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# Translatological Remarks on Rendering the Qur'an into Latin (Robert of Ketton, Mark of Toledo and Egidio da Viterbo): Purposes, Theory, and Techniques

**Abstract:** This paper presents a preliminary approach toward a modern translatological analysis of the first three full translations of the Qur'an: the ones by Robert of Ketton (1142–1143), Mark of Toledo (1210), and the version translated by Juan Gabriel de Teruel (1518) and corrected by Leo Africanus (1525) for the cardinal Egidio da Viterbo. Our analysis, in accord mostly with functionalist translation theories (see Nord, 2005; 2018), describes and comments on three phases of the translation process: (1) identification of the purpose of the translation and the problems to overcome in order to provide a proper rendering of the text; (2) formulation of a translating theory that serves as a general approach for translating the text; (3) choice and application of translation procedures. This approach toward the analysis of these aspects of the aforementioned translations of the Qur'an is an effort to account for the relative lack of attention that has been paid to the systematic analysis of the actual procedures by which these renderings were produced. A main point of contention of our analysis is that, while it would be misleading to state that the quality of the translations increases over time (for the quality fluctuates from fragment to fragment), nevertheless it is quite possible to assert that the overall zeal for fidelity seems to increase over time, meaning that the more the time passes, the more the translators feel compelled to preserve more features of the text.

In recent years, much effort has been devoted to producing critical editions of the extant Latin translations of the Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> However, relatively scanty attention

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<sup>1</sup> See Óscar de la Cruz Palma, ed., *La traducción latina del Corán atribuida al patriarca de Constantinopla Cirilo Lúcaris (1572–1638)* (Madrid: CSIC, 2006); Antonio García Masegosa, ed., *Germán de Silesia. Interpretatio Alcorani litteralis. Parte I: la traducción latina; introducción y edición crítica* (Madrid/Bellaterra: CSIC/UAB, 2009); Nadia Petrus Pons, ed., *Alchoranus Latinus quem transtulit Marcus canonicus Toletanus* (Madrid: CSIC, 2016); Katarzyna Krystyna Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an (1518/1621). Commissioned by Egidio da Viterbo. Critical Edition and Case Study* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018). Critical editions are underway for the work of Robert of Ketton (1142–1143), by José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz; and of Johann Zechendorff, by Reinhold Gleis (see Reinhold Gleis, "Review Article. Katarzyna K. Starczewska, Latin Translation of the Qur'an (1518/1621)," *Medievalia et humanistica* 45 (2020): 101–2).

has been paid to the systematic analysis of the actual procedures by which these translations were produced. Most attempts in this regard have been limited to broadly characterizing the general approach used by the translators or describing certain specific translation procedures.<sup>2</sup> This contribution presents preliminary guidelines toward a thorough translational analysis of the Latin versions of the Qur'an by proposing a comparative analysis of three of them: (1) Robert of Ketton's translation (1142–1143); Mark of Toledo's translation (1210); and the edition translated by Juan Gabriel of Teruel and corrected by Leo Africanus for Egidio da Viterbo.

This analysis is built around a twofold question: first, which methods were used to produce these translations and, second, how may we characterize them? Because the focus is placed on the translation practice, our analysis falls within the field of translology. This framework has its own limitations, notably because of the large amount of terms coined (and scopes developed) to describe the practice of translating. Krzeszowski has referred to this issue as “terminological chaos.”<sup>3</sup> The main reason behind such chaos, he says, “is that one and the same object of perception can be viewed (construed) in alternative ways along certain dimensions of imagery.”<sup>4</sup> This is precisely the case when it comes to the practice of translation. Notwithstanding, we view this as a benefit because the more the terms available to name a phenomenon, the more accurate will be its description.<sup>5</sup> This analysis, therefore, does not stick to a single classification

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2 Juan of Segovia's critique of Robert of Ketton's translating methods was “the earliest, most insightful, and [. . .] fairest” (Thomas Burman, “*Tafsir* and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'an Exegesis and the Latin Qur'ans of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo,” *Speculum* 73, no. 3 (1998): 705) study on this subject until the ones developed from the last decade of the 20th century onwards (see José Martínez Gázquez, “El prólogo de Juan de Segobia al Corán (Qur'an) trilingüe (1456),” *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 38, no. 1–2 (2003): 389–410). For more examples see Burman, “*Tafsir* and Translation”; Thomas Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Ulisse Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus. Eine sprachliche und kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse der Koranübersetzungen von Robert von Ketton und Marcus von Toledo* (Berlin/Münster: LIT Verlag, 2012); Ulisse Cecini, “Some Remarks on the Translation of Proper Names in Mark of Toledo's and Robert of Ketton's Latin Qur'an Translations,” *Al-Qanṭara* 35, no. 2 (2014): 579–605; José Martínez Gázquez, “El lenguaje de la violencia en el prólogo de la traducción latina del Corán impulsada por Pedro el Venerable,” *Cahiers d'études Hispaniques Médiévales* 28 (2005): 243–52; Gleib, “Review Article,” 103–7; Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*.

