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Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Gerard Wiegers

The European Qur'an: Towards an Inclusive Definition

1 Introduction

As another volume in the book series of the international research project *The European Qur'an: Islamic scripture in European culture and religion, 1150–1850 (EuQu)*, funded by the European Research Council (ERC), the present collection seeks to shine a light on the agency of Muslim communities and individuals in Europe with regard to the Qur'an, including its use and dissemination across the continent. By employing such terms as “European Muslims” and “European Qur'an,” we aim to contribute to the debate regarding the belonging of Muslims and Islam to Europe, a debate that has intensified with Muslim migration, the emergence of the European Union project, and various attempts to construct a shared European identity.

The ongoing discourse surrounding the concept of European Islam¹ and its defining characteristics has generated scholarly interest in certain Muslim communities that, unlike those that have emerged as a result of migration since the 1960s, can be considered historically “European”; these include communities in the Iberian Peninsula and the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, other communities with deep historical roots in the continent, such as the Bosnian and Dagestani Muslims, have remained relatively unknown to wider scholarly audiences. By bringing diverse cases together, this volume explores the significant role played by Muslim communities in copying, disseminating, using, interpreting, and translating the Qur'an throughout Europe. This approach not only sheds light on the role of Muslims in shaping the culture that we consider European, but also highlights how contact between Muslim and non-Muslim populations has led to the development of distinctive features and traditions of European Muslim communities.

¹ To name just a few major works on the topic: Jørgen Nielsen, *Towards a European Islam* (Basingstoke: Pallgrave, 1999); Xavier Bougarel, “Bosnian Islam as ‘European Islam’: Limits and Shifts of a Concept,” in *Islam in Europe*, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96–124; Jocelyne Cesari, “Conclusion: Is There a European Islam?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 802–6; Ertuğrul Şahin, *Europäischer Islam: Diskurs im Spannungsfeld von Universalität, Historizität, Normativität und Empirizität* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017); Mohammed Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2019).

2 On the Concept of the *European Qur'an*

In this volume, we propose to contribute to the study of Islam in Europe in general and to the definition of the *European Qur'an* concept in particular by analyzing Muslims' engagement with the Qur'an, specifically through their practices of reading, copying, interpreting, translating, and utilizing the scripture. Our central question is whether there is a distinct phenomenon that can be characterized as the *European Qur'an*. If so, what does this notion mean? And, importantly, what can and cannot be considered part of this phenomenon?

While we consider "Europe" as primarily a narrative construct that implies cultural, physical, and religious homogeneity in a region that is, in fact, incredibly diverse, the practical significance of belonging to "Europe" or enjoying "Europeanness" cannot be ignored. In the past, Europeanness was thought to be marked by sociocultural qualities – and in some cases, even physical qualities – which were deemed superior to the qualities ascribed to others. This was particularly evident where Europeanness was viewed as being closely connected to Christianity and when, in the nineteenth century, racialized views on non-Europeans started to influence cultural production.² Recently, Europeanness has come to also involve the possession of certain political rights. Consequently, exclusion from Europeanness and the European project is now associated with othering in terms of citizenship and various forms of discrimination and exclusion on legal grounds.

The applicability of the term "European" to Islam has been a topic of debate for several decades, with the notion of *European Islam* generating significant controversy and discussion, particularly since the 1990s. In interwar Europe, the term was used descriptively by Muslims in Albania to describe their (national) form of Islam as belonging to the shared European culture.³ In recent decades, it has been used in public debates to refer to the practices and communities of Muslim migrants in Western Europe, often in a strongly normative manner. Rather than simply describing reality, the term "European Islam" has come to suggest what this reality ought to be, transmitting to the broader public the expectation that Muslim

² Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2010), posits that eighteenth-century Enlightenment writings were marked by the relative absence of such notions of superiority. We thank Jan Loop for drawing our attention to this publication.

³ Nathalie Clayer, "Behind the Veil. The Reform of Islam in Inter-war Albania or the Search for a 'Modern' and 'European' Islam," in *Islam in Interwar Europe*, edited by Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 151.

migrants should adopt and adjust to the dominant “European” norms and institutions, which are often perceived as culturally liberal and secular.⁴

Academic discourse has done much to challenge this normative understanding and has invited a reconsideration of the history of European Islam to contest the idea of Islam as something imported and foreign to Europe.⁵ Scholars have emphasized the centuries-long history of Muslim-Christian relations in Europe, the impact of European colonialism on Muslim countries, and the history of indigenous Muslim communities in Europe. By exploring these historical and cultural contexts, a broad range of works have sought to deconstruct the narrow and homogenizing view of Islam in Europe and to recognize the diversity and richness of Muslim experiences and practices on the continent.⁶

It is in this historical vein that this volume aims to explore the notion of the *European Qur'an*. A relatively recent concept, it has not yet acquired a clear and commonly accepted definition. In the academic field of Qur'anic studies, “European” has so far been discussed in two ways.

