

Elizabethan Presentation of the Islamic Script: A Socio-cultural Understanding

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Abstract.

The Arabic Qur'ān entered Europe through Spain with Muslim conquerors in the eighth century. Though the Elizabethan treaties about Islam introduced the Qur'ānic teachings, Prophet Muhammad's mission was rejected, and he was announced a false prophet. In Elizabethan literature, this anti-Islamic information is intently expressed against the Prophet and the Qur'ān. Crimes and evil characteristics are imputed to the stereotypes of the Moors and Turks. These evil traits are referred to the Muslims' culture as they are represented being imbedded in the Qur'ān. Some Elizabethan dramatists have developed their interest in the Qur'ānic theology. It has been depicted to the Elizabethan audience that Qur'ān justifies the Turkish imperialism. For Marlowe, smashing or burning copies of the Qur'ān is a symbol of personal revenge and attack on religion.

Keywords: Koran, Qur'ān, Muhammad, translation, Saracen, divinity, conversion, Elizabethan literature.

1. Introduction

In early English literature, the Arabic Al-Quran, Al-Qur'an and Al-Qur'ān is mentioned in English as Alchoran, Alcharon Alcoran, Al-coran, Alkaron, Alkeran Alkoran, and Alkaron. *AL* is the Arabic article for *the*. The word Alcoran was previously adopted in almost all the European languages, but modern English authors choose Koran (Isik, 2007). Sometimes transliterated as Quran, Koran, Qur'ān, al-Coran or al-Qur'ān. Qur'ān is the primary source of Islam. For Muslims, it is the last revelation of God, Allah, and The Creator. This work casts lights on the literary colours illustrated from the Qur'ān. Through all ages, English writers have different fragmentary references to the Qur'ān. Most of these allusions are descriptive. For instance, Chaucer, William Langland and Lydgate portray rebellious blasphemies of the prominent Muslim characters, like sultans, after their outrageous temper over Islamic faith. However, to burn it, Marlowe denigrates the Qur'ān and unfairly falsifies the Prophet Muhammad.

2. The Qur'ān as a Medieval Heretic Script

The Elizabethan tradition of the Islamic symbols is rooted to the Medieval times. The Qur'ānic theology was in the interest of Medieval literary works. For instance, Prophet Muhammad was represented as the manifestation of the devil or Antichrist. The Medieval context of the term 'Saracen' is a non-Christian or heathen, pagan and infidel. Medieval people understood that the Saracens substituted their faith in Testaments with an evil duplicate book named the Qur'ān. Saracens worship 'Mahoune' or having faith in him as a deity (Smith, 1977). In *The National Scottish Dictionary* 'Mahoune' is defined as a name given to the devil. The *Song of Roland* (11th century) provides the earliest instances of the presence of Islam in the Western literary tradition. The misrepresentation born of deep hostility towards Islam dismissed outrightly as a mere Christian heresy in a figuring of Islamic creed and in projecting a repulsive picture of people of Islam. Perceived as the discipline of the devil, Islamic teachings appear in the *Songs* as heresy and violent. The King Marsile knows not but cheating in the name of his Islamic holy polytheistic laws. He drives violence possessing nature of a typical villain Saracen. In the *Song*, a knight describes him saying:

Thereby there stood a high-seat wrought out of elephant horn.
King Marsile let before him a certain book be borne.
Mahound and Termagaunt their law therein was written plain.
XXXIII. Then Blanchandrin stepped forward before the King to stand;

And Ganelon beside him, he led him by the hand.
And he said to the King:
May now our gods keep thee both safe and sound
Whose holy laws we keep always—Apollo and Mahound.
We gave thy charge to Charlemagne that raised his hands in air. (XLVIII, 21-30)

Like in polytheistic practice, a Saracen is introduced as a pagan who swore first by Muhammad as his powerful god and then God, The Almighty: 'By Mahomet', 'By Mahoun my lord, or by omnipotent god,' 'mi god mahun'. More is depicted about his faith saying: 'And then his oath upon it swore that Saracen of Spain/ That, if upon Count Roland in the rear-guard he might light' (Bacon, 1919). Some Medieval writers claimed to represent a truthful Islamic perception of Muhammad. They introduced him as an idol. His sculpture is either permanently erected in 'maumetries' and 'synagogues', or carried about and placed upon the maintop of ships. It is put up in make-shift temples or installed in the King of Spain's tent. In the *Song*, the Arab Emir of Babylon keeps the picture of Muhammad in his court. In reverse when they fail, they beat and insult their idols:

Of their gods Mahound and Termagant a sore complaint they made. And moreover of Apollo, whence they got no help at all.

