

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Qur'an was translated into Spanish in indirect translations based not on the original Arabic text, but rather on prior translations into other languages, foremost among them French. In particular, the French translations by Claude Savary and especially Albin de Biberstein Kazimirski were repeatedly translated and published in Spanish. However, there is a striking near total absence of references to *L'Alcoran de Mahomet* by André Du Ryer, a French translation that achieved widespread success throughout Europe following its publication in 1647. This gap in the history of the translation of Islam's most sacred text into Spanish is completed with the discovery of an anonymous Spanish translation of Du Ryer's text in mss. II/609, II/610 and II/3544 held in the Royal Library of Madrid. It is this anonymous translation, characterized by its nearly total fidelity to Du Ryer's French text, that is given a preliminary presentation here.

KEY WORDS: Qur'an, André Du Ryer, indirect translation, mss. II/609-610, ms II/3544, Royal Library (Madrid).

André Du Ryer in Spanish: an Anonymous handwritten Indirect Translation of the Qur'an*

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André Du Ryer en español: una retraducción del Alcorán inédita

Durante el siglo XIX y principios del XX fue una constante la traducción del Alcorán al español no desde el original árabe sino a partir de versiones a otras lenguas, especialmente, la francesa. Traducciones galas consagradas como las de Claude Savary o, sobre todo, la de Albin de Biberstein Kazimirski fueron objeto de traducción y reedición en repetidas ocasiones a nuestra lengua. Llamaba la atención, sin embargo, la casi total ausencia de referencias en nuestra lengua a L'Alcoran de Mahomet de André Du Ryer, versión de gran éxito y difusión en Europa desde su publicación en 1647. Ese vacío en la historia de la traducción del texto sagrado islámico al español se completa con el hallazgo de la traducción castellana anónima de esa versión contenida en los mss. II/609, II/610 y II/3544 de la Biblioteca Real de Madrid que aquí presentamos, caracterizada por una fidelidad absoluta al original francés.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Alcorán, André Du Ryer, retraducción, mss. II/609-610, ms. II/3544, Biblioteca Real (Madrid).

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history of the translation of the Qur'an into Spanish is replete with indirect translations.¹ Looking specifically at the period comprising the 19th century and first half of the 20th, such indirect Spanish translations of the Qur'an were almost totally based on the French translation by Claude Savary published in 1783 and even more so on that by Albin de Biberstein Kazimirski, whose first edition appeared in 1840. While the former was translated into Spanish in 1913 by Alfonso Hernández Catá² and seems to be the uncited source for Juan Bautista Bergua's 1931 translation,³ the latter served as the basis for respective translations into Spanish by José Gerber de Robles (1844), Vicente Ortiz de la Puebla

(1872), Benigno Murguiondo (1875) and Joaquín García Bravo (1907).⁴

However, none of these indirect translations of the Qur'an was based on the pioneering French translation, first published in 1647, by André Du Ryer, Sieur de la Garde Malezair, a merchant who also served as the French consul in Alexandria, Cairo and Istanbul, as well as ambassador extraordinary for the Ottoman Sultan Murat IV at the court of King Louis XIII. Fluent in Arabic and Turkish—of which he wrote a grammar—Du Ryer offered the first complete translation in a vernacular European language of the sacred Islamic text, largely devoid of critical commentary and aimed at the general public.⁵ Gaining widespread readership across Europe, this work was republished on multiple occasions well into the 19th century in Paris, Leiden, Amsterdam, Antwerp and the Hague (Hamidullah, 1989, p. LXXVII) and was immediately translated

¹ For more on the history of translations of the Qur'an into Spanish, see Arias (2007, 2009).

² Regarding this translation and its republication in Argentina, see Arias (2017, pp. 17-18).

³ The first publication (perhaps in Malaga) under the initials O.B.B.J. was followed by subsequent editions at various times during the first half of the 20th century. In addition to being a translator, Bergua co-directed with his brother José the Bergua y Ediciones Ibéricas publishing house, which put out cheap editions of universal classics of literature and thought, generally indirect translations from French. Although Cansinos (1951) first pointed to Kazimirski's translation as the source of Bergua's version, I believe that there is sufficient evidence to suspect that Bergua also made use of Savary's French translation of the Qur'an, either directly or through the aforementioned translation by Hernández Catá, to which Bergua's text bears a certain resemblance. At any rate, unlike previous indirect translations, Bergua did not limit himself to simple word-for-word translation from the French version or versions but instead used them as the basis for a fairly free rendition in Spanish. Detached from any sense of the Qur'an as a revealed scripture, Bergua presents the book from a historical-literary and completely areligious perspective, thus constituting what might be termed an atheist reading of the Qur'an fully in tune with the historical context in which the book was published, the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939).