3 Tomasz Paweł Krzeszowski, *The Translation Equivalence Delusion. Meaning and Translation* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016), 39.

4 Krzeszowski, *The Translation Equivalence Delusion*, 39.

5 “. . . with modern Translology we witness a display of notions that help us to better outline the analysis of the translating phenomenon.” (Amparo Hurtado Albir, *Traducción y Traductología*.

(and, therefore, interpretation) of certain translating phenomena. Rather it uses different translatological perspectives to characterize them in order to appreciate the nuances that each perspective brings to the description of our translations.

Our analysis considers that there are at least three phases in the process of producing a translation: (1) identification of the purpose of the translation and the problems to overcome in order to provide a proper rendering of the text;<sup>6</sup> (2) formulation of a translating theory that serves as a general approach for translating the text, based on the purpose and problematic issues of the translation; (3) choice and application of translation procedures in line with the previous theory.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not the translators reflect in advance about the theories and procedures they will use to produce the translation, these only emerge during the very act of translating.

Regarding the purpose as a determining factor, it is worth mentioning that the translators were commissioned by high-ranking clerics with different objectives. They thus had to comply strictly with the request of their employers. Robert was hired by Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, to translate the Qur'an (1142–3) to enable the latter to get acquainted directly with the text and therefore refute Islam.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we can infer that Robert's main aim was to deliver a text that conveyed the meaning of the text as accurately and clearly as possible. Mark was commissioned by the archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, and by the archdeacon Mauritius, to translate the text (in 1210) in order to enable Christians to “confound” Muslims and convert them to Christianity.<sup>9</sup> This purpose conditioned Mark's approach in two ways: the translation was composed in way that was

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*Introducción a la Traductología*. 2nd ed. (Madrid: Cátedra, 2004), 201) All translations, unless otherwise stated, are mine.

<sup>6</sup> As the *Skopos* theory has put forward, “the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (*Skopos*) of the overall translational action.” (Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity. Functional Approaches Explained*, 2nd ed. (London/New York: Routledge, 2018), 26)

<sup>7</sup> In the term *procedures* we include the concepts of translating techniques and strategies as explained by Hurtado. Techniques and strategies are the smaller- or specific-scale procedures by which one performs the translation. The distinction between them lays in the fact that techniques are standard translation procedures used perpetually over the text, while strategies are used to solve specific translation problems (Hurtado, *Traducción y Traductología*, 249–51, 256–7). Hurtado (*Traducción y Traductología*, 642) rightly states that “the pertinence of the use of one or another technique is always functional, according to the text type, the modality of translation, the purpose of the translation, and the chosen method.”

<sup>8</sup> See José Martínez Gázquez, “Finalidad de la primera traducción latina del Corán,” in *Musulmanes y cristianos en Hispania durante las conquistas de los siglos XII y XIII*, ed. Miquel Barceló and José Martínez Gázquez (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Petrus, ed., *Alchoranus Latinus*, 11–2.

familiar to Latin readers but recognizable to users acquainted with the source language. Juan's translation was commissioned by Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo (1518), well known for his interest in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic languages.<sup>10</sup> Besides Egidio's interest in acquiring knowledge of Islam because of his anti-Islamic views,<sup>11</sup> his desire for a translation of the Qur'an was also driven by his interest in learning Arabic. Juan thus produced a translation that informed Egidio about the content of the original text and also served as a guide for reading the original. This is attested by the form of the text, presented in four columns: the text in Arabic script, its transliteration, the Latin translation, and notes relating to the translation.<sup>12</sup> Based on this information, our translations may be classified into two groups. Drawing on Nord's functional approach, the translations by Robert and Mark may be regarded as *instrumental* in that they "may achieve the same range of functions"<sup>13</sup> of the original: the former is expected to substitute the original in terms of meaning, and the latter intends to reproduce the original also in terms of its form (i.e. the syntax of the text, the number of the chapters, the order of the verses). A cautious suggestion is that Robert's translation was intended to act as the semantic equivalent of the original, and Mark's was to be a formal and semantic equivalent. While Juan's translation may also be considered as a formal and semantic equivalent, its characteristics match more closely those of what Nord refers to as a *documentary* translation whose function "is metatextual [. . .]. The target text [. . .] is a text about a text, or about one or more particular aspects of a text."<sup>14</sup> The function of Juan's version is metatextual because it was produced not only for the sake of the transmission of the text itself, but also, and mainly, to act as a tool for studying the source language and reaching the original text.