Firstly, Angelika Neuwirth argues that the Qur'an can and should be considered part of European cultural heritage. Her detailed 2010 study of the Qur'an's historical genesis suggests that the text of the Qur'an is a product of the shared cultural heritage – Christian, Jewish, and Muslim – of the late antique period of the Mediterranean world. Neuwirth asserts that the failure of scholars to approach the Qur'an in this manner has resulted in Islam and the Qur'an being perceived as “outsiders” to European civilization. A European approach to the Qur'an, according to Neuwirth, means acknowledging the shared roots of both Christianity and Islam in the cultural and historical context of late antique society.⁷ In another study (2016), she shows how the character of the Qur'an as a coherent and wide-ranging critical commentary on the Jewish and Christian scriptures was prevented from be-

4 Jørgen Nielsen, “European Islam (as a concept),” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Devin J. Stewart. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27822.

5 This has also been the primary goal of the ERC-Synergy project *The European Qur'an: Islamic scripture in European culture and religion, 1150–1850 (EuQu)*.

6 E.g., John Victor Tolan et al., *Europe and the Islamic World: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); Maurits Berger, *A Brief History of Islam in Europe: Thirteen Centuries of Creed, Conflict and Coexistence* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014); Nathalie Clayer and Xavier Bougarel, *Europe's Balkan Muslims: A New History* (London: C. Hurst & Company Limited, 2017); Cesari, *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*.

7 For the discussion on the Qur'an's embeddedness in the religious and ethical ethos of late antique Christianity and Judaism, see also Guy G. Stroumsa, *The Making of the Abrahamic Religions in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

coming widely known in Europe because of the rise of the philological method and its detailed, piecemeal, critical approach to Islam's sacred scripture.⁸

Secondly, a definition of the European Qur'an concept has been suggested by Jan Loop in his introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* (2018). Loop defines it as a *sui generis* text genre that emerged as a result of "the transformations that the Qur'an underwent in its transition from the Islamic-Arabic world to the various Latin and vernacular versions in Europe, as well as with regard to the ways that the Qur'an is read, used and adapted in Christian and Jewish European contexts."⁹ Elsewhere in his article, Loop remarks: "that the European Qur'an constitutes a textual tradition of its own is reinforced by the fact that already in the earliest manuscripts, but also in the printed editions throughout the centuries, the *text of the Qur'an was framed by a battery of varying and changing paratexts – prefaces, refutations, annotations – which put it into ideological perspectives* [emphasis added]."¹⁰ As an example of the European Qur'an in this definition, Loop discusses the publication of Ketton's Qur'an translation with the Cluniac paratextual materials by the Protestant Theodor Bibliander (first edition 1543). The European Qur'an, according to Loop, thus primarily constitutes a translation of the Qur'an into Latin or a European vernacular, accompanied by an extensive corpus of additional texts aimed at clarifying and/or refuting the Islamic scripture.

Both Neuwirth and Loop's original approaches serve primarily to stimulate new research and to point out that the use of the Qur'an in Christian polemics in fact represents a degree of inclusion of Islam into what will later be seen as the basis of European culture. Neuwirth focuses on the emergence of distinct Christian and Islamic religious traditions that stem from the shared cultural and historical context of the late antique period of the Mediterranean world. Meanwhile, Loop emphasizes the early modern use of the Qur'an in interconfessional and anticonfessional polemical discourse.¹¹ Overall, this inclusion of the Qur'an in

8 Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010); "Qur'anic Studies and Historical Critical Philology. The Qur'an's Staging, Penetrating and Eclipsing of Biblical Tradition," *Philological Encounters* 1 (2016): 31–60. Also, Paderborner, "The Qur'an Also Counts as European Cultural Heritage," *Paderborner "SJ" Blog*, April 18, 2015, <https://sjpaderborn.wordpress.com/2015/04/18/the-quran-also-counts-as-european-cultural-heritage-award-for-angelika-neuwirth-goethe-de>.

9 Jan Loop, "Introduction: The Qur'an in Europe – the European Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 3.

10 Loop, "Introduction", 5–6.

11 An example of the first are the references to the Qur'an in Catholic anti-Protestant discourse, such as *Calvino-Turcismus*, and analogous Protestant phenomena. We may observe that this type of use indeed builds on the Cluniac model, preserved in Bibliander's translation and paratexts (1543). We also find this model in later translations which continued to build on it. Like the origi-

Christian European culture challenges the notion of a clear division between Christian and Islamic cultures, highlighting the complex and intertwined nature of their histories.

Though intellectually stimulating, both understandings of the Qur'an in relation to Europe – whether reading the text purely within the historical context of its origination, as in the case of Neuwirth, or through translations and early modern European Christian polemics, as in the case of Loop – have their shortcomings. Andrew Rippin notes that modern studies on the philology and historical evolution of the Qur'anic text cannot “escape the assumptions of the Muslim tradition” and an “objective study of the Qur'an purely within its historical context of origination” is deemed extremely difficult.¹²

Loop's definition, although inclusive of the variety of European Christian readings of the Qur'an, cannot be easily applied to European Muslim practices.¹³ For instance, as vernacular translation with paratexts became a prevailing model in Christian and Orientalist circles, similar phenomena emerged among Muslims in Europe. The Mudejars produced codices consisting of selected verses and consecutive *sūras*, and these Arabic textual models were frequently accompanied by Romance translations and interpretations.¹⁴ It is worth noting that these texts can be found in mixed manuscripts, unlike *muṣḥafs*, which, to the best of our knowledge, are never bound together with other texts. Enes Karić's contribution to this volume reveals that comparable works containing selected Qur'anic verses are

nal translation, all these vernacular translations served the main goal of polemicizing against Islam. This model remained dominant during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

¹² Andrew Rippin, “Review: Der Koran Als Text Der Spätantike. Ein Europäischer Zugang,” *Religion* 41, no. 3 (2011): 526.

