

كُنُودًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ الْاٰخِسِرِيْنَ  
 وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لَوْ كَا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ اَلِيَّ  
 بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ  
 وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ اِسْمًا وَّيَغْلُوْبُ فَا  
 فِيْهِ وَاكْلًا جَعَلْنَا صٰلِحِيْنَ  
 وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ اَيْمَةً يَّهْتَدُوْنَ زِيَادًا  
 مَّرْتَابًا وَاَوْحَيْنَا اِلَيْهِمْ رِغْلًا

Page of the Qur'an of Andalusian origin with excellent Magribine-type calligraphy. 13th century. Biblioteca de Catalunya.

## CATALAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN

*Mikel de Epalza*

**T**he Alcorà or Qur'ān (in Arabic Al-Qurān al-Karīm, “the noble recitation”, and other names) is the sacred book of the Muslims, believers in Islam – more than 1,000 million men and women, today, and has been for the past fourteen centuries.

According to the Muslim faith, the Qur'ān was revealed by God (Allāh, “the only God”) to all men via a progressive, fragmented dictation to Mahoma (Muḥammad, “the highly praised one”). This revelation in fragments was made through the angel Gabriel (Ġibrīl, the biblical archangel, who made the anunciation to Mary), during around 20 years of his life, from the first revelation in the cave of Mount Hira in the year 612CE, north of his native city of Meca (Makka al-Mukarrama, “the noble Meca”), to his death in the year 632CE, in the capital of his primitive state Medina (Madīnatu' n-Nabi, “The City of the Prophet”), the city that Muḥammad/Mahoma founded at the oasis of Yatrib in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the hegira or Islamic era that began when Mahoma, Muḥammad,<sup>1</sup> had to emigrate with his first disciples from Meca to Yatrib/Medina.<sup>2</sup>

The first revelation is reflected in The Qur'ān (Q.99:1-5):

“Read! Recite [the Qur'ān, that comes from God]!  
In the name of your Lord, who has created [you]!  
He has created man from a clot, from a clot of blood!  
Read! Recite [the Qur'ān, that comes from God]!  
Your Lord is the most Noble, the most Generous!  
He has taught the use of the quill, to write.  
He taught man what he did not know!”<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'ān, therefore, is from a divine, oral source, according to the Muslim faith. Mahoma, Muḥammad, also transmitted it to his first disciples orally, from his wife

Ḥadiġa and his cousin and future son-in-law 'Alī to everyone who wanted to listen to him, in Meca and Medina. According to entirely reliable traditions, he made groups of professional reciters repeat by heart the fragments that were revealed to him according to circumstances, so that a faithful record would be preserved. These oral texts (some of them were written down, little by little) were collected in a volume by order of his third successor at the head of the community and of the Muslim state, the caliph and also a son-in-law of his, 'Uṭman, twenty years after his death, around the year 52 / 30 of the hegira. This is the text of the Qur'ān that has survived down to our times, with practically no changes other than the orthographic ones.

So the Qur'ān is presented as a text in the Arabic tongue, aimed primarily at the Arab companions and compatriots of Mahoma, Muḥammad, who spoke different Arabic dialects, but who understood the Koranic tongue well. This is according to the same text of the Qur'ān in which God, Allāh, related it to previous divine revelations, especially biblical ones (Q.26:192-202):

“And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, which the True Spirit [the angel Gabriel] hath brought down,

Upon your heart [Muḥammad],  
that you may be of the warners  
[to all men],

In plain Arabic language.

And most surely the same is in the scriptures of the ancients. Is it not a sign to them that the learned men of the Israelites [Banu-Israīl] know it?

[the children of Israel, the Jews]

And if we had revealed it to any of the foreigners  
[someone who did not speak Arabic],

So that he should have recited it to them [in his tongue], they would not have believed therein.

Thus have We caused it to enter into the hearts of the guilty

[as if it was recited in a foreign tongue].

They will not believe in it until they see the painful punishment,

And it shall come to them all of a sudden, while they shall not perceive".<sup>4</sup>

The text of the Qur'ān was, therefore, clear for Arabic speakers contemporary to Mahoma, Muḥammad. However, very soon, with the extension of the Islamic message outside Arab territory, starting with Persia, the problem of translation became very important. The Koranic message was in Arabic, but was directed at millions of men and women who did not know that language. Today, 80% of Muslims in the world are not Arabic speakers, starting with the six most populated Muslim states: Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Turkey. This message had to be transmitted in other languages, that of each man, as is logical and also as Allāh, God says, in the Qur'ān (Q.14:4):

"And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly;"<sup>5</sup>

From this tension between the priority of the Arabic text of the Qur'ān in the revelatory tongue and the need for translations or "versions of the contents" of the Qur'ān the doctrine and practice of translating "the sense, or content" of the Qur'ān was born, while reserving the original Arabic text exclusively for individual and collective liturgy, and for legal and theological discussions.<sup>6</sup> Study by Turkish investigators in 1980 had already found 2,672 translations of the Qur'ān in 65 languages.<sup>7</sup> Now there is at least one more: Catalan.

In this short introduction to the subject of Catalan translations of the Qur'ān we will interpret "Catalan" in three aspects:

- a. Translations into Catalan
- b. Translations published in Catalonia
- c. Translations by Catalan translators.

Thus the social and cultural subject range in Catalonia can best be understood. This is what many people presenting studies on the history of translations have done: they have tried to present the texts of these translations in their historical and social context.<sup>8</sup> We will place the necessary academic bibliographical references into notes, to justify these affirmations and so the reader can widen their knowledge on these subjects.

### *Translations into Catalan*

The translations of the Qur'ān are inserted into a long translation history of this book, from the Arabic original to many other languages. It is a subject on which there is a lot of material, but there are still many in-depth studies to do, especially in comparative analysis of translation influences.<sup>9</sup>

The first known translations of the Qur'ān into Catalan were made from the Latin versions, the fundamental language of culture in western Europe in the Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> The first and best known is attributed principally to the Briton Robert Ketenensis and to the Balcan Hermannus Dalmata, by the so-called "School (or Schools) of Translators" of Toledo, in a climate of western crusade from the mid-twelve century to the beginning of the thirteenth. They are part of a significant European cultural movement promoted by the first Benedictine archbishops of Toledo, a Muslim city conquered in 1085, and for the visit to Spanish soil by the Benedictine abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, in 1141. These translations of Arab works were made with some co-operation between Muslims, Christians and Jews, according to the nature of the work. Spanish writers and writers from other European countries participated. The cultural motivations and the translation techniques of these groups linked to Toledo are what guided the first two Latin translations of the Qur'ān.