An analysis using House's terms of *overt* and *covert* translations reveals other insights.<sup>15</sup> Given the fact that both Robert's and Mark's translations are accompanied by prefaces that acknowledge their status as translations, and that Egidio's

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10 Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*, xv–xviii.

11 Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*, xviii–xxii.

12 This is attested by David Colville (d. 1629), the copyist of one of the extant exemplars of Egidio's edition (Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*, xxvii–xxviii).

13 Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 48.

14 Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 46.

15 "An *overt* translation is [. . .] quite overtly a translation, not as it were a second original. [. . .] An *overt* translation is embedded in a new speech event in the target culture. [. . .] A *covert* translation is a translation that enjoys the status of an original text in the receiving lingua-culture." (Juliane House, "Overt and Covert Translation," In *Handbook of Translation Studies*. Vol. 1, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslaer (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010), 245) As explained by Nord, in a *covert* translation "the source-text function is kept intact or invariant so that it aspires to the status of an original in the target culture", whereas *overt*

edition presents the translation alongside the original text, these translations could accurately be identified as overt translations. Nevertheless, their intended readership suggests differently. Robert's immediate readers – Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux<sup>16</sup> – are not expected to think, at any point, that they are reading an exact reproduction of the original, for the translator zealously reminds them that the text's "Arabic veil" has been removed and that it has been modified only "for its [better] understanding."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, we are led to believe that Robert's would be the only genuinely overt translation of the three. While Mark's intended readers – i.e. Christians studying the Qur'an in order to dispute with Muslims and convert them to Christianity – are aware of the fact that they are reading a translation, they are nevertheless expected to overlook this fact to some degree and perhaps even forget that they are doing so. Mark's translation, while not intended as such by the translator, is thus perceived as a covert translation by the users. We believe that Juan's translation lies somewhere in between these two categories because it satisfies characteristics of both types of translation. The fact that it appears alongside the original presents it quite overtly as a translation. However, to enable it to be read alongside the Qur'an, Juan appears to present it as an exact equivalent of the latter, at least at the grammatical and semantic levels, as though it were a second original. Readers are expected to go back and forth between the translation and the original to figure out from the former the meaning of the latter, as though they were the same text differing "only" accidentally in their respective languages."<sup>18</sup> In spite of this, we believe that the author does not seek to present the translation in either way: he seems committed only to delivering the best possible rendering in a manner that reproduces the original in terms of form and content. We may even call it an *oblivious* version because it does not seem to care about these categories.

Besides the fact that the purpose of a translation largely determines how it is produced, translation problems also have a considerable impact on the approach a translator selects to accomplish the task. In the translations analyzed here, translation problems posed by the source text influence the translators at three

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translations "have a second-level function in that the target receiver is not addressed directly but is made aware that the text is a translation" (Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 44–5).

<sup>16</sup> Peter the Venerable, as he acknowledges in the letter that prefaces the *corpus* that contained this translation, sent an exemplar of the collection to Bernard of Clairvaux urging him to write against Islam (James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 212–214).

<sup>17</sup> Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus*, 93.

<sup>18</sup> "An original and its covert translation might be said to differ 'only' accidentally in their respective languages." (House, "Overt and Covert Translation," 245)

different levels, leading to three different approaches to solve them via the translation produced.

Translation problems primarily affected Robert. We believe that in the preface to his translation he identifies quite clearly the main problems – which he refers to as *incommoda* – that he faced when translating the Qur’an.<sup>19</sup>

Even though, many problems oppressed me, supported on a weak capacity – namely the scarcity of eloquence, the slenderness of knowledge, the multifaceted desperation due to the worthless, prone to be loosened and disjointed subject matter of our translation, which is to be offered to your majesty in its very own fashion, but only with the veil of the Arabic language removed – I, nevertheless, undertook with all my power the task you commanded me, trusting that nothing will hinder the aspiration of your wishes, filled with the divine fire.<sup>20</sup>

We believe that Robert essentially highlights three problems he encountered while translating the Qur’an. First, he speaks of its *eloqui penuria*, i.e., the scarcity (at least from the point of view of a Latin scholar) of rhetorical technique. In this regard, we believe that Robert is primarily referring to the fact that the Qur’anic discourse is lacking in hypotaxis, which is perhaps the most noticeable difference between the construction of Latin and Arabic discourses; indeed, the latter is mostly paratactic. He then speaks about *scientie tenuitas*, i.e., the fact that in his view the Qur’an is meager in terms of content and information. This problem seems much more difficult to define because it may simply have been concerned with Robert’s biased appreciation of the Qur’an. We believe, however, that Robert is referring to the lack of what he considered to be relevant information in the text and to its worthlessness. This might be the perception of a reader facing the text for the first time and encountering the absence of a straightforward narration, the many *sententiae* scattered throughout the text, the seemingly misplaced epithets of God, the digressions, etc. Robert’s reference to the Qur’an as a

