

## *L'Alcorano Arabico di Andrea Arrivabene: An Iconographical Framework*

**ABSTRACT:** *L'Alcorano* published by Arrivabene in 1547 has been considered a servile copy of Bibliander's edition since the sixteenth century, but this conception has changed radically due to a recent publication (Tommasino, 2013). Starting off from this publication, this essay aims to delve further into *L'Alcorano* suggesting that the book was an innovative product, not only because of its literary sources and translation, but also due to the presence of meaningful iconographical details in its capital letters. At the same time, an analysis of the *cornice istoriata* reveals its images as the very first representation of Muhammad's life in visual form. The paper also puts forward a hypothesis about the book's creation, considering it a joint venture involving several bookmen: Arrivabene, Comin da Trino, Bernardino Bindoni and Bertolomeo *Imperatore*. The final section deals with the influence and material history of the book and its iconography during the centuries following its publication.

**KEY WORDS:** Translations of the Koran into European Languages; Koran in Italian; *L'Alcorano di Macometto*; Andrea Arrivabene; Attitudes towards Islam; Sixteenth-Century Religious History; Iconography of Muhammad's Life.

*“[This book is] a matter that is most desired in our time”*.<sup>1</sup>

The sentence quoted above appears in the “Letter dedicated to pious readers” in *L’Alcorano di Macometto*, a book published in Venice by an unknown printer in 1547 at the request of Andrea Arrivabene. Giovanni Battista di Castrodardo, the Islamic holy book’s translator into the vernacular, was most probably its author.<sup>2</sup> The subject of the sentence is this first European edition of the Koran into a modern European language. The sentence is also this study’s starting point, since it highlights two features that will be repeated in its argument: *time* and *desire*, construed as the historical context and the need for knowledge.

Starting off with this quotation, the study will focus on Arrivabene’s edition of the Koran, placing special interest on the iconographical apparatus that accompanied the text. The first section of the paper will look into the value of its iconography.

Arrivabene’s editorial enterprise will be the topic of the second half of the essay, which will suggest the names of its printers and establish a historical framework for *L’Alcorano*’s reception and reinterpretation.

Once all these issues have been explained, some questions that remain unresolved to this day will be raised and several conclusions will be sketched out. This essay aims to make a contribution by using the book’s images as unexplored primary sources to the

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<sup>1</sup> All the quotations in this essay will be translated in the main text and the original texts will be displayed in the corresponding footnotes. “[L’Alcorano è] materia che à tempi nostri è più che desiderata”.

*L’Alcorano di Macometto nel qual si contiene la dottrina, la vita, i costumi et le leggi sue. Tradotto nuevamente dall’arabo in lingua italiana* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1547), c. a i.

<sup>2</sup> A complete study of his role in early modern Italian literature in: Pier Mattia Tommasino, ‘Giovanni Battista Castrodardo Bellunese traduttore dell’*Alcorano di Macometto* (Arrivabene, 1547)’, *Oriente Moderno* 88-1 (2008), 15-40.

study of *L'Alcorano*, which until now has mainly been analysed from a literary and cultural point of view.

## 1. ICONOGRAPHY: A TWO-FOLD ATTITUDE

Few scholars deal with Arrivabene's *L'Alcorano*. This is probably because scholars have been denying its importance since the sixteenth century and have classified it as a poor translation of Robert of Ketton's Latin version<sup>3</sup> published by Bibliander in 1543.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the most recent research has demonstrated that the highly educated European elite – J.J. Scaliger, J. Selden, J. Mantzel, G. Sale, among others – discredited the Venetian edition and accused Arrivabene of being a fraudulent publisher.<sup>5</sup> However, a closer analysis of this *cinquecentina*'s iconography could elucidate many aspects of Arrivabene's enterprise.

This section intends to demonstrate that Arrivabene created an innovative version of the Koran by means of the book's iconographical programme, which reflects Europe's

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom (1140-1560)* (Philadelphia, 2007), pp. 60-87.

<sup>4</sup> *Machumetis Saracenorum principis, eiusque sucessorum vitae, ac doctrina, ipseque Alcoran (...)* (Basel: Theodor Bibliander, 1543). A study on the publisher and his edition in: Harry Clark, 'The Publication of the Koran in Latin a Reformation Dilemma', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15-1 (1984), 3-12.

<sup>5</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano di Macometto. Storia di un libro del cinquecento* (Bologna, 2013), pp. 29-58.

bipolar attitude towards Islam in light of the publisher's *time* and *desire*.<sup>6</sup> The iconographical programme itself is clear in this respect because it is divided into capital letters and a frontispiece. The first group of figures manifests a polemical approach to Islamic matters, while the latter reflects Europe's admiration for the Islamic empire.

### 1.1 Capital Letters: Imitation of Old Models

Arrivabene's *time* was a difficult period. He himself describes it as a "most turbulent *time*, in which religion along with all other Christian matters are, due to destiny, ever more troubled than in all past centuries".<sup>7</sup> The growing power of the Ottoman Empire, made evident by events like its control over the Eastern Mediterranean and the Siege of Vienna, was one of the great problems facing European princes, and this historical milieu is clearly manifested in *L'Alcorano*'s images. Indeed, some capital letters of the book are more than just decorative elements and are used as vehicles to convey anti-Islamic ideas.

The *desire* to use images in European versions of the Koran began with this text's very first Latin translation. It is interesting to note that, even if the medieval manuscripts of the Koran are not illuminated, a little figure appears in at least three of them.<sup>8</sup> This

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 244. Tommasino has already claimed that the book presents an ambiguous image of Muhammad; this paper will, however, particularly focus on the role played by iconographical materials in order to support his hypothesis.

<sup>7</sup> "Questi turbolentissimi tempi, ne quali la religione insieme con tutte l'altre cose Christiane, sono per avventura in maggior travaglio che mai siano state in tutti i passati secoli" in: *L'Alcorano* (see above n. 1), c. A iii v.