The first translation into Latin, around 1143, had a significant circulation around western Europe, until being printed in 1543, by Theodor Bibliander (Bucher), at Basle. This edition had been recommended by Martin Luther, in a religious and political context of Germanic, politico-religious



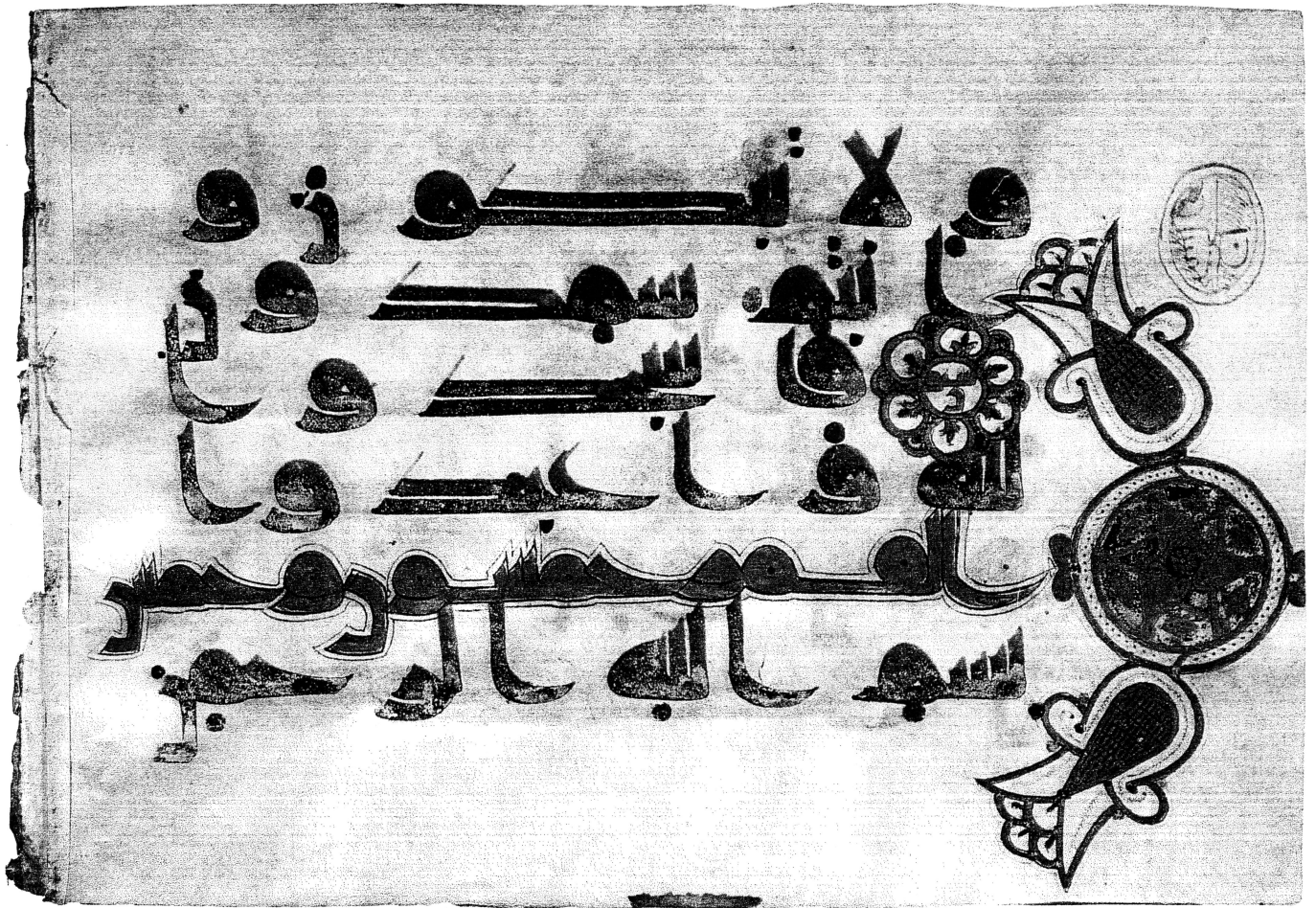
Christian catechism in Arabic within the "Vocabulario Español-árabe" (Spanish-Arab Vocabulary) by the Catalan Arabist Fra. Jaume Prats. Damascus 1836. Library of the Universitat de Barcelona.

fighting and Muslim attacks by the Turkish Ottoman empire on the Balkans and the central European valleys of the Danube (Hungria and Austria). The manuscript version, with different variants, was fairly well circulated in the four centuries before printing the text. The first printed, partial, translation of the Qur'an, in English, is from 1515, 65 years after the invention of the printing press.<sup>11</sup> The second translation is by canon Mark of Toledo, around 1184. It was more literal, but did not achieve the significance and circulation of the first, which is surely the text the Catalan translators used, at the end of the fourteenth and possibly also at the beginning of the sixteenth.

From these full translations of the Qur'an, we can uncover partial quotations more or less directly from the Koranic

text by Christian authors, that come from these translations or through other channels, still insufficiently studied, within the translation movement of diverse Arabic texts into Latin and Romance languages. Little has been done in this investigative line, in Catalan texts and in Latin by authors who have written on (or rather, against) Islam, such as Ramon Martí, Ramon Llull, Francesc Eiximenis and others.<sup>12</sup> The translations of the Qur'an could also be studied from certain Portuguese sources, which appear to come from Catalan originals, such as the *Livro da Corte Enperial* [Book of the Imperial Court] (14<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>13</sup> In this cultural, theological and religious climate, all the European medieval societies form a block with highly interrelated local extensions, among them, Catalan.

It is this very context within which translation of the Qur'an into Catalan must be placed, carried out in Palma de Mallorca and also documented in Perpignan, at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> It has been said there are two translations,