¹³ A point that requires further discussion is to what extent Loop's definition covers translations produced in the modern period. Starting with André Du Ryer's original translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into French, published in 1647, another approach also became important. New translations came into being, which supplanted Ketton's version and its model of text plus paratexts. The new model is exemplified by the Dutch translation of the Qur'an by the Cartesian and Spinozist Jan Hendrik Glazemaker, published by Jan Rieuwertsz in 1657. As Van der Deijl has demonstrated, this translation, based on Du Ryer's French translation, was undertaken with Enlightened, anti-authoritarian aims, and it stressed rational autonomy in the pursuit of truth. A century later, the Enlightened approach would become even more dominant in Europe. Lucas van der Deijl, “Orientalist Ambivalence: Translating the Qur'an in the Dutch Republic,” *Early Modern Low Countries* 6, no. 2 (2022): 176–200.

¹⁴ See Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias, “New Models of Qur'an Abridgement among the Mudejars and Moriscos: Copies in Arabic Containing Three Selections of Suras”, in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wieggers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 165–98.

also found among Bosnian Muslims and known as *en'ām* (Arabic *an'ām*), a term signifying a selection or collection of parts of the Qur'an.

3 Towards a New Definition

The question that arises is whether such texts, written by Muslims in what is now considered part of the European continent, can also be regarded as European texts. This volume aims to develop a definition of the European Qur'an that is inclusive of a range of practices related to reading and using the Qur'an and, importantly, acknowledges the role of Muslims in shaping the phenomenon. In selecting the case studies presented in this volume, we were guided by several considerations:

- **Geography:** One of the initial considerations in defining the European Qur'an was the issue of geographical borders. Where does Europe begin, and where does it end? How has the perception of boundaries changed over time, and why? How do physical borders between states or regions correspond to mental maps of neighboring peoples?
- **Temporality:** Secondly, we sought to determine *when* the idea of belonging to a shared European space becomes a dominant trope in the identification of “us” and “them,” and what interpretations this imagined common space entails.
- **Practice:** Finally, we looked at whether there are any elements of using the Qur'an (such as copying, translating, and commenting on the sacred scripture) that distinguish European Muslim cultures from coreligionists elsewhere.

The discussion in this volume on the practices of copying, reading, translating and using the Qur'an among Muslims in Europe places us in the midst of long-standing and complex debates that lie at the heart of Europe's struggle to define itself as a coherent entity, which often involves stigmatizing and excluding groups perceived as the Other. Drawing a line between “us” and “them” inevitably emphasizes differences while downplaying commonalities. By analyzing the phenomenon of the European Qur'an, we aim to expand the historically exclusive boundaries of Europe to include Muslim communities and to acknowledge the complex history of Occidental-Oriental, Muslim-Christian relations in Europe that have existed for centuries. However, we also recognize that casting the European Qur'an as a narrative construct risks reinforcing existing power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South by perpetuating a Eurocentric view of the history of interfaith relations. This exercise in the theoretical conceptualization of the European Qur'an does not seek to establish new boundaries between

practices of Muslims in different geographical areas, but rather contributes to deconstructing “Europeanness” as an exclusively Christian, Bible-centered cultural identity.

3.1 Geography

As outlined above, the first consideration in defining the European Qur'an concerns the geographical boundaries of Europe. In other words, we pondered which Muslim communities should and should not be included in the scope of this volume based on their geographical location within the cultural space of Europe.

The notion of Europe has always entailed a set of intertwined discourses, giving rise to a definition in political, economic and ethnological as well as geographic and religious terms.¹⁵ In the words of Klaus Eder, “Europe has accumulated an immense history of images of its boundaries that are used selectively to define its borders.”¹⁶ The intersection of geography and religion, in particular, historically played a significant role in the semantic constructions of Europe (and still does). On the one hand, determining Europe's geographical borders with Africa and Asia was closely linked to the production of cultural and political discourses surrounding the shared European civilization. Nature and climate were considered important factors in shaping the distinctive character of European states and their populations. On the other hand, religious differences prompted a reconsideration of Europe's north-south division, particularly following the Wars of Religion and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Europe was also frequently framed in terms of its relationship with Islam, and Muslim-Christian relations lie at the heart of envisioning Europe's southern and eastern frontiers.¹⁷

The southern frontier,¹⁸ in particular, has been portrayed as a significant defense line against the Muslim world – whether through the natural boundary