<sup>8</sup> The three images known today had been added to the section that deals with Muhammad's life by their respective scribes as visual comments to the *Corpus Toletanum*. They are not capital letters and do not play any role in the textual identity of the text, however, their visual and semantic meaning is made

grotesque representation is identified as Muhammad by an inscription and the image's negative connotations are evident since it clearly has connections with sirens<sup>9</sup> and Horace's invective against bad poets<sup>10</sup>.

Bibliander's Koran was also very poor in images, but two of them are strongly related to the book's polemical apparatus. "The Fools Fighting", two figures with pinwheels riding hobby horses, and "Cain killing Abel next to the altar of the sacrifices" are not only decorative letters, they are visual tirades (Fig. 1).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as the text demonstrates, they are placed there in order to show Islam as foolish and to depict the violence of the cultures it produced.

The Venetian edition also presents this polemical approach to Islam in two of its capital letters, placed right at the beginning of the book, the section written by the Italian

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evident by their harsh approach to Muhammad's figure. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Lat. 1162, fol. 11r; Paris, BnF, Arsenal, MS Lat. 3668, fol. 12v; Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 184, fol. 20r.

<sup>9</sup> Walter B. Cahn, 'The Portrait of Muhammad in the *Toledan Collection*', in *Reading Medieval Images. The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Thomas (Ann Arbor, 2002), pp. 51-60.

<sup>10</sup> Marie-Thérèse d'Alvernay, 'Deux traductions latines du Coran au Moyen Âge', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire* 16 (1948), 69-131, there 81-82.

<sup>11</sup> *Alcoran* (see above n. 4), c. α ii r. The identification of the two children as a representation of fools is based on comparisons with other images of the same period. A good example is the print by Virgil Solis *Allegory of Good and Evil* and also the print by Holbein illustrating the Psalm 52 in: *Historarium Veteris Testamenti Icones* (Lyon: Frellon, 1543), c. Kiiiv. This iconography is also described in literary sources such as: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia del cavaliere Cesare Ripa* (first published in 1593), 5 vols. (Perugia: Piergiovanni Costantini, 1764-1767), 4: 347. The topic has been studied by: Yona Pinson, *The Fool's Journey. A Myth of Obsession in Northern Renaissance Art* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 47-51.

publisher Arrivabene and the translator Castrodardo, which was not present in the Latin precedents of the book.

A dedicatory letter written by Arrivabene to Gabriel de Luetz, French ambassador to Constantinople, is the book's preface. The capital Q introducing this section is used to emphasise the need to deal with the Islamic faith and its believers, since the two figures represented are fighting, basically wrestling (Fig. 2).<sup>12</sup> This iconography clearly reminds the reader of the example of "The Fools Fighting" used by Bibliander in his edition, but can be reinterpreted in another way. The image might also be linked to a sentence in the letter, which states:

"Today our Christianity finds itself in extreme danger due to the very serious conflicts that it had maintained with the Muhammadan nation in the past, and it is in great danger of receiving even harsher blows, because of its great and impressive power".<sup>13</sup>

This first capital letter was polemically harsh; nevertheless, the one used to introduce the "True Life of Muhammad inspired by Christian authors" is even harsher in its critique of Islam. This capital letter is also a very good example of how the images' meanings can vary depending on their context.

This capital P was probably cut as part of a figurative alphabet representing different classical myths and its scene would depict the story of Proserpina.<sup>14</sup> It was reused in

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<sup>12</sup> *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), c. A ii r.

<sup>13</sup> "Trovandosi hoggi la nostra Christianità, per le gravissime controversie havute gia buon tempo con la natione Macomettana, in estremo pericolo di riceverne anchora maggior percosse di quello che gia si son ricevute, per la sua grande e meravigliosa potentia". Ibid, c. A iii v - B i r.

<sup>14</sup> Other classical figures used in *L'Alcorano*: Ibid, Dido, c. c iii r; Bacchus, c. g iv r; Juno, c. i i r; and Neptune, c. k i r.

various editions printed by Bartolomeo *detto Imperatore*, a printer linked to Andrea Arrivabene on more than one occasion. He published a book that included the capital P: the *Confutazione dei paradossi* by Ortensio Lando, which was probably printed by Bartolomeo in 1545.<sup>15</sup> That very same letter was also used by the same printer for the edition of Michelangelo Biondo's *Della nobilissima pittura* published in 1549.<sup>16</sup>

The capital P did not carry any special meanings in the above-mentioned editions and its iconography was merely dictated by mythological protagonist's name. However, the capital P placed at the beginning of Muhammad's life takes on a special meaning. This version of the life written by Castrodardo and based on Christian writings combines a great number of stereotypes and places heavy emphasis on the Prophet's false divine inspiration, fabulous journey to the heavens, and sexual depravity.<sup>17</sup> To the eyes of a contemporary reader, the capital P could include all these elements, allowing him to connect them to several episodes of Muhammad's life (Fig. 3).

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<sup>15</sup> The Venetian edition of the book was published anonymously, but the typographical material, *impresa* and internal references link it to Arrivabene as the publisher and Bartolomeo *Imperatore* as the printer. A more detailed study of the edition: Conor Fahy, 'Le edizioni veneziane dei 'Paradossi' di Ortensio Lando', *Studi di Filologia Italiana* 40 (1982), pp. 155-191, especially pp. 170-172 and 188-191.

<sup>16</sup> Michelangelo Biondo, *Della nobilissima pittura, et della sua arte, del modo, et della dottrina di conseguirla, agevolmente et presto* (Venice: Michelangelo Biondo, 1549). The book was published by the author himself as stated in the *marca* "all'insegna di Apolline" and in the colophon "Dalla casuppola del Biondo". A brief study on Biondo's editorial enterprise in: *Dizionario dei tipografi e degli editori italiani. Il Cinquecento*, 2 vols, eds. Marco Menato, Ennio Sandal, and Giuseppina Zappella (Milan, 1997), 1: 144-146. About *Imperatore*: Fernanda Ascarelli and Marco Menato, *La tipografia del '500 in Italia* (Florence, 1989) p. 382.

<sup>17</sup> *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), c. a ii r - c iii r.