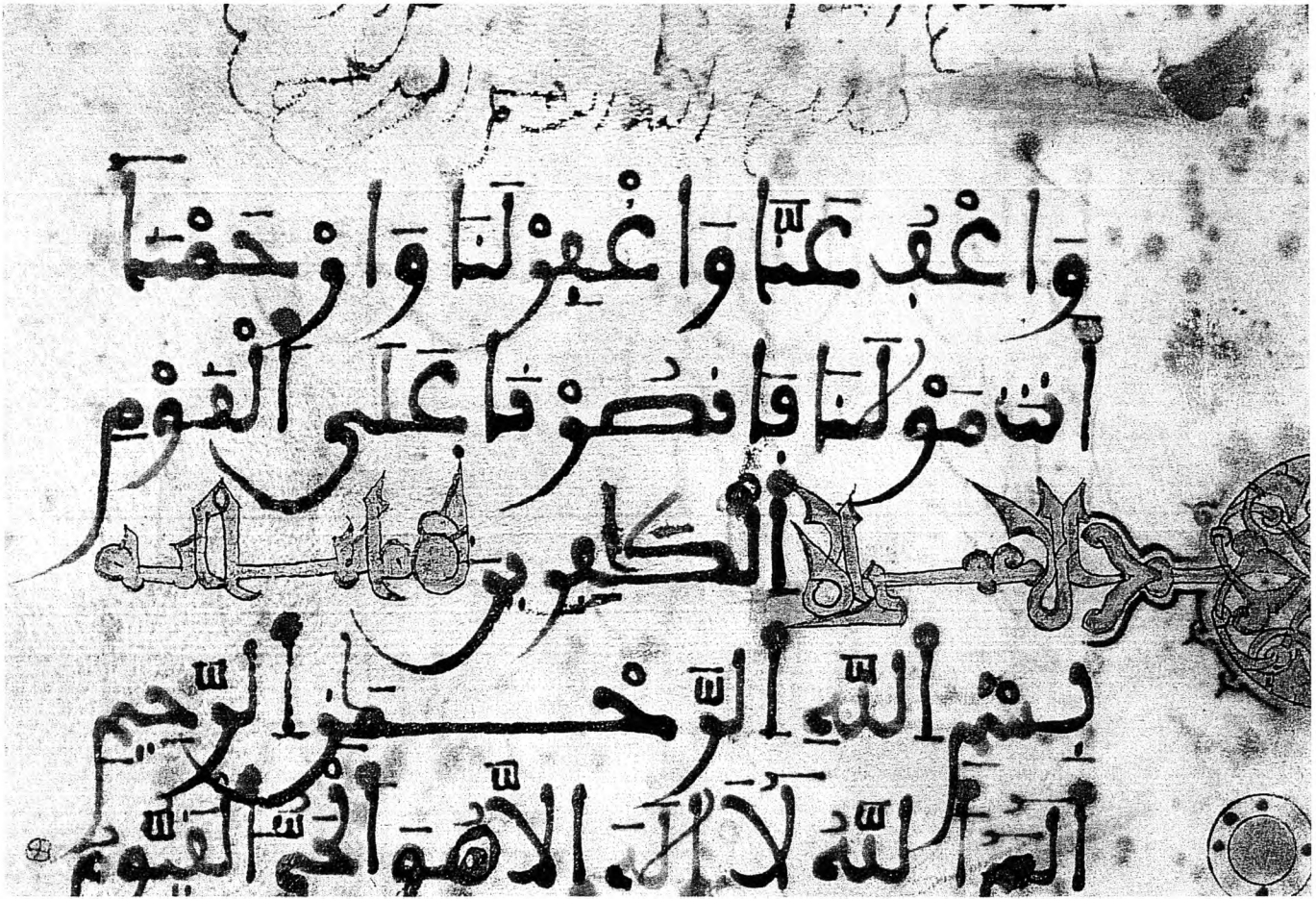


Page of a Qur'an in Cupbic script on vellum. Qayrauan, 9<sup>th</sup> century. Bibliothèque Nationale, Tunis.

but the documentation indicates the possibility that there is only one, and that the other, documented in the same Franciscan environs of the ex-kingdom of Mallorques, at Perpignan, is merely a copy. Furthermore, the first translation, a highly expensive one, was ordered by king Peter. This translation from Latin, probably from the first Toledan version mentioned above (*"reduit del llatí en romans"*, [transcribed from Latin into Romance] ordered and paid for by king Peter IV of Aragon (III, *el del Punyalet [he of the small dagger]*), was translated by the Mallorcan Franciscan Francesc Pons Saclota, in 1381.<sup>15</sup> Not even a fragment remains. However, this is a further proof of the interest of the Christian political and ecclesiastical authorities in the sacred

book of the Muslims, even if only to negate it. It also shows an interest in having it in Catalan, not only in ecclesiastical Latin, so that educated people could read this fundamental text of the Muslims (*"the Qur'an of the Moors"*, as the royal documentation states). So, it is not unusual for the Qur'an to be found in the king's library<sup>16</sup> nor for him to leave another copy, in Castilian, to his widowed queen Margarida, in 1410,<sup>17</sup> nor that a Barcelona bookseller should have three copies in his book store, in 1524, probably in Latin and in manuscript, because the aforesaid first printed Latin edition of 1543<sup>18</sup> had still not appeared.

Concurrent to this fashion for translation by Christian ecclesiastics, in the midst of military crusades against Muslim countries or states, from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards in the East and the Iberian peninsular, translations made by Mus-



Page of a Qur'an in Magribine script with the title of the sura in Cufic. 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ms. 2336. Biblioteca de Catalunya.

lms began to appear, by residents of Christian societies in significant population groups, who officially lived under the Muslim statute with the recognized right to free religious practice and to live in their own communities or aljames. These were the “mudèjars”, named in the Catalan documentation of the time “Moors” or “Saracens” of the king.<sup>19</sup> They became continually more proficient in Christian languages.

These groups, social minorities, even if not always numerically, remained for five centuries – half a millenium – living within the Hispanic Christian societies of the peninsular – until the general expulsion of the Moors, between

1609 and 1614, with a small group of Moors, or crypto-Muslims, hidden in Granada until 1730<sup>20</sup> – and they constitute the oldest and most continuous precedent, until now, of the Muslim presence in western Europe.<sup>21</sup>

These Muslims in Hispanic societies lived in different linguistic, historical and religious situations for almost six centuries during which they are documented as groups. However, halfway through the fifteenth century, a significant Muslim personality, the mufti of Castile and leader of the Muslim community of Segovia, Yça of Jebir or Gidelli,<sup>22</sup> describes in a text the three elements that allow Hispanic Muslims to have religious authorisation to express the content of their faith in any language of the societies in which they live, and not only in Arabic like their Arabic-speaking ancestors.<sup>23</sup> At the start of Yça of Jebir's book, *Suma de los*

*principales mandamientos y devedamientos of la Ley y Sunna* [Sum of the principal commandments and prohibitions of the Law and Sunna], 1462, he justifies the religious – but not the liturgical – use, obviously, of these translations for three reasons:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Because many Muslims do not understand Arabic and they must be taught the Islamic religion in the language they understand (this is the case in Castile, but probably in the valleys of the Ebre as well).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Because many Christians in the societies in which Muslims lived were interested in learning about Islam (this was the case of cardinal Juan of Segovia and of the lord of Sumacarcer, in the Ribera of the Xuquer, who requested they be taught Muslim beliefs, or the “laws of the Moors”).
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Because Yça of Jebir had seen in the Orient that many Muslims wrote in aljamiadic tongues – that is, in non-Arabic tongues – especially the Ottoman Turks, the emerging Islamic power that had just conquered Constantinople/Bizantium (1453), who wrote on Islamic subjects and who even had versions of the Qur’ân in Turkish. Likewise, Hispanic Muslims could do so in their languages.<sup>24</sup>