15 Shane Weller, *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 2–5.

16 Klaus Eder, “Europe's Borders: The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (2006): 256.

17 Weller, *The Idea of Europe*, 2–5; Eder, “Europe's Borders,” 264.

18 For instance, in the sixteenth century, Nicholas Cleynaerts (d. 1542) described his experience of being at the border of Europe while waiting to cross the Strait of Gibraltar in order to study the Qur'an in Fez with his liberated Tunisian Muslim slave, Kharūf. Nicolaes Cleynaerts to his teacher Jacobus Latomus, Gibraltar, 7 April 1540, Dutch translation in: Jan Papy and Joris Tulkens, *In de ban van Mohammed. Nicolaes Cleynaerts' (1493–1542) brieven uit de Arabische wereld* (Gorredijk: Sterck en De Vreese, 2021), 253. Latin original: “Desedi hic in Europae finibus in oppido Gibalaltar hedomadis tribus . . .” (Alphonse Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard*,

posed by the southern shoreline of the Mediterranean which separates the European from the African continent,¹⁹ or through less fixed boundaries²⁰ with the Turkish Other. In this volume, two chapters – by Gerard Wiegers and Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias & Maxime Sellin – examine Qur’an translation and annotation practices by the Muslims of Europe’s southernmost frontier, the Iberian Peninsula. These chapters shed light on a religious tradition that has had a significant impact on European Islam as a minority religion and on the first Qur’an translations by non-Muslim Europeans. The contribution by Karić on Muslim communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlights the mediating role played by frontier communities between Christian and Muslim/Turkish cultural spaces.

The eastern frontier of Europe has historically been defined by the dominance of Russia with its often-changing boundaries and spheres of influence.²¹ Despite being a major European power deeply involved in European cultural processes, Russia was historically associated with the East due to the Mongol invasions, and later viewed as a competitor to Europe in terms of claims to true Christian Orthodoxy. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was regarded as an ideological antagonist. Romanticization and fear of the counterpart have not only occurred on the side of (undisputedly) European countries. Russia’s culture, history, and politics reflect the country’s turbulent relations with Europe’s cultural centers. During the imperial period, seeing itself in an inferior position, Russia sought to establish dominance over its sizable Muslim population, particularly in Central Asia, which it conquered in the nineteenth century. Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) famously remarked, “in Europe

T I (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1940), 161/ French translation, Roersch, *Correspondance de Nicolas Clénard*, T III (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1941), 105: “Voici trois semaines que je suis, tout au bout de l’Europe, dans la forteresse de Gibraltar.”

19 E.g., Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); for a view of the same frontier from the opposite side: Oumelbanine Zhiri, “Mapping the Frontier between Islam and Christendom in a Diplomatic Age: Al-Ghassâni in Spain,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (2016): 966–99.

20 E.g., Palmira Johnson Brummett, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty Territory and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Charles Sabatos, *Frontier Orientalism and the Turkish Image in Central European Literature* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020).

21 E.g., William Hardy McNeill, *Europe’s Steppe Frontier 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Thomas McLean, *The Other East and Nineteenth-Century British Literature: Imagining Poland and the Russian Empire* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we will be masters. In Europe we were Tatars, and in Asia we are Europeans.”²²

This volume contains several case studies that examine Muslim communities that were once part of the Russian Empire, with some still being associated with Russia today. The chapters by Alfrid Bustanov and (to some extent) Gulnaz Sibgatullina discuss the Muslims of the Volga-Ural region, itself a frontier region bordering Asia. While the contribution of the Volga-Ural community to the dissemination of printed Qur'ans across Europe and beyond is relatively well-known,²³ the impact of this community on the vernacularization of Qur'an translations and on the creation of a distinct Muslim subjectivity remains an understudied area, addressed in this volume. There was also another Turkic-speaking group in close contact with the Muslim centers in the Volga-Urals, such as Kazan and Orenburg: the Crimean Tatars. Mykhaylo Yakubovych's contribution highlights how the strategic location of this community at the crossroads between Turkic, Arab, and non-Muslim worlds has placed it at the forefront of many innovations concerning translation, copying, and printing.

The volume also includes a case study on Dagestani Muslims in the North Caucasus, by Shamil Shikhaliev & Ilona Chmielewska. Due to the region's location in a hard-to-reach mountain area, Dagestani Muslims have long remained oriented towards the Arab-speaking world rather than to Europe. Nevertheless, we invite the reader to view this case, too, through the lens of the European Qur'an. Dagestani practices of copying and ornamenting the Qur'an have been influenced by the region's inclusion in the European technological, trade, and cultural spheres, following the Russian conquest of the area in the first half of the nineteenth century. This has led to a distinct form of the Qur'an known among manuscript collectors as the “Dagestani Qur'an.”²⁴

Also featured in this volume is a discussion of practices of reading and translating the Qur'an among Slavic-speaking Muslims of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, by Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska & Czesław Łapicz. In many respects, this community exemplifies how interactions between Muslim and Christian communities in Cen-

²² Fyodor Dostoyevsky, “Denvink za 1881 g.,” in *Polnoe sobranie khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1929), 454. Also, Mark Bassin et al., *Between Europe & Asia: The Origins Theories and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism* (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

²³ For the list of references, see Gulnaz Sibgatullina and Iazgul Rakhimova, “Arabic Edition of the Qur'ān, Kazan, 1803,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān Brill*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_055207.