The left side of the image depicts the backside of a strange animal, similar to a horse. It could be seen as a representation of the *al-Burāq*, a hybrid equine that carried the Prophet to the heavens according to Islamic tradition.<sup>18</sup> Only a few Renaissance texts mention this figure, but a very famous text was one of Castrodardo's main sources, Juan Andrés's *Opera chiamata confusione della secta machumetana*.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that this book was printed at different times in several cities and that the third Venetian edition of 1545 came from the aforementioned press of *Imperatore*.<sup>20</sup>

The second scene in the capital P needs no further explanation, since the sexual representation is extremely graphic and the identification of the male figure with Muhammad becomes immediately obvious. The Prophet's sexual perversion was a normal feature in European views of Islam and *L'Alcorano* also speaks widely about it in the "True Life of Muhammad" and in the "Description of Turkish Society".<sup>21</sup>

It seems likely that the first capital letter was placed at the very beginning of the book with a clearly polemical intention. It is also evident that Muhammad's life was introduced by a capital P, which acquired a symbolic meaning in this specific edition and chapter in order to reinforce the text's message.

This is not, however, the case for the other capitals. It is highly likely that they formed part of the repertoire belonging to the anonymous press that printed this book, which

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, c. b iii v.

<sup>19</sup> Juan Andrés, *Opera chiamata confusione della setta Machumetana, composta in lingua Spagnola per Giovan Andrea gia Moro et Alfacqui della citta de Sciativia, hora per la divina bontà Christiano e sacerdote, tradotta in Italiano per Domenico de Gaztelu* (Venice, 1540). Its relation to *L'Alcorano* has been studied in: Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), pp. 171-176.

<sup>20</sup> Universal Short Title Catalogue, online version (20/04/2015).

<sup>21</sup> *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), cc. a iii r, b ii v, and b iii r.

included mythological figures, decorative motifs, and landscapes.<sup>22</sup> They will be used in this paper as evidence to put forward the names of its printers, an issue that will be discussed in the second part of this paper.

## *1.2 Frontispiece: A New Attitude*

*L'Alcorano* is one of the most expensive and luxurious items ever produced under the “sign of the well”, Andrea Arrivabene’s mark.<sup>23</sup> This fact is made evident by the abundance of capital letters described above, but it is even clearer due to the highly decorated frontispiece. The importance of this edition is enormous as it is the most expensive of Arrivabene’s productions,<sup>24</sup> but even more so because it includes the first articulate and narrative iconographical programme depicting Muhammad’s life in European Christendom.<sup>25</sup>

The frontispiece is an extremely interesting feature of this book and its general taste bears enormous similarities with some editions by Lucantonio Giunta and his

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<sup>22</sup> Some of the mythological figures are related with the letter they decorate (Neptune-N, Bacchus-B, Juno-I). Vegetal decoration and landscapes do not seem to have any connection with the letter they decorate in: *Ibid.*, c. l i r.

<sup>23</sup> Andrea Arrivabene’s books were published “all’insegna del putto” and more often “all’insegna del pozzo”. Ester Pastorello, *Tipografi, editori, librai a Venezia nel secolo XVI* (Florence, 1924), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> After a study of several of Arrivabene’s editions, it can be concluded that they always contain very few decorative elements and none of them includes a frontispiece that illustrates the book’s main topic.

<sup>25</sup> I have attempted to find iconographical precedents of this programme in Italy and other European countries during my research, but the effort was in vain. Some Islamic models do exist. However, they seem to have a different origin and evolution. There is no evidence at all of these Islamic models travelling to Europe in the sixteenth century. An older, but still fundamental paper: Oleg Grabar and Mika Natif, ‘The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad’, *Studia Islamica* 96 (2003), pp. 19-38.

successors. To the eyes of potential buyers, the use of a *cornice istoriata* would link *L'Alcorano* to Giunta's valuable editions, especially Antonio Brucioli's vernacular 1532 translation of the Bible dedicated to King Francis I<sup>26</sup> and the *Opera* by Galen of 1540 (Figs 4 and 5).<sup>27</sup> The decorated frontispiece would also differentiate the book from other volumes when displayed unbounded on bookshop tables and windows, underlining at the same time this specific edition's privileges, novelty, and main subject matter.<sup>28</sup>

When the frontispiece's attitude towards Islam is compared to the general European attitude towards the Ottoman Empire, enormous differences immediately arise. As a matter of fact, this programme's message is neither polemical nor hostile; it simply shows the Prophet as a historical figure. His life is depicted according to ancient models and ironic or hostile visual messages are completely absent, with the sole and partial

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<sup>26</sup> *La biblia, qvale contiene i sacri libri del vecchio testamento* (Venice: Lucantonio Giunta, 1532). The similarity with this book has already been mentioned by Alberto Saviello, 'Muhammad's Multiple Faces. Printed mages of the Prophet in Western Europe', in *Constructing the Image of Muhammad in Europe*, ed. Avinoam Shalem, Michelina Di Cesare, Geather Coffey, and Alberto Saviello (Berlin, 2013), pp. 87-141, p. 95. The edition itself is studied in: Giorgio Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma: Antonio Brucioli* (Florence, 1940), pp. 202-212.

<sup>27</sup> Galen, *Geleni librorum prima classis naturam corporis hvmani* (Venice: Inheritors of Lucantonio Giunta, 1540).

<sup>28</sup> As other scholars have already claimed, the title page was essentially a commercial ploy used to facilitate the book's identification and sale: Rudolf Hirsch, *Printing, Selling and Reading, 1450-1550* (Wiesbaden, 1967), p. 72. This can also be seen in some scarce iconographical representations, such as the xylography in: Johannes Host, *Congestorium artificiose memorie* (Venice: Melchiorre Sessa, 1533), c. E iii v. This has been studied by scholars such as: Angela Nuovo, *Il commercio libraio nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Milan, 2008), p. 160; Ugo Rozzo 'Il libro e il suo mondo nelle immagini dei testi a stampa tra XV e XVI secolo', in *Storia per parole e per immagini*, eds. Ugo Rozzo and Mino Gabriele (Udine, 2006), pp. 87-113, pp. 104-105.

exception of the very last scene. As it was mentioned above, Muhammad's life is recounted following hostile Christian sources in the introductory part of the book written by Castrodardo.<sup>29</sup> However, it is narrated without any hostility at the beginning of the first book, which is a text based on Islamic writings.<sup>30</sup>

This second life is the only plausible source for the frontispiece's iconographical programme, since inspiration from Islamic models is highly unlikely due to the lack of specific examples.<sup>31</sup> The woodcutter might have created the entire frontispiece after reading or having been told about the text, since the large number of details included in it cannot be explained otherwise. It is highly likely that he had no prior experience whatsoever of representing Islamic religious histories and was probably forced to reinterpret scenes taken from Christian history and Italian literature in order to depict them.<sup>32</sup> This might have also helped potential readers and buyers to understand the

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<sup>29</sup> *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), c. a ii r - c iii r.