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**19** This fragment is understood to mean that Robert recognizes his own shortcomings, which influence his accomplishing of the task. See, for instance, Martínez, “El lenguaje de la violencia,” 251; José Martínez Gázquez, *La ignorancia y negligencia de los latinos ante la riqueza de los estudios árabes* (Barcelona: Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona, 2007), 40. However, we think that he is not describing his *fragile ingenium* (‘weak capacity’), but rather the *incommoda* (‘problems’) he perceived in the text he was translating.

**20** “Quamquam enim me fragili fulcitum ingenio plura presserunt incommoda, tum hinc eloqui penuria, illinc scientie tenuitas, tum id quod ad nil agendum est efficacius, socordie videlicet negligentieque mater desperatio multiplex, ob translationis nostre vilem et dissolubilem ac incomparinatam materiam pro sui modo prorsus Arabico tantum semoto velamine tue maiestati prebendam, non minus tamen obnixae tuum obsequium aggressus sum, confisus nil effectum quassari quo tuum votum igne divino plenum aspirat.” (Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus*, 93)

*lex* also reveals that he may have been expecting it to possess legal content, i.e., a set of rules by which Muslims' actions are governed, only to find that its content goes well beyond that of a legal book. Lastly, he speaks of "the worthless, prone to be loosened and disjointed subject matter of our translation which is to be offered [. . .] in its very own fashion, but only with the veil of the Arabic language removed." We believe that Robert is referring to two things here: an additional translation problem concerning the structure of the contents of the Qur'an, and his overall theoretical approach. First, he speaks about a "worthless, prone to be loosened and disjointed subject matter." In our opinion, he means that the matter that composes the Qur'an is worthless (*vilis*) because it is prone to be loosened (*dissolubilis*), i.e. to be split into smaller parts, and therefore altogether disjointed (*incompaginata*). Clearly, the adjective "worthless" is no more than a value judgment revealing Robert's attitude toward the text because of his background. Interesting, however, are the adjectives after "et" (which exerts an exegetical force over what follows), which explain why he considered the content to be worthless. It is essentially a matter of a loose thematic cohesion (*dissolubilitas*) and, in his interpretation, a complete disconnection (what we could call the *incompaginitas* of the text) of the parts that make up the text. While Robert's interpretation of these characteristics is indeed biased by his background, they are nevertheless well known features of the Qur'anic discourse. As Pearson explains, "except for a few other very short sūras near the end [. . .], very few treat a single topic [. . .] or otherwise appear to be structured entities [. . .]. Most of the sūras consist of several segments or pericopes that are only loosely connected, often with little or no apparent connection of thought."<sup>21</sup>

As we have implied, Robert seems to deliberately relate these three problems to the first three parts of the rhetorical process, as though he were trying to prove that the Qur'an is altogether lacking in the most elemental rhetorical *elegantia*. In this regard, one must consider the renewed interest in Ciceronian and pseudo-Ciceronian rhetoric in the 12th century, with whose ideas Robert was acquainted and applied them in his work.<sup>22</sup> According to this, the *eloqui penuria* reflects a lack of

<sup>21</sup> James Douglas Pearson, "Al-Ḳur'ān," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition. Vol. V. Khe-Mahi*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 409.

<sup>22</sup> Burman has proven that "Robert was systematically employing Latin compositional techniques that were recommended in his age in such widely read rhetorical manuals as the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*." (Burman, *Reading the Qur'an*, 32–34) Also, Robert's close partner, Hermann of Carinthia, while addressing Thierry of Chartres at the end of the preface to his translation of Ptolemy's *Planisphaerium* (where he also speaks about Robert), makes an explicit reference to Cicero (Johan Ludvig Heiberg, ed., *Claudii Ptolemæi opera quæ exstant omnia. Volumen II. Opera astronomica minora* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), clxxxiii-clxxxvi). Moreover, we know that Thierry of Chartres wrote commentaries on the *De inventione* and the pseudo-Ciceronian