²⁴ See Annabel Gallop, “From Caucasia to Southeast Asia: Daghistani Qur'ans and the Islamic Manuscript Tradition in Brunei and the Southern Philippines. I,” *Manuscripta Orientalia* 14, no. 1 (2008): 32–56, and 14 no. 2 (2008): 3–20.

tral Europe were mutually influential in terms of language, everyday practices, and political institutions. Kulwicka-Kamińska & Łapicz provide a detailed analysis of some of these aspects.

As evidenced in the chapters in this volume, Muslim communities in Europe, particularly those at its frontiers, have played a crucial intermediary role in shaping Muslim-Christian relations in premodern and modern periods, both within and across empires. While these Muslim communities were part of broader Islamic networks – the Persianate world in the case of the Volga and Crimean Tatars, or the Arab world in the case of Dagestan – they also developed traditions and practices specific to their liminal position (discussed further in section 3.3 below). Similarly, the Bosnian Muslim and Polish-Lithuanian Tatar communities, whose origins have been a much-debated and politically sensitive issue,²⁵ exhibit distinct traits in which Christian and Muslim elements interact in complex ways. With technological advancements and European colonialism, the boundaries between regions have become even more blurred. Johanna Pink's contribution stretches the notion of "Europe" beyond geographical boundaries by discussing the proliferation of Qur'an translations into European languages by Muslims both in continental Europe and in former European colonial territories.

Two points need to be made at this juncture. Firstly, while we acknowledge the significant contribution made by Muslims from the Ottoman Empire to the phenomenon of the European Qur'an, we do not directly address the case of Muslim Turks, who were the most influential Muslim community within the Empire. The Islamic and Qur'anic traditions of Muslim communities within the Ottoman Empire have long constituted a field of study in their own right,²⁶ and findings in this area are yet to be integrated into broader intellectual frameworks analyzing European Islam. Geographically, the Muslim Turks dominated territories that extended well beyond the European continent, and the interplay of different regional traditions with respect to the Qur'an remains to be studied. Some effects of the Ottoman political, cultural, and religious practices on regional traditions are discussed by Karić, whose contribution to this volume focuses on the frontier Bosnian Muslim commu-

25 E.g., Veneta Yankova, "The Tatars in Lithuania and their ethnohistory," *Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic studies* 4, no.1 (2021): 298–316; Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

26 M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Susan Gunasti, *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: An Exegetical Tradition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

nity, and by Sibgatullina, who touches upon Ottoman Turks in her analysis of broader translation traditions among Turkic-speaking Muslims.²⁷

Secondly, it is important to note that the notion of “Muslims” is not only used in reference to religious practices and worldviews of particular communities, but increasingly also forms a category of social analysis.²⁸ When used in this function, the notion emphasizes a single religion that supposedly defines many communities with various histories and experiences of living on the European continent. We realize that such an approach in itself can be limiting, as we are bringing together communities that – despite their commonalities – also have substantial differences that are potentially downplayed when viewing them through the lens of religious affiliation.²⁹ However, this approach also makes it possible to highlight a certain solidarity shared by Muslims from different geographical areas, as will be discussed in several of the chapters. Moreover, “Muslims” here is not an exclusive category, as we do not construct it as “Other” vis-à-vis European, Christian culture. On the contrary, the chapters in this volume show that there has been a continuous interchange between Muslim minority and Christian majority communities, where the former adopted an active stance rather than being merely a passive witness.

An aspect that remains beyond the scope of this volume is the problem of racialization and how the idea of Europe and Europeaness has historically been shaped by it. Muslims have historically been excluded from the shared culture not only due to religious affiliation and lifestyle, but also due to perceived racial differences relating to physical and behavioral traits. This exclusion is reinforced by imagining geographical borders like mountains, seas, channels and rivers to be natural barriers that separate a supposedly superior race from inferior ones (“Arab” or “Asian”).³⁰ The concept of racialization may explain how

27 A discussion that does not feature in our volume, and remains, by and large, understudied in the field of European Qur'an pertains to the Qur'an translation and commenting practices of Albanian Muslims, also strongly influenced by the Ottoman cultural sphere. For an overview of potential research avenues, see İsmail Bardhi, “The *Sayfahs* of the Translation and *Tafseer* of the Noble Qur'an into Albanian Language,” *Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4, no. 2 (2018): 167–220.

28 Rogers Brubaker, “Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 1–8.

29 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016).

30 This issue forms part of the broader scholarly debate on whether concepts of “race” and “racialization,” critically analyzed in the context of North America, can be applied to the European context: Markus Balkenhol and Katharina Schramm, “Doing Race in Europe: Contested Past and Contemporary Practices,” *Social Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2019): 585–93. The interplay between Islamophobia and racialization has been analyzed in Saher Selod and David G. Embrick, “Racializa-

religious markers gain racial meanings³¹ and function as a driving force in cultural politics.

By excluding certain groups based on their perceived racial characteristics, Europe reinforces the perception that it has always been a coherent and unchallenged unit. This perspective disregards the effects of continuous migration into and out of Europe, whether voluntary or forced. For example, the role of Muslim slaves in medieval and early modern Europe is an area of scholarship that promises to reveal how Europe repressed the confessional (viz. Muslim) identity of a sizable group of migrants (see Wiegers' contribution in this volume).³²

3.2 Temporality

When examining historical developments spanning centuries, one needs to be attuned to changes in the meaning of words over time. Interpretations of both “European” and “Qur’an” have never been static – neither for those who saw themselves as belonging to Europe, nor for those who saw themselves as (or were seen as) outsiders.