<sup>30</sup> Marginal note: "Principio tolto da una Chronica non meno mendosa che ridiculosa de gli Sarracini". *Ibid.*, p. 1r; the *vita*: *Ibid.*, p. 1r-13v. Compare the text with Bibliander's *Alcoran* (see above, n. 4), pp. 201-218. This is the translation of the texts already included in Robert of Ketton's Latin version of the Koran: Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom* (see above, n. 3), p. 76. Also: Pier Mattia Tommasino, 'Leer a Maquiavelo, traducir el Corán', *Al-Qantara* 33-2 (2012), 271-296, especially p. 275.

<sup>31</sup> Islamic representations of the Prophet are extremely rare, but some thirteen-century illuminated manuscripts from Persia have been studied in: Priscilla 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, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2-4 April 1980*, ed. Priscilla Soucek (Pennsylvania, 1988), pp. 193-218.

<sup>32</sup> The relationships of the images on the title page with Christian iconography and the second life of Muhammad have already been studied by: Alberto Saviello, 'Muhammad's Multiple Faces' (see above, n. 26).

frontispiece, so they would have been able to decode the iconographical language displayed on it.

A single example, the representation of “Muhammad’s Birth”, is sufficient to demonstrate this two-fold source (Fig. 6). Every single figure is described in the text with a specific attitude or element and represented in the frontispiece in exactly the same way.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the image could be easily misinterpreted and identified as a depiction of the “Birth of the Virgin”.

The only element lacking in both sources is the well, which is clearly identifiable as Arrivabene’s mark, and bears the same features as other signs of this publisher.<sup>34</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> The text says: “La madre di lui fe fede che mai senti per lui dolore alcuno, ne mentre lo portò nel ventre, ne dopo l parto, nemeno partorendolo, dicendo insieme che essendo ella sola in casa, ne pur chi le potesse porgere uno bichiero, non lo potendo da se stessa pigliare per essere nel parto impedita, vide una donna con uno vaso lucidissimo in mano, la quale le lo porgeva, e la ristorò con cotal bevanda. Poi vide alcune donne, come quelle che lievano i fanciulli, vestite tutte di bianco, simili alle figliuole di Abdemenef, le quali quando me le vidi intorno, smarrita, mi maravigliai, come quì potessero essere venute così presto, o chi le avesse indotte. Et in un tempo odo una voce che dice: ‘Chi ti lieva il fanciullo?’ e veggio una squadra di uccelli col rostro di smeraldo, e di iacinto, di tanto splendore ch’io vedeva fino in oriente e in occidente, dove quasi abbagliata veggio il mio picciolo figliuolo come in ginocchio levato, che con le mani giunte faceva preghi a Dio. E similmente un huomo di bianco vestito che venida con tre chiavi, quasi come di perle, e quelle presentò al nato fanciullo, il quale le prese tutte tre et egli così disse ad alta voce: ‘Macometto ha ricevuto la chiave della vittoria, la chiave della legge e la chiave della prophetia’. Dopo seguivano tre huomini con la faccia piena de raggi simili al sole. (...)”.

*L’Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), pp. 6v-7r.

<sup>34</sup> Arrivabene’s well in the frontispiece of *L’Alcorano* can be compared with other representations of the same mark in: Gulielmus Dulcetius, *De prudentia et iustitia orationes* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1562), frontispiece; Cardinale di Aras, *La quinta e la sesta divisione della Poetica di Aras* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1563), frontispiece.

well was probably added to the *cornice istoriata* in order to avoid any possible reuse by other publishers or printers in the future, a ploy which was also used by other Italian bookmen such as Gregorio de Gregori and Gabriele Giolito de Ferrari.<sup>35</sup>

Muhammad's second supernatural event depicted in the frontispiece is the "Miracle of the donkey".<sup>36</sup> The scene in the frontispiece clearly depicts this narrative, but the image placed in another context could have undoubtedly been read as a representation of the "Rest during the Flight to Egypt".

The next image is one of the most emblematic moments of the Prophet's life representing the "Removal of the devil's seed".<sup>37</sup> It is not possible to connect this figure to scenes of Christ's life, but the engraver could have been inspired by another source, Dante's *Commedia*.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, this episode's connection with the *Commedia* was

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<sup>35</sup> Francesco Barbieri, *Il frontespizio nel libro italiano del Quattrocento e del Cinquecento*, 2 vols (Milan, 1969), 1: 117.

<sup>36</sup> "Apparecchiandosi tutti per partire, e noi parimente ci partiamo, e sedendo in su l'asina, il mio marito mi porge il fanciullo, e quella quasi adorandolo s'inginocchia et io presolo si leva l'asina. Ed alzata la testa via cammina (...). L'asina allora favellando con humane parole et ad alta voce dice 'Così Dio mi ha da morte rievocata a vita. O se voi sapeste chi è colui ch'io porto, egli è il Sigillo del Profeti, egli è il Signore de Giudici, miglior de primi, e Nuntio di Dio omnipotente, che debbio dir più". *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), p. 9r.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9v.

