] More bluntly, he stated that "the conception of a Judeo-Christian tradition that Judaism and Christianity share is simply a myth in the bad old sense: a lie".[29] This is so despite some ostensibly shared elements. He elaborates:

> True, Christianity and Judaism share some of the same holy scriptures [...]. While episodically reaching conclusions that coincide, in general the two religions share no common agenda and have conducted no genuine dialogue. Scripture can provide an agendum – but one that leads only to division, since the Old Testament for Christianity serves only because it prefigures the New Testament, and the written Torah for Judaism can be and should be read only in the fulfillment and completion provided by the oral Torah.[30]

[25] J.C. Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1960, pp. 123–141, here 133 .
[26] *Is there a Judeo-Christian Tradition?: A European Perspective*, ed. by E. Nathan and A. Topolski, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016; R. Apple, "There is no 'Judeo-Christian Tradition'", *The Jerusalem Post*, 8 January 2018; J. Loeffler, "The Problem With the 'Judeo-Christian Tradition'", *The Atlantic*, 1 August 2020.
[27] A.A. Cohen, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, New York, Harper and Row, 1969; J. Neusner, *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition*, Philadelphia-London, Trinity Press International/SCM Press, 1991; *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition?*, esp. chapter 1, by E. Nathan and A. Topolski, "The Myth of a Judeo-Christian Tradition: Introducing a European Perspective", pp. 1–14.
[28] Neusner, *Jews and Christians*, p. 28.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. ix.
[30] *Ibid.*

The fact that Christians adopted the Hebrew Bible as their scripture thus does not suffice to make them share a religious tradition.

Stephen M. Feldman, writing on the legal separation of church and state in the United States, sees invocation of the Judeo-Christian tradition as the Christian dogma of supersession in disguised form:

> A twentieth-century manifestation of the theme of Christian universalism is the oft-mentioned "Judeo-Christian tradition". Once one recognizes that Christianity historically has engendered antisemitism, then this so-called tradition appears as a dangerous Christian dogma (at least from a Jewish perspective). For Christians, the concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition comfortably suggests that Judaism progresses into Christianity – that Judaism is somehow completed in Christianity. The concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition flows from the Christian theology of supersession, whereby the Christian covenant (or Testament) with God supersedes the Jewish one. Christianity, according to this belief, reforms and replaces Judaism. [...] Most important, the belief of the Judeo-Christian tradition insidiously obscures the real and significant differences between Judaism and Christianity.[31]

Eliezer Berkovits wrote of Judaeo-Christian dialogue and inter-religious understanding, and, in this view, the idea that Judaism and Christianity have a shared tradition "represents a distortion of historic truth; it is a falsification of the true nature of the Judeo-Christian tragedy".[32] In his view, theologically, the two faiths are poles apart: "As to a dialogue in the purely theological sense, nothing could be more fruitless and pointless. Judaism is Judaism because it rejects Christianity, and Christianity is Christianity because it rejects Judaism".[33] The Christian understanding that their acceptance of the Old Testament indicates the profound relationship of the two faiths is a false impression: "From the Jewish point of view, the 'Old Testament' is the Gentiles' misinterpretation of the very gist of the message of the Hebrew Bible. [...] Nor does Judaism have a common spiritual patrimony with

[31] S.M. Feldman, *Please Don't Wish Me a Merry Christmas: A Critical History of the Separation of Church and State*, New York, New York University Press, 1997, pp. 17–18.
[32] E. Berkovits, "Judaism in the Post-Christian Era", in *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish Christian Encounter*, ed. by F.E. Talmage, New York, Ktav Publishing House, 1975, pp. 284–295, here 293.
[33] Berkovits, "Judaism in the Post-Christian Era", p. 291.

Christianity in the Patriarchs and the Prophets: in the Jewish understanding, the God of Abraham is not the triune deity of Christianity."[34] These thinkers all stress the radical difference between Judaism and Christianity. They thus present an argument parallel to Durie's argument about the Qur'an and, by extension, Islam, but apply it to Christianity, which Durie sees as a natural, logical development out of Judaism.

The consequence of this is that Durie's analysis is arguably based on and biased toward a particular Christian theological understanding and reading of religious history. Essentially, he is willing to accept modern Protestant Christian understandings of the theological continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, because he accepts the Christian theological conception of Christianity's relation to Jewish tradition and the Old Testament, but he is unwilling to accept the parallel argument that one could mount regarding the Qur'an's relationship to the earlier scriptures of the Bible. Durie presents his argument as an objective assessment rather than as a consequence of Christian doctrinal assumptions. His extensive use of linguistic terminology and examples serves to bolster the appearance of an objective, non-partisan, non-sectarian approach.

The converse argument is to recognize Islam as a member of the biblical religions. Just as one may invoke the Judaeo-Christian tradition, one may also invoke the Abrahamic tradition, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The concept of "the Abrahamic faiths" or "the Abrahamic traditions" is obviously familiar. The term was apparently coined by Louis Massignon in a 1949 essay titled "Three Prayers of Abraham", and it is frequently invoked in an effort to expand the Judaeo-Christian tradition to include Islam.[35] Richard Bulliet has put forward the case for "Islamo-Christian civilization", stressing the concepts and historical experiences shared by the two traditions of Christianity and Islam.[36] In his work, Judaism is excluded not because it fails to count as a biblical religion, but rather because it was not associated

[34] *Ibid*.
[35] B. Feiler, *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*, London, Harper Collins, 2002; U. Rosenhagen, "One Abraham or Three?: The Conversation between Three Faiths", *The Christian Century*, 9 December 2015; P.L. Berger, "Judeo-Christian or Abrahamic", *The American Interest*, 23 December 2015.
[36] R.W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004.

with political dominance and empire. Durie's work argues that Islam ought to be excluded from the group, but as explained above, the same exact argument could be made about Christianity from the perspective of Jewish tradition. Durie rejects the conception of the Abrahamic faiths as sharing a religious tradition, but this configuration is no more problematic than the conception of the Judaeo-Christian tradition that Durie takes for granted and that involves the same sort of papering over of differences.

5. *Substantive Overlap and Systematic Relationships*

The second and most important argument against Durie's approach is that the instances of borrowing from biblical traditions that appear in the Qur'an are quite numerous and occur within a particular schema. They are not isolated instances and so do not resemble the use of "juggernaut" in contemporary English. They are evidence of sustained contact, and they do not occur haphazardly. Rather, they are presented within a much larger framework that includes many similar and parallel borrowings following discernible logical patterns. First, the Muslims' deity, Allāh, is portrayed in the Qur'an as the only real, legitimate God. Crucially, Allāh is identified as the God of biblical tradition. He is the same God who appointed Moses as a prophet – the same God who split the sea, allowing the Hebrews to flee from Egypt and to escape the forces of Pharaoh. He is the same God who is responsible for Jesus's miraculous birth and his subsequent mission. From the Qur'anic point of view, at least, this means that Allāh and the God of the Bible are in fact the same character. Allāh is simply Arabic for "God" in the same way that *Dieu* is French for the God of the Bible and *Dios* is Spanish for the same divinity. Some later Christians and Muslims balk at admitting this because the two religious traditions' conceptions and descriptions of the deity do not overlap entirely. However, it is worth noting that even when the Qur'an critiques the Jews' and Christians' ideas about God, Islam's sacred text nevertheless refers to the focus of the dispute as Allāh in all cases and does not suggest that there is any disagreement over that deity's identity. Islam's sacred text thus fully accepts that Jews and Christians worship Allāh, and not a separate god; the most one could say to distinguish them is that they worship a slightly distorted version of the same deity.

The Qur'an accepts that there are other legitimate religious traditions besides Islam, the particular religious movement that developed in response to the Prophet Muḥammad's mission. The main legitimate, extra-Islamic traditions, according to the Qur'anic text, are those of Judaism and Christianity.[37] The logic behind the Qur'an's treatment of those religions is obviously that they are both acceptable because they are based on worship of the one, true God. The only real god in existence is biblical God, and the only legitimate religions are those of biblical tradition. The Qur'an accepts Jewish and Christian worship as generally correct, even though their worshippers may be misguided in certain respects, on account of the very fact that they worship the correct deity, unlike the pagans. This idea is stressed in explicit terms: "Wa-qūlū āmannā bi-llaḏī unzila ilaynā wa-unzila ilaykum wa-ilāhunā wa-ilāhukum wāḥidun wa-naḥnu lahu muslimūn" ("Say, 'We believe in what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to you. Our God and your God are One, and we are exclusively devoted to Him'", 29:46)[38]. The most fundamental shared belief, according to the text, is belief in the same God. Consequently, the content of the different revelations, the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is envisaged to be essentially the same. Emphasizing the shared tradition of prophecy and scripture, another verse reads: "Say [O believers]: We believe in God and in what was revealed to us, what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinctions between any of them, and we have devoted ourselves to Him" (2:136). Not only God but also the historical patriarchs and the Torah and the Gospel are shared. Furthermore, this view arguably accords with the view of early Christians, who conceived of Judaism and Christianity as belonging to the same biblical tradition. Indeed, one may argue that the Qur'anic view of earlier biblical tradition was in a sense modeled on the Christian view of earlier biblical tradition. The Qur'an presents its message as belonging to biblical tradition, and in fact, in the Qur'anic presentation, biblical tradition represents the *only* legitimate religious tradition in existence.

[37] There are marginal cases of the Maǧūs (Magi) and the Ṣābi'a (Sabians). The Maǧūs are apparently the Zoroastrians, and the identity of the Ṣābi'a is the subject of controversy.
[38] All translations of Qur'an verses are based on the translation of Abdel Haleem, with some modifications.

In addition, the Qurʾanic prophetic figures of Mūsā, Ibrāhīm, ʿĪsā, and others are clearly meant to represent the biblical figures of Moses, Abraham, Jesus, and others generally. Moses is arguably the main protagonist of the Qurʾan, appearing more than any other single figure, and most of the Qurʾanic narratives in which he appears match closely, in outline, the story of Moses in Exodus. The narratives of his birth and upbringing, his fights in Egypt, his flight to Midian, and his marriage there are all similar in basic outline to the biblical story. In the Qurʾan as in Exodus, God commissions Moses as a prophet in the scene of the burning bush, instructs him to perform miracles before Pharaoh, and sends him along with Aaron to confront Pharaoh. Similarly, Moses's contest with Pharaoh's magicians, the flight of the Hebrews from Egypt, the parting of the sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh's host all conform to the outline of the biblical story. The Qurʾanic narratives are shorter than their biblical counterparts, and there are many differences in detail. Nevertheless, the fact that so much is shared between the Qurʾan and the Hebrew Bible makes it very difficult to believe that the relationship between the two texts is superficial or haphazard and that it does not reflect a sustained, intentional dialogue with biblical tradition.

Salvation history in the Qurʾan incorporates the Bible's portrayal of salvation history to a large degree. The world is temporally finite, having a definite beginning and a definite end. It began with God's creation of the world in six days, and it will end with the Day of Judgment. Human history begins with the account of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden, and it follows in succession the stories of Noah, Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Mary, and Jesus. The Qurʾan lacks many of the detailed historical accounts that occur in Kings and Chronicles, and it rarely includes references to specific dates, intervals of years, or ages – with the exception of Noah, who is said to have lived 950 years. It is on account of this overlapping vision of salvation history that most of the Qurʾan's cast of characters are figures from the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels – it is no coincidence. One might also make this point the other way round – relatively few Qurʾanic stories involve characters that do not appear in biblical tradition. The main exceptions are the prophets Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Šuʿayb and the sage Luqmān al-ḥakīm. Even Alexander the Great might be considered part of biblical tradition because his story had been incorporated into a Christian framework in

various versions of his legend that portray him as a pious proto-Christian and dedicated instrument of God.

Some of the fundamental similarities between the Qur'an and biblical tradition have to do with the conception of God and his communication with the world. God is throughout the Qur'an portrayed in a manner that recalls biblical images (in addition to sharing a great deal with ancient Near Eastern conceptions of the divine in general). God is portrayed as the creator and director of the world and is explicitly termed a king and represented as having a monarch's attributes and prerogatives. God is also portrayed as a judge, and he metes out justice to mankind on the Day of Judgment.

God communicates with the world in a regular manner through Scripture, the general label for which is *kitāb*, that is, "book". Scripture is "sent down" or revealed by God, and it is revealed to those whom God has commissioned as prophets. According to the Qur'an itself, the Qur'an is not the only legitimate scripture in existence: it belongs to a collection of other legitimate scriptural texts, and all of these belong to biblical tradition. In the Qur'an, the archetypal Scripture is the Torah (*al-Tawrāh*), which was revealed to Moses (28:48–49). It was followed by the Qur'an, which confirms (*muṣaddiq*) the earlier scriptures (2:14, 89, 91, 97, 101; 3:3, 50; 4:47; 5:46, 48; 6:92; 35:31; 46:30). Other scriptures or texts besides the Torah that have been revealed by God to mankind before the Qur'an include the gospels (*al-Inǧīl*, 3:3, 48, 65; 5:46, 47, 66, 68, 110; 7:157; 9:111; 48:29; 57:27) and the Psalms, termed *Zabūr* or *al-Zabūr*, characterized as a text revealed to David (4:163; 17:55; 21:105). There is also a reference to the scrolls or folios of Abraham and Moses (87:19). Thus, in the Qur'anic perspective, Scripture is a fundamental category of religious meaning, the chief representative of the category is the Torah, and the entire category belongs to, and is characteristic of, biblical tradition.

The Qur'anic text presents biblical scriptures as authoritative sacred texts. *All* legitimate scriptures are biblical. The most authoritative scripture in the text of the Qur'an is the Torah, which is associated with Moses. In several passages, the term *al-Kitāb*, "the Book" or "the Scripture", is applied to the Torah. In others, it is applied to a scripture that is shared by Jews and Christians, suggesting that *al-Kitāb* in such instances means simply "the Bible" and not just "the Book" or "the Scripture". The oft-cited terms for Jews and Christians, *ahl al-kitāb* ("the People of the Book", for example, 2:105) or *allaḏīna ūtū al-kitāb* ("those to whom the Book has been given", for instance, 2:101)

therefore may be interpreted as meaning "the People of *the Bible*" and "those to whom *the Bible* has been given". These labels refer not to all earlier groups who had a scripture of any sort in their possession but specifically to biblical monotheists who had adopted the Bible as their sacred text.[39] The term *al-ḏikr*, "the Remembrance", also appears to refer to the Bible.[40] The Qur'anic instruction "fa-s'alū ahla al-ḏikri in kuntum lā ta'lamūn" ("Ask the People of the Remembrance, if you do not know", 16:43) occurs in a context that refers to salvation history. The passage suggests that "the People of the Remembrance" means people who have knowledge of biblical tradition – authorities on the Bible. A similar statement is directed to the Prophet Muḥammad himself: "So if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has come to you from your Lord, so do not be among those who doubt" (Q 10:94). Those who have been reading the scriptures before you must be Jews or Christians who were knowledgeable about the Bible.

God communicates with the world in a regular manner through signs (Hebrew *ôtôt*, Arabic *āyāt*), leaving marks of his work in the world for mankind to observe. At the end of the story of the flood and Noah's ark in Genesis, God creates a rainbow for the survivors to view (Gen 9:13, 17). The story is an etiology that explains the existence of rainbows; from that time forward the rainbow reminds mankind that, when it rains, however profusely and excessively, God promised never again to flood the entire world and nearly to annihilate the human population. The concept of signs revealed by God in the natural world is a fundamental aspect of Qur'anic discourse that permeates the text. Features of the natural world and the cosmos are cited as indications of higher truths, and mankind is supposed to observe and contemplate them in order to arrive at those truths, which include the ideas that a divine power exists, that it is singular and not multiple, that God provides out of His bounty for mankind, that they have a consequent obligation to thank Him, and that human communities must listen to the messages that God conveys.

[39] M. Goudarzi Taghanaki, *The Second Coming of the Book: Rethinking Qur'anic Scripturology and Prophetology*, PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2018, pp. 219–225, available at https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/40049998 (21 November 2024); D.J. Stewart, "Noah's Boat and Other Missed Opportunities", *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* 6 (2021), pp. 17–67, esp. 58–63.
[40] Goudarzi Taghanaki, *The Second Coming of the Book*, pp. 104–107.

God has also communicated with mankind historically through a series of prophets. Each prophet is commissioned by God to deliver God's message to his people. Each addresses his people, and while most of them usually reject his message, a small group accept it and thus become believers. Durie does point out the importance of prophetology in the Qur'an, and he notes that this represents a distinct difference between the Bible and the Qur'an.[41] Many figures who are not characterized as prophets in the Bible, such as Noah, Lot, David, and others, are assimilated to the model of a prophet in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the Qur'anic conception of a prophet is very much tied to biblical models. Arguably, the chief representative of the category of prophet in the Qur'an is Moses. Prophets are chosen and commissioned by God, and the chief example of this in the Qur'an is the scene of the burning bush familiar from Exodus (Exod 3:1–4:17; Q 19:51–53; 20:9–48; 26:10–16; 27:7–12; 28:29–35). Prophetic miracles convince the audience that they are representing God and not making mere claims for themselves, and the chief examples of this in the Qur'an are the miracles of Moses' staff's transformation into a snake and his hand's turning white (Exod 4:3–7; 7:8–12; Q 7:107–108; 20:17–21; 26:32–33; 27:10–12; 28: 31–32). As Durie observes, the Qur'anic prophets are parallel and similar to each other.[42] Nevertheless, they are not all of the same salience or importance in the text, and they have distinctive features despite their general conformity to a paradigm.

Furthermore, the conception of the life of this world and the afterlife are in broad outlines very similar. Both Christianity and Islam stress that the soul is eternal. One is tested by God during one's life in the world, and one is judged on the basis of one's performance of good or evil in the world. The conceptions of sin and individual responsibility are similar. One is judged by God on the Day of Judgment and found deserving either of punishment or of reward. Consequently, one is assigned either to paradise or to hell.

It is not only biblical figures and concepts that appear in the Qur'an but also biblical vocabulary that refers to those concepts. The Qur'an uses the name Sinai, Arabic *Sīnā'*, *Saynā'*, or *Sīnīn* (23:20; 95:2) in connection with Mount Sinai, but it also uses the term *al-Ṭūr* (the mountain, 2: 63, 93; 4:154; 19:52; 20:80; 23:20; 28:29, 46; 52:1; 95:2). *Al-Ṭūr*, which is a borrowing from the Aramaic *ṭūrā* "mountain", is

[41] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 123–154.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 135–142.

used in the Qurʾan only in reference to Mount Sinai. The common Arabic word for mountain, *ǧabal* (pl. *ǧibāl*), is used in 39 passages, including all of those in which ordinary mountains are described, such as: "A-lam tara anna Allāha yasǧudu lahū man fī al-samāwāti wa-man fī al-arḍi wa-al-šamsu wa-al-qamaru wa-al-nuǧūmu wa-al-ǧibālu" ("Do you not see that those who are in the heavens, those who are on the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the mountains all prostrate to God?", 22:18). Similarly, one of the main terms for hell in the Qurʾan, *Ǧahannam* (for instance, 2:206; 3:12, 162, 197), derives from the Hebrew *Gēʾ Hīnnōm*, meaning "the Valley of Hinnom", from *Gēʾ ḇen-Hīnnōm*, "the Valley of the Son of Hinnom". The term *al-asbāṭ*, which derives from the Hebrew *ševaṭīm*, refers to the twelve tribes of Israel (2:136, 140; 3:84; 4:163; 7:160), as opposed to the ordinary Arabic word for tribes, *qabāʾil* (49:13). These are just a few among many such biblical terms that serve in the Qurʾan to express specific biblical concepts.

Several explicit quotations of biblical texts occur in the Qurʾan, though the number is limited. The existence of such quotations is often denied in secondary literature, perhaps because of the assumption that there ought to be more extensive biblical quotations or that the form should match more exactly. One of these is the statement of *lex talionis* that occurs in Sura al-Māʾida: "And We ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds legal retribution. But whoever forgoes his right as charity, it is an expiation for him. Whoever does not judge by what God has revealed – then those are the wrongdoers" (5:45). The Qurʾanic version of "the meek shall inherit the earth" is identified in the text as a quotation from the Psalms: "We wrote in the Psalms, after the Reminder, 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth'" (21:105).

Several Qurʾanic texts are closely related to the Mishnah or Talmud. David Samuel Margoliouth argued in 1928 that the phrase "laysa lahum ḫalāq fī al-āḫirah" ("They have no share in the Afterlife"), which occurs in the exact same form four times in the Qurʾan (2:102, 200; 3:77; 9:69), was a verbatim quotation of the Hebrew "ēn lahem ḥeleq la-ʿōlam hab-ba ("They have no share in the World-to-Come") in the Mishnah (Tract Sanhedrin 90a).[43] The fact that the Qurʾanic

[43] D.S. Margoliouth, "Harut and Marut", *Moslem World* 18/1 (1928), pp. 73–79, here

verses use the distinctive term *ḫalāq* for "share", which resembles the Hebrew *ḥeleq* closely, rather than the common Arabic word, *naṣīb*, which occurs in similar contexts (2:202; 4:85; 42:20), suggests that the Hebrew wording in the Mishnah affected the wording of these passages. Another verse that presents itself as a quotation from Jewish texts is the following (5:32): "Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely". This verse refers to the Jewish law concerning murder. It does not mention a book, but it refers to a law that has been decreed. A text close to this appears in the Mishnah: "Therefore, the man was created singly, to teach that he who destroys one soul of a human being, the Scripture considers him as if he should destroy a whole world, and he who saves one soul of Israel, the Scripture considers him as if he should save a whole World" (Tract Sanhedrin 5, Mishnah 4).

While one cannot point to many passages in the Qur'an that are simply transposed versions of biblical passages, the Qur'an does provide evidence of explicit quotations of biblical texts. The fact that more do not occur may have to do with the form of the Qur'an, which differs radically from that of most biblical prose. Many of the Qur'an's condensed, artistic passages exhibit rhyming and rhythmically parallel cola. The existence of these formal constraints would militate against the quotation of extensive biblical passages without significant changes in form.

In addition, many biblical turns of phrase occur in the Qur'an.[44] The reference to a camel passing through the eye of a needle is well known from the Gospel of Matthew: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Matt 19:24).[45] As Gabriel Said Reynolds and others have pointed out, it also occurs in the Qur'an, not in reference to a wealthy man, but rather in reference to those who reject

78; J. Horovitz, "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925), pp. 145–227; A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1938, pp. 124–125.

[44] G.S. Reynolds, "Biblical Turns of Phrase in the Quran", in *Light upon Light*, pp. 45–69.

[45] For quotations from the Bible, I have used the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

God's signs: "Indeed, those who deny Our signs and are disdainful of them – the gates of heaven will not be opened for them, nor shall they enter Paradise until the camel passes through the needle's eye [*ḥattā yaliǧa al-ǧamalu fī sammi al-ḫiyāṭ*], and thus do We requite the guilty" (7:40).[46] Reynolds connects the phrase "qulūbunā ġulf", "our hearts are uncircumcised", which occurs several times in the Qur'an (2:88; 4:155), with biblical usage in such passages as the following: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will attend to all those who are circumcised only in the foreskin: Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all those with shaven temples who live in the desert. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart". (Jer 9:25–26).[47] In addition, as mentioned above, the Qur'an includes retellings of the narrative of Moses and the burning bush, and in several of those scenes the language used appears to reflect the specific terms of the Hebrew text. These passages include the phrases: "Innī anā rabbuka" ("I, indeed I, am your Lord", 20:12), "innahū anā Allāhu al-ʿazīzu al-ḥakīm" ("indeed it is I who am God, the powerful and decisive", 27:9), "innī anā Allāhu rabbu al-ʿālamīn" ("I, indeed I, am God, Lord of the Worlds", 28:30). One may argue that they all correspond to "ʾehyeh ʾasher ʾehyeh", "I am who I am", in Exod 3:14, not word for word but at least rhetorically, since all of them repeat the first-person pronoun, which produces an emphatic effect similar to that caused by the repetition of the first-person verb *ʾehyeh*, "I am".

Reynolds' extensive study of the biblical subtext in the Qur'an examines 13 Qur'anic passages that draw on biblical literature in ways that were not recognized in the Islamic commentaries.[48] For example, he makes the following connections between Qur'anic passages and biblical literature. The scene in which Adam is presented to the angels and the angel Iblīs refuses to bow down draws on Christian comparisons of Adam to Christ.[49] The Qur'anic passages which portray Abraham examining the stars and rejecting their divinity take up a theme found in Jubilees 12:16–17 and the Apocalypse of Abraham 8:5–6.[50] The refusal of Abraham's guests to eat does not correspond to the nar-

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 51–55.
[48] Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, pp. 39–199.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 77–81.

rative of Abraham's hosting of his guests in Genesis, but rather to later texts in the Hebrew Bible which indicate that angels do not eat (Judg 13:15; Tob 19), as well as commentaries by Philo, Josephus, and Justin Martyr.[51] In Reynolds' view the biblical background to many Qur'anic narratives looms so large that the Qur'an may be understood as a homily on the Bible.[52]

Later Muslim authorities often frowned on using the Bible as a source for understanding the Qur'an. This attitude was enshrined in the doctrine of *taḥrīf*, which is often rendered as "textual corruption" and is cited as justification for the idea that the biblical books one now finds in the hands of Jews and Christians are unreliable and so should not be read by Muslims or treated as legitimate scriptures. Examination of the Qur'an shows that it does not generally support this exaggerated doctrinal view. The verses to which it is attached serve to explain the existence of small discrepancies between the Torah and the Qur'an but not to impugn the authority of the biblical texts generally (2:75; 4:46; 5:13, 41). Contrary evidence is provided by the Qur'anic passage that urges Jews who are contemporary with the Prophet to judge on the basis of the Torah and Christians contemporary with the Prophet to judge on the basis of the Gospel (5:45–47). How could this be suggested if the scriptures – in the form in their possession during the Prophet's time – were not reliable?

The doctrine of *taḥrīf*, however, did not result in universal avoidance of the Bible on the part of Muslim scholars. Some Muslim commentators, both those who were quite aggressively opposed to Jews and Christians, such as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), and those who adopted a more ecumenical approach, such as Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480) and Naǧm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316), made extensive use of the Bible in their writings.[53] Camilla Adang surveyed exeget-

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 230–258.
[53] W.A. Saleh, "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqaʿi' and His Defence of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qur' ān", *Speculum* 83/3 (2008), pp. 629–654; Id., *In Defense of the Bible: A Critical Edition and an Introduction to Al-Biqāʿī's Bible Treatise*, Leiden, Brill, 2008; Id., "The Status of the Bible in 9th/15th-Century Cairo: The Fatwas Collected by al-Biqāʿī d. 885/1480", in *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period: Jews in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Sultanates (1171–1517)*, ed. by S. Conermann, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017, pp. 177–194; C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, Leiden, Brill, 1996; L. Demiri, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm*

ical and related literature of the first five Islamic centuries and found that many early Muslim authors held the view that the Hebrew scriptures had remained intact, including Abū al-Rabīʿ b. al-Layṯ (fl. 8th century CE), ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. ca. 247/861), ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba (d. 276/889), Aḥmad b. Isḥāq b. Ǧaʿfar b. Waḥb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (d. after 292/904), Abū Ǧaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ǧarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), and Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). Others, however, including Abū Naṣr Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 355/966) and Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048), indeed held the view that the Hebrew Bible had been corrupted.

The biblical tradition and biblical writings thus loom large in the Qurʾanic conception of salvation history and sacred texts, but it bears emphasis that they also loom large in the Qurʾanic present. In other words, the Medinan members of the nascent Islamic community understood and felt viscerally that they were living through and experiencing directly a continuation of biblical history. They therefore interpreted the events of their times in accordance with biblical themes and models and in connection with particular biblical stories. Both the Qurʾan itself and extra-Qurʾanic accounts regarding the early history of the Islamic community provide evidence of the widespread use of an interpretive strategy of typology – analogical arguments connecting stories from salvation history with contemporary events. Thus, for example, the Shiites compared their *imāms* to Noah's ark: whoever pledges allegiance to the *imām* of the age has virtually embarked on Noah's ark and will be saved. Whoever does not will be like those who failed to embark on the ark and were drowned. A *ḥadīṯ* cited frequently to justify the Shiites' view of the succession to the Prophet Muḥammad reports that he said to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, his cousin and son-in-law: "You, to me, are like Aaron, to Moses".[54] This is understood to mean that, just as Aaron had been Moses's representative and rightful successor, ʿAlī was Muḥammad's representative and rightful successor, thus justifying the authority of the line of Shiite *imāms* among ʿAlī

al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures. A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation with an Introduction, Leiden, Brill, 2013.

[54] G. Miskinzoda, "The Significance of the *Ḥadīth* of the Position of Aaron for the Formulation of the Shīʿī Doctrine of Authority", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 78/1 (2015), pp. 67–82.

ibn Abī Ṭālib's descendants. In the course of the conflict between the Muslims in Medina and the pagans of the Prophet Muḥammad's native town of Mecca, he is reported to have cursed his opponents: "Almighty God, trouble them with seven years of drought like the seven which occurred at the time of Joseph".[55] Again, an explicit analogy is made between the story of Joseph in Genesis and the contemporary political situation. Many other examples could be cited that indicate a regular practice by early Muslims of interpreting their contemporary world through biblical paradigms.

Not only early Muslims but also the Qurʾanic text itself frequently engages in this sort of analogical argument. In the Sura al-Taḥrīm (Q 66), two unnamed wives of the Prophet Muḥammad are compared to the wives of Noah and Lot. The analogy and its implications are clear: Muḥammad is analogous to Lot, and his wives are analogous to Lot's wife. The fact of their being married to one of God's prophets does not guarantee their salvation, with the implication that they may end up like the wife of Lot. They are responsible as individuals, and they still need to behave properly.[56] The term applied to the members of the nascent Muslim community, *al-Anṣār*, "the Helpers" or "the Allies", alludes to the disciples of Christ. After a description of Jesus's mission to the children of Israel (3:49–51), the following statement occurs: "When Jesus realized that they still did not believe, he asked, 'Who will be my helpers [*anṣār*] in God's cause?' The disciples responded, 'We will be God's helpers [*anṣār*]'" (3:52). When the Medinan converts to Islam were termed *anṣār*, this designation was meant to portray them as the disciples of the Prophet Muḥammad, a loyal group of followers modeled on the disciples of Christ. The Qurʾanic audience is repeatedly asked to reflect on the relevance of characters and events from biblical salvation history to their own situations.

Throughout much of the Qurʾan, the stories of earlier peoples from salvation history are told not merely to document what occurred in the past of a religious tradition. Rather, they present analogical arguments referring to the contemporary age of the Prophet Muḥammad: the prophets of the past are parallel to Muḥammad, the believers

[55] U. Rubin, "Muḥammad's Curse of Muḍar and the Blockade of Mecca", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31/3 (1988): 249–264, here 249.
[56] N.K. Schmid, "Lot's Wife: Late Antique Paradigms of Sense and the Qurʾān", in *Qurʾānic Studies Today*, ed. by A. Neuwirth and M.A. Sells, Abingdon, Routledge, 2016, pp. 52–81, here 71–72.

of the past are parallel to the Muslims, and the disbelievers of the past are parallel to the disbelievers in the Prophet's audience. For example, Sura al-Qamar (Q 54) presents a series of parallel stories of earlier peoples who were destroyed because they rejected God's warnings. The accounts of their destruction are meant to suggest that the Prophet Muḥammad's people, too, will suffer a similar fate if they continue to reject God's warnings.[57] In Sura al-Šuʿarāʾ (Q 26), a similar set of parallel stories stresses that the believers of past nations obeyed their prophets and were therefore saved, along with the prophets themselves.[58] The analogical point of the sura is that the Muslims, if they obey the Prophet Muḥammad, will be saved along with him when their pagan compatriots are destroyed. Such analogical arguments show many points of similarity with Christian strategies of typological interpretation of Old Testament material, indicating a profound connection between the traditions. In the Qur'an, most of the passages that draw on this strategy base it on a fundamental understanding of the regularity of prophetic missions. Walid Saleh has called attention to this and suggested that it draws on the conception of prophecy evident in Deuteronomic history.[59]

In recent decades, many scholars have adopted an approach that emphasizes the Late Antique environment of the Qur'an. The chief representative of this approach has been Angelika Neuwirth, in her ground-breaking and wide-ranging *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, but it has been pursued vigorously as well by Gabriel Reynolds, Emran El-Badawi, and many others, as mentioned above. Though they share emphasis on the Late Antique background, scholars within this trend vary widely in their assessment of the Qur'an's relationship to the surrounding environment. As Mohsen Goudarzi has succinctly

[57] D.J. Stewart, "Understanding the Koran in English: Notes on Translation, Form, and Prophetic Typology", in *Diversity in Language: Contrastive Studies in English and Arabic Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, ed. by Z. Ibrahim, N. Kassabgy and S. Aydelott, Cairo, American University in Cairo Press, 2000, pp. 31–48.
[58] M. Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto: The Sūra of 'The Poets' and the Qur'ānic Foundations of Prophetic Authority", in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of A Literary Tradition*, ed. by J.L. Kugel, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990, pp. 75–119; S.H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 64–71.
[59] W.A. Saleh, "The Preacher of the Meccan Qur'an: Deuteronomistic History and Confessionalism in Muhammad's Early Preaching", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20/2 (2018), pp. 74–111.

put it, they differ over the issue whether the environment in which the Qur'an arose was barely, somewhat, or thoroughly imbued with Judaism and Christianity.[60] Durie's work aligns with those who would argue that the Qur'anic environment was barely exposed to biblical tradition and that the Qur'an does not reflect any substantial knowledge of Jewish and Christian understandings of the Bible.

6. *The Question of Intention*

A third objection that may be raised against Durie's argument is that it sidesteps or ignores the intended effect of any single mention of a biblical element. While he would take any difference in definition or meaning assigned to a biblical element as indication of an important disruption or lack of continuity, that is not the only question to ask. Another, equally valid question is whether inclusion of the element was intended to invoke biblical tradition. The Qur'an may contain examples equivalent to the English "juggernaut", a usage utterly removed from its original context, but that is rarely the case. References to biblical figures are meant to conjure up biblical stories that fit into biblical salvation history and that invoke biblical religion, and the text reflects the expectation that the Qur'anic audience will understand such allusions. Moreover, the differences one encounters may be due to the intention to modify, manipulate, or reform the tradition rather than due to haphazard usage, ignorance, or neglect.