European identity, as discussed above, has often been structured along religious lines. However, the strict division between arguably united Christian Europe and its non-Christian (viz. Muslim) neighbors is a relatively recent construct. According to Isabella Walser-Bürgler, the notion of “Europe” was not prominent even during the time of the crusades (eleventh to thirteenth century), although various European peoples were engaged in the war against the common Muslim

tion and Muslims: Situating the Muslim Experience in Race Scholarship,” *Sociology Compass* 7, no. 8 (2013): 644–55; Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, “The Racialization of Muslims,” in *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, Salman Sayid and AbdoolKarim Vakil (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 69–84. For an in-depth historical analysis of the phenomenon: Jocelyne Dakhlia and Bernard Vincent, *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe: Une intégration invisible*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011); Jocelyne Dakhlia and Wolfgang Kaiser, *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe: Passages et contacts en Méditerranée*, Vol 2 (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013); Mercedes García-Arenal and Felipe Pereda, *De sangre y leche: raza y religión en el mundo ibérico moderno* (Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2021).

31 Valérie Amiraux and Pierre-Luc Beauchesne, “Racialization and the Construction of the Problem of the Muslim Presence in Western Societies,” in *Routledge Handbook of Political Islam*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh, (London: Routledge, 2020), 363–82.

32 Ariel Salzmann, “Migrants in Chains: On the Enslavement of Muslims in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe,” *Religions* 4 (2013), 391–411; Tijana Krstić, “Islam and Muslims in Early Modern Europe,” in *Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750, Vol. I: Peoples & Places*, ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 670–93.

enemy; “in this context, it was customary instead to speak of *ecclesia occidentalis* or *Christianitas* instead of *Europa*.”³³ Fourteenth-century, fifteenth-century and especially sixteenth-century sources reveal the emergence of ideas about shared “Europeanness”: for example, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (c. 1400–1458) in his *De Europa* uses *Europaei* (“Europeans”) to refer to the peoples of the geographical realm called “Europe”; but even in these periods, the role of religion in shaping the sense of common belonging remained complex.³⁴

European practices of identifying “us” in relation to Muslims clearly have some roots in the premodern period. The two chapters on Muslims in Iberia illustrate the dominance of Christian polemics in the construction of Muslims as the Other. Wiegiers shows in his contribution that such distinctions in this period were predominantly confessional; once converted, an ex-Muslim could participate in Christian social networks. From the eighteenth century and in connection with the educated elites and scholarly knowledge production, “Europeanness” acquired additional connotations, including racial ones, when contrasted with the Orient. In the nineteenth century, with growing industrialization, colonialism, and globalization, the concepts of Europe and Europeanness left “the narrow circles of the educated elite to become a more meaningful category of attribution and differentiation,” although the two concepts remained plural, fragmented, and polyvalent in definition.³⁵

As for the meaning of the term “Qur’an,” it is important to mention the following. Since the focus of this volume is mainly on Sunni Muslim communities, it can be argued that the sacred status of the Qur’an remained a stable and core notion for all the communities under discussion, regardless of changing social or political contexts. Instead, it was the traditions of reading the Qur’an, dominant ideologies around translating and commenting on the text, and particular rituals in which the Qur’an was used that were subject to change over time. In her contribution, Sibgatullina discusses how the translation of the Qur’an at different points in time was undertaken in pursuit of different goals. Additionally, the expression of Muslim piety through engagement with the Qur’an also evolved over time, as discussed in Bustanov’s chapter on the individualization of Qur’an study among Tatars.

A common theme throughout the volume is the reflection of ethnic identities through practices of translating and using the Qur’an, particularly in response to the emergence of nation-states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Trans-

³³ Isabella Walser-Bürgler, *Europe and Europeanness in Early Modern Latin Literature: Fuitne Europa Tunc Unita?* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 30.

³⁴ Walser-Bürgler, *Europe and Europeanness*, 33.

³⁵ Patel, “The Making of Homo Europaeus,” 22, 27.

lations of the Qur'an into vernacular languages, such as the Spanish Romance vernacular, already existed in the medieval period (Wiegers). Additionally, scholars have shown that the vernacularization of Islamic scholarship was already underway in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, developing independently of processes in Europe.³⁶ Nevertheless, many translations were produced in local languages, such as Polish dialects (Kulwicka-Kamińska & Łapicz) or Crimean Tatar (Yakubovych), mirroring the period when smaller states like the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (until 1795) or empires like Russia were struggling to define their (proto-)national ideas. This process coincided with the decline of the Persian world – the pre-national Muslim linguistic cosmopolis – which also played a role in legitimizing translations into languages other than Persian.³⁷ Amid the emergence of alternative identities and solidarities, such as pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic, Muslim reformist elites worked to define Muslim identity in relation to new modern realities, including closer social, political, and intellectual ties with Western Europe, as well as the expansion and transformation of the empires in which they were included. These new realities required a significant alteration of traditional Muslim institutions and hierarchies.