<sup>38</sup> *Inferno*, XXVIII. Maria Esposito Frank, 'Dante's Muhammad: Parallels between Islam and Arianism', *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 125 (2007), pp. 185-206. Visual evidence in Dante's *Commedia* of third quarter of the fourteenth century held at: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Holkam Misc. 48, fol. 24v.

already well known in Arrivabene's time and Castrodardo even added a little commentary pointing out their similarities in a marginal note in *L'Alcorano*.<sup>39</sup>

As Muslims have always claimed, the prophet's greatest miracle was the Koran itself, a divine text the angel Gabriel revealed to the illiterate Muhammad, which was orally transmitted to his followers.<sup>40</sup> A representation of this miraculous event was not easy to achieve. *L'Alcorano*'s engraver, however, resolved the difficulties and composed an easily readable scene in which an old man is dictating the divine words to a younger scribe. The image has probably some connection to a traditional depiction of St Matthew the Evangelist. Nonetheless, they differ enormously in their deeper meaning because Muhammad is not writing, but merely reporting God's sentences to someone else.<sup>41</sup>

In early-modern Europe, the military campaigns of the Prophet became extremely popular and were probably considered the precursors of the battles of its own time. This interest in military events is made perfectly evident in the long list of Muhammad's

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<sup>39</sup> *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 1), p. 9r.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 9v. This marginal note has been used as further proof to demonstrate that Castrodardo, who worked intensely on Dante's *Commedia*, was indeed the translator of *L'Alcorano*. In: Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), p. 167.

<sup>40</sup> Jan Loop, 'Divine Poetry? Early Modern European Orientalists on the Beauty of the Koran', *Church History and Religious Culture* 89 (2009), 455-488.

<sup>41</sup> The reading Saviello proposes for this scene is very different, since he links it to an educational moment of Muhammad's boyhood and admits that there are no literary sources for this scene. Alberto Saviello, 'Muhammad's Multiple Faces' (see above, n. 26), p. 102. This lack of literary sources in a frontispiece that appears to be a visual translation of the text seems highly unlikely and suggests the hypothesis put forward above.

many battles and conquests during his life.<sup>42</sup> The Prophet's military abilities are depicted in the fifth image, in which a generic war scene is used to summarise the many conflicts in which Muhammed was involved.

It can be considered that the ambience and figures of the frontispiece discussed above are represented in an antique manner merely due to the artist's training and the adaptation of preceding artistic models. Nevertheless, a deeper analysis of the book and its frontispiece, combined with the study carried out by Tommasino<sup>43</sup> and other contemporary texts suggests that a deliberate decision was taken to represent Muhammad's life in Greco-Roman fashion.

It has been demonstrated that the book portrays the figure of Muhammad as a ruler-legislator, an idea which is partially based on Machiavelli's political theories<sup>44</sup> and is also present in humanistic descriptions of Islamic territories.<sup>45</sup> At times, the European view of Islamic society also portrayed Muslims as the inheritors of Roman rules and behaviour. Colluccio Salutati's statement is clear in this regard: "Believe me, when I observe the customs, life, and institutions of this race of men, I am reminded of the religious practices and customs of the mighty Romans".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *L'Alcorano* (see above, n.1), pp. 11r-11v.

<sup>43</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), pp. 236-243.

<sup>44</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, 'Leer a Maquiavelo' (see above, n. 30).

<sup>45</sup> Luca D'Ascia, 'L'impero machiavellico. L'immagine della Turchia nei trattatisti italiani del Cinquecento e del primo Seicento', *Quaderns d'Italia* 15 (2010), 99-116.

<sup>46</sup> "Credite michi: genus hoc hominum, quorum cum mores, vitam et istituta percipio, fortissimorum Romanorum ritum consuetudinesque recorder". In: Nancy Bisaha, 'New Barbarian or Worthy Adversary', in *View of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. David R. Blanks and Michael Farsetto (Paris, 1999), 185-206, pp. 195 and 203.

Colluccio Salutati considered contemporary Muslims as the living heirs of the ancient Romans, a feature that is much clearer in Giovanni Mario Filelfo's writings. This humanist wrote a poem called *Amyris* between 1471 and 1476 at the request of Othman Lillo Ferducci, a merchant from Ancona who hoped to gain the favour of the Sultan Mehemed through a literary gift. The epic poem traced the sultan's genealogy back to Priam and the Trojans, adding a note of nobility and grandeur to the European view of Muslim history.<sup>47</sup>

As Tommasino clearly demonstrated, humanistic writers went even further and compared the Prophet of Islam with some Roman rulers, especially Numa Pompilius, the second king of the *Urbs*.<sup>48</sup> In classical sources, Numa's major achievement was the pacification of Rome by creating a new religion. Among these authors, Valerius Maximus<sup>49</sup> and Plutarch<sup>50</sup> enjoyed great success during the Italian Renaissance and forged the humanistic figure of Numa. Subsequently, the Roman king was once again portrayed as a lawmaker and creator of religion by Petrarch<sup>51</sup> and he was represented during the *Cinquecento* as the great legislator who manipulated the entire Roman population.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pp. 195-196.

<sup>48</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), pp.236-242.

<sup>49</sup> Numa is the first figure mentioned in the chapter entitled "About the simulated religion". Valerius Maximus, *Libri novem factorum dictorumque memorabilium* (Leiden: Samuel Luchtmans, 1726), p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> Plutarch, *Lives in Eleven Volumes with an English Translation*, 11 vols, tr. Bernadotte Perrin (London, 1967), 1: 306-383.

<sup>51</sup> Petrarch, *De viribus illustribus vitae*, 2 vols, ed. Aloysii Razzolini (Bologna, 1874), 1: 31-39.

<sup>52</sup> Mark Silk, 'Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civil Religion in the West', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72-4 (2004), 863-896.