⁴ Regarding these four translations, see Arias (2022, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c). I say they were "almost totally" dependent on the work of Savary and Kazimirski because several of these translators, such as Murguiondo, also used the Latin translation by Ludovico Marracci (1698) and because the 19th century saw an attempt to translate the Qur'an directly from Arabic into Spanish by Anfbal Rinaldi, the translator employed by the Spanish delegation in Tangiers, of which a few short fragments have been preserved (Arias, 2022, pp. 458-461). The first direct (albeit partial) translation from Arabic to Spanish of the Qur'an was published in Argentina in 1945 (Arias 2017).

⁵ For more on this translation, see the monograph by Hamilton and Richard (2004), a key reference for the subsequent works by Elmarsafy (2009, p. 432), Larzul (2009), Aoujil (2018), Hanne (2019, pp. 504-511) and Vigliano and Welé (2021). Recently Hamilton (2017) has devoted a compilation volume to the figure of Du Ryer. A full facsimile reproduction of Du Ryer's French original translation (1647) is available at <http://www.coran12-21.org/fr/editions/duryer>, with an introduction by Eliorf, Vigliano and Welé as well as a study by Welé of the text's Islamic exegetical sources. In the quotations that follow I have left untouched the spelling as it appears in this edition.

into English (Alexander Ross, 1649), Dutch (Jan Glazemaker, 1658), German (Johan Lange, 1688) and Russian (Petr Vasilyevic Postnikov, 1716; Mikhail Verevkin, 1790) for the purposing of informing the religious or political disputes—whether within or across communities—underway in that period.

The snowball effect generated in Europe by Du Ryer's translation seems not to have reached Spain, which is well known to have been immersed at the time in a climate of general hostility to Islam which did not begin to dissipate until the last quarter of the 19th century. Nonetheless, there is one reference to a no longer extant “translation from a French translation of the Qur'an for use by missionaries” written—or perhaps, as Epalza (2001, p. 1076) suggests, commissioned—by the Count of Oropesa in 1672, who was probably Manuel Joaquín Álvarez de Toledo-Portugal, the eighth Count (1641-1707). In a previous work (Arias, 200, p. 264) I noted that the French translation in question is Du Ryer's. The reference to this translation was taken from the excellent “Qur'anic bibliography” with which Rafael Cansinos closed the introduction to his own translation of the Qur'an (1951, p. 41), Cansinos having taken it in turn from Tirso González de Santalla (1687), though he failed to note the connection with Du Ryer. However, an examination of González de Santalla's original text clearly seems to support the idea that the author of the French translation in question was Du Ryer:

Ut constat ex Alcorano quem in linguam Gallicam transtulit Legatus Regis Cristianissimi Constantinopoli degens quem è Gallico in Hispanicum idioma convertit Excelent Comes de Oropesa ann. 1672 ut Missionariis usui esse posset [Thus it is stated in the Qur'an translated into French by the King's ambassador in Constantinople and then

translated into Spanish by the Count of Oropesa in 1672 for possible use by missionaries⁶; *my translation*]⁷

It is this gap in the history of the translation of the Qur'an into Spanish that seems to have been filled by the indirect translation which I will now present.

2. THE QUR'AN IN THE ROYAL LIBRARY OF MADRID

The indirect translation of the Qur'an to which I now turn is contained in manuscripts II/609, II/610 and II/3544 held in the Royal Library of Madrid. The first two correspond to two volumes of a single translation, the first volume comprising translations of suras 1 to 20 and the second comprising suras 21 to 114. Both are on paper (245 × 195 mm, 17 lines) and have a similar number of folios (271 and 273, respectively). Handwritten in impeccable cursive, they are headed by the title *El Alcorán de Mahoma* (*'The Qur'an of Muhammad'*) (folio 1r), with no mention whatsoever of the original text from which the copy

⁶ Regarding the “use by missionaries” mentioned in this translation, various authors have pointed out that this suggested purpose is not stipulated in the preface to Du Ryer's first (1647) edition, although it does appear in later editions (“pour la satisfaction de ceux qui preschent le Christianisme aux nations Orientales”, “ces nouveaux Apostres qui sont au Levant” [“to satisfy the needs of those who are preaching Christianity to the Eastern nations”, “these new Apostles now in the Levant”; *my translation*]) perhaps as a way to head off conflict with the religious authorities.