When the ball is over, they smote the idol of Mahound:
His carbuncle from Termagant has the angry Paynims torn,
And they have hurled Mahomet into a foss forlorn. (CXCVI)

Besides Muhammad, a long incompatible list of gods such as Beelzebub, Apollo, Jupiter, Termagant, Nero, Ascorat and other mythical, biblical and historical figures were credited by the Saracens. The so-called Saracen gods are, of course, fabrications of the romance writers and are quite unknown in Islamic faith (Smith, 1977). The Qur'ān is described as the Bible of the Saracens. As well as it is included among those supposed gods: 'He defied Mahounde and Apolyne\ Iubiter Ascart and Alcaron also' (*The Sowdone of Babylone* 2272, 2761-62). Edmund Spenser referred to the 'Mahoun' idol of Medieval literature (Chew, 1965). Like Spenser, Robert Greene's *Alphonsus*, describes the devil as hidden inside an idol in a heathen temple or Mosque. When the idol shakes, it begins to issue forth clouds of smoke. He is represented on London stage as a 'Brazen Head' or 'Pow' that speaks to his priests and instructs the Turkish emperors.

Sacrilege is not a remote element in the demonstration of Muslim characters in the Medieval period. Saracens, Turks, Moors and heretics alike, treat Muhammad as an idol worshipper. They believe in the Holy Qur'ān as a source of their canon. Blasphemy of Saracen characters was given a wider prevalence in the early fourteenth century and was in exchange until seventeenth century. Chaucer talks of 'mammatte' that had turned into a legend in *The Man of Law's Tale*. The term "Maumerye" is from the false idea that the Mahometans were idolaters — a belief very general in the Middle Ages — arose the French mahomet, an idol; mahumeriey idolatry, or an idolatrous temple, as here. For instance, Chaucer portrays rebellious blasphemy in a statement of the Sultan who expresses his outrage over his Islamic faith, the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* - the tradition of the Prophet:

The hooly laws of our Alkoran
Yeven by Goddess message Makomete.
But oon a vow to grate God I heete
The lyf shal rather but of my body stertic
Or Makometes lawe out of myn hertel. (2.3. 32-37)

In Medieval Ages, William Langland was a chief priest. He translated the Bible into English. In *Piers Plowman*, he describes that 'Sarrasyns' [Muslims] behave like 'Jews' do. (*Passus*, XVI, ii, 84-7). They are nations of superstitions, magic and myths. They are very uncharitable. John Lydgate (1370?- 1451), in his *The Fall of Princes*, includes an extensive account entitled 'Off Machomet the fals prophete and how he beyng dronke was deuoured among swyn;' Lydgate culled his material from 'bookis olde' called Alkeran. He begins his story by charging the prophet with being a magician. 'When Muhammad grew up, we are told, he was admired by his fellow countrymen for teaching them how to use camels for carriage'. From his frequent journeys to Egypt, Lydgate continues, Muhammad 'lerned the Olde and Newe Testament' (71-74, 920-923).

The European authors in medieval ages curiously view the most primitive Qur'ānic picture Prophet Muhammad's journey to Heaven, the 'Miraj.' This Islamic story is the theme of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. It was written in the beginning of the fourteenth century. The Qur'ān briefly mentioned the story but *Hadith* books of the speech of the Prophet perfectly narrate it. Dante manipulated the story, definitely rather deeply, by a Christian counter text made available in Latin that detailed Muhammad's journey through the heavens. Dante tried to distort image of the Prophet Muhammad, and spread to such an extent that it was preserved and perpetuated in literature. He consigns the Prophet Muhammad to the lowest level of Hell (Miguel, 2005). Hugh Goddard argues in a very precise way that *The Divine Comedy* offers a clear acknowledgement of Christendom's debt to Islam for earth and heaven interactions (Goddard, 2001). Later, the Victorian poet, Joseph Addison (1672-1719), recalled the story of 'Miraj' to the English memory in a number of magazines such as *The Guardian*, *Freeholder* and *The Spectator*. On August 30, 1714, issue No. 587, Addison wrote an article to deny the Prophethood of Muhammad with an illustration about his ascendance, which was the topic of *The Divine Comedy*.