The first account of Muhammad's connection to the classical figure of Numa is set out in *La pazzia*, an anonymous work reprinted several times after the first known edition of 1541.<sup>53</sup> In his *Bibliotheca Selecta* published for the first time in 1593, Antonio Possevino is even more straightforward about Muhammad's connection to Numa.<sup>54</sup>

Muhammad's association with Roman rulers went even further in Campanella's *Della monarchia di Spagna*, in which the Prophet is placed directly at the same level as Julius Caesar: "Every great man who has created new monarchies has also changed the sciences and often the religion in order to be admired by people (...). Striving for monarchy, Muhammad created a new religious doctrine in accordance with the desires and admiration of peoples. Caesar gave rise to his own greatness with the pontificate and astrology, which was little known by the Romans, and also by changing the Roman months".<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "E Numa con la simulata Egeria e Macometto con l'incredibili pazzie del suo *Alcorano* non governò pacificamente gli insensati e furiosi popoli? Li quali tanto amano le pazzie, che molto più facilmente si reggono e governano con le favole e con le menzogne dei pazzi, che con le savie leggi dei prudenti filosofi, li quali non amano e non li vogliono udir né conoscere", in: Anonymous, *La pazzia*, ed. Paola Malaguti (Nuovo Rinascimento online version, 2009), <http://www.nuovorinascimento.org> (22-11-2014), pp. 40-41. Also: Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), p.240.

<sup>54</sup> "Numa, conficto congressu cum Dea Aegeria, populum continuit; Tullus vim omnem posuit in armis; verumque Mahometus expressit, nam primo novas leges, quas stupidis ea tempestate Arabibus imposuit, ad Gabrielem Angelum referebat, quo monitore sese omnia mentiebatur gerere. (...) viribus in novum dogma subiugavit". Antonio Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta qua agitur de ratione studiorum in historia, in disciplinis, in salute omnium procuranda* (Venice: Altobellum Salicatum, 1603), p. 443. Also: Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), p. 241.

<sup>55</sup> "Ogni uomo grande che ha nuove monarchie instituito, ha mutato le scienze e spesso la religione, per farsi ammirabile appresso i popoli (...). E Macometto, aspirando a monarchia, fece una nuova dottrina in religione, secondo il gusto ed ammirazione de' popoli; e Cesare col pontificato ed astrologia, poco a'

After having read these quotations, the frontispiece and especially the last depiction of Muhammad, which has not been mentioned before, take on a new dimension. In this last scene, the Prophet is depicted with his supporters, all of whom are soldiers, in front of a crowd of Arabs and Gentiles. He is portrayed in a historical framework, in the same *time* as Numa, Tullius or Caesar. He is depicted here in keeping with a *desire* to connect him to ancient lawmakers, but also to show the derision Europeans felt for his ideals.<sup>56</sup> The Prophet holds the Koran – the new religion – in his right hand; in his left hand, he grips the sword used to conquer and dominate his vast territories. Although he is able to hold the book on his own, he ironically needs the help of a soldier to hold up the sword, which is too heavy for his elderly body to sustain (Fig. 7).

## 2. ARRIVABENE'S ENTERPRISE: *L'ALCORANO*

### 2.1 *Arrivabene's collaborators*

Despite the fact that there are no monographic studies on Andrea Arrivabene, his political, religious, and cultural contexts have been studied. His connections with Italian

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Romani cognita, e con mutar li mesi Romani, diede principio alla sua grandezza". Tommaso Campanella, *Opere di Tommaso Campanelle scelte, ordinate ed annotate da Alessandro D'Ancona e precedute da un discorso del medesimo sulla vita e le dottrine dell'autore*, 2 vols, ed. Alessandro D'Ancona (Turin, 1854), 2: 116.

<sup>56</sup> Another reading given to this scene affirms that Muhammad is represented as a demonic idol. In: Alberto Saviello, 'Muhammad's Multiple Faces' (see above, n. 26), p. 103. However, neither the text nor the images seem to link the Prophet to this reading, which seems very unlikely in a frontispiece and book where allusions to Muhammad as the devil are absent.

Reformist circles have been the most attractive topic for most scholars.<sup>57</sup> His problems with the Inquisition have also attracted a great deal of attention.<sup>58</sup> *L'Alcorano* has recently been analysed in the light of its translator's rediscovery, focusing attention on its literary sources and models.<sup>59</sup>

Many questions, however, remain unanswered and this section will put forward a plausible hypothesis about *L'Alcorano*'s material production. At this stage of research it is impossible to assure any printer's name, since there is no archival evidence for it. However, a study of other editions of the period related to Arrivabene could shed some light on the problem.

It is evident that Arrivabene's intention was to publish a book that was easy to sell. As a result of this *desire*, very common at that *time*, the publisher decided not to follow Bibliander's model, the Latin *in folio* of 1543. He produced a handy volume written entirely in the vernacular, where the descriptive sections were reduced and an entire introductory book was incorporated.<sup>60</sup> Some specific capital letters and the frontispiece were also added to this edition, differentiating it from the rest of Arrivabene's volumes.

As a matter of fact, this seems to be the only book published under the "sign of the well" that includes a *cornice istoriata* on its title page, which was quite uncommon in

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<sup>57</sup> Carlo de Frede, *La prima traduzione italiana del Corano sullo sfondo tra Cristianità e Islam nel Cinquecento* (Naples, 1967), pp. 39-52 and appendixes.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press 1540-1650* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 105-110.

<sup>59</sup> Tommasino, 'Giovanni Battista Castrodardo' (see above, n. 2); Tommasino, 'Leer a Maquiavelo' (see above, n. 30); Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

the period.<sup>61</sup> Some months before, in October 1546, Bernardino Bindoni published an Italian translation of the Bible, a luxurious edition which also included a decorated frontispiece.<sup>62</sup>

The connection between Arrivabene and Bindoni existed before the publication of these religious texts, since they had collaborated on the publishing of two volumes between 1543 and 1544.<sup>63</sup> It is interesting to suggest that they may have worked together once more on the Italian editions of the Bible and the Koran between 1546 and 1547.<sup>64</sup> The links between the two bookmen have been clearly documented. Firstly, Bindoni was concerned with Islamic matters, as can be seen in his 1545 edition of Muhammad's stories and wars,<sup>65</sup> an interest that Arrivabene also shared in his own edition. Secondly, the decorated capital N that includes a representation of the "Birth of Eve" is present in both books, *L'Alcorano* and the Bible, and portrays an identical scene, probably because it was made using the very same woodcut.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Francesco Barbieri, *Il frontespizio nel libro italiano* (see above, n. 35), pp. 13, 131-132.