⁷ This same passage is reproduced in a recent study by Vázquez Ruiz (2024, p. 380), who furthermore demonstrates that González de Santalla made use—without citing his source—of the introduction entitled “A summary of the religion of the Turks” to Du Ryer's translation when he wrote his chapter on *Mores instituta Mahumetanorum*, though Vázquez Ruiz is unable to ascertain whether González de Santalla did so using the original French text or instead using the translation thereof supposedly by the Count of Oropesa.

was made or the names of either translator or copyist.⁸ With regard to manuscript II/3544, this is likewise on paper (212 × 149.5 mm) and consists of a copy of the same text in a single volume (432 folios) apparently executed by two different copyists (folios 1-67, 68-432), which would explain the differing number of lines per page, between 20 and 24 in the first part and between 16 and 19 in the second.

A quick glance at the three manuscripts shows that the latter is older than the other two and probably dates from end of the 17th or early 18th century. Less gracefully executed and in a worse state of conservation, the document reveals, for example, a tear in pages 341 and 342 and partly dissolved ink on other pages, making reading difficult. It is without any doubt the original text from which manuscripts II/609 and II/610 were subsequently copied, this time in clear, careful calligraphy and with spelling and grammar brought up to date in keeping with modern norms (e.g., *quando*, *avia*, *hiziesen*, *guerfanos*, *tpo*, *bersos*, *scripto*, *dubdais*, *misericordioso*, *coraçon*, *yra* → *cuando*, *había*, *hicieren*, *huérfanos*, *tiempo*, *versos*, *escrito*, *dudais*, *misericordioso*, *corazón*, *ira*).⁹

In the process of copying, some notes present in Du Ryer's original French text and which do

appear in translation in II/3544 have been left out of the later version comprising II/609 and II/610,¹⁰ as are small fragments of text that can be assumed to be unintentional omissions on the part of the copyist.¹¹ The complete reliance of the later copy on the earlier two-volume version, without any reference whatsoever to the French original, is also reflected in the faithful reproduction of spaces left blank whenever translation of the French proved beyond the translator's abilities.¹² In some instance, the copyist of II/609 is even unable to decipher the Spanish text of II/3544 and leaves a blank space here too.¹³ For the same reason, the copyist ends up corrupting the text by miscopying: for example, for a passage on Luqman that reads in the earlier text "Los turcos dicen que Locman era un gran D[oct]or que bivia en t[iem]po de David"¹⁴ ['The Turks say that Luqman was a great doctor who lived at the time of David'] (II/3544, 277v) the copyist writes "Los *Justos* dicen que Locman era un gran *Dios* que vivía en t[iem]po de David" ['The Righteous say that Luqman was a great God who lived in the time of David'] (II/610, 79v). The same thing occurs when

¹⁰ For example, Q.8, note 6, or Q.9, note 4.

¹¹ For example, Q. 5:1, "fuera de lo que se os declarar *en lo que sigue*" ('outside of that which I will declare to you in what follows') (II/3544, 62v) or Q. 7:1 "yo soy *Dios* sapientísimo y verdadero" ('I am *God* the Most Knowing and True') (II/3544, 92v), with the missing text indicated in italics.

¹² For example, Q. 6:7, "le escriture escrit en velin" (velum) is rendered in both Spanish translations as "la escritura escrita en [...]" ['the writing written on [blank]'] (II/3544, 77r; II/609, 104v) or Q. 37:146 "feuilles de coudre" (gourd) is reproduced as "ojas de [...]" ['leaves of [blank]'] (II/3544, 309r; II/610, 117r).

¹³ In Q. 18: 20, "estaing fondu" ['molten tin'] is translated correctly in II/3544, 193r as "estaño fundido". In II/609, 248r, by contrast, it appears as "[...] fundido".

¹⁴ This is true to the French original: "Les Turcs disent que Locman estoit un grand Docteur qui vivoit au temps de David".

⁸ The online catalogue reference for this manuscript can be seen at <https://realbiblioteca.patrimonionacional.es/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=519>. Facsimile images of the manuscript itself are available at <https://rbdigital.realbiblioteca.es/s/realbiblioteca/item/11835#?xywh=-682%2C-112%2C4076%2C2222>. I am grateful to Nuria Torres Santo Domingo, director of the Royal Library of Madrid, for directing me to these three manuscripts, facilitating my access to them and answering all my questions about them.