Some idea of the Qur'an's overall conception of biblical traditions and their relation to the Qur'an itself may be gained from the following verse (Q 29:46):

> Wa-lā tuǧādilū ahla al-kitābi illā bi-allatī hiya aḥsanu illā allaḏīna ẓalamū minhum wa-qūlū āmannā bi-allaḏī unzila ilaynā wa-unzila ilaykum wa-ilāhunā wa-ilāhukum wāḥidun wa-naḥnu lahū muslimūn.
>
> Do not argue with the People of the Book except with what is best, except with those of them who act wrongfully. Say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is One, and to Him we are exclusively devoted".

[60] See Goudarzi, "Peering Behind the Lines".

The verse in general suggests that in debates with the People of the Book, the Muslims should stress what they have in common rather than harping on divisive issues. This statement is based on an understanding that a fundamental, shared tradition exists despite points of dispute and contention. I suppose that Durie might argue that this idea is simply false, but he ignores completely the Qur'anic perception of its validity.

In many instances, therefore, biblical material in the Qur'an serves a purpose very similar to the purpose it served in the original, biblical context. For example, the creation of the world in six days serves, in the Qur'an, to suggest that the world has an orderly structure, that many of its elements have been created for mankind's benefit, that mankind has dominion over the other creatures in the world and consequently an obligation to thank God for the favors that He has bestowed on humans. Moses, in the Qur'an as in the Bible, is commissioned to deliver God's message about the Hebrews to Pharaoh. He leads them in their flight out of Egypt, allowing them to escape Pharaoh's grasp and ending their oppression. He conveys to them their scripture, the Torah, and establishes their religion. Elijah or Elias is portrayed as championing worship of God and denouncing the worship of Baal (37:123–32), as he is in the Bible (1 Kgs 18:20–40). In these and many other instances, the Qur'an and the Bible do not merely share characters, events, and other material; they also share the attendant messages.

In several cases, it may even be argued that the Qur'anic text assumes knowledge of biblical tradition, without which the reference in the text might not make sense to the audience. The story of Abraham and his guests, in which he and his wife are informed that they will have a son, appears several times in the Qur'an, and in all cases it occurs together with the story of those same guests, God's messengers, who set out to destroy the city of Lot. This connection accords perfectly with the account in Genesis, in which these two stories occur in tandem in chapters 18 and 19. In the retelling of the story in Sura Hūd, after the guests inform Abraham that he will have a son, the text reads as follows: "Thus when fear had left Abraham and the good news had been conveyed to him, he began to dispute with us [*yuǧādilunā*] concerning the people of Lot" (11:74). This statement appears abruptly, without any transition. Neither Lot, nor his city, nor its inhabitants have been introduced thus far in the passage, and it is not clear why they have suddenly become the focus of the narrative. Still less clear is why

Abraham disputes with God concerning them. The statement briefly alludes to the lengthy exchange in Gen 18:16–33 in which Abraham is informed of the plan to annihilate Sodom and Gomorrah and argues against it on the grounds that, even if the inhabitants are generally evil and corrupt, there might be some righteous men among them who do not deserve annihilation. The Qur'anic reference is not torn out of its context, nor has it shown up haphazardly in a place where it does not belong, nor does it serve to convey a different message to the reader. The context is the same, and the message is the same. However, the reference is so short and oblique that it might not be comprehensible to readers who do not already know the story and do not know the substance of Abraham's debate with God. A similar example involves the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11–12. David was smitten by Bathsheba, the wife of a captain in his army, Uriah the Hittite. He arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle, and then he married the captain's widow, Bathsheba. He was then confronted by Nathan, who told him a parable of a rich man who owned 99 sheep taking the single sheep owned by a poor man (2 Sam 12:1–6). David responded that the rich man had wronged the poor man and should be severely punished, upon which Nathan revealed that the rich man in the story was none other than David himself, for he had done something exactly analogous in taking the wife of Uriah. Consequently, David accepts the blame for his actions and repents (2 Sam 12:7–13). A condensed version of this story appears in 38:21–25 in the Qur'an. The parable of the rich man with 99 sheep and the poor man with one sheep is mentioned, but it is told by two litigants who have brought their case before David for adjudication (38:23). The next verse reports David's verdict and then his repentance:

> [David] said, "He has certainly wronged you in demanding your sheep in addition to his. And indeed, many associates oppress one another, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds – and few are they". But then David became certain that We had tried him. He asked forgiveness of his Lord, fell down, bowing in prostration, and turned [to God] in repentance.

This passage presents David's reaction, including his repentance, but it is not clear from the verse what he repents for or how the parable relates to him. One would have to know the biblical story in order for

the chain of events to make sense.[61] These examples suggest that the Qur'anic text assumes a high level of familiarity with biblical stories on the part of its audience, corroborating the view that they have a shared tradition.

Furthermore, the Qur'an recognizes that certain ideas are contested among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, while at the same time not impugning the understanding that they belong to one tradition. In particular, the Qur'an points out that Jews and Christians both claim to follow the legacy of Abraham, but that, according to a historical view, Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian (Q 3:65-67):

> Yā-ahla al-kitābi lima tuḥāǧǧūna fī Ibrāhīma wa-mā unzilati al-Tawrātu wa-al-Inǧīlu illā min baʿdihī a-fa-lā taʿqilūn [...] mā kāna Ibrāhīmu yahūdiyyan wa-lā naṣrāniyyan wa-lākin kāna ḥanīfan musliman wa-mā kāna min al-mušrikīn.
>
> O People of the Bible! Why do you dispute over Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Do you have no sense? [...] Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was a monotheist wholly devoting worship to God, and he was not one of the idolaters.

The logic behind this Qur'anic statement is that Judaism proper did not begin until the era of Moses and the revelation of the Torah and that Christianity did not begin until the mission of Jesus and the revelation of the Gospel. Since Abraham lived long before that, he could not have been a Jew or a Christian. And if Abraham was a non-Jewish, non-Christian monotheist, then the Muslims can claim him even more strongly as their own forerunner. This is one among many examples that indicate that, according to the Qur'anic view, the three religions belong to a unified tradition even though they contest certain issues.

7. *Specific Claims Regarding Biblical Terms and Concepts in the Qur'an*

It is striking that while Durie pays significant attention to the Qur'an as a whole, he seems to miss many fundamental points regarding the

[61] On the exegesis of this story in Islamic sources, see K. Mohammed, *David in the Muslim Tradition: The Bathsheba Affair*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2015.

Qur'an's general framework of salvation history, in which biblical tradition looms large. This is perhaps simply a reflection of a general tendency to stress differences rather than similarities between the two traditions. However, he does recognize the Qur'an's commitment to monotheism[62] and its emphasis on prophets and the history of prophecy,[63] two fundamental concepts that shape the Qur'an's treatment of biblical material.[64]

Durie adopts some of the typical strategies of those who would stress the separation of the Qur'an from the Bible. One such strategy is not to translate the biblical names from their Arabic forms into their ordinary English equivalents, in order to suggest, like Leaman, that they are not the same characters. Thus, for example, he refers to Noah as Nūḥ (p. 206), Abraham as Ibrāhīm (p. 208), Moses as Mūsā (p. 209), Jesus as ʿĪsā (p. 161). He refers to God in the Qur'an as Allāh (pp. 106–115). He also refers to the Qur'an's conception of prophecy as "rasulology", again retaining the Arabic term *rasūl*, "messenger", stressing its difference from biblical conceptions of prophecy.[65]

Durie's most sustained argument against recognizing the Qur'an as part of biblical tradition, the heart of the book in my view, is presented in chapter 6, "Lexical and Narrative Studies".[66] Here, he addresses instances in which casual observers might detect a close connection between the Qur'an and biblical tradition but concerning which he argues that this would be a misleading, superficial impression. In Durie's analysis, these examples show that the Qur'an adopts what appear to be biblical terms with little or no recognition of their proper biblical context, meaning, or theological implications, in cases that resemble the use of Roman columns to build the Grand Mosque of Kairouan.

[62] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 105–122.
[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 123–154.
[64] Durie's book contains a great deal of material that is unnecessary in that it is entirely superfluous to his main arguments but perhaps serves to signal to readers significant engagement with earlier Qur'anic studies scholarship. Durie discusses the chronology of the Qur'anic text at length, proposing a parallel chronology that is ostensibly not based on later works of the Islamic tradition such as the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 150/767) and Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) but that ends up being quite similar to Nöldeke's chronology. I find the entire section devoted to the chronology of the Qur'anic text in chapters 2–3 of Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 47–103, of little relevance to the rest of his work. Similar is the discussion of the oral nature of the Qur'an, *ibid.*, pp. 29–36.
[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 123–154.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 155–249.

The conclusion one is supposed to reach is that the Qur'an is not related to the Bible in any systematic or organic way; it cannot be described as having grown gradually or naturally out of biblical tradition. In this chapter, Durie treats seven examples of Qur'anic vocabulary and concepts: *al-Masīḥ* (Christ, pp. 157–164), *Rūḥ* (spirit, pp. 164–175), *Kalimah* (word, pp. 173–174), *sakīna* (Shekhinah, pp. 175–180), holiness (pp. 180–182), Satan and Satans (pp. 182–195), the covenant (pp. 195–205), the fall and sin (pp. 213–229), and fighting prophets (pp. 229–239). In all these cases, Durie argues that apparent similarities between Qur'anic usage and biblical tradition are superficial and do not indicate profound connections. His basic strategy is first to show that the sense of a term in the Qur'an differs from the sense that the corresponding term has in the Bible – especially in a particular Christian theological interpretation of the Bible. Having established that, he then argues that the term cannot serve as evidence that the Bible and the Qur'an share a substantial theological connection. They therefore cannot be said, he implies, to belong to the same religious tradition.

Durie treats the first topic to be considered here, the meaning of the term *al-Masīḥ*, "the Messiah" or "Christ", in a section devoted to Christology.[67] While the term is clearly related to the Hebrew *hamašīaḥ*, several scholars have argued that it derives more directly from the Syriac form, *mešīḥā*.[68] In the Qur'an it is applied to Jesus eleven

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 157–164. On the Qur'anic portrayal of Christ in general, see M. Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, Paris, Seuil, 1959; C. Schedl, *Muhammad und Jesus: Die christologisch relevanten Texte des Koran. Neu übersetzt und erklärt*, Vienna, Herder, 1978; G. Rizzardi, *Il problema della cristologia coranica. Storia dell'ermeneutica cristiana*, Milan, Istituto di Propaganda Libraria, 1982; K. Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1985; G. Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'ān*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977; N. Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity: The Representation of Jesus in the Qur'ān and the Classical Muslim Commentaries*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991; T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2001; H.I. Çinar, *Maria und Jesus im Islam: Darstellung anhand des Korans und der islamischen kanonischen Tradition unter Berücksichtigung der islamischen Exegeten*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2007; O. Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, 2nd ed., New York, Continuum, 2010; M. Siddiqui, *Christians, Muslims, & Jesus*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013; Z. Saritoprak, *Islam's Jesus*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2014; S.H. Griffith, "Late Antique Christology in Qur'ānic Perspective", in *Die Koranhermeneutik von Günter Lüling*, ed. by G. Tamer, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 33–68.
[68] S. Fraenkel, *De Vocabulis in antiquis Arabum carminibus et in Corano peregrinis*, Leiden, Brill, 1880, p. 24; P. de Lagarde, *Übersicht über die im Aramaeischen, Arabischen und Hebraeischen übliche Bildung der Nomina*, Göttingen, Dieterichsche Ver-

times (3:45; 4:147; 171, 172; 5:17 [twice], 72 [twice], 75; 9:30, 31): three times as *al-Masīḥ* (4:172; 5:72; 9:30), five times as *al-Masīḥ b. Maryam*, "the Messiah son of Mary" (5:17 [twice], 72, 75; 9:31), and three times as *al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā b. Maryam*, "the Messiah Jesus son of Mary" (3:45; 4:157, 171). The term occurs in the Qur'an *only* in connection with Jesus. Durie begins his analysis by noting that *al-masīḥ* is a *laqab* or "epithet".

> Although a *laqab* is normally a recognizable descriptive, the form *masīḥ* is morphologically unanalyzable in Arabic if the root is *m-s-ḥ*. The Arabic root *m-s-ḥ* can mean "anoint" or "touch", which is close in meaning to the cognate Hebrew *māšaḥ*, however, the form *masīḥ* does not fit into any productive Arabic nominalization pattern.[69]

Durire's statement that in the Qur'an, *al-Masīḥ* is a *laqab* is true, since *al-Masīḥ* is clearly not Jesus's proper name, *ʿĪsā* in Arabic. It is true that a *laqab* is usually an adjective, and it is also true that a *laqab* often has an apparent meaning. An example from Islamic tradition surrounding the Qur'an is *al-kalīm*, "the one addressed directly", an epithet applied to Moses, though it does not occur in the Qur'an itself. This term indicates that Moses was distinguished from other prophetic figures by having been addressed directly by God, without any intermediary. One should recognize, however, that not all *laqab*s have a transparent meaning. For example, in Islamic tradition, the *laqab al-Fārūq* is applied to the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb (r. 634–644), but this term is by no means transparent to modern interpreters and has been subject to various speculations. While it has been identified as an Aramaic term meaning "redeemer", it has often been claimed to mean "he who distinguishes truth from falsehood", because the root consonants *f-r-q* suggest an association with the concept of "dividing" or "distinguishing".[70]

lags-Buchhandlung, 1889, pp. 93–99; J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1926, pp. 129–130; A. Mingana, "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'ān", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 11/1 (1927), pp. 77–98, here 85; Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, pp. 265–266.

[69] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, p. 161.

[70] P. Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 18–19.

Durie's claim here that the word *masīḥ* is a formal oddity in Arabic must be rejected. The form *masīḥ* is perfectly analyzable according to Arabic morphology, since it adopts a common pattern of Arabic nouns and adjectives, *faʿīl*. One might ask whether it is crucial to ask this question in the first place. The Arabic words *qāmūs* (ocean, dictionary), and *ǧāmūs* (water-buffalo), adopt the same pattern, *fāʿūl*, even though they derive from words that resemble each other much less, *qāmūs* deriving from the Greek *okeanos* (ocean), and *ǧāmūs* deriving from the Persian *gāv-mīsh* (water-buffalo). Furthermore, they adopt a common form that is shared by other nouns, including nouns of Aramac-Syriac origin, such as *ṭāḥūn* (mill) and *ṭāʿūn* (plague), and thus do not stand out as morphological oddities in the way that *tilifūn* (telephone) or *kombyūtar* (computer) stand out in modern Arabic. *Masīḥ* is an ordinary form with, moreover, a clearly recognizable triconsonantal root, *m-s-ḥ*, connected with the common verb *masaḥa*, *yamsaḥu*, meaning "to wipe, anoint", something helped by the close historical connections between Arabic and Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac.

The original Hebrew *mašīaḥ* is of the pattern *paʿīl*, which serves as the passive participle of verbs of the form *paʿal*. The Aramaic/Syriac cognate *mašīḥā* has the same pattern. The corresponding Arabic pattern of passive participles of the form I verb is *mafʿūl*, which in this case would produce the form *mamsūḥ*, from the verb *masaḥa*. However, the pattern *faʿīl* is common in Arabic, and it is well known that adjectives of this pattern may take on the meaning either of an active participle (*fāʿil*) or of a passive participle (*mafʿūl*) of the associated form I verb (*faʿala*). Thus, *raʾīs* (chief, leader) takes on the meaning of the active participle of *raʾasa* (to preside), while *qatīl* (murder victim) takes on the meaning of the passive participle of *qatala* (to kill), *ǧarīḥ* means "wounded", from *ǧaraḥa* "to wound", and so on. Many Qurʾanic words of this pattern belong to the active category, such as *marīḍ* (ill, 2:184, 185, 196), *ġaniyy* (wealthy, not needy, 2:267; 3:97) and *faqīr* (poor, needy, 4:135), *šadīd* (strong, severe, 3:4), *samīʿ* and *baṣīr* (respectively "hearing" and "seeing", 26:61). Words of this form that convey the meaning of a passive participle are somewhat less common in the Qurʾan but nevertheless include *qatlā* (killed, murdered, 2:178), the plural of *qatīl*, and *ṣarʿā* (felled, struck down, 69:7), the plural of *ṣarīʿ*, as well as *amīn* (trusted, trustworthy, 7:68), *ʿatīd* (prepared, made ready, 50:18, 23), *hašīm* (crushed, 54:31), *haḍīm* (mashed, 26:148), *ḥamīd* (praised, praiseworthy, 2:267), *ḥanīḏ* (roasted, 11:69),

and *ḥaṣīd* (harvested, cut down, 11:100). *Masīḥ* falls into this latter category, conveying the meaning "anointed", the passive participle of *masaḥa* (to touch, wipe, anoint), as the corresponding terms do in Hebrew and Syriac. There is thus nothing odd or rare about the form of the term *masīḥ* in Arabic. It also happens to have the same pattern as *al-kalīm*, "the one addressed directly" – that is, by God – the epithet commonly applied to Moses in the Islamic tradition, which does not occur literally in the Qur'an but is based on the Qur'anic scenes in which God commissions Moses as a prophet. A similar epithet for a biblical figure in the Qur'an is *al-ḏabīḥ*, literally "the Sacrificed One" – that is, the one who was about to be sacrificed – referring to the son whom Abraham was instructed to sacrifice.

Durie argues that while the term *al-Masīḥ* indeed occurs in the Qur'an, the Christian meaning of the term is not incorporated into the text. The presence of *al-Masīḥ* in the Qur'an is the result of random borrowing that has been torn from its earlier contexts and, ultimately, has no meaning:

> *Al-Masīḥ* of the Qur'an is to *mashiaḥ* of the Hebrew Bible and *christós* of the New Testament what "juggernaut" is to Hindi *Jagannātha*. *Al-Masīḥ* sits in the Qur'an like a piece of flotsam washed up and isolated from its original context, meaningless, morphologically unanalyzable, and decontextualized. [...] The adoption of the title *al-Masīḥ* for ʿĪsā in the Qur'an involved loss. It was a destructive process in the sense that the meaning of the Messianic title in the Bible was lost in the chain of events that led to the material entering the Qur'an: [...] All that is retained is that it is a title for ʿĪsā.[71]

Durie recognizes, correctly, that Jesus is presented in the Qur'an as a messenger or prophet and that this dictates significant differences in his portrayal. In his view, this is due to the Qur'an's principle of messenger uniformitarianism, the Qur'anic idea that prophetic missions follow the same pattern. However, Durie's presentation of this concept exaggerates the similarity somewhat – the prophetic figures in the Qur'an are similar to each other, but not the same, and they have distinctive qualities, despite the general resemblance among their prophetic missions. David, for example, is distinguished from other

[71] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 163–164.

prophetic figures in the Qur'an by association with revelation of the Psalms, the use of iron, the invention of armor or chainmail, and kingship. With respect to Jesus, for example, the Qur'anic presentation makes it clear that he has many distinct features, including the performance of a large number of miracles in comparison with other messengers (5:110).

Durie sees that in the Qur'an, the title *al-Masīḥ* is taken out of a context in which it had a rich history and web of meanings and placed into an alien context in which it had none of these.

> The title *al-Masīḥ* is disconnected from the religious, linguistic, and cultural system of the Bible in which *christós* had derived its meanings. This is [...] a co-opted linguistic signifier, separated from its meaning and context and repositioned to perform quite a different function. *Al-Masīḥ* shows no signs of being incorporated into the Qur'an via a continuous process of religious transmission and adaptation, in which a religious tradition was developed further by people who had been formed in the earlier religion. The way in which *al-Masīḥ* is used – and not used – in the Qur'an suggests a process of borrowing, and outsider-driven repurposing process in which a superficial feature of the "superstrate" – a phonological signifier – has been co-opted to serve a new theology, with its former theological meanings stripped away.[72]

He thus characterizes the Qur'an's use of the title *al-Masīḥ* as one that occurred without a process of adaptation involving transmission within a religious tradition. The Qur'an, in his view, is an outsider to biblical traditions (with the implication, of course, that Muslims are outsiders to the Judaeo-Christian tradition). He leads up to a categorical statement that serves to caste a sharp divide between the Qur'an and the New Testament and between Islam and Christianity in general: "To put it bluntly, the meaning of *al-Masīḥ* is irrelevant for Islam. [...] We cannot even assume that the human author(s) of the Qur'an was aware of the theological meaning and context of the title in its biblical context. He may have been aware of nothing more than that *al-Masīḥ* was a title for Jesus".[73] Durie thus sees that the term *Masīḥ* is a sort of relic that has entered the Qur'anic corpus as if by accident; the original meaning of the term has been completely lost.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 164.
[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 163–164.

As mentioned above, Durie's remarks on *al-Masīḥ* in the Qur'an and Islam are based on the contrastive assumption that the Christian view of Jesus is a natural development of the Jewish understandings of the Messiah. This idea has been widely accepted in Christian tradition, but it cannot be treated as an objective fact. Not only is it rejected by Jewish theologians, but it also involves a radical reinterpretation of the Jewish concept.

In addition, Durie's analysis of *al-Masīḥ* misses a fundamental feature of the presentation of Christian material in the Qur'an. In contrast to one of the main assumptions behind Durie's work, the idea that Qur'anic borrowings of biblical material do not belong to a system and that they are simply isolated instances, a survey of the discourse surrounding mentions of Jesus in the Qur'an reveals an overall strategy of substantial concurrence with the Christian portrayal of Jesus. Jesus' birth was miraculous. His mother, Mary, was a virgin, and his birth was facilitated directly by God. An angel announced the birth to Mary, who doubted the news at first (3:35–37, 42–50; 19:16–33). Jesus performed many miracles, including curing the sick, healing lepers, and bringing the dead back to life (3:49; 5:110); he is credited with more miracles than any other figure in the Qur'an. Jesus is termed "a Word" (*kalima*) from God (3:39, 45; 4:171), something that recalls the opening of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word". Jesus is associated with "the Holy Spirit" (*rūḥ al-qudus*) (2:87, 253; 5:110), recalling the close association of the Holy Spirit with Jesus in Christian doctrine. God "raises him up" (3:55), which recalls the Christian notion of Christ's resurrection.

Of course, some differences in his portrayal reflect real theological differences between Islam and Christianity: Jesus is not divine but rather a mortal and a prophet (3:59; 4:171–72; 5:17, 72–75, 116); he cannot perform miracles of his own accord, for his actions depend on God's power and permission (5:110); and he did not die on the cross but was miraculously rescued by God at the last minute (4:157). However, the number and importance of similar features are striking, and they must be recognized as part of a pervasive, intentional Qur'anic strategy of creating common ground with Christians. This confluence of ideas has broad consequences for the interpretation of the Qur'anic material related to Jesus, but Durie focuses narrowly on the differences and either ignores or attempts to dismiss the similarities. As Durie points out, the term *al-Masīḥ* occurs in the Qur'an only in connection with Jesus. The term appears in the Qur'an as part of a general

Qur'anic strategy to agree with Christian usage, at least formally, and this view is corroborated by numerous other examples such as those mentioned above.

In a well-known episode in the history of the nascent Muslim community, the Prophet sent a group of Muslims to Ethiopia because they had been persecuted in Mecca by the local pagans. This became known as the first *Hiǧra*, or "flight", prefiguring the Prophet's later flight from Mecca to Medina in 632 CE. The reasons for choosing Ethiopia seems clear enough: it was relatively close by, yet far enough to provide safety, and the Muslims expected that the negus (Arabic *al-Naǧāšī*), the Ethiopian ruler, as a Christian and fellow monotheist, would welcome and protect them. As the story unfolds in *The Life of the Prophet* by Ibn Isḥāq, the Meccans sent a delegation to the negus in order to seek to have the Muslims extradited back to Mecca, but before agreeing to do so, the negus questioned Ǧaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib, their leader and a cousin of the Prophet, about their religious beliefs. Ǧaʿfar recited for him part of the Sura Maryam (Q 19 – presumably the beginning of the sura, vv. 1–33, which resembles the beginning of the Gospel of Luke). The negus and the bishops in attendance wept, and the negus proclaimed: "Of a truth, this and what Jesus brought have come from the same niche". The following day, the Meccans tried to get the Muslims denounced by arguing that they had insulted Jesus by referring to him as a "slave" or "creature" (*ʿabd*). Ǧaʿfar explained to the negus that their opinion was that Jesus "is the slave of God, and his apostle, and his spirit, and his word, which he cast into Mary the blessed Virgin". The negus then picked up a stick from the ground and exclaimed: "By God, Jesus, son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick!"[74] Reflecting on this episode, Vincent Cornell has written an insightful discussion on religious dialogue, creedal boundaries, and the extent to which Muslims and Christians may be said to worship the same God. What he notes about this exchange is that the negus chose to emphasize the shared elements in the two traditions, while at the same time recognizing that differences did exist.[75] It is important to note that Ǧaʿfar's description of Christ, which was designed

[74] A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 152.

[75] V.J. Cornell, "The Ethiopian's Dilemma: Islam, Religious Boundaries, and the Identity of God", in *Do Jews, Christians & Muslims Worship the Same God?*, ed. by J. Neusner *et al*., Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2012, pp. 85–129.

to gain the Christian ruler's favor, was based on references to specific passages and vocabulary of the Qur'anic text. What the anecdote only admits in an indirect way, and what Durie seems to be unaware of, is that the Qur'an, by using those terms, was already engaging in a strategy of reconciliation with Christians over the figure of Jesus.

While English translations of the Qur'an usually render *al-Masīḥ* as "the Messiah", it would be preferable to render it as "Christ" instead, in order to capture the rhetorical intent behind it. Of course, Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah. However, "Christ" takes on a different valence in English and other languages. Though "Christ" is simply the literal Greek translation of Hebrew *mašīaḥ*, meaning "anointed", referring to the practice of anointing the new king of Israel with holy oil in a ritual equivalent to coronation, "Jesus Christ" is the most common Christian designation of Jesus. Contrary to Durie's analysis, in Christian traditions, the term "Christ" comes to have the character of a frozen epithet, losing some of its connection with the promised Messiah of Jewish tradition and with complex Christology. The use of the term *al-Masīḥ* in the Qur'an certainly reflects this development,[76] and so may be interpreted as a case of agreeing with common Christian linguistic usage. Just as the term "Christ" in English usage loses a large part of its connection with the Jewish concept of the Messiah and Christological dogma, so too does *al-Masīḥ* in the Qur'an appear to serve as an honorific title of Jesus, indicating his exalted and revered status in general and not evoking the Trinity or a restoration of the historical monarchy of Israel.

8. *Rūḥ, "Spirit"*

Durie argues that the tripartite connection between "wind", "breath", and "spirit" that characterizes Hebrew *ruaḥ* in the Bible does not exist in the Arabic of the Qur'an, since Arabic *rūḥ* "spirit" differs from *rīḥ* "wind", and "wind" is not exactly the same as "breath", whereas they are closely related in Hebrew. He argues this even though he knows that *nafs* means "soul" in Arabic and that *nafas* means "breath", so that the two seem to represent a similar association. Durie uses this tactic to argue that *rūḥ* is somehow out of place in Arabic, an odd bor-

[76] Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an*, pp. 30–33.

rowing that resulted neither from a historical, etymological relationship between Arabic and Hebrew nor from an organic growth out of biblical tradition. Instead, in his view, it appears as an alien transplant in the Qurʾan.

Durie would then like to argue that mentions of the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*) in the Qurʾan do not carry the same denotations and connotations that they do in biblical tradition. Durie argues that the form *al-qudus*, which occurs in the compound term *rūḥ al-qudus* (2:87, 253; 5:110; 16:102), is a morphological oddity in Arabic, as he claimed with regard to *al-Masīḥ*. He reports that *al-qudus* is an abstract noun meaning "holiness". It occurs in a genitive construct, so that *rūḥ al-qudus* means literally "the spirit of holiness" and not "the holy spirit" (it is interesting that the form used by Arabic-speaking Christians, *al-rūḥ al-qudus*, interprets *al-qudus* as an adjective). Durie claims that this Arabic pattern, *fuʿul*, is used for the plurals of nouns and rarely for anything else. It is true that many plurals take the form *fuʿul*, such as *subul* (paths), the plural of *sabīl* (16:69; 20:53; 29:69; 71:20), or *zubur* (scriptures, books, 3:184; 16:44; 26:196; 35:25; 54:43, 52). However, Durie's claim that this form rarely occurs for anything else is not true. *Fuʿul* can also serve as an adjective, as in *ǧunub* (in a state of ritual impurity, 5:6) or *nukur* (abominable, 54:6). What Durie does not appear to be aware of is that the form *fuʿul* in several cases, including the case of *al-qudus*, is an alternative form of *fuʿl*. So, *ṯuluṯ* (4:11, 12) is a common alternative form of *ṯulṯ* (one third), and *al-qudus* is an alternative form of the abstract noun *al-quds*. In addition to being the name of Jerusalem in Arabic – *al-Quds* – it corresponds exactly to its Syriac/Aramaic counterpart, *qodšā*. The form of *al-qudus* may be compared to that of *al-ǧumuʿa* (Friday) in the Qurʾan (62:9), which is an alternative for the more common form *al-ǧumʿa*. Other examples of singular nouns of the form *fuʿul* that occur in the Qurʾan include *suʿur* (madness, 54:24, 47) and *al-dubur* (back, derrière, 54:45).

This incorrect claim concerning *al-qudus* leads up to Durie's larger point that, despite appearances, the Qurʾan's apparent references to the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost do not reflect a significant engagement with Christian conceptions. On the contrary, *rūḥ al-qudus*, "the Spirit of Holiness", is closely associated with Jesus in the Qurʾanic text. Twice there appears the statement "wa-ātaynā ʿĪsā bna Maryama l-bayyināti wa-ayyadnāhu bi-rūḥi al-qudus" ("We gave Jesus, son of Mary, the clear signs, and We supported him with the Holy Spirit", 2:87, 253). Another verse reads "uḏkur niʿmatī ʿalayka wa-ʿalā wālida-

tika iḏ ayyadtuka bi-rūḥi al-qudus" ("And remember My favor to you and to your mother, when We supported you with the Holy Spirit", 5:110). The "clear signs" (*bayyināt*) in 2:87 and 2:253 probably refers to the many miracles associated with Jesus, and the "favor" (*niʿma*) mentioned in 5:110 probably refer to Jesus's miraculous birth and perhaps also to the other miracles he was able to perform. These verses suggest that the Holy Spirit is associated with Jesus especially, and with Mary as well. It is a power sent by God that assisted Jesus in his prophetic mission and facilitated his miracles.

In addition, Jesus is described as "God's Word" in the Qurʾan, another indication that the text reflects a strategy of formal agreement with Christian doctrine. Jesus is designated as "a word" from God in three verses, 3:39, 45; 4:171. The birth of a son is announced to Zechariah as follows: "Anna Allāha yubašširuka bi-Yaḥyā muṣaddiqan bi-kalimatin min Allāhi" ("God gives you glad tidings of Yaḥyā [i.e., John the Baptist], confirming a Word from God", 3:39). The birth of Jesus is announced to Mary in similar fashion: "Inna Allāha yubašširuki bi-kalimatin minhu ismuhu al-masīḥu ʿĪsā ibnu Maryam" ("God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him, whose name is the Christ, Jesus son of Mary", 3:45). Jesus is "kalimatuhū alqāhā ilā Maryama" ("[God's] Word that He cast into Mary", 4:171). Durie claims that the description of Jesus as God's Word "indexes ʿĪsā's status as just a man, that is, one of Allāh's creations, who came into being by Allāh's word of command", connecting mention of "the word" with the description of God's ability to create in the phrase "yaqūlu lahū kun fayakūn" ("He says to it, 'Be!' and it is", 2:117).[77] While it is true that God creates in the Qurʾan by speaking, Durie ignores here that Jesus is being accorded special titles that distinguish him from God's other messengers, let alone from other ordinary humans, none of whom is described as God's Word, and that Jesus' birth is portrayed as an extraordinary miracle in these passages. One may admit that the sense of "God's Word" in 3:39, 3:45, and 4:171 is not the same as that of "the Word" in John 1:1, in which it appears to refer to the eternal essence of Jesus, but it is undeniable that the description of Jesus as Word in the Qurʾan is meant to resonate with Christian discourse surrounding the figure of Christ and not to indicate that he was simply one of God's many creations.

[77] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, p. 173.

In addition, Jesus is associated with God's "spirit" (*rūḥ*). The Qurʾanic references to this term are associated with Mary's conception of Jesus. In verse 19:17, the text states: "We sent our *rūḥ* to her in the form of a human". This is a description of the annunciation, and the *rūḥ* may be interpreted here as an angel – apparently Gabriel – who was sent to deliver the message. Jesus is described as "kalimatuhū alqāhā ilā Maryama wa-rūḥun minhu" ("His Word that He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him", 4:171). Two verses describe the act of Mary's conception as follows: "Fa-nafaḫnā fīhā min rūḥinā" ("We blew into her of Our spirit", 21:91; 66:12). According to Durie, the Qurʾan's statement that Jesus was a *rūḥ* is simply a way of asserting that he was created by divine blowing. In his view, this turn of phrase merely emphasizes that ʿĪsā was only mortal and not divine. Durie connects these statements with 18:110, in which the Messenger is instructed to announce: "I am only a human being, like you".[78] In contrast, I would argue that these passages involve God's spirit intimately in the conception of Jesus, again stressing the miraculous nature of his birth.

Durie argues that "blowing" in the Qurʾan is a mere reference to God's acts of creation, and that the Qurʾan lacks the biblical conception of the equation of "soul" or "spirit" with "the breath of life". He writes:

> In the Qurʾanic accounts of the creation of Ādam Allāh blows into clay to create a living person, and in the case of Maryam the blowing causes conception. What these two acts have in common is the idea of creation by blowing, which is different from the (biblical) idea of breathing the "breath of life" into Adam's nostrils (Gen 2:7) to animate him. The use of the formula *nafakh fī-X min rūḥ* to describe the conception of ʿĪsā suggests that it was not understood as being about breathing the breath of life into a body, but as a creative act.[79]

"Blowing", in Durie's view, is simply a basic, alternative manner of describing the act of creation. This position is difficult to maintain when it appears prominently in the description of one of Jesus's miracles, which involved fashioning birds of clay, and then blowing into them in order to bring them to life: "Fa-anfuḫu fīhi fa-yakūnu ṭayran bi-

[78] *Ibid.*
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

iḏni Allāhi" ("Then I will blow into them, and they will be birds, by God's permission", 3:49); "fa-tanfuḫu fīhā fa-takūnu ṭayran bi-iḏnī" ("Then you will blow into them, and they will be birds, by My permission", 5:110). It seems clear that the act of blowing in these cases is exactly breathing life into them. God's creation of Adam, also out of clay, is described in three verses as "blowing into him of God's spirit", evidently bringing Adam to life in the same way (15:29; 32:9; 38:72). On account of these verses, Gabriel Reynolds rightly notes the parallel between Christ's conception and God's creation of Adam, and he translates 21:91 as "We breathed Our Spirit into her". He adds: "The Qur'an has Christ, like Adam, created directly from the Spirit of God".[80] Durie claims that Reynolds' translation is wrong, adding that this "is a case of reading biblical theology into the Qur'an. These words create an impression of affinity of meaning between the Qur'an and the Bible which the text cannot sustain". Durie continues:

> It is reading too much into the text to speak of the "Spirit of God" in relation to the animation of Adam or the conception of ʿĪsā, because there is no Qur'anic Theology of *rūḥ* as the breath of life to sustain such a designation. A more accurate translation of Q 21:91 could be "We blew into her" and the most that can be said about the similarities in the creation of Ādam and ʿĪsā in the Qur'an is that both stories involved Allāh blowing.[81]

Durie's claim, in my view, is ignoring the particularity of the term *nafaḫa* in the Qur'an, which only appears in a limited number of examples of creation, unlike *ḫalaqa* (to create), which refers in scores of instances to the creation of a wide variety of creatures and objects. Reynolds' conclusions are correct here, and Durie's objections and revisions are invalid. The Qur'an certainly reforms the Christian view of Christ, denying his divinity and the Trinity, but it engages in a sustained strategy of adopting Christian terminology and in accepting several of the central Christian conceptions regarding Jesus's special status and miraculous birth.