In his *Introduction of Knowledge*, written about 1501, Andrew Borde, physician and traveller, treats Islam as a medieval paganism whose followers worshipped the superstition of 'Alkaron', which 'macomyt, a false fellow made' (1855) Medieval and early modern Western European texts about Islam nearly always defined it as a licentious religion of sensuality. In *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Norman Daniel discusses the prevalent European notion that "Islam was essentially built upon a foundation of sexual license, which was plainly contrary to the natural and the divine law' (Daniel, 1966). This tradition of anti-Islamic polemic saw the religion of Muhammad based on "fraud, lust, and violence" (Daniel, 1966).

Distance and the lack of any real contact between the audience and the Muslim world left the medieval romance writer free to depict the Saracen as a directed fancy. The place of the Saracen in medieval fiction might well represent by depicting his religious and physical portrayal out of the cursory reading of romances. Elizabethan writers and poet-entertainers made much of this alien appearance. For some writers, the use of false information of Islam was a patriotic attack on Eastern characters that represented a threat to the Christianity in the Europe. For example, because the Ottoman threat for Europe, the Quran is identified as Turkish and Turkish characters collectively disfigured the Qur'ān and its holiness in practice.

3. Image of the Turkish Qur'ān

The Elizabethans' perception of the Qur'ān is Turkish and the Turks are the people of the Qur'ān, Islam and Muhammad. The Elizabethan dramatists treated them unkindly as foreign to the English life. Hostility is obvious in Marlowe, Shakespeare, Greene, Massinger, etc. The reaction is entirely conventional and aggressive. For the Elizabethan Christian audience, Islam was a deceptive and new account of some earlier religions. A rigorous Christian picture of Islam was intensified in innumerable ways. For Norman Daniel, the Europeans' response to the Ottoman menace is evidently reproduced in Elizabethan drama (Daniel 1960). Consequently, Daniel says that 'the use of false evidence to attack Islam was all but universal' (Daniel, 1966). After the establishment of the Levant Company in 1531, scores of learned diplomats, traders and scholars visited the East and returned with favourable impressions of Islam. The rise of Oriental travel to the Ottoman Empire was high between 1580 and 1720. English visitors were eager to explore the East. It was really a public English interest which stimulated the writers to allude, authentically or sometimes otherwise, to the mysterious Islamic World. Louis Wann reports that between 1558 and 1642 the major British playwrights produced no less than forty-seven plays dealing with Eastern material. The production of Islamic plays was not because of the fancy of one author or group of authors, but Wann thinks that it was due to the interest of the Elizabethan audience in Oriental matter (Wann, 1915).

The travel accounts made its echo on Elizabethan Literature. English travellers brought back more details of Islamic life, with less partiality in their reports. For instance, the Turks captured the English gunner and traveller Edward Ebbe in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. He had the audacity and naivety to say that his captors forced him to fight against the forces of Pester John. He has an effect to praise Muslims: "Alla, that it is gret sclaudre to cure faith and to oure lawe... For the Sarazines ben gode and feythfulle, for thei keen entirely the commandment of the holy book Alkaron that God sente hem by his messenger Aachomet" (24). The word 'Allah' is the highest invocation. It is the name Allah. The name is of the Unqualified Divinity, "the Supreme Name," "the Unique Name," "the Name of Majesty." Within its two syllables and four letters, the symbolism of which has been often commented on, this name

concentrates on all of the redemptive effectiveness of the divine word.

