

## The *Mi' rāğ* of Muḥammad According to Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667). Sources, Controversy and Christianization of an Islamic Tradition\*

El *mi' rāğ* de Muḥammad según Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667). Fuentes, controversia y cristianización de una tradición islámica

Federico Stella

Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale  
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2868-6556>

### Abstract

The article deals with an unknown Latin version of the *mi' rāğ* the author has discovered in the Archive of the Pontifical Gregorian University within a booklet written by Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667), a Moroccan Muslim prince converted to Christianity who then joined the Society of Jesus. The aim of the article will be to demonstrate how this Latin *mi' rāğ* relied on an Arabic source related to the *ḥadīṭ* literature. As a method for reaching our aim, we will make a comparative study of the sources of which Baldassarre may have had knowledge. We will further show the way Baldassarre tried not only to polemicize with the Islamic tradition, but also the strategies he used for Christianizing it.

**Key words:** Baldassarre Loyola Mandes; *mi' rāğ*; Society of Jesus; Islam; Christianity; *ḥadīṭ*; controversy; Christian Muslim relations; conversion.

### Resumen

El artículo versa sobre una versión latina desconocida del *mi' rāğ* que el autor ha descubierto en el Archivo de la Pontificia Universidad Gregoriana dentro de un opúsculo escrito por Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667), un príncipe musulmán marroquí convertido al cristianismo que luego entró en la Compañía de Jesús. El objetivo del artículo será demostrar cómo este *mi' rāğ* latino se basó en una fuente árabe relacionada con la literatura de *ḥadīṭ*. Como método para alcanzar nuestro objetivo, haremos un estudio comparativo de las fuentes de las que Baldassarre pudo tener conocimiento. Además, mostraremos el modo en que Baldassarre intentó no solo polemizar con la tradición islámica, sino también las estrategias que utilizó para cristianizarla.

**Palabras clave:** Baldassarre Loyola Mandes; *mi' rāğ*; Compañía de Jesús; islam; cristianismo; *ḥadīṭ*; controversia; relaciones cristiano-musulmanas; conversión.

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## Introduction

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how external and internal evidence within this previously unknown early modern Latin narrative of the *mi'rāġ* lead to assume that Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667) — who was able to read and write in Arabic, Latin and Italian — made use of an Arabic source for writing his version of the legend. What we are going to propose and imply in the following pages is a close relation between Baldassarre's version and the four long accounts of the *mi'rāġ* included in al-Buḥārī's collection (mainly by Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a,<sup>1</sup> Anas ibn Mālik,<sup>2</sup> Abū Ḍarr,<sup>3</sup> and a different version of the *ḥadīth* report passed on by Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a<sup>4</sup>) or to what Roberto Tottoli calls *ḥadīth*-oriented literature,<sup>5</sup> rather than to the previous Latin versions which already widely circulated in the West. Furthermore, we will show the way Baldassarre dealt with this Islamic tradition, not only polemizing with it, but also giving a Christian-oriented reading of the story of the ascension of Muḥammad.

## Between the Islamic World and Western Christianity

Islamic religious literature developed an incredibly extensive tradition of legends regarding the night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, the heavenly ascension of Muḥammad and the subsequent vision of the hereafter. Starting out from only a few Qur'ānic verses mainly contained in two suras and other obscure verses,<sup>6</sup> over the centuries Muslim religious culture went on to produce many theological, mystical, poetical and popular works which appeared within the borders of Islamic lands, as well as in European Latin and Vernacular literature. The first and most important Qur'ānic passage

regarding the night journey and the ascension of the Prophet is Q. 17:1:<sup>7</sup>

Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship, to the furthest place of worship, whose surroundings we have blessed, to show him some of Our signs: He alone is the All Hearing, the All Seeing.

Contained in Q. 53:1-18 are further more obscure references, which seem to outline a vision of Paradise:<sup>8</sup>

By the star when it sets! Your companion has not strayed; he is not deluded; he does not speak from his own desire. The Qur'ān is nothing less than a revelation that is sent to him. It was taught to him by [an angel] with mighty powers and great strength, who stood on the highest horizon and then approached — coming down until he was two bow-lengths away or even closer — and revealed to God's servant what He revealed. [The Prophet's] own heart did not distort what he saw. Are you going to dispute with him what he saw “with his own eyes”? A second time he saw him: by the lote tree beyond which none may pass near the Garden of Restfulness, when the tree was covered in nameless [splendour]. His sight never wavered, nor was it too bold, and he saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord.