[80] Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, p. 53.
[81] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 174–175.

9. *Al-Sakīna*

The Qur'anic term *sakīna* has long been recognized as a borrowing from Jewish tradition originating in the Hebrew *šeḫīnāh*, which is often translated as "the presence (of God)". The general interpretation of its use in the Qur'an has followed the same lines from the early 19th century. Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy identified *sakīna* as a borrowing from Hebrew already in 1829, explaining: "Or qui ne voit que ce n'est autre chose que la *schékina*, שכינה c'est-à-dire *la présence de la majesté divine* ou, comme s'exprime Moïse, *la gloire de Dieu* qui, reposant sur le tabernacle, annonçait la présence de la divinité". He added: "On peut conjecturer, par les deux passages de la surate 48, que Mahomet lui-même attachait à ce mot une idée de calme et de sécurité".[82] Subsequently, Abraham Geiger and many other scholars recognized Hebrew *šeḫīnāh* as the etymon of *sakīna*.[83]

The Hebrew term *šeḫīnāh* is a verbal noun meaning "dwelling, occupying" that derives from the verb *šāḫan*, *yišḫōn*, meaning "to dwell", cognate with Arabic *sakana*, *yaskunu*. It is used to refer to God's "indwelling", that is, His "presence" or "aura", which would correspond to *ḥaḍra* or *ḥuḍūr* (presence) in Arabic. The history of the term *šeḫīnāh* is complex; the term does not appear in the Hebrew

[82] "Lettre de M. le baron Silvestre de Sacy, à M. Garcin de Tassy", *Journal Asiatique* 4 (1829), pp. 161–179, here 178.

[83] A. Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?: Eine von der Königl. Preussischen Rheinuniversität gekrönte Preisschrift*, Bonn, F. Baaden, 1833, pp. 54–56; A. von Kremer, *Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen des Islams: Der Gottesbegriff, die Prophetie und Staatsidee*, Leipzig, F.A. Brockhaus, 1868, p. 226, note 2; Fraenkel, *De Vocabulis in antiquis Arabum*, p. 23; M. Grünbaum, "Ueber Schem hammephorasch als Nachbildung eines aramäischen Ausdrucks und über sprachliche Nachbildungen überhaupt", *Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 39 (1885), pp. 543–616, here 581–582; I. Goldziher, "La notion de *Sakīnah* chez les Mohamétans", *Revue de l'Histoire des religions* 28 (1893), pp. 1–13; Id., "Ueber den Ausdruck 'Sakina'", in Id., *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, vol. I, Leiden, Brill, 1896, pp. 177–204; O. Pautz, *Muhammeds Lehre von der Offenbarung*, Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1898, p. 251; T. Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg, Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1910, pp. 24–25; Horovitz, "Jewish Proper Names", pp. 208–209; K. Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran: Eine Nachlese", *Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 84/1–2 (1930), pp. 15–68, esp. 21; Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, p. 174; R. Firestone, "Shekhinah" s.v., in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. by J.D. McAuliffe, vol. IV, *P–Sh*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 589–591; U. Rubin, "Traditions in Transformation: The Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Calf in Biblical and Islamic Historiography", *Oriens*, 36 (2001), pp. 196–214.

Bible itself but became important in later stages of Jewish religious literature.[84] The consensus is that *šeḫīnāh* was first employed as a euphemism in the Targums, the Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible, in which it replaced "God" – Yahweh – in passages of the Hebrew Bible that sounded too anthropomorphic in the original Hebrew. When confronted with such anthropomorphic passages, the translators into Aramaic chose to refer to the *šeḫīnāh*'s being located somewhere rather than referring to God directly. So, for example, Exod 34:6 reads "*the Lord passed before him* and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness'". Onqelos renders this as "*the Lord made his presence pass in front of him*, and he proclaimed, 'O Lord! O Lord! Compassionate and gracious God, who keeps anger at a distance and abounds in doing true goodness'".[85] "The Lord" – that is, Yahweh in the original Hebrew – has been replaced by "the presence (*šeḫīnāh*) of the Lord" in order to avoid stating that God simply walked among humans.[86]

This usage of *šeḫīnāh* arguably has roots in the biblical text. Cognates of *šeḫīnāh* appear prominently in connection with God in the books of the Hebrew Bible, even though the exact term is not found. Chief among these is *mišḫān* (dwelling place), the Hebrew term for the tabernacle, the mobile precursor of the temple, whose construction is described in great detail in Exod 25–31 and 35–40.[87] The tabernacle

[84] J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature*, London, Macmillan, 1912; A. Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Schekhinah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1969; E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. by I. Abrahams, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1987, esp. chapter 3, "The *Shekhina* – The Presence of God in the World", pp. 37–65; J. Sievers, "'Where Two or Three...': The Rabbinic Concept of Shekhinah and Matthew 18:20", in *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, ed. by E.J. Fisher, New York, Paulist Press, 1990, pp. 47–61.

[85] B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Exodus*, Wilmington, Glazier, 1988, p. 96 (italics mine).

[86] *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97, note 3. Grossfeld points out that Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan uses the same periphrasis, while the Targum of Neophyti and the Fragmentary Targums P, V use "the Glory of His Divine Presence".

[87] The Tabernacle is also termed *ha-ōhel* (the tent, for example in Exod 26:9), *bēt ha-ōhel* (the house of the tent, for example in 1 Chr 9:23), *ōhel mō'ed* (the tent of meeting, for example in Exod 33:7), and *bēt Yahweh* (the house of Yahweh, for example in Exod 23:19). On the Tabernacle in general, see A.R.S. Kennedy, "Tabernacle" s.v., in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by J. Hastings, vol IV, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898–1904, pp. 653–668; F.M. Cross Jr., "The Tabernacle: A Study from an Archaeological and Historical Approach", *The Biblical Archaeologist* 10/3 (1947), pp. 45–68; R.E. Friedman,

is called "the dwelling place" because God dwells there. This understanding of God's physical residence is stated explicitly in several passages (Exod 25:8; 29:45; 1 Kgs 6:13; Num 5:3; 35:34). One might argue, therefore, that even though the exact term *šeḫīnāh* did not occur in the Bible, it was nevertheless implied.

Durie argues that the Qur'anic use of this term does not reflect its original meaning, thus providing another example of disruptive borrowing from biblical tradition. This point serves a larger contention having to do with Christology. Durie suggests a connection between the concept of *šeḫīnāh* and Christ, in that both represent God's presence on earth. Durie holds that unlike the Bible, the Qur'an does not have a robust concept of God's presence among mankind on earth: "The Qur'an does not have a discernible theology of the presence of Allāh in time and space with humanity on earth".[88] Here, Durie seems to be interpreting the *šeḫīnāh* as a forerunner of Christ on earth without saying so. He associates the divine presence (*šeḫīnāh*) with the Holy Spirit, commenting that the two issues are not unrelated.[89]

In contrast to this claim, the Qur'an includes many passages that imply God's presence in the world. Notably, the scene of Moses and the burning bush portrays God as speaking directly with Moses in the same fashion as God is portrayed in Exodus (Q 20:17–21). According to the Qur'an, God is everywhere: "Li-Allāhi al-mašriqu wa-al-maġribu fa-aynamā tuwallū fa-ṯamma waǧhu Allāh" ("To God belongs the east and the west. No matter which way you turn, there is the face of God", 2:115). The text describes God as being inseparable from humans' physical presence: "Wa-laqad ḫalaqnā al-insāna wa-naʿlamu mā tuwaswisu bihī nafsuhū wa-naḥnu aqrabu ilayhi min ḥabli al-warīd" ("We created the human, and We know what his soul whispers to him, for We are closer to him than his jugular vein", 50:16). Such passages make it difficult to argue that the Qur'an does not envisage God's presence

"The Tabernacle in the Temple", *Near Eastern Archaeology* 43/4 (1980), pp. 241–248; V. Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105/1 (1985), pp. 21–30; C.R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*, Washington, DC, The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989; B.D. Sommer, "Conflicting Constructions of Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle", *Biblical Interpretation* 9/1 (2001), 41–63; M.M. Homan, "The Tabernacle and the Temple in Ancient Israel", *Religion Compass* 1/1 (January 2007), pp. 38–49.

[88] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, p. 179.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

in the world, and it seems that Durie only stresses this point to bolster the idea that the rejection of Jesus's divinity represents a contradiction of biblical theology in general.

Al-Sakīna, I argue, retains important connections with the biblical usage of the term. Q 2:246–251 presents a condensed version of the events recounted in 1 Sam 4–17. The Ark of the Covenant appears prominently in Q 2:248, in an account of the exploits of Saul (Ṭālūt) and a prophet who remains unnamed in the Qur'anic text but corresponds to Samuel in the biblical account.[90] In Q 2:248, the un-named prophet promises the Israelites future victory over their enemies. This is followed by a description of one of Saul's military campaigns, before the momentous battle in which David defeats Goliath, sealing Israel's victory over the Philistines (2:250–251; see 1 Sam 17).

> Q 2:248: And the prophet said to them: "Surely the sign of His kingdom is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is a presence [*sakīna*] from your Lord and relics of what the descendants of Moses and the descendants of Aaron left as an inheritance, borne by angels. Surely there is a sign in this if you believe".

English translations of the Qur'an regularly fail to capture the biblical allusion to God's presence in the Ark, rendering *sakīna* with a term related to "calm" or "tranquility". In doing so, they agree with many commentaries on the Qur'an, which gloss *sakīna* as *ṭuma'nīna*, meaning "reassurance".[91] The meaning "tranquility" derives from one of the main meanings of the triconsonantal root *s-k-n* in Arabic, *sukūn* (quiet, calm), even though the verb *sakana*, *yaskunu* also means "to dwell" in Arabic, as does the corresponding verb in Hebrew.

In 2:248, *sakīna* is used in a clear biblical context, a scene that portrays a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. It is associated with the Ark of the Covenant, as it is in the Bible. In the books of the Hebrew Bible, the Ark of the Covenant is marched out with the army of the tribes of Israel when they do battle in order to terrify their

[90] H. Speyer, *Die biblische Erzählungen im Qoran*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961 [Gräfenhainichen, C. Schulze, 1931], pp. 364–371. The book was first published in the late 1930s but was given a false publication date of 1931 to circumvent German publication laws instituted in 1933–1935.

[91] See, for example, al-Ṯaʿlabī, *al-Kašf wa-l-bayān*, ed. by A.M. Ibn ʿĀšūr, vol. II, Beirut, Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāṯ al-ʿArabī, 2002, p. 213.

enemies and to infuse the army of Israel with the determination and courage to fight and emerge victorious. 1 Samuel does not include a verse in which Saul utters the statement that appears in Q 2:248, but the Ark of the Covenant appears prominently in that book. The Ark is first retrieved from Shiloh to help the army of Israel in a battle against the Philistines, who are terrified by its presence (1 Sam 4:3–8). Then, it is captured by the Philistines, who hold it for seven months but return it after suffering divine punishment in the form of plagues of mice and hemorrhoids (1 Sam 4:11–6:18). The return of the Ark allows Israel to defeat the Philistines (1 Sam 7:10) and later makes another victory over the enemy possible (1 Sam 14:18–31).[92]

Verse 2:248 portrays the Ark of the Covenant as a sign of Saul's sovereignty (*mulk*) and does not mention a specific battle. Nevertheless, the figure of the king (*malik*) is associated with fighting in verse 247, and the passage refers to Saul's campaign in verse 249 and ends with David's climactic victory over Goliath in verses 250–251. This suggests that the prophet's statement is a promise of future victory. One consequently assumes that the *sakīna* fulfills a martial role not captured by translations such as "tranquility" or "reassurance". Like the angels who fought alongside the Muslims at the Battle of Badr (3:123–125; 8:9), the *sakīna* is a physical presence that will enable Saul's forces to overpower their enemies and grant them victory.

In general, scholars in Qurʾanic studies have agreed that while the term *sakīna* is connected with the biblical *šeḵīnāh* in verse 2:248, in the other verses in which it appears (Q 2:248; 9:26, 40; 48:4, 18, 26), its meaning has been conflated with or at least colored by one of the ordinary meanings of the root combination *s-k-n*, namely *sukūn*, meaning "quiet" or "calm". Though they do not occur in the midst of biblical narratives, the other five instances of *sakīna* occur in Sura al-Tawba (Q

[92] The Ark of the Covenant is also termed "arōn berīt-Yahweh" ("the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh", 1 Kgs 3:15; 6:19); "arōn ha-elohīm" ("the Ark of God", 1 and 2 Sam); and "arōn ha-ʿedūt" ("the Ark of Testimony, Exod 25:22). On the Ark in general, see G. von Rad, "The Tent and the Ark", in Id., *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1966, pp. 103–124; T.E. Fretheim, "The Ark in Deuteronomy", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968), pp. 1–14; J. Maier, *Das altisraelitische Ladeheiligtum*, Berlin, Töpelman, 1965; J. Gutmann, "The History of the Ark", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83/1 (1971), pp. 22–30; J. Day, "Whatever Happened to the Ark of the Covenant?", in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. by J. Day, London, T&T Clark, 2007, pp. 250–270.

9) and Sura al-Fatḥ (Q 48), both of which portray military confrontations. Even in those cases, *sakīna* does not lose its connection with the military role of God's presence.

Sura al-Tawba begins with an ultimatum to the pagan Meccans. The term *sakīna* occurs in it twice, in the following verses:

> Q 9:26: Then God sent His *sakīna* down to His Messenger and the believers, and He sent down troops you did not see [*ǧunūdan lam tarawhā*]. He punished the disbelievers – this is what the disbelievers deserve, but God turns in His mercy to whoever He will. God is most forgiving and merciful.
>
> Q 9:40: If you do not aid the Prophet – God has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Mecca] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed, God is with us". God sent down His *sakīna* upon him and supported him with troops you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of God – that is the highest. God is Mighty and Decisive.

These verses present images of a battle in which God grants victory to the Prophet and the believers over the disbelievers. The military valence of the term *sakīna* are demonstrated by the fact that it is placed in parallel with "forces" or "troops" (*ǧunūd*) in both instances: "Anzala ǧunūdan lam tarawhā" ("He sent down troops you did not see") and "ayyadahu bi-ǧunūdin lam tarawhā" ("He supported him with troops you did not see"). Like the invisible troops, God's *sakīna* made the believers' victory over their enemies possible.

The term *sakīna* occurs three times in Sura al-Fatḥ (Q 48), which reports a victory of the Muslims over the pagan Meccans. The first mention of *sakīna* occurs once again paired with *ǧunūd*, "troops": "It was He who sent down His *sakīna* into the hearts of the believers, to add faith to their faith. To God belong the forces of the heavens and earth [*ǧunūdu al-samāwāti wa-al-arḍi*]. He is Knowing and Decisive in judgment" (48:4). Here, the troops mentioned act in concert with God's *sakīna* to bring about the victory of the believers. Verse 48:18 refers explicitly to a "swift victory" (*fatḥan qarībā*) as a consequence of God's sending down of the *sakīna*. In 2:249–250, the troops that have been fortified by the *sakīna* are described as steadfast (*ṣābirīn*), having endurance or forbearance (*ṣabr*) poured upon them by God,

and having their feet (*aqdām*) planted firmly by God. *Sakīna* must be parallel to, and in harmony with, these meanings.

In addition to the biblical narrative regarding Saul's military campaign, *sakīna* thus appears in two main contexts involving military confrontations between the forces of the believers and those of the pagan Meccans. In all cases, God's *sakīna* aids the believers to gain victory over their opponents, and in this it is closely parallel to the biblical *šeḵīnāh*. The term invokes might, terror, and military prowess. "God's overwhelming, or awe-inspiring, aura" or a similar translation would better convey the appropriate meaning. This argument suggests that Durie's view that Qur'anic *sakīna* is entirely distinct from Hebrew *šeḵīnāh* is overstated; the two are closer than he thinks.

10. *Satan and Satans*

Durie argues that the concept of Satan in the Qur'an differs radically from the concept of Satan in the Bible and Christian tradition.[93] Despite these claims, the character of Iblīs or al-Šayṭān in the Qur'an is identifiable with Satan of the biblical tradition. Apparently, the figure of *ha-Sāṭān*, which in Hebrew means "the Accuser", developed in biblical literature from an understanding of the Judgment of humans before God. God in this scene is a judge, the believer is the accused, and Satan is the prosecutor. The name of Satan was translated into Greek literally, as *diabolos* "accuser", and the various Christian words for devil in other languages derive from the Greek. Durie writes about the Qur'anic Satan: "The biblical meaning of 'accuser' was lost in this process, as *šayṭān* was not associated morphologically with a verb meaning 'accuse' or 'oppose' in Arabic".[94] One could, however, make the same argument about Christian understandings of Satan/the devil in all languages except Greek: among most believing Christians, the understanding that the devil means "the accuser" hardly registers. In Christian tradition, Satan/the devil came to be portrayed less as the accuser of humans being judged and more as the one who tempted them and led them astray in the first place. The Qur'an fully embraces the portrayal of Satan as tempter, drawing on Christian interpretations of biblical literature. So, for example, in Genesis the temptation of Adam

[93] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 182–195.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

and Eve is carried out by a fabulous creature. That creature is turned into a serpent, losing his limbs, at the end of the account, as a punishment for his wrongdoing (Gen 3:14–15). However, in Christian tradition – in the works of such writers as Justin Martyr, Titian, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine – the serpent and Satan are fully conflated.[95] In keeping with Christian tradition, thus, the Qur'an does not refer to a serpent at all in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden; the character in the garden who tempts Adam and Eve is Satan throughout.

Strong connections with Christian tradition may be seen in the Qur'anic narratives of the fall of Satan. According to the Qur'an, Satan was originally an angel, but He was expelled from the heavenly host after God presented Adam to him and he refused to bow down to the new creature. In this presentation, Iblīs appears to be the name of the angel before the fall, and Satan his name after the fall. The passages that tell this story suggest that God punished Satan by expelling him, rather than annihilating him immediately. God grants Satan a respite, allowing him to exact revenge on humans, the cause of his expulsion, by leading them astray and attempting to cause their damnation (7:14–15; 15:36–37; 38:79–80). This narrative is closely related to Christian texts, including The Life of Adam and Eve, which was probably first composed in Greek and then translated to many other languages, and The Cave of Treasures, a Syriac text. The Christian background of the Qur'anic story is suggested by the name Iblīs, which must derive from Greek *diabolos*, likely through Syriac. Both the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve and the story of the fall of Satan show that the Qur'anic conception of Satan is quite similar to the conception of Satan in biblical tradition.

However, Durie ignores both those stories and instead focuses on several points that obfuscate the relationship. First, he argues that the word *šayṭān* is not a borrowing from biblical tradition at all. Secondly, he argues that *šayṭān* is in fact an Arabic word that means "horned viper". Thirdly, he points out that the Qur'an refers to "satans", in the

[95] The conflation is evident already in The Wisdom of Solomon 2:24, which dates to the 1st century CE. See D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York, Doubleday, 1979, pp. 121–123. The identification became standard in Christian writings of the second and later centuries. See P.C. Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2014, pp. 34–38.

plural, which muddies the picture with regard to the singular figure known as Satan in the Bible. These points draw attention away from the very real similarities between the Qur'an and biblical texts and are presented to corroborate the idea that any similarities between the two are accidental and inconsequential.

Durie's use of this example stands out in its neglect of the larger picture. What the Qur'an clearly shares with biblical tradition – and this is no accident – is the conception of the eternal soul and the responsibility of the individual for the fate of his or her soul in the afterlife. The life of this world is a trial to which God, in his wisdom, has subjected humans. They are being tested, and it is their choice whether they will do good deeds or sin in this world. On the Day of Judgment they will be judged by God and will then enter the afterlife, assigned a place in paradise or in hell according to the relative weight of the good and evil they have wrought in the world. Satan plays a role in the drama by tempting humans to commit wrong and by enticing them to stray from the straight path, preventing them from being saved. This entire scheme is familiar both to Christians and to Muslims, though theologians may object that certain elements within this scheme are conceived of differently.

In my assessment, several of Durie's statements in this section are not just biased but incorrect. He argues that *šayṭān* cannot derive from Hebrew because of its form, but this claim is questionable. The closest equivalent of Hebrew *sāṭān* would be *šāṭān* in Arabic. The form *fāʿāl* does occur in the Qur'an in Hāmān, the name of the minister associated in the Qur'an with Pharaoh (Q 28:38; 29:39; 40:23–25, 36–37), but who appears in the Bible as the evil minister of Ahasuerus, the Persian king in the Book of Esther. This name clearly derives ultimately from Hebrew, perhaps through an intermediary language such as Aramaic or Syriac. However, the form *fāʿāl* is relatively rare in Arabic, and it is entirely conceivable that Hebrew *Sāṭān* could have been borrowed into Arabic as *al-Šayṭān*, just as Hebrew Abrāhām has obviously been borrowed into Arabic as *Ibrāhīm* instead of *Abrāhām*. Because morphological patterns are so important in the Semitic languages, one cannot treat the types of sound changes that occur in borrowings in the same way that one treats them in the Romance languages, for example. Durie writes: "If *shayṭān* is a borrowing, there is a difficulty with the

-ay- in the first syllable instead of the expected *-ā-*".[96] The word *faylasūf* (philosopher) serves as an obvioush counter-example to this claim: the diphthong *-ay-* does not occur in the original Greek word *philosophos*, from which it was borrowed, but inserting it creates a more satisfying pattern according to Arabic morphology. A similar change occurs in Sulaymān for Solomon, which is Šelōmō in Hebrew. *Šayṭān* would simply be a parallel example with the same type of sound change in the first syllable, for the same reason. Many scholars in Qur'anic studies have accepted that *šayṭān* in fact derives ultimately from Hebrew, perhaps through Ethiopic, though Durie denies it: "We conclude that *shayṭān* is not cognate with *Sāṭān*".[97] Gabriel Reynolds gives a useful synopsis of the debate on this issue, showing that the consensus is decidedly in favor of the Hebrew etymology,[98] against Durie's view.

Durie blurs the distinction between "demons" in the Qur'an, termed, in the definite plural, *al-šayāṭīn*, indefinite plural, *šayāṭīn*, or the indefinite singular, *šayṭān*, "demons" or "a demon", and "Satan", termed *al-Šayṭān*, always in the definite singular. Demons and Satan are for the most part easily distinguished in the text, contrary to Durie's presentation, which attempts to characterize the Qur'anic view of *šayṭān* as incoherent from the perspective of biblical tradition. However, the question of their relationship is somewhat complicated by two phenomena that appear to conflict in some respects. On the one hand, the *šayāṭīn* appear to be the forces commanded by Satan, demons under his control that can tempt humans (26:95). On the other hand, the *šayāṭīn* appear to be synonymous with the *ǧinn* or genies (6:75; 15:17; 22:3; 37:7). It is not a simple matter to reconcile the two views, because many verses of the Qur'an suggest that genies include both good and evil individuals, believers and unbelievers, Muslims and non-Muslims, and so on (71:1–4), whereas the minions of Satan must all be evil. Genies cannot all be synonymous with the armies of Satan. Thus, the two concepts of "demons" (*šayāṭīn*) and "Satan" (*al-Šayṭān*) are clearly connected in the Qur'an, but they are distinct, despite the unanswered question regarding the relation of Satan to genies. This is especially fraught because of the verse which reports that Iblīs, when he was apparently an angel, refused to bow down to Adam "(because) he was one of the genies" ("kāna min al-ǧinn", 18:50).

[96] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, p. 186.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 190.
[98] Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, p. 57, note 93.

Before the Qur'an was recorded, the term *šayṭān* had been assimilated into Arabic and had been used to refer to genies. Genies share some of the features of run-of-the-mill demons, such as the demons that Jesus exorcises in the Gospels (Matt 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39). However, they are portrayed in the Qur'an and extra-Qur'anic lore as a species parallel to humans who are invisible, fly, and assume different forms, and who live in and among humans and interact with them. They have communities similar to human ones, and since Sura al-Ǧinn (Q 72) refers to their listening to the Qur'an and accepting belief in it, some of them must be Muslims or believers, while others are not.

Now, Durie claims that *šayṭān* originally meant "horned viper" and therefore has nothing to do with biblical tradition, but I believe that he has got the chronological development backwards here. In my view, the biblical sense of Satan was extended to refer to demons in general, perhaps already in other languages besides Arabic, such as Aramaic and Syriac. Then, when the term for "Satan", *al-Šayṭān*, was assimilated into Arabic, the term *šayāṭīn* "demons" was assimilated as well. Later, the term *šayāṭīn* in Arabic came to be applied to *ǧinn* or genies. And last, the term came to be applied to snakes.

Snakes are associated with genies in pre-Islamic Arabic tradition. The reason for this association is that it was commonly believed that genies could assume the form of serpents, especially venomous ones. In a well-known *ḥadīṯ*, the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have stated: "Inna al-hawāmm min al-ǧinn", "Snakes are a class of genies".[99] This equation of genies and snakes is evident from the text of the Qur'an itself. In the Qur'an, as in Exodus, Moses is instructed to perform several miracles in his dialogue with God in the scene of the burning bush, and he later performs them in front of Pharaoh. In Exodus, he is supposed to instruct Aaron to perform the miracles, one of which consists in throwing his staff to the ground, upon which it will turn into a snake (Exod 4:3–4; 7:8–13). In the Qur'an, Moses performs the task himself. Twice, the staff in this scene is described using the ordinary word for snake, *ṯuʿbān*: "fa-iḏā hiya ṯuʿbān" ("And lo and behold! It was a snake", 7:107; 26:32). In two other parallel versions of the same scene, however, at the same point in the narrative, the text reads "ka'annahā ǧānn" ("As if it were a genie", 27:10; 28:31). In addi-

[99] Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Adab*, *Bāb fī qatl al-ḥayyāt*, n. 15.

tion, the description of a tree in hell as bearing "ru'ūs al-šayāṭīn" ("the heads of demons", 37:65) may indicate that it bears the heads of serpents. It was evidently common for snakes to be referred to as genies or demons when the Qur'an was recorded. Therefore, it is likely that the term *šayṭān* did not originally denote "horned viper" and then was semantically extended to include genies, but rather that the process occurred in the reverse order.

11. *Covenant*

Regarding the concept of covenant, Durie, as in other cases, attempts to drive a wedge in between the Qur'an and the Bible, denying that the Qur'an has a theology of covenant. He argues that the terms that at first glance may appear to refer to a covenant and that have been interpreted in this fashion by earlier scholars, *ʿahd* and *mīṯāq*, in fact do not convey this sense. Instead, they simply refer to God's general imposition of obligations on mankind. Though Durie does not express it this way, the effect of his argument is to suggest that covenantal language in the Qur'an is equivalent in meaning to the later legal term *kallafa*, *yukallifu*, *taklīfan*, meaning "to impose a legal obligation" or the theological term *taʿabbada*, *yataʿabbadu*, *taʿabbudan*, that is, "to impose as religion or form of worship". He states that ostensibly covenantal terms refer instead to a divine command or to the imposition of an obligation.

Durie claims that *ʿahd* and *mīṯāq* indicate one-sided operations in the Qur'an, in contradistinction to a covenant, which is an agreement between two parties. He then understands the Qur'anic use of these terms as referring simply to God's "command", a direct order of God to mankind that imposes an obligation on them. For example, he argues that *ʿahd*, the basic meaning of which is "pact", means simply "promise" in the Qur'an, and that the related verb forms *ʿahida* (to take upon oneself as an obligation)[100] and *ʿāhada* (to engage in a pact with someone). simply mean "to command". First, this argument does not take into account previous, significant studies of the Qur'anic use of the concept of covenant, which are usefully summarized in

[100] The verb *ʿahida* is presented correctly once but incorrectly in nine other instances, as *ʿahada*. Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 203–205.

an article by Andrew J. O'Connor.[101] Secondly, it does not take into account the ordinary meaning of the terms *ʿahd* (covenant, pact) and *mīṯāq* (pledge, sworn agreement), which indeed usually refer to mutual agreements. Thirdly, these terms are used in some Qur'anic passages to refer to an agreement between God and the Israelites that arguably invokes the biblical covenant directly, suggesting an awareness, in the Qur'an, of the biblical model. Fourthly, attention to the context indicates that what Durie claims are one-sided impositions of an obligation imply mutual ones instead. In return for the human agreement to fulfill the duties that God has imposed on them, God takes it upon Himself to judge them fairly and to reward the obedient with paradise and the disobedient with hell.

The Qur'an refers to three sorts of covenants. One is the primordial covenant, cited in later mystical texts as "the Day of *Alast*". This occurred when God extracted all the descendants of Adam from his loins and asked them "A-lastu bi-rabbikum?" ("Am I not your Lord?", 7:172). The consequence of this verse is the understanding that all humans have in essence acknowledged God as their Lord before being born, without having been exposed to God's signs in the world or the teachings conveyed by prophets. The second sort of covenant is an agreement of God with the prophets as a group: "And remember when God took a covenant from the Prophets: 'This is the Book and the Wisdom which I have given you. But should a Prophet come to you confirming that which is already with you, you shall believe in him and shall help him'" (3:81). These verses suggest that the prophets agreed to support each other's missions and to vouch for the authenticity of their fellow prophets. Another reference to a covenant with prophets occurs in the following verse: "And remember when We took a pledge [*mīṯāq*] from the prophets – from you and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, the son of Mary. We took a binding covenant from them that He might ask the truthful about their truthfulness. He has prepared a painful torment for the unbelievers" (33:7–8). In this verse, the prophets are urged to deliver God's messages truthfully. The mention of a painful torment at the end of the verse suggests that this covenant does imply a mutual obligation. God will punish those who fail to abide by their pledge and will reward those who keep it.

[101] A.J. O'Connor, "Qur'anic Covenants Reconsidered: *mīthāq* and *ʿahd* in Polemical Context", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 30 (2019), pp. 1–22.

This sort of obligation is implied whenever God takes a pledge from some group in the text. Moreover, the mention of "unbelievers" suggests that this covenant includes the peoples to whom the prophets are sent, and not just the prophets themselves.

The third sort of covenant is an agreement of God with the believers, which appears in passages such as this: "Are those who know that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth like those who are blind? Only those possessed of understanding are reminded, those who fulfil God's covenant [*ʿahd*] and do not violate the pledge [*al-mīṯāq*]" (13:19–20). The context indicates that this message is directed to the believers among the Prophet Muḥammad's audience. The second-person singular in "what has been sent down to *you* from *your* Lord" refers to Muḥammad, and "what has been sent down" refers to the messages of the Qur'an.

The covenant between God and the believers of the nascent Muslim community bears an obvious resemblance to the biblical covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The most important evidence against Durie's view that the Qur'an does not contain a covenantal discourse is that it refers directly to God's covenant with the children of Israel in several passages, including the following verse: "Children of Israel, remember My blessing which I bestowed on you. If you honor your covenant with Me, I shall honor My covenant with you [*awfū bi-ʿahdī ūfi bi-ʿahdikum*]. I, then, am the one you should fear" (2:40). The conditional sentence in this verse makes the reciprocal nature of the covenant between God and the children of Israel explicit and clear. While Durie argues that mentions of the two terms of *ʿahd* and *mīṯāq* regularly refer to a unilateral imposition and therefore are simply synonymous with an act of commanding, that is difficult to claim in this case. The Qur'an uses different vocabulary to indicate unilateral commands, such as *qāla* (he said), *amara* (he commanded), or *ǧaʿala* (he imposed), so it would stand to reason that *ʿahd* and *mīṯāq* both reflect a different sort of action. More importantly, the use of *ʿahd* to mean "covenant, pact" in 2:40 suggests that the other uses of that term and of the term *mīṯāq* to mean "pledge, sworn agreement" in similar contexts denote the same type of reciprocal relation made explicit in this case. Such verses referring to God's covenant with the children of Israel include the following:

> Q 3:187: Remember when God took a pledge [*mīṯāq*] from those who were given the Bible: "Make it known to people; do not conceal it". But

> they flung the pledge behind their backs and bartered it for a small gain. What a bad bargain they made!
>
> Q 5:12: In the past God took a pledge [*mīṯāq*] from the children of Israel. We raised among them twelve chieftains, and God said, "I am with you. If you hold prayer, pay the prescribed alms, believe in and support My messengers, and lend God a good loan, I will redeem your evil deeds for you and admit you into gardens graced by flowing streams. After this pledge, if any of you ignore it, you will stray from the right path".

On the basis of such evidence, many scholars have argued that there is an important connection between the biblical conception of the covenant between God and Israel and the Qur'anic understanding of covenant.[102]

In addition, it has been argued that the Qur'an includes conscious versions of the Ten Commandments of the Bible, which are closely associated with the covenant between God and Israel.[103] For example, Angelika Neuwirth argues that three passages of the Qur'an closely reflect the text of the Ten Commandments (Q 17:22–39; 6:151–153;

[102] R.C. Darnell, "The Idea of Divine Covenant in the Qur'an", PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 1970; B.G. Weiss, "Covenant and Law in Islam", in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. by E.B. Firmage, B.G. Weiss and J.W. Welch, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1990, pp. 49–83; G. Böwering, "Covenant" s.v., in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. by J.D. McAuliffe, vol. I, *A-D*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, pp. 464–467; W. al-Qadi, "The Primordial Covenant and Human Nature in the Qur'an", in *Occasional Papers of the Margaret Weyerhaeuser Jewett Chair of Arabic 1*, ed. by R. Baalbaki, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 2006, pp. 5–55; M. Ebstein, "Covenant Religious Pre-Eternal", in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. by K. Fleet *et al.*, 3rd ed., vol. I, Leiden, Brill, 2007; A. Neuwirth, "From Tribal Genealogy to Divine Covenant: Qur'anic Re-figurations of Pagan Arab Ideals Based on Biblical Models", in Id., *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 53–75; J. Lumbard, "Covenant and Covenants in the Qur'an", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 17/2 (2015), pp. 1–23; T. Jaffer, "Is There Covenant Theology in Islam?", in *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin*, ed. by M. Danishgar and W.A. Saleh, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 98–121; O'Connor, "Qur'anic Covenants".