*elocutio*; the *scientie tenuitas* a deficiency of the *inventio*; and the *incompaginatas* of the text – i.e., the fact that the *materia* was *incompaginata* – a disorganized *dispositio*. This could be a confirmation that Robert is not talking idly about the Qur'an by proposing mere value judgments, but rather that he is trying to make a formal, though biased, criticism about the form of the text. The problems Robert identified may also be described by Nord's typology of translation problems. As she says, these relate mainly to four domains: (1) *pragmatic* problems, "arising from the contrast between the situation in which the source text is or was used and the situation for which the target text is produced"; (2) *convention-related* problems, "arising from the differences in behavior conventions between the source and the target culture"; (3) *linguistic* problems, "arising from the structural differences between source and target language"; and (4) *text-specific* problems, "arising from the particular characteristics of the source text."<sup>23</sup> According to these definitions the *eloqui penuria* is a *linguistic* problem in that it refers to the formal differences between the Arabic and Latin languages. The *scientie tenuitas* is a *convention-related* problem because it is related to neither the text's form nor language – such as the *eloqui penuria* and the *materie incompaginitas* respectively –, but rather to a specific bias of the translator toward the original text, stemming from his religious background. The *materie incompaginitas* is a *text-specific problem* because it has to do with the disposition of the contents of the Qur'an.

The approach of the other two translators toward the translation problems is much simpler. While Mark also speaks in the preface to his translation about the inconveniences in the style of the Qur'an, he does not frame them as translation problems.<sup>24</sup>

For it is not in accord with the Gospel neither in its rhetorical style nor in its precepts [ . . . ]. § It differs from the Old and the New Testament in its rhetorical style. For he speaks sometimes as someone who raves [ . . . ] in a disturbed and disjointed style. There are some who excuse his disturbance, for they assert that he was being shaken in his soul and body by an angel [ . . . ] and he behaved as those who rave due to the perturbation of their minds while suffering a fit.

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*Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Peter Dronke, "Thierry of Chartres," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 359). We owe this observation to Cándida Ferrero Hernández.

<sup>23</sup> Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation. Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2005), 167.

<sup>24</sup> "Non enim conuenit cum Euangelio nec in modo loquendi nec in preceptis [ . . . ]. § In modo loquendi discrepat ab aliis scripturis Veteris et Noui Testamenti. Interdum enim loquitur sicut qui delirat [ . . . ] stilo turbato et dissoluto. Huius autem turbatio a nonnullis excusatur, eo quod asserunt eum inuisibiliter ab angelo uexari in anima et corpore [ . . . ] et morem gerebat accutam pascientibus in passione delirantibus ex perturbatione mentis." (Petrus, ed., *Alchoranus Latinus*, 10)



Mark clearly recognizes at least one of the characteristics pointed out by Robert, i.e., the *stilus turbatus et dissolutus* of the Qur'an, corresponding roughly to Robert's *eloqui penuria* and *materie incompaginitas*. However, because he does not regard this as a translation problem, he does not set out to solve it. Rather, he seems to consider it simply as an intrinsic (though problematic) characteristic of the text, evidenced by the fact that he provides two explanations: a canonical explanation, i.e., that Muḥammad was supposedly overpowered by Gabriel at the moment of the revelation, and the medical explanation, i.e., that Muḥammad suffered from epilepsy.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the fact that he points to the difference of style between the Bible and the Qur'an shows that he also perceives a *convention-related* issue – much like Robert's *scientie tenuitas* – stemming as well from his Christian background.

Again, Nord's distinction between translation *problems* and *difficulties*<sup>26</sup> reveals other perspectives and provides a framework within which to comment on how Egidio's edition addresses translation issues. Robert, as his characterization of what he calls the *incommoda* of translating the Qur'an clearly shows, was struggling not only with the objective problems of rendering the text, but also with the subjective difficulties he imagined to be present in the original: a defective style – the *eloqui penuria* – and the lack of relevant information – the *scientie tenuitas*. His translation choices are thus primarily governed by the idea that he has to solve these difficulties while tackling, at the same time, the objective problems of translating the text. Mark, however, does not seem to care about subjective difficulties even though he recognizes several problematic features of the Qur'an. Rather, he appears to be primarily concerned with the objective problems of translating the text.<sup>27</sup> As for Egidio's edition, even though we do not have a preface by Juan Gabriel, the main translator, explaining the difficulties he imagined or the problems he encountered when rendering the text, his approach appears to be very similar to Mark's because Juan seems to care exclusively about the objective problems of rendering the text. In the few statements that we have regarding the approach of Leo Africanus, the corrector of Juan's version, he does

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25 Óscar de la Cruz Palma, *Machometus. La invención del Profeta Mahoma en las fuentes latinas medievales*, (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2017), 511 ff.

26 Problems, to Nord, are the objective issues associated with the translation of a text, whereas difficulties are subjective issues imagined by the translator (Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation*, 166–7).