Travel sources were not authentic enough to be granted as William Lithgow's report that the Prophet's tomb hangs in the mid-air upon the Kaaba's roof in Makkah. Marlowe describes this portrait in *Tamburlaine The Great* (1589), throughout Orcanes. As a religious personality as well as a great commander in the Turkish forces, the commander takes a vow by holy Muhammad whose death-place is Makkah:

By sacred Mahomet
Whose glorious body when he left the world,
Closed in a coffin mounted up the air,
And hung on stately Mecca's temple roof. (Part II, 1.2.60-63)

Another famous Elizabethan traveller, Sandys, narrated many religious accounts about Muslims in his travels in the Islamic World. He was impressed by Muslims' dealing with the Qur'ān, when 'they kisse it, embrace it, and swear by it, calling it the booke of glory'; such accounts like these find their way in the presentation of the Qur'ān in Elizabethan literature. Robert Wilson represents in his masterpiece, *The Pedlars Prophecies* (1595) that the high respect of the holy book is more done by Muslims to the Qur'ān than Christians to the Bible. Wilson remarks, 'Of the Gospel we do boast, and it professe,/ But more honest fidelitie is among Turkes' (II, 916f; Chew, 1965). In his poem, *Abuses Script and Whipt* (1622), George Wither expresses his admiration for the reverence and devoutness of Muslims to the Qur'ān in their life and worship:

Our cursed Pagan unbelieving foe,
I meant the Turke, more reverence doth show
In those his damn'd erroneous Rites than we
In the true Worship: for 'tis knowne that he
Will not so much as touch his Alchalon,
That doth containe his false Religion,
With unwasht hands: nor till he hath o'erwent
All that his vaine and confus'd rabblement
Of Ceremonies us'd much lesse dares looke
On the Contents of that unhallowed Booke. (Book II, Satire iv, 301-311)

The Gracious Qur'ān was a subject of approving eyewitness. Muslims put right hand on the holy Qur'ān and swear to say. It was practiced in the Islamic world to verify the Muslim's witness to say truth. Though the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet did not approve of this, Western tradition adopted this practice. In Dryden's *Don Sebastian*. Marsh says:

That all is true you make delivered
Both lay your hands upon the Alcoran.
It was after proved holy to Muslims to tell truth (III, ii, 17-19)

The same vision is remarkably mentioned in Elizabethan literature. Muslims respect the book highly, so they swear on a copy of it in courts. In *Soliman and Perseda*, Soliman says: "Faith two great night of the post swore upon/ Alcoran that he would have fired the Turks" (V.iii.34-35). Kyd remarks this with admiration of this devotion among Muslim community. His character, Marsh assists the practice for mortal, social and personal affairs and relationship. The Qur'ān is used to endorse marriage. Marsh says: 'That all is true that here you have declared,/ Both lay your hands upon the Alcoran' (V, ii,70-73). The English abridgment of Sebastian's Minister's cosmography contains a charity on Muslim's practices. Chew supports the authenticity of the information saying 'it is quite accurate so far as it goes to abridge knowledge between the Elizabethan readers and the Muslim world' (Chew, 1965). Travel and trade in the East provided many opportunities for Europeans to think deeply about Islam.

4. Conversion to Islam

Islam attracted non-Muslims not only because it was the religion of the Arabs but even more because it was increasingly the worldwide religion. Europeans were curious to know how Arabs had been able to conquer the world,

and how they had contributed to the world civilization. Muhammad is the Prophet and Messenger of God. God delivered him his message to humanity. This divine message is the Holy Qur'ān. For instance, Marlowe amazes his Elizabethan audience with this description of Qur'ānic God, suggested to be taken assertively as the same Christian Godhead. He speaks marvellously of the oneness of God, declaring: 'The God that sits in heaven.../ For he is God alone, and none but he' (Part II, 5.1.199-200). Carleen Ibrahim remarks that 'Marlowe means the verse of *Ayat Al-Kursi* (Throne), a great verse in the Noble Qur'ān (2.255) (Ibrahim, 1996). The verse means the equivalent significance which Marlowe puts across the depiction to his Christian spectators:

He that sits on high and never sleep,
Nor in one place is circumscribable,
But everywhere fills every continent,
With strange infusion of his sacred vigour. (Part II, 2.2.49-52)

The verse means that the throne of Allah in the sky includes all things, world, planets and skies. The following is the verse:

Allah! There is no god but He, - the Living, the Self-Subsisting Supporter of all. No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what (approaches His creatures) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory). (Qur'ān, 2.255)