[103] S. Guenther, "*O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us* (Q. 3:64): The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9/1 (2007), pp. 28–58; J.E. Lowry, "When Less is More: Law and Commandment in Sūrat al-Anʿām", *ibid.* 9/2 (2007), pp. 22–42.

2:83–85).[104] Moreover, several scholars have argued that the term *Furqān*, which in some contexts appears to refer to a sacred text that is distinct from the Torah and that was conveyed to mankind through Moses (2:53, 185; 3:4; 21:48), refers to the Ten Commandments specifically. Fred M. Donner has argued that the Qur'anic term *Furqān* may derive from the Syriac for "commandment", *puqdānā*.[105]

In an insightful study on law in Sura al-Baqara, Joseph E. Lowry has discussed the role played by the concept of covenant in the sura. He points out that the Qur'an associates the Decalogue closely with the biblical covenant in suras 2, 6, and 17, recapitulating the connection between the two made explicitly in Exodus 34:10–28. Sura al-Baqara includes specific references to the biblical covenant, termed *'ahd* or *mīṯāq*, between God and *Banū Isrā'īl* (the Israelites).[106] Moreover, the text presents the Qur'anic community as a covenantal community as well, and the legal material in the sura is similarly connected with that covenant, constituting a "neo-covenantal code" in 2:178–203, 215–242.[107] Lowry remarks that a major goal of Sura al-Baqara is "to emphasize general biblical and specifically covenantal parallels between the histories and elections of the biblical and Qur'anic communities".[108] He concludes: "The main point of a condensed re-presentation of Genesis and Exodus would be to draw parallels between the history of the Jews as parties to the Covenant and the Qur'anic audience as the new covenantal community".[109] All this implies an acute awareness of the Bible's covenantal discourse and a willingness to adopt a similar and parallel discourse in the present.

There are, of course, some differences between the two conceptions. The Qur'an stresses belief in God's messengers as a central part of the covenant. The Qur'an rejects henotheism, the idea prevalent in the early historical layers of the Bible that many gods exist but that the Hebrews or Israelites have chosen just one for themselves, pledging to

[104] A. Neuwirth, "A Discovery of Evil in the Qur'an? Revisiting Qur'anic versions of the Decalogue in the Context of Pagan Arab Late Antiquity", in Id., *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community*, pp. 253–274.
[105] F. Donner, "Qur'anic *Furqān*", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 52/2 (2007), pp. 279–300.
[106] J.E. Lowry, "Law, Structure, and Meaning in Sūrat al-Baqarah", *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* 2 (2017), pp. 111–148, esp. 120–122 and 136–137.
[107] *Ibid.*, pp. 127–132, 141–142, 146.
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 121.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

worship only Yahweh in return for his continual support. In addition, the Qur'an plays down the racial or genealogical definition of the chosen community and the idea of election, that is, that only one community has been chosen by God for special favor and attention. Rather, many communities may become chosen through exclusive worship of God and acceptance of his messengers. The scholarly consensus is nevertheless that the Qur'an exhibits a significant covenantal theology that is parallel and similar to that of biblical origin, despite engaging in reform and modification.

Moreover, even in biblical tradition, the covenant may appear to be unilateral at times. The Qur'an refers to a scene described in Jewish extra-biblical texts in which God extracts a pledge from the Hebrews under what appear to be coercive circumstances. God extirpates Mount Sinai and holds it over the heads of the Hebrews:

> Q 2:63, 93: wa-iḏ aḫaḏnā mīṯāqakum wa-rafaʿnā fawqakumu al-Ṭūr.
> And when We took their pledge and held the Mount over their heads.
>
> Q 4:154: wa-rafaʿnā fawqahumu al-Ṭūra bi-mīṯāqihim.
> And We held the Mount over your heads, taking your pledge.
>
> Q 7:171: Remember when We uprooted[110] the mountain [*al-ǧabal*] [and held it] over them as if it were a canopy, and they thought that it was going to fall on them [We said]: "Hold fast to what We have given you, and remember what is in it, so that you may protect yourselves".

In all these cases, the covenant seems to be quite one-sided, given that the Hebrews are enjoined to agree to it under a terrifying threat of being crushed.[111] The Qur'an draws here on post-biblical commentaries that portray God as having grabbed Mount Sinai, wrenched it from the earth, and then held it directly over the heads of the Hebrews.[112]

[110] Several translations render the verb *nataqnā* as "We raised" because they are interpreting the verb in light of the verb *rafaʿnā* used in the other verses that describe this scene. Other translations have "shook". In my view, the correct meaning is given in the entry in *Lisān al-ʿarab*: *iqtalaʿa*, "to pull out, uproot". Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. X, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 2003, p. 351.

[111] Exod 19:16–18; Deut 4:10; Speyer, *Die Biblische Erzählungen*, pp. 303–304; O'Connor, "Qur'anic Covenants", p. 12.

[112] G.S. Reynolds, *The Qur'ān and the Bible: Text and Commentary*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018, p. 51.

The text in the Babylonian Talmud reads as follows: "The Holy One, blessed be He, turned the mountain over them like an inverted cask, and said to them: 'If you accept the Torah, well and good; and if not, there will be your burial'" (b. Šabbat, 88a, see Avodah Zarah, 2b). The Qur'anic passages clearly refer to a similar narrative in which God is threatening to drop the entire mountain on the children of Israel if they dare to refuse the pledge. Here, this one-sided scene is not an invention of the Qur'an but rather derives directly from Jewish tradition. Despite the salience of such scenes in Jewish tradition and in the Qur'an, that does not detract from the general idea that a covenant is a mutual pact between God and the believers.

Durie also treats the story of the fall of Adam and the question of original sin, finding, correctly in my view, that the Qur'an does not have a theory of original sin that matches the Christian doctrine. He draws the conclusion that the Qur'an disrupts the theological import of the biblical account.[113] This issue has been discussed in secondary scholarship elsewhere, and Reynolds has recently presented a more reasonable account of the Qur'an's theology regarding the fall of Adam, suggesting that, while it does not line up entirely with the conception of original sin, it does connect the human propensity to sin with the behavior of Adam and Eve.[114]

The examples that Durie presents may give the overall impression that he has reverted to the position of scholars like Abraham Geiger in the early 19th century, who understood that Qur'anic deviations from the features of original biblical narratives were caused by errors, misunderstandings, and faulty transmission. His references to disruption and destructive borrowing suggest this view. However, in the section devoted to Adam and the fall it becomes clear that his view is a bit more sophisticated. Regarding the question of original sin he writes: "The Qur'an's disinterest in sin is not due to the sources it drew upon, but on the inner logic of its own theological outlook".[115] In other words, he recognizes that the differences are intended and that they de-

[113] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 213–229.
[114] G.C. Anawati, "La Notion de 'péché originel' existe-t-elle dans l'Islam?", *Studia Islamica* 31 (1970), pp. 29–40; O. Leaman, "Punishment and Original Sin" s.v., in *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by O. Leaman, London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 512–513; G.S. Reynolds, "The Qur'an and Original Sin", *Islamochristiana* 46 (2020), pp. 197–218.
[115] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, p. 228.

rive from the Qur'an's distinctive theology. He distinguishes his view from that of Geiger:

> Geiger's mistake was to assume that the Qur'an was unoriginal, and its features could be accounted for in terms of how and where it borrowed its material. What his efforts to textual paleontology overlooked was the independent power of the Qur'an's own theological vision, which readily makes use of biblical and extra-biblical Christian material but adapts them to serve its own theological purposes. While certain narrative elements have been taken over into the text of the Qur'an from biblical and post-biblical sources, the theological vision they serve is by no means an evolved, inherited version of biblical Theology. On the contrary, the radical theological repurposing of these narrative materials points to a destructive borrowing process.[116]

One can agree with this account in part. The distinctive features of biblical material that appear in the Qur'an are indeed due to its independent theological vision, and they are deployed to serve the Qur'an's theological purposes. The problem with Durie's view lies in his description of it as a "destructive borrowing process", and the consequent idea that this sort of "borrowing" renders the Qur'an outside the true or proper bounds of biblical tradition.

12. *Conclusion*

Overall, despite strenuous efforts and direct engagement with the text of the Qur'an, Durie appears to have fallen victim to circular reasoning. He begins by assuming that the Qur'an is an interloper and does not belong sufficiently to biblical tradition to merit inclusion in the biblical club. The Qur'an, in his view, is an outsider to biblical tradition – with the implication that Muslims are outsiders to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Then, when he examines individual borrowings, he argues that they have not been developed or adapted within a single biblical tradition but rather have been shoved into alien contexts, places where they do not belong. The problem from the beginning is that Durie does not sufficiently recognize the overarching ideas of the

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Qur'an that are parallel and related to biblical ideas and misses several fundamental points about its biblical framework. As explained above, God as presented in the Qur'an is understood to be the same God who is central in biblical tradition. Salvation history as presented in the Qur'an has a biblical framework that begins with the creation and the story of Adam and Eve, and includes the figures of Noah, Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. While Durie argues that the biblical reflexes in the Qur'an are cases of destructive borrowing, he is ignoring hundreds and hundreds of cases of non-destructive borrowing, in which the biblical material is presented in the Qur'an in a manner that is very similar to its presentation in Jewish and Christian texts, whether in the books of the Bible or in extra-biblical literature.

At the end of his review of this work, Reynolds brings up the pertinent question that the author asks in the introduction: "What was the pre-existing theological framework into which biblical reflexes were fitted?"[117] Reynolds supposes that Durie's answer would have to be the religious world of pre-Islamic Arabia but argues that that world was already in profound conversation with Jews and Christians.[118] It is important to keep in mind the Arabians' contact with Jews and Christians in the 7th century and their exposure to Jewish and Christian ideas, but it is even more important to recognize that biblical paradigms exert a controlling influence over Islam's sacred text. The Qur'an includes Jewish and Christian material, but it also includes material deriving from the pagan religious traditions of Arabia, including oracular oaths and omens related to Arabian divinatory traditions, lore about genies, references to the sage Luqmān, the pre-Islamic prophetic figures Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Šuʿayb, and more. It is crucial to note that this material as it is found in the Qur'an has been assimilated into a biblical framework. The oracular oaths almost always refer to the resurrection and the Day of Judgment. The figures of Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and Šuʿayb are fitted into the chronology of biblical history and made to conform to the portrayal of biblical prophets such as Moses. The pilgrimage to Mecca, which clearly derives from pre-existing pagan rituals, is reformed by being presented as a pilgrimage to the temple of God built by Abraham. Muslims thus pray toward Mecca not because the Prophet was born there but rather because it is the site of the First Temple, whereas Solomon's was the Second Temple. These examples

[117] *Ibid.*, p. xlvi.
[118] Reynolds, "Review of *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*", p. 485.

indicate that the framework of biblical salvation history is dominant in the Qur'an and not just occasionally invoked.

How much shared history, shared material, and shared ideas are necessary to make the Qur'an part of biblical tradition? Ideological and theological changes often occur even within one and the same tradition. When Durie detects changes in the Qur'anic reproduction of biblical material, he tends to argue that they in effect break the tie with the earlier tradition and cause information or knowledge to be lost, but what he is not taking into account is the intention behind the presentation. The question is less whether the Qur'an preserves Christian theological understandings but rather whether the text in question was intended to invoke terms, concepts, images, stories, or lessons that were prevalent in biblical tradition. Is the story of Adam and Eve in the Qur'an meant to recall the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis? When Noah's ark is mentioned in the Qur'an, is it meant to be the same ark that appears in the story of Noah in Genesis? Is Moses's confrontation with Pharaoh's magicians in the Qur'an meant to recall his confrontation with Pharaoh's magicians in the Bible? Are the tablets mentioned in the Qur'an meant to be the same tablets on which Moses received the Ten Commandments in the biblical account? In many such cases, the answer is obviously yes, even if there are differences of detail and interpretation.

In addition, the changes introduced in the Qur'an to biblical material are not only due to disruption or loss, which suggests haphazard violence, lack of knowledge or expertise, or simple accident. Rather, they are often intended as a commentary on, or a rectification or reform of, earlier material. The Qur'anic story of Adam and Eve, their temptation, and eventual expulsion from the garden (2:31–38; 7:11–27; 20:115–123) bears obvious resemblances to the corresponding story at the beginning of Genesis (Gen 2:4–3:24). However, certain changes appear in the story that tend to ameliorate the portrayal and legacy of Eve. Eve is not created from Adam's rib. It is implied that the pair are created in a more equal manner, Adam and his mate being said to derive from the first soul (4:1; 7:189). Both Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit (2:36; 7:20–22; 20:121); she does not eat the fruit first and then give Adam the fruit to eat it as well (Gen 3:1–7). These differences from the biblical account are part of a sustained strategy to reduce the opprobrium that attaches to Eve in the biblical account, thus getting rid of aspects of the story's moral in Genesis, the ideas that husbands should never listen to their wives' advice and that wives tend

to cause harm to their husbands' standing with God. There is a clear distinction between the two versions of the story, but does that mean that they do not properly belong to the same tradition? As mentioned above, Emran El-Badawi has aptly termed such Qur'anic uses of the biblical tradition "dogmatic re-articulation".[119]

Another factor that Durie seems to overlook is that all his arguments could also be used to prove that Christianity is quite alien to Jewish tradition. Because Christ is considered divine and because he is portrayed as sacrificing his life for the sake of mankind, the Christian concept of the Messiah is obviously quite different from the Jewish concept of the Messiah. Durie's response would be that even though the concepts are different, the Christian understanding developed out of the former in an organic, gradual fashion within the same tradition. However, one can only adopt such a view when one has accepted and internalized Christian theology regarding the relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament.

In addition, the same sort of argument could even be mounted to suggest that there are major disjunctions between the different historical layers of Israelite or Jewish religion. It is clear from the early historical layers of the Bible that the writers did not adhere to a belief in monotheism. There were many gods, and each people or tribe had one main god to whom they were especially devoted. The Hebrews and later Israelites had the god Yahweh, and they had established a covenant with him, in the same way that the Moabites worshipped the god Chemosh. In exchange for their exclusive worship of him, Yahweh would help the Israelites in their battles against other peoples. They were continually backsliding and worshiping the gods and goddesses of their neighbors, which infuriated Yahweh and resulted in his intermittent withdrawal of support, causing them to be defeated by their enemies as a form of punishment. In all this, there was no suggestion that those other gods were not real gods. It was just that Yahweh was a jealous god and did not view the Hebrews' worship of other, rival gods as acceptable. The contrast between this sort of belief system and later Jewish monotheism is stark, yet both systems are often viewed as constituting one tradition.

In Durie's view, scholars and translators have overestimated the presence of biblical ideas in the Qur'an, and this has caused them to introduce ideas into the text which do not properly occur there. He

[119] El-Badawi, *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, pp. 5–10.

writes that there is "pressure upon scholars to introduce biblical theological categories into Qur'anic texts. Often the language used to translate and interpret the Qur'an ends up tracing the shape of the biblical 'frame' through which the Western reader looks at the Qur'an".[120] Here, Durie suggests that scholars are "pressured" to overestimate the similarities between the Qur'an and the Bible, by the ideological goal of recognizing the similarities between Islam and its scripture on the one hand, and Judaism and Christianity and their scriptures on the other. In his view, engaging in a "biblicizing" translation of a Qur'anic term has the effect of injecting into the Qur'anic discourse biblical concepts that do not belong there. I would argue quite the contrary: that many translators of the Qur'an often choose to render a particular Qur'anic term or phrase that is related to biblical tradition in an "anti-biblicizing" manner, thus ruining or obscuring connections with the Bible or other texts from Jewish or Christian tradition that were clearly intended in the Qur'anic text. Thus, for example, when translations of the Qur'an render *al-kitāb* as "the book" when it refers to the Bible, or *ahl al-kitāb* as "the People of the Book" when it means "the People of the Bible", this causes the reader to miss an important message concerning the Qur'an's background.[121]

As Vincent Cornell has aptly put it, "the message of Islam as embodied in the Qur'an expresses a theology of reform".[122] In his analysis, there are three possible ways to frame the message of change: through a logic of supersession, a logic of location, or a logic of restoration. All three approaches are evident in the Qur'an itself.[123] Just as the gospel ushered in a new legal regime that superseded the one imposed by the Torah, the Qur'an ushered in a new legal regime that superseded the preceding systems (5:43–50). The Qur'anic text stresses that the Prophet Muḥammad has been sent to deliver God's message to the contemporary Arab tribes of the Ḥiǧāz, a people who have not previously received a messenger. He is supposed to warn "'aširataka al-aqrabīn" ("your closest kin", 26:214), "umm al-qurā" ("the Mother of Cities [Mecca]", 42:7) or "umm al-qurā wa-man ḥawlahā" ("The Mother of Cities and those around it", 6:92), or "al-qaryatayn" ("the Two Cities [Mecca and al-Ṭā'if]", 43:31). The Qur'an is expressed in

[120] Durie, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes*, pp. 240–242.
[121] Stewart, "Noah's Boat and Other Missed Opportunities".
[122] Cornell, "The Ethiopian's Dilemma", p. 92.
[123] *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

the Arabic language for the benefit of the intended recipients, so that they might not have any difficulty in understanding and assimilating the message (12:2; 13:37; 16:103; 20:113; 26:195; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7; 43:3; 46:12). In addition, the Qur'an presents Islam as a hearkening back to the original monotheism of Abraham, who could not have been a Jew or a Christian because he lived before the revelation of the Torah to Moses which marked the beginning of Judaism (2:135; 3:65–68, 84, 95; 4:125; 10:105; 16:120–123). In all these modes of reform, the Qur'an places itself squarely within biblical tradition, at least to the same degree that Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels places himself within Jewish tradition. Durie has chosen to accept the latter as a case of legitimate reform, while rejecting the former as illegitimate.

The possible complexities of a shared tradition may be seen in the example of the Last Supper. If one reads the Christian Gospels with the Jewish background of Jesus and his disciples in mind, one realizes that Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. The Last Supper was thus a Passover seder, and the texts of the Gospels report how Jesus reinterprets the ritual of Passover in a striking, novel manner (Matt 26:17–29; Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–38), which then became the basis for the Christian Mass. Durie would apparently argue that this was a natural, organic development of Old Testament ideas, and so does not render Christianity an outsider to Jewish biblical tradition, but it was obviously a radical change, as was the transformation of the pascal lamb into a human sacrifice. This same scene of the Last Supper occurs in Sura al-Mā'ida (Q 5) in the Qur'an, and here again, what had been the Passover seder of Judaism and the Last Supper of Christianity is reinterpreted. In the Qur'an, Jesus's disciples ask him for confirmation of the truth of his message, and he requests that God send down a banquet, which God promptly produces for them (5:111–115). The Last Supper in its Qur'anic version is a miraculous banquet meant to demonstrate God's unwavering support for his prophets and his concern to prove the truth of their missions. The same story or event is thus presented in three different ways, for three different purposes, but all suggest that they belong to the same family of traditions. Durie, in contrast, would stress the theological differences between the versions but would arbitrarily accept the Christian one as part of biblical tradition while rejecting the Qur'anic version.

If the Christians historically decided to include the Hebrew Bible along with the New Testament as their sacred text, the Muslims could have hypothetically decided to adopt a trilogy of scriptures, including

both the Torah and the New Testament along with the Qur'an as their sacred text. The fact that they did not follow that course historically made it easier for both them and others to see Islam as relatively divorced from biblical tradition, ignoring the many contrary hints in the Qur'an, whereas the Christians' decision to adopt the Old Testament as their own scripture made it easier for them to claim continuity. Nevertheless, the differences between the Qur'an and the two earlier scriptures are, in an objective sense, no more radical than the differences between the two earlier scriptural collections.

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The Qur'an "by Maometto" of Sonzogno's "Biblioteca Universale"
The First 20th-Century Direct Translation in Italian?

Riccardo A. Vigliermo

Studies on the translation of the Qur'an have analysed various works, tracing a historical path of its translation into Italian. A partial version of the Qur'an containing a selection of verses from all suras appeared as a small volume, anonymously published in 1912 in the "Biblioteca Universale" series by Milanese publishing house Sonzogno. Like other versions, it claims to be the first translation from Arabic into Italian, and could indeed appear to be the first of the 20th century. In this work, a comparison of translations is proposed to shed some light on Sonzogno's and its relationship with other contemporary and previous ones. While it successfully introduced the Qur'an to a broader Italian readership, Sonzogno's Qur'an perpetuated previous translations' biases, inadvertently providing insights into the historical trajectory of Qur'anic translations in Europe, reflecting the interpretative frameworks of its 18th- and 19th-century predecessors in their approach to Islamic religious texts.

Keywords: Sonzogno, Biblioteca Universale, Italian Translation of the Qur'an, Comparative Translations

1. *Introduction: The Qur'an of the "Biblioteca Universale"*

There have been numerous translations of the Qur'anic text into Italian, especially during the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st, and studies on these have collected and analysed them, tracing a historical path of the Qur'an's versions from Arabic into Italian. A partial version of the Qur'an appeared in a small volume of the "Biblioteca Universale" series published by the Milanese publishing

house Sonzogno between 1873 and 1932.[1] The format is typical of the series: it resembles a paperback pamphlet. Even without consulting it, one can tell that it is not a complete translation both because the title indicates "versetti scelti", confirmed by Sergio Noja Noseda[2] and the Harvard Catalog,[3] and because the series was dedicated specifically to abridged versions of literary works for the general public, which typically does not include religious texts. Curiously, this approach led to Muhammad being indicated as the book's author. The preface confirms its partial nature, giving the specific verses selected. Moreover, the end of the preface explicitly specifies the nature of the edition and the selection of verses made.

The "Biblioteca Universale" was one of the many series published by the Sonzogno publishing house, founded in 1818 by Giovan Battista Sonzogno. Beginning in 1865, Giovan Battista's nephew, Edoardo, published various series: "La Biblioteca del Popolo" (manuals), "La Biblioteca Classica Economica", "La Biblioteca Romantica", and this literature series "La Biblioteca Universale". These, in particular the "Universale", were part of a trend in publishing of popularising the classics by abridging them for more general consumption.[4] The "Biblioteca Universale" (ancient and modern) was described as a "Raccolta dei lavori letterari di tutti i tempi e di tutti i paesi – Storia – Filosofia – Politica – Poesia – Arte – Teatro – Romanzo". The Qur'an is thus treated as a literary, historical, or philosophical work, not as a religious text. The series was published monthly for about 552 issues, of which the Qur'an "by Maometto" was the 425th, published on 5 May 1912.

Sonzogno's Qur'an is a selection of verses from all 114 suras. Notably absent from the preface are both the author and the translator.

[1] Maometto, *Il Corano: Prima versione italiana dall'arabo*, Milan, Sonzogno, [1912] (hereinafter Sonzogno). See also "FFF – Biblioteca Universale (Ed. Sonzogno)", www.lfb.it/fff/editoria/test/b/bib_universale.htm (8 December 2024).

[2] S. Noja Noseda, "Il *Corano* nell'editoria italiana", in *La presenza arabo-islamica nell'editoria italiana*, ed. by I. Camera d'Afflitto, Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2000, pp. 9–13.

[3] See "Hollis – Corano Sonzogno", https://hollis.harvard.edu/primo-explore/search?tab=everything&search_scope=everything&vid=HVD2&lang=en_US&mode=basic&offset=0&query=lsr01,contains,990058379550203941 (9 December 2024). In this case "Maometto" is included in the title of the work whereas in the "Biblioteca Universale" he is indicated as the author of the text.

[4] See L. Barile, "Un fenomeno di editoria popolare: Le edizioni Sonzogno", in *L'editoria italiana tra Otto e Novecento*, ed. by G. Tortorelli, Bologna, Edizioni Analisi, 1986, pp. 95–105.

Opening the booklet, the title page reveals the subtitle: "Prima versione italiana dall'arabo". From the literature on Qur'an translations into Italian, we know that the first attempted translation was by Nicolaio Di Berto in 1461. This was followed by a version by Andrea Arrivabene printed in Venice in 1547 under the title *L'Alcorano di Macometto*. However, Arrivabene's work is not a direct translation from Arabic but rather an arbitrary summary of the Latin version by Peter of Cluny.[5] Furthermore, several other translations, roughly contemporaneous with the Sonzogno Qur'an, are dated 1882, 1912, 1913, and 1914.[6] Notably, only the last one is a true translation from Arabic. Given this, it might seem that the Sonzogno Qur'an is the first of the 20th century. Indeed, relying on the title page alone, it could be thought to be the first direct translation from Arabic into Italian in history. However, already on a first brief reading, the Sonzogno Qur'an seems to be more as a selection of verses from pre-existing translated versions of the Qur'an.

This issue is the focus of the present investigation. Despite the partial and anonymous nature of the translation, some of its features deserve a more in-depth analysis. This analysis aims to achieve three goals: 1) delineate features of agreement or disagreement among contemporary translations; 2) confirm or deny the translation's claim to authenticity; and finally, 3) possibly try to identify the author of the preface and/or a translator. Although the investigation offers intriguing possibilities, it is necessary to first shed light on existing translations, particularly those from 1912 to 1914. Next, a detailed description of the work will be necessary, followed by an analysis of sample suras compared with other translations derived from the Arabic. This comparison will help determine whether the Sonzogno Qur'an matches any existing translations and verify its authenticity. Specifically, this analysis may lead to different outcomes based also on the indications of the preface and the translation. These possibilities include: an indirect translation with an author who had knowledge of the Qur'an and expertise in Islamic studies such as *tafsīr* and *ḥadīṯ* (studied in translation in other languages, like French, German, etc.); an indirect translation without Islamic studies expertise; a direct translation without specific expertise in Islamic studies; or a direct translation with Islamic studies expertise.

[5] P. Branca, *Il Corano: Il Libro sacro della civiltà islamica*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2001, p. 109.
[6] The reason for considering the 1882 version along with those of the first decades of the 20th century is explained in section 2.

2. *Italian Translations of the Qur'an: Notes on Full and Partial Versions*

The works of Luciano Formisano[7] and Nàdia Petrus Pons[8] identify Nicolaio Di Berto's translation as the true debut of the Qur'an in Italian. The translation is contained in the Codex Vaglienti (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms. 1910), a well-known collection of journals from the early 16th century related to the Portuguese discoveries. Notably, it also contains the oldest translation of the Qur'an into a modern European language and the only known translation into a modern European language of Ibn Tūmart's *Liber Habentometi*. This translation is a Florentine vernacularising of the Latin translation by Mark of Toledo, produced during the Las Navas de Tolosa military campaign of 1210–1211.[9] In the section of the Vaglienti Codex dedicated to translation, Di Berto is mentioned as the author of the *Liber Habentometi* translation. According to Formisano and Petrus Pons, although there is no direct mention of the Qur'an translation, Di Berto is likely the author. Even more significant is the dating at the end of the *Liber Habentometi*'s prologue: October 1461 ("del mese d'otobre 1461"). This dating establishes Di Berto's work as the oldest translation of the Qur'an into Italian, almost a century earlier than the translation of Robert of Ketton's Latin version by Andrea Arrivabene, printed in Venice in 1547, previously considered the first translation into Italian.[10]

The turning point in Qur'anic translations and studies came with the work of Father Ludovico Marracci. He was the first scholar to undertake a serious study of the Qur'an and its translation directly from Arabic, albeit into Latin. His translation (and commentary), *Alcora-*

[7] L. Formisano, "La più antica (?) traduzione italiana del *Corano* e il *Liber Habentometi* di Ibn Tūmart in una compilazione di viaggi del primo Cinquecento", *Critica del testo* 7/2 (2004), pp. 651–696; *Iddio ci dia buon viaggio e guadagno: Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms. 1910 (Codice Vaglienti)*, ed. by L. Formisano, Florence, Edizioni Polistampa, 2006.

[8] *Alchoranus Latinus quem transtulit Marcus canonicus Toletanus*, ed. by N. Petrus Pons, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2016.

[9] T.E. Burman, "Tafsīr and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo", *Speculum* 73/3 (1998), p. 706. On Mark of Toledo's translation and other translations see also J. Martínez Gázquez and A. Gray, "Translations of the Qur'an and Other Islamic Texts before Dante (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)", *Dante Studies* 125 (2007), pp. 79–92.

[10] *Iddio ci dia buon viaggio*, p. 31; *Alchoranus Latinus*, p. 76.

ni textus universus, first appeared in 1698.[11] In terms of approach, it has been considered one of the first comprehensive translations of the Qur'anic text in Europe.[12]

Nearly four centuries elapsed before the next Italian translation of the Qur'an appeared. In 1847, Vincenzo Calza, pontifical consul general in Algiers, published his version. However, the preface signed by him clearly states: "Questa traduzione è tratta dal testo arabo coll'ajuto di quella francese del sig. Kasimirski, che è la più recente, ed i cui Commenti sono i più ragionati di quei degli altri illustratori del Corano".[13]

[11] Marracci's work has been studied extensively along with Latin translations of the Qur'an. For a more detailed study see G. Gabrieli, "Gli studi orientali e gli ordini religiosi in Italia", *Il pensiero missionario* 3 (1931), pp. 297–313; G. Levi Della Vida, "P. Ludovico Marracci e la sua opera negli studi islamici", in Id., *Aneddoti e svaghi arabi e non arabi*, Milan-Naples, Ricciardi, 1959, pp. 193–210; H. Bobzin, "Latin Translation of the Koran: A Short Overview", *Der Islam* 70 (1993), pp. 193–206; A. Hamilton, "The Study of Islam in Early Modern Europe", *Archiv Für Religionsgeschichte* 3/1 (2001), pp. 169–182; M. Rizzi, *Le prime traduzioni del Corano in Italia: Contesto storico e attitudine dei traduttori*, Turin, L'Harmattan, 2007. Regarding the literature on the Latin Qur'an and the Qur'an in Europe, see the publications of the European Qur'an project ("The EuQu Project", euqu.eu/the-european-quran/, 8 December 2024), in the series "The European Qur'an: Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150–1850", including, for example, *The Latin Qur'an, 1143–1500: Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, ed. by C. Ferrero Hernández and J. Tolan, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021, first volume of the series; *The Qur'an in Rome: Manuscripts, Translations, and the Study of Islam in Early Modern Catholicism*, ed. by F. Stella and R. Tottoli, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2024, fourth volume of the series; and *European Muslims and the Qur'an: Practices of Translation, Interpretation, and Commodification*, ed. by G. Sibgatullina and G. Wiegers, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2024, fifth volume of the series.

[12] The first known translation dates back to 1456 and consists of a trilingual translation of the Qur'an (Arabic-Latin-Castilian) by the Salamanca theology master Juan Alfonso de Segovia and the *faqīh* mudejar ʿIsa al-Šāḍilī (Içа Gidelli or Içа de Gebir). This is the first example of a translation of the Qur'an into three languages; after its completion, it was donated to the University of Salamanca by de Juan Alfonso de Segovia himself. Unfortunately, the text was not subsequently copied and is considered lost today. For an in-depth study on this subject, see the work of D. Scotto, "'De pe a pa': Il Corano trilingue di Juan de Segovia (1456) e la conversione pacifica dei musulmani", *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 48/3 (2012), pp. 515–578; J.P. Monferrer Sala, "Somewhere in the 'History of Spain': People, Languages and Texts in the Iberian Peninsula (13th–15th Centuries)", in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. V, *1350–1500*, ed. by D. Thomas and A. Mallett, Leiden, Brill, 2013, p. 59. For a more in-depth look at the figure of ʿIsa al-Šāḍilī, see G. Wiegers, "Içe de Gebir", in *Christian-Muslim Relations Online*, ed. by D. Thomas, vol. I, *600–1500*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 462–468.

[13] V. Calza, "Prefazione", in *Il Corano*, ed. by V. Calza, Bastia, Fabiani, 1847.

Thus, as stated in part by the author and later highlighted by Paolo Branca's analysis, the translation of the suras, the numbering of the verses, the footnotes, and especially the use of italics suggest a direct translation only from French.[14]

Not many years later, in 1882, an anonymous translation of the Qur'an was published by the Panzeri publishing house in Milan.[15] This version included the "Leggenda di Maometto", a summary of the prophet's life, and the "Sommario della Religione Turca", a summary of Islamic principles and precepts.[16] Carlo Alfonso Nallino[17] reviewed this translation, describing it as a paraphrase of Claude-Étienne Savary's 1783 French translation from the Arabic.[18] This anonymous translation is relevant to the present research for three reasons. The first reason is the period and place of publication. It appeared in Milan towards the end of the 19th century, precisely when Sonzogno produced its series, including the "Biblioteca Universale". Second, this first edition was followed by a second one, also published in Milan by Ermanno Bruciati in 1912 (the same year the Qur'an was published in the "Biblioteca Universale").[19] Finally, both the translation and the preface are anonymous.

Eugenio Camillo Branchi's translation, published in the same year, claimed to be the first direct Italian translation from the Arabic.[20] However, the translation does not match the Arabic text. In fact, it is

[14] P.L. Branca, "Le traduzioni italiane del Corano: Storia, analisi, prospettive", in *Il Corano: Traduzioni, traduttori e lettori in Italia*, ed. by M. Borrmans *et al.*, Milan, IPL, 2000, pp. 111–182, here 119.

[15] *Il Corano: Nuova traduzione italiana dall'arabo con note dei migliori commentatori orientali, preceduto dalla Leggenda di Maometto e dal Sommario della Religione Turca*, Milan, Panzeri, 1882 (hereinafter Panzeri).

[16] P. Branca, "L'evoluzione delle traduzioni del Corano: Il caso italiano", in *Tradurre i testi sacri*, ed. by M. Canepari and S. Valenti, Padua, libreriauniversitaria.it Edizioni, 2019, p. 70.

[17] C.A. Nallino, "Recensione a 'Il Corano: Nuova versione letterale italiana con una prefazione e note critico-illustrative del dott. Luigi Bonelli'", *Oriente Moderno* 7/12 (1928), p. 592.

[18] *Le Coran, traduit de l'arabe, accompagné de notes, et précédé d'un abrégé de la vie de Mahomet, tiré des écrivains orientaux les plus estimés*, 2 vols., ed. by C. Savary, Paris, Knapen & Fils, Impr. Libraires de la Cour des Aides/Onfroy, Libraire, 1783 (hereinafter Savary).

[19] Branca, *Il Corano*, p. 110.