⁹ In the quotations that follow I have left untouched the spelling as it appears in the manuscripts. The copyist of manuscripts II/609 and II/610 takes the liberty of writing in numerals the number of *āyahs* which are written as words in the titles of suras in II/3544 (e.g., Q. 18 and Q. 19) and has also corrected the "escrito a la Meca" that appears in the latter sura with "escrito *en la Meca*" ('written in Mecca').

the French “les olives” (“the olives”) in Q. 95:1, whose equivalent in Spanish would be *las olivas* (II/3544, 426v), is misread and erroneously reproduced as *los olmos* ‘elms’ (II/610, 266r). Despite all this, the later two-volume generally reproduces with a high degree of accuracy the text of the earlier single volume. Thus, given its greater legibility, it may be taken (albeit cautiously) as a suitable basis for comparison with the original French translation.

We know practically nothing, for the moment, about the provenance of either of the two manuscripts. Perhaps the reorganization and digitalization of the archives in the Royal Library currently underway will shed some light on the matter in the near future.

The margins of several pages of manuscript II/3544 have been marked with a cross, possibly added at a later date, apparently to indicate that the page contains passages of interest, suggesting that the manuscript was used for purposes of study.¹⁵ The same hand has included the only note in the entire text that is not simply copied from the French original.¹⁶ The two-volume version (II/609 and II/610) formed part of the personal library of King Ferdinand VII, according to details offered in the Royal Library’s catalogue about the book’s binding. In fact, there seems

to be no doubt that the Qur’an was an object of interest to the Spanish monarchy. Firstly, the library contains two manuscripts of the Qur’an in Arabic: II/4221, which is a fragment consisting of five pages of parchment from what was probably a Moroccan Qur’an in a batch of Arabic manuscripts acquired in 1965¹⁷; and II/3221 a fine example in oriental script of the full Qur’an, richly decorated, with collective bookplates for two sets of Bourbon princes, the three sons of Charles III, namely Antonio Pascual, Fernando and Carlos, and the three sons of the latter (Charles IV), namely Fernando (the future Ferdinand VII), Carlos María Isidro and Antonio Francisco de Paula (González Castillo, 2006, pp. 75, 85). In addition to these handwritten texts, there is also a copy of a Qur’an in Arabic printed in Hamburg by Abraham Hinckelmann in 1694 (VIII/1530). Secondly, the Royal Library collection include two copies of Robert de Ketton’s translation of the Qur’an into Latin printed by Bibliander, one the 1543 edition (IX/4295) and the other the 1550 edition (VII/1355), both of them again the property of Ferdinand VII, as well as Savary’s French translation (VIII/17904) and the indirect Spanish translation thereof by Murguiondo (XIX/1683), the latter two having belonged to María de las Mercedes, the wife of Alfonso XII. The Royal Librarian of the latter monarch, the *malagueño* Juan Gualberto López-Valdemoro de Quesada, Count of Las Navas and former student of the Sacromonte in Granada, carried on a correspondence in 1909 with Theodor Grigull, author of a German translation of the Qur’an (Grigull, 1901), which resulted from Grigull’s having sent a copy of his book as a gift to the king (ARB/36, CARP/11, docs. 377 and 378).

¹⁵ The marked passages are related a variety of topics (Jesus, Moses, the Prophet’s miracles, paradise, the “eye for an eye” law, the Prophet’s women, etc.) and are mostly to be found in the Sura of the Cow. If we have identified them correctly (in Du Ryer’s text the *āyahs* are not numbered) the marked passages correspond to Q. 2:10, 25, 39-40, 60, 62, 85, 87, 97, 102, 105, 111, 118, 126, 136, 139, 160, 178; Q. 7:28; Q. 13:27; Q. 18:60; Q. 33:50; Q. 42:23; and Q. 58:22. On two occasions, instead of a cross, the text has been underlined (Q. 4:3 and Q. 5:17).

¹⁶ Located in the inner margin next to the title of the Sura of the Ant (Q. 27, II/3544, 251v) one reads “todo es ridículo” [‘it’s all ridiculous’]. This pejorative comment, in principle attributable to neither author nor copyist but rather to a subsequent reader, is copied faithfully in the later manuscript (II/610, 50r).