With the exception of a few chapters, this volume does not extensively discuss developments after 1950. While the idea of a united Europe faded in the wake of nation-state building, it resurfaced after World War II, particularly as part of the European Union's identity-building projects. The imaginations of contemporary Europe as an entity are significantly different from the connotations that existed before the end of the long nineteenth century and during the interbellum. The participation of Muslims in shaping these novel identities therefore requires careful analysis that is beyond the scope of this volume.³⁸

³⁶ Michiel Leezenberg, "The Vernacular Revolution: Reclaiming Early Modern Grammatical Traditions in the Ottoman Empire," *History of Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2016): 251–75; Paolo Sartori, "Between Kazan and Kashghar: On the Vernacularization of Islamic Jurisprudence in Central Eurasia," *Die Welt Des Islams* 61, no. 2 (2020): 216–246.

³⁷ On how the decline of the Persianate world affected Qur'an translation practices into a Turkic vernacular, see Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur'an: Rethinking Mūsā Bīgī's Translation into Türki-Tatar," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 46–69.

³⁸ Weller, *The Idea of Europe*; also Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (London: Routledge, 1996); Yilmaz Hakan and Aykaç Çağla E., *Perceptions of Islam in Europe: Culture Identity and the Muslim 'Other'* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

3.3 Practice

Oral and textual instances of the Qur'an have continually been interconnected with and reliant upon the historical and social context of Muslim societies. As such, the temporal and geographical contexts outlined above have given rise to certain practices of Qur'an production and usage that can be associated with European Muslims.

Regional practices of Qur'an reading are closely linked to the spread of particular *madhhabs* or schools of law followed by European Muslims. The Ḥanafī *madhhab* is traditionally observed by Crimean, Volga, and Polish-Lithuanian Tatars as well as Bosnian Muslims, while the Shafi'ī *madhhab* is followed by the majority of Dagestani Muslims, and the Maliki *madhhab* was adhered to by Iberian Muslim communities. In addition to *madhhab*-specific provisions, local traditions and customs of using the Qur'an have been shaped by geographical location, such as a community's proximity to important centers of Islamic education in Central Asia, or historical factors, such as migration and coexistence with other religious communities.

Although the content of the Qur'anic revelation remains unchanged, the design and materials of Qur'an manuscripts may be modified to meet the diverse needs of users. Oral practices such as *tajwīd* (the art of Qur'anic recitation), vocalization of the text, and different readings (*qirā'āt*) have been incorporated into the design of Qur'an manuscripts to facilitate memorizing and recitation. In their contributions, Shikhaliev & Chmylevskaia and Karić discuss Dagestani and Bosnian regional specifics of producing the Qur'an, including variations in ornamentation, paper, format, and writing style. As the authors demonstrate, these different characteristics may combine a multitude of different forms suited to different purposes and audiences.³⁹ For example, memorizing the Qur'an is facilitated by manuscripts that are well laid out and where pages end at the end of verses. In addition, there are forms of the Qur'an specifically designed for different audiences, such as in clear writing for seniors or large formats for children. Karić covers the tradition of copying the Qur'an in *juz'* format, which was evidently important in religious customs and proved to be an invaluable tool for more efficient copying of the sacred text.⁴⁰

The perception and treatment of the Qur'an are intrinsically tied to its context, and may exhibit significant variability. The handling of this sacred text may

³⁹ See also François Déroche, "Manuscripts of the Qur'ān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00110.

⁴⁰ See also Mercedes García-Arenal, "The Inquisition and the search for Qur'ans," in *The Iberian Qur'an: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 245–85.

range from venerating it as a symbol of divine guidance to treating it as a commodity, or even as spoils of war or an art object in a museum. In the everyday life of Muslims, the Qur'an is believed to be divinely protected and a conduit for various forms of divine intervention, such as conferring success and prosperity, preventing misfortune, or shielding the owner from the envy of others.⁴¹ Hence, forms and excerpts of the Qur'an have been widely used for centuries to decorate living rooms, to serve as talismans worn near the heart, or as essential objects that must be present during ceremonies such as naming, marriages, and funerals. The materials and ornamentation of Qur'an manuscripts can also signify the owner's wealth, as discussed by Shikhaliev & Chmylevskaia, who describe exceptionally large Qur'an manuscripts with richly illuminated *sūra* titles, which imply considerable investment.

Another significant aspect evident in the materiality of the European Qur'an is the tangible presence of translation. Given that the Muslim communities in question were often multilingual and Arabic was not the mother tongue of most members, written translations became a necessity. There are different types of translation, and the intended audiences for these translations also differ. For instance, interlinear translations may exist alongside *tafsīrs* and explanations in the margins, which may be presented in either a carefully planned page layout or a more informal manner. Furthermore, translations may be produced for personal use or given as a gift or *baraka* to members of the elite. The ideologies behind translation, the coexistence of the original and its translation, and the rules for utilizing such translations have sparked wide-ranging debate and discussion (see the contribution by Pink). The study of socio-cultural and historical "ecologies" in which these Qur'an translations were produced and which were influenced by a multitude of intersecting factors such as Christian-Muslim polemics, Orientalist scholarship, Christian mission endeavors, and modernizing imperial governance of religious and ethnic minority populations, among others, offer a rich research direction that holds great potential for gaining deeper insights into the nature of the European Qur'an phenomenon.⁴²

With the development of recording technology – beginning with the printing press and the gramophone – Muslims became concerned about the application of

⁴¹ See discussion in Gregory Starret, "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo," *American Anthropologist* 97, no.1 (1995): 53.

