# Muhammad's Multiple Faces

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## Printed Images of the Prophet in Western Europe*

The printing press exerted a lasting influence on the European perception of Islam. The mass multiplication inherent to this technology made texts regarding Islam available for the first time, not only to the clergy, but also to a wider secular public. Among the many publications which shaped the Western image of Islam, translations of the Qur'an were of special importance, because they typically provided the most detailed and authentic information the European reader could acquire concerning the Prophet Muhammad and his teachings.[1] Over two hundred different editions of Qur'an trans-

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**1** This project involved the consultation of translations of the Qur'an and of biographies of Prophet Muhammad in English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Czech and Hungarian. The research was based on several bibliographies, including Juan Pablo Arias Torres, "Bibliografía sobre las traducciones del Alcoran en el ámbito hispano," *TRANS. Revista de Traductologia* 11 (2007), 261–272; Marc-Edouard Enay, ed., *Mohammed und der Heilige Koran* (Hamburg, 1995); Hartmut Bobzin, "Latin Translations of the Koran. A Short Overview," *Der Islam* 70 (1993), 193–206; Ismet Binark and Halit Eren, ed., *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an: Printed Translations 1515–1980* (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art, and Culture, 1986); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. "Translation of the Kur'ān"; James D. Pearson, "Bibliography of Translations of the Qu'rān into European Languages," in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. Alfred F. L. Beeston and Thomas M. Johnstone (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1983), 502–520; Victor C. Chauvin, ed., *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes publiés dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 à 1885*, vol. 10, *Le Coran et la tradition* (Liege: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1907); ibid., vol. 11, *Mahomet* (Liege: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1909); Alexander G. Ellis, ed., *Catalogue of Arabic Books in the British Museum*, vol. 1 (London: British Museum, 1894); Egon Lambrecht, ed., *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de L'école des langues orientales vivantes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Impr. Nationale, E. Leroux, 1897). These bibliographies were augmented by the catalogues of various international libraries: The British Library in London, La Bibliothèque National de France in Paris, La Biblioteca Nationale di Firenze, the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, the Staatsbibliothek München,

lations into European languages were published from the middle of the sixteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, which bear testimony to a sustained appetite for information regarding Islam by European audiences.[2] Considering that the Catholic Church banned the Qur'an shortly after its first published translation in 1543—a prohibition that was officially lifted only in 1917—this huge number of printed editions is all the more striking.[3]

However, the books in which Muhammad is discussed and represented are not confined to Qur'an translations. Works belonging to distinct literary genres all broached the issue of the Prophet Muhammad, indicating that the founder of Islam was both a matter of religious interest and also a subject of general curiosity. Commencing with the earliest translations of the Qur'an printed in Europe, this section will trace the history of the visual representations of Muhammad in these texts and analyze the changes that the image of the Prophet underwent in this context.

These depictions, which have rarely been the subject of scholarly attention,[4] are of particular importance. Containing several life-like and seemingly tangible figures, the biographical scenes or "portraits" of the Prophet dispersed throughout these publications constitute undeniably concrete visualizations of Muhammad, which provide critical insight into contemporary Western perceptions of the Prophet and Islam. It

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the University Libraries in Basel and Düsseldorf, and the internet-based catalogue *worldcat*, available at http://www.worldcat.org.

**2** Burman, for example, describes the Qur'an as a "bestseller". See Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qu'rān in Latin Christendom: 1140–1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 1.

**3** The first interdiction mentioned in the Roman *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of Prohibited Books) affected only the first Qur'an translation printed in Basel 1543. Some years later, other editions were listed in the Indices. Furthermore, Pope Alexander VII (r. 1655–67) enacted a general prohibition regarding the publication of Muslim religious texts. See Jesús M. de Bujanda, René Davignon, and Ela Stanek, ed., *Index des Livres Interdits*, vol. 8, *Index de Rome 1557, 1559, 1564, les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente* (Genève, Suisse: Droz, 1990), 720 and 825; and Heinrich F. Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Literaturgeschichte*, vol. 1, (Bonn: Cohen, 1883), 137–138. The last implementation of the prohibition is to be found in the *Decreta Generalia* (I,11) of Pope Benedict XIV, which bans "Instructionum et Rituum sectae Mahometanae libri omnes" (all books belonging to the rites of the Mahometan sect and books for their instruction). See, for example, *Catalogue des Ouvrages mis à l'index* (Paris: Impr. ecclésiastique de Beaucé-Rusand, 1825), LVI. The *Decreta Generalia* were operative until 1917, when the *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Can. 1385–1405) of Pope Benedict XV no longer explicitly prohibited the publication of books with Islamic content. The Holy See abolished the *Index* completely in 1966. With the exception of the Latin translations of the Qur'an made by Padre Ludovico Marracci in 1698, who was Pope Innocent XI's confessor, from the first edition published by Arrivabene in 1547 until 1882, no other Qur'an translation was published in Italy. Censorship concerning the dispersal of the Qur'an in Poland and Spain must have been similarly severe, where vernacular versions were printed only in 1858 and 1872.

**4** Current scholarship regarding images of the Prophet in Europe mostly concentrates on literary sources. Critically important publications are named in the master bibliography available for consultation at the end of the volume.

will be shown that these woodcuts and engravings function not merely as incidental illustrations but constitute an independent form of expression, one that should be examined not only in terms of the images' intrinsic value and visual complexity, but also regarding their multiple and multilayered interactions with the textual content of the books themselves. In some cases these pictorializations of the Prophet conveyed arguments and propagations concerning Muhammad that were perhaps of greater expressive efficacy than the texts themselves.

Before embarking on the discussion of these images, it is important to emphasize that the application of techniques such as woodcut and copper engraving enacted a seriated multiplication and dispersal of the visual representations of Muhammad that involved a significant change in the consumption of his image within the context of book illustration. In order to appeal to a wider public these images had to be easily understandable but still compelling, and novel. To this end, artists producing images of the Prophet often relied upon the adaptation of established Christian iconographic formulas. The first part of this chapter discusses one of the most important visual motifs used to characterize the Prophet, the representation of Muhammad as an Antichrist. This motif, which was used in an illustration accompanying the earliest printed book, established a paradigm operative, to a greater and lesser degree, in subsequent images in Western printed books up to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The first example that explicitly applied the iconography of Antichrist to the representation of Muhammad was Wynkyn de Worde's book *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse of the turkes lawe called Alcaron. And also it speketh of Machamet the Nygromancer*, published in 1515 in London. This publication is historically important because it was the first printed book to deal exclusively with Muhammad in both text and image.[5] Furthermore, the representation of the Prophet in this book is especially noteworthy because De Worde was the first printer in England to specifically aim his publications to the mass market, namely to popular interest. Thus, his image of Muhammad presumably corresponded to the vision of the Prophet in the public sphere.[6] The *lytell treatyse of the turkes law*, consisting of only six folios, can be seen as part of a widespread phenomenon of publishing "little treatises" produced by De

**5** The electronic catalogue of the National Library of Australia suggests 1519 as an approximate date for Wynkyn's treatise. National Library of Australia, accessed July 19, 2010, http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/2698931?lookfor=Here%20turkes%20Alcoran&offset=1&max=1. The earliest depictions of the Prophet in woodcut are contained in two editions of John Mandeville's *Travels*, printed 1481 in Augsburg and Basel. See John Mandeville, *Das Buch des Ritters Herr Hannsen von Montevilla [...]*, trans. by Michel Velser (Augsburg: Anton Sorg, 1481), fol. 26r, 45v. John Mandeville, *Reysen und Wanderschafften durch das gelobte Landt, Indien vnnd Persien*, trans. by Otto von Diemeringen (Basel: Bernard Richel, 1481), without pagination.

**6** De Worde was a former collaborator of Britain's first book printer, William Caxton, from whom he inherited the workshop. Moran states "His [De Worde's] place in history is that of the first publisher and printer to popularise the products of the printing press." See James Moran, *Wynkyn de Worde.*

Worde and other English printers, which generally offer short summaries and overviews of specific topics.[7] For his production of this volume, De Worde simply reused a part of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville,* which he had first printed ten years earlier.[8] The description of the Prophet in Mandeville's successful fictional travelogue bears all the characteristics of the literary paradigm of the "legendary Muhammad" discussed elsewhere in this volume.[9] In order to adapt the text, written around 1370, to the needs and wants of the sixteenth-century reader, the printer added a short introduction dealing with the Ottomans, who are described as the contemporary "banner holders" of Islam and who had, under Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520), reintroduced an aggressively expansionist policy. Certainly this polemical introduction broaching a pressing political and military issue was an important tool for attracting consumers and guaranteeing a successful sale of the edition. The short *treatyse* is additionally illustrated with two woodcuts, and the inclusion of compelling images was no less important for this commercial purpose.[10] The first picture, which features a "Turkish" priest holding up a sword while delivering a sermon, is positioned on the first page just under the title. In the second woodcut Muhammad is featured in a composition appearing on the verso of the folio (fig. 12). The Prophet is depicted standing on a pulpit, together with a horned devil on the right side of the image. The left side of the image features another pulpit with two haggard-looking bearded men. The intentional opposition of the two pulpits is reinforced through the division of the listeners depicted in the foreground, who focus their attention on one or the other. The followers of Muhammad, prompted by the horned devil behind him, are evidently immoral in their behavior. For example, the old woman shown directly under the pulpit begs the preacher for a gift, while the group in the foreground negotiates the price of a prostitute. In contrast to the questionable morality of the people to the right hand side of the scene, the couple seated modestly before the pulpit on the left hand side

*Father of Fleet Street With a Chronological Bibliography of Works on Wynkyn de Worde compiled by Lotte Hellinga and Mary Erler and a Preface by John Dreyfus* (London: British Library, 2003), 21.

**7** De Worde's smaller books often bear titles using the set phrase "a lytell treatyse". Examples include: *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse of the horse, the shep, and the goos*, 12 folios, printed c. 1499; *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse for to lerne Englysshe and Frenssh*, 12 folios, c. 1497; *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse called the contraverse bytwene a lover and a Iaye*, 12 folios, c. 1525; *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse called the Lucydarye*, 32 folios, 1508(?).

**8** Mandeville's *Travels* were edited for the first time in England by De Worde in 1499.

**9** The text describes Muhammad's life in a flamboyant style. It not only reports two of his wonders but introduces him as "a grete astronomyer" and as "keeper of all the golde of the princes of Corydan". Nevertheless, the image of the Prophet given here is not as negative as in most of the earlier Christian texts. Wynkyn de Worde, ed., *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse of the turkes law called Alcoran* (London: De Worde, 1515/1519), without pagination. For discussion of the literary image of the: "legendary Muhammad," please see the section authored by Michelina Di Cesare in this volume.

**10** De Worde was very innovative regarding the use of woodcuts within his books. See Martha W. Driver, "The Illustrated de Worde: An Overview," *Studies in Iconography* 17 (1996), 363.

**Fig. 12:** Untitled, 1515(?). Woodcut print on paper, 94 × 87 mm. *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse of the turkes lawe called Alcaron. And also it speketh of Machamet the Nygromancer*, ed. by Wynkyn de Worde, (London: Wynkny de Worde, 1515 or 1519) fol. 1v.

appears devout. They turn their backs to the other group and listen intently to the bearded priests on the pulpit. The rosary the woman holds in her hand emphasizes that she is contemplating the religious meaning of the preacher's message. Thus, the two preachers on either side of the picture are clearly distinguished from one another through the obvious contrast in the behavior of their audiences, who absorb their words and follow them accordingly. To the left only a few are shown who hear the warnings of the ascetic preachers and seek to follow a religious and virtuous path. To the right the artist has depicted a larger group, enslaved by their own vice and blinded by the promises of a man appearing in the guise of a sixteenth-century churchman, but prompted towards evil by the devilish companion who whispers inspiration.

De Worde's crudely-made image adopts the composition of an earlier woodcut that first appeared in a publication of the *Apocalypse* by Pseudo-Methodius, an eschatological text written in the seventh century, in which the witnesses Enoch and Elias are depicted preaching against Antichrist.[11] This is but one example of how De Worde's volume is completely reliant on older textual and visual sources and even mixes images of the Prophet commissioned to illustrate the text representative of two different genres. While Mandeville's text complies with the pattern of the image of the legendary Muhammad, the representation of Muhammad as an Antichrist evokes the image related to the "pseudo-historical" Prophet. This strategic re-use and recombination of texts and images must be understood not only as a way to economize the production process, but also as a method of familiarizing the public to a relatively "new" topic. Since the literary *topos* of Antichrist has historically been applied to various persons, in addition to Muhammad himself,[12] the printer felt free to use the well-known iconography of Antichrist in the context of Muhammad's representa-

**11** Sebastian Brant, ed., *Revelationes divinae a sanctis angelis factae* (Basel: Michael Furter, 1498), 55.
**12** Referring to Mathew 24, 3–5, Conklin states "Muhammad [...] is seen as an imperfect reflection of Christ. Medieval accounts of the Prophet stress Muhammad's claim to be the messiah." See Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "The Rhetoric of Antichrist in Western Lives of Muhammad," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, no. 3 (1997), 299. For medieval and reformatory descriptions of Muhammad as Antichrist see Hans Preuss, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist im späteren Mittelalter, bei Luther und der konfessionellen Polemik* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1906), 81, 204, and 244–245. This apocalyptic image of the Prophet was mostly diffused through texts authored by Riccoldo da Montecroce. For example, in his text entitled *Confutatio Alcorani*, (Refutation of the Alcoran) from 1300, he calls Muhammad *aut Antichristus aut Antichristi percursor* (either Antichrist or precursor of Antichrist). Luther, who published a German translation of Riccoldo's text in 1542, had a different target for this slander. It was not Muhammad who was the real Antichrist but rather the Pope: "Und ich halt den Mahmet nicht für den Endechrist, Er machts zu grob und hat einen kendlichen schwartzen Teuffel, der weder Glauben noch vernunfft betriegen kann [...] Aber der Bapst bey uns ist der rechte Endechrist, der hat den hohen, subtilenm schönen, gleissenden Teufel, Der sitzt innwendig in der Christenheit." See Ricoldo da Montecroce, *Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi Prediger Ordens Anno 1300[...]*, trans. Martin Luther (Wittenberg: 1542), without pagination: See also Egil Grisilis, "Luther and the Turks," *Muslim World* 64, no. 3 (1974), 183.

tion.[13] Through this re-combination of visual and textual content—enacted through the technology of printing—different medieval categories governing the representation of the Prophet begin to merge with each other.

A further artistic development in the representation of Muhammad as Antichrist can be seen in the *Alcorano di Macometto*, printed and probably edited by Andrea Arrivabene in 1547 in Venice. This book is fascinating not only because it is the first printed translation of the Qur'an in a vernacular language, but also because of the specificity of its title page, which features a conflation of multiple pictorial vignettes presenting episodes from the life of the Prophet (fig. 13). The six scenes framing the title of the publication, which is written on a curtain positioned in the center of the page, raise critical questions regarding the motivation underlying the creation of such a detailed visual representation of the supposed Prophet's biography.

The motif of the central curtain inscribed with the title of the publication, *Alcorano di Macometto*, fulfils two distinct functions. Firstly, the inclusion of the curtain alludes to the sacred practice of covering holy images and places and therefore alludes to the religious content of the book.[14] Secondly, it acts as a visual prompt to the viewer, who may imagine the curtain be pulled away by turning the page and reading the ensuing text. This somewhat "apocalyptic" allusion (the Greek word *apokálypsis* means 'to uncover') is not only related to the editor's intention to reveal the core tenets of Islam, albeit from a Christian perspective, but also it provides a key to interpreting the title page's pictorial program.

The panel in the center is framed with six scenes depicting different episodes from Muhammad's *vita*. The rectangular field positioned directly above the title depicts the birth of the Prophet. Two smaller scenes appear on each side. The images on the left represent two miracles: the upper scene features a donkey recognizing the child Muhammad as the messenger of God, while the lower image depicts the episode of Muhammad's heart being washed by angels. The upper panel on the right hand side shows Muhammad as a boy reciting from a book in front of an older bearded man,

**13** Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Topische Modelle in Theorie und Praxis der Renaissance," in *Visuelle Topoi: Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer and Max Seidel (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003), 11–19. He describes the τόποι as criteria of description, which provide a semantic structure that can be widely applied. Although the image of the beardless Muhammad perhaps seems unusual to the modern viewer, the depiction of Muhammad in the guise of a western preacher can be found in earlier illustrated manuscripts. See, for example, Giovanni Boccaccio, *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*, transl. Laurent de Premierfait, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Français 236, fol. 184.

**14** Regarding the symbolism of the curtain to the concept of revelation in the Christian tradition, see Alessandro Nova, "Hangings, Curtains, and Shutters of Sixteenth-Century Lombard Altarpieces," in *Italian Altarpieces: 1250–1550*, ed. Eve Borsook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 177–189, and Johann K. Eberlein, *Apparitio Regis – revelatio veritatis. Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1982), 49–96.