¹⁷ See Justel (1990) regarding this manuscript and the other Arabic texts in this set. A description and updated cataloguing of all the Arabic manuscripts in this collection can be found in González Castillo (2006).

28 Needless to say, none of this sheds any light on the translation with which we are concerned here.

3. DU RYER IN SPANISH

As noted above, the Spanish version of the Qur'an contained in manuscripts II/609, II/610 and II/3544 is an indirect translation based on Du Ryer's translation into French. It should first of all be mentioned that, despite its popularity, Du Ryer's translation was sharply criticized. For example, Claude Savary—Du Ryer's immediate successor in France—called Du Ryer's translation “irrespectuoso” (‘disrespectful’) of the original and said that it came across like “rapsodia monótona y tediosa” (‘a monotonous and tedious rhapsody’) (in the words of Hernández Catá, who translated Savary's work into Spanish; 1913: VII). Juan Vernet, author of one of the most widely acclaimed Spanish translations of the Qur'an, bluntly labelled Du Ryer's version as “muy defectuosa” (‘highly flawed’) (Vernet, 1953, p. 53; Vernet, 1963: XCVII-XCVIII). But it is important to situate Du Ryer's work within its historical context and a certain conception of translation, that of the *belles infidèles* (‘beautiful unfaithful’). This was derived from principles formulated a few years previously by Nicolas Perrot de Ablancourt in the prologues to his translations of the classics which gave priority to an understanding of the source text, expressed in an elegant and carefully crafted French that would be acceptable to a 17th century public, over an exact interpretation of content. In attempting to produce a didactic translation for a non-specialist readership, Du Ryer translation precedes each sura with its title, the number of *āyahs* it contains and the place where the sura was revealed to Muhammad, without separating or enumerating the respective *āyahs* in the following text. Rejecting word-for-word translation, he instead uses para-

phrasing, eliminates repetitions, avoids terms that are likely to be unfamiliar and simplifies notions to make them accessible to the reader of the epoch, Christianizing the text whenever he sees fit (Hanne, 2019). While it may be true that his ignorance of technical notions related to Islamic law or religion leads him on occasion to an imprecise use of vocabulary, it must be said in Du Ryer's defence that in the absence of an Arabic-French dictionary he could rely only on his own knowledge of Arabic language (and Turkish), an Arabic-Turkish dictionary and the exegetical works by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (*Tafsīr al-Jalalayn*), al-Bayḍāwī (*Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl*) and Ibn Jamīl al-Raba'ī al-Tūnisī (*al-Tanwīr fī-l-tafsīr*) (Hamilton & Richard, 2004: 97; Welé). He could also apparently count on the help of Maronite priests living in France as well Bibliander edition of Kerton's Latin translation, although Du Ryer's version comes across as completely independent of the latter (Larzul, 2009).

Nonetheless, unlike the book that might be regarded as its alter ego—the *Alcorani Texti Universus*, a translation-refutation written a few years later by Ludovico Marracci (Padua 1698, Arabic text and translation)—Du Ryer's book cannot be counted among the body of works intended to discredit Islam. In spite of the presence of possible “translation mismatches”¹⁸ in Du Ryer's text and some paratexts proper to the epoch that seek to accommodate this work in a fully Christian context while avoiding conflict with the religious and political authorities of the day, Du Ryer does his best to inform the reader honestly, and the work as a whole provides a fairly accurate view of what Islam consists of on the basis

¹⁸ A full theoretical discussion, illustrated abundantly with examples of translations from Arabic to Spanish, of translation mismatches (*desajustes*) and their consequences may be seen in Peña (1998), from which I take this term.

of its sacred scripture. This would probably explain the book's aforementioned success.

With regard to the Spanish translation, I have already pointed to the complete absence of information about the original text or the translator.¹⁹ The manuscript starts immediately with the translation of the first sura, or so-called "Chapter of the Prologue". Noteworthy is the disappearance of the paratexts that accompany the French, intended to guide the reader to a better understanding of the text. This is unfortunate because these paratexts would have given us some clue as to the edition of Du Ryer on which the anonymous Spanish translation was based. For example, the first edition of Du Ryer, from 1647, begins with a dedication to Du Ryer's patron, the chancellor Séguier, followed by a preface "to the reader" and a "Summary of the religion of the Turks". The letters of commendation from the consuls in Marseilles and the *firmām* or safe-conduct issued by Sultan Murad IV on Du Ryer's behalf that accompany the translation have likewise been left out of the Spanish translation. In subsequent editions a preface was added that was taken from a work by Mr. Porter, minister plenipotentiary of His Royal Majesty of Great Britain in Turkey, as well as *Des observations historiques & critiques sur le Mahometisme*, a preliminary study that was included in the English translation of the Qur'an by Georges Sale (1734).²⁰ Neither addition appears in the manuscripts under study here.

