

THE SPREAD OF ISLAMIC SACRED SOURCES IN EUROPE

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Abstract: This article explains the history of Islamic sacred texts in Europe, from the early Middle Ages to the present day. The influence of Islamic literature on European thought and its methods of translation, interpretation and research. Particular attention has been paid to key points such as the early translations of the Qur'an, the influence of Arabic Islamic scholarship on medieval Europe and modern studies of Islamic sources.

Keywords: Qur'an, religious concept, Islamic studies, scriptures, Enlightenment, Hadith, Arabic studies, Christianity, Latin, science, culture.

Islamic sacred sources, especially the Qur'an and Hadith, have played an important role in shaping religious and cultural expressions in Europe. Its study began in the Middle Ages, but the perception of these texts has changed depending on the historical context. Today, interest in the sources of major European Islam continues not only in religion but also in academic circles. The sacred texts of Islam first entered the European sphere of vision in the Middle Ages, when the Christian world encountered Islam in wars, trade, and diplomacy. The first references to the Koran in Europe appeared in the eighth century, but systematic study did not begin until the 12th century, when Europe was confronted with the expansion of Muslims and a strong Arab intellectual heritage.

The translation of the Qur'an into Latin in 1143 was a major event in the history of Europe's acquaintance with the sacred texts of Islam. This translation was carried out by a group of scholars led by the English monk Robert of Ketton, at the request of Abbot Peter the Venerable (Petrus Venerabilis), the head of the Cluny order.

By the 11th and 12th centuries, the Islamic world had reached the highest level of development in science, philosophy, medicine, and other fields. Christian Europe, which was gradually emerging from the "dark ages", began to realize the need to study Muslim culture not only for the purpose of criticizing it, but also for the purpose of borrowing valuable knowledge.

At the same time, the Crusades were taking place, which contributed to active contact between Christians and Muslims. European theologians sought to study Islam in order to use this knowledge in religious polemics and missionary work.

Peter the Venerable, being the abbot of the Cluny monastery and an influential theologian, believed that the fight against Islam should be waged not only with weapons, but also with knowledge. He organized the translation of the Qur'an into Latin, entrusting this task to a group of translators. Robert Ketton worked in Spain, where Islamic manuscripts and scholars who knew Arabic could be found in the Muslim cities of Toledo and Zaragoza. His translation of the Qur'an was completed in 1143. This translation was made with certain theological prejudices. Robert Ketton not only translated the text, but also added Christian interpretations and critical comments to it. As a result, his version of the Qur'an was more of an adaptation than an accurate translation. Despite this, Ketton's work was the first step towards the study of Islam in Europe. The translation remained the only version of the Qur'an available to Europeans until the 17th century, when more accurate translations were made.

After Ketton's translation, interest in the Qur'an waned for a time in Europe, but a new wave of research began in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the 13th century, the Catholic Church was actively fighting heresies and non-Christian religions, including Islam. The Dominican monk Raymundus Martini wrote "Pugio Fidei" ("Dagger of Faith"), in which he used Islamic sources to criticize Muslim dogma. He relied on medieval Latin translations of the Qur'an and Arabic sources, but his approach remained hostile.

In the 15th century, the German philosopher and cardinal Nicolaus Cusanus presented a more in-depth and less biased analysis of the Qur'an. In his work *Cribratio Alkorani* (Sifting the Koran), he tried to understand Muslim beliefs and compared them with Christian dogmas. Although his work still contained elements of Christian apologetics, it demonstrated a more scientific approach than the works of his predecessors.

Spain played an important role in the study of Islamic texts, where Muslim, Christian and Jewish cultures coexisted for centuries. After the conquest of Muslim cities during the Reconquista, Christians gained access to a huge number of Arabic manuscripts. The Toledo School of Translators, founded under King Alfonso X the Wise, played a decisive role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge to Europe. In the 13th century, not only the Qur'an was actively translated here, but also the works of Arab-Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, which contributed to the spread of Eastern thought in Western Europe. The study of Islamic texts was particularly influenced by Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus), where Christians had direct access to Arabic literature, science, and philosophy. Spanish Christian rulers, especially Alfonso X the Wise, supported translation activities,

which contributed to the penetration of Islamic ideas into Europe.

Thus, between the 12th and 15th centuries, Islamic sacred texts gradually became an object of study in Europe. The first translations of the Qur'an, such as Robert of Ketton, were anti-Islamic in nature, but they still contributed to the spread of knowledge about Islam. Later, scholars such as Nicholas of Cusa attempted to analyze Islam more objectively. By the 15th century, the Qur'an and other Islamic sources were becoming available to European researchers, which paved the way for further in-depth study of Islam in the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

The Renaissance (15th–16th centuries) was a time of significant changes in European attitudes towards Islamic sources. If in the Middle Ages the Qur'an and other Islamic texts were considered primarily as an object of religious polemics, then in the Renaissance European scholars began to study Islam from a scientific and cultural point of view. This was due to several factors: the development of humanism, interest in ancient and oriental heritage, and the spread of printing.

In the 16th century, new translations of the Qur'an appeared that were more accurate and closer to the original text than the medieval Latin version of Robert of Ketton.