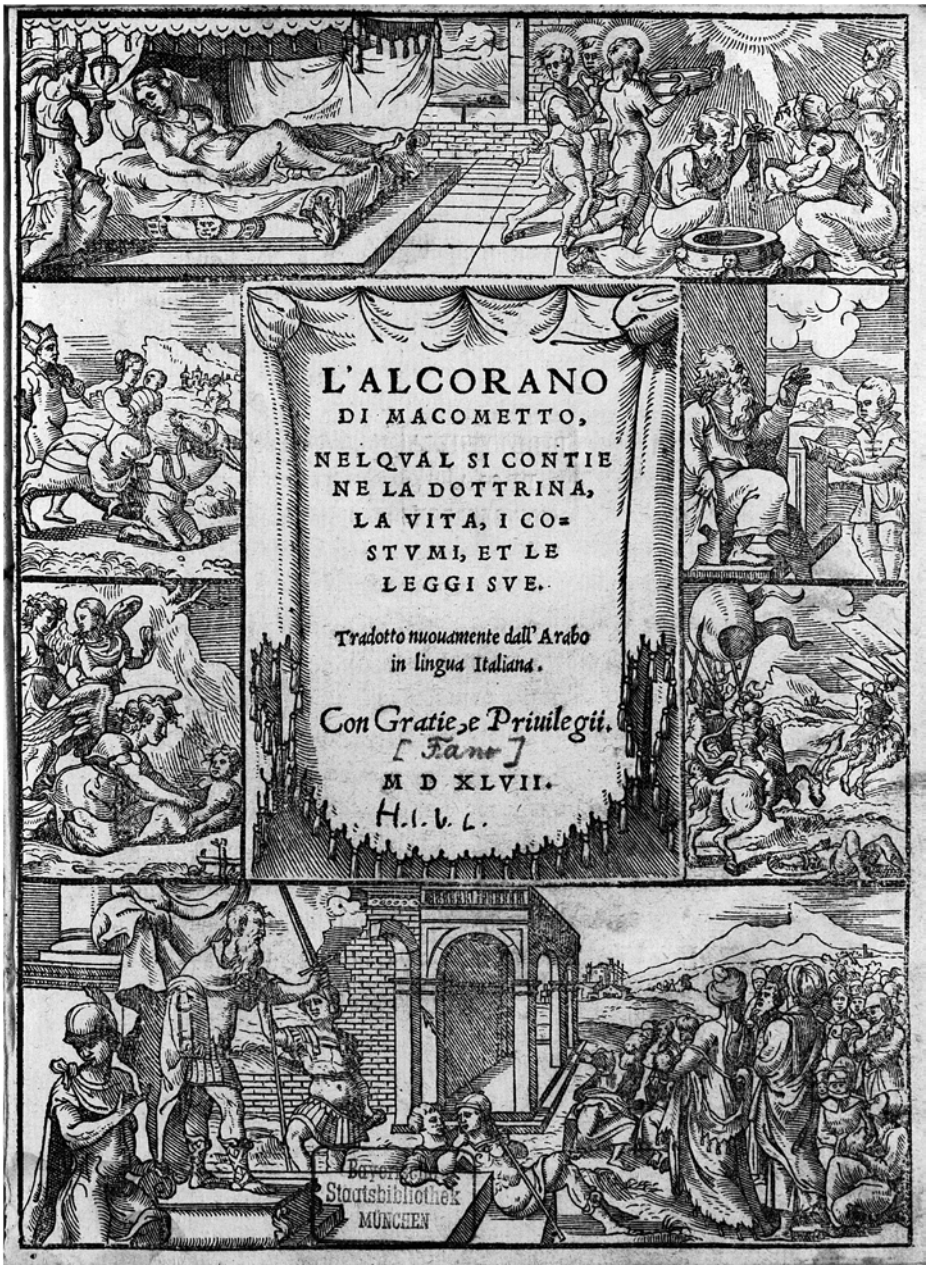


**Fig. 13:** Untitled, 1547. Woodcut print on paper, 200 × 144 mm. *L' Alcorano di Macometto, nel quale si contiene la doctrina, la vita, i costumi, e le leggi sue*, (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1547), title page.

and the scene below depicts the victory of an equestrian army while opposing forces flee the battlefield. In the lower and largest rectangular frame, Muhammad stands on a pedestal and preaches to a group of people gathered at the edge of a city.

The inclusion of a frame composed of individual pictorial vignettes, traditionally called a *cornice istoriata*, is rare in Italian book printing of the sixteenth century.[15] Nevertheless, one appears in a printed Bible published in Venice fifteen years earlier, in 1532, by Lucantonio Giunta (fig. 14). Both Arrivabene's and Giunta's publications present new translations into Italian. The Bible published by Giunta offers a new rendition of the Old and New Testaments based on the Hebrew and Greek sources, while Arrivabene's *Alcorano* claims on its title page to have been translated directly from Arabic. A further compelling detail is that both books were later prohibited by the Catholic Church.[16] Although it cannot be said with certainty whether the woodcut opening the *Alcorano* was definitively understood as a formal analogy to contemporary bibles, this type of title page was frequently applied to the Christian scriptures in the lands north of the Alps.[17] Undoubtedly the application of a pictured frame suggests a more costly undertaking than that of a non-figurative, generically ornamental frame.[18] The *cornice istoriata* brings an element of prestige to the volume and offers a visual summary of the book's content on its very first page.

Whereas the title page of Giunta's Bible presents a sequence of scenes spanning the Old and New Testaments, from the creation of Eve up to the preaching of Saint Paul, the cover page of Arrivabene's *Alcorano* is thematically more restricted. Its vignettes focus solely on Muhammad's life and therefore affirm an exclusive relation between the Qur'an and Muhammad, who was erroneously believed to have authored

**15** See Francesco Barberi, *Il Frontespizio nel Libro italiano del Quattrocento e del Cinquecento*, vol. 1 (Milan: Il Polifilo 1969), 131–132. While Barberi lists only three examples for this type of title page in sixteenth-century Italy, it was much more common north of the Alps, especially in the Holy Roman Empire. See Brian Richardson, "Series of Woodcut Borders in Early Sixteenth-Century Venetian Title Pages," *La Bibliofilia. Rivista di storia del libro e di bibliografia* 103, no. 2 (2001), 137–164.

**16** See Simonetta Pelusi, ed., *Le civiltà del Libro e la stampa a Venezia. Testi sacri, cristiani, islamici dal Quattrocento al Settecento* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2000), 142–143.

**17** *Hollstein's German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts: ca. 1400–1700*, ed. Friedrich W. H. Hollstein et. al., 78 vols. (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1954) contains examples of several title pages of Bible editions featuring a "cornice istoriata" produced before 1547. These include Hans Holbein, *Das newe Testament*, Basel 1523 (*Hans Holbein the Younger*, vol. 14a, 97) and Hans Holbein the Younger, *Biblia*, London 1535/1536/1537/1540, (*Hans Holbein the Younger*, vol. 14a, 194). In the following decades the motif also appears in biblical prints, such as in the work of Virgil Solis (*Virgil Solis*, vol. 69, Book-Illustration III, IV, 16, 34, 156).

**18** This primarily was because the labor of the inventor and woodcutter was so exacting, and additionally because the use of a particular figural woodcut was normally restricted to one theme, inhibiting its reuse in other contexts.

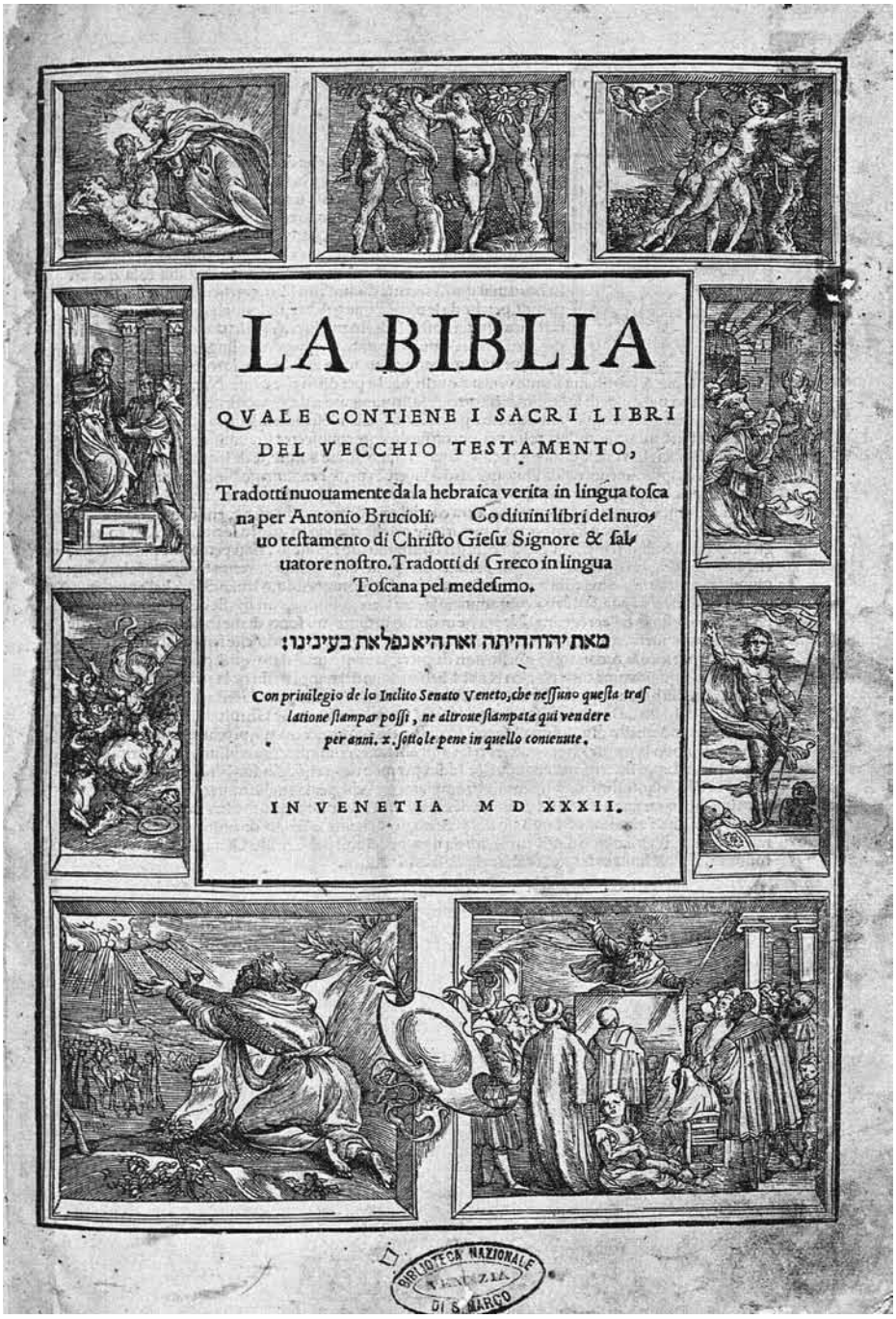


**Fig. 14:** Untitled, 1532. Woodcut print on paper, Height circa 320 mm, *La Biblia qvale contiene i sacri libri del vecchio Testamento tradotti nuouamente da la hebraica verita in lingua toscana per Antonio Brucioli* [...] (Venice: Lucantonio Giunta, 1532), title page.

the Qur'an with the help of a heretical Christian monk.[19] Qur'anic passages comparable to the Old Testament, and even passages referring to Jesus and Mary which link Muhammad to the tradition of earlier Christian and Jewish Prophets affirmed by Islam, are completely omitted.

Correspondent to the above-mentioned concept illustrated in the title page, the text of the Qur'an in Arrivabene's book is prefaced by two different biographies of Muhammad. The first text, entitled *La Vera Vita di Macometto*,[20] presents Muhammad's life based on Christian writings. The second biography includes four different episodes which are titled *La Generatione di Macometto*, *La Nativiá di Macometto, La Nodritura di Macometto,* and *La Vita i costumi la forma la statura e l'oppinioni di Macometto*, (The Generation of Muhammad, The Birth of Muhammad, The Nurture of Muhammad, and The Life, the Customs, the Form, the Stature, and the Concepts of Muhammad). All of them present the Prophet Muhammad in a messianic light and originally derive from Islamic literary tradition.[21] Arrivabene even argues that, for the safety of the Christian readers, it would be better first to present the "real" and "condemnable" life of Muhammad and only thereafter, in the second section, his biography according to the Arabic sources.[22] Although the editor was apparently afraid of featuring a positive image of Muhammad at the outset of the volume, the anonymous artist of the title page was more daring, and illustrated scenes from the Arabic biographical sources and not from the Christian *vita*. At first glance this artistic endeavor appears to contradict the general anti-Islamic tenor of the book.[23] Fur-

**19** The same strategy to abnegate the prophetic tradition of Muhammad or the divine inspiration in the creation of the Qur'an can be found also in fifteenth century travel reports, which speak of the Qur'an as "his [Muhammad's] book". See Elena Giovannini, *L'immagine dell'Islam nella letteratura di viagiio tedesca tardomedievale: prospettive a confronto* (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 2005), 64.

**20** "La Vera Vita di Macometto tratta dall'historie di cristiani," in *L'Alcorano di Macometto, nel quale si contiene la doctrina, la vita, i costumi, e le leggi sue*, comp. Andrea Arrivabene (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1547), II–XI.

**21** Arrivabene's version was based on the Latin translation *De generatione Machumet et nutritura eius* (On the Generation of Muhammad and his Breeding) made in 1142 by Herman Dalmata, which was published together with a Latin translation of the Qur'an in 1543 by Theodor Bibliander in Basel. Regarding the Muslim sources and the tradition of this text, see James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), 33, 84–88.

**22** "Alli pii Lettori," in Arrivabene, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, Iv, reads: "E poscia che l'animo nostro è di darvi l'Alcorano, loro legge, volgare, & a maggior bellezza del libro, la Geneaologia, Nativita, Notritura, e Vita di Macometto, d'inviolabile osservanza appresso Hismaheliti, hò voluto à sicurezza de pii lettori, prima premonirgli della vera vita di quello [...] a fine che scoprendosi la sporca vita delloro Profeta [...]."

**23** This was already recognized by Guy Le Thiec. He sees a difference between the representation of Muhammad in the text and in the title page, in which the latter could be regarded as a step towards a more positive vision of the Prophet. But his interpretation is somewhat vague: "Le frontispice a résisté à l'entreprise de justification: comment introduire la dénonciation de ces fables dans une planche dépourvue encore de légendes? Les pièces ultérieures ont plausiblement eu comme visée de

thermore, when drawing the scenes, the artist responsible for the woodcut evidently relied on Christian iconography. Indeed, the pictures can be described as presenting episodes based on Islamic textual sources in a Christian "visual grammar". Just as the iconography of Antichrist was adapted to the representation of Muhammad in De Worde's *Treatyse*, the use of well-known Christian iconographic formulas was equally intentional here, and likely meant to help the viewer decipher the unfamiliar stories composing Muhammad's life. Additionally, the adoption and adaptation of Christian iconographic formulas enabled the viewer to easily identify similarities and differences between the lives of the Christian saints and of the Muslim Prophet.

The first scene, depicting Muhammad's birth, shows strong resemblances to nativity scenes found in Christian hagiographic and biblical narratives. In a domestic interior Muhammad's mother appears reclining in bed while midwives bathe the baby in a basin. This setting and the composition of the figures alludes to the Christian representations of Anna giving birth to Mary. Moreover, the appearance of a miraculous light on the right-hand side of the picture, and the inclusion of men offering precious gifts to the newborn, recall the iconography of the three Magi in the *Adoration of Christ*. Nevertheless, the narrative content of the image closely follows the description of *La Nativitá di Macometto* based on the Arabic sources. For example, the bearded man, who kneels in front of the child and presents him with the "keys of victory, law, and prophecy," and the three young men with their "heads shining like the sun," directly relate to the description of this event in the text of the *Nativitá*, given in the second biography of the Prophet in the book.[24] Furthermore, the shining sphere positioned over the infant Muhammad might relate to the divine primordial light (nūr Muhammad) that was transmitted from Adam via his progeny to Muhammad and thus into the world.[25] Whereas in Muslim tradition this primordial light emanates directly from the Prophet himself, in this scene it is depicted as a celestial phenomenon originat-

détourner le feu de l'Index, christianisant en quelque sorte inconcevable opération d'une traduction du Coran. À ce frontispice, les Turcs s'ils avaient conquis une place pour leur Prophète, demeuraient encore peut-être de simples auditeurs d'un Saint dont l'épée pourrait séparer la vraie religion de celle ces faux prophètes. Mais une iconographie musulmane se frayait incontestablement une voie dans les *Corans* imprimés." See Guy le Thiec, *'Et il y aura un seul troupeau' – L'immaginaire de la confrontation entre Turcs Chrétiens dans l'art figuratif en France en Italie de 1453 aux années* (Lille: A.N.R.T, 1994), 123.

**24** "La Natitività di Macometto," in Arrivabene, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, 7v: "[U]n huomo di bianco vestito [...] veniva con tre chiavi, [...] e quelle presentò al nato fanciullo [...] la chiave della vittoria, la chiave della legge, e la chiave della Prophetia. Dopò seguivano tre huomini con la faccia piena de raggi simili al Sole." The commentary provided at the border of the folio claims (unfortunately without further explanation) that the keys received by Muhammad opened the gates of hell, as opposed to the keys of paradise given to Saint Peter.

**25** Ibid., 6v: "Si e giunto per ordine lungo de secoli al termine, il quale Iddio haveva prescritto, e veduto, e nel quale doveva nascere al Mondo il lume del Propheta Macometto".

ing outside of the child completely, in accordance with the Christian concept of the divine light.[26]

Although these elements comprehensibly characterize Muhammad's birth as a holy episode, the picture shows also some peculiarities incompatible with the representation of the birth of a Christian saint. Instead of the painless birth reported in the text, Amina, the Prophet's mother, looks exhausted, if not depressive.[27] Furthermore, the way she rests on the bed resembles a mythological figure with erotic implications, recalling representations of Danae, rather than the chastely covered women in childbirth in Christian iconography. In addition, the woman draped on the bed attracts not only the attention of the viewer, but also that of the angelic looking man who stands at the foot of her bed, who only has eyes for the young mother, instead of being interested in the newborn child. Thus, at second glance, these and similar details cast doubt on the sacred character of the birth as it is represented.

The next scene in the title page, positioned on the upper left side, also contains strong allusions to the life of Christ, particularly to the well-known iconography of *The Flight into Egypt*. Here again, select details deviate from the standard Christian iconographic formula: for instance, the man accompanying Muhammad's mother is young in age, and the she-ass kneels on its forelegs and turns its head towards the infant Muhammad. Though not entirely in accordance with the Arabic source, these details allude to an episode narrated in *La Nodritura di Macometto* in which, at the very start of the journey from Mekka to Benizat, as Amina and Muhammad climb on the donkey, the animal immediately recognizes Muhammad as the messenger of God and kneels down to adore him.[28] It is difficult to say how the contemporary viewer would have interpreted this picture, because the iconography is partially familiar and yet has been transformed into something astonishing. Even without referring to the appropriate text, the image could have been understood as representing a sort of miracle. A passage in the book of Isaiah praises the steadfast piety of the donkey,

**26** On the Arabic tradition of defining Muhammad according to metaphors of divine light, see Christiane J. Gruber, "Between Logos (*Kalima*) and Light (*Nur*). Representations of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Painting," *Murqanas* 26, (2009), 1–34; Uri Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light. Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muhammad," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975), 62–119; and The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, specifically the entry "Nūr Muhammadī" authored by Uri Rubin.