¹⁹ All quotations from the Spanish version reproduced here will be from mss. II/609 and II/610 since both of them have been digitalized and are available to the general public, aside from being easier to read.

²⁰ See, for example, the 1775 Amsterdam-Leipzig edition. My source in this instance is the description by Luis Miguel Pérez Cañada of the copy of this book kept by the library of the University of Castile-La Mancha's School of Translation in Toledo. I am indebted to him for sharing this essay, written in partial completion of requirements for a doctor's degree.

Without undertaking a comprehensive analysis, which would be outside the scope of this paper, examination of the translations of sura headings and a non-systematic sampling of the body of the text make it clear that the Spanish translator relied wholly on Du Ryer's text. Just as in the French version, the text of each sura is offered without separation into *āyahs* and the final result is an almost entirely word-for-word translation, a kind of replica in Spanish of the original French. By way of illustration, I reproduce here the French text²¹ and Spanish translation of the first chapter and the initial verses of the second:

PREFACE escrit à la Meque, contenant sept versets.
 AU Nom de Dieu clement & misericordieux,
 louange soit à Dieu clement & misericordieux, Roy
 du jour du Jugement, c'est toy que nous adorons,
 c'est à toy que nous demandons secours, conduits
 nous au droict chemin; au chemin de ceux que tu as
 gratifiez, contre lesquels tu n'as pas esté courroucé,
 & nous ne serons pas devoyez.

Capítulo del Prólogo escrito en la Meca que contiene siete versos.

En nombre de Dios clemente y misericordioso: alabado sea Dios clemente y misericordioso, Rey del día del Juicio: eres tu el que nosotros adoramos, á ti te pedimos favor llevanos en la via recta, en el camino de aquellos que tu has favorecido, contra quienes no has tenido ira y no seremos desviados (II/609, 1r).

[‘Chapter of the Prologue, written in Mecca, which contains seven verses.

In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate: praised be God the Merciful and Compassionate, King of the Day of Judgment: it is You we worship, of you we ask succour, guide us in the straight path, in the path of those You have favoured, not those to whom You have not been wrathful, and we will not be led astray.']

²¹ Taken from <http://www.coran12-21.org/fr/editions/duryer>.

LE CHAPITRE DE LA VACHE escrit à la Meque contenant deux cens quatre vingts sept versets.

AU Nom de Dieu clement & misericordieux. Je suis Dieu tres-sage.

Il ny a point de doute en ce livre, il conduit au droit chemin les gens de bien

qui croyent ce qu'ils ne voyent pas, qui font leurs prieres avec affection, & depensent en aumosnes une partie des biens que nous leur avons donnez.

Ceux qui croyent aux choses qui t'ont esté inspirées, en celles qui ont esté preschées aupara vant toy, & à la fin du monde, ne sont pas ignorans.

Capítulo de la vaca escrito en la Meca que contiene 287 versos.

En nombre de Dios clemente y misericordioso: yo soy Dios sapientísimo, no hay duda en este libro lleva al derecho camino de las gentes de bien, que creen lo que no ven, que con afecto hacen sus oraciones y gastan en limosnas parte de los bienes que les hemos dado: los que creen en las cosas que te han sido inspiradas, en aquellas que han sido predicadas antes de ti, y en el fin del mundo, no son ignorantes (II/609, 1v).

[Chapter of the Cow, written in Mecca, which contains 287 verses.

In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate: I am God Most-Knowing, there is no doubt in this book (which) guides to the straight path the People of Good, who believe that which they cannot see, who with affection make their prayers and give as alms part of the goods which We have given them: those who believe in the things inspired by you, in those things that have been preached previously to you, and in the end of the world, they are not ignorant.]