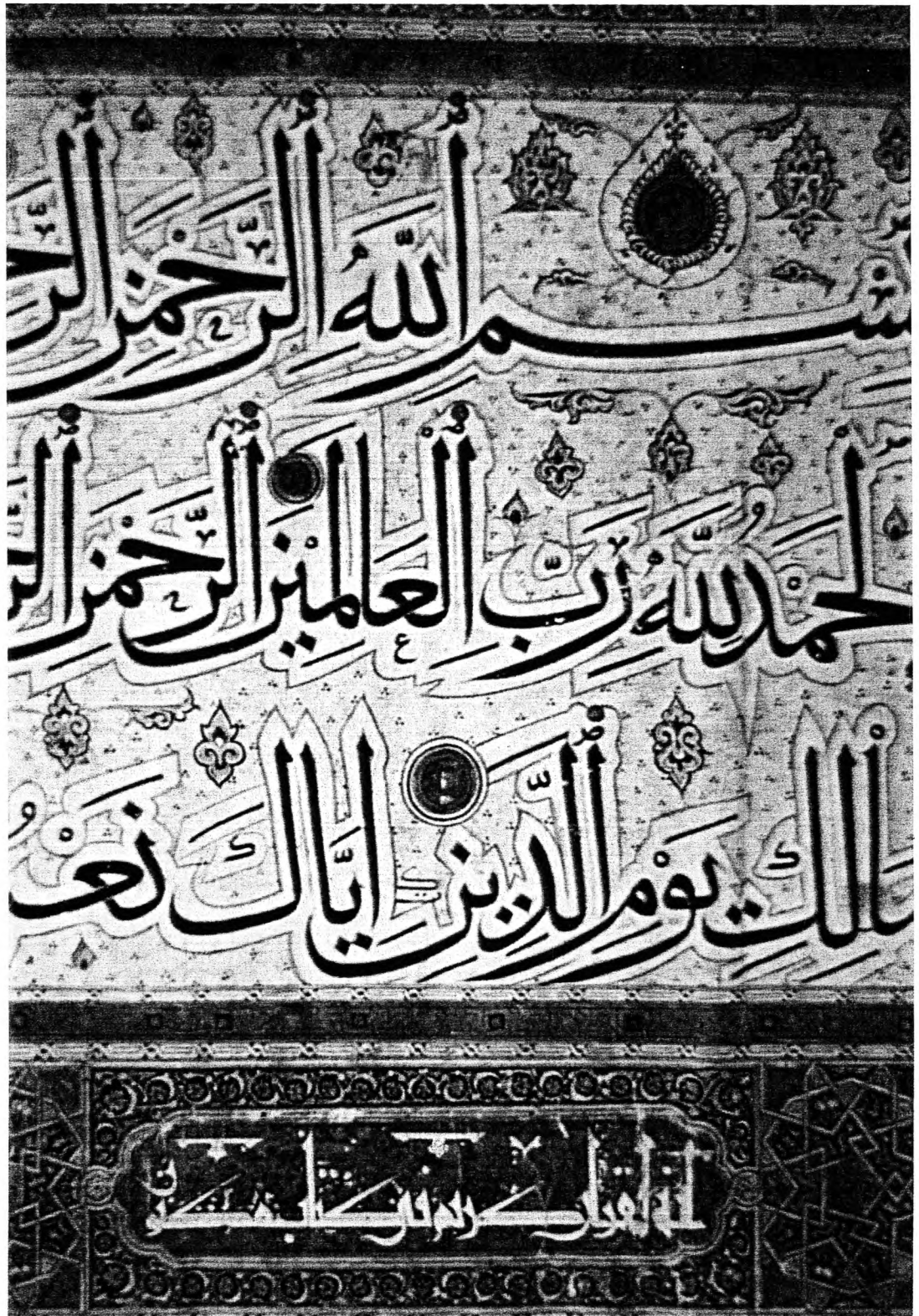
In the territories of the Crown of Aragon this situation of mudejarism started at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but in territory which is now Catalan, or Catalan-speaking, so far no document has been found written directly by Muslims on religious themes in this language until the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, very few years after Yça of Jebir’s book. There are only two cases of religious translation documented in Catalan, mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>.

The first is the *Llibre de la Çuna e Xara dels Moros*, written by the holder of the recently created lordship of Sumacarcer, who had many Muslim subjects.<sup>25</sup> Curiously, this book, aimed at Christians, which presents the principal public precepts of Islam and the Christian laws that regulate them, has no text from the Qur’ân in Catalan. It is an exceptional text, unique in the Valencian tongue, in which the Muslims of these Christian lands express their Islamic,

basically Koranic, beliefs, in the Catalan language, but without any quote or translation from their sacred book.<sup>26</sup>

More widely circulated in Catalan, but more centred on the Qur’ân, is what is known of a possible translation into Catalan, also from Valencian lands, by Joan Andreu, alfaqui of Xativa, who converted to Christianity and became a Christian priest. He worked on conversion of Muslims at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the inquisitor of Granada, Martin Garcia, afterwards bishop of Barcelona and of Osca. His polemic anti-Muslim book, called *Confusión de la Secta Mahometana y del Alcorân* [Confusion of the Mahometan Sect and of the Koran] (Valencia, 1515) was very successful, in Latin, in Castilian, in Italian, in French and in German. Koranic quotes are also found in sermons published in Latin by the bishop Martin Garcia, which very probably come from the Xativa diocese. However, it is very plausible that Joan Andreu found it initially easier to translate the Qur’ân into the Valencian tongue than into Latin or Castilian. The controversy with the Muslims demanded more accurate translations of the Qur’ân than those of the Latin medieval texts. New cultural currents in Romance languages during the European Renaissance and a demand for faithfulness to the Arabic text, fundamental for arguing with the Muslims demanded new translations into the Romance languages that were better known all the time. However, this is a subject that must be further studied.<sup>27</sup>

Neither has the historical and historiographical relationship between these Islamic environments been studied sufficiently – or the relationship to the anti-Islamists, to the Inquisition, or to the Spanish court – in one edition of a manuscript in Castilian, dated at 1606 and published recently in Barcelona.<sup>28</sup> This is not the appropriate place to show the scientific deficiencies of this publication and especially of its presentation. It is really an exceptional text, and very significant, among the many that are known as the “Literature of Mudejars and *Moriscos*” (Yçe of Gebir, Mancebo of Arevalo, Alonso of Castillo, Miguel of Luna, *Evangelio de Bernabe Apostle*, Muḥammad Rabadan and the writers in exile such as Al-Hàgari Bejarano, in Morocco and in Egypt, and Ibrahim Taybili, in Tunisia). So it has been seen by the previous scholars preparing the publica-



*Detail of a page of the  
Egyptian Qur'ān  
written in muhaqqah  
script. Egyptian  
Museum, Cairo.*



tion, under hardships described in this book, with the important contributions and the correct divergences shown in different publications, from the Dutch writer G. Wiegers and his doctoral thesis (published in 1991 and 1994)<sup>29</sup> and the North-American C. Lopez-Morillas (from 1982 until 1999, with other works in print).<sup>30</sup>

Later, for the period from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, no translation text of the Qur'an into Catalan had been found, or studied. In contrast, Catalan-speakers could study the sacred book of the Muslims in versions published in other European languages, especially those translated directly from Arabic, starting with the French version of Sieur André de Ryer, Lord of Malezair, a trader and diplomat resident in Alexandria (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1647; 28 editions and translations known, up until 1775).<sup>31</sup> Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, some of the first versions in Castilian, translated from French, were published in Catalonia.<sup>32</sup> It was a time of increasing hope and curiosity in the history of religions, in Hispanic societies as well, in spite of certain polemic Catholic, anti-Islamic texts, as shown in the title of Benito de Murguiondo and Ugartondo's *Alcorán, traducido fielmente al español, anotado y refutado, según el dogma, la doctrina santa y la moral perfecta de la Santa Religión Católica Apostólica Romana, única verdadera [Qur'an, translated faithfully into Spanish, annotated and refuted, according to dogma, the holy doctrine and the perfect moral of the Holy Roman Apostolic Catholic Religion, the only true one]*.<sup>33</sup>

Then, in Catalonia, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of the first and best known modern versions of the Qur'an translated directly from Arabic into Castilian<sup>34</sup> were published.

However, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the renaissance in the educated use of the Catalan language, the Qur'an began to be translated into this language. The first translation appears to be that of the Mallorcan J. Sureda Blanes, who lived for some time in Morocco and who started the translation with the help of a Moroccan expert. We do not know if he finished the complete translation of the Qur'an or whether the manuscript survives, because

he only published one small article in Barcelona, of a very interesting nature.<sup>35</sup>

Then late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1988) and with the freedom for post-Francoist religious propaganda, a small, "catechetical" presentation opuscle on Islam was published in Catalan, by an international association of Pakistani Muslim origin, the Ahmadiya, within a programme of worldwide scope on the translation and circulation of the Qur'an in 150 languages, taken from Urdu and English.<sup>36</sup> They also wanted to present it in Euskadi or Basque.<sup>37</sup>

Catalan translations of partial quotes from the Qur'an have been uncovered, generally of translations from Castilian and other languages, in publications on Islam in Catalan.<sup>38</sup>

In 2001, the first known translation, simple and direct, of the Qur'an from the Arabic into Catalan, was published: *The Qur'an...i cinc estudis Koranics*.<sup>39</sup> The general introduction explained some of the characteristics of this translation, directed principally at an educated Catalan-speaking public and not so much at the Arabists and Muslims, who have direct access to the original text, even though they can take advantage of the five academic studies. The objective of this version is also to bring out the maximum possible amount of content of the message from the Arabic text while not necessarily worrying about its syntax where this is an obstacle to the semantic comprehension or for linguistic correction in Catalan. Also the maximum amount of clarity and accuracy was aimed for, but without making the text too "Christian" or "philosophical" where it is not. A literary style has been aimed for, between poetic prose and free verse, that expresses the musicality of the Qur'an for Arabs and Muslims, within a knowledgeable, meditative and prophetic style, resembling the religious attitudes with which Catalans can read the knowledgeable and prophetic books of the Christian bible.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century starts, then, in Catalonia with a first translation of the Arabic into Catalan,<sup>40</sup> with a translation foreseen into Castilian by the Catalan authors,<sup>41</sup> in a modern edition, even though not deeply studied, of a manuscript in Castilian,<sup>42</sup> and with new editions of translations into Castilian.<sup>43</sup>

### *Translations published in Catalonia*

In 2001 I wrote, after a book presentation of around 50 modern translations (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries) of the Qur'an into Catalan, Portuguese and Castilian:

"Not all modern translations can boast the same authority, either for Muslims, or in a university setting, or for the general public. At least in regard to Spanish editions, a general valuation would demand a socio-bibliographic survey and not just a personal analysis. According to certain socio-bibliographic criteria, the survey would have to value the respective importance of these translations following at least these three parameters:

1. Quotes from academic works.
2. Re-editions and re-printings, with the print run.
3. Acceptance by the general reading public, classified according to social groups (for example, Spanish-speaking or foreign Muslims, educated Catalan readers interested in the history of religion, Arabists who need to have this book to hand, even though they understand the Arabic original, etc.).

According to these criteria and, even if slightly subjectively, it appears that the most significant versions in university circles are those of Vernet and Cortés. In Muslim circles, the most valued translations are those of Cortés (in America and Shiite Iran) and the Argentinian Muslims. Other Muslim translations are little circulated outside the associations which publish them (Machordom, Ahmadiya, etc.). Melara's translation, the product of more than 15 years of work, seems to have a constantly improving circulation and acceptance, for the manner in which it has been done and for its clarity, of concept, of style and of typography. Cansinos Assens' translation, little quoted by academics, for its insufficiencies and also possibly because it is a pocket edition, is good and has an interesting introduction, more literary than academic. It has gone through many editions. For our translation into Catalan the translations of Cortés, Melara and Vernet have been singularly useful, with the vocabulary gathered by Kassis and Kobberwig".<sup>44</sup>

This perspective, possibly valid in Catalonia generally, now poses the problem of hierarchy of translations, according to publishing house and public. In any case, Vernet's numerous editions, through different publishers, and Cortés's, expensive, but much improved by the bilingual Arabic-Castilian text and a good introduction, in Herder, are texts published in Catalonia.

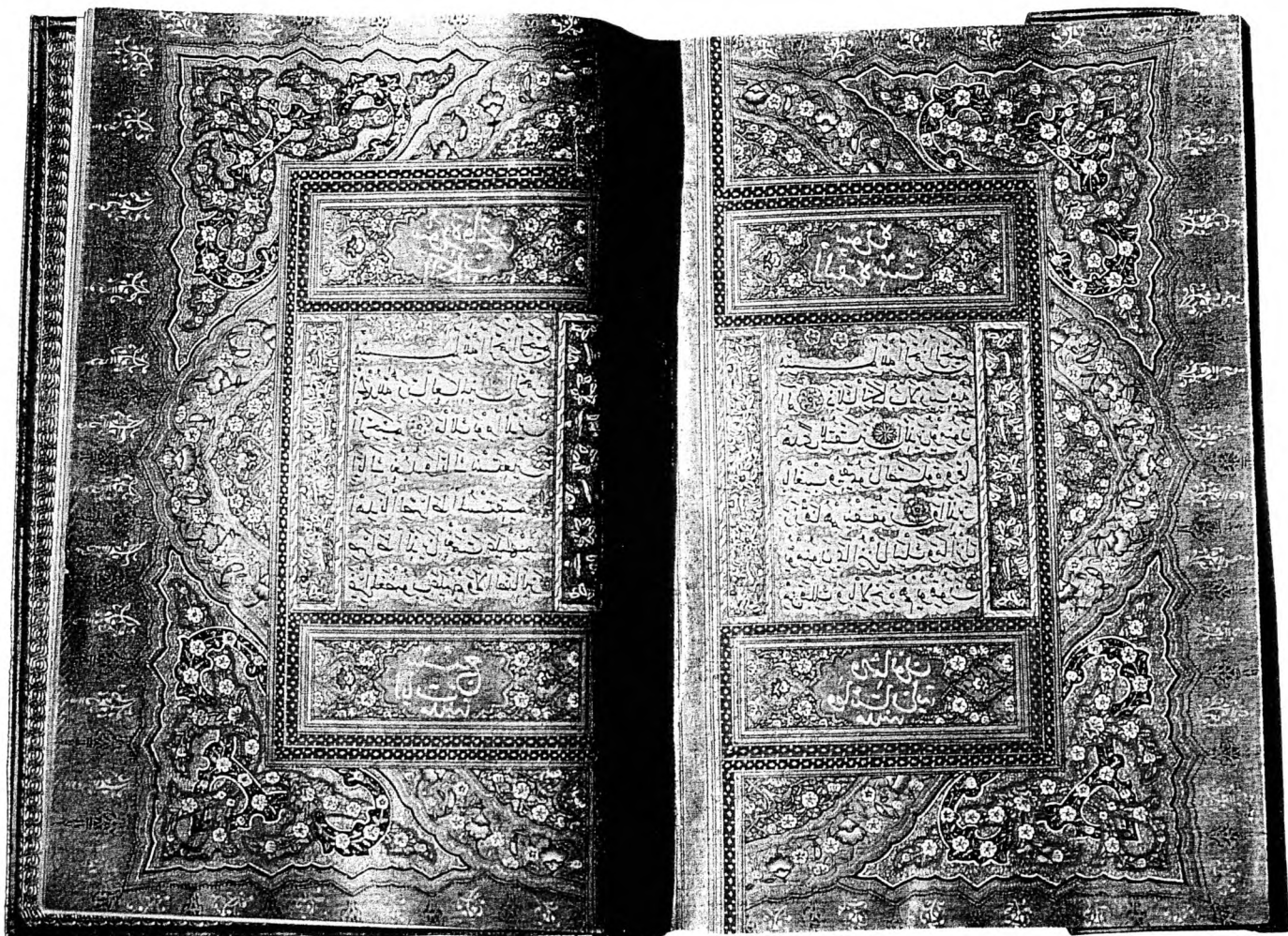
Also primarily in Catalonia, research papers on translations of the Qur'an into Castilian and the Aragonese dialect by Hispanic Muslims, around the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Mudejars and *Moriscos*) have been published. These are generally articles related to academic works directed by the professor Joan Vernet: thesis (Teresa Losada) and mini-thesis (Josep Maria Ribera Florit, Maria Luisa Moraleda, C. López Lillo, Maria Victoria Viscasillas and the aforesaid work of Lluís Roqué Figuls) or works by other members of his Department of Barcelona (Maria José Hermosilla Llisterra).