**27** "La Natività di Macometto," in 6v:"La madre di lui, fe fede, che mai senti per lui dolore alcuno, ne mentre lo porto nel ventre, ne dopò il parto, ne meno partorendolo[…]."

**28** "La Nodritura di Macometto," in Arrivabene, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, 9r: "[E] noi parimente ci partiamo, e sedendo in su l'Asina il marito mi porge il fanciullo, e quella quasi adorandola s'inginocchia[…]." In fact the animal praised the Prophet, speaking with a human voice, only later during the ride. "L'Asina allhora favellando con humane parole, & ad alta voce dice,[…] egli è il Sigillo de Propheti, egli è Signor de Giudici, miglior de primi, e Nuntio di Dio omnipotente, che debbio dir piu."

which, in contrast to the people of Israel, "recognizes the cradle of the Lord,"[29] conferring upon this animal an ability to recognize the Divine.[30] Conversely, however, if one interprets the she-ass to be kneeling *during* the journey, that is, as simply refusing to move, the picture recalls the story of Balaam, whose donkey was, according to the Old Testament, stopped by an invisible angel of God because Balaam's intention was to curse the people of Israel. Only his she-ass was able to see the angel, which kneeled down and spoke to Balaam with a human voice. Of course, this association would lead to a negative interpretation of the incident represented on the title page.[31] Thus, by mingling different iconographies, the artist deliberately created a somewhat ambiguous visual representation of the narrated wonder.

The next vignette shows the washing of Muhammad's heart, a miracle which *La Nodritura di Macometto* states occurred in Muhammad's early childhood. The text explains that while the young Muhammad was guarding sheep, three men came, opened his breast, and purified his heart in preparation for his future call to Prophethood. Although the source for the iconography of the scene can be found in both biographies of the book, the artist has again adhered to the Arabic version. This can be seen by the inclusion of three angels and the mountainous landscape, which are only mentioned in the Islamic text.[32]

The artistic rendering of the story required the creative interpretation of the text; neither is there any Christian iconography the artist could have adopted to create the composition, nor is there any detectable inspiration drawn from pictorial themes and subjects common to Islamic book painting. The panel shows the huge figure of the Archangel Gabriel accompanied by his two attendants. The Angel kneels next to the

**29** Isaiah 1.3: "The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

**30** The hagiographies of Saint Anthony of Padua, which were popular throughout Europe, also recount the story of a donkey praising the body of Christ in the sacred host. On the diffusion of the cult of Saint Anthony, see Conrad de Mandach, *Saint Antoine de Padoue et l'art italien* (Paris: Renouard, H. Laurens, 1898). On the miracle of the mule, see ibid., 230–238.

**31** See the fourth Book of Moses, 22.21–38. I would like to thank Ittai Weinryb for referring me to this episode. In the fifteenth century, the iconography of Balaam and his hesitating donkey was dispersed by Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* (Book of Chronicles) published for the first time in 1493 and by the "Leienbibel" printed in Strasburg in 1540, which included a woodcut of this scene.

**32** The artist probably chose to adhere to the Arabic text because the description is much more detailed. "La vera vita di Macometto," VIIv, reads: "[D]iremo anchora d'alcuni suoi fualosi [sic] miracoli, quantunque non s'havesse testimonio alcuno, & il primo, quando essendo fanciullo, e ne pascoli solo gli fu aperto il petto dall'angelo Gabriello suo custode, e trattogli la fece, ò non so che di cattivo attaccato al cuore [...]." In *La Nodritura di Macometto*, on folio 9v, Mohammed states that: "Tre huomini cavandomi de Pascholi mi condussero qui [in cima ad uno Monte], il primo mi sparò fino al bellico sanza farmi punto di male, e mi lavo le viscere, e fecele bianche come neve, il secondo mi parti il cuore in due parti, cavando del mezzo un grano negro, & gettandolo via, disse questa è la portione del Diavolo, Il terzo mi rimesse le viscere nel ventre, e ritornommi come voi vedete ch'io sono."

nude body of the young Muhammad while stretching his hands towards the child's open chest. The "operation" takes place in an enclosed and narrow rocky landscape. Within this almost claustrophobic setting, the actions of the huge figures of the angels seem somewhat threatening: Gabriel reaches into the open breast cavity of the unconscious child, while the angel behind him ostentatiously holds up the removed heart. The anxious atmosphere surrounding the act is enhanced by the tousled hair of Gabriel, which sticks up from his forehead in curls resembling two horns. The hair of Muhammad is similarly disheveled, and the artist has drawn agitated criss-cross hatchings over the breast and the head of the boy. The strongest doubt about the sacred nature of this heavenly intervention is provoked by the cross in the foreground, which consists of two boughs with a snake-like figure leaning on the cross-bar. The inclusion of the cross is a peculiar detail because it is not found in either of the prophetic biographies included in the volume and seems to be an invention of the artist. This motif is ambiguous, but the intentional inclusion of the Christian symbol of Christ's suffering and final victory underscores that the artist was not satisfied with merely reproducing a narrative based on Arabic sources.

In sum, the artist turns the sacred character and ceremonial aspect of the purification of Muhammad's heart into a direful and ambiguous scene.[33] Indeed, the editor of the book was fascinated by this episode. In his commentary to the relevant text, he presumes that the "washing of the heart" prefigures Muhammad's later punishment in hell, as it is described in Dante's *Divina Commedia*, in which Muhammad's body is cleaved from his chin to his genitals.[34] It can be suggested then, that the creator of the woodcut, who shows the opening of the boy's torso as a frightening act, placing his nude body right in front of a cross, may also have been aware of the characterization of Muhammad in Dante's *Commedia* and tried to represent the story in such a way that it remains unclear for the viewer, whether the opening of the child's breast is an act of divine grace or of punishment.

**33** According to Islamic tradition, the washing of the heart prepares Muhammad for his future prophetic office and is therefore an act of solemnity. See Harris Birkeland, *The Legend of the Opening of Muhammed's Breast*, Oslo 1955. On the earliest known visual representation of this story in Ilkhanid book painting, see Priscilla P. Soucek, "The Life of the Prophet: Illustrated Versions," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World: Papers from a Colloquium in Memory of Richard Ettinghausen*, ed. Priscilla P. Soucek (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 193–218.

**34** *La Nodritura di Macometto*, 9v states: "Forse augura questo scrittore che Macometto sia cosi sfesso dal mento in sin dove si trulla, come scismattico, del quale Dante nel canto XXVIII. del Inferno, e nel nostro argomento sopra quello, [...]" Whereas the pertinant section of Canto XXVIII in Dante's *Inferno* reads: "Già veggia, per mezzul perdere o lulla, com'io vidi un, così non si pertugia, rotto dal mento infin dove si trulla. [...] Mentre che tutto in lui veder m'attacco, guardommi e con le man s'aperse il petto, dicendo: "Or vedi com'io mi dilacco! vedi come storpiato è Mäometto!" See Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*: *Inferno*, ed. Cesare Gaboli (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), Canto 28:30–31.

The next panel on the right presents Muhammad reading from a book in front of an unidentified figure, most likely his teacher, who is depicted greeting and approaching the boy. The scene takes place in a hilly landscape with a cloudy sky. The combination of the two figures is puzzling on an iconographical level because there is no passage in the book to which it can be definitively related. On the one hand, it corresponds to the story of the hermit, whom Muhammad met on his first caravan-trip to Syria. But this story, from Islamic tradition, does not precisely mention that Muhammad was taught by the hermit.[35] Furthermore, in Islamic tradition Muhammad is customarily described as illiterate, so that on a literal level, it would make no sense at all from a Muslim point of view that the child Muhammad is reciting from a book. In order to defame the Prophet, multiple Christian writings in circulation from medieval times up to the nineteenth century recount a story in which Muhammad did not receive divine revelations but was instead instructed by a heretical monk, variously called Nestor, Sergius or Bahira.[36] Yet, in this story, which the *Alcorano* recounts in its first apologetic biography, Muhammad is described as a mature man and not as a boy.[37] Although the literary source that inspired this picture cannot be clearly identified, it again sustains parallels to the life of Christ, namely the story of the twelve-year-old Christ, who astonished the priests of the Temple with his wisdom.[38]

The scene on the lower right side represents a battle of two equestrian armies. Unfortunately it is impossible to name the specific battle or to identify the soldiers depicted.[39] In any case, the scene functions as a prelude for the last and lowest panel in the title page, in which Muhammad appears victorious, dressed in an ancient military uniform preaching to the inhabitants of a city. This lower panel is in fact the crux of the whole biographic sequence of Muhammad. Whereas in the other scenes the saintly and Christ-like elements of his biography are emphasized, the final picture instead depicts the Prophet as an earthly and triumphant figure, who came to power by the use of his sword.[40] Furthermore, the last scene provides the key to under-

**35** This story was also known throughout the Latin West since the medieval period. See Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years of Western Myth-Making* (Reading, United Kingdom: Garnet Publishing, 2000), 105–106.

**36** See Alessandro D'Ancona, *La leggenda di Maometto in Occidente* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1994), 39–40 and Almond, *Heretic and Hero*, 68.

**37** Following *La Vera Vita* a certain Surgio, a Nestorian monk, became his mentor. See "La Vera Vita di Macometto," 3r–4v.

**38** Luke 2.46–47.

**39** Both biographies speak of several battles which were fought by Muhammad. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the renaissance style of this battle scene. There are several other interesting aspects of this scene, such as the wounded man lying on his back and the partial representation of the flight of the riders to the right in the scene, which speak again for the woodcutters ability to create an idea of dramatic movement and in this case of the cruelty of war in such a small composition.

**40** The contrast between the pacifistic content of Christ's teachings and Muhammad's supposed inclination towards violence is also mentioned in the text. The editor comments on a passage that

stand the *cornice istoriata's* entire visual message. What appears at first glance to be another saintly vision recalling the iconography of Saint Paul, who is also often represented as a preacher with a sword in his hand, such as in the last vignette of Giunta's Bible (fig. 14), culminates in the totally different interpretation of Muhammad as Antichrist.[41] The exposure of Muhammad as Christ's anti-figure is achieved by various visual elements. The first is the erotic atmosphere surrounding the figure of the Prophet in this image, which is suggested by the tightly fitting garment of the *festaiuolo* and the homoerotic undertone of a couple of men depicted at the foot of the preacher's platform.[42] The second element involves the elegant podium, from which the victorious Muhammad delivers a speech, which likely refers to the representation of Muhammad as an idol and to the pictorial tradition of the depiction of the

describes Muhammad as having success sometimes with words but more often with the sword: La "Religione di Macometto [è] fondata i[n] violentia, e crudeltà, e non in carità & amore." See "La Vita i costumi la forma la statura e l'oppinioni di Macometto," in Arrivabene, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, 11r. The motif of the sword as the definitive instrument of Islamic power is already entrenched in the thirteenth century. See D'Ancona, *La leggenda di Maometto*, 58. In the later iconography the sword becomes one of the standard attributes of Muhammad. The letter supposedly sent by Pope Pius II (r. 1458–1464) to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 / 1451–1481) emphasizes how Muhammad planned to disseminate his teachings by using violence. See Enea S. Piccolomini, "Epistola a Maometto. Pio Episcopo servo di Dio augura all'illustre Maometto, sultano dei Turchi, di temere ed amare il nome di Dio," in *Il Corano e la tiara. L'epistola a Maometto di Enea Silvio Piccolomini (papa Pio II)*, ed. Luca D'Ascia (Bologna: Pendragon, 2001), 221–222.

**41** Despite the similarities between the last scenes in the frontispieces of Giunta's Bible (fig. 14) and of the *Alcorano* (fig. 13), the sword in Muhammad's hand cannot be interpreted as a direct parallel to the iconography of Saint Paul, as Le Thiec proposes. He only seems to interpret the image on a superficial level, which does give the impression of a connection between the two. Le Thiec states "L'iconographie qui reprend donc plusieurs scènes de la vie de Mahomet, ne rendrait pas compte de la tension perceptible dès l'épître dédicatoire (à moins, comme il a déjà été indiqué, de voir dans le prédicateur des Turcs à l'épée, au bandeau inférieur du frontispice, un saint Paul apôtre des Gentils)." See Le Thiec, "*Et il y aura,*" 119.

**42** The audience of the sermon in Wynkyn de Worde's "Antichrist" woodcut showed comparably inappropriate behavior (fig. 12). It was a commonly held prejudice against Islam that its adherents engaged in licentious sexual behavior. The Turks and the Ottoman Sultans were especially accused of cultivating homosexual practices. See Alberto Saviello, "Felix Petancic's *Historia Turcica* – A Central European View of the Ottoman Empire?" in *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa. Perzeptionen und Interaktionen in den Grenzzonen zwischen dem 16. und 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Robert Born (forthcoming). Arrivabene's book itself describes the Turks as "molto imbrattati del vitio della sodomia, in modo tale, che non è poßibile per alcuna via, se ne possano astenere. Et perche tutti sono macchiati di questa pece, fra loro non ne danno punitione, & hanno nel loro Coraam, che quelli, che usano questo vitio, sono perduti in questo mondo & dell'anima, & del corpo: & in alcuni libri restati di Mahometto, dicono haverne veduta chiaramente la isperienita." See "In che è fondata la legge Mahomettana," in Arrivabene, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, XLVIv. In some ways the picture contradicts the text, because the relevant text concludes that Muhammad had damned homosexuality.

Antichrist preaching from a podium to the citizens of Jerusalem.[43] But the most decisive elements included by the artist to underline the supposedly evil nature of the Prophet are his widely opened mouth and the two horns placed on his head, which clearly suggest his "diabolic" character. The moment the "true" nature of the Prophet is revealed, the hanging curtain at the very center of the title page is metaphorically opened, and the adjoining scenes of the seemingly angelic and miraculous stories of the Prophet's life expose their treacherous character.

Although, as mentioned above, there is a long tradition of representing Muhammad as Antichrist that pre-dates Arrivabene's book, it is interesting to question his motivation in emphasizing this *topos* through the inclusion of such a sophisticated visual program. First, however, it should be clarified that the claim, sustained by the book's title (*Alcorano di Macometto[…]Tradotto nuovamente dall'Arabo in lingua Italiana*), that the translation was made directly from the Arabic text is false. In fact, the whole book relies on the Latin edition, *Machumetis Saracenorum Principis vita ac doctrina omnis* (The Life and the Entire Doctrine of Muhammad, Ruler of the Saracens), which was published four years prior by Theodor Bibliander in Basel.[44] The translation, edited by Bibliander himself, who was a Protestant Professor of the Old Testament, was the first Latin Qur'an ever printed.[45] But even Bibliander's book did

**43** The characterization of Muslims as worshippers who adored Muhammad in the form of an idol appears in the *Song of Roland* in the twelfth century, which states "Dâ wârne siben hundert apgot, Machmet was der hêrest unter in." [There were seven hundred idols, Machmet was the noblest among them]. See Dieter Kartschoke, ed., *Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrads, Mittelhochdeutsch – Neuhochdeutsch* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001), 3492–3493. See also John V. Tolan, "Muslims as Pagan Idolaters in the Chronicles of the First Crusade," in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, ed. David R. Blanks and Michael Frasetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 97–117. The practice of idolatry was traditionally understood as a sin akin to adultery and fornication, so that the statue-like representation of the Prophet and the leisurely behaviour of his followers in the picture form a coherent image. See the entry for "Abgötterei" (idolatry) in *Bibel-Lexikon*, ed. Herbert Haag, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln: Benzinger, 1968), col. 9, authored by Paul van Imschoot. See also the chapter by Michelina Di Cesare in this volume.

**44** Already the Dutch scholar Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609) had recognized that the translation was based on the *Corpus Toletanum*. See Bobzin, "Latin Translations of the Koran," 197. The translation from Latin into Italian was completed by the Catholic priest Giovanni Castrodardo. See Pier M. Tommassino, "Giovanni Battista Castrodardo Bellunese traduttore dell'Alcorano di Macometto (Arrivabene, 1547)," *Oriente moderno. Rivista d'informazione e di studi per la diffusione della conoscenza della cultura dell'oriente sopratutto musulmano* 88, no. 1 (2008), 15–40.

**45** Although Bibliander and his printer Oporinus resisted the city council publishing the first edition, the book must have been a monetary success. A second edition, featuring minor changes, was issued in Basel in 1550. See Carlo de Frede, *La prima traduzione italiana del Corano sullo sfondo dei rapporti tra Cristianità e Islam nel Cinquecento* (Naples: Instituto universitario orientale, 1967), 10, and Hartmut Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation, Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1995), 262.

not offer a new translation from the Arabic, because its text was based on the Latin translation made in 1143 in Toledo by the commission of Peter the Venerable, the Abbot of Cluny.[46]

The complete history of European Qur'an translations is too vast to be discussed here. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the historic ambience in which the first printed Qur'an translation originated. Bibliander's so-called "Basel Affair" sheds unique light on the perception and instrumentalization of the Qur'an in the age of Reformation.[47] Bibliander's Qur'an translation not only was meant to refute Islam and to inform the reader about the menacing Ottoman Empire (agendas made clear by its introductory texts), but also became a potent rhetorical device deployed within inner-Christian theological debates.[48] Both sides, Catholics and Protestants, regarded the Qur'an as the "blueprint" of all heresies, against which all other erroneous beliefs could be exposed and judged.[49] According to this understanding of the Qur'an, Martin Luther emphasized multiple similarities between Muhammad and the Papacy,[50] and, in turn, propaganda in support of the Catholic Church commonly associated Protestant thought with Islamic teachings.[51]

As a follower of the Waldensian gospel, which was branded and persecuted as heretical by the Roman Church since the thirteenth century, Andrea Arrivabene himself became directly involved in Christian religious conflict and was actually accused of heresy.[52] However, his *Alcorano* does not contain an attack against the Catholic Church and was not raised in the context of the accusation.[53] Published in

**46** For a discussion of the translation of 1143, see Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*.

**47** The best scholarly analysis of this topic remains Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitlater der Reformation*.