[20] Maometto, Il profeta dell'Islam, *Il Corano, versione tolta direttamente dal testo arabo*, ed. by E.C. Branchi, Rome, M. Carra & C. di Luigi Bellini, 1913 (hereinafter Branchi). Previously published in 1912 without "Maometto" as author of the text.

based on Albin de Biberstein Kazimirski's 1840 French text,[21] and not the Arabic source itself. In support of this, it is known from the sources that Branchi was a journalist with no knowledge of Arabic. In fact, the first true direct translation from Arabic came in 1914 by Aquilio Fracassi.[22] This version includes a preface, explanations regarding Muhammad, the Qur'an, and the suras, along with indexes of names and subjects.[23] Despite the translator's efforts, the work prioritises a literal, word-for-word approach, resulting in imperfections, discrepancies, and translation errors (for example, Q al-Baqara 2.5, 8 and 251, Q al-Muṭaffifīn 65.5 and Q al- ʿAṣr 103.1).[24] These shortcomings likely led the publisher Hoepli to not reprint the text in subsequent years. Fracassi's version remains the first Italian attempt from the Arabic original, even though it was, as Francesco Gabrieli stated, "more eager than successful".[25] In 1989, the publisher Brancato of Catania republished the version, but mistakenly used Arnaldo instead of Aquilio for the author's first name.[26]

Luigi Bonelli's translation, published by Hoepli in 1929,[27] effectively superseded the previous one. Bonelli, an orientalist specialising in Turkish languages, produced the first truly scholarly work on the Qur'an in Italian. However, as Gabrieli pointed out, it was overly literal and narrow, making the text difficult to read.[28] Obscurities, ambiguities, and inaccuracies mar the translation in many passages, and the verse numbering system differs from common Arabic editions, making reference to the original difficult.[29]

[21] *Le Koran: Traduction nouvelle faite sur le texte arabe*, ed. by M. Kasimirski, Paris, Charpentier, Libraire-Éditeur, 1840 (Kazimirski's name has been spelt in various ways by publishers, but the one indicated above is the spelling he himself adopted).
[22] *Il Corano: Testo arabo e versione letterale italiana*, ed. by. A. Fracassi, Milan, Hoepli, 1914 (hereinafter Fracassi). See Nallino, "Recensione a 'Il Corano'", p. 593.
[23] In the anonymous revision published by Vita e Pensiero, Fracassi's version is acclaimed to be necessary for instructing Italians about the religious and civil institutions of the Arabs after the recent conquest of Libya. However, the author's name given is not Aquilio but Augusto; see the review published in *Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali e discipline ausiliarie* 63/252 (1913), p. 557.
[24] Citations from the Qur'an will be formatted as follows: Q al-Baqara 2:21; thereafter Q 2:21 if repeated.
[25] "Più volenteroso che felice", F. Gabrieli, *Saggi orientali*, Caltanissetta, Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 1960, pp. 39–40.
[26] Branca, "Le traduzioni italiane del Corano", pp. 123–124.
[27] *Il Corano: Nuova versione letterale italiana*, ed. by L. Bonelli, Milan, Hoepli, 1929.
[28] Gabrieli, *Saggi orientali*, p. 40.
[29] Branca, "Le traduzioni italiane del Corano", p. 125.

Alessandro Bausani's 1955 version marked a significant shift.[30] Widely accepted in both Muslim and academic circles, his translation is praised for its literary merit. Bausani's skilful use of language grants easy access to the text for both specialists and non-specialists. He achieves this by offering a nuanced approach that respects the inherent meaning of the text while preserving the religious dimension. The result is an unbiased work, rich in scholarly apparatuses with a solid historical and critical foundation. Furthermore, Bausani's work presents Islam not as a monolithic entity but as a multifaceted and dynamic cultural phenomenon with active engagement with other civilisations and religions. He emphasises Islam's ability to elaborate a unique doctrinal interpretation rather than passively adopting existing religious ideas.[31]

A few years later, in 1967, Martino Mario Moreno's translation was published. According to the preface by Gabrieli, Moreno's work achieved a level comparable to Bausani's, effectively reproducing the style of the older suras in rhymed prose. Similar to Bausani's approach, Moreno's translation is supported by a foundation of historical and religious scholarship, along with extensive notes.[32]

Twelve years later, Father Federico Peirone's translation appeared, published in 1979.[33] Peirone's commentary draws on various sources, including classical commentators, modern apologetics, recent Christological and martyrological studies, and the insights of Western Arabists. His translation offers concrete annotations, prompts for critical reflection for specialists, and numerous insights into Arabic linguistics and morphology. However, Peirone's approach excessively utilises semantic expansion, pushing the boundaries of translation. The liberties he takes are explained in the commentary following the suras, but this commentary has also been critiqued.[34]

The World Islamic Call Society (WICS), founded in Tripoli, Libya, in 1972, also contributed to Italy's Islamic scholarly landscape. In 1984, WICS published a partial Qur'an translation by Fū'ād al-Ka'bāzī,

[30] *Il Corano*, ed. by A. Bausani, Florence, Sansoni, 1955.
[31] See B. Scarcia Amoretti, "La traduzione del Corano di Alessandro Bausani e le sue implicazioni in campo islamistico", *Oriente Moderno* 78/3 (1998), pp. 513–519.
[32] See the preface written by Francesco Gabrieli in *Il Corano*, ed. by M.M. Moreno, Turin, UTET, 1967, pp. vii–viii.
[33] *Il Corano*, 2 vols., ed. by F. Peirone, Milan, Mondadori, 1979.
[34] See P.X. Despilho (review of *Il Corano*, 2 vols., ed. by F. Peirone, Milan, Mondadori, 1979), *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 86/4 (1981), pp. 561–562.

titled *Le sure brevi del Glorioso Corano*, encompassing the opening sura and suras 78-114. The full translation, titled *Glorioso Corano*, was published only in 2007 by the WICS Rome office.[35]

The *Sacro Qur'an* of 1986[36] was published under the auspices of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Movement in Islam at the London Mosque. It differs from its "Italian" predecessors in that it is the first complete Italian translation promoted by Muslims.[37] This is so despite being based on Sher Ali's English rendition[38] and even though the Ahmadiyyah community has a limited presence in Italy.

A noteworthy attempt in 1989 came from Father Cherubino Mario Guzzetti.[39] His high-quality translation balances precision with readability, though it contains a less extensive critical apparatus.[40] In contrast, Angelo Terenzoni's 1993 translation represents a return to a non-specialist approach.[41] This work, likely based on an English version published by Polaris, lacks a strong scholarly foundation. It is similar in approach to Terenzoni's translation of the *Nahǧ al-balāġa*, also derived from English.[42]

The year 1994 witnessed another initiative by Muslims. The Union of Islamic Communities and Organisations in Italy (UCOII) published a translation, but no editor is credited. It is highly likely that Hamza Roberto Piccardo, later identified as the editor in a revised edition, was involved. While the first edition utilised transliterations of

[35] *Le sure brevi del Glorioso Corano*, ed. by F. al-Ka'bāzī, Tripoli, The World Islamic Call Society, 1972; *Glorioso Corano*, ed. by F. al-Ka'bāzī, Tripoli, The World Islamic Call Society, 2007. This edition, however, raises questions. The translator's name is mysteriously absent, and the informative introduction is replaced by a short preface that does not acknowledge the work's creators. Interestingly, the translations for suras 19–114 seem identical to Ka'bāzī's 1991 version (second version), also distributed by the WICS Rome office. For further details see "Qur'an Translation of the Week #136: Glorioso Corano: An Italian Translation by Fuad Kabazi", 23 December 2022, gloqur.de/quran-translation-of-the-week-136-glorioso-corano-an-italian-translation-by-fuad-kabazi (29 November 2024).

[36] *Il Sacro Qur'ân: Testo arabo e traduzione italiana*, ed. by M.T. Ahmad, London, The London Mosque: Al- Shirkatul Islamiyyah, 1986.

[37] Branca, *Il Corano*, p. 111.

[38] "Qur'an Translation of the Week #27: The Qur'an in Italian", 20 November 2020, gloqur.de/quran-translation-of-the-week-27-the-quran-in-italian (29 November 2024).

[39] *Il Corano*, ed. by C.M. Guzzetti, vol. I, Turin, Elle Di Ci, 1989.

[40] Branca, "Le traduzioni italiane del Corano", p. 138.

[41] *Il Corano*, ed. by A. Terenzoni, La Spezia, F.lli Melita, 1993.

[42] Branca, "L'evoluzione delle traduzioni del Corano: Il caso italiano", p. 7.

Arabic terms, the revised edition instead translated some of these into Italian.[43] Both versions aimed to promote knowledge of the Qur'an and is among the most widely available Italian translations today.[44]

The first decade of the 21st century saw a continued rise in Italian Qur'an translations. In 2002, Francesco Aniballi's version appeared, which was essentially a translation of Kazimirski's 1993 French edition, as acknowledged in the publisher's opening note.[45] The following few years saw two further translations: Antonio Ravasio's in 2003[46] and Gabriele Mandel's collaboration with Mohsen Mouelhi in 2004.[47]

More recently, in 2010, a version by Alberto Ventura and Ida Zilio-Grandi was published. Oddly, the introduction holds itself to the standard of excellence represented by Bausani's version, ignoring developments in Qur'an studies since then.[48] The result of the translation is faithful, honest, balanced, with few apologetic inclinations.

In 2018, 'Abdu-R-Rahmàn Pasquini's *Sublime Corano* was published,[49] offering a translation derived from his 1992 work *Parafrasi del Sublime Corano*.[50] This edition features minimal apparatuses, limited to a final glossary, and utilises many transliterated terms with few references to exegetical texts or commentaries. The most recent translation, published in 2022, comes from Hafez Haidar, a translator, author of Islamic literary essays, and Arabic language consultant for the Italian courts.[51]

Beyond full Qur'an translations, a substantial body of partial translations, anthologies, unfinished works, or those focusing on a single sura or a few suras also exists. Some of these, like the aforementioned

[43] *Il Corano: Edizione integrale*, ed. by H.R. Piccardo, Rome, Newton Compton, 1997.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[45] *Il Corano*, ed. by F. Aniballi, Rome, Gangemi Editore, 2002.
[46] *Il Corano*, ed. by A. Ravasio, trans. by L. Monti, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Rusconi Libri, 2003.
[47] *Il Corano*, ed. by G. Mandel Khan, trans. by M. Mouelhi, Novara, De Agostini, 2004. This version most likely presumes that Mandel only contributed the apparatus. A second edition by the same author instead indicates Gabriele Mandel as editor/translator of the text with an introduction by K.F. Allam: *Il Corano: Testo arabo con la versione letterale integrale*, ed. by G. Mandel, Turin, UTET, 2006.
[48] *Il Corano*, ed. by A. Ventura, trans. by I. Zilio-Grandi, Milan, Mondadori, 2010.
[49] *Sublime Corano: In lingua italiana*, trans. by A.R. Pasquini, ed. by A.A. Shwaima, Milan, Centro Islamico di Milano e Lombardia, 2018.
[50] A.R.R. Pasquini, *Parafrasi del Sublime Corano*, vol. I, Milan, Edizioni del Calamo, 1992.
[51] *Il Corano*, ed. by H. Haidar, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Diarkos, 2022.

Parafrasi del Sublime Corano or Ventura's study of the first sura (*al-fātiḥa*), have been incorporated into complete editions.[52]

Interestingly, among the various studies on Islamic scripture translations, the Sonzogno Qur'an seems largely overlooked. Only a handful of studies mention it. The first is Noja Nosed's work in the 2000 volume *La presenza arabo-islamica nell'editoria italiana*. In his bibliographic list, Nosed included two publication dates and titles for the Sonzogno translation, along with additional notes on the Panzeri version republished by Bruciati.[53] The second study, by Branca, includes the Sonzogno Qur'an among partial translations without a publication date, acknowledging its unique characteristic of quoting verses from all chapters of the Qur'an. Branca recognises the value of the translation and the target audience, surmising that the Sonzogno edition aimed to introduce the Qur'an to a broader audience in a non-intimidating way.[54]

3. *The Sonzogno Qur'an: Textual Features*

The Qur'an in the Sonzogno edition opens with a one-and-a-half-page introduction. This introduction provides a brief overview of the Qur'an's composition, Islamic precepts, the origin and systematisation of the written Qur'an, and even touches on verse abrogation. Comparing it with the preface of the 19th-century Italian version by Calza, translated from the French of Kazimirski, reveals obvious differences in content and intent. Calza's preface is addressed exclusively to Christian readers, the only ones he deems valid. His explicit aim is to highlight what he considers the errors of Islam to a zealous Catholic audience. Interestingly, considering that the Panzeri's 1882 version derived from Savary's French text, a comparison can be made between the French preface and the Sonzogno Qur'an. Both Panzeri and Sonzogno do not indicate an author for the preface. In the opening of the preface in Savary's version, similarities are readily apparent:

> Il Corano o Alcorano (questa parola viene dal verbo Kara, leggere) è il codice dei precetti e delle leggi che Maometto, parte dalla Mecca e parte da

[52] A. Ventura, *al-Fātiḥa – l'Aprente: La prima sura del Corano*, Genoa, Marietti, 1991.
[53] Noja Noseda, "Il *Corano* nell'editoria italiana", p. 13.
[54] Branca, "L'evoluzione delle traduzioni del Corano: Il caso italiano", pp. 147–148.

> Medina, diede agli Arabi come capo supremo della religione e come sovrano. Esso comprende centoquattordici sura, cioè capitoli. [Sonzogno, p. 3]
>
> Le Coran est le code des préceptes & des loix que Mahomet donna aux Arabes, comme chef suprême de la religion, & comme souverain. Il comprend cent quatorze Chapitres divisés en versets. [Savary, p. V]

As the text continues, the parallels are evident:

> Esso consiste in due parti: nella fede dommatica (imàn) e nella religione pratica (din). Il Corano ha per dogma la credenza di un Dio unico di cui Maometto è il Profeta: per principi fondamentali la preghiera, l'elemosina, il digiuno nel mese di Ramadan e il pellegrinaggio alla Mecca. La morale ch'esso predica è fondata sulla legge naturale e su ciò che conviene ai popoli dei climi caldi. [Sonzogno, pp. 3–4]
>
> Le Coran a pour dogme la croyance d'un Dieu unique dont Mahomet est le Prophète; pour principes fondamentaux, la prière, l'aumône, le jeûne du mois *Ramadan* & le pèlerinage del Mecque. La morale qu'il prêche est fondée sur la loi naturelle, & sur ce qui convient aux peuples des climats chauds. [Savary, p. VI]

The only small differences can be seen in the explication of the *basmala* in transliteration ("Besm ellah elrohman elrahim", not surprisingly in the French manner) and in the division of Islam into dogmatic faith (*'imān*) and practical faith (*dīn*). In any case, both are present also in the Savary version using other words.

> Il Corano, dettato in versetti come i Salmi di David, fu scritto su foglie di palma o su pezzi di pergamena, da Said-ben-Thabet, segretario di Maometto. Due anni dopo la morte del Profeta (13.° dell'egira, 635 di C.) Abu-Bekr li raccolse in volume; ma essendo state introdotte nella collezione molte aggiunte apocrife, il califfo Omar nell'anno 652 ne rivedé e ne sanzionò una copia creduta autentica. [Sonzogno, p. 4]
>
> Le Coran fut publié dans l'espace de vingt-trois ans, partie à la Mecque, partie à Medine, & suivant que le Législateur avoit besoin de faire parler le Ciel. Les versets furent écrits par ses secrétaires sur des feuilles de palmier, & sur du parchemin. Aussitôt qu'ils étoient révélés, ses Disciples les apprenoient par cœur, on les déposoit dans un coffre ou ils restoient

> confondus. Après la mort de Mahomet, Abu-Becr les recueillit en un volume. [Savary, p. VI]

Here, the differences consist in the presence of dates and the mention of the figure of Zayd bin Ṯābit as Muḥammad's secretary (transliterated, however, as Said-ben-Thabet). If, on the other hand, one consults Branchi's version of the Qur'an, the note at the beginning of the preface mentions Said-ben-Thabet as the one who wrote down the revealed verses, apparently after hearing them from the prophet, and then collected them in an illogical order.[55] Savary and Panzeri, in agreement with Branchi's and Kazimirski's versions, and unlike the Sonzogno version, indicate a time span of 23 years for the drafting of the Qur'an in its final form. However, Savary, Panzeri, and Sonzogno all indicate the second caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (Abu-Becr) as the main promoter of collecting the verses in a single volume.[56]

Despite some small discrepancies between Savary and Sonzogno, the similarities are much greater, which suggest that Sonzogno is a paraphrased translation of the opening part of Savary's preface.[57] This is again evident in the following extract:

> Abu-Bekr, idolatra del suo maestro, considerando come divino tutto quello ch'egli aveva insegnato, non s'applicò a dare al Corano l'ordine di cui era suscettibile; collocò i capitoli più lunghi al principio e i più brevi alla fine. Questo affastellamento in un'opera che è una raccolta di precetti

[55] See the note in the preface of Branchi. Since we know that this version is based on Kazimirski's French version, we have a confirmation in that Kazimirski gives the name as Zeïd. See *Le Koran*, p. x. According to Islamic sources, Zayd bin Ṯābit, a servant of the prophet's companions, was one of the first to learn to write and then to compose the "official" letters, to transcribe the verses revealed to the prophet and then to collect them in a volume. On this subject, see Ibn ʿAbd al-barr, *Kitāb al-Istīʿāb fī maʿrifa al-'aṣḥāb II*, vol. II, Beirut, Dar al-gil, 1996, p. 538; ʿAlī bin Muḥammad al-Ḫizāʿī, *taḫrīǧ al-dilālāt al-samʿiyya*, Beirut, Dar al-garb al-islami, 1985, p. 181.

[56] To date, recent studies on Qur'anic readings (*qirā'āt*) have revealed a more stratified and complex reality of the phenomenon of the composition of the Qur'an, which has seen the succession of numerous phases that began with the Caliph ʿUṯmān b. ʿAffān and ended only in the 20th century, according to the study conducted by Shady Hekmat Nasser. On this subject see S.H. Nasser, *The Second Canonization of the Qur'ān (324/936): Ibn Mujāhid and the Founding of the Seven Readings*, Leiden, Brill, 2020, pp. 5–8.

[57] Savary, pp. v–vii.

> dati in tempi diversi, e dei quali i primi sono spesso aboliti dai secondi, genera la più grande confusione. Non vi si deve, quindi, cercare né ordine né seguito; ma il filosofo può vedervi i mezzi che un uomo, appoggiato soltanto al proprio genio, ha impiegato per trionfare dell'attaccamento degli Arabi all'idolatria, e per dar loro culto e leggi; potrà scorgervi, in mezzo a moltissime favole e a innumerevoli ripetizioni, dei tratti sublimi e un entusiasmo atto oltre ogni dire a soggiogare popoli d'indole ardente. [Sonzogno, p. 4]

> Idolâtre de son maître, regardant comme divin tout ce qu'il avoit enseigné, il ne s'attacha point à donner au Coran l'ordre dont il étoit susceptible, en arrangeant les Chapitres suivant la date des temps où ils avoient paru; il plaça les plus longs à la tête du recueil, & ainsi de suite. [...] Ce bouleversement dans un ouvrage qui est un recueil de préceptes donnés dans différens temps, & dont les premiers sont souvent abrogés par les suivans, y a jetté la plus grande confusion. On ne doit donc y chercher ni ordre, ni suite; mais le Philosophe y verra les moyens qu'un homme appuyé sur son seul génie, a employés pour triompher de l'attachement des Arabes à l'idolâtrie, & pour leur donner un culte, & des loix; il y verra parmi beaucoup de fables, & de répétitions, des traits sublimes, & un enthousiasme propre à subjuguer des peuples d'un naturel ardent. [Savary, pp. VI-VII]

After the short preface, the Qur'an translation itself begins. Each chapter is titled, numbered, and followed by the translation of the Arabic title of the corresponding sura. However, the translation approach to these titles varies:

a) Some titles are literal translations of the Arabic, like "introduzione (Fatahat)" for the first sura (Sonzogno, p. 7).

b) Others are more interpretive, such as "La Guerra" translating the title *muḥammad* in Q Muḥammad 47 (p. 60).[58]

c) Still others, like "L'unione dei sessi" for the title *al-ʿalaq* (The Clot) in Q al-ʿAlaq 96 (p. 86), and "Abu Lahab" for *al-masad* in Q al-Masad 111 (p. 91), depart significantly from the original Arabic title.

[58] It is indeed true that the sura is also known as *Surat al-Qitāl*; in this sense the title translation could be considered more a synthesis of the meaning of the verses contained in the chapter, see for example Qāsim ʿAšūr, *1000 suʾāl wa ǧawāb fī al-qurʾān al-karīm*, Beirut, Dar Ibn Hazm, 2007, p. 249.

d) Confusingly, some titles are left transliterated, following the French source without explaining this inconsistency.

Unlike the Panzeri version, the Sonzogno Qur'an omits preliminary information about each sura, such as its origin (Meccan or Medinan) or the number of verses it contains, which would be expected given its partial nature. The *basmala* (the phrase "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"), which is typically the first verse of each sura (except for Q al-Tawba), is also absent throughout the text. The verse numbering system is erratic. In some cases, verses are numbered randomly, and, at times, merged together. For instance, in Q al-Kāfirūn 109, "Gli infedeli", the first three verses in translation show a numbering problem[59], as shown below:

Q 109 (original arabic):

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ)
قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١﴾ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾
وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ ﴿٤﴾ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٥﴾ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴿٦﴾

Q 109 – "Gli infedeli" (Sonzogno, p. 90):

1. Di': O infedeli, io non adorerò i vostri simulacri; voi non adorate il mio Dio!
2. Aborro il vostro culto! La mia religione non è la vostra.
2. [*sic*] Voi avete la vostra credenza; io la mia!

Another example is found in Q al-Falaq 113, "Il Dio del mattino", where the five verses of the original tense are given as one verse:

Q al-Falaq 113 (original arabic):

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ)
قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾ مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ﴿٢﴾ وَمِن شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ ﴿٣﴾
وَمِن شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ﴿٤﴾ وَمِن شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ ﴿٥﴾

[59] The original Arabic text mentioned here is taken from the digital edition of the Qur'an in the Tanzil Project. This project was launched in 2007 aiming to produce a highly verified Unicode Quran text to be used in Quranic websites and applications. For more details see tanzil.net/docs/home (29 November 2024).

> Q 113 – "il Dio del mattino" (Sonzogno, p. 91):
>
> 1. Di': Metto la mia confidenza nel Dio del mattino, onde mi salvi dai mali che assediano l'umanità, dalle influenze della luna coperta di tenebre, dai sortilegi delle streghe figlie di Lobeid, e dai neri progetti meditati dall'invidioso.

Moreover, the Sonzogno Qur'an version of this chapter is particularly interesting when it translates the Arabic term *min šarr al-naffaṯāt fi-l-ʿuqad* as "sortilegi delle streghe figlie di Lobeid". It is evident that, rather than being a translation, it is taken from a commentary or note drawn from a *tafsīr*.[60] The comparison of this version with Panzeri's anonymous version, which does not give the verse numbers, reveals a different translation of this passage from the same chapter:

> Q 113 – "Il Dio del mattino" (Panzeri, p. 531)
>
> Di': Io pongo la mia fiducia nel Dio del mattino, onde mi sciolga dai mali che affliggono l'umanità, dagli influssi della luna coperta di tenebre, *dai malefizj di tutti coloro che soffiano sui nodi* [my italics], e dai neri progetti che medita l'invidioso.

However, in the commentary on the same note in Panzeri's version, we read: "Essi soffiavano sopra i nodi che facevano a una corda, pronunziando certe parole magiche. Queste erano le figliole di Lobeid che avevano ammagliato Maometto. *Marracci*". The note thus seems to be taken straight from Marracci's translation but, when comparing Panzeri's version with Savary's, we see that it is more likely that

[60] For example, Ibn Kaṯīr, in his *tafsīr*, mentions, quoting al-Ṯaʿlabī, *Lubayd bin al-Aʿṣam* (Lobeid), as a Jew in the service of the Prophet who enchanted the latter with a spell, leading him to illness. See *tafsīr al-qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, Beirut, Dar ibn hazm, 2000, p. 2054. Al-Qurṭubī reports that some women bewitched the prophet with an 11-knot incantation, which is the reason why the two suras are nicknamed in Arabic *al-muʿawaḍatayn* (*al-falaq* and *al-nās* of verses 5 and 6 respectively). Al-Qurṭubī further specifies that the sorceresses in question were Jewish and were daughters of Lubayd bin al-Aʿṣam. See *al-ǧāmiʿ li-ʾaḥkām al-qurʾān: wa al-mubayyin li-mā taḍammana-hu al-sunna wa ʾāyy al-furqān*, vol. XXII, Beirut, Mu'assasa al-risala, 2006, p. 577. Instead, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* is more general in his report of sorceresses who used to blow on the knots of the rope to bring forth their enchantment. See *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol. VI, Beirut, Mu'assasa al-risala, 1994, p. 585.

the note has simply been translated from the French version based on Marracci's note on verse 4 of the same sura.[61]

The Sonzogno translation of this chapter thus seems to be a paraphrase of Panzeri (and thus of Savary) where the note on Lobeid has turned into Qur'anic text. The lack of notes or critical apparatuses of any kind in the Sonzogno version does not make it easy to discuss these passages and at the same time makes reading and understanding difficult. Another, less articulate, possibility is represented by Branchi's version of the same verse (see below). The only footnotes present are to be found in Q Yūsuf 10, "Giuseppe" (Sonzogno, p. 23),[62] and in Q al-Rūm 30, "I Greci" (p. 42).[63] Both notes would appear to be an abbreviated paraphrase of the notes in Savary's version. The latter is

[61] In Panzeri's edition, only the second footnote provided by Savary is translated, who may in turn have drawn his comments on this sura directly from Marraci's version, quoting it only partially. See Savary, vol. II, pp. 462–463. Marracci, in a footnote, gives the Arabic text of *Tafsīr al-ǧalālayn* by Ǧalāl al-dīn al-Maḥallī and Ǧalāl al-dīn al-Suyūṭī (see *Tafsīr al-ǧalālayn al-muyassar*, Beirut, Maktaba Lubnan nashirun, 2003, pp. 604–605), translating the commentary from Arabic to Latin and explaining the type of spell with an interesting reference to Virgil. See L. Marracci, *Alcorani textus universus*, Padua, Ex Typographia Seminarii, 1698, pp. 832–833. These notes echo the words expressed by Pierre Martino in 1908 referring to Kazimirski: "In certain passages, it really seems as if he translated not the Arabic of Muhammad, but the Latin of Marracci", P. Martino, "Mahomet en France au XVII^{e} et au XVIII^{e} siècle", in *Actes du XIV^{e} Congrès international des orientalistes, Alger, 1905*, vol. III, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1907, pp. 206–208, here 208. For an overview of the first French translations of the Qur'an, see S. Larzul, "Les premières traductions françaises du Coran (XVII^{e}–XIX^{e} siècles)", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 147 (2009), pp. 147–165.

[62] Concerning the note in Q 12 in the Sonzogno version see Savary, vol. I, p. 239. Savary, probably using Marracci (See Marracci, *Alcorani textus universus*, pp. 360–361), cites the *tafsīr*s of al-Bayḍāwī and Maḥmūd al-Zamaḫšarī when they explain the circumstances of the revelation of those verses. See *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta'wīl al-musammà tafsīr al-bayḍāwī*, vol. II, Beirut-Damascus, Dar al-rashid, Mu'assasa al-īman, 2000, p. 157; *Tafsīr al-kaššāf*, Beirut, Dar al-ma'rifa, 2009, p. 502. This can be seen when they comment on verse 111 of sura 12 by using an *ḥadīṯ* of the Prophet describing the usefulness of a Muslim's teaching of this sura to family members and servants, achieving as a reward from Allāh a sweet death and the strength not to envy anyone. However, both *mufassirs* acknowledge the limited truthfulness of this *ḥadīṯ* and regard it as fabricated (*mawḍū'*). See al-Bayḍāwī, *Tafsīr al-bayḍāwī*, vol. II, p. 194; and al-Zamaḫšarī, *Tafsīr al-kaššāf*, p. 533.

[63] Concerning note in Q 30 in the Sonzogno version, see Savary, vol. II, p. 171. In this case the note in Savary is taken from Marracci's *Refutationes in Suram XXX*, where the latter explains how the prediction may actually be based more on a conjecture about the conditions of the Greek and Persian empires than on a prophecy. See Marracci, *Alcorani textus universus*, pp. 541–542.

also probably a reformulation of those reported by Marracci on the same chapters of the Qur'an. Two suras, on the other hand, do not contain translated verses but only a partial summary of their content (in Q ṭaha 20, "T.H."), or a complete one (in Q al-Ṭalāq 65, "Il Ripudio"). These are taken from Qur'anic commentaries, as indicated by the quotations in both chapters.[64]

A final note concerns the use of transliterations in the titles of the suras and the use of italics in the text. As already mentioned, some of the titles are not translated but are left in a transliterated form, although the transliteration criteria used are never specified in the text. Thus, we have: Q al-'A'rāf 7, "Elaraf" (p. 15); Q Hūd 11, "Hod" (p. 20); Q al-Ḥiğr 15, "Hegr" (p. 25); Q 20, "T.H." (p.32); Q luqmān 31, "Locman" (p. 43); Q yā sīn 36, "I.S." (p. 49); Q ṣād 38, "S" (p. 51); Q al-aḥqāf 46, "Hacaf" (p. 59); Q qāf 50, "K" (p. 63); and Q al-kawṯar 108, "Il Kautser". Other titles are translated while giving the transliterated Arabic original in brackets, as in Q al-'isrā' 17, "Il viaggio notturno (Esra)" and Q al-kahf 18, "La Caverna (Elcahaf)". Comparing the Sonzogno, Panzeri, and Savary versions, we note that the titles in Sonzogno are not directly translated from Arabic but simply taken from the Panzeri version and are in some cases shortened or paraphrased.[65] Titles remain essentially unaltered since they often retain the transliteration and some translation inaccuracies present in Savary's version.[66] Thus, the systematic renditions of Arabic: *ḳ* into *c*, *q* into *k* (sometimes also into *c*); *ǧ* into *g*; the confluence of *ḥ* and *ḫ* into *h*; the confluence of the emphatic *ṭ* and *ṣ* into *t* and *s* respectively; inconsistent transliteration of *ṯ* sometimes rendered *th* and sometimes *ts*; finally, the systematic omission of ʿ (*ʿayn*) and long vowels. There is widespread use of italics in the names of prophets, peoples, and places, such as: "Hod", "Saleh", "Adeei", and "Themudeei" (p. 21); "Moses", "Chaib", and "Medianiti" (p. 22), "Eblis", "Aleïca", and "Hegr" (p. 26), "Jagog" and "Magog" (pp. 31-32). Italics are also found when elements of nature are present, such as the "Zacoum" tree (p. 51) or the "Tensim" spring

[64] The commentaries cited in Sonzogno, as in Panzeri, are translations from the French of Savary, who in turn cites the *tafsīr* of al-Maḥallī, al-Suyūṭī, and al-Zamaḫšarī as seen previously.

[65] For example, Q 10, in Panzeri "Giona. La pace sia con lui", became in Sonzogno "Giona"; Q 101, in Panzeri "Il giorno dei disastri", became in Sonzogno "Il giorno delle calamità".

[66] Q 7, "Elaraf"; Q 96, "L'unione dei sessi", Q 111, "Abu-Lahab": both in Panzeri and Sonzogno, both translated or drawn directly from Savary.

(p. 81). It is also found in some temporal concepts: "La notte chiamata El-cadar" (p. 86). However, these examples are not consistent within the text and sometimes the same names are used both with and without italics (p. 40).

4. *The Translation: A Comparison of a Few Examples from Savary, Panzeri, Branchi, and Fracassi*

The analysis conducted in the previous section revealed a close relationship between the Sonzogno, Panzeri, and Savary versions. The first two editions borrow heavily from Savary's work in terms of preface, notes, chapter titles, and transliteration. This section will focus on the actual translations. As indicated in the introduction, the comparison will involve Italian versions published between 1912 and 1914, alongside Savary's French version, given its similarities to the Sonzogno Qur'an. The model employed here resembles the parallel format used by the Qur'an 12–21 project website.[67] I have selected chapters for analysis, including the opening sura and the three concluding ones. These choices were made due to their shorter length while still offering a significant sample. This type of analysis is based on two key considerations. First, the Sonzogno Qur'an is selective, reproducing mostly shorter suras in their entirety. Second, this approach allows readers to more easily identify similarities and differences between the various translations.

Initially, the original Arabic text will be presented followed by a synopsis of the translations in chronological order, starting with Savary and ending with Fracassi, which was, as shown, the first Italian translation truly derived from the Arabic original.

Q al-Fātiḥa 1 (original arabic):

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

[67] That website compares and gives context to translations from different European languages throughout history (12th century to today). For more details see quran12-21.org/en (29 November 2024).

Savary (1783)	Panzeri (1882)	Sonzogno (1912)	Branchi (1912)	Fracassi (1914)
Au nom de Dieu clément & miséricordieux. LOUANGE à Dieu souverain des mondes! La miséricorde est son partage. Il est le roi du jour du jugement. Nous t'adorons, Seigneur, & nous implorons ton assistance. Dirige-nous dans le sentier du salut, Dans le sentier de ceux que tu as comblés de tes bienfaits, De ceux qui n'ont point mérité ta colère, & se sont préservés de l'erreur.	*In nome di Dio clemente e misericordioso.* Lode a Dio, sovrano dei mondi! La misericordia è la sua eredità. Egli è il re del giorno del giudizio. T'adoriamo, o Signore, e imploriamo la tua assistenza. Guidaci nella via della salute, nella via di coloro che hai ricolmi de' tuoi benefizj, Idi quelli che non meritarono la tua collera sono preservati dall'errore.	1. Lode a Dio sovrano di tutti i mondi! 2. La misericordia è il suo retaggio. 3. Guidaci, o Signore, nel sentiero di salute: nel sentiero di coloro che tu hai colmato de' tuoi favori; di coloro che non hanno meritato la tua collera, e si sono preservati dall'errore!	*In nome di Dio clemente e misericordioso:* 1. Lode a Dio, Signore dell'universo. 2. Il Clemente, il Misericordioso. 3. Supremo giudice nel giorno del Giudizio. 4. Noi ti adoriamo, noi imploriamo il tuo soccorso. 5. Dirigi i nostri passi sul sentiero della salute. 6. Sul sentiero di coloro che Tu hai colmato dei tuoi benefizi. 7. Non di quelli che meritarono la tua collera, né di quelli che vivono nell'errore.	**In nome di Dio, Clemente, Misericordioso.** 1 Lode a Dio, Signore dei Mondi, 2 Clemente, Misericordioso, 3 Re del giorno del giudizio. 4 Te adoriamo e a Te chiediamo aiuto. 5 Dirigici sulla via retta, 6 via di coloro, ai quali Tu hai accordato grazie sui quali non cade ira da parte Tua, e che non sono in errore.