27 “Mark of Toledo, as we have seen, had nothing kind to say about Islam in the polemical preface to his Qur'an translation. Yet when we watch him translate this passage, we see a man in whom the thousand philological problems presented by Arabic-to-Latin translation have pushed aside all polemical and apologetic concerns. When he reads as a translator, he reads philologically.” (Burman, *Reading the Qur'an*, 23)

not address this issue, at least not in the fragments we have. For this reason we believe that Egidio's translators did not pay attention, at least not to the same degree as Robert or Mark, to subjective difficulties they perceived in the original. Instead, they merely tackled the objective problems of the task, perhaps due to their religious or linguistic background.<sup>28</sup>

Moving on to how the purposes and problems posed by the text influenced their translation theories, it is Robert once again who provides the most information in this regard. In the last point of his enumeration of *incommoda*, he states that “the worthless, prone to be loosened and disjointed subject matter” of the translation “is to be offered” to Peter the Venerable “in its very own fashion, but only with the veil of the Arabic language removed.”<sup>29</sup> This statement clearly reveals a domesticating translation theory:<sup>30</sup> Robert intends, for the sake of clarity, to remove the “veil of Arabic language” from the text by transforming it into a Latin discourse. Almost immediately, he says that he has translated “not omitting nor altering anything regarding the sense [sc. of the text], but only for the sake of understanding.”<sup>31</sup> Although he claims that he will not omit or alter anything from the source text that does not obstruct comprehensibility, he ends up doing almost the opposite because of what he perceives as problems in the text: because he considers that both the style and the language of the original are obstacles to its comprehensibility, he substitutes them with elegant Latin prose that transmits the meaning but not the form of the Qur'an. Robert therefore translates using an *ad sensum* approach, as confirmed by his take on Boethius's method.<sup>32</sup> This is

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**28** “[Leo Africanus] Muslim name was al-Ḥasan al-Wazzān, although in Italian circles he was better known as Leo Africanus (or Yūhannā al-Asad). In fact, when al-Ḥasan al-Wazzān was baptised by Pope Leo X in 1520, Egidio da Viterbo was one of his godfathers;” “Juan Gabriel, a native of Teruel, was most likely the former *faqīh* of that city, known before his conversion as Alí Alayzar.” (Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*, xvii, lxxii)

**29** Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus*, 93.

**30** The opposition between *domesticating* and *foreignizing* approaches is the one defined by Schleiermacher: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.” (Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 2004), 19–20)

**31** “. . . nil excerpens, nil sensibilibiter nisi propter intelligentiam tantum alterans.” (Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus*, 93)

**32** Herman of Carinthia quotes Robert as saying that no translator should stray from Boethius translating method, but that a different approach is to be followed when translating Arabic texts (Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 46). Boethius in turn is known for sticking to an *ad uerbum* approach (Sten Ebbesen, “The Aristotelian Commentator,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 39).

clearly visible throughout Robert's translation.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, further into the text, Robert states that he "wanted to say [i.e. translate] summarily,"<sup>34</sup> a statement that accurately describes his paraphrastic approach. With this in mind, we may summarize the procedure as follows: Robert domesticates the text by adapting it to a discourse built upon Latin rhetorical rules – thus correcting its *eloqui penuria* and the *incompaginitas* – , which omits irrelevant content – thus reducing the *scientie tenuitas* – , without failing to transmit the original *sensus* of the Qur'an, in a manner that expresses *summatim* its contents. According to Nord's typology of functional translations, Robert's version can be accurately described as a heterofunctional one because it intends to "achieve similar function(s) as ST for a target audience."<sup>35</sup> This is revealed by his *Arabico semoto uelamine* approach: the translation is intended to convey the meaning rather than the form of the text such that readers assume that they are reading the actual contents of the Qur'an.

Regardless of the scanty information we possess regarding how the purposes (and problems) shaped Mark's translation and Egidio's version, the process seems rather straightforward: both are compelled by the wishes of their employers – and probably by their linguistic background as well,<sup>36</sup> according to which they would not find so troubling the Qur'anic style as Robert – to deliver *ad uerbum* (or foreignizing, i.e., that intends to imitate the form of the foreign text) translations. In other words, they both largely preserve the text's form. Mark, however, renders it without affecting Latin grammar "in a way St Jerome would have defined as *ridiculum*."<sup>37</sup> Juan's translation, on the contrary, is described as "not the best translation, be it because he superimposed ideology over faithfulness to the Arabic text, or because he was simply short on skill."<sup>38</sup> We believe that the difference between the two theoretical approaches lays in the function of each translation: According to Nord's typology of functional translations,<sup>39</sup> Mark's translation may be accurately described as an equifunctional translation because it seeks to "achieve similar function(s) as ST for target audience." Juan's translation on the other hand, because of its metatextual functions – i.e. the text is planned as a

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33 Already Juan of Segovia (ca. 1393–1458) complained about Robert's adaptation: "he alters a lot of words [ . . . ] also he silently omits a lot of things that are explicitly stated." (Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus*, 15)

34 ". . . summatimque [sc. me] dicere volenti." (Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus*, 94)

35 Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 49.