**48** See Harry Clark, "The Publication of the Koran in Latin: A Reformation Dilemma," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 1 (1984), 3–12.

**49** Luther's main interest in the Qur'an was a "polemische[ ] Gegenüberstellung von Papstkirche und Türkenreich: den Koran in seinem wahren Charakter zu erkennen ist so wichtig wie die Auseinandersetzung mit Allem anderen innerhalb der Kirche, was dem wahren Evangelium entgegensteht." See Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 15. Bobzin explains the passage thus: "Erst die genaue Kenntnis des Korans ermöglicht ja die zutreffende Diagnose der Feinde im inneren der Kirche: das sind in erster Linie das Papsttum zu Rom, und in zweiter Linie die Anhänger Thomas Müntzers, die Widertäufer und Antitrinitaner." Ibid., 18. The same exploitation of the Qur'an can still be found in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. For example, in Humphrey Prideaux's book *The True Nature of Imposture fully display'd in the Life of Mahomet* published in 1696, Prideaux used the Qur'an to prove the veracity of Christian belief in contrast to the contemporary movement of the Deists.

**50** See Ricoldo da Montecroce, *Verlegung des Alcoran*, chap. VII, and Egil Grislis, "Luther and the Turks," *Muslim World* 64, no. 3 (1974), especially 183.

**51** To expose similarities between Protestants and Muslims was also the aim of the works of the Catholic writer Johann Albrecht Widmannstetter. See Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 7, 356–358.

**52** Frede, *La prima traduzione*, 40.

**53** Ibid., 42–43.

Venice, the specific nature of Arrivabene's book is best understood in regard to the contemporary historic-political context of the Venetian Republic.

Firstly, it must be emphasized that the introduction to the volume stresses that the main purpose of the book was to help readers achieve and maintain a peaceful symbiosis with Muslim potentates.[54] The author's suggestion of fruitful coexistence with the Muslim states, namely the Ottomans, is consistent with the general tenor of the political stance of the Venetian Republic, in which religious differences were in most cases considered to be of less importance than profitable trade connections.

Secondly, the *Alcorano* can be described as a manifestation of emotional ambivalence, that is, of coexisting fear and attraction, with which the Venetians perceived the Muslim "Other".[55] The book not only reflects the European fascination for Muslim themes, it introduces itself as the new authority on Islam: its authenticity is underscored in its title, which advertises that in addition to the Qur'an translation itself, it also contains information on the Islamic costumes and laws. Furthermore, the title page engages the viewer through the lavish complexity of the *cornice istoriata*—initially attracting the attention through the presentation of visual similarities between Muhammad's biography and the lives of Christian saints—only to subvert these parallels, in the very last scene, wherein Muhammad is sensationally depicted as an antichrist.

Thirdly, the title page's revelatory rhetoric corresponds with contemporary modes of representing Islam, especially when compared to one of the most widely read and highly estimated examples of *Turcica*, a genre which was very popular at the end of the fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth centuries. This is the *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia turcorum* (Treatise on the Customs, Living Conditions, and Wickedness of the Turks) of George of Hungary. This text is pertinent to any discussion of the *Alcorano* because it was also part of Bibliander's edition of the Qur'an—which, because of his extensive supplementary material concerning Muslim belief and the Turks, was named an "Encyclopedia of Islam"—and must therefore have been known to Arrivabene. In the report of his prolonged captivity in the Ottoman Empire, where he was held for twenty years, George of Hungary warns the reader against the so-called Muslim deception, declaring that although he had experienced the Ottomans as a morally virtuous and highly cultivated people, he perceives their laudable attributes to be a fraudulent façade, through which the devil tries to persuade Christians

**54** In his introduction Arrivabene argues that the knowledge of Muslim practices is pivotal for this purpose. Arrivabene, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, (unpaginated) reads: "meglio come haversi da governate in ogni evento, ò di pace ò di guerra che possa nascere, non essendo di piccola importanza a il saper si di maniera portarsi con un tal potentato, ch'egli non sia piu nimico."

**55** This dichotomy in Western European perceptions of the Ottoman was described by Hans Joachim Kissling and subsequently adopted by others scholars. See Hans J. Kissling, "Türkenfurcht und Türkenhoffnung im 15./16. Jahrhundert. Zur Geschichte eines 'Komplexes'," *Südost-Forschungen. Internationale Zeitschrift für Geschichte, Kultur und Landeskunde Südosteuropas* 23 (1964), 1–18.

to renounce their belief.[56] The warning against the attractiveness of Islam was of contemporary importance. Not only did George of Hungary feel in "danger" of converting to Islam, a matter he strongly regretted after his escape, but also this was not uncommon during the sixteenth century, when cohorts of Christians, who were often experienced and specialized laborers, such as seafarers, brass founders, and other technicians, defected to the Ottoman Empire and occasionally even embraced Islam.[57] This trend was considered to be particularly threatening to the Venetian Republic, because its maritime empire was sustained by sound knowledge of seafaring and navigation, which could easily be lost through the unchecked migration of skilled workers to the rival Ottoman Empire. Thus, it seems that Arrivabene's *Alcorano* adopted George of Hungary's rhetoric regarding the deceptive allure of Muslim belief, a point which is reinforced through the visual magnetism of the volume's complex title page. Moreover, the elaborate nature of the cover illustration was undoubtedly intended both to elevate and enhance the popularity of the book, and also to advise Venetian readers to abide by their State and their Christian faith.

The next major transformations in the depiction of the Prophet do not emerge in published translations of the Qur'an but rather in illustrated historical works. Although the expressions "Profeta dei Turchi," "Prophet der Türken," and "Prophete des Turcs" became synonyms for Muhammad, and despite the fact that the Qur'an was commonly referred to as the "Turkish law" and the "Türkenbibel" in the fifteenth

**56** George of Hungary sees in Muhammad a forerunner of Antichrist and describes the attractiveness of Islam and the Ottoman Empire as the work of the devil. See Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus condictionibus et nequicia turcorum [1481]. Traktat über die Sitten, die Lebensverhältnisse und die Arglist der Türken*, ed. Reinhard Klockow (Köln: Böhlau, 1993), 42 and 165, and Albrecht Classen, "The World of the Turks Described by an Eye-Witness: Georgius de Hungaria's Dialectical Discourse on the Foreign World of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Early Modern History* 7, no. 3–4 (2003), 277. Regarding the European experience of the dangerous "seductiveness" of Islam, see also Giovannini, *L'immagine dell'Islam*, 193–200.

**57** Eric R. Dursteller notes that "[t]he period from 1500 to 1650 represents the golden age of the renegade; their numbers were so great that the flow from Christianity to Islam has been characterized as a "haemorrhage of men" and a "religious nomadism." See Dursteller, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 112. For more detailed statistics see Lucia Rostagno, *Mi faccio turco: esperienze ed immagini dell'Islam nell'Italia moderna* (Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 1983). Carlo De Frede, who completed the authoritative analysis of Andrea Arrivabene's *Alcorano* saw it as a product also made for the numerous Italian renegades who converted to the Muslim faith while making their fortunes in the Ottoman Empire. Frede writes "[d]unque il numero e la frequenza grandissima dei rinnegati (tra i quali i più erano provenienti dai dominî veneti) poteva facilmente sollecitare un editore veneziano a offrire loro, sul mercato librario, un testo volgare della Scrittura ch'essi ufficialmente avrebbero dovuto imparare." See Frede, *La prima traduzione*, 52.

century, it was not until the very end of the sixteenth century that the Prophet was first represented in the guise of an Ottoman sovereign.[58]

The first printed image of Muhammad in distinctively Ottoman dress is to be found in the *Acta Mechmeti I. Saracenorum Principis* (Records of Mehmed I. Ruler of the Saracens) published by Johann Theodor and Johann Israel de Bry in 1597 in Frankfurt (fig. 15).[59] The book contains a history of the Islamic dynasties commencing with the foundation of Islam during the life of Muhammad and concluding with prophecies of the future downfall of the Ottoman Empire. Muhammad is described as a historical figure, given the name "Mehmet I" and is depicted according to conventional representations of Turkish sultans, wearing a moustache and dressed in a lavish royal caftan and a large Ottoman turban.[60] The renaming of Muhammad as Mehmet I also enacted a dynastic link with the reigning sultan Mehmet III (r. 1595–1603) under whom, according to the predictions contained in the second part of the book, the Ottoman Empire will collapse.[61]

The entire engraved title page expresses the ongoing enmity between the Muslim and Christian Empires. This antagonism is chiefly expressed in the strict opposition of the figure of Muhammad on the left versus a Byzantine emperor on the right side. The opposition of both sides is echoed in the upper portion of the page, which features the confrontation of a janissary and a Christian knight, both dressed in contemporary military uniforms. In the lower section of the page, the dichotomy is manifested again through the juxtaposition of male and female demonic figures. The central cartouche,

**58** A precursor to visual representations of Muhammad wearing Ottoman cloth can be found in an illuminated manuscript of Robert of Ketton's Latin Translation of the Qur'an, produced at the beginning of the sixteenth century. See Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms. lat. 3670, fol. 1r.

**59** The De Bry brothers functioned both as editors of the book and the producers of its cooper engravings. For a more detailed description of the scenes illustrating the biography of Muhammad and a consideration of its sources, see Le Thiec, *'Et il y aura'*, 123–130; Ulrike Ilg, "Vom Reisebericht zum ethnographischen Kompendium. Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte von Nicolas de Nicolays ‚Quatre Premiers Livres des Navigations et Peregrations orientales' (1567)," in *Text und Bild in Reiseberichten des 16. Jahrhunderts. Westliche Zeugnisse über Amerika und das Osmanische Reich*, ed. Ulrike Ilg (Venice: Marsilio, 2008), 161–192. While the book's title omits an author's name, in a contemporary document it is reported that the original German version of the book was written by a man called Michael Julius, whose biography has so far not been studied at length. See Michael van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 403–404.

**60** This image strongly recalls representations of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566), under whom the Ottoman Empire had its "golden age", and who was the subject of numerous images produced by European artists. See Alberto Saviello, "El Gran Turco – Der 'maskierte' Sultan in der italienischen Druckgraphik des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, ed. Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 213–226.

**61** The only difference made between the Prophet Muhammad and the rulers of the Ottoman dynasty on the title page is that it names the Sultan Mehmet III and his people as the new ("modernum") Turks.


**Fig. 15:** Johann Theodor de Bry, untitled, 1597. Engraving on paper, 189 × 147 mm. *I. Acta Mechmeti I Saracenorvm principis: natales, vitam, victorias, imperivm et mortem eius ominosam complectentia; genealogia successorum eiusdem ad modernum vsq[ue] Mechmetem III*. […] (Frankfurt a.M.: De Bry, 1597), title page.

positioned between two opposing sides, adheres to this binary composition through the positioning of a male and a female captive on either side of an allegorical figure of victory.

Within this antagonistic structure, Muhammad plays the definitive role of the fraudster. This is accentuated by the bird that flies close to his left ear. This scene reflects the legend of the tamed dove[62] and is comparable to the iconography of Pope Gregory the Great, who is often shown in illustrated manuscripts recording the words of the Holy Ghost which speaks to him in form of a dove placed next to his ear.[63] Again, as in the title page of Arrivabene's *Alcorano*, Muhammad is represented according to established Christian iconography in order to suggest and to simulate holiness. The major difference between Muhammad's depictions on the *Alcorano* and on this title page, however, is that Muhammad is presented here as a cunning "fraudster" and not in the eschatological garments of Antichrist.

It is equally important to explore why the artist depicted Muhammad beside a Byzantine emperor almost one hundred and fifty years after the fall of the eastern Roman Empire in 1453. The inclusion of a Byzantine emperor seems to refer to the second half of the book, in which Basileus Leo the Wise (r. 889–911) is listed among the foreseers of the future demise of the Ottoman Empire.[64] Accordingly, it is plausible that the print shows Leo the Wise as the emperor, who gazes pointedly at Muhammad, seemingly aware of the Prophet's supposedly fraudulent holiness, reflecting the emperor's prophetic vision of the doom of Islam. Thus, optical vision is presented on the title page as an empirical instrument to perceive truth—a point that is not only important for the richly illustrated products of the De Bry printing shop in general, but also in the assessment of the visual representation of Muhammad specifically. While Muhammad is characterized as producing a deceptive image of himself, and thus as a creator of a false image more broadly, it is the aim of the book, which interpolates the Prophet's biography with further detailed engravings representing the deeds of his life, to look behind the supposedly misleading surface of Muhammad's persona and to unveil his prodigious nature.[65]

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**62** Please see the chapter authored by Michelina Di Cesare in this volume.

**63** The story of this faked miracle first appears in the *Libellus in partibus transmarinis de Machometi fallaciis* (Little Book of Machomet's fallacies in overseas) and was dispersed across a wide area throughout the thirteenth century through its inclusion in Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale* (Historical Mirror) and the *Legenda aurea* (Golden Legend) by Jacopo de Voragine. See D'Ancona, *La leggenda di Maometto*, 59 and Annette Seitz, "Darstellungen Mohammeds und seiner Glaubenslehre in lateinischen Weltchroniken," in *Mittelalter im Labor: Die Mediävistik testet Wege zu einer transkulturellen Europawissenschaft*, ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 116–130.

**64** One of the prophecies contained in the book is ascribed to this former Byzantine ruler.

**65** A more detailed discussion of the emblematic nature of the illustrations in De Bry's *Acta*, which presents the life of Muhammad in seven further engravings, will be addressed in the forthcoming book by Alberto Saviello.

The antagonistic structure of the title page's composition, which expresses hope for the fall of Islam and an ultimate Christian victory, clearly indicates that the perceptions of Islam and of the Prophet at this specific moment in history were largely influenced by the unease surrounding the contemporary confrontation between Christian Europe and the Muslim Ottoman Empire.

A subsequent development in the representation of the Prophet Muhammad in Western Europe appears in Michel Baudier's *Histoire général de la religion des Turcs* (Comprehensive History of the Religion of the Turks) from 1625 (fig. 16).[66] This illustration provides the readers for the first time with a depiction of the Prophet according to the conventions of contemporary portraiture, where he is presented as an individual, albeit one still dressed in a sumptuous Turkish costume.[67] The copper engraving is located at the very beginning of his biography and is followed by a description of Islam. What is novel about this image is the fact that the illustrator did not portray Muhammad according to a prescribed role or *topos*, but rather aimed at presenting Muhammad's individual nature or personality, at least so it appears at first glance. Furthermore, the huge bust-length portrait, which commands more than half of the page, imparts a physical and almost tangible presence. This is achieved not only by the shadow casting over the back wall, creating the illusion of space and temporality, but also and mostly by the central cap (*taj*) placed at the very top of the voluminous turban. The cap seems to overlap the picture's frame and, thus, leaves the impression that Muhammad protrudes from the two-dimensional surface of the picture into the actual space of the viewer.

In contrast to this strongly realistic—perhaps even hyper-realistic—manner of representation, and the three-dimensional quality that characterizes this image, Muhammad's gaze is less expressive. He appears contemplative and somewhat unaware of the external world, and there is a hint of melancholy in his eyes. Portrayed in this vulnerable state of self-reflection, the image allows the viewer to stare at the Prophet unchallenged and without any fear or hesitation. And yet, his thoughtful expression

**66** The book was published again with this portrait in 1632 and in 1641.

**67** In fact, the picture included in Baudier's text is only the second representation of Muhammad according to the conventions of the genre of portraiture. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Christoffel van Sichem designed a face of Muhammad which was included in 1608 in a catalogue of heretics titled *Apocalypsis insignium aliquot Haeresiarcharum* (Apocalypsis, or, The Revelation of Certain Notorious Advancers of Heresie), attributed to Hendrik van Haestens. However, the picture in the *Apocalypsis* was created mainly to provide a grotesque and repugnant view of the Prophet. Thus, Haestens's representation of Muhammad hardly corresponds to the definition of a portrait as a "self-referential" representation of an individual. For discussion of the criteria defining portraiture as a genre, see Gottfried Böhm, *Bildnis und Individuum: Über den Ursprung der Porträtmalerei in der italienischen Renaissance* (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1985). For the Islamic tradition of Muhammad's portrait, see Oleg Grabar and Mika M. Natif, "The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad," *Studia Islamica* 96 (2003), 19–38.


DES TVRCS. Liv. I. 7

MAHOMET PROPHETE DES TVRCS.

*La naiſſance, la vie, & la mort de Mahomet, impoſteur abominable, & faux Prophete des Turcs, Mores, Arabes, Egyptiens, Perſes, Tartares, & quelques Indiens.*

CHAP. II.