### *Translations by Catalan translators*

Finally, a highly important element of any translation and particularly of translations of the Qur'an, from Arabic into Catalan, is the Catalan nature of the translators. This does not mean the geographic origin of their birth but their relationship to Catalan language and culture.

In effect, in any translation, knowledge of the target language is equally if not more important than the knowledge the translator may have of the source text language, Arabic in this case. In fact, in international bodies the general rule is to translate only into the mother tongue and not the inverse.

This rule does not appear to be generally or sufficiently appreciated in the case of the Qur'an. Many Muslims and Arabic-speakers demand a thorough knowledge of Koranic Arabic by translators, which is evidently necessary, while they often underestimate the level of target language needed, in which the content of the Qur'an must be expressed. Otherwise, they get stuck on faithfulness to the syntactic or stylistic form of the original Arabic rather than concentrat-



*Profusely decorated Syrian Qur'ān. 18<sup>th</sup> century. Umayyad Library, Damascus.*

ing on clarity of the original concepts in the target language, or their level of proficiency, correctness, or their literary style. In the 60s and speaking of Castilian, I had problems with some good Muslims of Arabic origin who wanted a good translation of the Qur'ān and were surprised that I suggested that the final translator of the Qur'ān should be a good Castilian writer, even though he did not know Arabic (my proposal was to offer this job to a professor from the University of Barcelona, José María Valverde, a poet and a magnificent translator of Greek and English classics).

For this reason, in this chapter on Catalan translations of the Qur'ān the specific problem of translators into Catalan should be noted, albeit briefly.

In the few examples of modern translations known, it is evident that the general situation of official marginalization of the Catalan language in teaching and in Spanish society has been the principal cause of there being few translations of the Qur'ān into Catalan, in comparison with languages that obviously have many more readers, but also more official support, such as Castilian, or Portuguese.<sup>45</sup> As well as this, bilingual Catalan-speakers, such as Joan Vernet, have always translated the Qur'ān into Castilian.<sup>46</sup>

The type and means of Arabic study could also be looked at, especially Koranic Arabic, by those who have translated the Qur'ān, from its original Arabic into Catalan and other Romance languages. It is a difficult topic to explain.

In the case of the first direct translation into Catalan, always with the possibility of comparing translations into

other European languages, collaboration between the academic Catalan-speaker J. Sureda Blanes and an anonymous Moroccan academic supplemented the linguistic deficiencies of each.<sup>47</sup> This was also the solution to the first translations from Arabic into Castilian made in Argentina in the middle and late 20<sup>th</sup> century, those by Rahhal – Peralta (1945),<sup>48</sup> Castellanos – Abboud (1953),<sup>49</sup> Carrillo – Ata-Ilahi (1988)<sup>50</sup> or the Mexican group led by Faruqi (1986).<sup>51</sup> This is also what we have done by bringing together an Arabist and Islamologist (Epalza), who did not know written and literary Catalan well, and specialists in Catalan language and literature (Forcadell i Perujo).<sup>52</sup> This group collaboration definitely has its precedent in the first direct translation of the Qur’ān in Europe, in Toledo in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, from Arabic into Latin<sup>53</sup> and is even the aspiration of an excellent translator from Arabic into French, professor Jacques Berque.<sup>54</sup> The translation of the leaflet of Muslim religious propaganda *Versicles escollits... [Selected Verses...]* (1988) was taken from the English, by a Catalan doctor of languages.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, the problems of the language, translation or version of the Qur’ān pose significant religious and ideological problems, as can be seen in the history of translations and in their contexts, merely initiated by Arias and by Epalza. These are the problems of personal belief or non-belief of the translator, which often come up in the translating methodology, in spite of any desire for a “neutral” position in so many polemical situations in the history of the Qur’ān.

In matters regarding translations into Catalan, it can be affirmed that the Sureda Blanes translation appears to have stemmed from a distinctly European curiosity towards a text so significant to humanity. That of the leaflet *Versicles escollits...* corresponds to the preferred form of propagation of the Islamic faith of the Ahmadiya group of Islam, coming from Cashmir, from Pakistan and from India. The curiosities originating from Vernet’s translation stem from his university studies, as he has recently summarized.<sup>56</sup> That of Epalza – Forcadell – Perujo is also very explicit in his general introduction: “Both this translation and my studies have a cultural, university and academic objective, that of mak-

ing known the sacred book of Islam, not for propagandistic purposes, or for religious circulation, as legitimate as these may be. We can identify with the first non-Muslim person to translate the Qur’an directly from Arabic into Castilian, Rafael Cansinos Assens, who in 1951, declared: “we must make it clear, in precise terms, while trying to avoid inciting the scorn of those who believe this book to be a revelation, that our intention in translating it does not correspond to any apologist objective in this sense but to purely cultural motives, such as those which would have induced us to translate the Vedas, Zend-Avesta, or any other great religious work like those which have guided more or less significant fractions of Humanity”.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This brief presentation of the texts and of the contexts of the Catalan translations of the Qur’ān aims to be a step forward in these studies, that will definitely help in understanding the knowledge that Catalan society has of the “Koranic phenomenon” (Màlek Bennabi) and will aid in preparing new steps to comprehension, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## NOTES

1. See a justification of the use of both names in Catalan, in Mikel de Epalza (with the collaboration of Josep Forcadell and Joan M. Perujo), *L’Alcorà. Traducció de l’àrab al català, introducció a la lectura i cinc estudis alcorànics*, Proa, Barcelona, 2001, in chapter 1.5 “Sobre la dualitat of noms referits al profeta of Islam: Mahoma, Muhàmmad”, pp. 1008-1013. Also see the opinion of Abdullah Bartolls Rius, “¿Mahoma o Muḥammad?”, in the two pages of [www.webislam.com/99/tx\_99\_54.html], where he believes the name “Mahoma” has its origins in the identification of the Islamic prophet with Maozim, from the vision of the Biblical prophet Daniel (Dan.8:1-27), an identification unearthed by the Christian writer from Muslim Cordova, Àlvarus, in his *Iudiculus luminosus*. There are other interpretations, more philological, to solve the uncertainties on the origin of “Mahoma” (“Mafumet”, in old Catalan).
2. See a general presentation of Muslim religion, with its principal, doctrinal and social aspects, in M. de Epalza (dir.), *L’Islam d’avui, de demà i de sempre*, Centre d’Estudis de Temes Contemporanis – Fundació Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona, 1994.
3. M. de Epalza, *L’Alcorà...i cinc estudis*, p. 945.
4. M. de Epalza, *L’Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, p. 548.
5. M. de Epalza, *L’Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, p. 375.