Both the above suras<sup>9</sup> are the main Qur'ānic sources from which the Islamic exegetical tradition on *isrā'/mi'rāġ* has been developed. According to Colby, the technical Arabic word that meant “night journey” (*isrā'*) also became synonymous for the heavenly ascension.<sup>10</sup> Discerning whether the night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and the heavenly journey are actually the same event or two different events is not easy in early Islamic sources. Sometimes, the journey from Mecca to Jerusalem is called “night journey” (*isrā'*), while the heavenly one is called “ascension” *mi'rāġ*. In other cases, such as in Ibn Ḥiṣām's (d. 833) version of the *Sīra* originally written by Ibn Ishāq (d. 767), the use of both words became similar, if not identical.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, as Tottoli states, the early de-

<sup>1</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Bad' al-Ḥalq*, *Ḍikr al-Malā'ik* (no. 6), no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭawḥīd*, no. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāt*, no. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Al-manāqib al-ansār*, no. 42. From hereafter Malik ibn Ṣa'sa'a, Version 2.

<sup>5</sup> As Tottoli states: “With ‘*ḥadīth*-oriented’ I intend literature that relies mainly on *ḥadīths* (sayings of the Prophet), but also includes reports and statements going back to Companions and Successors, and literature constructed mainly from their literal quotations”. Tottoli, *Muslim Eschatology and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad*, p. 865.

<sup>6</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 13-27. See also Longoni, *Introduzione*, pp. VI-VII.

<sup>7</sup> All the English translations of the Qur'ān are taken from: Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*. See Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>8</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 17-21.

<sup>9</sup> Other obscure references to the Throne of God can be found in Q. 81:15-24. See Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 14; according to Bencheikh, “in the older tradition *isrā'* is often used as synonymous with *mi'rādj*”. Bencheikh, *Mi'rādj*, 1, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 15.

velopment of *mi'rāj* literature is far from being clear, especially as regards the question of how and when Muslim scholars combined the eschatological themes (tour to Paradise and Hell) with the heavenly ascension of Muḥammad. In fact, in early Muslim literature, these two topics were not linked or connected, but they slowly became a sole legend.<sup>12</sup>

The version attributed to Ibn 'Abbās<sup>13</sup> — who was a relative of Muḥammad — was widely circulated and recognized starting from the second half of the eighth century or the first half of the ninth century. Cited by Ṭabarī (d. 923) in his *Tafsīr* — who thus demonstrates that the oral narrative was already in circulation — the first full written evidence of Ibn 'Abbās' version pertains to Ibn Ḥibbān Bustī's (d. 965) critical report — in which he disapproved of the *isnād* and warned Muslims of its unauthenticity — in his lost work quoted by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 1505) in the Mamluk era.<sup>14</sup> Colby has stated that *mi'rāj* literature begun to spread and circulate widely in Eastern lands from the eleventh century onwards and then in the West over the course of the following two centuries. This extensive propagation of the legend was linked to the mysterious name of Abū al-Ḥasān Bakrī (ninth century?), who was either a person or perhaps a group of people.<sup>15</sup> According to Colby, Ibn 'Abbās' narrative circulated extensively due to the texts which were diffused — both written and orally — under the name of Bakrī from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>16</sup>

Five surviving manuscripts are attributed to Bakrī and the oldest of them is kept in Istanbul (last quarter of the thirteenth century).<sup>17</sup> This last manuscript is called *Ḥadīṭ al-Mi'rāj 'ala al-tamām wa-l-kamāl*.<sup>18</sup> Evidences of Bakrī's version can be also traced back to Ibn Sīnā's *Mi'rāj nāme*, written between 1022-1037,<sup>19</sup> as well as to an incomplete Western Andalusian or North African codex (twelfth century), already referred to by Miguel Asín Palacios as Madrid MS. Gayangos 241.<sup>20</sup> Although Colby agrees with Asín Palacios dating of the North African fragment of Bakrī, he believes that this version — despite its incompleteness — appears to share several features in common with the *Liber Scalae Machometi*.<sup>21</sup> However, scholars disagree regarding the date of Ibn 'Abbās' version: according to Guillaume, on the one hand, Ibn 'Abbās' report must have appeared after the tenth century, while, on the other, according to Bencheikh it is an apocryphal work which survived in many versions.<sup>22</sup>