DEvx rares hommes de l'antiquité diſcourans de l'ambition, & de l'ambitieux, depeignoient par leurs parolles la verité de tous les deux: car l'vn diſoit de celle-là, qu'elle eſtoit la baſe ſur laquelle ſap-

**Fig. 16:** *MAHOMET PROPHETE DES TVRCS*, 1625(?). Engraving on paper, Height of page ca. 24 mm, engraving 147 × 152 mm. Michel Baudier, *Histoire générale de la religion des Turcs, Avec la naissance, la vie, et la mort, de leur prophete Mahomet, et les actions des quatre premiers Caliphes qui l'ont suiui* [...] (Paris: C. Cramoisy, 1625), 7.

confers a level of dignity to his image. Moreover, his facial expression and his physiognomy, such as the strongly contracted eyebrows, the forcefully pressed wrinkles in his forehead, and the crinkles at the root of his nose, are counterbalanced by the presence of a subtle smile imparting a level of vivacity, interiority and kindness.[68]

However, the text that accompanies this image claims that Muhammad was a fraud and negates his prophethood. Therefore, the positive impression of the Prophet's character reinforced through the study of this carefully executed "portrait" actually contradicts the text, which clearly designates Muhammad as a "professional impostor". But what is the rationale behind the invention of a positive portrait of the Prophet, when it is promptly negated by the text, obviating the visual content of the image? To answer this question it is necessary to analyze the interrelation between text and image specific to this particular folio. This contradiction between a favorable visual representation and slanderous textual description is deliberate, in which text and image are designed to transmit a message together, acting as a pair. When read in tandem with the text, the sympathetic and honorable impression of Muhammad transmitted by his image acts as a sort of "proof" of the Prophet's alleged talent for fraudulent deception through the ability of the image to conceal his negative character behind a distinguished appearance.[69] Compared to the complicit nature of the visual impression, which presents a positive perception of the Prophet, the text functions not only as the medium for the transmission of knowledge but also as the arbiter of truth for the Christian reader.

Furthermore, the composition of the engraving seems to enact an intentional comparison with miraculous images of Christ, the *acheiropoieta*, a view which is supported not only by the conventional characterization of Muhammad as an Antichrist, but also by some physiognomic features of Muhammad's representation. This includes his bifurcated beard, which appears in many depictions of Moses as well as in traditional representations of Christ in the *Mandylion* and in the *Vera Icon*. Thus, already the form of the beard indicates Muhammad's claim to prophethood. In addition, the small mouth, the line of the eyebrows, and the unfocused view of the Prophet insinuate the famous pictures of Christ (fig. 17).[70]

The illusionistic quality of the engraving can also be interpreted as a direct allusion to the miraculous pictures of Christ. Just as these images of Christ characteristically appear to float above the surface of the picture plane, or to levitate above it, the face of Muhammad in this portrait seems to protrude in a similar fashion from the surface of the image. Whereas Christ's face, despite its vivid expression and seeming

**68** See Böhm, *Bildnis und Individuum*, 9–34.

**69** The motif of the physically attractive traitor is found throughout in medieval literature. See for example the *The Song of Roland*, 1960–1961.

**70** A vast bibliography exists on this topic. See, for example, Gerhard Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel: Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002).

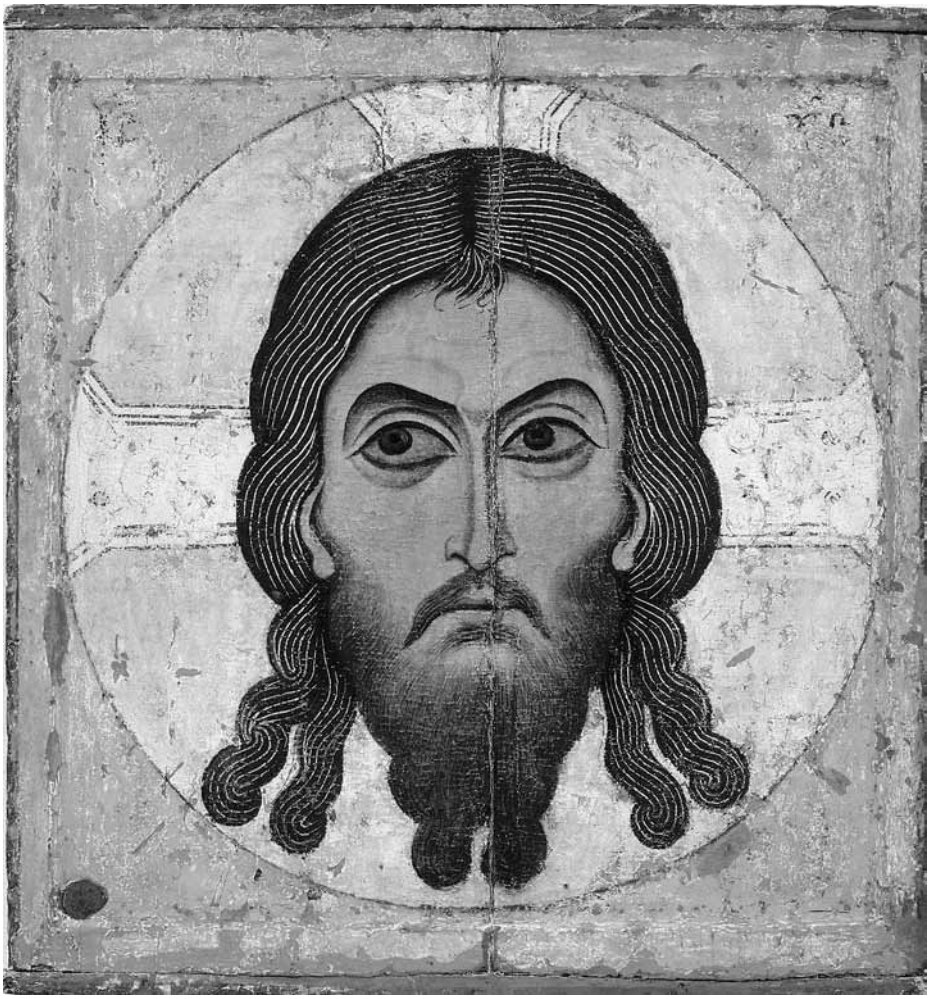

**Fig. 17:** Mandylion, Second half of the 12th century, 770 × 710 mm. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia.

separation from the veil, remains a two-dimensional representation, the illusionism of Muhammad's picture imbues him with a virtual corporeality, akin to a portrait bust.[71] This difference is clearly indicated by the Prophet's shadow cast on the back wall. The constructed antithesis of Christ's spiritual versus Muhammad's corporal presence in this image coincides with conventional Christian criticisms of Islam. The author Baudier, for example, claims that Muhammad confronted his people with a material, as opposed to a spiritual image of God, and also that the Muslim conception of the afterlife preoccupies itself with corporeal lust as opposed to spiritual elevation.[72] Therefore, in contrast to the Christian concept of the true image—the *Vera Icon*—created by divine intervention, the "icon" of the Prophet is artificially made and, therefore, a "false" picture, that, when adored, ensnares the viewer in idolatry.[73] Last but not least, the relatively small initial of the letter "D" at the beginning of chapter II, positioned just below the engraving, akin to a footnote, also reinforces the notion of his alleged falsehood. The initial contains a grotesque mask bearing an offensive expression, which harshly contrasts with Muhammad's sympathetic look, and thus casts a doubt on the trustworthiness of his portrait.

**71** On the "immaterial" nature of the image of Christ's face imprinted on the *sudarium*, see Gerhard Wolf, "From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the 'Disembodied' Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West," in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998), esp. 165.

**72** Concerning Muhammad's vision of God during his ascension to heaven, Baudier writes "A la verité il [Mahomet] parle tres-mal du principal object d'icelle: car discourant de la personne de Dieu, il luy donne le mouvement local, comme à un corps pesant & perissable: En l'Azoare trente six, & ailleurs ordonne quatorze chandelles tousiours esclairantes devant sa face divine, dont la monstreuse longueur est de cinq cens annees de chemin." See Michel Baudier, *Histoire générale de la religion des Turcs, Avec la naissance, la vie, et la mort, de leur prophete Mahomet [...]* (Paris: Claude Cramoisy, 1625), 30. The critique that the Muslims speak of God using "unacceptably anthropomorphic terms" can be found also in Hugo Grotius, *Truth of the Christian Religion (1632)*, as is cited by David A. Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions. Comparative Religion in Seventh- and Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 99. Furthermore, it was commonly believed by Christians that Muhammad's teachings and the paradise he described were consumed with sensuality and carnal pleasures, and had no spiritual qualities.

**73** One of the main characteristics of holy images in the Christian cult was the claim that they were not made by human hands (*acheiropoieton*). Any intervention made by an artist to these images or to subsequent copies of them was undesired, because it would obviate the claim of the image to authenticity and divine origin. See Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1990), 66. The argument that an illusionistic image can betray the viewer and therefore lead to false image worship can also be found in the theological treaties of the fifteenth century. See Norbert Schnitzler, "Illusion, Täuschung und schöner Schein: Probleme der Bilderverehrung im späten Mittelalter; Schaufrömmigkeit – ein Missverständnis," in *Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter: politisch-soziale Kontexte, visuelle Praxis, körperliche Ausdrucksformen*, ed. Klaus Schreiner and Marc Müntz (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002), 232.

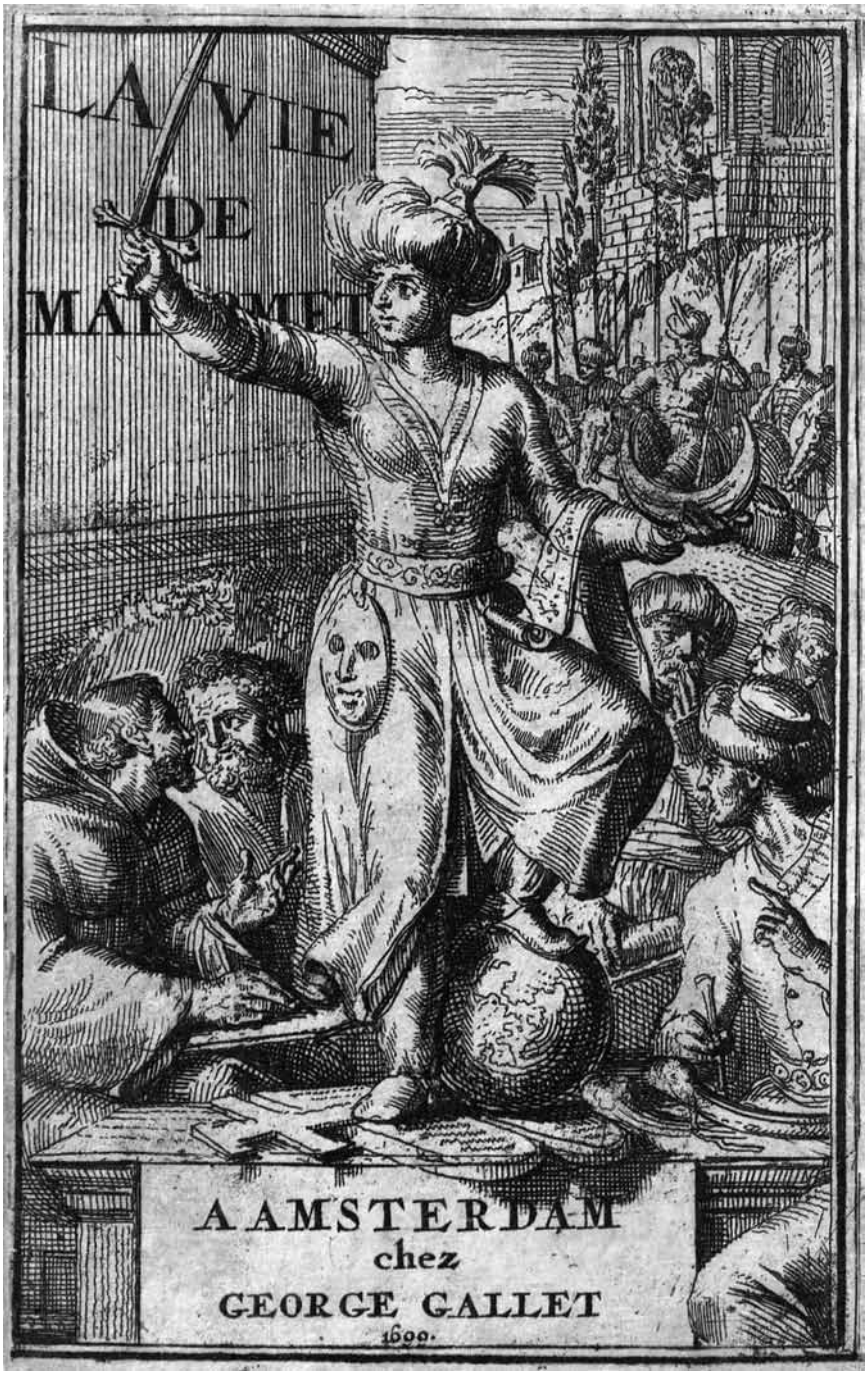


**Fig. 18:** Untitled, 1698. Engraving on paper, ca. 140 × 90 mm. Humphrey Prideaux, *La Vie de Mahomet, où l'on découvre amplement la Vérité de l'imposture: Enrichie de figures en Taille-douces* (Amsterdam: George Gallet, 1698), title page.

The ambiguity of a lifelike but simultaneously somewhat artificial representation of Muhammad is intensified even more in the next example (fig. 18). The title page of Humphrey Prideaux's *La Vie de Mahomet,* published in 1698 in Amsterdam, offers the viewer a new approach to the depiction the Prophet, but one which still contains this inherent duality. Instead of portraying Muhammad's "individuality", the artist of the engraving deliberately created uncertainty regarding the figure's true nature. Although the physiognomy of the central figure strongly recalls the face of the Prophet appearing in the engraving of the marriage of Muhammad and Khadija on page eleven in this biography, the viewer is left unable to decide whether it represents the living Prophet, a statue of him, or even a personification of Islam generally.[74]

At first glance, Muhammad, depicted as a young man elevated on a relatively high platform in the foreground of the picture, resembles a statue. This impression results from the arrangement of the figure and from its gestures, such as the victorious presentation of a sword and a small object in the form of a crescent, which isolates him from the men surrounding the podium, who are engaged in vigorous discussion. Yet the scale of the figure, which is similar to the others, and the smooth texture of his skin and clothing, gives no indication of a "material" difference between his figure and the men encircling it. Moreover, the lively, animated expression on the face of Muhammad reinforces the impression that this is not a sculpture of him at all but rather the Prophet himself.

However, the attributes included in his depiction negate this notion. Most of the objects, such as the globe, the tablets featuring the Ten Commandments, and the cross on which the figure stands, cannot be related to the historical person of Muhammad and function symbolically; that is, as a metaphoric desecration of the Testaments and as a desire for world domination. Charged with symbolic attributes rather than with historical objects which could plausibly have been in his possession (such as a cloak or sword), the figure of Muhammad is revealed to be an artfully constructed image, or more precisely, a personification.

These metaphorical attributes not only call into question the authenticity of this representation of the Prophet, but also emphasize the morally ambiguous nature of the figure. The identification of the figure as masculine is undermined by the inclusion of evidently female breasts. The inherent sexual hybridity resulting from this detail overtly conflicts with the perceived verisimilitude of the depiction, evoking the convention of representing allegories in the form of female personifications. At the same time, on a symbolic level, the breast defames Muhammad as effeminate.[75]

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**74** In the scene "Mahomet marchand, Epousant Cadiga," the young Muhammad appears with the same face. See Humphrey Prideaux, *La Vie de Mahomet* (Amsterdam: George Gallet, 1698), 11.

**75** Hugo Grotius's comparison of Muhammad to Christ includes the phrase "Mahumet a long time was robber, and always effeminate." Hugo Grotius, *True Religion* (London: John Haviland, 1632). Reprinted in *The English Experience: its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile*, no. 318

The general ambiguity manifested throughout this image also characterizes the mask that hangs from Muhammad's belt. As in Baudier's "portrait", the mask again undermines the reliability of the representation of the face of the Prophet. However, the specific meaning of this attribute is disputable, because in the seventeenth century it appeared in many personifications and carried a multitude of connotations.[76] The first and most likely meaning of Muhammad's mask derives from the traditional association of masks with fraud and falsity. Yet already in 1614, the mask was specifically deployed as an attribute of the personification of heresy in a painting by Pietro Telesphoro de Pomis.[77] Indeed, Prideaux's text describes Muhammad as a heretic, raising the possibility that the mask was included to communicate heretical overtones.[78]

Nevertheless, the mask could also connote an "artful" fraud. Since Antiquity a mask symbolized the dramatic arts, functioning as the traditional attribute of Thalia and Melpomene, the Muses of comedy and tragedy. By the seventeenth century the mask had become a basic symbol of the imitation of nature inherent to the performing and visual arts. This specific meaning matches the literary description of the Prophet in so far as he was accused of preaching an invented religion that merely imitated

(Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1971), 329. The frontispiece of George Sandy's book on the Ottoman Empire also represents the Sultan Ahmet I (r. 1603–1617) with female breasts to indicate his effeminate character. See George Sandys, *A Relation of a Iourney begun An: Dom: 1610 [...]* (London: R. Field, 1615), reprinted in *The English Experience: its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile*, no. 554 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1973).

**76** According to Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* of 1593, which became the most influential description of allegories in seventeenth-century Europe, the mask carries both positive and negative implications. The negative implications, which are in the majority, are personified by *Bugia*, *Fraude*, *Inganno*, *Otio*, *Simulatione*, *Tradimento*. Neutral or positive meanings of the mask include the personification of *Comedia*, *Imitatione*, *Pittura*, and *Thalia*, which are all linked to the idea of the arts. See Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia: overo descrittione di diverse imagini cavate dall'antichità, & di propria invenzione [...]* [Rome, 1602], introd. Erna Mandowsky (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984), 46, 174, 228, 374, 455, 489, 70, 223, 404, and 347. Furthermore, the mask is destroyed by the allegory of *Lealtà* as a symbol of falseness. See Ibid., 290. For an extensive study on the iconology of the mask, see Eckhard Leuschner, *Persona, Larva, Maske: ikonologische Studien zum 16. bis frühen 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1997).

**77** The painting shows Archduke Ferdinand's triumph over heresy. False belief is personified as an old and ugly woman losing her beautiful mask. See Leuschner, *Persona, Larva, Maske*, 130 and 487.