Many Europeans and Englishmen embraced Islam in the Elizabethan time. Benjamin Bishop, the English ambassador in Egypt in 1606, was an educated, wealthy and successful person who took an interest in Islam as a religion (Matar, 1988). Therefore, converts to Islam grew in number that made Europeans not so strange in the Islamic World. The Elizabethan Captain Ward was extensively known in England to have accomplished power and wealth as a Muslim, and "the rumours of Ward's riches" were so gorgeous that they captured the imagination of adventurers. In fact, reports from the Barbary coastline included the surname of Sir Francis Verney, a member of the English nobility-as having joined Ward and turned Turk, a Muslim (Chew, 1965).

The term 'turn Turk', is applied by Elizabethans to signify a change entirely for the worse. The original inspiration was to turn into a renegade of Christianity and embrace Islam. In Shakespeare, Hamlet gives the same sense; 'If the rest of my fortunes turn Turk'(3.2.262). The source of this phrase, 'turn Turk', is told in a story for Thomas Saunders. He was one of the ship's companies and captured by Tripolitan pirates. A Frenchman in the crew "protested to turne Turke, hoping thereby to have safe his life. Then, said the Turke, if thou wilt turne Turke, speak the words that thereunto belong (that is the declaration of that 'There is no God by Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger): and he did so. Then, said they unto him, now thou shalt die in the faith of a Turke and so he did." This byword was very frequent in the factual sense of embracing Islam, as when a Muslim Commander asks in Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*: "What say these prisoners? Will they turn Turke or not?" (III. v, 26-23). Kyd reports about Turkish forces enforced massive conversion of Christians into Islam. He mistakenly thinks that they will worship Muhammad.

Hath Brusor led a valiant troope of Turkes,
And made some Christians kneele to Mahomet:
Him we adore, and in his name I crie,
Mahomet for me and Soliman. (I, iii, 60-63)

The play *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612) is an initiative story of one of the Elizabethan elite, Captain Ward, who converted to Islam and became politically a pro-Turk. As a result, the expression 'Turn a Turk' was frequently used in Elizabethan literature. This common idiom was also in use up to the early eighteenth century literature. It was employed chiefly for hammering disrespect and hatred is 'Turk', used regularly by Shakespeare in *Othello* (II, i, 114), *Hamlet* (III, ii, 275), *King Lear* (III, iv, 91), *2 Henry IV* (V, ii, 47), *Richard II* (IV, I, 95), *Richard III* (III, v, 40), *The Merchant of Venice* (IV, i, 32) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (III, iv, 56). For instance, Othello uses the phrase as he denounces a fight between his soldiers in which a quarrel among Turks is forbidden in their religion: 'Are we turned

Turks, and to ourselves do that\Which heaven hat forbid the Ottomites?' (2.3.161-2). As well, Iago says: 'Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk' (2.1.141). It might be appropriate here to refer to the quality and number of people, who embraced Islam. The major conversion Elizabethan stories are in *Soliman and Perseda*, *A Christian Turn'd Turk*, *The Fair Maid of the West*, *Othello* and *The Renegado*. Those who convert to Christianity in these plays are the good and the gracious commanders, sultan, or princess among their own people while those who convert to Islam, in contrast, are the unlucky and slaves, fools, or slaves among their fellows. While the new Muslims are damned and punished for their apostasy, the new Christian converters are prized, blessed and saved by the end of the play.

There is no reference or investigation on conversions and accounts of converters. However, the power of Islam is not only military, but it is also commercial. Islamic business rules practiced by Muslims in the world such as central of Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, led peoples to embrace Islam. In Europe, Europeans had less interest in Islam as they lived in the threat of the Islamic Ottoman Empire. However, some writers hold an antagonistic attitude towards Muslims. For example, Marlowe seems to be familiar with the Qur'anic teachings. Marlowe's offensive utterances about the Qur'an do not rest on any academic source. To a certain extent, it shows, accidentally, the lack of his understanding of Islam. His remarks are based on the inaccurate paraphrases available in European languages. As far as Elizabethan writers were quite apprehensive, they had three translations of the Qur'an, Marracci's (1538) in Latin and Sieur Du Ryer's (1647) in French and Alexander Ross's (1649) in English. They, however, called it the Saracen Alcoran. Islam and Muslims were viewed within their limited, rather incomplete understanding of the Islamic world.