6. See the study by M. de Epalza, *L'Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, study 3. "Inimitabilitat de l'Alcorà. Valor de les traduccions segons els teòlegs musulmans".
7. Ismet Binark – Halit Eren, *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Printed Translations 1515-1980*, O. I. S. Research Centre of Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul, 1986.
8. Specifically see the introduction by Ekmeleddine Ihsanoglu, "Introduction to the History of Translating the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an", en I. Binark – H. Eren, o. c., XVII-LVI; chapter "I. La traduction du Kur'an", in the article "al-Kur'an", *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, E. J. Brill, Leiden – Paris, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1981, 1986, V, 431-435; the studies of M. de Epalza, *L'Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, "3.3 Pràctica musulmana: història de les traduccions", "4. Traduccions hispàniques de l'Alcorà", pp. 1054-1095.
9. In the introductory studies on the history of translations of the Qur'an already mentioned in the previous note we can add the comparative studies of translations in Romance languages by Consuelo López Morillas, *The Qur'an in Sixteenth Century Spain: Six Morisco Versions of Sûra 79*, Tamesis Books Limited, London, 1980; by Juan Pablo Arias, "Traductor, confeso y mártir: ocho versiones del Corán en español", in Esther Morillas – J. P. Arias (eds.), *El papel del traductor*, Colegio de España, Salamanca, 1997, 371-386; by M. de Epalza, "Exemples de comparació entre traduccions hispàniques" and "Principis d'aquesta traducció alcorànica de l'àrab al català", o. c., 1083-1201, and monographic works such as the interesting doctoral thesis, not yet published, by Mohammed Barrada, *Traducciones del Alcorán: lingüística y estilística*, Autonomous University of Madrid, Department of Spanish Philology, 2000, directed by Dr. Pedro Martínez Montávez.
10. See M. de Epalza, o. c., pp. 1059-1062. General panorama in Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh, 1960, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. extended, Oxford, 1993.
11. See I. Binark – H. Eren, o. c., pp. XXXIV and 152.
12. See works by the professor of the University of Toulouse of Languedoc Dominique Urvoy, from his thesis *Penser Islam. Les présupposés islamiques de l'Art de Lull*, J. Vrin, Paris, 1980, that has still not been translated into Catalan. Koranic roots have not been so fully investigated in monographic works as in that just published by M. de Epalza, "Un logos cristià enfront de l'Islam: Eiximenis escrivint sobre Mahoma", *Miscel·lània Joan Fuster. Estudis de llengua i literatura*, Montserrat, 1990, 59-75, or the excellent research by Josep Hernando Delgado, "Le de Seta Machometi du cod. 46 d'Osma: oeuvre de Ramon Martí", *Cahiers de Franjeux*, Toulouse of Languedoc, 18, 1983, 351-371; ID., "Ramon Martí, de seta Machometi, de origine, progressu et fine Machometi et Quadruplex reprobatione prophetiae eius", *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Medievalia*, Barcelona, 4, 1983, 9-63; ID., "De nuevo sobre la obra antiislámica atribuida a Ramón Martí, dominico catalán del siglo XIII", *Sbarq Al-Andalus. Estudios Árabes*, Alacant, 8, 1991, 97-108; and Eulàlia Duran, "Una refutació valenciana de l'Islam (15<sup>th</sup> century)", *Boletín de la Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura*, Castelló de la Plana, XXIV/1, 1998, 141-160.
13. See Adel Sidarus, "Le Litro da Corte Enperial, entre l'apologétique lullienne et l'expansion catalane au XIVe siècle", in *Diálogo filosófico-religioso entre cristianismo, judaísmo e islamismo durante la edad media en la península Ibérica*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1994, 131-172, and the bibliographic works of ID., "Nota sobre as traduções do Corão em língua portuguesa", *Qurtuba*, Cordova, 4, 1999, 191-192; 5, 2000, 277-280.
14. See corrections to certain affirmations by M. de Epalza, *L'Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, pp. 1063-1064, in ID., "Alguns antecedents islamocristians de la primera traducció completa de l'Alcorà al català (Barcelona, 2001)", *Homage to Father Miquel Batllori, Abbot of Montserrat*, vol. I, in print.
15. See the original documentation on this matter in Antoni Rubió i Lluch, *Documents per l'història de la cultura mig-eva*, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona, 1908, I, 296, 305, 322; 1921, II, 261.
16. See Josep M. Miret i Sans, "Llibres i Joies del rei Martí no inventariats en 1410 per la Reina Margarida. Venda de llibres del rei Martí en 1421", *Revista de la Asociación Histórica y Arqueológica de Barcelona*, Barcelona, VI, 1910, pp. 199, 215.
17. See J. Massó Torrents, "Inventari dels béns mobles del rei Martí d'Aragó", *Revue Hispanique*, París, XII, p. 424 (reprinting, New York, 1962); "...another book called *Mafumet* in Castilian...which begins in vermilion "Este libro es clamado" and in black "Al primer capitulo" and finishes "E mes auant Amen".
18. See Josep M. Madurell Marimón, *Documentos para la historia de la imprenta y librería en Barcelona 1474-1553*, Guild of publishers, booksellers and teachers in print, Barcelona, 1955, p. 688.
19. See the preceding chapter of this catalogue, by Pasqual Ortega, "Mudèjars, moriscos, conversos".
20. See section "2.6. Los últimos emigrantes moriscos al Magreb (siglo XVIII)", in M. de Epalza, "Estructuras de acogida de los moriscos emigrantes de España en el Magreb (siglos XIII al XVIII)", *Alternativas. Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, Alacant, 4, 1996, 35-58 (pàgs. 49-53).
21. See also the synthesis by M. de Epalza, *Los moriscos antes y después de la expulsión*, MAPFRE, Madrid, 1992, 1994, 1997, and ID. (coord.), *L'expulsió dels moriscos. Conseqüències en el món islàmic i en el món cristià. Congrés internacional. 380è aniversari de l'expulsió dels moriscos (1990: Sant Carles de la Ràpita)*, Government of Catalonia. Department of Culture, Barcelona, 1994, 418 pp.
22. 'Isà Ibn al-Ġābir aš-Šādīlī (generally transcribed Yça of Jebir, "Jesús, son of the expert in resetting bones", or Yça Gidelli, "Jesús, of the xadhilī brotherhood"...), according to M. de Epalza, *L'Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, p. 1058.
23. See Gerard Wieggers, *Yça Gidelli (fl. 1450) His Antecedents and Successors. A Historical Study of Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado*, Leiden, 1992, and Darío Cabanelas, *Juan de Segovia y el problema islámico*, Universidad de Madrid, Madrid, 1952, and "Juan de Segovia y el primer Alcorán trilingüe", *Al-Andalus*, Madrid, 14, 1949, 149-173.
24. See M. de Epalza, o. c., 1066-1067. On the influence of the Turkish model on the translations of the Qur'an into Hispanic languages, M. de Epalza, "El escritor Ybrahim Taybili y los escritores musulmanes aragoneses", in Luis F. Bernabé Pons, *El Cántico Islámico del morisco hispanotunecino Taybili*, Institución Fernando el Católico, Saragossa, 1988, 5-26.
25. Text discovered and prepared by professor Dr. Vicent Pons Alós and published by Dr. Carme Barceló Torres, *Un tratado catalán medieval de derecho islámico: el Libro de la Cuna e Sara dels Moros*, University of Córdoba, Córdoba, 1989.
26. See the presentation of this problem and the International Conference on "La Voz de Mudéjares y Moriscos", by María Jesús Rubiera Mata (dir.), *Sbarq Al-Andalus. Estudios Mudéjares y Moriscos*, Alicante, 12, 1995, 5-612.
27. See bibliography and points of view, still very deficient, in M. de Epalza, o. c., 1058-1059, 1065, 1071-1072, 1076, 1204, 1233-1234.
28. *Alcorán. Traducción castellana de un morisco anónimo del año 1606*, Introduction by Joan Vernet Ginés. Transcription by Lluís Roqué Figuls, Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres – National University of Distance Learning, Barcelona, 2001.