Two further kinds of documents should be mentioned together with Ibn 'Abbās' narrative. On the one hand, Ibn Ishāq's (d. 767) above-mentioned account of *isrā'* and *mi'rāj* recounted in his *Sīra*, which survived in the versions written by Ibn Ḥiṣām — which recounts both the night journey and the heavenly ascension —<sup>23</sup> and in some recently discovered fragments of an older recension written by Yūnus ibn Bukayr (d. 814),<sup>24</sup> which only deals with the journey of the Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem. Within

<sup>12</sup> Tottoli, *Muslim Eschatology and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad*, pp. 858-890. Asín Palacios referred to *isrā'* solely as the night tour Muḥammad undertook through Hell and Paradise with some friends, by way of a mountain or Jerusalem, while according to modern studies the premise of the matter is quite different. According to Longoni, *isrā'* should only be seen or contemplated as the journey Muḥammad made riding the flying creature Burāq from Mecca to Jerusalem. See Asín Palacios, *Dante y el Islam*, pp. 28-36; Longoni, *Introduzione*, p. VII.

<sup>13</sup> On Ibn 'Abbās see Gilliot, "Portrait mythique d'Ibn Abbās".

<sup>14</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 32-35, 42-46, 114-115. For the sources in which Ibn Ḥibbān's quotation is included see Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 246, n.14; see also Longoni, *Introduzione*, p. IX-XI. On Ibn 'Abbās' version see Zilio-Grandi, *Introduzione*, (on al-Suyūfī see pp. XXXVII-XXXVIII).

<sup>15</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 127. According to Bencheikh, Bakrī was a controversial personality who lived in the second half of thirteenth century. Bencheikh, *Mi'rādj*, 2, p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>17</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 145-147.

<sup>18</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 195-234. Bencheikh refers to one of Bakrī's manuscripts with the title of *Kitāb qissa al-mi'rāj*. According to Bencheikh, Bakrī's version is close to that of Ibn 'Abbās. Bencheikh, *Mi'rādj*, 2, p. 100. See Tottoli, *Muslim Eschatology and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad*, pp. 878-880.

<sup>19</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 150-154; Longoni, *Introduzione*, p. XI.

<sup>20</sup> Asín Palacios, *Dante y el Islam*, p. 279; Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 154-156; see Longoni, *Introduzione*, p. XI.

<sup>21</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 154-158.

<sup>22</sup> Guillaume, *Le texte sous le texte*, pp. 39-53, 45; according to Bencheikh, Bakrī's version "has often been regarded as apocryphal". Bencheikh, *Mi'rādj*, 2, p. 100; see the discussion in Tottoli, *Two Kitāb al-mi'rāj*, p. 704.

<sup>23</sup> See the English translation: Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 181-187.

<sup>24</sup> On Yūnus ibn Bukayr's version of the *Sīra* see: Guillaume, *New Light on the Life of Muhammad*; Muranyi, "Ibn Ishāq's *Kitāb al-Mağāzī*".

this older version, even the negotiation between Muḥammad and God regarding the number of daily ritual prayers occurs in Jerusalem and not in the heavens.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the *ḥadīṭ* literature accounts reported in the collections of the traditionists al-Buḥārī (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875)<sup>26</sup> were another means of spreading the legend in the Islamic lands.

The story of the ascension of the Prophet was a well-known legend in Western literature<sup>27</sup> ever since it first appeared at the Castilian court in Spain in the thirteenth century.<sup>28</sup> As Christians believed this work to be an Islamic holy book, it was translated into a Castilian version (which has not survived) by the Jewish doctor Abraham Alfaquim. Then in 1264 it was translated from the Castilian into both Latin (*Liber Scalae Machometi*) and old French (*Livre de l'Eschiele Mahomet*), by Bonaventura da Siena, who was a notary and scribe who worked at the court of Alfonso X of Castile “the Wise”.<sup>29</sup> This old French translation appears to be the oldest testimony of the story in a Western language.<sup>30</sup> As is written at the very end of the book, *Liber Scalae Machometi* mentions Ibn ‘Abbās as a source of the report.<sup>31</sup> Due to it being regarded as an Islamic holy book, *Liber Scalae Machometi* was incorporated into the still surviving texts of *Collectio*