36 Mark was, if not a Mozarab, at least well acquainted with the Arabic language from the early stages of his career (Petrus, ed., *Alchoranus Latinus*, xxix–xxxi). Juan Gabriel was a former *faqīh*.

37 Ulisse Cecini, "Main Features of Mark of Toledo's Latin Qur'an Translation," *Al-Masaq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 25, no. 3 (2013): 335.

38 Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*, lxxxii.

39 Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 46, 49.

guide into the ST's language – , may be characterized as a philological translation because it intends merely to reproduce the “ST form and content.”

Before commenting on the procedures used by these translators, we must say that since they multiply by the thousands, because they affect smaller instances within the text, this paper therefore simply seeks to reveal a few of the most representative ones of each version, while we wait for a thorough analysis of them to be produced. At first glance, the translations may be divided into two groups depending on their form: one group has only Robert's translation, and the other, Mark's and Juan's translations. The difference between the groups may be expressed by oppositional categories of translating theories: While Robert's translation may be described as an *ad sensum* or a domesticating translation, the other two are *ad uerbum* or foreignizing translations. These theoretical approaches compelled each of the translators to use procedures that may also be interpreted as opposed: Robert's procedures involve transformation and those used by the other translators, preservation. Robert adapted<sup>40</sup> the text by substituting the Qur'anic style based on the paratactic structure of the Arabic language with a high Latin prose with a hypotactic structure, which is manifest in his paraphrastic procedures.<sup>41</sup> Mark and Juan, however, were forced to use the literal translation as a technique.<sup>42</sup> These techniques – the ones based on preservation, or literal techniques, and the ones based on adaptation – are non-mutually-exclusive, and while Mark and Juan sometimes resort to adaptation, Robert, perhaps even more freely, sometimes resorts to literal translation.

The very rendering of the word *Allāh* as *Deus* shows that all the translators were willing to adapt the text to a certain extent. In this case, the adaptation is decisive in the approach readers adopt to the text and in the Christian interpretation of Islam: it presents them with a familiar concept instead of a potentially obscure one and clearly presents the God of Muslims as the same as the God of Christians, in accord with the idea that Islam is simply a heresy of Christianity, but also with the doctrines of Islam, according to which the God of Muḥammad

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<sup>40</sup> Adaptation is the technical term that Hurtado uses for the substitution of “a cultural element for one of the receiving culture”. (Hurtado, *Traducción y Traductología*, 269).

<sup>41</sup> Marracci (1698) had already commented about this translation: “But this may better be called a paraphrase rather than a translation.” (Ludovico Marracci, *Refutatio Alcorani* (Padua: Ex typographia seminarii, 1698), 3)

<sup>42</sup> A nuance regarding the term *literal* is in order: while it is frequently used to refer to a general approach, i.e., the *theory* that dictates the overall translation procedure, it may also refer to a smaller-scale *technique* (Hurtado, *Traducción y Traductología*, 257–271) used for translating specific *units of translation* (defined by Hurtado Albir as a “communicative unit with which the translator works; it has a textual location, a complex imbrication, and a variable structuring. There are macro-, intermediate, or microunits”, Hurtado, *Traducción y Traductología*, 645).

is the same as the God of Abraham and Jesus.<sup>43</sup> An opposite case – i.e. where all translators use the literal translation technique – may be seen in the translation of the *basmala*:<sup>44</sup> *bismi-llāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm* ('In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'). While all the translators present different versions of this fragment, they all preserve the content in a way that may be described as literal, even with the adaptation of *Allāh*. In his translation of "*In nomine Domini pii et misericordis*",<sup>45</sup> Robert takes the adaptation of *Allāh* further by translating it as *Dominus*, which is somewhat a deviation from the original, but which is nevertheless not entirely reproachable. He chooses not to represent the etymological link between *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* in the translation, a choice that has almost become standard in the translation of this passage. Mark goes with "*In nomine Dei, misericordis, miseratoris*", a translation that preserves every element of the original and even reflects the etymological link between epithets. Juan's version is noteworthy because throughout his text he presents up to four possibilities for translating the *basmala*: "*In nomine Dei misericordis et clementis*"; or "*pii, pietatoris*"; or "*pii, misericordis*"; or even "*Cum nomine Dei, pii, misericordis*". It is worth noting that only one of the possibilities he offers preserves the etymological link between epithets, as if this trait was of minor importance for achieving maximum faithfulness. With "*Cum nomine Dei*" he takes literalization to the extreme by trying to transmit the instrumental meaning of the Arabic preposition *bi-* with *cum*, revealing an insufficient knowledge of formal Latin and an influence of the spoken language. It is Leo's translation that tries to preserve the most semantic nuances, but not without questionable choices in the target language. With *In nomine Dei misericordioris et misericordissimi* (or *miser cordis, misericordioris*), he preserves not only the etymological connection between the epithets, but even manifests the relationship of degree between the positive *raḥīm* and the intensive *raḥmān*<sup>46</sup> – epithets from the same root – by translating both with the same adjective – *miser icors* – using two degrees of comparison, i.e., comparative and superlative (or, in the second case, positive and comparative), resulting in an awkward though quite literal translation.