Q al-'iḫlāṣ 112 (original arabic):

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ)
قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿٢﴾ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَد﴿٤﴾

Savary (1783)	Panzeri (1882)	Sonzogno (1912)	Branchi (1912)	Fracassi (1914)
Au nom de Dieu clément & miséricordieux. DIS: Dieu est un Il est éternel. Il n'a point enfanté, & n'a point été enfanté. Il n'a point d'égal.	*In nome di Dio clemente e misericordioso.* Di': Dio è uno solo, è eterno; non è stato partorito; non ha eguale.	1. Parla così: Dio è uno! 2. E il Dio al quale tutti gli esseri si rivolgono nel lor cuore. 3. Egli non ha avuto figli e non è stato partorito. 4. Non ha uguali.	*In nome di Dio Clemente e Misericordioso.* 1. Di: - Dio è unico. 2. È il Dio, al quale tutti gli esseri si rivolgono nei loro bisogni. 3. Egli non ha avuto figli, né è stato partorito. 4. In nessun uomo esiste il suo uguale.	**Nel nome di Dio, Clemente, Misericordioso.** 1 Di: Egli è Dio unico. 2 Dio eterno! 3 Non generò, né fu generato. 4 E non è a Lui uguale pure uno!

Q 113 (original arabic):

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ)
قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾ مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ﴿٢﴾ وَمِن شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ ﴿٣﴾
وَمِن شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ﴿٤﴾ وَمِن شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ ﴿٥﴾

Savary (1783)	Panzeri (1882)	Sonzogno (1912)	Branchi (1912)	Fracassi (1914)
Au nom de Dieu clément & miséricordieux. DIS: je mets ma confiance dans le Dieu du matin; Afin qu'il me délivre des maux qui assiègent l'humanité; Des influences de la lune couverte de ténèbres; Des maléfices de celles qui soufflent sur les nœuds; Et des noirs projets que médite l'envieux.	*In nome di Dio clemente e misericordioso.* Di': Io pongo la mia fiducia nel Dio del mattino onde mi sciolga dai mali che affliggono l'umanità; dagli influssi della luna coperta di tenebre; dai malefizj di tutti quelli che soffiano sui nodi', e dai neri progetti che medita l'invidioso.	1. Di': Metto la mia confidenza nel Dio del mattino, onde mi salvi dai mali che assediano l'umanità, dalle influenze della luna coperta di tenebre, dai sortilegi delle streghe figlie di Lobeid, e dai neri progetti meditati dall'invidioso.	*In nome di Dio Clemente e Misericordioso:* 1. Di: Cerco un rifugio presso il Signore dell'Alba. 2. Contro la perversità degli esseri che Egli ha creati, 3. Contro i mali che ci possono cogliere in una fosca 4. Contro i sortilegi delle streghe figlie di Lobeid, 5. E contro il pericolo di colui che nutre dell'invidia per noi.	**Nel nome di Dio, Clemente, Misericordioso.** 1 Di': cerco un rifugio, uno scampo nel Signore dell'Aurora dal male che Ei creò, e dal male della luna, allorché si eclissa, allorché non è visibile a noi, e dal male delle femmine, che soffiano nei nodi, e del male dell'invido, quando abbia invidiato.

Q al-nās 114 (original arabic):

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ)
قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ﴿١﴾ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَٰهِ النَّاسِ ﴿٣﴾ مِن شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ
الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ﴿٥﴾ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴿٦﴾

Savary (1783)	Panzeri (1882)	Sonzogno (1912)	Branchi (1912)	Fracassi (1914)
Au nom de Dieu climent & miséricordieux. DIS: je mets ma confiance dans le Seigneilt des hommes, Roi des hommes, Dieu des hommes; Afin qu'il me délivre des séductions de Satan, Qui souffle le mal dans les cœurs, Et qu'il me défende contre les entreprises des genies, & des méchans.	*In nome di Dio clemente e misericordioso.* Di': Pongo la mia confidenza nel Signore degli uomini, re degli uomini, Dio degli uomini, onde mi liberi dalle seduzioni di Satana che soffia il male nei cuori, e mi difenda contro le trame dei genj e dei malvagi.	1. Di': Io metto la mia confidenza nel Signore degli uomini, 2. Re degli uomini; 3. Dio degli uomini; 4. Onde mi liberi dalle seduzioni di Satana, 5. Distrugga il male nei cuori, 6. E mi difenda contro gli attentati dei genii e dei malvagi.	*In nome di Dio Clemente e Misericordioso:* 1. Di: - Io cerco un rifugio presso il Signore degli uomini, 2. Re degli uomini, 3. Dio degli uomini, 4. Contro la perversità di colui che suggerisce i cattivi pensieri e fugge, 5. Che inculca il male nel cuore degli esseri creati da Dio. 6. Contro i genii e contro gli uomini stessi.	**Nel nome di Dio, Clemente, Misericordioso.** 'Di': cerco un rifugio, uno scampo nel Signore degli Uomini, Re degli uomini, Dio degli uomini, dal male di Satana, del tentatore nascosto, che sussurra, che insinua nei petti degli uomini; uno scampo dai genii, dagli uomini, da lui male ispirati.

A few brief remarks on the translations can be made at this point. With regard to the first sura, it will be noted that the *basmala*, contained in the first verse in the Arabic text, is always placed outside the verses in the translations, either in italics or in bold, except in the Sonzogno version where it is omitted altogether. The last verse, on the other hand, is translated with an error in all versions except Branchi's, which is taken from Kazimirski's French. The error lies in the translation of the exceptive particle *ġayr* and thus of its subsequent coordination, which in the context of the verse *ṣirāṭ illaḏīna anʿamt ʿalay-him ġayr al-maġḍūb ʿalay-him wa la al-ḍāllīn* can be roughly translated in Italian as: "La via di coloro che hai colmato di grazia e non di coloro che hanno meritato la tua collera e nemmeno di coloro che hanno sviato". The versions considered here, with the exception of Branchi's, state the opposite: "La via di coloro che hai colmato dei tuoi benefici, e di coloro che non hanno meritato la tua ira e che non hanno errato". The Sonzogno translation also omits the fourth verse (*malik yawm al-dīn*), but it is easy to find a general paraphrase of Panzeri and thus of Savary's version that also keeps unchanged the error in the concluding verse mentioned above.

In Q 114, on the other hand, Sonzogno's version seems to be closer to Branchi's than to those of Panzeri and Savary, which are very similar to each other. In particular, the two central verses (2 and 3) are less synthetic than in Panzeri and Savary. Verses 2 and 3 in Sonzogno and those in Branchi are practically identical apart from the change of the word "cuori" to "bisogni" which, however, does not have much specific effect on the translation. In any case, neither version matches the original Arabic text.

Q 113 presents a curiosity. Two versions seem to have been taken into account by Sonzogno. From the first to the third verse, Sonzogno presents a paraphrase by Panzeri that does not find much correspondence in the original Arabic but only in Savary, which in turn deviates greatly from the Arabic text. As we have already seen, in the fourth verse Sonzogno instead comes very close to Branchi by practically using the same words, including "le streghe figlie di Lobeid", a locution not found in the Arabic text and in fact not employed by the others, Fracassi included.

The last sura in Sonzogno is quite similar to Panzeri's except for an ambiguous translation of the fifth verse. The verse (*illaḏī yuwaswis fī ṣudūr al-nās*) is mysteriously translated as "destroy the evil in hearts", referring to Allāh, while the relative pronoun (*ism mawṣūl*) *illaḏī*

clearly refers to *al-ḫannās* (Satan's epithet), which is the last word in the previous verse.

5. *Conclusion*

This study investigated the early 20th-century Sonzogno Qur'an translation published in Milan's "Biblioteca Universale" series. While rarely mentioned in scholarship, the Sonzogno edition had a commercial purpose, aligning with popular publishing trends. Beyond its presumption of marketability, it likely aimed to introduce the Qur'an to a broader Italian audience, perhaps emphasising its literary aspects. Despite claiming to be the first Italian translation from the Arabic, the Sonzogno Qur'an falls short of this claim. I have shown that the anonymous preface, the use of italics and titles, and even the limited notes, were all borrowed from, or influenced by, earlier European sources. Notably, the notes seem to be derived indirectly from Marracci's Latin translation through Savary's French version. A key feature of the Sonzogno Qur'an is its concise introduction and selection of verses from all chapters, making it potentially accessible to a wider audience in early 20th-century Italy. However, the translation itself is not a direct rendering from Arabic. Instead, it appears to be a paraphrase based primarily on Panzeri's 1912 Italian version, which itself is derived from Savary's French text. Supporting evidence includes translation errors and inconsistencies carried over into the Sonzogno Qur'an. Furthermore, Branchi's 1912 Italian version, likely based on Kazimirski's work, seems to have been a minor source for some verses.

In conclusion, the Sonzogno Qur'an is a paraphrase of several non-direct translations that still have roots in the original text. The author is most likely not mentioned because there was simply no translation and therefore no translator, therefore is not possible to identify him in both preface and translation. However, in addition to the merit of bringing the public's attention to a sacred text, there is perhaps a second merit more hidden and unintentional: that of compressing into a few pages a sort of history of the previous translations of the Arabic book *par excellence*. At the same time, however, it must be emphasised that since there is no real work of translation from Arabic, the Sonzogno volume opted for the "choice not to choose" the translation but to rely on the earlier material, inevitably carrying over their biases and interpretations. The pattern of influence takes us back to

the 18th-century Savary and the 19th-century Kazimirski, reflecting mechanisms such as the "falsification" of the figure of Muḥammad as Prophet and Islam as religion. In the Sonzogno Qur'an, this is further reinforced by presenting the text in a way that emphasises its literary aspects. Savary, as Sylvette Larzul points out, presents the Prophet and Islam with hues reflecting the deism of certain philosophers (a step ahead of predecessors such as André Du Ryer, who vigorously condemned Islam, even going so far as to falsify verses). Kazimirski, on the other hand, in his 1841 edition, emphasises the point of view of a Christian who places his own religion above Islam and denies the Qur'an the status of revelation, seeing in it mere reminiscence in which the false and apocryphal are mixed with the true and authentic.

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Notes

Imam Šāmil and *Muridizm* in Russian and Western Historiography

Antonio Carluccio

The historiography about Imam Šāmil and *muridizm* has evolved significantly from the beginning of his Imamate in Dagestan to more recent historical developments, reflecting various political and academic contexts. This note is devoted to exploring how interpretations of his movement have changed over time. Early Russian narratives depicted him as a fanatic within a civilizing mission, while Soviet historians later framed his struggle as an anti-colonial movement, emphasizing socio-economic factors and minimizing religious elements. Most recent Western scholarship has introduced more nuanced perspectives, examining the interplay of religious, political, and cultural influences on *Muridizm* and its legacy in contemporary Caucasian identity. International historians have also contextualised Šāmil's resistance within broader 19th-century anti-colonial movements. Overall, this note briefly shows how the historiography about Imam Šāmil and *muridizm* remains dynamic, with ongoing debates about the role of Islam in Russia, and the long-term implications for Caucasian societies and Russian-Muslim relations.

Keywords: Imam Šāmil, Dagestan, Russian Empire, *muridizm*

1. *Introduction*

Imam Šāmil,[1] the "alpha and omega" of the Dagestani-Chechen *gazavat*,[2] was the third imam of Dagestan, the leader of a resistance to the

[1] In this work I use the scholarly transliteration Šāmil, from the Arabic شامل. However, Šāmil, the third imam of Dagestan, also signed his letters شمويل (Šamwīl) or الشمويل (al-Šamwīl), see K.A. Omarov, *100 pisem Shamilia* (100 Letters of Shamil), Makhachkala, Izdatel'svo DNTs RAN, 1997. Many Western scholars use the simplified version Shamil, perhaps influenced by Russian sources and historiography, where it is always reported as Шамиль (Shamil'). This latter transliteration will be used in the quotations from works in Russian.

[2] A. Runovskii, *Muridizm i Ġazawāt po ob'iasneniu Shamilia* (Muridism and Gazavat according to Shamil's Explanation), Tbilisi, Tipografiia glavnogo upravleniia namestni-

Russian Empire in Northern Caucasus, and the head of the Caucasian Imamate from 1834 to 1859. He is at the centre of a long-standing politically oriented historiography which has engendered a heated debate. From the dawn of the Soviet Union to the present, Šāmil's legacy has remained relevant to both scholars and politicians.[3] This literature review will focus on the main works on Imam Šāmil, the turning points in related historiography, and the evolving interpretations of his movement, known as *muridizm*.[4]

When approaching the relevant literature about Imam Šāmil and his political and religious struggle, the narrative of Islamic revivalist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries comes to the fore. This can be ascribed to a particular Sufi ideology which constituted the theological basis of a defensive *ǧihād*.[5] European colonialism, combined with the growth of orientalist approaches to Muslim peoples, led to

ka kavkazskogo, 1863, p. 1. Here I use the transliteration from Russian газават (*gazavat*), since in this work I am relying predominantly on Russian sources. The term comes from the Arabic غزوات (*ġazawat*).

[3] See "Address by the President of Ukraine to the Indigenous Peoples of Russia: Fight to Avoid Death, Defend Your Freedom in the Streets and Squares", given in front of Šāmil's memorial in Kiev on 29 September 2022, available at www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-do-korinnih-narodiv-rosiyi-bo-78137 (21 November 2024).

[4] The term *muridizm* (also known as *miuridizm*) derives from the Arabic word *murīd*, which means "one who desires" or "a seeker", referring to a Sufi disciple in his relationship with the *muršid,* meaning "guide" or "teacher". Apart from the fanatical and retrograde aspect of this relation, according to the Russian imperial sources, the complete, unquestioning submission of the local resistance fighters to the will of their spiritual leader, the imam, emerges. Two variants are used by imperial and Soviet scholars мюридизм and муридизм (*muridizm*/*miuridizm*), Western scholars prefer the anglicised form (muridism or miuridism), however, I choose to leave the transliteration from the Russian (з = z), *muridizm*.

[5] M. Canard, "Chamil et Abdelkader", *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales d'Alger* 14 (1956), pp. 231–256, esp. 234–235; M. Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan*, London, Frank Cass, 1994, p. 51; see also D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, Berkley, University of California Press, 2005, p. 83: "His jihad took on the characteristics of both a liberation movement and a revival-purification movement"; F.A. Leccese, *Sufi Network*, Milan, Jouvence, 2017, p. 77. For a critical analysis of Sufi and Salafi *ǧihād* in the Caucasus, see M.A. Reynolds, "Muslim Mobilization in Imperial Russia's Caucasus", in *Islam and the European Empires*, ed. by D. Motadel, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 187–212. For a more general overview of Sufi *ǧihād* as a resistance movement see A. Marchi, "Il *ǧihād* dei sufi contro i colonizzatori", in Ǧihād*: Definizioni e riletture di un termine abusato*, ed. by P. Manduchi and N. Melis, Milan, Mondadori, 2019, pp. 109–138.

the emergence of the idea of what is now called neo-Sufism: this concept suggests that the Muslim struggle against Western, or Christian, influence was rooted in Sufi teachings that went beyond purely mystical and spiritual aspects.[6]

Such ideas are mainly rooted in the analysis of the sources written by the European colonists through the prism of orientalism and imperialism, interpreting Islam as incompatible with European civilisation and the *mission civilisatrice* of the European empires towards the people living in the colonies. This is also true for a well-known genre called *literature de surveillance*.[7] In this regard, many parallels were seen between Imam Šāmil, and the consequent struggle of the Russian Empire against *muridizm* (1828–1859), and ʿAbd al-Qādir, a prominent figure of the Algerian resistance against the Kingdom of France (1832–1845).[8] In this period, terms such as *confrèrisme* and *maraboutage* in the French Maghrib,[9] *muridizm* or *tarikatizm* in Dagestan, *zikrizm* in Chechnya, or *ishanstvo* in Central Asia were coined,

[6] For a deeper discussion see M. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 125–130; A. Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: The Issue of the Motivation of Sufi Resistance Movements in Western and Russian Scholarship", *Die Welt des Islams* 42/2 (2002), pp. 139–173, esp. 140–144.

[7] Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm", p. 140. See also Leccese, *Sufi Network*, pp. 67–76; The most relevant examples of this genre in the Russian imperial literature are Apollon Runovskii's works: *Zapiski o Shamile: Pristava pri voienno-plennom* (Notes about Shamil: Of a Bailiff to a Prisoner of War), Saint Petersburg, Tipografiia Karla Vul'fa, 1860; *Kodeks Shamilia* (Shamil's Codex), Saint Petersburg, Sen'kovski i Ko, 1862; *Muridizm i Gazavat po ob"iasneniiu Shamilia* (Muridizm and Gazavat According to Shamilia's Opinion), Tbilisi, Tipografiia Glavnogo Upravleniia Namestnika Kavkazskogo, 1863; A. Runovskii, "Dnevnik" (Diary), in *Akty sobrannye Kavkazskoi Arkheograficheskoi Kommissii* (Proceedings of the Caucasian Archaeographical Commission), vol. XII, ed. by D.A. Kobiakov, Tbilisi, Tipografiia Glavnogo Upravleniia Namestnika Kavkazskogo, 1904, pp. 1395–1528. For accounts of noblewomen captured by Šāmil, see: E.A. Verderevskii, *Plen u Shamilia* (Captivity from Shamil), Saint Petersburg, Tipografiia Koroleva i Komp., 1856; É. Merlieux, *Les Princesses russes prisonnières au Caucase: Souvenirs d'une Française captive de Chamyl*, Paris, F. Sartorius, 1857; translated into Russian as K. Dziubinskii, *Plennitsy Shamilia: Vspominania G-zhi Dranse. Perevod s frantsuskogo*, trans. by K. Dziubinskii, Tbilisi, Tipografiia Kantseliarii Namestnika Kavkazskogo, 1858.

[8] Canard, "Chamil et Abdelkader", pp. 231–256; M. Kemper, "The Changing Images of Jihad Leaders: Shamil and Abd al-Qadir in Daghestani and Algerian Historical Writing", *Nova Religio* 11/2 (2007), pp. 28–58; Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, pp. 125–126.

[9] G.R. Trumbull IV, "French Colonial Knowledge of Maraboutism", in *Islam and the European Empires*, ed. by D. Motadel, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 269–286.

although their definitions remained vague. Indeed, they were used by European colonisers to label Sufi movements, which were thought to play a potentially disruptive political role in the context of the ongoing "pacification" of such areas, a process which prioritised Sufism as a driving force.[10] The term *muridizm* can hardly be separated from the Caucasus war itself – which was a long and violent conflict lasting from the end of the 17th to the end of the 18th century – and such an intertwined meaning could have contributed to the perception of *muridizm* as incompatible with Western civilisation.[11]

Coming up with a possible definition of *muridizm* entails a thorough critical review of the different interpretations of Šāmil's movement.[12]

2. Muridizm *in Soviet Historiography*

Before the October Revolution, the Caucasian *murīd*s were praised by the enemies of the tsar, including Karl Marx himself, who admired Šāmil's military genius.[13] As happened to other non-Russian, national

[10] Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm", pp. 139–173; A. Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 191–209.

[11] Scholars' opinion about the beginning and the end of the Caucasus war (or wars) differs. If we consider just the mountaineers' movement led by the three imams of Dagestan, it endured from the military activity of Ġāzī Muḥammad (1828) until the surrender of Imam Šāmil (1859). The beginning and the end of the war in Dagestan and Chechnya depend on whether we consider also the *ǧihād* proclaimed by Šayḫ Manṣūr (Ushurma) (1785–1791) and the revolts led by the Ḫālidi-Naqšbandī Šayḫ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al- Ṭuġūrī along with the brief experience of the fourth Imam of Dagestan, Muḥammad Ḥāǧǧī al-Ṭuġūrī (1877).

[12] For earlier attempts to provide a bibliographical review on such topics, see the introduction by M. Bennigsen Broxup, "Caucasian Muridism in Soviet Historiography", in Jemaleddin of Kazikumukh*, Al-adab ul-marziya: Naqshbandi Treaty*, *Arabic Text –Russian Translation*, Oxford, Society for Central Asian Studies, 1986, pp. 5–17; M. Gammer, "Shamil in Soviet Historiography", *Middle East Journal* 28/4 (1992), pp. 729–777; Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm", pp. 139–173.

[13] See M.M. Idrisov, "Osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie gortsev Severo-Vostochnogo Kavkaza v 20- 50-e gg. XIX veka v trudakh K. Marksa i F. Engel'sa" (The Liberation Movement of the North-East Caucasian Mountineers in the 20–50 Years of 19th Century in the Works of K. Marx and F. Engels), *Vestnik Dagestanskogo Gosudarstennogo Universiteta* (Bulletin of Dagestan State University) 4 (2011), pp. 64–67. For the rehabilitation of Imam Šāmil before the October Revolution see: Kemper, "The Changing Images of

movements within the sphere of influence of the empire, *muridizm* was interpreted by the early Soviet politicians – including, most importantly, Vladimir Lenin himself – as a political-religious movement which, under the cloak of religious fervour, was able to muster the strength to guide the local population to a primitive form of bottom-up revolutionary uprising.[14] This argument was used initially to call the highlanders' struggle guided by the Imam of Dagestan "progressive".

The main supporter of this idea was Mikhail Nikolaevich Pokrovskii,[15] who saw the tsarist empire as "the prison of nations" (*tiurma narodov*) and the annexation of Dagestan as an imperialist enterprise and an "absolute evil". Resistance to the conquest was therefore depicted in a positive light and its leaders depicted as heroes, even if they belonged to the feudal aristocracy and regardless of their affiliation to a Sufi brotherhood. Thus, Šāmil and his *murīd*s represented a viable and recent example of a form of popular struggle against the tsarist oppressors, which conveniently forgot their Islamic *côté*. In turn, Sufi religious mysticism, the spiritual basis of the "Naqshbandi *ǧihād*" was simply denied, ignored, or rationalised in such a way as to disappear completely behind secular motives. A few years later, Nikolai Il'ich Pokrovskii, not to be confused with Mikhail,[16] interpreted Šāmil's

Jihad Leaders"; A. Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917*, Montreal-Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. An example of the changing narrative about Šāmil in the imperial sources, giving two opposite views, are: M. Kazem-Bek, "Muridizm i Shamil" (Muridizm and Shamil), *Russkoe Slovo* (Russian Word) 12 (1859), pp. 182–242 and M.N. Chichagova, *Shamil' na Kavkaze i v Rossii: Biograficheskii ocherk* (Shamil in the Caucasus and Russia: A Biographical Sketch), Sankt-Peterburg, Tipografiia i Litografia S. Muller i I. Bogel'man, 1889.

[14] V.I. Lenin, *Collected works*, vol. IV, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1960, p. 243.

[15] M.N. Pokrovskii, *Diplomatiia i voiny tsarskoi Rossii v XIX veke* (Diplomacy and Wars of the Tsarist Russia in 19th Century), Moscow, Krasnaya Nov', 1923, pp. 179–229.

[16] In Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm", as well as in Gammer, "Shamil in Soviet Historiography" I could not find any note of disambiguation between Mikhail Nikolaevich Pokrovskii and Nikolai Il'ich Pokrovskii. Given the same surname, apart from the name, which is rarely mentioned in the Soviet works, the patronymic could be used to check for a common father, which they did not have. In addition, care should be taken since a scholar's work might have been published posthumously, as in the case of Nikolai Pakrovskii. Among Nikolai Pokrovskii's works see N.I. Pokrovskii, "Miuridizm u vlasti (Teokraticheskaya Derzhava Shamilia)" (Muridism in Power [The Theocratic State of Shamil]), *Istorik marksist* (Marxist Historian) 2/36 (1934), pp. 30–75; N.I. Pokrovskii, *Kavkazskie voiny i Imamat Shamilia* (Caucasian Wars and Shamil's Imamate), Moscow, Rossiskaya Politicheskaia Entsiklopediia, 2000. As stated on p. 2, the

movement in the same "progressive" light.[17] Nikolai Pokrovskii's works, among others, help us understand on which bases the followers of the so-called Dagestani school of thought or "Pokrovskiism" (the school of thought of Mikhail Pokrovskii) saw Šāmil's movement in such a manner. Firstly, Nikolai Pokrovskii provides a summary of how tsarist historians interpreted Šāmil's policy:

> The official tsarist history interpreted the entire struggle of the mountain peoples for independence as the result of fanatical agitation by certain representatives of the Muslim clergy. It was the religious agitation of a number of fanatical mullahs that caused the huge explosion that for 49 years chained significant forces of the tsarist army to Chechnya and Dagestan and more than once called into question the success of the tsarist conquest of the north-eastern Caucasus. We can find this thesis in the most disparate variations and paraphrases in all representatives of tsarist history, and sometimes even in Soviet literature.[18]

However, Pokrovskii's interpretation through the prism of Lenin's historical materialism is different:

> There is nothing to say, the huge peasant movement, which tsarist historians dubbed *muridizm*, was not, and could not have been, caused by "religious agitation of the mullahs". The mass movement against tsarism often broke out without any religious agitation and had absolutely secular aims. Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to classify *muridizm* under the category of religious disagreement.[19]

The idea of a "popular movement" somehow covered by religious motives is thus completely acceptable when applying Lenin's and Friedrich Engels's theories to the "stage of development" of Dagestani society.[20]

book is the original version dated 1940 taking account of the author's corrections dated 1941.

[17] See Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. IV, p. 597.

[18] Pokrovskii, *Kavkazskie voiny i Imamat Shamilia*, p. 149, translations from Russian into English henceforth are mine. In the case of a work written before the orthographic reform of 1918.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, see also the reference to Lenin's work in note 3. According to 1930s Soviet historicism, Dagestan was at its feudal stage of development, with all the implications in the interpretation of Šāmil's movement.

In the late 1930s, however, the steady emergence of Russian nationalism within the Communist Party and the annihilation of Trotskyist internationalism resulted in the rejection of Mikhail Pokrovskii and Nikolai Pokrovskii's theories. The old formula "tsarist conquest as an absolute evil" was replaced by the new formula of the "lesser evil".[21] However, the most authoritative instance declaring a reassessment of Šāmil's movement appeared only on 22 September 1950 in a memorandum of the president of the Academy of Sciences of URSS. According to this interpretation, the conquest of the borderlands (including the Muslim-majority lands of the Caucasus and Central Asia) could not be considered an "absolute evil" in that it saved the native peoples from a much more tragic fate: their annexation by other imperialist countries such as Turkey, Persia, or even Great Britain.[22]

As we will see below, Stalinist historiography in the late 1930s portrayed the annexation of Muslim lands as having a significant positive advantage: indeed, it brought the conquered people into direct contact with the advanced and progressive Russian people, referred to as their elder brother. These interactions allowed the Muslim nations of the empire to benefit from the Bolshevik revolution and achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently, resistance to Russian conquest and rebellion against Russian rule were no longer deemed entirely progressive. After 1945, Soviet historians disavowed any progressive character of non-socialist liberation movements and condemned all Muslim uprisings under feudal, clerical, or bourgeois leadership. However, the prestige of Šāmil was still so significant that some years later, on 17 July 1950, the *murīd* movement was declared reactionary by Mir Dzhafar Bagirov, the first secretary of the Central

[21] See, for example, S.K. Bushuev, *Bor'ba gortsev za nezavisimost' pod rukovodstvom Shamilia*, Moscow-Leningrad, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1939.

[22] In the article of Bennigsen Broxup, "Caucasian Muridism in Soviet Historiography", p. 7, she writes that one of the earliest instances of this expression appeared on 22 August 1937 in the resolution of the State Commission on Historical Questions, however at that time Šāmil's movement was still widely regarded as "progressive", and we could not find any source to confirm the work of this commission, nor the author provides us with related documents. Instead, we argue that one of the first official documents issued on this matter is the memorandum of 1950, which accepted Bagirov's theory (see below). Source: Zapiska prezindenta Akademii nauk SSSR S.I. Vavilova i glavnogo uchenogo sekretaria Prezidiuma Akademii Nauk SSSR A.V. Topchieva sekretariu TsK VKP (b) G.M. Malenkovu "Ob antimarksistskoi otsenke dvizheniia miuridizma i Shamilia v trudakh nauchnykh sotrudnikov Akademii Nauk SSSR". 22 sentiabria 1950 g. Archive reference: RGAŠPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 342. L. 34-41.

Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. He stated that the people of the Caucasus, at the beginning of the 18th century, had to make a choice about their destiny: given the politics of their neighbours, "they could have been absorbed and enslaved by backward, feudal Turkey and Persia, or they could have joined Russia", and "joining Russia was the only way for the peoples of the Caucasus to develop their economy and culture".[23]

Through the prism of the "lesser evil" interpretation, Šāmil's movement was also regarded as an obstacle to progress. Bagirov's pamphlet aims at demonstrating that the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain, which the imam was suspected to act as a spy for, were manipulating the mountaineers'[24] struggle in order to plan a reconquest of Dagestan:

> *Muridizm*, which served the invading purposes of the Turkish sultans, was the main reactionary ideology of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism, which was formed later [...]. With the help of *muridizm*, the Turkish invaders also sought to raise the peoples of the Caucasus against Russia, to detach these territories from Russia and incorporate them into the Ottoman Empire.[25]

He continues: "Sultan Turkey, inspired by England long before Šāmil, sent its agents to the Caucasus to preach *muridizm* in order to raise the peoples of the Caucasus against the Russians under the banner of 'holy war'".[26] Bagirov suggested a sort of conspiracy theory, seeing Šāmil as a Turkish special agent supported by England, and used the argument of the foreign origin of *muridizm* for his own polemical aims.[27]

[23] M.D. Bagirov, *K voprosu o kharaktere dvizheniia Shamilia* (On the Question about the Nature or Shamil's Movement), Moscow, Gosudarstvennyi Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1950, p. 28.
[24] Mountaineers, or highlanders, is one way to refer to the peoples of Dagestan. This comes from their self-identification as горцы (gortsy), and this was taken up in Russian and Western literature.
[25] Bagirov, *K voprosu*, p. 7.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[27] Bagirov also says that *muridizm* originates from the Naqshbandi order, used by the Timurids to conquer, and later by the Ottomans to enslave the peoples of the Caucasus. Even if this theory may seem fascinating, it is part of the Soviet propaganda against foreign forces seen to be trying to destroy Russia. Bagirov does not provide any solid source-based analysis to prove these theories; however, he will have followers (the "bagirovites", as Gammer calls them in "Shamil in Soviet Historiography") until the collapse of USSR.

Bagirov's theses were immediately taken up by Nikolai Smirnov, who published in 1952 a pamphlet under a self-explanatory title: *Reaktsionnaia sushchnost' dvizheniia Miuridizma i Shamilia na Kavkaze* (The Reactionary Essence of the *Muridizm* Movement and Šāmil in the Caucasus).[28]

In his conclusion Smirnov praises the defeat of Imam Šāmil as follows: "The exposure of the reactionary character of the *muridizm* and Shamil's movement is a crushing blow to Pan-Turkism, which is an instrument of war propaganda, misanthropy, darkness, and backwardness; it is at the same time a blow to all bourgeois-nationalist concepts and to bourgeois objectivism".[29]

After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 the approach was subject to major changes, both to show a human face of communism and to avoid pressure from public opinion in the Caucasus. An article by Anton Pikman is remarkable and marks a partial rehabilitation of Šāmil.[30] It is also remarkable that, a month later, in April 1956, Bagirov, who was among the first to discredit the imam by calling him reactionary, was executed.

In the very first page of his work, Pikman takes a clear position against both Bagirov's pamphlet and the narrative presented at that time, even in school textbooks, that cast Šāmil's struggle as reactionary and obscurantist. He states that the literature up to that time did not take account of the fact that the mountaineers' movement: "Took place at a time when tsarism was the all-powerful gendarme of Europe and was the main stronghold of feudal reaction. The struggle of the highlanders weakened tsarism, thus helping the forces of the 1848 revolution in Europe".[31]

Thus, in the debate that unfolded during the spring and summer of 1956, a wide range of opinions, closely aligning with the national ori-

[28] N. Smirnov, *Reaktsionnaia sushchnost' dvizheniia Miuridizma i Shamilia na Kavkaze* (The Reactionary Essence of the Movement of Muridism and Shamil in the Caucasus), Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Znanie, 1952. Another of his publications reviewed in this paper is N. Smirnov, *Miuridism na Kavkaze* (The Muridism in the Caucasus), Moscow, Akademia Nauk SSSR, 1963.

[29] Smirnov, *Reaktsionnaia sushchnost' dvizheniia Miuridizma i Shamilia na Kavkaze*, p. 24.

[30] A.M. Pikman, "O bor'be kavkazskikh gortsev s tsarskimi kolonizatorami" (About the Struggle of the Caucasian Mountaineers with the Tsarist Colonisers), *Voprosy Istorii* (History Questions) 3 (1956), pp. 75–84.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 74.

gins of the scholars, emerged. Some of them, like Pikman, adhered to Pokrovskiism while others, whose major representative was Smirnov, followed "Bagirovism". However, the mainstream narration sought to develop a new interpretation that would not cast Šāmil in a negative light, trying instead to find a balanced narration between the idea of the "elder brother", and the *druzhby narodov* (friendship of peoples) narration, and the progressive nature of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, as exemplified in the works of Anatolii Fadeev and Anna Pankratova.[32]

Finally, at least for 1956, Pokrovskiism prevailed when a Dagestani historian, Gadzhiali Daniialov, published an article in the journal *Voprosy Istorii,* which amounted to an almost total rehabilitation of Šāmil. Daniialov claimed that *muridizm* was not a feudal clerical movement and had widespread support among the people of Dagestan. He asserted that the Sufi doctrine (that he calls *muridizm*) was in fact the ideological cover for a broader, progressive national liberation movement, and thus could not be dismissed as clerical obscurantism. The imam, he argued, was a wise statesman rather than a tyrant, and there was no evidence of any conspiratorial alliances between him and foreign powers like Turkey or Britain. In essence, *muridizm* was portrayed as a legitimate response to the brutalities of Russian colonial rule.[33] The rehabilitation of Šāmil, however, was still incomplete because praising the movement of Šāmil, be it for religious purposes or patriotism, could have been a way to undermine the central Soviet power in the Muslim lands like Caucasus or Central Asia. In the 1960s, even Western historians were still influenced by Bagirovism.[34]

A reactionary interpretation of Šāmil's movement also emerges from Smirnov's book, published in 1963, where he explains the aims of the "Kavkazskii tarikat":[35]

[32] For a deeper discussion about the two schools of thought see Gammer, "Shamil in Soviet Historiography".
[33] G.D. Daniialov, "O dvizhenii Gortsev pod rukovodstvom Shamilia" (About the Mountaineers' Movement under the Guidance of Shamil), *Voprosy Istorii* 7 (1956), pp. 67–72.
[34] It is noteworthy how Western accounts are influenced by this view, see L. Tillett, "Shamil and Muridism in Recent Soviet Historiography", *American Slavic and East European Review* 20/2 (1961), pp. 253–269. His bias against Šāmil's movement is evident since he calls it "one of the most fanatical sects of Islam, dedicated to continual war (*gazavat*) against the infidel" (*ibid.*, p. 254).
[35] N. Smirnov, *Miuridism na Kavkaze* (The Muridism in the Caucasus), Moscow, Akademia Nauk SSSR, 1963.