<sup>62</sup> *Biblia vulgare nuovamente stampata e corretta* (Venice: Bernardino Bindoni, 1546). Frontispiece "Venetiis apud Bernardinum de Bindonis Mediolanensis" and colophon "Stampata in Venegia per Bernardino Bindoni Milanese".

<sup>63</sup> "Per Bernardino Bindoni": Luca Bettini, *Oracolo della renovatione della Chiesa secondo la dottrina del reverendo Hieronimo Savonarola* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1543); "Per Bernardino Bindoni": St Agustin, *Libro del ben della perseveranza* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1544).

<sup>64</sup> Tommasino has already suggested the notion of collaboration in *L'Alcorano*: Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), p. 81.

<sup>65</sup> Marco Guazzo, *Historie di Messer Marco Guazzo ove se contengono le guerre di Mahometto* (Venice: Bernardino Bindoni, 1545).

<sup>66</sup> *Biblia vulgare* (Venice: Bernardino Bindoni, 1546), c. a ii r.

Even if the hypothesis of an exclusive collaboration with Bindoni seems really interesting, the same capital N can also be found in a book printed by Comin da Trino and published by Arrivabene, the *Genealogia degli dei* of 1547 (Fig. 8).<sup>67</sup> This seems to suggest that the typographical material was reused by more printers or that some of them collaborated even if their names were not included in the frontispiece or colophon.<sup>68</sup>

A study of other editions published “under the sign of the well” seems to indicate that Arrivabene usually worked in collaboration with different printers and it is likely that he mainly acted as a publisher and bookseller.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, a few books suggest that he was also a printer, as is evidenced by his editions of 1555, 1562 and 1563.<sup>70</sup> Until now,

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<sup>67</sup> “Per Comin da Trino”: Boccaccio, *Genealogia dei quindici libri di M. Giovanni Boccaccio sopra la origine et discendenza di tutti gli dei de’ gentili* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1547), c. 87r. Frontispiece “In Vinegia al segno del pozzo” and colophon “Stampato in Vinegia per Comino da Trino di Monferrato”.

<sup>68</sup> A similar work system and collaboration is explained in: Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 32-33.

<sup>69</sup> He collaborated with: Pietro and Giovanni Maria di Nicolini da Sabbio, Comin da Trino, Bartolomeo Cesano, Giovan Maria Bonelli, Venutirno Rufianelli, Bartolomeo *Imperatore*, Francesco Giovanni and Domenico Farri, Giovanni Bonadio, Bartolomeo Zanetti, Aurelio Pincio, Nicolò Rascarini, Francesco Ziletti, and Giovanni Griffo among others. *Dizionario dei tipografi e deglie editori italiani* (see above, n. 16), p. 45.

<sup>70</sup> Francesco Patrizi, *Della historia dieci dialoghi* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1560); *Risposta di donn’Ippolito Chizzuola bresciano, canonico regolare lateranense, alle bestemmie e maldicenze contenute in tre scritti di Paolo Vergerio* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1562); *Religionis et regis adversus exitiosas Calvinii, Bezae et Ottomanorum factiones* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1563). He published and printed the above-mentioned books which say in the frontispiece and colophon “Venetiis, apud Andream Arriabenum” or “In Venetia, appresso Andrea Arrivabene”. These sentences usually

his activity as a printer has not been studied in depth, but it is supported by the fact that his predecessors Cesare and Giorgio Arrivabene were both active printers in Venice.<sup>71</sup>

They owned their own typography, a business that Andrea could have easily inherited.

The edition of *L'Alcorano* seems to be a halfway house between these two systems, thus speeding up the printing process by dividing the work among more printers, including Arrivabene himself. On the one hand, the first two books present typographical materials that connect them with Imperatore, Bernardino Bindoni and Comin da Trino, who could have collaborated or acted independently on this edition. On the other hand, the third book, which includes the translation of the Koran, seems to be the work of Arrivabene's press. This supposition is backed by the striking similarities of its typographical material with another edition published and printed by Arrivabene himself, the *Casi delgi Hvomini illvstri* published and printed by Arrivabene for the Count Collatino di Collato in 1545 (Fig. 9).<sup>72</sup>

## 2.2 Circulation and Influence of *L'Alcorano*

Arrivabene's edition of *L'Alcorano* was a revolutionary book. It was printed in Venice and circulated widely within Italy and beyond in Europe and the Mediterranean area.

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refer to the printer himself as studied by: Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers* (see above, n. 68), p. 20.

<sup>71</sup> Cesare printed in Venice between 1517 and 1528 and his editions bore the colophon "Impressum per Cesarem Arrivabenim". *Dizionario dei tipografi e degli editori italiani* (see above, n. 16), p. 47.

<sup>72</sup> Boccaccio, *I casi delgi hvomini illvstri* (Venice: Andrea Arrivabene, 1545), frontispiece "In Vinegia al segno del pozzo" and colophon "In Venegia per messere Andrea Arrivabene all'insegna del pozzo". Note the capital letters: L (c. b i v), A (c. b ii v), D (c. d i r), E (c. e ii r), C (d iv v) and S (c. f i v).

The Italian Koran was read by Arabists, such as Postel, who owned a copy that was burnt by the Inquisition.<sup>73</sup> It was also read by common people, as is evidenced by the fate of Guido Giannetti da Fano's confiscated *L'Alcorano*.<sup>74</sup>

Arrivabene probably had in mind previous Venetian attempts to print the Koran and this helped him to avoid errors of the past and to attain reasonable success with his edition. His father, Giorgio Arrivabene collaborated in 1506 with Paganino Paganini, the printer of the first Koran printed in Arabic (1537-1538),<sup>75</sup> who was also in contact with the Levant as a trader of the famous Toscolano paper.<sup>76</sup> This edition was a financial disaster, because it was aimed at a Muslim audience that was clearly against any printed version of the Holy Book.<sup>77</sup> Arrivabene was also probably aware that Gregorio de Gregori published the *Horologium*<sup>78</sup> in 1514, the first book in Arabic for Christians living in Arab-speaking countries. Arrivabene probably learned how to identify the ideal sector in the Oriental market from these two editions. He then decided to publish

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<sup>73</sup> De Frede, *La prima traduzione* (see above, n. 57), p. 46. Other readers of the book are mentioned in: Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), pp. 29-59 and pp. 257-287.