5. Burning the Qur'an

Marlowe's reference to the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad is remarkable in the two parts of the play. Marlowe seems to be familiar with the Islamic Scripture and its teachings. In the second part of the play, *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe frequently insulted the Prophet. Subsequently, the last act is a public burning scene of the Qur'an. Marlowe calls it the 'Turkish Alcoran' to attack the Turkish pride as he feels the imperial Turkish threat to Christendom. However, at the end, Marlowe's Tamburlaine persistently burnt the Qur'an with disgust for it. This public burning scene of the Qur'an is a bizarre. However, to burn Qur'an, Marlowe unjustly degrades it and misrepresents the Prophet Muhammad. His attack on Islam is regarded as a natural attack on the infidel enemy and his theology. A simple Christian spectator rather a critic will not accept to see the burning event happen to the Bible than to accuse the author of this heresy.

Marlowe's hero, Tamburlaine orders his soldiers to collect the copies of the Qur'an from the Islamic temples. He identifies that this book is of the real enemy of Elizabethans. Tamburlaine's burning of the Qur'an is regarded as a sign of Christian power and victory. The Qur'anic biblioclasm on London stage was bizarre. The huge flames and vaunting speeches of Tamburlaine draw an earthly hell for Muslims in the Middle East, which has no limits. It seems the end of the Islamic World.

Now, Casane, where's the Turkish Alcoran,
And all the heaps of superstitious books
Found in the temples of that Mahomet
Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt. (Part II, 5.1.171-4)

Tamburlaine asks the Prophet Muhammad to take revenge from him just to mock him. He has continued ordering homicide for the Prophet's kinsmen, fellows and scholars. Tamburlaine overwhelmingly slew Muslims. In a remarkable pause in his speech, he comments that he is alive and 'untouched by' the Prophet Muhammad. Tamburlaine defies the Prophet for not saving Qur'an from the devastating burning. He loudly shouts:

Now Mahomet, if thou have any power:
Come down thyself and work a miracle'
Thou art not worthy to be worshipped
That suffer'st flames of fire to burn the writ
Wherein the sum of thy religion rests:
Why send'st thou not a furious whirlwind down,
To blow thy Alcoran up to thy throne. (Part II, 5.1.185-191)

Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is an exciting Elizabethan play. Though it is an Oriental play, it is made for Christian audience. The Qur'ān, therefore, has been quite often and seriously misunderstood in Europe. This derogatory treatment betrays the Marlowe's lack of understanding of Islam in general and the Qur'ān in particular. Despite the fact that several performances of the play recently replace the copies of the Qur'ān by irreligious books, the English Christian *Tamburlaine* is imaginatively known as the Qur'ān burner in the English literature. By burning the Qur'ān, Marlowe seems to think that the Qur'ānic law is entirely demolished.

In English literature, blasphemy is the end of the devotion of most Muslim characters and their fate is Hell and contemptuous for the majority of Muslims. For instance, Robert Baron portrays in his play *Mirza*, the prince of Persia, insults the Qur'ān, and calls it 'a Fardel of Blasphemies, Rabbinical Fables, Impossibilities and contradictions' (Chew, 1965) The lack of interest in Islamic religious practices marks the failure to even the twentieth century Christians to recognize any end of spiritual life in Islam, though this does not apply evenly to all aspects. Elizabethan writers had nothing about Islam except deformity and blackness. The Qur'ān has been seriously misapprehended in England as well. Though Islam emerged in the light of history, Europeans did not know much more about the Prophet and laws of Islam. Therefore, writers have been attacking Islam on this modernist and historical ground, though not very systematically. Recently, a Pastor of a monitory church in Florida, Terry Jones, works publically to put the Qur'ān on a ridiculous trial in his own church to irrationally and personally burn it. In news reports, when he was questioned about his knowledge of the Qur'ān by a court, he said that he had heard that it resembles Mosaic Law.