> The ideology of the *tarikat* did not contain social issues: it did not call for a struggle against exploiters, did not oppose the disenfranchisement of people; it suppressed the slightest human freedom, was incompatible with the interests of the people. That is why the *tarikat* did not represent a serious opposition to feudalism. Cultivating a spirit of hostility and intolerance towards people who did not want to submit to the authority of the imam and naibs, the *tarikat* glorified those who died in the name of Islam, promising retribution in the afterlife.[36]

Again, Dagestan during the 19th century was still considered feudal, as reflected in the vast majority of Soviet historiography about Šāmil and *muridizm*. Smirnov proudly belongs to the bagirovian school of thought mentioned above and did not look for any compromise in his narrative against the Dagestani imam.

On the other hand, in what he calls a "brochure", Abdurakhman Daniialov, the first secretary of the Dagestan regional branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and older brother of the Dagestani historian Gadzhiali Daniialov, attempts a reconciliation of the two schools in a work whose title evokes the article written by his brother ten years before.[37] As in the quotation above, the word "feudal" is stressed abundantly, since the Dagestani mountaineers were considered to be at a feudal stage of development, according to a Marxist-Leninist perspective. Abdurakhman Daniialov, given the fragmentation of Dagestani population, languages, and geography, argued that they were at different stages of development.[38] Furthermore, the tsarist regime strengthened the power and influence of local lords (*beks*, *ḫāns*,

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145.

[37] A.D. Daniialov, *O dvizhenii Gortsev Dagestana i Chechni pod rukovodstvom Shamilia* (About the Movement of the Mountaineers of Dagestan and Chechnya under the Guidance of Shamil), Makhachkala, Dagestanskoe Knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1966.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 6. For a study of the complexity of the Dagestani socio-political situation see: S. Shikhaliev, "Rasprostranienie Islama v Dagestane v XI–XVI vv." (Diffusion of Islam in Dagestan in 11th–16th Centuries), in *Islam na Severnom Kavkaze: Istoriia i vyzovy sovremennosti* (Islam in the North Caucasus: History and Contemporary Challenges), ed. by A. Szabaciuk, A. Gil and M.S. Arsanukaeva, Lublin, Maikop, Izdatel'stvo KUL, 2014, pp. 229–246; A. Shikhsaidov and S. Shikhaliev, "Arabskii period islamizatsii Dagestana (VII–IX vv.)" (The Arabic Period of Islamization of Dagestan [7th–9th Centuries]), *Islamology* 3 (2010), pp. 75–90; S. Shikhaliev and I. Chmilevskaia, "The Qur'ans of Dagestan: Practices of Copying, Using, and Translating", in *European Muslims and the Qur'an, Practices of Translation, Interpretation, and Commodification*, ed. by G. Sibgatullina and G. Wiegers, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2024, pp. 117–142.

šamḫāl), so the peasants had no other choice but rebellion against colonialism.[39] Daniialov recognises that this opposition was mainly built and supported by the Muslim local clergy, but this does not mean that *muridizm* was the reason for the mountaineers' struggle, even though they waved the "*muridizm* flag".[40] The author states that the mountaineers' movement began as an anti-feudal and anti-colonial movement, but the Muslim clergy took over the rebellion and provided the ideological basis for it.[41] Abdurakhman Daniialov is a scholar who recognises the progressive nature of the mountaineers' struggle, but also does not ignore that the religious component was a strong factor motivating the masses against the tsarist regime. In the end, he takes a position which may have been acceptable both to bagirovites and Dagestani: "Regardless of the goals and desires of the ruling elite of Russia, the incorporation of the peoples of Dagestan into a strong centralised Russian state had a huge progressive significance for them".[42]

Another attempt to rehabilitate Šāmil was made by Andarbek Iandarov, a Chechen historian then living in Kazakhstan. In the 1970s Chechen historians started to deal with themes uncomfortable to Moscow, such as the movement led by Šayḫ Manṣūr.[43] This trend reached a peak with the publication in 1975 of a book by Iandarov entitled *Sufizm i ideologiia natsional'nogo-osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia* (Sufism and the Ideology of a National Liberation Movement)[44] in

[39] Daniialov, *O dvizhenii Gortsev*, pp. 12–14.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[43] Regarding Šayḫ Manṣūr Ushurma, the Chechen "precursor" of the three imams, the latest and most complete work is S.B. Manyshev, *Sheikh Mansur v materialakh kizliarskogo i mozdokskogo komendantskich arkhivov* (Sheykh Mansur in the Sources of the Commandant's Archive of Kizliar and Mozdok), Moscow, Kuchkovo Pole, 2022. In Russian see also A.N. Musaev, *Sheikh Mansur*, Moscow, Molodaia Gvardiia, 2007. A milestone for Western scholarship is A. Bennigsen, "Un mouvement populaire au Caucase au XVIII[e] siècle: La 'guerre sainte' du sheikh Mansur (1785–1791), page mal connue et controversée des relations russo-turques", *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 5/2 (1964), pp. 159–205. For an Italian account of Šayḫ Manṣūr as a Piedmontese monk, see F. Picco, *Il Profeta Mansùr (G.B. Boetti) 1743–1798*, Genoa, A.F. Formiggini Editore, 1915. See also E. Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea and Circassia*, London, Routledge, 1854, p. 351 for an account of Šayḫ Manṣūr as a "renegade Pole in disguise", called such also because he spoke several European languages and knew European warfare.
[44] A.D. Iandarov, *Sufizm i ideologiia natsional'nogo-osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia* (Sufism and the Ideology of National Liberation Movement), Alma-Ata, Nauka, 1975.

Checheno-Ingushetia, starting with his criticism of imperial chronicles that misrepresented their target of analysis: "Common to the nobility-bourgeois historiography is the mixing of Islam, *tarikat*, and *Šāmil's muridizm*, which contributed to the distortion of the ideal of the national liberation movement".[45]

Then he gives a brief but striking definition of two key words, about which much ink was shed, pushing the idea of anti-imperialism further than the other scholars embracing Pokrovskiism: "Gazavat and *ǧihād* do not just refer to a religious war against infidels, but are a just, though historically limited, programme of struggle against invaders. An 'infidel' is not simply a non-believer in Islam, but a coloniser who encroaches on the honour and independence of the mountaineers".[46]

The first paragraph of the third chapter "Sufizm [Nakshbendiiskii Tarikat] i Miuridizm" (Sufism [the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa*] and Muridizm)[47] attempts to explain the differences between Sufism and *muridizm*. Up to this point, Smirnov and the bagirovites called Sufism the "Caucasian *tarikat*", while Iandarov argued that they were mistaken. According to him, the "Caucasian *tarikat*" did not exist. For this reason, he instead used the term "Naqshbendiiskii Tarikat" (Naqšbandiyya). *Muridizm* (called *Naibskii Miuridizm*) was seen as Šāmil's creation, or, better said, an implementation of what Šayḫ Muḥammad al-Yarāgī had preached,[48] and it was different from the previous Caucasian *muridizm* and *tarikat*.[49] Iandarov is one of the first to recognise the presence of the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa* in Dagestan and specifies that Sufism and what was called thus far *muridizm* are different things: "In the specific conditions of the initial stage of the Shamil wars, when there was a split among the Sufis, and an independent organisation of Naib murids was formed, it is not legitimate to identify these latter with the orthodox Sufis who had broken away".[50] Referring to Smirnov's assertion that the main purpose of Caucasian *tarikat* was the *gazavat*, he states that: "This is inaccurate. The Naqshbandi *tarikat*, not the Caucasian *tarikat* (which simply does not exist), is a religious doctrine preaching renunciation and withdrawal from active social life.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 83, the third chapter is titled "Miuridizm".
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

It has nothing to do with *ǧihād* or *gazavat*".[51] Iandarov states that the "infidels" against whom the *gazavat* was waged are both the Russian (or Iranian, therefore other Muslims) conquerors and the Muslim Dagestani mountaineers cooperating with the tsar. He sees *gazavat* as a struggle for self-affirmation and independence more than a holy war in the strict sense of the word.[52]

Nevertheless, Iandarov's daring point was his comparison of Šāmil's movement with other liberation movements considered progressive in Soviet historiography, such as the war in Algeria lead by ʿAbd al-Qādir (1832–1847), the Aceh war in Indonesia (1873–1904), and the Zaydī movement against the Ottomans in Yemen (1890–1904).[53]

According to Iandarov, there were two completely different, even opposing, trends in Caucasian *muridizm*: the popular and warlike *muridizm* of the imam, which he calls "*muridizm* of the *nā'ib*s" (naibskii miuridizm). This was the idea of the *gazavat*, and the mystical and reactionary religious *muridizm*, which he calls the "*muridizm* of the *ṭarīqa*" (tarikatskii miuridizm).[54] Šāmil was seen as a progressive hero, and the religious cloak, under which the movement was covered, was the predominant form of uniting the masses in that typical kind of society.[55] Iandarov also introduces the term *zikrizm*,[56] which is considered to be something peculiar to Chechen Sufism, from the Kunta Ḥāǧǧī's pacifist teachings, more in line with Sufism according to Iandarov,[57] who saw Šāmil's *muridizm* as a kind of aberration.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 108. Infidels are in quotation marks.
[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 115–116.
[54] Here Runovskii's influence is visible in the dualism with which he analyses the *murid*s. In the sources, see Runovskii, *Muridizm i Gazavat po ob'iasneniiu Shamilia*, pp. 10–13; Runovskii, *Kodeks Shamilia*, pp. 29–32.
[55] Iandarov, *Sufizm i ideologiia*, p. 90.
[56] From Arabic *ḏikr* (ذكر), in Russian *zikr* (зикр). Iandarov, *Sufizm i ideologiia*, pp. 137–138; he also criticises the improper use of this term, since the *zikr* is a practice common to many Sufis, not only in Chechnya.
[57] *Ibid*. Kunta Ḥāǧǧī was a Chechen Sufi master belonging to the Qādiriyya, active in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan. He did not participate in Šāmil's struggle and preached non-resistance practices. See S. Shikhaliev, "Kratkii obzor arabograficheskikh sochinenii Kunta-Khadzhi" (Brief Overview of the Works of Kunta-Khadzhi in Arabic), in *Islam v Rossii i za ee predelami: istoriia, obshchestvo, kul'tur*a*: sbornik materialov mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 100-letiiu so dnia konchiny vydaiushchegosia religioznogo deiatelia sheikha Batal-khadzhi Belkharoeva* (Islam in

A new, radical change came in 1983 when an Ossetian historian, Mark Bliev, went much further than his predecessors in defending the Russian conquest of the north Caucasus. According to him, the Caucasian wars were not due to Russian colonialism and the drive of the empire towards the warm seas but were a defence against the expansion of the mountaineers, their raids for booty into the Georgian territory of Transcaucasia, and against Russian settlements along the frontier line of the Kuban and Terek river.[58] The explanation of this radical reinterpretation of Šāmil's history lies partly in the impact of the Afghan war on the Soviet Muslim *intelligentsia* and in the hidden but deeply felt sympathy at all levels of the Soviet Muslim community for the Afghan *muǧāhidūn* during the Soviet-Afghan war (1979–1989).[59]

In any case, the attempt to demonstrate the incompatibility of Šāmil's movement with "classical" Sufism and to present it as a movement of national liberation had little overall impact on the official Soviet perception of *muridizm* as a reactionary and fanatic movement.[60] Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the role of the *muridizm* and its leaders was drastically reassessed by Dagestani and Chechen historians in line with the new nationalist agendas. The *murīd*s and their imams began to be portrayed as the great heroes of the national liberation struggle, who set an example to be followed by their descendants. The campaign to rehabilitate them gathered momentum and acquired an international dimension with the calling of the First International Symposium on Shamil and the Liberation Movement on 15–16 March 1991 in Oxford,[61] and the First International Symposium on Shamil and the Caucasian War in March 1992 at St Antony's College,[62] where Dagestani, Chechen, and other Soviet historians met colleagues from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and

Russia and Beyond: History, Society, Culture: Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference on the 100th Anniversary of the Death of the Eminent Religious Leader Sheikh Batal Hajji Belkhoroev), ed. by M.S. Albogachieva, Saint Petersburg, Magas, 2011, pp. 71–75.

[58] M.M. Bliev, "Kavkazskaia voina: Sotsial'nie istoki, Shuschnost'" (Caucasian War: Social Roots, Essence), *Istoriia SSSR* (USSR History) 2 (1983), pp. 54–75.

[59] For a discussion see Bennigsen Broxup, "Caucasian Muridism in Soviet Historiography", pp. 13–14; Gammer, "Shamil in Soviet Historiography", pp. 755–757.

[60] For a critical bibliographic overview from the late 19th century to the early 2000s, see Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm", pp. 139–173.

[61] Gammer, "Shamil in Soviet Historiography", p. 765.

[62] M. Gammer, "Introduction", *Central Asian Survey* 21/3 (2002), pp. 239-240.

Israel. In the same year, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the term "Soviet historiography" became anachronistic.[63]

At the same time, many Russian historians, especially those in the northern Caucasus, continued to cast the *murīd* movement in a negative light, a fact that can be attributed to the influence of the Russo-Chechen wars (1994–1996, 1999–2009), the guerrilla warfare in Chechnya and the neighbouring republics, and a string of terrorist attacks on civil complexes in Moscow and across Russia. Despite this dramatic reassessment of the past in Dagestani and Chechen nationalist discourses, *muridizm* continued to be invoked as the principal cause and *raison d'être* of the mountaineer resistance to the Russian conquest of the Caucasus.

3. Muridizm *as a Sufi-inspired Movement*

3.1. *19th and Early 20th Century*

The Russian fear of *muridizm* and *tarikatizm* as a war-oriented Islamic movement is to be found in many accounts from Russian military officers and other European travellers. I have conducted a brief review of the most known and influential works.

In the accounts of Russia and the Caucasus war during his travel through the Ottoman Empire, Captain Edmund Spencer states:[64] "Khasi-Moullah with his terrible murids – those fierce warriors of the prophet – were ever ready to fall on Russians, when least expected, and to turn every opportunity to their advantage".[65] He adds that general Ivan Fedorovich Paskevich, who had won a battle against the Poles and the Persians, was struggling in vain in the Caucasus, and his successor, general Georg Andreas von Rosen, was not doing any better. Spencer does not spare his words, giving a mystical cast to his description of Khasi-Moullah: he speaks about a "divine mission" to which the first imam was delegated, hence his prophet-like behaviour in battle:

[63] For a critical bibliographic overview of late Soviet historiography of the Russo-Mountaineers wars in the Caucasus, see Gammer, "Shamil in Soviet Historiography", pp. 729–777.

[64] Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea*.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 352; I quote the name of the first imam of Dagestan, Ġāzī Muḥammad, since it is in the original text.

"What Elija Mansour commenced in Dagestan and was afterwards partially carried out by Khasi-Moullah, Schamyl-bey, the present high priest, warrior, and prophet of the Caucasus, has perfected".[66]

Spencer's Šāmil is represented as a prophet, most likely the ultimate prophet, in a paragraph that I quote in its entirety, given its uniqueness in the historiography regarding the third imam of Dagestan:

> While the fanatic Turks and Persians have been massacring each other for centuries, because they cannot agree whether Ali or Omar was invested with the mantle of the prophet, in the same manner as the Latin and Greek churches have been disputing respecting the orthodoxy of their respective creeds, our clever chieftain of Daghestan has discovered not only the means of reconciling Ali and Omar, but of uniting men of all religions in one common feeling of brotherhood, and hatred against the rule of Moscov [*sic*].[67]

This description seems romanticised, and we have no other account of such a religious position. On the other hand, we know that Šāmil was a Sunni that was loyal to the Ottoman sultan.[68] Spencer, in line with his contemporaries Julien Rouquette and Friedrich Bodenstedt, provided to the Western European reader a narrative full of peculiarities but without a list of sources or a critical apparatus.[69] Abbot Rouquette, a French monk of the Society of African Missions of Lyon, exhibits a striking resemblance to Spencer's account, referring to *confrérisme* in the Maghrib. In his study he drew a frightening picture of the sinister

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 353, He also provides a prophetic dimension of the whole struggle against the Russian naming the first supposed Naqshbandi šayḫ in Chechnya, Manṣūr Ushurma, Elijah Mansour.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 353–354.
[68] See K.-M. Donogo, "Poslednii put' imama Shamilia/İmam Şamil'in Son Yolculuğu" (Imam Shamil's Last Journey), *TYB Akademi Dergisi* 32 (2021), pp. 76–92. For the correspondence between Imam Šāmil and the Ottoman Sultan see İ. Binark, *Osmanlı Devleti İle Kafkasya, Türkistan Ve Kırım Hanlıkları Arasındaki Münasebetlere Dair Arşiv Belgeleri*: *1687–1908 Yılları Arası* (Archival Documents on the Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus, Turkistan and Crimean Khanates: 1687–1908), Ankara, Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1992.
[69] There were also accounts published in Italian but translated from German and French, see *Sciamil e la guerra santa nell'oriente del Caucaso*, Milan, Libreria Ferrario, 1854 (translated from German); *Sciamyl, il profeta del Caucaso del maggiore Warner*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1855 (translated from French).

role of the Sufi brotherhoods in North Africa. Their location, the Sahara Desert, and their ferocity, do resemble Spencer's account of the mountains of Dagestan inhabited by the *murīd*s. A certain degree of scariness emerges from both these works. However, Spencer did not hide a hint of appreciation for Šāmil's deeds, while, in Rouquette's study on the "secret societies" of Maghrib, there is far more obsession and a veil of paranoia when he predicts a "war without mercy against the Catholic Church".[70]

Another remarkable account of the Sufism in the Caucasus, which is also used as a primary source for the Western European scholarship,[71] was written by the German historian and romantic poet Friedrich Bodenstedt. He is one of the first Westerners to show empathy for the unequal struggle of the mountaineers against the Russian Empire. His favourable view of *muridizm* and its leaders may have been dictated by his romantic fascination with any struggle against injustice and oppression, which is visible in the title itself.[72] He provides a blunt explanation of the *silsila*[73] of this "new Dagestani doctrine"[74] when he says that it "was founded by Hadis Ismaïl, encouraged by Mullah

[70] Abbé Rouquette, *Les sociétés secrètes chez les Musulmans*, Paris, J. Briguet, 1899, p. 155. In the text: "Ce sera une guerre sans merci à l'Église catholique, et peut-être le signal de la lutte qui précédera l'Antéchrist".

[71] See Canard, "Chamil et Abdelkader", pp. 231–256.

[72] F. Bodenstedt, *Les peuples du Caucase et leur guerre d'indipendence*, Paris, E. Dentu, 1859, translated from the German *Die Völker des Kaukasus und ihre Freiheitskämpfe gegen die Russen: Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Geschichte des Orients*, Frankfurt a.M., Lizius, 1849.

[73] Here the word *silsila* is mine, Bodenstedt does not use it, referring to Šayḫ Ismāʿīl al-Kūrdumīrī, active for a few years around 1830 in the Shirvan region as a *ḫalīfa* (deputy) of Šayḫ Ḫālid al-Šahrazūrī, and the founder of the *ṭarīqa* Naqšbandiyya-Ḫālidiyya (Nakşbandia-Muridiyya, as reported in K.H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 33–41). After his deportation by the Russians, it seems that one of his disciples, Šayḫ Ḫāṣṣ Muḥammad al-Šīrwānī, continued the activities of the *ṭarīqa* in the area. This latter was in charge of Šayḫ Muḥammad al-Yarāġī (also known as Yaragskii or Magomed Efendi in Russian sources) in the Kurin Khanate, south of Dagestan, who was in charge of Šayḫ Sayyid Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ġāzī Ġumūqī (in Russian sources often as Dzhemaluddin Kazikumukhskii) who became the *muršid* of the first imam of Dagestan, Ġāzī Muḥammad (in Russian: Kazi Mulla), and he is also thought to be the *muršid* of Šāmil.

[74] Bodenstedt, *Die Völker des Kaukasus*, p. 324. Here I translated "doctrine" from the German *Lehre*.

Mohammed, and further expanded and fortified by his successors Kasi-Mullah, Hamsad-Beg, and Schamyl".[75]

He takes up what various writers have written about "this memorable religious period in Dagestan", in just a few notes: "Schamyl is the founder of a new sect, and its adherents are called murids".[76] Elsewhere in the same edition we find references to Šāmil's sect as a Dagestani "doctrine". Bodenstedt is also one of the first Western observers to have noticed what he described as "the intimate link between Sufism and the doctrine of Dagestan". Šāmil's movement was "nothing but an adaptation of Sufism to the contemporary circumstances".[77] Since Bodenstedt does not disclose his sources, I wonder whether he added a hint of creativity when he applied his newly acquired knowledge of Sufism to Šāmil's movement, given the fact that he was also a romantic poet.[78]

Writing half a century later, the British traveller and historian of the Caucasus John Baddeley repeats Spencer's and Bodenstedt's assumptions about the activist, militant nature of *muridizm* and its Sufi roots. Although he shows more empathy for the mountaineer struggle against the formidable might of the Russian Empire than Spencer about fifty years before.[79]

> Moullá Muhammad may therefore justly be considered as the founder of the politico-religious movement which, under the name of Muridism, united for a time in the great struggle for freedom a majority of the Mussulman inhabitants of Daghestan and Tchetchnia; but he never took upon himself the actual leadership, and is wrongly counted by some as the first Imám.[80]

[75] *Ibid*.
[76] *Ibid*., p. 326.
[77] *Ibid*., p. 327.
[78] M. Kemper, "Einige Notizen zur arabischsprachigen Literatur der gihäd-Bewegung in Dagestan und Tschetschenien in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts", in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, vol. II, *Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Relations*, ed. by M. Kemper, A. von Kügelgen and A.J. Frank, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998, pp. 63–100, here 72, note 37.
[79] J.F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.
[80] *Ibid*., p. 234. Moullá Muhammad "of Yaraghl, a village in the Kioureen district" is Šayḫ Muḥammad al-Yarāġī, not to be confused with Ġāzī Muḥammad (Kazi Moulla, in Baddeley's work), the first imam of Dagestan. The author here adds a note that I give in full: "For Moullá Muhammad and his connections with Muridism, see memoir

According to Baddeley, the actual number of *murīd*s was never great, since in the days of Šāmil's power the fighting *murīd*s were merely his bodyguards and his *nā'ib*s, who provided them arms, horses, and financial support. As he states, the imam had no more than 132 *murīd*s attached to his person.[81] In saying this he does not provide either quotations or footnotes; nevertheless, we can be sure that these data come from Runovskii's works, the only work, to the best of my knowledge, providing the exact number of Šāmil's *murīd*s.[82] Now, let us see how this imperial and colonial tradition influenced scholarship in the 20th century, and how a debate was opened at the beginning of the new millennium.

3.2. *The Late 20th and Early 21st Century*

Among the most prominent works published by French scholars in the second half of the last century, we must mention Marius Canard and Alexandre Bennigsen. Canard highlights the similarities between two Sufi leaders, Abdelkader (ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ǧazā'irī), who surrendered in 1847, and Šāmil, who capitulated to the Russians in 1859. As Canard states, they never met in person, even though they had a long period of correspondence.[83] Since the Russian works were not available to him, he makes use primarily of Bodenstedt's work, translated into French as well as the memoirs of Anna Drancey and other articles written in French. He writes about "a popular Islamic movement" linked with the "Naqshbandi order of dervishes, which had many followers and

by the Captain Prouzhanovsky, *Sbornik Gazeti Kavkaz* (1847), ii. 22". I have no other account so far that al-Yarāġī was considered the first imam of Dagestan; this may be a profitable research topic on European accounts of the "Murid War", to use Baddeley's own words.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

[82] Runovskii, *Muridizm i Gazavat po ob"iasneniu Shamilia*, p. 13; Runovskii, *Kodeks Shamilia*, p. 31.

[83] Canard, "Chamil et Abdelkader", pp. 231–256. Scholars do not agree whether Šāmil and ʿAbd al-Qādir met in person. While Canard states that they never met (p. 231), Donogo recognises a lack of sources recording a meeting. On the other hand, from Leccese, *Sufi Network*, p. 78, n. 42, we know about a photo of their meeting on the Suez Canal. In this regard Reynolds, "Muslim Mobilization in Imperial Russia's Caucasus", also affirms that they met on the Suez Canal. As an example of their correspondence see Muḥammad bin al-amīr ʿAbd al-Qādir, *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir fī ma'āṯir al-amīr ʿAbd al-Qādir wa-aḫbār al-ǧazā'ir*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiya, 2013, pp. 140–141.

was clearly oriented towards holy war against the Infidels".[84] Canard reports the words of Šayḫ Muḥammad al-Yarāġī (Mollâ Mohammed), the *muršid* of Šāmil's *muršid* (Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ġāzī Ġumūqī), giving for some reason his own reflections about the necessity of *ġazawāt*. Unfortunately, he does not provide the source for this, most probably taking this "discourse" from Russian imperial sources. He also states that, according to Bodenstedt, his followers modified the *šahāda* as: "God is greatest, Muḥammad is his first prophet and Šāmil is the second".[85] Finally, he states that both the Algerian emir and the Dagestani imam were political and military leaders, literates, and wise men, theologians and leaders of religious brotherhoods, animated by the same spirit of independence and holy war against the infidels.

Along the same lines, the conflicts and developments in the Caucasus in the 1990s were considered to be an extension of the tradition springing from imperial discussions about the nature of Šāmil's movement, assuming the critical role of Sufism in shaping, motivating, and sustaining the mountaineers' resistance to Russian colonisation in the 19th century.[86] The most prominent representatives of this academic trend are Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay,[87] Marie Bennigsen Broxup,[88] Moshe Gammer,[89] and Anna Zelkina.[90] All these scholars owe a considerable intellectual debt to the book by Alexandre Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush.[91] This study identified Sufism and Sufi brotherhoods as a

[84] Canard, "Chamil et Abdelkader", p. 234.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 243; he quotes Bodenstedt, in the French translation, *Les peuples du Caucase*, on p. 611.
[86] An invaluable discussion regarding the imperial legacy in analysing Shamil's movement is provided by Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm", pp. 139–173; see also Knysh, *Sufism: A New history of Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 191–198.
[87] C. Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Le Caucase", in *Les voies d'Allah: Les ordres mystiques dans le monde musulman des origines à aujourd'hui*, dir. by A. Popovic and G. Veinstein, Paris, Fayard, 1996, pp. 300–308.
[88] M. Bennigsen Broxup, "Introduction: Russia and the North Caucasus", in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. by M. Bennigsen Broxup, London, Hurst & Company, 1992, pp. 1–17.
[89] Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar*.
[90] A. Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom: The Sufi Response to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus*, London, Hurst & Company, 2000.
[91] A. Bennigsen and S.E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985; see also the French translation: A. Bennigsen and C. Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Le soufi et le commissaire: Les confréries musulmanes en URSS*, Paris, Seuil, 1986.

major threat to the atheistic Soviet state, a sort of religious volcano that could erupt at any moment against the Soviet enemy. As an example, on the very first page of the French edition we read: "Like most mystical currents, Muslim mysticism has two faces: the individual quest for God and the rigorous, collective, ruthless discipline of holy war. These two aspects are inextricably linked in the Sufism of Central Asia and the Caucasus".[92]

A mere glance at the sources used by the authors reveals their almost total dependence on Russian and Soviet literature, especially on the anti-religious pamphlets issued by Soviet propaganda, which on their part were relying almost completely on Russian imperial sources, where the struggle against *muridizm* and the *mission civilisatrice* were preponderant. The obsession with the rise of Sufi hordes against the Soviet Union was something more related to political propaganda or, as we have seen above, drawn from the French accounts of the late 19th century. Bennigsen, who was exposed to French scholarship on Islam in general, and its Algerian school in particular, throughout his academic career in France could hardly remain unaffected by worries about the militancy of *confrérisme*. According to Alexander Knysh, Bennigsen simply transposed the Algerian model onto the Muslims of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and discovered a kind of Sufi conspiracy that aimed at destroying the foundations of the government. However, they cannot be blamed for this view. Since scholars were effectively forbidden by the Soviet authorities from conducting field studies among the Soviet Muslims, they had to rely on evidence provided by the Soviet scholarship. Nevertheless, as the most recent history has shown us, the events of the last four decades have proved the Sufi conspiracy theory to be unfounded.[93]

Gammer makes very useful corrections to the Russo-Soviet use of the term *muridizm* when describing Šāmil's resistance movement. He dismisses this term and presents the Dagestani imam as the leader of a typical Sufi movement of revivalist inspiration that was motivated by an orthodox Sunni ideology. According to Gammer, at the turn of the 19th century an even more orthodox version of this Naqšbandī-Muǧaddidī ideology was instituted by Šayḫ Ḫālid al-Šahrazūrī, whose

[92] *Ibid*., p. 9. This extract is on the very first page in the "Avant-propos" section along with a quotation allegedly by Imam Šāmil but without any reference to the source where this extract is taken from.
[93] For a discussion see Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm".

numerous disciples spread it in the Caucasus. Once there, the Ḫālidi branch of the Naqšbandiyya found an eager following among the Dagestani and Chechen Muslims, who were attracted by its activist character and used it to restore Islam to its original purity. As a result, the Naqšbandiyya, misnamed by Russians as *muridizm*, became a natural source of inspiration and a vehicle of anti-Russian struggle in the Caucasus.[94]

While his correction to the name of the movement is of undeniable significance, on closer examination Gammer's approach does not look different from that of the French and Soviet scholars. After describing Šāmil's movement as inspired by the revivalism and militancy of the reformed Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa*, Gammer proceeds to examine the concrete political and military events that unfolded in the Caucasus from 1830 to 1859 as well as the institutional structure of the Caucasus Imamate. He relies on Russian imperial sources when he quotes al-Yarāġī's speeches, without trying to reconcile Sufi practice with "the call for *ǧihād*". It is also noteworthy that he recognises the double nature of this holy war, firstly against the *ʿādāt* (customary law), promoting the implementation of *šarīʿa*, and then against the Russians. In doing so, Gammer tries to moderate the "fanatical" approach to mountaineers' struggle, which is almost ubiquitous in Russian imperial sources. Nevertheless, later in the narrative, Gammer argues that Šāmil, in the role of a Sufi Šayḫ, had a strong hold over a great part of the population; however, he never explains how the teachings of Šayḫ Ḫālid al-Šahrazūrī or Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ġāzī-Ġumūqī shaped Šāmil's prosecution of war against the Russians.

When we approach the study of Imam Šāmil, we must deal with the fact that he wrote no major work either about Sufism or any aspect of Islamic law. If we want to study the "pious" imam, we must rely on sources written by those who lived with him and observed his everyday practices.[95] His brief and pragmatic messages to his followers do not contain anything related to Sufi teachings, nor about his spiritual view or ascetic inspiration.[96] The only significant Sufi treatise from

[94] Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar*, pp. 39–46.
[95] As an example, see the accounts about Šāmil during his captivity: Chichagova, *Shamil' na Kavkaze i v Rossii*; Runovskii, "Dnevnik".
[96] See Omarov, *100 pisem Shamilia*, and "Nizam Shamilia" (Shamil's Codex), in *Sbornik svedenii o kavkazskikh gorstakh* (Collection of information about the Caucasian Mountaineers), vol. III, Tbilisi, Tipografiia Glavnogo Upravleniia Namestnika

Šāmil's era was written by Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ġāzī Ġumūqī,[97] who was a stark opponent of armed struggle against the Russian conquest.[98] The content of this treatise is quite typical of contemporary Naqshbandi literature and reveals no interest in either *ǧihād* or political activism in general. One may of course argue that Šāmil transmitted his militant Sufi teaching to his disciples orally, but there is no mention of this in any local Muslim chronicles of the Caucasus wars.[99] As for Šāmil's predecessors, Ġāzī Muḥammad and Ḥamza Bek, their affiliation with Sufism is even more controversial.[100] Their strict enforcement of the *šarīʿa* and calls for *ǧihād* do not necessarily spring from their status as *murīd*s of Muḥammad al-Yarāġī and Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ġāzī Ġumūqī. In fact, the latter actively advised the first imam of Dagestan, Ġāzī Muḥammad, against declaring *ǧihād* against Russians. Ǧamāl al-Dīn justified his pacifist stance by referring to Russia's superior military might and the incompatibility of armed struggle and Sufi tenets. In doing so, he incurred Ġāzī Muḥammad's wrath with all the consequences of the Caucasus war.[101]

The latest in the series of studies which highlight the Sufi nature of Šāmil's movement, or "Sufism as the explanatory paradigm" to use Knysh's own words, is Anna Zelkina's primary work.[102] Her key thesis is stated explicitly on the book's cover, in the subtitle *The Sufi Response to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus*. Indeed, the very *raison*

Kavkazskogo 1870, pp. 1–18 [27–43]. In support of this opinion see Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm".

[97] Jemaleddin of Kazikumukh, *Al-adab ul-marziya: Naqshbandi treaty* contains the original Arabic version and the Russian "official" translation. The Russian translation is taken from *Sbornik svedenii o kavkazskikh gortsakh*, vol. II, Tbilisi, Tipografiia Glavnogo Upravleniia Namestnika Kavkazskogo 1869, pp. 2–22. Unfortunately, Bennigsen Broxup does not comment on the translation, which deserves as deeper analysis.

[98] This is also well explained in Runovskii, *Muridizm i Gazavat*.

[99] Even in the "official" Dagestani chronicle by Mukhammed Takhir al-Karakhi, *O Dagestanskich voinach v period Shamilia* (About the Dagestani Wars in the Period of Shamil), trans. by A.M. Barabanov, Moscow-Leningrad, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1941, there is no major reference to Sufi practices.

[100] See Runovskii, *Muridizm i Gazavat*, pp. 2–3; Runovskii, *Zapiski o Shamile*, pp. 108–123, chapter 4: "Kanly v nemirnom kraie" (The Blood Feud in the Belligerent State). The first two imams are depicted as far from pious Sufi masters. Runovskii's Šāmil recognises that their role had nothing to do with the teachings of their Sufi masters.

[101] There are many accounts of this argument between the first imam and his Sufi master, for a detailed example see Runovskii, *Muridizm i Gazavat*, pp. 45–50.