<sup>74</sup> Aldo Stella, 'Guido da Fano eretico del secolo XVI al servizio dei re d'Inghilterra', *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa* 13 (1959), 225-226.

<sup>75</sup> Angela Nuovo, 'A Lost Arabic Koran Rediscovered', *The Library* 12-4 (1990), pp. 17-37; About the printer: Angela Nuovo, *Alessandro Paganino (1509-1538)* (Padua, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> Angela Nuovo, *Il commercio libraio* (see above, n. 28), p. 49.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas F. Carter, 'Islam as a Barrier to Printing', *The Muslim World* 33-3 (1943), pp. 213-216 and Moinuddin Aqeel, 'Commencement of Printing in the Muslim World: A View of Impact on *Ulama* et Early Phase of Islamic Moderate Trends', *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Studies* 2-2 (2009), pp. 10-21.

<sup>78</sup> Giorgio Vecellin, *Venezia e l'origine della stampa a caratteri arabi* (Padua, 2001), pp. 59-66.

an edition that could be sold in Europe as well as the East, an easy compendium of Islamic matters suitable for any person having an interest in them.<sup>79</sup>

The book was used in Europe as the basis for other translations of the Koran. It was the source for Salomon Schweigger's German translation in 1616,<sup>80</sup> a version later used to write an anonymous Dutch translation of 1641.<sup>81</sup> Castrodardo's text was also translated by Jewish communities in Venice and Amsterdam.<sup>82</sup>

Recent research has demonstrated that the book enjoyed reasonable success during the Modern Period. Nonetheless, its iconographical programme did not have any subsequent followers. Neither the German nor the Dutch translations of the book included any linked figurative elements. Furthermore, subsequent lives of the Prophet continued to manifest a polemical stance towards Islam in their figures. The most concrete examples of this approach are Prideaux's edition of 1608, which was entitled *The Life of Muhammad* (Fig. 10)<sup>83</sup>, and the French translation of the Koran published by Du Ryer in 1647.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5 ), p. 127.

<sup>80</sup> Another edition is: *Alcoranus Mahometicus* (Nuremberg: Salomon Schweigger, 1623).

<sup>81</sup> Giorgio Vecellin, *Venezia e l'origine della stampa* (see above, n. 78), p. 38. *De Arabische Alkoran*, ed. Barent Adriaensz Berentsma (Amsterdam, 1641).

<sup>82</sup> H. Lazarus-Yefeh, 'A Seventeenth-Century Hebrew Translation of the Qur'an', *Scripta Mediterranea* 19-2' (1998-1999), pp. 199-211; Howard Tzvi Adelman, 'A Rabbi Reads the Qur'an in the Venetian Ghetto', *Jewish History* 26-1/2 (2012), pp. 125-137; Harm Den Boer and Pier Mattia Tommasino, 'Reading the Qur'an in the 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Sephardi Community of Amsterdam', *Al-Qantara* 35-2 (2014), pp. 461-491.

<sup>83</sup> Humphrey Prideaux, *Le vie de Mahomet, où l'on découvre amplement la verité de l'imposture*, (Amsterdam : George Gallet, 1608). Not only the text, but also the images of this edition show an extremely negative attitude towards Muhammad. *Ibid*, pp. 4, 11, 39, 72, 113, 134, and 147.

Europe's contradictory attitudes towards Islam becomes evident when analysing Arrivabene's book, but this aspect can also be traced by studying the fate of three of *L'Alcorano* exemplars which are today held at the British Library (London).<sup>85</sup> One of the copies – like many others – was annotated schematising the genealogy of Muhammad's family or highlighting the main ideas of his new religion, thus revealing the reader's academic interest.<sup>86</sup> Another exemplar in a later binding is accompanied by a new and highly impressive iconographical element: Muhammad's portrait. Here the Prophet is represented as an aged man with very characteristic traits wearing elaborate cloths.<sup>87</sup> Once again, he is represented historically with no ironic nor hostile connotations. The third copy was obviously read in a highly polemical context because it underwent the incorporation of another famous edition that underscored Europe's hostile attitudes towards Islamic matters: the 1603 edition of Angelo Pientini's *Alcorano riprovato*.<sup>88</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

At this stage of research, many questions still remain unanswered and need further investigation. First of all, it is still necessary to study Arrivabene's work in order to

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<sup>84</sup> Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France* (Geneva-Oxford), 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), pp. 293 and 314.

<sup>86</sup> Marginal notes: "Abramo – Agar = Ismahelle = Chedar = Ihebicte = Abdallà – Emin = Mahomet" in : London, British Library, General Reference Collection, C.107.B.18, c. ii r. "Non credono la Trinità"; "La credenza de'macometani Christo", Ibid., c. xi v.

<sup>87</sup> London, BL, General Reference Collection, 255.d.28, inside cover.

<sup>88</sup> London, BL, General Reference Collection, 483.b.28(1-2).

explain his methods and contacts with the printing and the book markets. Secondly, the name, training, and involvement of the artist or artists who engraved *L'Alcorano*, especially its frontispiece, need to be discovered and archival research might be helpful to clarify this point. Finally, more information about Arrivabene's intentions regarding this edition would be of great interest and could reveal whether or not he was responsible for organising *L'Alcorano*'s iconographical programme.

Some doubts have, nonetheless, been resolved. The notion of *L'Alcorano* as a book that was only a servile copy of Bibliander's has been replaced by the certainty of Arrivabene's new typographical conception, which included the use of the meaningful capital letters and the inclusion of the *cornice istoriata*, thus supporting the thesis proposed by Tommasino. Besides attempting to identify the Prophet's literary and iconographical figure with the great rulers of the classical world,<sup>89</sup> Muhammed's story in the frontispiece is the very first visual translation of his life ever created in Europe. Last but not least, a new hypothesis for the book's material creation has been put forward, suggesting that several printers and Arrivabene himself collaborated on its creation.

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<sup>89</sup> Pier Mattia Tommasino, *L'Alcorano* (see above, n. 5), pp. 236-243.