**78** Although Prideaux refutes the legendary stories of Muhammad's false miracles, he nevertheless describes him as a condemnable impostor. Furthermore, Prideaux claims that "none of those Marks and Properties which are so visible in the Imposture Mahomet, and must be also in all other Impostures in Religion, can possibly be charged upon that holy Religion, which we profess." Thus, Muhammad is exploited not only to denote the falseness of all heretic movements—Prideaux implicitly refers here to the Deists—but also to prove *ex negativo* the righteousness of the Christian belief. See Hunphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture fully display'd in the Life of Mahomet with a Discourse annex'd, for the Vindicating of Christianity from this Charge*: *Offered to the Consideration of the Deists of the present Age [...]* (London: printed for William Rogers, 1698), Introduction, IV. This passage was not included into the French version published in the same year in Amsterdam.

the supposed veracity of Christian doctrine. Thus, the mask suspended from Muhammad's belt seems to convey a meaning that extends beyond the simple accusation of heresy. In the context of this representation of Muhammad in the form of a theatrically posed figure, which seems to oscillate between actual human being and statue, the mask can be read as a symbol of imitation and of image making itself[79], akin to *Pittura*, the personification of painting.[80] As in Baudier, the engraver of this title page plays on the analogy between the illusionistic capabilities of his art and the supposedly deceitful character of the represented.[81]

A third meaning can be deduced from the etymology of the word "persona", which was used either to denote the social status and role of a man (lat. *persona*) or to refer to a mask as an object (lat. *persona*).[82] Thus, the mask placed at his hip may also be seen as indicative of Muhammad's social role, as distinguishable from his character as an individual. Within this complex nexus of multiple meanings, the inclusion of the mask as an attribute arouses the viewer's suspicion: does the mask symbolize the removal of the Prophet's *persona*, revealing to the viewer his underlying nature and motivations, or does it have the opposite function, indicating the duplicitous nature of the engraved figure, which, through the detail of the mask and its inherent allusion to theatricality and artifice, presents itself as a masterful simulation, and even an artfully produced "false" image?

An answer to this question is perhaps suggested by the inclusion of a group of figures gathered around the central platform. Two of the men, the Christian monk on the left and the man in oriental costume to the right of the base, are shown writing. Both are depicted in the act of transforming their visual experience into the written word, thus creating textual images of the Prophet. Therefore, the composition of the engraving itself suggests that these literary descriptions are based on contradictory

**79** Regarding the myth of Pygmalion and the issue of artificially-produced vivacity see George L. Hersey, *Falling in Love with Statues. Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Victor I. Stoichita: *The Pygmalion Effect. From Ovid to Hitchcock* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), and Aleida Assmann, "Belebte Bilder. Der Pygmalion-Mythos zwischen Religion und Kunst," in *Pygmalion. Die Geschichte des Mythos in der abendländischen Kultur*, ed. Mathias Mayer and Gerhard Neumann (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach, 1997), 63–87. Concerning the representations of Muhammad as an idol, see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 129–164.

**80** See Leuschner, *Persona, Larva, Maske*, 145–146.

**81** By the end of the seventeenth century it was common in art theory as well as in critiques of art to emphasize the inherent capability of the image to delude vision. The topos of the painter as an "honest cheat" arose, and from the second half of the century onwards the illusionistic qualities of pictures were subject to increasing theoretical and technical appreciation, especially in the Netherlands. See Gregor J.M. Weber: *Der Lobtopos des ‚lebenden' Bildes. Jan Vos und sein ‚Zeege der Schilderkunst' von 1654* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1991), 98 and 103.

**82** Hannah Baader, "Anonym: Sua cuique Persona. Maske, Rolle, Porträt," in *Porträt*, ed. Rudolf Preimesberger, Hannah Baader and Nicola Suthor (Berlin: Reimer, 1999), 239–246.

experiences, because the writers positioned among the divergent groups to the left and to the right of the image perceive the figure of the Prophet from different points of view. The two Christian monks, recognizable by their cloth and tonsured hair who stand on the left side of Muhammad are mainly confronted with negative and domineering attributes—the sword in Muhammad's hand, the mask, and the desecrated religious symbols under his foot. In contrast, the Muslim writing on a parchment scroll perceives the figure of Muhammad from the opposite side, and from closer proximity to positive objects, according to his worldview, such as the globe, the crescent, and the scroll hanging down from Muhammad's arm.[83]

Furthermore, the inclusion of these scribes in the title page of Muhammad's biography conveys another important layer of meaning. Through their insertion, the act of writing in which they are engaged adopts a self-referential quality, which, aside from the most sensational and impressive figurative representations of the Prophet, points to a more abstract method of perceiving and presenting him, and thus to the book itself. The wall behind the scribe to the left not only bears the foreshortened inscription of the book's title, but also opens the pictorial space through its diagonal alignment to the upper right, prompting the eyes of the viewer to consider the background of the image, where an armed cavalry troop is shown assembling at the outskirts of a town. Although the rules of relative scale dictate that the scene occurs a fair distance from the foreground, the riding commander of the troops is noticeably prominent. He not only is the biggest figure depicted in the background, but also is framed by the crescent held by the central figure of Muhammad in the foreground. Besides the foreshortened title of the book, this visual and symbolic connection is the only linking element between the content of the foreground and background, suggesting that the captain of the cavalry can also be understood as Muhammad, depicted a second time as an elder man within a historical scene inspired by an episode of his life.[84] Therefore, the title page of the biography of the Prophet seems to simultaneously offer two different representations of Muhammad. The artist deliberately distinguished between the historical person of Muhammad, shown in the "historically distant" background of the image, and a personification of Islam bearing Muhammad's face, which engages the viewer directly and immediately in the foreground.

Prideaux's title page maintains standard prejudices against Islam, but, instead of relying upon standard iconographical formulas, such as depicting Muhammad in the guise of Antichrist or of an Ottoman Sultan, the engraver has represented the Prophet as a topical and artistically constructed figure of his own. Thus, its ambiguous nature and monumental effect imparts again the medieval suspicion that Muhammad is

**83** In a second version of this frontispiece published in 1699, the scroll of the Muslim writer is much easier to recognize. Furthermore, the region of the globe on which Muhammad puts his foot features an inscription clearly naming it as Europe.

**84** A similar figure of the elder Muhammad is depicted within this biography.

represented as a false image or an idol. Nevertheless, by representing Muhammad a second time in the separated space in the background of the image, the engraver drew a clear distinction between the historical person and the artificial imaginations of Muhammad passed on by both Christian and Muslim writers and artists. For the first time an image of the Prophet Muhammad reflects not only his historical distance, but also that his representation and interpretation is relative to the different authors' standpoints.

A positive view of the Prophet permeated slowly throughout Europe. Before the first sympathetic biography of Muhammad was published in Western Europe by the Count Henri de Boulainvilliers in 1730,[85] and well before Goethe praised the sublime character of the Qur'an in his *West-Östlicher Diwan* in 1819,[86] already in 1703 a German edition of the Qur'an, published by the Protestant Superintendent David Nerreter, was an important step towards a more historically accurate image of the Prophet.[87] His pursuit of an objective and verifiable assessment of Muhammad is evident throughout the entire work.[88] To name but one example, Nerreter considered the legend of the dove to be unreliable, because he could find no trace of it in biographies of the Prophet propagated by Muslim authors.[89] His critical attitude also manifests itself in

**85** See Henri de Boulainvilliers, *La vie de Mahomed* (London: P. Humbert, 1730). However, Boulainvilliers's text can hardly be described as an objective scholarly work. Rather, his positive evaluation of the Prophet was composed in order to attack the Christian Church. See Peter M. Holt, "The Treatment of Arab History by Prideaux, Ockley and Sale," in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernhard Lewis and Peter M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 300 and Arthur Jeffery, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *The Muslim World* 16 (1926), 327–348.

**86** Already in 1773, long before Goethe published his *West-Östlicher Diwan* in 1819, he lauded the figure of Muhammad in his poem *Mahomets Gesang*. See Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe und der Islam* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 2001), 42.

**87** Minou Reeves evaluates the book differently. In her opinion, Nerreter merely repeats anti-Islamic stereotypes. At first glance her estimation is right, but she fails to notice Nerreter's scholarly scepticism towards the traditionally negative image of the Prophet. See Reeves, *Mohammad in Europe*, 171.

**88** Nerreter was not able to read Arabic and, thus, he had to rely on secondary sources. However, he was careful in his selection of texts. His German translation of the Qur'an, for example, was based on the newest Latin version, translated by Ludovico Marracci, and widely considered at the time to be the best translation available.

**89** This was also the opinion of the Oxford Professor of Arabic, Edward Pocock (1604–1691), which he quotes in the text: "Was insgeheim fürgegeben wird, als hette er eine Taube gewöhnet, ihm aus dem Ohr zu essen, dass man meinen sollte, der Hl. Geist habe ihm den Alkoran also eingegeben, kann aus den Arabischen Scribenten nicht erwiesen werden. Daher auch Grotius, als er vom Pocokio gefragt worden, wo er die Meinung her habe, die er L. 6. der Verit. Relig. von der gewöhnten Tauben angeführt, geantwortet und frey bekannt, dass er's bey keinem Arabischen Scribenten gelesen, sondern in des Scaligeri Notis ad Manilium. Und eben dergleichen Gattung ist auch das Gedicht vom Ochsen, auf dessen Hörnern der Alkoran dem Mahomet soll zugetragen worden seyn, da er eben von seinem Gesetze das Volk gelehrt." See David Nerrter, *Neu-eröffnete Mahometanische Moschea [...]* (Nürnberg: Endter, 1703), 49.

the image of Muhammad. Departing from common practice, Nerreter did not employ an artist to invent a new face for the Prophet (fig. 19). Instead, he commissioned a copy of the image of Muhammad which appeared in the history by Baudier (fig. 16). His efforts to provide a reliable image went even further: the copper engraving is not used as a frontispiece but is included next to a description of the appearance of Muhammad, offering the reader a direct comparison of text and image.[90]

Although it seems that the image provided by Nerreter remained unchanged from the one found in Baudier's text—the portrait resembles its model in pose, costume and physiognomy—one component was considerably altered, impacting the essential message imparted by the picture. Instead of including the simple rectangular frame which encapsulated the image in Baudier's history, Muhammad is now represented in an oval picture frame that evokes sculptural decoration. Moreover, the extension of the rectangular outer frame of the copper engraving into the oval frame of the portrait indicates that the image in Nerreter's book is not a portrait but the picture of a portrait. Through the new framing the picture not only abstains from the exaggerated illusionistic qualities featured in Baudier, but also dissociates itself from any claim to truthfully represent the Prophet. Instead it reveals itself to be the reproduction of a portrait, a fact that Nerreter emphasizes in the text by referring directly to its prototype contained in the work of the renowned historian Baudier.

Yet it seems that Nerreter's desire for historical accuracy was not satisfied. The two strata in which the image operates, the represented historical portrait and its actual reproduction, are also captured in the inscriptions which accompany the portrait, where the engraver has incorporated two forms of lettering. Similar to the image in Baudier, the man depicted is defamed exclusively by the text, where the formula of *der falsche Prophet* (the false Prophet) appears again. The name of the Prophet written in Roman capitals is inscribed in the picture's stone frame, whereas the phrase *der falsche Prophet*, which appears directly below the inscription, is written with the same gothic typeface which is used throughout the book. The two different letter forms suggest that they were made at different times and by different authors. The Roman capital letters belong to an inscription that intentionally appears archaic, whereas the slanderous phrase 'the false Prophet' gives the impression of being a later addition made by the artist or the author himself. The overwriting of the letters, specifically the gothic "S" which clearly overlaps the letter "H" of "MAHVMED", makes these two different instances in time evident: The inscription in capital letters suggests an ancient sculptural memorial apparently made by Muslim worshippers which preserves an "authentic" record of the Prophet, whereas the overwriting in gothic letters that defines the surface of Nerreter's reproduction bears the conventional label of "impos-

**90** Concerning the tradition of the literal descriptions of the Prophet see Rudolf Sellheim, "Das Lächeln des Propheten," in *Festschrift für Adolf Ellegard Jensen*, ed. Eike Haberland, Meinhard Schuster and Helmut Straube (München: Renner, 1964), 621–630.


**Fig. 19:** Christoph Weigel (attr.), *MAHVMED der Falsche Prophet*, 1703. Engraving on paper, 130 × 74 mm. In David Nerreter, *Neu-eröffnete Mahometanische Moschea: […], Fürs andre, Der völlige Alkoran, Nach der besten Edition Ludovici Marraccii, verteutscht, und kürzlich widerlegt wird* (Nürnberg: Wolfgang M. Endters, 1703), 44.

tor". Operating on these two different levels the engraving qualifies the reader's judgment of the Prophet, emphasizing that a negative evaluation of Muhammad is not a given truth but an act of interpretation that is time specific and which therefore must be critically assessed. Through the evident stylistic differences between the two captions, and the superscription of the phrase *der falsche Prophet*, the hand of the author declares its own subjective, interpretive status.

Like Prideaux's title page, Nerreter's portrait distinguishes between the "historical" Prophet and his actual appearance and description. These two images, both created at the turn of the eighteenth century, offer evidence of the relativity then affecting the perception of the Prophet. This phenomenon was not only limited to considerations regarding the historicity of the image of Muhammad, but also encompassed the differences between the Muslim and Christian religious and literary traditions. Nevertheless, this new scholarly approach, which reflects the intellectual inquiry of the Enlightenment, did not necessarily result in an impartial assessment of Muhammad as a religious or historical figure.[91] The engravings in Nerreter and Prideaux demonstrate two opposing approaches to the pictorialization of the Prophet in Europe. In Nerreter's portrait the "real" Prophet remains an indeterminate entity, caught between the two strata of the Islamic and Christian imagination. The picture therefore provided the starting point for a new appraisal of Muhammad which could surpass traditional modes of representation. The artist of Prideaux's title page, however, largely followed the author's traditional, negative characterization of Muhammad. Pointing to the passage of time and the contrasting Muslim and Christian literary traditions, he replaced the historical person with a timeless, supra-individuated figure type, wherein a multitude of Western biases against Islam are compressed.

In the decades following the Amsterdam print of Prideaux's book, the difference between literary images of Muhammad produced by historians and Arabists on the one hand, and visual images produced by playwrights and artists on the other, became more and more evident. Popular taste clearly preferred the sensational imaginations produced by the arts. This change in the popular reception of Muhammad was due to a new taste for Ottoman and Islamic culture generally, which accompanied the gradual ebbing of the Ottoman threat after the second siege of Vienna in 1683 and

**91** Instead, most texts written by scholars and travellers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerning Islam display a paradoxical mixture of a desire for objectivity and also for the maintenance of traditional prejudices; and of fascination with the exotic and also distaste for the alien. Ian R. Netton describes the situation thus: "The lands of the Middle East might indeed be approached overtly, and probably sincerely, out of a desire to slake an Enlightenment thirst for knowledge or to complete an education, but such pure aims did not necessarily imply an absence of prejudice on the part of the traveller or the writer. Paradoxically, however, prejudice against some facets of Islam and the Middle East could sometimes exist side by side with sympathy for others." See Ian R. Netton, "The Mysteries of Islam," in *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, ed. Georg S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 25.

the Empire's subsequent retreat from Middle and Eastern Europe.[92] Emblematic of the change perception of Islam is the title engraving at the beginning of the Amsterdam edition of André du Ryer's translation of the Qur'an into French, published in 1734 (fig. 20).[93] Its artist, Adolf van der Laan, lavishes attention on the different costumes of the figures included in the scene, and in the idyllic landscape and eclectic architecture that surrounds them, while he directs much less effort towards the characterization of the Prophet.

At first glance the image offers no immediate indication of a negative depiction of Muhammad. He is shown on a hill in the center of the picture, preaching to a group of men gathered around him. Muhammad's audience is composed of different ethnicities representative of the geographical areas where Islam was then practiced, which are harmoniously united. In the foreground a black African reclines on the soil in the pose of an ancient river god, while the listeners assembled on the slopes of the hill display stereotypically Chinese, Arab and European features. The variety and richness of their representation recalls Christian iconography of missionary preachers in foreign lands, and the people and animals in the background recall a travelling caravan hurrying to join the listeners gathered around the Prophet. Christian iconography is evoked again through the representation of Muhammad, who sits humbly on a rock and preaches to a large crowd, thus, recalling representations of Jesus's *Sermon on the Mount* (Matt. 5–7).[94]

In contrast to this evocation of Christ, expressed by iconographic similitude, the narrative episodes represented in the background of the frontispiece regenerate negative stereotypes of Muhammad as a traitor and idolater. In the center of the picture, where the landscape opens to reveal a path leading to a city, a group of people surround a cow and a man lying on the ground. The scene refers to a passage of *Surat al-Baqara* ("The Cow," Q 2: 67–73), where Moses orders his people to sacrifice a cow in order to resurrect a man who had been killed by an unknown murderer. In his comment to this passage Ryer explains how the Muslims believe that the touch of the tongue of this sacrificed cow had the power to bring a person back from the dead.[95]

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**92** The most important book to bolster this new mystic and exotic view of the Muslim Orient was Antoine Galland's translation of Mille et Une Nuit (*The Thousand and One Nights*), which he finished in 1717, and which quickly became one of the most widely read books of its time. SeeYuriko Yamanaka and Tetsuo Nishio, ed., *The Arabian Nights and Orientalism: Perspectives from East & West* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2006).

**93** André de Ryer, *L' Alcoran de Mahomet* (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1734). This book was one of the numerous re-editions of Ryer's translation, which was first made in 1649. See Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Arcadian Library in association with Oxford University Press, 2004).

**94** Matt. 5–7.

**95** Ryer's commentary reads "Les Turcs croyent qu'un home ressuscita lors qu'il fut frappé de la langue de cette vache." See Ryer, *L'Alcoran de Mahomet*, 10.

**Fig. 20:** Adolf van der Laan, No Title, 1733. Engraving on paper, 180 × 112 mm. André du Ryer, *L'Alcoran de Mahomet, traduit de l'Arabe par A. Du Ryer [...] Nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1734), title page (detail).

The positioning of the scene in the frontispiece right beside Muhammad's mouth, while he simultaneously composes the Qur'an on his lap and indicates the event in the background, seems to link the representation of the story of the cow to the Prophet's actual speech. The artist must have misunderstood the text and its commentary, because according to the narrative contained in the book, the deceased person was brought back to life by the touch of a piece of the dead cow and not by the tongue of the living animal.