*Toletana* (Vatican and Paris codex<sup>32</sup>) produced by Peter the Venerable and his team of translators and polemicists in the twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, a summary of the *Liber Scalae Machometi* can be found in a Castilian polemic treatise attributed to Saint Pedro Pascual (d. 1300) with the title of *Sobre la seta mahométana*,<sup>34</sup> while a further account of a description of Paradise related to the *Liber Scalae*, including a quotation of the title of the book (*nel libro suo che Scala ha nome*), is reported by Fazio degli Uberti in his *Dittamondo* (1350-1360).<sup>35</sup>

The legend of the ascension of the Prophet also entered into Western literature through different sources other than Ibn ‘Abbās’ report. The *Historia Arabum* by Ximénez de Rada<sup>36</sup> (1170-1247, Archbishop of Toledo) and *Crónica General* (which was started to be written under Alfonso the Wise and completed in 1289)<sup>37</sup> both rely on a version of the legend closer to the *ḥadīṭ*’s narratives. Furthermore, a thirteenth century codex of Uncastillo contains a short account of the ascension at the end of an anti-hagiographic biography of Muḥammad (*Vita Mahometi*).<sup>38</sup>

References to the *mi rāḡ* can be found in the *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, a well-known work written by the Dominican missionary Riccoldo da Montecroce,<sup>39</sup> whose source regarding the ascension of the Prophet is contained in the *Liber Denudationis*.<sup>40</sup> According to Elsheikh, evidence

<sup>25</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad’s Night Journey*, pp. 51-52, 251 (notes).

<sup>26</sup> Asín Palacios categorized al-Buḥārī’s version (as well as Muslim, but we can also consider Ibn Ishāq’s account as a part of this cycle) in what he calls the redaction A of the second cycle (legends on *mi rāḡ*), while he considers Ibn ‘Abbās’ version as an example of redaction B of the second cycle. Asín Palacios, *Dante y el Islam*, pp. 38-50; See also Colby *Narrating Muḥammad’s Night Journey*, pp. 29-49, 81-85.

<sup>27</sup> See Di Cesare, *The Pseudo-Historical Image of the Prophet Muḥammad*.

<sup>28</sup> On the spreading of the legend in the Iberian Peninsula see: Echevarría, “El Mi‘radj en la literatura castellana del siglo XV”; Echevarría, “La reescritura del Libro de la escala de Mahoma”.

<sup>29</sup> Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 11-23; Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche sul Libro della Scala e l’Islam*, pp. 11-18. According to Jacques Monfrin, the Latin version could originate from the French one and not from the Castilian. See. Monfrin, “Les sources arabes de la Divine Comédie”.

<sup>30</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad’s Night Journey*, pp. 156-158. According to Gargan, the oldest Latin version of which we have information is reported in a list of books to be sent to the Studium of Saint Domenico in Bologna in 1313 written up by the Dominican Ugolino. See Gargan, *Dante, la sua biblioteca e lo Studio di Bologna*, p. 50; Pioletti, *Del Libro della Scala e altro*, p. 223

<sup>31</sup> According to the Latin text, Ibn ‘Abbās is called “Abnez”. *Liber Scalae Machometi*, LXXXV, §215, p. 225.

<sup>32</sup> MS Vat – Latin 4072; MS Paris, BNF – Latin 6064; Echevarría, *Liber scalae Machometti*, pp. 425-428. As regards the Vatican Codex, see Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 248-263.

<sup>33</sup> Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, p. 248; Capezzone, “Intorno alla rimozione delle fonti arabe”, p. 528 (note n. 13); Celli, “Gli studi di Enrico Cerulli su Dante”, pp. 44, 51; Pioletti, *Del Libro della Scala e altro*.

<sup>34</sup> Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 264-328. The authorship of this work is still debated among scholars: Tolan, “Pedro Pascual”.

<sup>35</sup> Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 355-357.

<sup>36</sup> Jiménez de Rada, *Historia Arabum*. See Maser, “Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada”; On Ximénez de Rada’s knowledge of Islam see Pick, “What did Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada Know About Islam?”.

<sup>37</sup> *Primera Crónica General de España*, pp. 270-272 (the work is written in Castilian); Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 335-345.

<sup>38</sup> Valcárcel, “La Vita Mahometi del códice 10 de Uncastillo (s.XIII)”, pp. 243-245; Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 331-334.

<sup>39</sup> Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, pp. 122-125.