6. The Qur'ān as a Source of Law

At this period and in the past time, Mohammad is described as the great lawgiver, and the wisest legislator that ever was. The Qur'ānic law is deeply rooted in the Islamic world's culture and religion. The Qur'ān perfectly has no comparable scripture in other religions. Sale's interpretation of the Qur'ān remained until today a standard work. He was carried by the current of his age in portraying the Prophet as an imposter, but on the other hand, he proved some neutral and objective attitude in some places to the extent that he was charged with putting Islam on a rank with Christianity. Consequently, the failure to comprehend this leads the Europeans persistently to compare Christ and Prophet Muhammad and nothing marks more manifestly the gap between Islamic and European thought. Daniel states that the translation of Peter was scholarly and notoriously full of errors (Daniel, 1966). Non-Muslims have not realized that the Qur'ān describes itself as a copy from a heavenly prototype, so that it is unlike anything known to Christianity.

Kyd describes the Qur'ān as holy and sacred in *Soliman and Perseda*. He recognizes it 'holy' Qur'ān and his characters such as Sultan Soliman of Turkey 'swears' by the holy Alcoran'. (I, v, 7) On the other hand, Nashe has denigrated the Great Qur'ān. He approves of the West's general hostility towards Islam. Nash writes about 'Mahomet's angles in the Alchoran having 'ears' stretching from one End of heaven to the other'; and whose real shape covered the sky. Nashe, scornfully, speaks about the Qur'ān as 'it is written that two-hundred fifty ladies, hanged themselves for love of Mahomet,\ Have with you to saffron-Walden' (iii,33). On his treatment of Qur'ānic issues, he repeats a number of mistakes that had already been passed from one writer to another. Much of his aggravation with Holy Qur'ān states from his lack of knowledge but the nature of its law. According to John Bale (1495-1563), one of the champions who reformed England, believes that "the Magog," against whom Jesus warned his believers, is none other than that "tyrant" Muhammad whose Qur'ān is 'a mean law' and designed to seduce men by encouraging vice and "voluptuous pleasures". It might be mentioned that Muhammad's partner in deceiving people in the four quarters of the earth was, none other than the "Romish Pope", who was identified as Gog (Bale, 1949). David Lindsay (1490-1555), reflecting one of the religious attacks, says that there are many Antichrists on earth but none more harmful than Muhammad and his Law:

Quha wes one greter Antichrist And more contraryous to Christ
Nor the fals Propheit Machomeit
Quilk his curste lawis maid so sweet? (V, 197-200)

In *Soliman and Perseda*, Sultan Soliman speaks admirably about Erastus as a good citizen in Turkey. He compares his faith in Christ as it is replaced by the faith in Muhammad for Muslims.

A man whose presence more delighted me;

And had he worshipt Mahomet for Christ,
He might haue borne me through out all the world,
So well I loued and honoured the man.(Act III, Sc. I 22-25)

In this connection of Muhammad as a devil, one might add that the Elizabethan Mahu or Maho, who appears as the general dictator or prince of hell is alluded to in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (III, iv, 140). Greene's *The Tragicall Raigne of Selimus, Emperour of the Turkes* describes the Qur'an as 'farced' and 'dread laws' (V.1170-1698). In another picture, Chapman states in his Arabian play *Revenge for Honour* that the Qur'an is a source of moral law. It forbids drinking wine. He depicts the religious sins. Muslim commits a great sin in taking sip or a glass of it. Selinthus informs Gaselles about this creed:

By no means,
Though by the Alcoran wine be forbidden,
You soldiers in that case make't not your faith. (II, I, 378-380)

This information is frequently reoccurred to misuse the truth for a new convert to Islam to scorn and to approve of the irrationality of Islam. Massinger's heroine, Donusa in *The Renegado*, a niece of the Ottoman Emperor, falls in love with Vitelli, a Venetian slave, at first sight. She regularly invites him to visit her in her chamber. Vitelli amuses Donusa's attractiveness. Later on, Donusa's sexual relationship with Vitelli is discovered the people in the court. Mustapha informs Donusa that 'The Crime committed, \ Our Alcoran calls Death' for it (i.ii). The Ottoman Emperor, Amurath, declares a suitable punishment for his niece's sexual liaison with a Christian in accordance with the laws of the "Alcoran:" Donusa must expire:

If any virgine of what degree or quality so ever, born a natural
Turk, shall be convicted of corporal looseness and incontinence with
any Christian, she is, by the decree of our great prophet, Mahomet,
to lose her head . . . (4.2.313).