The result of his labour is unquestionably conditioned by the translator's lack of knowledge of Arabic, a knowledge which would have permitted him to consult the Arabic original. This ignorance is manifested in, for example, Q. 50 (II/610, 180r), where he reproduces the note that

introduces this chapter but does not include the original Arabic expression *قضى الامر*, which is present in Du Ryer's version. By the same token, the Spanish translator reproduces the phonetic transcriptions of Arabic terms used in the French text without the slightest attempt to adapt them to the phonetics of Spanish.²²

Nor has any other translation been consulted, it would seem, either during the translation process itself or the in the subsequent copying of the text. This can be explained by the fact that the copy in II/3544 was likely created in the 17th century, and the manuscript comprising II/609 and II/610 was copied at the very latest in 1833, the last year of Ferdinand VII's reign. At that time no other translation into Spanish of the Qur'an had been published, and those available in Latin or other modern languages would not have been easily accessible. It must be recalled that the Qur'an was included in the list of works that were proscribed by the Inquisition, which was not abolished until 1834.

What we have, then, is a painstakingly faithful reproduction of the French text. As a result, the omissions in Du Ryer's original are transferred intact to the Spanish version, such as the expression *rabb al-'ālamīn* de Q. 1 (translated inaccurately as "King of the Day of Judgment" rather than "Lord of the Worlds"), and Du Ryer's translation choices—be they simplification, paraphrases or Christianization of the lexicon—are reproduced in Spanish without fail. Thus, for example, in Q. 2:124 Spanish "templo de la Meca" ("Temple of Mecca") and "oratorio" ('oratory') are simply literal translations of the French "le

²² Nonetheless, although the Arabic phonemes without counterparts in French respect the French transcription (e.g., Ramazan, Mharam), at least in the case of the toponym "Mouchar" (Q. 2:198, *al-maš'ar*), the Spanish translator appropriately adapts the French digraph *ou* to Spanish *u*, yielding "Muchar" (II/609, 24r).

Temple de la Meque” and “oratoire” (for *bayt* and *muṣalla*’ respectively in the Qur’an). Similarly, in Q. 2: 125, *ṭahhirā baytī li-l-ṭā`ifīna al-`ākifīna al-ruka`i al-sujūd`i* is given as “hiciesen a mi casa limpia para los que con humildad vinieren a ella en procesión a adorar” (“make my house clean for those who with humility may come to it in procession to worship”) (II/609, 15r) in keeping with the French “tenir ma maison nette, pour ceux qui viendront en procession avec humilité & adoration”. Elsewhere the French “Divine Majesté”, a term in common use under the French *ancien régime*, is adopted in its Spanish form “Divina Majestad” to refer on multiple occasions to God.

Very few elements in the Spanish text can be considered original contributions on the part of the anonymous translator, most of them somewhat inept.

1. In a few instances the translator abandons his otherwise meticulous fidelity to the French, translating, for example “vraicroyantes” (‘true believers’) as “fieles” (faithful) rather than the more accurate “verdaderos creyentes”. The title of Sura 70 (Arabic *Al-Ma`ārij*), translated into French as “la montée” (‘the ascent’), becomes in Spanish “la escalera” (‘the stairway’) (II/610, 233r).
2. Not all the marginal notes present in the French version are reproduced in the Spanish. Only those with informative content are selected, while those that are merely bibliographical, where Du Ryer specifies the sources he consulted, are left out.²³
3. At times the note explaining the title of a sura is also omitted. We see this in Q. 20 (II/609, 262r), where the sura is described as “el capítulo de la beatitud y el Infierno” (‘the chapter of beatitude and Hell’) rather than being given the traditional alphabetic title *Ṭā Hā*, and also in Q. 36 (II/610, 106r), where “el capítulo que se intitula O hombre” (‘the Chapter which is entitled “O Man”’) is given instead of *Yā Sīn*.²⁴
4. Occasionally, such as at the beginning of Q. 9 (II/609, 154r), the Spanish version reproduces Du Ryer’s initial note but incorporates it into the body of the sura itself without setting it apart typographically.
5. The Spanish version eliminates the parentheses that are used in the French text to signal interpolations in the original, such as at the beginning of Sura 19 (II/609, 256r), where “conducteur (des gens de bien)” in the French text is given in Spanish as “conduce a la gente de bien” (‘guides People of Good’).²⁵
6. Sometimes entire fragments of the French text are also omitted. For example, in Q. 28 (II/610, 58v) “Dieu est tres pur, il entend tout, il est tres sage” (‘God is very pure, He understands everything, He is very wise’) is reduced to “Dios es purísimo” (‘God is exceedingly pure’). The title of Q. 33 “Des bandes & Troupes des gens de Guerre” (‘The bands and troops of the People of War’) is rendered as “las gentes de guerra” (‘the people of war’) (II/610, 86r).
7. However, a large number of errors are simply derived from the Spanish translator’s inability to correctly interpret the French text. Some are glaringly obvious, such as when in Q. 2:32 “nous ne scavons que ce que tu nous

²³ Recall, moreover, that some notes present in II/3544 have been left out of II/609 and II/610 by the copyist.