The scene situated to the right of this narrative episode, however, cannot be explained with a simple misunderstanding of the book's contents, but must be recognized as a deliberately erroneous representation of the text. It features two worshippers adoring a sculpture in front of a fanciful architectural structure, reminiscent of both a round Roman temple and a Chinese pagoda. The silhouette of the sculpture placed in the small temple resembles the figure of Muhammad sitting on the rock in the center of the page perfectly. Furthermore the crescent, which appears on the turban of the preaching Prophet and reappears over the entrance to the shrine, leaves no doubt that it is a statue of Muhammad being adored.

Although it contradicted knowledge of Islam among erudite circles throughout Europe, and even the characterization of Islam within the book itself—which definitively refutes the notion of Islamic idolatry—the artist did not restrain from creating this image.[96] The characterization of Islam as a continuation of ancient or "oriental" idolatrous practices, was a more colorful and fascinating image than the factual descriptions of the religion contained in contemporary scholarship. Still, it should be emphasized that the accusation concerning the supposed heretical nature of Islam is relatively tame here. The image of idolatry is confined to the background, while in the foreground the followers of Muhammad form a peaceful society.

With its idyllic and lavish setting, Adolf van der Laan's frontispiece presents an exoticized picture of Islam that corresponds to the eighteenth-century delight in masquerades, which in turn inspired the category of painting known as *fêtes galantes*, typically depicting festive gatherings of costumed and masked nobility occurring in idealized landscapes, often featuring pavilions or temples.[97] This new playful vision of Islam was not confined to the visual arts; Muhammad became a famous theat-

**96** Ibid, unpaginated (in Ryer's preface to the reader) : "Il declame contre ceux qui adorent les idoles, particulierement contre les Habitants de la Ville de la Meque, & contre Coreïs qui estoient ses ennemis à son évenement [...]." The quill in Muhammad's hand also conflates the act of preaching the Qur'an with its authorship, reflecting the popular legend throughout Europe that the Qur'an was, in fact, written by Muhammad.

**97** Maxime Rodinson, in his article "The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam," in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. Joseph Schacht and Clifford E. Bosworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 36–37, explains that "Islam was no longer seen as the land of Antichrist but essentially that of an exotic, picturesque civilization, existing in a fabulous atmosphere peopled by good or evil, wayward genies – all this for the delight of an audience that had already shown so much taste for European fairy tales."

rical character throughout Europe due to Voltaire's play *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète* (The Fanatiscim, or the Prophet Muhammad), performed first in 1741.[98] Indeed, Muhammad's debut on stage seems to have occurred during a ballet that was performed at the French court of Louis XIII in 1626.[99] The play was exceptional in its inclusion of comical scenes relating to Islam and the Prophet. In the first of five acts Muhammad enters the stage accompanied by a group of Muslim scholars "marching in mock solemnity and gesticulating with a quill pen over the tremendous Koran borne on the backs of two bowed figures preceding him".[100] The bizarre costumes and masks worn by the actors, and the plot—which ends in a chaotic brawl between Muslim scholars from the Ottoman and Savafid Empires—was written to ridicule Islam and its Prophet.

The strategy of presenting Islam and Muhammad as fantastic and comic elements in theater culminated in Alain-René Lesage's farce, *Arlequin Mahomet* (Harlequin Muhammad), which was first performed in 1714 in Foire de Saint Laurent.[101] In this play, set in "the Orient," the mask of the "false prophet," previously used as a sym-

**98** The shift to a more exotic conception of Islam is already detectable a hundred years earlier in Madeleine de Scudéry's novel *Ibrahim ou l'illustre Bassa,* published in 1641. See Frederick Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies. The Image of Islam in Western Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61. Mademoiselle de Scudéry created the idea "of a Turkish world of color and cruelty, pageantry and intrigue." Subsequent publications, which created a more playful and attractive image of the Orient, include the already mentioned translation of the *Mille et Une Nuit* by Antoine Galland in 1704–1717, and Baron de Montesquieu's Lettres persanes (Persian Letters) completed in 1721. On Voltaire's play see Christopher Todd and Ahmad Gunny, ed., *Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le prophete; De l'Alcoran et de Mahomet*, vol 20B of *The Complete Works of Voltaire / Œuvres completes de Voltaire Le*, ed. Nicholas Cronk et. al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002). Regarding Voltaire's relationship to Islam, see Magdy G. Badir, *Voltaire et l'Islam* (Banbury, GB: Voltaire Foundation 1974) and Djavâd Hadidi: *Voltaire et l'Islam* (Paris: Association Langues et civilisations, 1974).

**99** The first play in which Muhammad was conceived as a figure on stage was William Percy's *Mahomet and his Heaven*. It was written in the beginning of the seventeenth century, but there is no evidence that it was ever performed. See *William Percy's Mahomet and His Heaven. A Critical Edition*, ed. Matthew Dimmock, (Aldershot: 2006), 2. The first verifiable representation of Muhammad onstage occurred in the *Ballets du Grand Turc et Peuples d'Asie*. (Ballets of the Grand Turk and the people of Asia) The comic play was written on behalf of Louis XIII (r. 1610–1643) and was conceived as a commentary on or reply to a diplomatic affront committed by the Ottoman ambassador. Muhammad appears in the first scene of this ballet among a group of Muslim scholars dressed in ridiculously exaggerated costumes. See Haitham Abdulaziz Saab, "The Representation of the Orient in Molière: Europe and the Turks in the Bourgeois Gentleman (1670)," *J. King Saud University* 17 (2009), 42 and Clarence D. Rouillard, "The Background of the Turkish Ceremony in Moliere's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1969), 35. A colored drawing of the scene "Entrée de Mahomet et ses docteurs" was made by Daniel Rabel and is preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Reserve QB-3 (1629)-FOL.

**100** Rouillard, "The background of the Turkish ceremony," 35.

**101** Alain-René Lesage, *Arlequin Mahomet. Piéce d'un acte. Par M. le S[age]. Representée à la Foire de Saint Laurent 1714* (Paris: E. Ganeau, 1721).

bolic attribute of Muhammad in the title page to Prideaux's book (fig. 18), functions as the actual disguise of the protagonist Harlequin. As a character of the *commedia dell'art*e, the mask is part of Harlequin's typical stage costume, so that in this play he is doubly masked and wears the mask of Muhammad on top of his own. Harlequin dresses up as Muhammad in order to betray the Muslim characters featured in the play and to help a Princess to marry her beloved Prince by appropriating the authority of the Prophet. The engraving before the title page of the script, printed in 1721, depicts the climax of the play (fig. 21): Harlequin—masquerading as Muhammad with a long, white beard and a mask—casts thunderbolts from his flying vehicle at the King of Basra and the Tartar Kam, who tried to forbid the marriage of the Princess of Basra and the Prince of Persia. In this staging of Harlequin-Muhammad as *deus ex machina*, the false Prophet uses gadgets of theatrical illusion: a mechanically flying object, a mask and fireworks; all tricks that help him to effectively mislead the Muslim characters in the play, but that are, at the same time, revealed as technical and theatrical gimmicks to the European spectators. For instance, Harlequin's flying vehicle, which appears in the frontispiece camouflaged as a cloud, is revealed in the previous dialogue of the play to be nothing more than a mechanical construction.[102]

Thus, Lesage's play draws on medieval anti-Islamic traditions. For example, Harlequin's acts of theatrical trickery correspond to the widespread legend of Muhammad's deceit with the tamed dove which was trained to pick grain out of Muhammad's ear in order to create the impression that Muhammad was inspired by the Holy Ghost, as depicted in the title page of De Bry's *Acta Mechmeti I.* (fig. 15). Furthermore, the representation of Muhammad as a god in the engraving of the printed version of the play *Arlequin Mahomet* evokes the French medieval tradition of the legendary Muhammad in *chansons de geste*, in which Muslims are described as worshippers of the idol "Mahum".[103] Furthermore, the King of Basra and the Tartar Kam call the Prophet a rogue, after having learned that Muhammad ordered the marriage of the Princess and the Prince against their will.[104] This evokes the treatment of the medieval Saracens within the *chansons de geste*, who are depicted in some cases as quickly abandoning their faith and destroying their idols after losing a battle.[105] In both cases, in the play and in the *chansons*, it seems as if the Muslims would abide by their faith only as long

**102** Asked by Harlequin whether the flying box is magic, the inventor Boubkeir answers: "Non, non, de Mécanique c'est un ouvrage pur." See Lesage, *Arlequin Mahomet*, 116. Furthermore, the bolts thrown by Harlequin at his adversaries are described as fireworks in the surviving stage directions. See ibid., 136.

**103** On this tradition see Camille, *The Gothic idol*, 141–152.

**104** "Le Roy: / Tout cela ne sent rien de bon: / Ce Mahomet est un fripon. (...) Le Kam: / Oui, vous avez raison, Beau-père, / Mahomet est un scelerat." See Lesage, *Arlequin Mahomet*, 135.

**105** For a description of this behavior of Saracens in disrespect to their idols mentioned, for example, in the *Jeu de Saint Nicolas* (The play of Saint Nicolas, around 1200), see Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 129, 134.

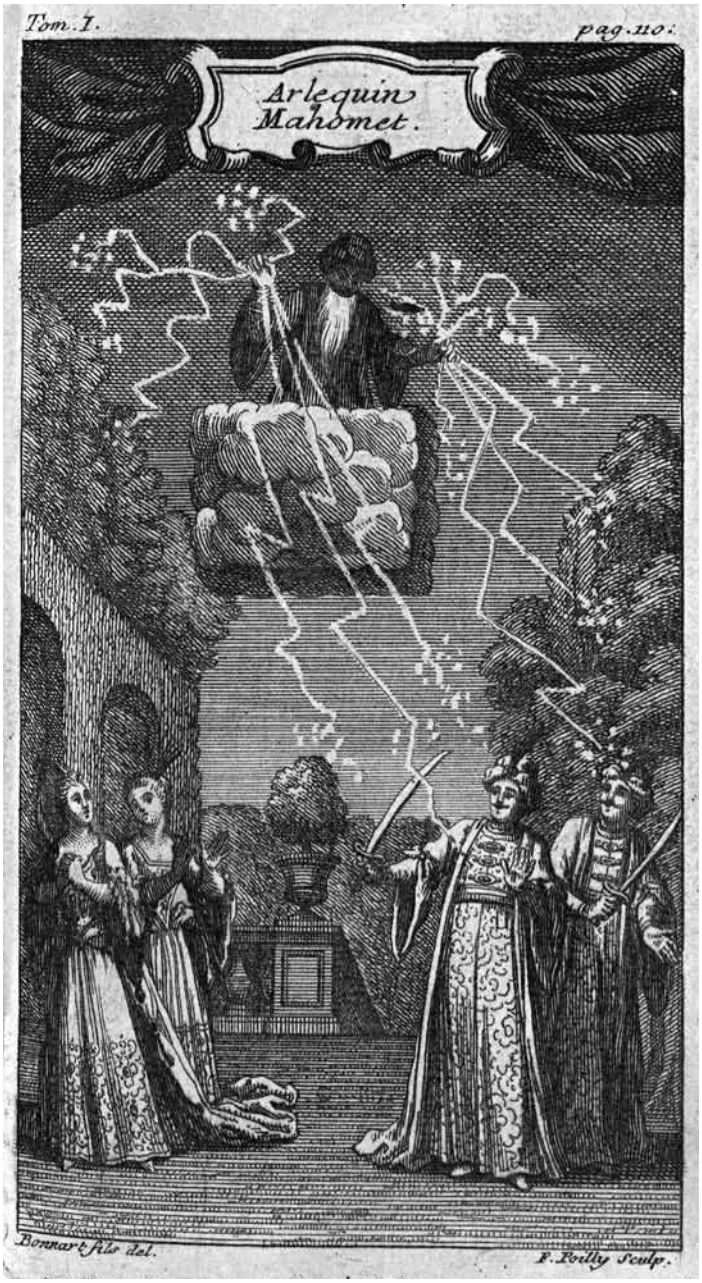



**Fig. 21:** Bonnart fils (del.) and François de Poilly (the Younger) (sculps.), No Titel, 1721(?). Copper engraving and etching on paper, 148 × 81 mm. In: Alain-René Lesage: "Arlequin Mahomet." In Le théatre de la foire, ou L'opera comique: Contenant les meilleures pieces qui ont été representées aux foires de S. Germain & de S. Laurent. Enrichies d'estampes en taille douce, avec une table de tous les vaudevilles & autres airs gravez-notez à la fin de chaque volume. Recueillies, revûës, & corrigées, 6 vols. (Paris: Etienne Ganeau, 1723–1731), vol. 1, 110.

as it was beneficial and compatible with their plans and intentions. The disguised Harlequin is thus only able to regain his authority through force, such as when he beats the Tartar Kam and the King with a club. The play's main innovation is its presentation of the deceit traditionally associated with Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in a humorous and satiric fashion. Muhammad, played by Harlequin, thus becomes a "doubly false" prophet, and through this farcical composition it is clear that the play did not intend to inform the audience about the historical Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, but that he was merely a theatrical invention, where both the realm of Islam and of the Orient merge, revealing themselves to be fictional stage-sets.

The further stage career of the figure of Muhammad was determined by Voltaire's play *Le fanatisme ou Mahomet le Prophète* (Mahomet). Shortly after its debut in Lille in 1741, it was performed in Paris and then in numerous productions staged in theaters across Europe.[106] Although Voltaire's theatrical representation of the Orient was conventional and even his Muhammad corresponded to the most common Western prejudices,[107] the play nevertheless became a scandal. Voltaire depicted Muhammad as a Machiavellian ruler, who invented his own religion and subsequently took advantage of the fanaticism of his followers. Many of Voltaire's contemporaries interpreted the play as an indirect critique of institutional religions and of Christianity in particular.[108] Thus, it can be suggested that Voltaire's *Mahomet* followed in the tradition of Montesquieu's previous *Lettres persanes* (Persian Letters, 1721), which exposed the depravities of French society through the eyes of two fictional Persian visitors to Paris, who report their experiences in letters sent home. The copper print, depicting an English performance of Voltaire's play, illustrates the popular appreciation of such Oriental subjects (fig. 22). For instance, Muhammad's rich garments, the feather and the crescent attached to his turban,[109] coupled with the inclusion of a palm tree in the background, clearly creates an exotic setting. However, in the eighteenth century, the theatrical presentation of the Orient rarely referred to any actual geographic region but rather functioned as a distinct mode of artistic expression autonomous of lived experience. The figure of Muhammad was a similarly fictional construction: Voltaire freely admitted that his dramatization of the Prophet did not correspond to historic

**106** For an extensive bibliography of all editions and translations, see Todd, *Le Fanatisme*, 60–135.

**107** The form of Voltaire's *Mahomet le Prophète* largely conforms to the French tradition of Oriental religious-tragedies like Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1643) und Racine's *Bajazet* (1672). See Angela C. Pao: *The Orient of the Boulevards. Exoticism, Empire, and Nineteenth-Century French Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 56.

**108** Voltaire's critics described the play as "une satire sanglante contre la religion chrétienne". In some instances, his opponents even interpreted the figure of Muhammad as a critique of Christ. See Hadidi, *Voltaire et l'Islam*, 54–57.

**109** The same elements were also used in the frontispiece of Ryer's translation of the Qur'an published in 1734. See (fig. 20).


**Fig. 22:** Edwards (del.) and Collier (sculps.), *Mr. Bensley in the Character of Mahomet, Act 2. Sc. 2.*, Etching with engraving on paper, 175 × 109 mm. Voltaire, *Mahomet, the impostor: a tragedy marked with the variations of the manager's book at the Theatres-Royal in Drury-Lane*, trans. James Miller, London. C. Bathurst et al., 1777), title page.

facts, and asserted that his changes were acceptable due to artistic license.[110] The inscription of the frontispiece of the printed play also declares that it represents the English actor Mr. Bensley in the role of Muhammad, who gives a pathetic monologue lauding the usefulness of his Qur'an, confirming that it records a theatrical scene and not a historic moment. As already seen in the engraving of Prideaux's *La Vie de Mahomet*, a book to which Voltaire frequently referred,[111] the perception of Muhammad had been divided into the historical person of scholarly interest and an imaginary, dramatized and highly visible figure, which was implemented by the arts and which did not hid its artificiality.

The next major change in the visual representation of Muhammad occurred in the nineteenth century. One of the first examples of this altered vision can be found in the edition of George Sale's translation of the Qur'an in 1801 (fig. 23). This image, which follows the table of contents in the second of two volumes of the translation, is particularly important because it can be regarded not only as an example of the romantic transfiguration of Muhammad but also of the application of iconographic formulas drawn from images produced in the Islamic world to a representation of the Prophet produced in the West. But before we consider this image, it is necessary to briefly address the text of Sale's translation of the Qur'an, and its new attitude towards Islam, which seems to have influenced illustrations contained in subsequent editions of his publication.