One of the most important steps in the study of the Qur'an was the Latin translation published in 1543 by the Swiss theologian Theodor Bibliander. In fact, it was an edited version of Ketton's translation, but with the addition of commentaries and explanations based on later research.

This translation was printed in Basel thanks to the invention of printing, which allowed for its significant expansion. However, the publication caused a mixed reaction in Europe: the authorities initially banned it, fearing that familiarity with Islam could undermine the Christian faith, but later the book was still allowed.

During the Renaissance, European intellectuals began to actively study Arab-Islamic works on philosophy, medicine, astronomy and mathematics. This contributed to a change in attitudes towards Islamic culture and its sources.

Averroes (Ibn Rushd). His works on philosophy and commentary on Aristotle had a huge influence on European scholasticism. In Italy, his ideas were especially popular among humanists. Avicenna (Ibn Sina). His Canon of Medicine remained the main medical textbook in European universities until the 17th century. Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali and other Muslim thinkers became part of the intellectual heritage of Europe.

By the 15th and 16th centuries, the Ottoman Empire had become the main Islamic power, and its influence extended to the Balkans and Eastern Europe. This forced Europeans to study Islam and its texts more deeply in order to understand their

powerful neighbor. The Renaissance led to a rethinking of many religious and philosophical concepts. If Islam was perceived as hostile in the Middle Ages, then during the Renaissance, some scholars began to show interest in its theological and philosophical aspects. An example is Jean Bodin, a 16th-century French philosopher who, in his work "Colloquium Heptaplomeres", compared Islam with Christianity and Judaism, trying to find common ground between the religions. Another example is Guillaume Postel, a French orientalist who studied Arabic and wrote about the need for religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

During the Renaissance, interest in Islamic sacred texts increased significantly. New translations of the Qur'an appeared, the study of Arab-Islamic philosophy and science spread, and the perception of Islam among European intellectuals changed. These processes paved the way for the further development of oriental studies during the Enlightenment.

During the Enlightenment (17th–18th centuries), European scholars began to study Islam and its sacred sources more systematically and objectively. While in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the Qur'an and Hadith were studied mainly for the purpose of criticism or polemics with Islam, the foundations of academic oriental studies were born in Europe in the 18th century. Islam became the subject of rational analysis, and its sacred texts began to be translated and studied from a historical and philological point of view.

One of the key achievements of the Enlightenment was the development of Oriental studies as a separate discipline. European scholars began to study Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, which allowed them to work with original Islamic texts without the mediation of Latin or medieval adapted translations.

The first university departments of Oriental studies were established in many European countries. In Paris, the first department of Arabic was created in 1669. In Oxford and Cambridge, the study of Arabic and Islamic texts became part of the curriculum. In Germany, the study of Arabic grammar and vocabulary began on a scientific basis.

Before the Enlightenment, European translations of the Qur'an were often interpretations containing Christian polemics. In the 17th–18th centuries, a philological and historical-critical approach appeared. Scholars began to analyze Islamic texts in the context of Arabic culture, which allowed them to better understand their meaning. The Enlightenment became a time of creating new, more accurate translations of the Quran into European languages. Philosophers of the 18th century began to study Islam not only as a religion, but also as a cultural and social phenomenon. The French philosopher Charles de Montesquieu in his Persian

Letters and “The Spirit of the Laws” examined Islam in the context of its influence on society. He analyzed Muslim laws, Islamic morality, and compared Islam to Christianity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau in “The Social Contract” argued that Islam, despite its theocratic structure, is in some ways closer to a natural religion than Catholicism.

Until the 18th century, the Qur’an was the main Islamic text known in Europe. However, in the 18th century, scholars began to study the hadith, a collection of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

The French orientalist Antoine Galland not only translated the “Thousand and One Nights”, but also worked with Ottoman and Arabic sources. He was one of the first in Europe to study the hadith.

During the Age of Enlightenment, Europeans began to treat Islam more rationally and scientifically. Islamic texts began to be studied in universities, accurate translations of the Qur’an and Hadith appeared, and philosophers began to analyze Islam from a social and moral perspective.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, European scholars began to study not only the Qur’an, but also Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). The Hungarian orientalist Ignaz Goldziher in his book “Muhammedanische Studien” (1889–90) applied the historical-critical method to Hadith, studying their origins and influence. The German scholar Joseph Schacht examined the development of Islamic law and concluded that many Hadith were late interpretations of Islamic tradition. His work *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (1950) remains a key work in Islamic studies. The 19th and 20th centuries became the era of the scientific study of Islamic texts. European and Russian orientalists created accurate translations of the Qur’an, critically examined the Hadith and Islamic law, and delved into the study of Islamic culture and politics. These processes laid the foundation for modern Islamic studies. Thus, Europe’s path to understanding Islam underwent a complex evolution: from fear and rejection to scientific interest and objective study. Today, Islamic studies continues to develop, enriched by new discoveries, research, and dialogues between cultures. This process not only deepens our understanding of Islamic sacred texts, but also contributes to better mutual understanding between the East and the West in the context of a globalizing world.

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