²⁴ In II/3544 the translator leaves some blank space at the beginning of the sura, perhaps allowing room for the explanatory note.

²⁵ At times the copyist of II/609 and II/610 eliminates parentheses from the original French that appear in II/3544, as can be seen in Q. 14:44 (169r).

as enseigné” (‘we know only what You have taught us’) is translated as “no sabemos lo que tu nos has enseñado” (‘we know not what You have taught us’) (II/609, 4r) or in Q. 2:87, where “nous avons inspiré la science à Jesus Fils de Marie” (‘We have inspired science in Jesus, Son of Mary’) is translated wrongly as “hemos inspirado la ciencia de Jesús hijo de María” (we have inspired the science of Jesus, Son of Mary’) (II/609, 10v). Other mistranslations are somewhat more complex. In the original Arabic, the title of Q. 37 *al-ṣāffāt* refers to the ranks or files in which the angels are ordered. However, the French translation “des ordres des Anges” (‘the orders of Angels’) is ambiguous, since ‘ordres’ (like its Spanish counterpart *órdenes* and English ‘orders’) may refer to either spatial arrangements or commands. In Spanish the former meaning is distinguished from the latter by the grammatical gender assigned, and this is what gives away the mistranslation in II/610, 111v, which has “las órdenes” (‘the commands’) rather than “los órdenes” (‘the ranks or files’).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The history of the translation of the Qur’an into Spanish cannot be understood without reference to translations of the text into other European languages, particularly French. Surprising though it may seem, non-Spaniards such as Claude Savary and Albin de B. Kazimirski, both of them French, played a key role in the translation of Islam’s holy texts into Spanish. The anonymous indirect translation of Du Ryer’s *L’Alcoran de Mahomet* that I have presented here completes the list of pre-20th century French translations which passed into Spanish in the form of literal translations.

Regrettably, we know nothing of the translator or the circumstances or reasons behind this text. We can only be certain that the Royal Library’s manuscript II/3544, perhaps written not long after Du Ryer composed his translation in the second half of the 17th century and rather indifferent in execution, was the original translation from which manuscripts II/609 and II/610 were copied, with somewhat greater care and grace, in the late 18th or early 19th century. This fact in itself would be reason enough for the Royal Library to retain the earlier document in its collection. However, the fact that the manuscripts were handwritten—and in the keeping of the Royal Library, a collection to which few would have had access—effectively ruled out any chance that this version of the Qur’an would exert any sort of influence on the intellectual and political environment in Spain, unlike what occurred with the multiple publications of Du Ryer’s work and the indirect translations thereof in Europe over the two preceding centuries.

Nor is it possible to conclusively confirm that the translation contained in these three manuscripts is the translation attributed to the Count of Oropesa, of which no copies are currently extant. And even if this were the case, we do not know whether its stated purpose “for use by missionaries”—perhaps in imitation of some edition of the original French text—represented an attempt to justify the translation of a book that was proscribed at the time. Perhaps it simply reflected the zeal for conversion and the apologetic tendency that dominated the relationship between Spain and Islam in the Modern Age, a function that could certainly not be ascribed to Du Ryer’s original translation.

One thing that is unarguable is the overwhelming dependence of this Spanish text on Du Ryer’s, which can be explained basically by the translator’s ignorance of Arabic and the virtual

impossibility of consulting other translations. It is worth pointing out that the field of Arabic Studies in Spain, which could have produced a direct translation of the Qur'an into Spanish, did not emerge until the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and its key figures, foremost among them Miguel Casiri (d. 1791) and José Antonio Conde (d. 1820),²⁶ were primarily concerned with studying the history of al-Andalus and the recovery of its heritage legacy.

It is my hope that the discovery of the manuscripts presented here will stimulate researchers in the field of French-Spanish translation to flesh out the present brief report. Furthermore, it is not often that two versions of the same Spanish translation are available, one based on the other, a circumstance that in itself suggests an interesting direction for further research.

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²⁶ For a short biography of Casiri, see Martín Escudero. For a description of Conde and his work, with a selected bibliography, see Marín (2020).

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