George Sale's *Koran: commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed*, published in 1734, was the first direct translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into English. The book, which was reissued in a total of one hundred and twenty-three editions prior to 1965, when it was printed for the last time, remains one of the most widely available translations of the Qur'anic text.[112] Despite this posthumous success, it was not well-received by Sale's contemporaries, largely because Sale presented a vision of the Prophet that constituted a radical departure from traditional depictions of Muhammad.[113] Giving more weight to Arabic textual sources than to the Christian literary tradition, Sale lauded Muhammad as a sincere and authentic individual who displayed many noble qualities and virtues.[114] Sale did not completely overturn the normative perception of

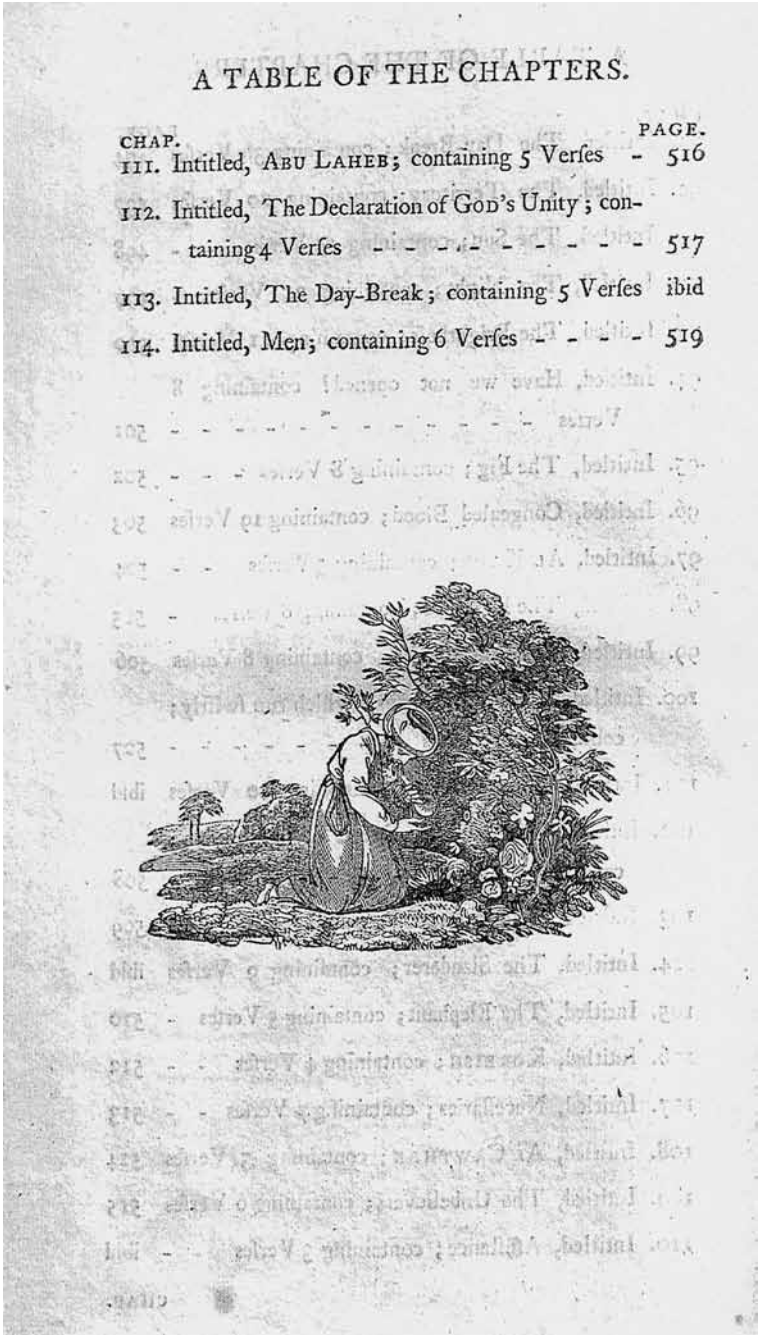
**110** See Badir, *Voltaire et l'Islam*, 78, and Netton, "The Mysteries of Islam," 37.

**111** See Philip C. Almond, *Heretic and Hero. Muhammad and the Victorians* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1989), 34.

**112** See Franz V. Greifenhagen, "Traduttore Traditore: An Analysis of the History of English Translations of the Qur'an," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 3, no. 2 (1995), 279.

**113** Sale never travelled abroad to study Arabic. On the events of his life see *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885–1900*, vol. 50, s.v. "Sale, George". See also Holt, "The Treatment of Arab History," 298–299.

**114** Sale's work played an important role in disseminating a positive image of Muhammad. See D'Ancona, *La leggenda di Maometto*, 20. Commenting on Sale's unique contribution, Holt writes that "[h]is freedom from religious prejudice, (...) his obvious conviction that Arabic writers were the



A TABLE OF THE CHAPTERS.

CHAP. PAGE.

111. Intitled, ABU LAHEB; containing 5 Verſes - 516

112. Intitled, The Declaration of GOD's Unity; containing 4 Verſes - - - - - - - - - 517

113. Intitled, The Day-Break; containing 5 Verſes ibid

114. Intitled, Men; containing 6 Verſes - - - - 519

**Fig. 23:** Untitled, 1801(?). Wood engraving (?) on paper, ca. 80 × 88 mm. George Sale, *The Koran, Commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed, Translated from the Orginal Arabic, with explanatory notes* […] *To wich is prefixed a preliminary discourse* […], 2 vols. (London: Thomas Maiden, 1801), vol. 1, fol. IV.

the Prophet: despite his largely positive summation of Muhammad's character, Sale could not restrain himself from condemning Muhammad's religious teachings. In his *Preliminary Discourse* to the *Koran* Sale terms Muhammad an "imposter" and repeats the conventional prejudice that the rapid expansion of Islam was highly dependent on the use of violence.[115] Although Sale condemned the supposed militaristic nature of Islam, he was still subject to harsh attacks due to his presentation of the Prophet as a sympathetic figure.[116]

Sale's critics seemingly regarded his conventional condemnation of the Prophet as insincere, included in his text merely to satisfy the expectations of a pious Christian public. This suspicion should not be completely rejected. The opening phrase of its introduction emphasizes how tedious Sale found it to slander Islam:

> I imagine it almost needless either to make an apology for publishing the following translation, or to go about to prove it a work of use as well as curiosity. They must have a mean opinion of the Christian religion, or be but ill grounded therein, who can apprehend any danger from so manifest a forgery.[117]

The author cleverly turns the widespread opinion of the Qur'an as an adulteration of Christian doctrine against potential critics, in order to achieve a more objective examination of the tenets of Islam. In accordance with his historical sensibility, Sale chose to illustrate his book with a geographical map of Arabia, two genealogical

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best source of Arab history, and Muslim commentators the fittest to expound the Qur'ān, marks an enormous advance on the hodgepodge of "authorities" advanced by Prideaux. His work complements that of Ockley and for over a century the two played a leading part in creating the notion of the Prophet and the Arabs held by educated Englishmen." See Holt, "The Treatment of Arab History," 302. Concerning Sales' characterization of Muhammad, see also David A. Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions. Comparative religion in Seventh- and Eighteenth-century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 91.

**115** Sale sees the violent tribal warfare and rapid militaristic advance characteristic of the earliest centuries of Islam as "one of the most convincing proofs that Mohammedism was no other than human invention," George Sale, *The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed: translated into English [...] with explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators. To which is prefixed a preliminary discourse [...]* (London: C. Ackers, 1734), 50. Nevertheless, Sale qualifies this statement in the preface, where he declares that "they are greatly deceived who imagine [Islam] to have been propagated by the sword alone, or by what means it came to be embraced by nations which never felt the force of the Mohammedan arms," ibid, III.

**116** He was accused of equating Christianity and Islam, or even of being half Muslim. See Greifenhagen, "Traduttore Traditore," 279. Greifenhagen's thesis that the "non-Muslims who first began to translate the Qur'an into English acted with the explicit intention of betraying the original text, by showing it to be false or inferior or somehow untrue to its own stated goals" is, in the case of Sale's book, already contradicted by its negative reception by contemporaries. Furthermore, Greifenhagen does not take into account that Sale's negative statements about Muhammad are superficial and defensive in nature.

**117** Sale, *The Koran,* III.

charts tracing the lineage of the major Arabic tribes, and an image of the Kaaba in Mecca. Notably, he did not include a portrait of Muhammad. It was long after Sale's death in 1736 that other illustrations were added to later editions of the text, including depictions of Muhammad.

The new illustrations accompanying the edition of Sale's translation of the *Koran* in 1801 included an image featuring a possible representation of the Prophet, but the subject was given a less prominent position than in the printed books discussed above. Situated directly under the table of contents and fairly small in scale and lacking a frame, the image commands less attention, functioning less like an independent visual representation and more like a decorative element of the book. This unpretentious representation is echoed in the content of the image (fig. 23). The picture features a man wearing a turban and caftan who kneels in an idyllic landscape. Holding a cup in his left hand, he pours water into his right. This concentrated gesture, combined with his kneeling posture, suggests that he is preparing for ritual prayer. To the right the surrounding flora is shaped in a form of a niche that half encloses the man, creating a natural space that formally reflects his inner harmony and concentration.

It can be argued that this image represents the Muslim understanding of the purpose of ceremonial washing before prayer rather than the meaning of it propagated by Christian onlookers. Whereas Christian writers mistakenly claimed that the ablutions performed by Muslims before prayer were believed to actually cleanse them of their sins, this vignette accompanying Sale's translation of the holy Qur'an appears to characterize the act as one of meditation and spiritual purification.[118] Thus, the man can be understood as a model for the reader, indicating the proper preparation for reading the word of God, represented by the Qur'an and Sale's translation itself. The image's sensitive approach towards Islam is captured in a further detail. The artist intentionally restrained from identifying the kneeling man as the Prophet Muhammad, instead incorporating a symbol indicative of Muhammad's presence in the picture. The rose in the immediate foreground claims prominence not only due to its huge blossom but also because it seems to correspond with the believer's direction of prayer.

It is highly probable that the illustrator included the flower in order to symbolize the Prophet. The associations of Muhammad and the rose can be found in Muslim

**118** Sale vigorously opposed the claim made by many previous Christian writers that Muslims believed they were washing away their sins when completing the ritual purification of the body before prayer, stating "Whence it plainly appears, with how little foundation the Mohammedans have been charged by some writers, with teaching or imagining these formal washings alone cleanse them from their sins." See ibid., 105. The renunciation of this Western prejudice was already present in Adrian Reland, *Zwey Bücher von der Türckischen oder Mohammedischen Religion* (Hanover: Förster, 1717), §9, XXXII; but it was still dispersed through the reprints of Ryer's translation of the Qur'an and those by other authors.

biographies of the Prophet, in *hadith*, as well as in works of art produced throughout the Islamic world.[119] In Ottoman *hilyeler*—calligraphic descriptions of the external appearance of Muhammad—the rose is often evoked or employed directly to symbolize the Prophet.[120] In some cases the name of the Prophet was even written into the blossom, as is the case with the *hilye* produced in the eighteenth century, preserved in the Sadberk Hanım Museum in Istanbul (fig. 24).[121] Thus, the diminutive image of a Muslim preparing for prayer not only demonstrates a newly sympathetic attitude towards Islam but also tries to describe the religion according to its own pictorial formulas.[122]

Although it seems visually to adhere to a pictorial strategy commonly found throughout the Ottoman Empire, the image still fails to provide an objective rendering of either the Prophet or of Islam. It instead offers a romanticized view of Islam which is characteristic of the nineteenth century. The Western imagination found in its visualizations of the "Islamic Orient" the opposite of its own industrialized and supposedly rational society, and projected onto it a timeless, primitive land characterized by leisure and sensual pleasure. Muhammad was simultaneously transfigured into a sincere and heroic person, who brought his people a natural and simple religion.[123]

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**119** Muhammad adored the rose as a symbol of the perfection of the cosmos. See Annemarie Schimmel, "Rose und Nachtigall," *Numen* 5, no. 2 (1958), 105–107. Islamic sources not only recount Muhammad's appraisal of the rose as a symbol of the divine composition of the cosmos, but also recount how roses sprouted wherever drops of Muhammad's sweat fell to the earth during his *mi'raj*. The Hapsburgian Diplomat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq included this anecdote in the first letter sent from the Ottoman court (dated September 1, 1555). His letters became available to a wide audience when they appeared in print in 1581 in Antwerp. See Ogier G. de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554–1562: Translated from the Latin of the Elzevir Edition of 1663*, ed. and trans. Edward Seymour Forster (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2005), X, 28.

**120** Hüseyin Gündüz emphasizes that the "[r]ose is the most preferred flower for hilye illuminations. Rose is the symbol of the Prophet. The Prophet's sweat has the smell of Rose." See Hüseyin Gündüz, *Hat Sanatinda. Hilye-I Şerîfe Hz. Muhammed'in Özellikleri* (Istanbul: Antik A. Ş. Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 91.

**121** The names of the Caliphs, the successors of the Prophet as spiritual and political leaders, are written on the leaves of the flower.

**122** Rippin sees an incorporation of Muslim sources into European scholarship on Islam beginning only in the twentieth century. In its reference to Islamic iconography, the print can be seen to herald this development. See Andrew Rippin, "Western Scholarship and the Qur'an," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen MacAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 242.

**123** The first steps towards the characterisation of Islam as a simplified, and therefore logical, religion were already made in the eighteenth century in the works of Adrian Reland and Boulainvilliers. See Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East* (London: Verso, 1998), 110. The characterization of Muhammad as a historical hero became popular due to a series of lectures given by Thomas Carlyle in London in 1840. SeeThomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1882). The second lecture in his series, delivered on May 8, 1840 was titled "The Hero as Prophet; Mahomet".

**Fig. 24:** Untitled, Hilye, 18th century. Paint on Paper, X × X. Istanbul, Sadberk Hanım Museum, Inv.-no. 10602, Y. 8.

## Conclusion

One major aspect in the history of the Western perception of Islam is the continuous presence of popular interest in all of its aspects. The first widespread diffusion of material concerning Islam was made possible through the invention of the printing press. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the Reformation were two critical factors responsible for an increased interest in Islam and its founder. However, a less hostile popular image of the Prophet arose only with the ebbing of the menace of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the seventeenth century. Scholars of the Enlightenment aspired to the propagation of a more historically accurate understanding of the Prophet, although popular taste during the baroque and rococo period embraced an exoticized and fantastical image of Islam, of which Muhammad was merely the personification, and was even transformed into a theatrical character who appeared in several plays.

The nineteenth century witnessed another transformation in the visualization of Muhammad. On the one hand, authors and artists seemed to propagate an image of Muhammad imbued with some authentic Islamic content which depicted Muhammad as a sincere religious reformer. Informed by nineteenth-century Romantic ideals, which emphasized a desire for nativeness and simplicity, the figure of Muhammad was heroicized as a sort of natural philosopher. Thus, Western European audiences were never simply passive receivers of the Prophet's image but, through ever-changing taste and preferences, were inherently responsible for its public formulation.

Given the frequency with which the representation of the Prophet Muhammad was altered—Nerreter is one of the few to reuse an older, existing portrait of Muhammad from another source, rather than commissioning a new image—it appears that every generation evidently felt the need to give a new face to the Prophet, and by reformulating his image, to reconfigure their relationship with Islam. Thus, the examination of this material enables a better understanding of Western ideas about Islam, but even more, the depictions of Muhammad can be read as mirrors of contemporary European society.[124] Particularly during the Reformation, but also in later religious, political and social disputes, the image of the Prophet Muhammad was continuously

**124** Conklin Akbari reaches the same conclusion upon analyzing earlier Western European imaginations of the Prophet as Antichrist. She notes that "[t]he depiction of Islam and particularly Muhammad is in part dependent on historical developments such as the crusades and the later conflict with the Turks; but it also responds to internal events within Europe, such as heretical movements and religious debate within the church. The representation of Islam thus often serves to indicate the status of Christian community itself: commentary on the other is very frequently commentary on the self". See Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "The Rhetoric of Antichrist in Western Lives of Muhammad," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, no. 3 (1997), 304. For Thierry Hentsch the Orient in general was used as to mirror the European self. See Thierry Hentsch, *Imagining the Middle East*, transl. Fred A. Reed (New York: Black Rose Books, 1992), 113.

exploited by Western artists and authors as an emblematic figure of the "Other" employable for their very own objectives.[125]

An important aspect of the imagery concerning the Prophet is that the interpretation of most of these images was highly dependent upon some type of text, whether inscriptions contained within the image or appended to them, or else upon a textual passage positioned adjacent to the image,[126] frequently taken from a translation of the Qur'an or else from a biography of his life. Indeed, images of Muhammad which are completely independent of text are rare in Christian art prior to the twentieth century. Thus, the relationship between the visual representation and the text is of particular importance, because the image of the Prophet is a product of the interplay between both media. In the case of the inscription "the false Prophet" which accompanies the fictitious portraits of Muhammad in the texts of Baudier, Nerreter and many others, the text was specifically employed to obviate a neutral or positive visual depiction of the Prophet by rendering it suspect, facilitating a decidedly negative interpretation.[127] This "disclosure" of visual content as misleading was used not only to characterize Muhammad's fraudulent qualities but also can be described as one of the main characteristics of the Prophet's depictions. Before the nineteenth century, artists creating a face for Muhammad often referred to the topos of the false image or idol; Arrivabene's image presented the *vita* of Muhammad as Christ-like throughout its composition, only to subvert this comparison in its final scene; Baudier's book contrasted an illusionistic "portrait" of the Prophet to the *Vera Icon*; while Prideaux's frontispiece presented Muhammad in an ambiguous state, so that his figure oscillated between living person, antique statue and abstract personification. These and other figures of the Prophet were deliberately designed in opposition to the "true" images of Christ and of the Christian saints. Images of the Prophet Muhammad rarely concealed their man-made origins; instead, they openly displayed their artificiality and, therefore provided a platform for self-referential discourse concerning the very nature of the visual arts.

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**125** On the use of Islamic content in propaganda produced by both Catholics and Protestants during the Reformation, see Michael J. Heath, "Islamic Themes in Religious Polemic," in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 50, no. 2 (1988), 291. For the subsequent instrumentalization of Islam in European religious conflicts between Christian orthodoxy and "Deists" throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions*, 86 and 99.

**126** Certainly, this observation concerns not only the images discussed in this article but pertains to all visual representations of the Prophet found by members of the research group.

**127** The direct contrast of a visual portrait of Muhammad with his textual description also appears in translations of the Qur'an completed by Alexander Ross and David Friedrich Megerlin. See *A Compleat History of the Turks, from their origin in the year 755 to the year 1718 [...] To which are added, [...] III. The life of their Prophet Mahomet. IV. The Alcoran, translated from the Arabic by the Sieur De Ryer, and now Enlish'd.*, ed. David Jones, 4 vol. (London: J. Darby, 1718–1719), and David F. Megerlin, *Die türkische Bibel, oder des Korans allererste teutsche Übersetzung aus der arabischen Urschrift selbst verfertigt* (Frankfurt a.M.: J. G. Garbe, 1772).