⁴² E.g. Samuel Jonathan Ross, "The Biblical Turn in Modern Qur'an Commentary," PhD diss., Yale University, 2018; Gulnaz Sibgatullina, "The Ecology of a Vernacular Qur'an: Rethinking Mūsā Bigī's Translation into Tūrki-Tatar," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2022): 46–69.

new media.⁴³ Such technologies pose a broader challenge: namely, how can the practical and institutional conditions that ensure an ethical response to the divine revelation be upheld across new and rapidly changing media environments? The contributions by Yakubovych and Bustanov touch upon the evolution of standards in Qur'an copying and printing and discuss the roles of individual visionaries in bringing about important changes.⁴⁴

Lastly, it is important to note that the European Qur'an is intimately tied to the position of European Muslims, setting them apart from their counterparts in Muslim-majority countries such as Morocco or Turkey. As a minority group in predominantly Christian Europe, European Muslims have developed distinctive cultural, literary, and theological practices that reflect their position within a pluralistic European society.⁴⁵

4 Volume Outline

The book is divided into three parts, each exploring different aspects of the European Qur'an. **Part 1** focuses on the interplay between Christian and Islamic traditions on the European continent, highlighting the role of European Muslims in the evolution of Christian Qur'an studies and translations. **Gerard Wiegers** examines the relationships between Muslims of al-Andalus and Christian Iberia and the Christian elites, both voluntary and forced. He argues that given their extensive contributions to the scholarship of the Early Modern period, some of these Iberian Muslims deserve to be considered members of the Republic of Letters. **Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias and Maxime Sellin** explore the issue of the so-called *hurūf muqatta'āt* ("the isolated/disconnected letters") in Mudejar and Morisco translations into Spanish, and trace impact of these translations on medieval and early modern European translations into Latin and the vernacular. **Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz** discuss two Qur'an translations into Polish to exemplify the linguistic, theological, and political interplay between Muslim and Christian cultures in Eastern Europe during the modern period.

⁴³ Charles Hirschkind, "Media and the Qur'an," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Johanna Pink. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00117.

⁴⁴ Compare with the case outlined by Anouk Cohen, "What is a 'Moroccan Qur'an'?" *Cahiers d'études africaines* 236 (2019): 1119–54.

⁴⁵ For the discussion of contemporary lived Islam, see, e.g., Nathal M. Dessing, Nadia Jeldtoft, and Linda Woodhead, *Everyday Lived Islam in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2016); Erkan Toguslu, *Everyday Life Practices of Muslims in Europe* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015).

Part 2 presents individual regional case studies, expanding the European Qur'an notion further to the southeast and east of Europe. **Enes Karić** provides an overview of the Qur'an manuscript tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, arguing that the historical position of the Bosnian Muslim community in the borderlands of the Ottoman Empire makes it a valuable case for understanding European Muslims' engagement with the Qur'an. **Shamil Shikhaliev and Ilona Chmilevskaia** cover the history of the Qur'an in Dagestan and prompt us to reconsider the place and role of this mountainous region in the history of Europe's Muslims, as Dagestan served as a natural point of contact between Arab and non-Arab Muslims. **Mykhaylo Yakubovych** focuses on the case of Crimea, where the Islamic tradition has roots in medieval times, and demonstrates how the attitude towards the Qur'anic text among the educated scholarly class shifted from the classical exegetical tradition to modern approaches. Finally, **Alfrid Bustanov** presents an overview of the cultural dynamics underlying Muslim engagement with the Qur'an in Inner Russia from the late seventeenth to the late twentieth century.

Part 3 provides theoretical and more geographically expansive considerations on Qur'an translation practices. **Gulnaz Sibgatullina** offers preliminary considerations for a broader study of practices of Qur'an translation among Turkophone Muslims, drawing on examples from the history of translations into Turkic languages and delineating major phases that informed the relationship between the sacred text, literary traditions, and vernacular languages. **Johanna Pink** examines the beginnings of Muslim efforts to translate the Qur'an into the languages of Western Europe between 1905 and 1960. In doing so, she explores the ways in which Muslim translators had to navigate local and global as well as premodern and modern Muslim exegetical traditions, and position themselves vis-à-vis the legacy of non-Muslim European Qur'an translation.

This volume thus offers a diverse range of perspectives and case studies on the European Qur'an, exploring its historical, cultural, and linguistic dimensions. By examining regional case studies, Qur'an translation practices, and the interplay between Islamic and Christian traditions, the contributing authors invite readers to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted role of the Qur'an in European societies. We hope that this collection will inspire further research and discussions on this important topic and encourage scholars to explore new avenues of inquiry into the rich history of the Qur'an in Europe.

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