Harrie Cavendish, an Englishman who visited Constantinople in 1589, notes; 'No Christian man may have to do with a Turkish woman, but she shall die for it if it be known, but a Turk may have as many Christian women as he will' (Vitkus, 1999). Besides, Sandys stresses that Muslim women believed their way of life in compliance with the "Alcoran." There were frequent accounts of Ottoman's secret love affairs, polygamy, and harem-filled concubines. The play inspires Sandys's reports, for Donusa proclaims, "our religion \ Allows all pleasure" (1.2.49-50). On the other hand, Dryden's Oriental play introduces an Islamic theology in looking at God in paradise 'O holy Alla that I live to see'. In *Don Sebastian*, Dryden represents Sultan Almanzor 'swear[s] on the Alcoran' (5, 191). Dryden talks about 'fasting' as an Islamic 'law,' and the same law 'forbids to wed a Christian' which is in the Qur'an (2: 221; 60:10). In his *Hind and the Panther* (1687), he speaks derisively of Arabs not practicing their faith and of their violation of the Islamic prohibition of wine in "Astraeu Redux" (1660). A similar polemical scene is in the opening words of the High Marshal of Rhodes in Davenant's first English opera, *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656): "My sword against proud Solyman I draw, \ His cursed Prophet, and his sensual law" (iii, 212-213f).

To sum up, the Turkish Islamic law was unfamiliar in Europe. Shelly's *The Revolt of Islam* is a revolt poem against the Ottoman Empire. He implicitly calls to free eastern parts of Greece from Turkey. In *Hellas: A Lyrical Drama*, he seeks to have 'a Diverse, learned in the Koran, preaches, \ That it is, written how the sins of Islam/ Must raise up a destroyer even now' (545-7). He states that the 'Greeks expect a Savoir from the West'. It is neither priesthood nor clergy provided with the Koran to serve Islamic community. The conspiracy Shelly seeks is a destruction of Islam from its inner faith. The idea fulfils two hundred years later when Kamal Ataturk blocked Islamic Laws in Turkey in 1932. The Bible is unlike the Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad derives his significance from the Qur'an but the Bible derives its significance from Prophet Jesus. Islam was often assimilated in practice to heresy. The exploitation of false accounts to attack Islamic teachings was universal. It was hazily echoed in the West. Prejudice over the Holy Qur'an is striking in many English writings.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Qur'ān has been so often and so critically misunderstood in Elizabethan England. Elizabethan writers get to know from travel books how Muslims revere Qur'ān. Therefore, Elizabethan playwrights like Dryden's Oriental plays contain Qur'ānic theology. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the political power of the Turkish Empire continued in declining. Islamic lands became more and more reachable by Europeans. Elizabethan travelers and residents of some Islamic countries made very useful records and observations about Islam. During this era, some scholars treated Islam as an equal match for Christianity. Some Elizabethan writers exploit their own literary interests in the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān is represented as a respected book in Elizabethan literary works. Though the burning of the Qur'ān in Marlowe is a symbol to attack the concept of religion, the representation of the Qur'ān in general remains holy. A critic can easily analyse the Elizabethan tradition of the depiction the Turks and the Turkish Sultans which does not include the Qur'ān in the distortion. On this literary level, throughout all ages, some English authors conclude that Qur'ān contains many teachings of the ancient divine books. However, these teachings are valid to the human life - past and present. For them, Prophet Muhammad has no innovative or original message. Therefore, for non-Muslims, his mission is rejected, and he is a bogus prophet. The anti-Islamic information scarcely expressed against the Prophet and the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, Peter's Latin translation of the Koran played an important role for the next four centuries and was used for an Italian translation in 1557, which in its turn led Sale in 1716 interwove the English mindset up to the recent days. Elizabethan writers portray rebellious blasphemy in a statement of the Turkish Sultan who expresses his fury over his Islamic belief. Their attack on Islam is regarded as a natural attack on the infidel enemy and his theology.

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