29. Gerard Wiegers, *Yça Gidelli (fl. 1450), his antecedents and successors. A historical study of Islamic literature in Spanish and Aljamiado*, Leiden, 1991 [original in Dutch, 1986], Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1994.
30. Dr. López-Morillas wrote in 1999: "This manuscript, in brief, though it comes at the end of several generations of Mudejar and Morisco versions of the Qur'an, differs from these in its completeness, its writing system, and its treatment of exegetical material, and therefore does not have an obvious connection to any earlier models... This very interesting speculation [de Wiegers] calls for an attempt at confirmation – one requiring a complete edition and study of the manuscript, in which I am at present engaged... I shall propose some lines of inquiry into these issues" ("Lost and Found? Yça of Segovia and the Qur'an among the Mudejars and Moriscos"), *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Oxford, 10/3, setembre 1999, 277-292 (p. 278) and in two later publications, in Puerto Rico and Teruel.
31. See I. Binark – H. Eren, o. c., 180-185, and M. de Epalza, o. c., 1076-1077.
32. Such as those of Vicente Ortiz de la Puebla (1972) and Joaquín García Bravo (1907), according to M. de Epalza, o. c., 1078-1079. See the following section "b. Translations published in Catalonia".
33. Madrid, 1875.
34. See the numerous editions of Joan Vernet, from 1953, and of Julio Cortés, from 1986, en M. de Epalza, o. c., pp. 1083, 1212, 1243, and the following section "b. Translations published in Catalonia".
35. "L'Alcorà a Catalunya. "Fragment del pròleg d'una traducció catalana inèdita", *La Revista*, Barcelona, year VII, no.152, August 1921, 243-244. My thanks to Francesc Espinet and to Mercè Sola, who showed it to me.
36. *Versicles escollits del Sant Coran. Selected verses of the Holy Quran in Catalan*, edit. Islam Internacional Publications Ltd., Tilford (United Kingdom), 1988, 53 pp. This was presented in a notice in the Catalan Catholic magazine *Serra d'Or*, no. 357, September 1989, p. 69, and in M. de Epalza, o. c., 1072-1073.
37. *Ibid*, pàgs. 1057-1058.
38. See the bibliographic study "1. Bibliografía hispánica sobre Aràbia, Mahoma (Muhàmmad) i l'Alcorà", *id.*, 986-1013, i M. de Epalza (dir.), *L'Islam d'avui...*, especially in the chapter "L'Islam de sempre" (pp. 13-65), and Mercè Viladrich i Grau, *El Déu de L'Alcorà i el Déu de la Bíblia*, Higher Institute for Religious Sciences (Coll. "Texts, 20), Vic, 2000, 44 pp.
39. *L'Alcorà. Traducció de l'àrab al català, introducció a la lectura i cinc estudis alcorànics*, per Mikel de Epalza, catedràtic d'Estudis Àrabs i Islàmics, amb la col·laboració de Josep Forcadell i Joan M. Perujo, de la Universitat d'Alacant, Proa, Barcelona, 2001, 1277 pàgs.
40. M. de Epalza, o. c.
41. by Abdullah (Daniel) Bartolí Rius and Remei Vidal Palomera. See *L'Alcorà...i cinc estudis alcorànics*, p. 1082.
42. *Alcorán. Traducción castellana de un morisco anónimo del año 1606. Introducción de Joan Vernet Ginés. Transcripción de Lluís Roqué Figuls*, Real Acadèmia de Bones Lletres – National University of Distance Learning, Barcelona, 2001.
43. Especially those by Julio Cortés and Joan Vernet.
44. Hanna E. Kassis – Karl I. Kobbervig, *Las concordancias del Corán*, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, Madrid, 1987.
45. See M. de Epalza, o. c., 1072-1083.
46. See *id.*, p. 1243.
47. See *supra*.
48. See M. de Epalza, o. c., 1080 i 1236.
49. *Id.*, pp. 1080 and 1210.
50. *Id.*, pp. 1081 and 1210.
51. *Id.*, pp. 1081 and 1221-1222.
52. See the complete title of the 2001 book: *L'Alcorà. Traducció de l'àrab al català, introducció a la lectura i cinc estudis alcorànics*, per Mikel de Epalza, catedràtic d'Estudis Àrabs i Islàmics, amb la col·laboració de Josep Forcadell i Joan M. Perujo, de la Universitat d'Alacant.
53. *Id.*, pp. 1059-1060, and *supra*.
54. See the quote translated into Catalan from his prologue of 1990, in *id.*, p. 1095.
55. *Id.*, pp. 1072-1074, 1245.
56. See "Introduction", in *Alcorán. Traducción castellana...*, paras. IX-XIII. See also M. de Epalza, "Juan Vernet y los estudios islámicos", in *Juan Vernet. Historia de la ciencia y de la cultura. Aportaciones de la Escuela de Barcelona. Anthropos*, Sant Cugat del Vallès, 117, February, 1991, 34-35.
57. See M. de Epalza, o. c., p. 8.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي  
خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ  
وَالَّذِي يُرِيهِمْ  
آيَاتِهِ وَيُخَوِّفُهُمْ  
وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ  
الْحَكِيمُ

Qur'an manuscript in Magribine script. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Biblioteca de Catalunya.