<sup>43</sup> Prof. John Tolan also kindly reminds us that it is customary for Medieval Jews and Christians writing in Arabic to use the word *Allāh* for God.

<sup>44</sup> The *basmala* is the first verse of each of the 114 chapters of the Qur'an, except for the ninth.

<sup>45</sup> The text of Robert's translation was taken from MS Arsenal 1162, the earliest exemplar of the text; the one by Mark from Petrus, ed., *Alchoranus Latinus*; and the ones by Juan and Leo from Starczewska, ed., *Latin Translation of the Qur'an*.

<sup>46</sup> Gleit ("Review Article," 104) notices that "Leo provides a translation which resembles the etymological connection and the tautology to a much greater extent [sc. than Juan]" and, even though he is right in pointing out that "the Arabic forms are not elatives", the form *raḥmān* is however intensive.

Lastly, it seems that as time elapsed, the less prone were the translators to opt for procedures that resulted in an omission of the contents of the original: the overall zeal for fidelity on the translations seems to increase over time. This is not to say that the version corrected by Leo is the most faithful one because small-scale faithfulness to the text fluctuates across the translations, nor that the more the time passes, the better the translations become. In other words, where minor units of translation such as word, syntagmata, sentences or periods are concerned, the most faithful rendering is not necessarily the most recent one. It is clear, however, that the more the time passes, the more the translators feel compelled to preserve more features of the text. One could argue, for example, that Robert is condemned to unfaithfulness due to his paraphrastic adaptation of the text, but only if one conceives fidelity as the best possible representation of the original in terms of form *and* content (which is not entirely accurate because the translator frequently has to privilege content over form, or *vice versa*, to achieve fidelity). In this view, either Mark's or Juan's translations, or even the version corrected by Leo, would be the most faithful ones. An example of the increasing zeal for fidelity on a large scale may be seen in the translation of *al-muqatta'āt*, the so-called mysterious letters that appear at the beginning of 29 chapters of the Qur'an. Robert, as expected because of his interest in removing worthless content, altogether omits these letters in his translation. Mark preserves them only in eight chapters. Juan not only preserves them in all the chapters that contain them, but even offers explanations for two of them (chapters three and 50), and Leo repeats the procedure by adding a further one in chapter two.

The objective of this paper was twofold. First, we tried to describe the features of the first three full translations of the Qur'an by examining them through the lens of translational theory in order to characterize as accurately as possible the procedures by which they were produced. Second, we compared the characteristics of these translations in order to provide data about how the approaches used to translate the Qur'an into Latin evolved diachronically. Regarding the first point, it must be said that the categories with which these translations have been associated are disputable given that the approaches used by the translators may be described in different ways. Nevertheless, these categories serve as broad guidelines about how to characterize the translations at hand in translational terms. Regarding the second point, our reference to an evolution in translation approaches does not mean that there was a single method, refined over time, for translating the Qur'an. Rather, there was an epistemic transformation of the approach to the task of translating of the Qur'an. Indeed, the biased approach toward the Qur'an appears perhaps not to diminish in the context of the production of the translations, but to disappear gradually from the translations. Thus, while Robert harshly criticizes the text's style and modifies it completely, Mark

simply glosses over its “disturbed” style and preserves its form quite closely. Juan and Leo appear to be primarily concerned with translating the text to the best of their abilities. As the biased approach disappears from the translations, an increase of what we refer to as zeal for fidelity emerges. As we mentioned earlier, this does not mean that the quality of translation increases over time, but rather that over time translators increasingly intend to preserve more features of the text, albeit successfully or unsuccessfully. Lastly, two things must be considered to determine why the translators chose a particular method: first, the considerable influence exerted by their linguistic and rhetoric background and second, the frequently overlooked fact that the translations must have been produced at astonishing speeds considering the length of the text and the complexity of the task. Thus, it only seems natural that the translators opted for the method that required the least effort. Space limitations force us to end our analysis here. However, further studies along the same lines will make it possible to develop a systematic analysis and description of the translation theories generated to render Arabic scientific and non-scientific texts into Latin during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period.

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