[102] Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom*.

d'être of her book is to prove that both past and present Muslim resistance movements in the northern Caucasus are inspired, motivated, and sustained by the ideology of the Naqšbandiyya-Ḫālidiyya Sufi brotherhood, as propagated by its predecessors.

One question remains: the fact that Šāmil's followers were described as his *murīd*s in many Russian imperial sources. Does this really mean that they were full-fledged practicing members of the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa* and that the three imams of Dagestan were Sufi masters, who received *iǧāza* and whose names are included in a *silsila*?

In her discussion of the Soviet period, Zelkina reiterates Bennigsen's claims about "a clandestine network of murid organisations" that "remained totally outside Russian reach".[103] Zelkina's book fundamentally reinterprets the conventional understanding of Sufism as a movement of opposition and resistance. The roots of these assumptions, it is argued, are found in colonial theories, which depicted Northern African brotherhoods, Central Asian *ishanstvo*, and Caucasian *muridizm* as intrinsically militant and conspiratorial.[104]

All the proponents of the "because-of-Sufism" explanatory paradigm seem to have done is to replace these colonial names with the idea of the neo-Sufi order.[105] *Gazavat* could have been also part of the integration into the Dagestani code of honour that served Chechen resistance during the two wars. According to Knysh, this deserves further investigation.[106]

The main exponents of the same school of thought as Knysh, arguing that *ǧihād* and Sufi preaching are not necessarily linked, are Michael Kemper,[107] Vladimir Bobrovnikov,[108] and Shamil Shikhaliev.[109]

[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
[104] See A. Knysh, review of A. Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom*, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12/1 (2002), pp. 92–95.
[105] Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm"; Leccese, *Sufi Network*, pp. 61–94.
[106] Runovskii, *Zapiski o Shamilie*, pp. 108–122, dedicated the fourth chapter "Kanly v nemirnom kraie" to practices related to honour in the North-Eastern Caucasus, in particular *kanly* (blood feud).
[107] M. Kemper, "Khālidiyya Networks in Daghestan and the Question of *Jihād*", *Die Welt des Islams* 42/1 (2002), pp. 41–71; M. Kemper, "The North Caucasian Khâlidiyya and 'Muridism': Historiographical problems", *Journal of the History of Sufism* 5 (2007), pp. 151–167.
[108] V.O. Bobrovnikov, "Islam in the Russian Empire", in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. II, *Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. by D. Lieven, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 202–224.
[109] M.G. Shekhmagomedov and S. Shikhaliev, "Svedeniia ob uchenom- bogoslove i sufiiskom sheikhe Mamma-Dibire Ar-Ruchi v kontekste dagestanskich araboiazychnykh

In the same year that Knysh put forth his arguments against the Sufi teachings of Naqšbandiyya-Ḫālidiyya and the Dagestani Sufi network as an explanatory paradigm of the imams' struggle against the Russian colonising policy, Michael Kemper published an analysis of the Dagestani branch of this *ṭarīqa* and the question of *ǧihād*. He states that "the positions and activities of Khālidiyya shaykhs during the jihad are still far from being clear", and that it seems that scholars were hardly interested in studying the development of the *ṭarīqa* after the surrender of Šāmil.[110] He found new relevant information in the work *Ṭabaqāt al-ḫwāǧaġān* by Šuʿayb al-Bāġinī. Al-Bāġinī was a Šayḫ belonging to Ḫālidiyya from a Dagestani Avar community in today's Azerbaijan, who reports information about the, at this point almost unknown, Šayḫ Mamma-Dibīr al-Rūčī, "the most excellent" of Ǧamāl al-Dīn's *ḫalīfa*; however, none of his *murīd*s are known, and he seems to be involved in no political activity.[111]

Bobrovnikov highlights the misunderstanding that the Russians had in Dagestan. He states that, when they encountered Muslim resistance in the Caucasus, they became "anxious about Sufism", since they confused the "*ǧihād* state" with the Sufi network. This led to the idea that Sufi *ṭarīqa*s were a "single anti-Russian movement", hence the idea of *muridizm* as a uniform current plotting against the empire, against which tsar Nicholas I issued decrees of an anti-Sufi character.[112]

biograficheskikh sochinenii" (Information about the Sheykh Mamma-Dibir Ar-Ruchi in the Contexts of the Dagestani Biographic Works in Arabic), *Sovremennye problemy nauki i obrazovaniia* (Modern Problems of Science and Education) 6 (2012), pp. 1–8; S. Shikhaliev and M. Kemper, "Sayfallāh-Qāḍī Bashlarov: Sufi Networks between the North Caucasus and the Volga-Urals", in *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. by M. Kemper and R. Elger, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 166–198.

[110] Kemper, "Khālidiyya Networks in Daghestan", p. 41.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 47. For a deeper analysis of Mamma-Dibīr ar-Rūčī see Shekhmagomedov and Shikhaliev, "Svedeniia ob uchenom", p. 4. Noteworthy is the fact that the Dagestani Said- Afandi Al'-Chirkavi in his work *Sokrovshchina blagodatnykh znanii* (The Treasure of the Beneficial Knowledge)*,* Makhachkala, Nurul' Ishad, 2010, p. 288, reports the *silsila* of the the Naqshbandiyya in Dagestan. In the chain of transmission, we find two disciples of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ghāzī-Ghumuqī, Imam Shamil and Mamma-Dibīr al-Rūčī, however they have no offspring (no *murīd*s). The chain continues through ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al- Ṯuġūrī, who will be the father of the fourth imam of Dagestan and lead the uprising in 1877. In Šayḫ Al'-Chirkavi's *Silsila*, the first and the second imam are not included.

[112] Bobrovnikov, *Islam in the Russian Empire*, 2006, p. 211.

The last relevant reference to this dispute in Western scholarship, to the best of my knowledge, was published in 2017 by Kemper and Shikhaliev.[113] It shed light on the Naqšbandiyya and the other Sufi orders before the 19th century. The Sufi order came to Dagestan in the form of the Ḫālidiyya, an offshoot of the Muǧaddidiyya. Kemper and Shikhaliev argue that all Dagestani Ḫālidiyya branches originate from Ismāʿīl al-Kūrdumīrī, who was a disciple and *ḫalīfa* of Šayḫ Ḫālid al-Šahrazūrī.[114] They trace the chain of transmission of the *ṭarīqa*, emphasising the role of Sufi masters active at the time of Šāmil's imamate, namely Muḥammad al-Yarāġī and Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ġāzī Ġumūqī. Their conclusion is that Ḫālidiyya may not be considered the backbone of Ġāzī Muḥammad and Šāmil's *ǧihād*. According to the authors, the reasons must be seen in the struggle against the noblemen and elders who applied *ʿādāt* (customary law)[115] and not the *šarīʿa*. Another proof is that, after Russia's subjection of Šāmil, some Sufi masters, such as Ǧamāl al-Dīn as al-Ġāzī Ġumūqī, fled from Dagestan and moved to Ottoman lands.[116] However, through popular *shaykh*s like ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṯuġūrī, the Ḫālidiyya remained in Dagestan and maintained a strong position there throughout the Soviet era until today.

4. *Conclusion*

Considering the role of Sufism within a broader socio-political framework helps us understand the boundary between the mystical dimension of Islam and the lens of orientalism used by European scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries.

[113] Shikhaliev and Kemper, "Sayfallāh-Qāḍī Bashlarov".
[114] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[115] For a deeper analysis of Dagestani customary law, see M. Kemper, "Adat against Shari'a: Russian Approaches toward Daghestani 'Customary Law' in the 19th Century", *Ab Imperio* 3 (2005), pp. 147–173; V.O. Bobrovnikov, *Musul'mane Severnogo Kavkaza: obychai, pravo, nasilie* (Muslims in the Northern Caucasus: Customs, Law, Violence), Moscow, Vostochnaia Literatura RAN, 2002; V.O. Bobrovnikov, *Obychai i zakon v pis'mennych pamiatnikakh Dagestan V-nachala XXv.* (Customs and Law in Written Records of Dagestan in the Early XX Century), vol. I, Moscow, Izdatel'skii dom Mardzhani, 2009 (Customs and Law in the Written Monuments Dagestan V- Beginning of XX Century).
[116] He died in 1866 and was buried in Karacaahmet Mezarlığı in the Üsküdar district of Istanbul.

Rather than focusing solely on the alleged inherent tendency of Sufism to initiate and maintain resistance movements, it is essential to examine how diverse Islamic communities throughout the Muslim world created methods of mass mobilisation in response to European expansion and to understand why their resistance to European colonialism manifested itself in various and similar ways across different regions of the Muslim world.

For a more complete literature review of the historiography of Šāmil's movement in Dagestan and Chechnya, it is insufficient to rely just on what was written by Russian and Western scholarship, since their narratives appear often affected by the political view of the time. It is advisable also to look at what Muslim *intelligentsia*, both during the empire and during the USSR, wrote about the imamate and mountaineers' resistance to the tsar.

To ensure a thorough review, it is essential to investigate whether such discourses were addressed in journals published by Muslim intellectuals before the October Revolution,[117] and the proceedings and papers of conferences in 1920s held in Dagestan and Azerbaijan.[118] Furthermore, a more astute analysis of certain Russian imperial sources is also advisable to avoid a generalisation regarding a one-way narrative of *muridizm* as fanatical and Šāmil as an orthodox Sufi master.[119] The latest, and probably last, biography of Imam Šāmil, published in 2023 by the Dagestani scholar Khadzhi-Murad Donogo, may provide new insight about the changing image of the Dagestani imam and the *muridizm*, since it is rich in source-based material.[120] Finally, we should also take into account the political discourse during the two Chechen wars,[121] and what is happening

[117] A starting point for research on a discourse about the imamate might be the journal *Терджима́н-Переводчикъ* (Crimean Tatar: Terciman, ترجمان), published from 1883 to 1918 by the Crimean Tatar *intelligentsia* or the pre-revolutionary journals of Dagestani intelligentsia issued since 1906, like *Zariia Dagestana* (Dawn of Daghestan) or *Musul'manskaia Gazeta* (Muslim Journal). See S. Shikhaliev, "Islamic Press in the Early Soviet Dagestan and the Journal 'Muslims of the Soviet Orient'", *Islamology* 7/2 (2017), pp. 74–100.

[118] See N. Sahakyan, *Muslim Reformers and the Bolshevisks: The Case of Daghestan*, London, Routledge, 2022.

[119] An example is Runovskii, *Zapiski o Shamile*; Runovskii, *Muridizm i Gazavat*; Chichagova, *Shamil' na Kavkaze i v Rossii*.

[120] K.-M. Donogo, *Shamil'*, Moscow, Badr book, 2023.

[121] I. Rasulov, *Dzhikhad na Severnom Kavkaze storonniki i protivniki* (Jihad in the Northern Caucasus Supporters and Opponents), unpublished but most probably writ-

now in Ukraine when two differently politically oriented Caucasian groups are struggling against each other, both in the name of the Dagestani imam.[122]

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ten between 2003 (last published reference in the text) and 2006 when he was killed by the Russian special forces. He was also called "Dagestan's rebel scholar", and was one of the thinkers behind the terrorist separatist group Shariat Jamaat.

[122] See ru.krymr.com/a/mansur-sheykh-batalon-chechnya-rossiya-voyna-vsu/32647840.html (21 November 2024); the Chechen pro-Ukrainian battalion is named after Manṣūr, the precursor of Imam Šāmil in Chechnya, active from 1785 to 1791. See also P.A. Goble, "Shamil Battalion, from Russia's Daghestan now fighting Russian Forces in Ukraine", available at euromaidanpress.com/2022/11/07/shamil-battalion-from-russias-daghestan-now-fighting-russian-forces-in-ukraine (21 November 2024).

Reviews

Hadith Commentary: Continuity and Change, ed. by J. Blecher and S. Brinkmann, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023, 312 pp.

The subject of this book is certainly innovative, since it is one of the few volumes devoted entirely to the exegesis of the *ḥadīṯ*s. Apart from the monograph by Joel Blecher himself (*Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary Across a Millennium*, Oakland, University of California Press, 2018), which pioneered this type of study, or Ömercan Kaçar's MA thesis (*Mühelleb b. Ebî Sufre ve Şerhçiliği*, Marmara University, 2021), we have very few articles or contributions dedicated to the topic, such as the one by Khaola Trad ("The Impact of Maghribi *Ḥadīth* Commentaries on the Mashriq", in *The Maghrib in the Mashriq: Knowledge, Travel and Identity*, ed. by M. Fierro and M. Penelas, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021, pp. 213–236) and Christopher Melchert ("The Theory and Practice of Hadith Criticism in the Mid-Ninth Century", in *Islam at 250: Studies in Memory of G.H.A. Juynboll*, ed. by P.M. Sijpesteijn and C. Adang, Leiden, Brill, 2020, pp. 74–102).

While studies of Qur'anic exegesis are quite numerous, commentaries on the *ḥadīṯ*s have not yet received the attention they deserve. Such commentaries represent a vast production, the composition of which begins as early as the first centuries of Islam and extends to the present day. As the editors of the volume make clear in the introduction, the definition of commentary is understood in a broad sense here, since it includes, on the one hand, works that originated with the intention of explaining (*šarḥ*) or glossing (*ḥāšī'a*) the sayings of the Prophet, and on the other, the commentaries found in *fatwa*s and *tafsīr*s as well as streaming videos and live sessions in which imams comment on the *ḥadīṯ*s.

The book is divided into ten chapters, collected in two parts following roughly the chronology of the sources: I. "Formation and Developments in the Early and Middle Periods"; II. "Modern Recollections and Reimaginings".

The contributions address the subject from multiple perspectives, offering a vast and stimulating overview. The book opens with Stefanie Brinkmann's "Between Philology and Hadith Criticism: The Genre of *Sharḥ Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*" (pp. 15–49). The author examines the collections of the *ġarīb al-ḥadīṯ* (the "rare" or "strange" *ḥadīṯ*s) as the first core of commentaries on *ḥadīṯ*s. Her approach is historical and takes into account the centres of production and the context in which these works originated.

Brinkmann begins by defining the term *ġarīb*, which can be applied to both the chain of transmission (*isnād*) and the content (*matn*) of prophetic sayings. However, much of the literature on *ġarīb al-ḥadīṯ* focuses on explaining the rare, obscure, or foreign words contained in a saying, and thus the interest is mainly focused on the *matn*. Philology occupies an important place in this type of work, and as time went on this literary genre was partly integrated into dictionaries and works of lexicography. During the formative period, *mawālī* (non-Arab converts to Islam) played an important role in the composition of this type of work. Their foreign origin and the need to better understand the meaning of a prophetic saying prompted them to delve into the linguistic and philological aspects of *ḥadīṯ*s.

In "The Hermeneutics of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā: The Interpretation of *al-akhbār al-āḥād* in *Kitāb al-Amālī*" (pp. 50–78), Ali Aghaei discusses at length the Shiite hermeneutical approach to traditions attributed to imams (*aḫbār*) and, in particular, to the so-called isolated sayings (*al-aḫbār al-āḥād*) through the work of al-Šarīf al-Murtaḍā (5th/11th century). One of the criteria considered most reliable for establishing the authenticity of a *ḥadīṯ* or *ḫabar* is the existence of multiple chains of transmission corroborating the same tradition (*ḥadīṯ* or *ḫabar mutawātir)*, where "isolated" or "unique" traditions have always been a matter of debate. In particular, the author points out two trends that have emerged in this field over time: the traditionalist trend, which aims to preserve the authority of an ancient text attributed to a well-known personality, even when not sufficiently supported by traditional literature, and the rationalist trend, which considers isolated *ḥadīṯ*s inadmissible. Al-Murtaḍā adopts the critical and rational attitude, typical of the *muʿtazilī* school.

Aghaei then analyses the Shiite author's criteria and methods of interpretation. According to al-Murtaḍā, one of the following can be said of every tradition: 1) that its veracity is known; 2) that its falsity is known; 3) that its veracity or falsity is not known (*ġayr maʿlūm al-ṣidq aw al-kiḏb*). The isolated *ḥadīṯ* or *ḫabar* belongs to the third category, that is, there is a suspension of judgment toward them even when the transmitter is considered worthy of trust (*ṯiqa*). In contrast to the majority of later Imamite scholars, al-Murtaḍā asserts that *al-aḫbār al-āḥād* have no authority on the legal plane. An exception is when imams agree on the veracity of a saying, even if it is transmitted in isolation, as their unanimous agreement (*iǧmāʿ*) can bridge the gap of the authenticity of these sources. The factor that endorses the validity of a *ḥadīṯ* or *ḫabar*, however, is always the fact that it does not contradict the Qur'an and the principle of reason (*ʿaql*).

Youshaa Patel, in his "'Blessed are the Strangers (*ġhurabā'*)': An Apocalyptic Hadith on the Virtues of Loneliness, Sadness and Exile" (pp. 79–111), offers a very interesting and almost exhaustive analysis of the interpretations of the well-known *ḥadīṯ*s transmitted by Muslim Ibn Haǧǧāǧ (d. 261/875), which reads in full as follows: "Islam began strange, and will [one day] return to being strange – just as it began – so blessed are the strangers (*ṭūbā li-al-ġurabā'*)". This is a *ḥadīṯ* with an apocalyptic flavour but which, at the same time, provides a positive image of the stranger, in Arabic *ġarīb*, plural *ġurabā'*. Patel presents the interpretations of authors from pre-modern times belonging to different religious circles – Sufis, jurists, theologians, and historians – who explain what the virtues of being a foreigner are.

The Semitic root *ġ-r-b* originally indicated the act of entering, and already Franz Rosenthal ("The Stranger in Medieval Islam", *Arabica* 44 [1997], pp. 35–75) had

pointed out the connection of this meaning with the Arabic adjective *ġarīb* in the sense of "newcomer", one who enters and introduces himself into a group. Later, the Arabic meaning of this term bifurcated into: *a*) foreigner, traveller, or outsider, and *b*) unusual, rare, and wonderful. Works bearing the title *Ġarīb al-Qur'ān* or *Ġarīb al-ḥadīṯ* deal mainly with rare traditions or unusual words in Islamic scriptures. The positive valence of *ġarīb* in the aforementioned *ḥadīṯ* is due to the presence of the term *ṭūbā* (blessed). Foreigners are understood here as a kind of elite that stands out and rises from the masses spiritually and morally. The Prophet himself experienced initial isolation as he was sent to a population that followed different creeds and was perceived as a stranger among his people. As far as the apocalyptic aspect is concerned, the expression "Islam will return to be a stranger" is a prediction of a return of the masses to unbelief, due to the prevalence of their passions (*al-ahwā'*). Only a minority will continue to adhere to the creed of Muḥammad and the *šarī'a*, and thus the Islamic community will again become foreign.

Among Sufi authors, the term *ġurabā'* takes on different nuances: for Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya, the poor, that is, the Sufi, is never foreign in the sense of alone, since he enjoys closeness to God, whereas for Rūmī the stranger *par excellence* is the master, one who has realised his full spiritual potential already in this world. A similar interpretation is that of al-Ġazālī who calls the true sages, the *'ulamā'*, "strangers" to their era because of the ignorance of the masses who despise them. Regarding modern extremists and terrorists who refer to this *ḥadīṯ* to express their condition of estrangement from the world and justify their *ǧihād*, Patel contrasts their point of view with that of the authors examined above, who speak exclusively of an intellectual and spiritual condition as a sign of moral excellence.

With his "Sufi Contributions to Hadith Commentary" (pp. 112–131), Samer Dajani aims to demonstrate the Sufis' uninterrupted interest in the literature of the *ḥadīṯ*s and the particular nature of their commentaries compared to those of other categories of authors. He says: "It is now well known that the early Sufis were closely connected to, and in many cases part of, the proto-Sunni Ahl al-Hadith movement. However, not much has been said about the contribution of Sufis to the various fields of *ḥadīṯ* science and transmission" (p. 113).

One of the oldest Sufi commentaries on Prophetic traditions, namely the *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmiḏī (d. 298/910), contains a selection of around 300 *ḥadīṯ*s. The work focuses on his favourite Sufi themes and especially on holiness, knowledge of God, and metaphysical questions. Other selections of *ḥadīṯ*s were collected by Abū Bakr Kalābāḏī (d. 384/994), Abū Manṣūr Ma'mar al-Isfāhānī (d. 418/1027) and Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī (d. 578/1182) with the intention of conveying Sufi messages through the metaphorical and spiritual interpretations of the *ḥadīṯ*s. In response to Jamal Elias's assertion about the absence of any real specificity of Sufi *tafsīr* with respect to methodology and content, Dajani claims for both Qur'anic and *ḥadīṯ*s commentaries an originality of theme and vocabulary absent in other similar works. A characteristic element of these Sufi works not mentioned by Dajani is that the chain of transmission of the sources of these commentaries (that is, the Sufi *ḥadīṯ*s, which rarely derive from canonical collections) are formed by spiritual masters or missing entirely, such as the work by Kalābāḏī also cited in this contribution (see J.A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2009, pp. 184–185).

Mohammed Gharaibeh tackles the 40 *ḥadīṯ* genre in his "Ibn Rajab's Commentary on al-Nawawī's Forty Hadith: Innovation and Audience in the *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa-l-ḥikam*" (pp. 132–149). With the *Forty ḥadīṯ* by Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), this genre, namely the collection of a small number of traditions on a given topic, became a widespread custom, produced as an act of devotion. The subjects on which these collections focus are diverse, and range from theology and morality to eschatology, medicine, mystical themes, and others. Nawawī's *Forty ḥadīṯ*s remains the book most widely read by Muslims other than the Qurʾan.

Gharaibeh's contribution examines Ibn Raǧab's (d. 795/1393) commentary on Nawawī's work entitled *Ǧāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa-al-ḥikam fī šarḥ ḫamsīn ḥadīṯan min ǧawāmiʿ al-kalim* (The Collection of Knowledge and Wisdom: A Commentary of Fifty Hadith of Concise Comprehensive Words). Gharaibeh dwells in particular on three *ḥadīṯ*s commented on the *Ǧawāmiʿ* analysing the methodology of Ibn Raǧab. The first *ḥadīṯ* is "Actions are [judged] by intentions and [a man] will [only] have what he intended (*innamā al-aʿmāl bi-al-niyyāt wa-li-kulli (i)mriʾ mā nawā*)". It is placed by Buḫārī at the beginning of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* by way of introduction, thus emphasising its importance. The discussions provoked by this *ḥadīṯ* are innumerable, with important legal implications that Ibn Raǧab faithfully reports in his commentary. The second *ḥadīṯ* is: "No one becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself (*lā yuʾminu aḥadukum ḥattā yuḥibbu li-aḫīhi mā yuḥibbu li-nafsihi*)". The focus here is on faith and the meaning of what is meant by liking/loving. According to Ibn Raǧab, knowledge is the best basis for love for oneself and others. The third is the *ḥadīṯ* that closes the book: "Keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of God, most mighty and majestic (*lā yazālu lisānuka raṭban min ḏikr Allāh ʿazza wa-ǧalla*)". It is only reported in this version by Ibn Raǧab's master, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, and exhorts believers to recite the name of God as a supreme act of protection and devotion.

Sajjad Rizvi highlights, with his "The Words of the Imam beyond Philosophy and Tradition: Shīʿī Hadith Commentaries in the Ṣafavid Period" (pp. 150–183), the interest in studies on *ḥadīṯ*s in the Ṣafavid period (907–1135/1501–1773). The rediscovery was intended as a way to find a Shiite answer to legal and theological questions in contrast to the Sunni Ottoman tradition. Rizvi aims to show the plurality of interpretations of these commentators whose opinions were often at odds with the speculation of the philosophers of the time. The case study that the author analyses is the discussion around the definition of "intellect" (*ʿaql*) expressed in the *ḥadīṯ*s. The main positions are divided between intellect understood as an innate faculty, placed by God in human beings to learn and distinguish good from evil, and an immaterial substance emanating from the One, which is outside and within a person. Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1045/1636), the most famous philosopher of the Ṣafavid era, attempts to compose a synthesis between the two theories in his commentary on the theological sections of al-Kulaynī's *Kāfī*, one of the most important Shiite collections of *ḥadīṯ*s. The introduction begins with a conventional apophatic assertion about the inability of the human intellect to grasp God, which necessitated the sending of messengers with revelations. On the other hand, God has endowed man with intellect so that he can understand reality and attain salvation.

Ṣadrā attempts to answer the question about the nature of the intellect by trying to establish a connection between metaphysics and morality. Intellect is an innate faculty (*ġarīza*) that distinguishes humans from animals and possesses theoretical and ethical

capacities as part of the human soul. There is, however, a metaphysical aspect of the *ʿaql* that concerns pure intellects, uncontaminated by matter and emanating from God, which only desire and contemplate him. An opposite position is expressed by the theologian al-Maǧlisī, who criticises the philosophers' theses about the eternity of the world and emanatist theories. He states that the *ḥadīṯ* "The first thing created was the intellect" is nothing but a Sunni forgery and therefore not acceptable to the Shiite tradition. In a strong denunciation of the Sufis, who partly embrace philosophical theses, he states that their nefarious innovations are instruments of deviation that divert the faithful from the true guidance and wisdom of the imams. He considers it his duty to return the faithful to those sources of wisdom.

Rizvi calls all these commentaries an eisegesis rather than an exegesis, since the interpretation of the *ḥadīṯ*s is inseparable from each author's worldview in matters of knowledge, theology, and ethics.

In the second part of the book, Susan Gunasti, "Contesting Ḥanafī Thought in a Twentieth-Century Turkish Hadith Commentary" (pp. 187–206), begins her contribution by recalling a BBC program from 2008 that announced a Turkish project of a revolutionary nature, centred on a new compilation of *ḥadīṯ*s adapted to contemporary society. The project, it was expected, would bring about much needed change and reform in Islam. To date, the only publication on the subject by the Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs) has been the re-publication of a summary of Buḫārī's text, translated and published between 1928 and 1948. Gunasti focuses on this work, placing it in the context of a renewed interest in the *ḥadīṯ*s since the late Ottoman period.

The old Diyanet's project was called *Saḥîḥ-i Buḫari Muḫtaṣarı: Tecrîd-i Sarîh Tercümesi* (A Synthesis of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Buḫārī: A Translation of the *al-Taǧrīd al-Ṣarīḥ*). The work was accompanied by classical commentaries by Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) and ʿAlī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605). In his introduction, the translator Babanzade Ahmet Naim (d. 1934) discusses the historical-critical method of Italian scholar Leone Caetani. The famous Orientalist rejected as counterfeit some *ḥadīṯ*s that Muslims considered authentic just because they were accompanied by an intact transmission chain. According to Caetani, these traditions contain inconsistencies or anachronisms in their content (*matn*), but they had been falsely associated with authentic chains of guarantors taken from other *ḥadīṯ*s. Babanzade defends those *ḥadīṯ*s by considering the criterion of the trustworthiness of the guarantors and the integrity of the chains of transmission as historically valid and indeed superior to the more approximate methods of other traditions.

The new translator, Kamil Miras (d. 1957), who took over after Babanzade's death, made some editorial improvements and corrections, but above all added to the sources the work of the Ḥanafite al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1453), *ʿUmdat al-qārī fī šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī*, which supported the Turkish-Ottoman legal position.

A new field of interest is that explored by Ali Altaf Mian with his study on Indian scholars: "Debating Authority and Authenticity in Modern South Asian Hadith Commentaries: Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhalawī's *Awjaz al-masālik*" (pp. 207–237). Mian's contribution focuses on the *ḥadīṯ* commentaries that developed in India in colonial times. Many Indian Islamic movements flourished extensively during this period and the three major organisations, namely the Ahl al-Ḥadīṯ, the Deobandi, and the Barelvis, began to study the prophetic traditions, albeit from different points of

view. The Ahl al-Ḥadīṯ followed the Indian Salafi movement, in favour of a conservative religious view close to the literal interpretation of texts; the other two movements, both with Ḥanafī tendencies, were supportive of a jurisprudence based on a rational approach. In some respects, this division responded to the social and political reality of British India, divided between a religious sphere that had to remain private and a public sphere projected towards a secular mentality.

Mian's interest focuses in particular on the commentary on the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 179/796), entitled *Awǧaz al-masālik ilā Muwaṭṭa' Mālik* (The Most Abridged Path to Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'*) by the Deobandi Ḥanafī scholar Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhalawī (1898–1982). Kāndhalawī attempts to balance the traditional approach to *ḥadīṯ*s with a critical analysis of the content (*matn*). He extols the pluralism inherent in Islam through the presence of the different legal schools but seeks to create a new authority based on Ḥanafism. From a methodological point of view, Walī Allāh tried to reconcile (*ǧamʿ* or *tawfīq*) the contradictions sometimes present in the variants of a *ḥadīṯ* in order to overcome the different interpretations and find a common ground. Kāndhalawī, for his part, follows the *tarǧīḥ* method, preferring legal choice, in his case dictated by the Ḥanafite school. Mian believes that this change of orientation by the Deobandi movement was due to different historical circumstances and the author's unusual personality.

The commentary on the *ḥadiṯ*s found in the Qur'anic *tafsīr* is the subject of the contribution "'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Exegetical Hadiths in *al-Mizān*: A Contemporary Imāmī Commentary on Hadith?" (pp. 238–262) by Shadi Nafisi. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabaṭabā'ī (1903–1981) was an Iranian philosopher, theologian, and exegete, whose famous work, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, is considered the most important invece Qur'anic commentary in modern Shi'ism. For many years he taught the Shi'a collection *Biḥār al-Anwār* and wrote glosses on it, correcting the passages he considered erroneous. His criticism of the *Biḥār* lost him the sympathy of the religious authorities of Qom. He also wrote an independent commentary entitled *al-Bayān fī muwāfaqa bayn al-ḥadiṯ wa-al-Qur'ān* (The Elucidation of Consistency between *ḥadīṯ* and the Qur'an), which, however, remained incomplete.

Al-Nafīsī dwells on this work that combines Qur'anic exegesis and *ḥadīṯ* commentary. After the explanation (*bayān*) of the verses, Ṭabaṭabā'ī devotes a part of the commentary to the discussion (*baḥṯ*) in which he quotes a *ḥadīṯ* on the same subject. The sources he draws on for the *ḥadīṯ* are the Shiite *al-Kāfī* collection, but also the Sunni book *al-Durr al-manṯūr fī al-tafsīr bi-al-ma'ṯūr* by Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). Unlike the Qur'anic commentaries based on the *ḥadīṯ*s and called *Tafsīr bi-al-ma'ṯūr*, in the work of Ṭabaṭabā'ī the discussion of the *ḥadīṯ*s is separate from the rest of the commentary and the *ḥadīṯ* itself is also the subject of exegesis. There is in fact an interrelationship between Qur'anic commentary and *ḥadīṯ* commentary.

In regard to the typology of *ḥadīṯ*s accepted by Ṭabaṭabā'ī , the most valid ones are the *ḥadīṯ mutawātir* (supported by multiple chains of transmission). For the isolated ones (*wāḥid/āḥād*), their validity is limited to the legal field. In this, they are not acceptable in the area of faith, since certainty (*yaqīn*) is fundamental to belief. Nafīsī defines Ṭabaṭabā'ī's method as a "*matn*-oriented approach" (p. 247) to *ḥadīṯ*s that holds the message, or the content (*matn*), is more important than the sources from which they derive. For this reason, he also accepts traditions of Sunni origin.

The most innovative contribution of the entire volume is undoubtedly the one devoted to the applications of computer programs and artificial intelligence to this type of study. Maroussia Bednarkiewicz, Aslisho Qurboniev, and Gowaart Van Den Bossche give us "Studying Hadith Commentaries in the Digital Age" (pp. 263–280), which focuses on the great opportunities offered by the online presence of digitised texts of *ḥadīṯ* collections and their commentaries (see Shamela or ShiaOnline Library). All this material can be used not only for reading and basic research but also for more complex computer analyses. The authors open their paper by stating: "The advent of such online libraries facilitates the navigation and extraction of text to build corpora tailored to new research questions, thus radically changing historians' workflow" (p. 263). In particular, the re-use of these texts in the form of quotations, plagiarism, reworkings, and other forms of intertextual research is analysed here.

As far as *ḥadīṯ* commentaries are concerned, this is an enormous amount of material, the perusal of which has yet to be done, not to mention the Islamic production that continues so far in various forms. Despite this, the processing of *ḥadīṯ* texts in digital form is often limited to Muslim and Buḫārī collections. Some of the problems leading to this limitation are related to the editorial errors which digitalised texts are full of, due to omissions, typos, and repetitions. Even more, digital publishers provide versions without critical apparatus or tend to provide "correct" texts, without taking into account, for instance, manuscript variants or accurate critical editions. Other errors concern the false attribution of texts or incorrect intertextual relationships. All this still makes the printed text more reliable. As for commentaries, identifying the genre is not always easy because the word *šarḥ* (commentary) or *ḥāšiya/taʿlīq* (gloss) is rarely present in the title, not to mention that the commentary of a *ḥadīṯ* may also be found in a Qur'anic exegesis or elsewhere.

Another important problem regarding *ḥadīṯ*s is the recognition of the transmission chain (*isnād*) with respect to the content (*matn*) of the text. For the computer, in fact, *isnād* is a string of characters like any other. So far, the algorithms created by Ryan Muther and later by Mohamed Alkaoud and Mairaj Syed have only been able to identify the beginning of a chain. The KITAB team works on these issues with Open ITI, a corpus of digital texts from pre-modern Islamic times created for the purpose of building a basic infrastructure for digital analysis.

In his concluding remarks (pp. 281–293), Blecher shows an illustration of the text of a manuscript of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Buḫārī present in the Ambrosiana library in Milan dating from the Mamluk period (827/1424). Its margins are crowded with annotations by students and scholars who have read and commented on the manuscript at different times and in different geographical areas, providing an interesting example of *ḥadīṯ* commentary. While noting the geographical vastness touched upon by the contributions in this book (from Andalusia to India, Egypt, and Syria) and the long historical period covered, from the 9th to the 20th century, Blecher emphasises that studies on the *ḥadīṯ*s in vast areas of modern Islam, such as the regions of Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as the Deobandi communities in South Africa, are still to be investigated.

In addition to written production, new forms of commentaries are constantly being created, such as online discussion forums and texts circulating in CD form in the United States and Europe. Another field of investigation that Blecher proposes is the analysis of how non-Muslims translated, recompiled, and interpreted the *ḥadīṯ*s.

One area that should be included in this type of study, but which was not mentioned at all in the book, is that of the collections of "artefactual" (*mawḍūʿāt*) *ḥadīṯ*s or the studies on the defects or "diseases" (*ʿilal*) of *ḥadīṯ*s, that is ancient and modern works that critically analyse *ḥadīṯ*s. In any case, this collective work provides many suggestions for new fields of research that could be the subject of other books on *ḥadīṯ*s commentaries.

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