<sup>40</sup> *Liber denudationis*, pp. 375-383. On Ricoldo: Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs*, pp. 227-231. *Liber Denudationis* is a translation of an Egyptian work from the eleventh century: Bertaina, “The Arabic Version

included in such writings as the codex of Uncastillo, *Historia Arabum, Crónica General, Contra legem Sarracenorum* and a Pisan legend<sup>41</sup> — to which we add the brief summary of the ascension in Alfonso Bonihominis' *Disputatio Abutalib* (fourteenth century)<sup>42</sup> — demonstrate that the *mi'rāj* was not only introduced into Western literature via Ibn 'Abbās' version — to which the *Liber Scalae Machometi* seems to be related — but also by means of other sources, such as Anas ibn Mālik's report which was mainly propagated by *hadīth* literature starting from the Middle Age.<sup>43</sup> Further citations of the *mi'rāj* can also be found in some fifteenth century authors, like Pope Pius II, Alonso de Espina, Juan de Torquemada, Roberto da Lecce,<sup>44</sup> and Roberto Caracciolo, who fashioned a summary — perhaps based on the Latin version of the *Liber Scalae* — contained in his *Specchio della fede*.<sup>45</sup>

The legend of the *mi'rāj* continued to spread throughout Europe in the early modern age. An essential work that deals with the *mi'rāj*, and which we will return to later, was the *Confusión o confutación de la secta mahomética y del Alcorán* (1515) written by the former Muslim jurist converted to Christianity Juan Andrés and then translated into Italian by Domingo de Gaztelu in Seville in 1537.<sup>46</sup> The book was rediscovered by Tirso González de Santalla S.J. in a library in Granada more than a century later,<sup>47</sup> and inspired his *Manuductio ad conversionem Mahumetanorum* (Madrid 1687), which dedicated a section to the story of the conversion of Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. and contained a Latin version of the *mi'rāj* taken from Juan

Andrés.<sup>48</sup> Ten years after the Italian translation undertaken by Domingo de Gaztelu, the Italian version of the *mi'rāj* within the *Confusión* was then revised by Giovanni Battista Castrodardo in *L'Alcorano di Macometto, nel qual si contiene la dottrina, la vita, i costumi e le leggi sue*, edited by Andrea Arrivabene in Venice (1547)<sup>49</sup> and partially based on Theodor Bibliander's printed edition of the *Colletio Toletana (Machumetis Saracenorum principis Eiusque Successorum Vitae, doctrina ac ipse Alcoran*, 1543 and 1550). Bibliander's printed edition contributed to spreading the ascension of Muḥammad in Europe: in fact, it contained Riccoldo's version of the *mi'rāj* following a previous Greek translation of the *Contra legem* which was carried out by Demetrio Cidonio and then translated into Latin by Bartolomeo Piceno da Montearduo<sup>50</sup> (the *Contra legem* was also translated into German by Marthin Luther in 1542).

Finally, Vigliano has recently given an account of another seventeenth century representation of the *mi'rāj* written by the French Christian Cabbalist Blaise de Vigenère in his work called *Vision, ou plustost pipperie controuuée par Mahomet, et ses sectateurs d'un voyage qu'en dormant il fit en Ierusalem, et de là au ciel monté dessus l'Alborach* (1612). According to Vigliano, Juan Andrés' *Confusión*, Antoine Geuffroy's *Briefve description de la cour du Grant Turc* (1546) and its Latin translation (1573) can all be identified as Vigenère's sources.<sup>51</sup>

### Biographical Note and Studies on Baldassarre

Muley Muḥammad al-Tāzī — the original Arabic name of Baldassarre Loyola Mandes S.J. (1631-1667)<sup>52</sup> — was a Moroccan Muslim prince, the son of the ruler of Fez 'Abd al-Wāḥid. He was born in an age of political disorder and therefore tracing his royal lineage is not an easy

of the *Liber Denudationis*".

<sup>41</sup> Mancini, "Per lo studio della leggenda di Maometto in Occidente".

<sup>42</sup> Alfonso Bonihominis, *Disputatio Abutalib*, pp. 139-141.

<sup>43</sup> Elsheikh, "Lettura (faziola) dell'episodio di Muhammad: Inferno XXVIII".

<sup>44</sup> McMichael, "The Night Journey (*al-isrā*) and Ascent (*al-mi'rāj*)"; Longoni, *Introduzione*, pp. XLIII-XLIV.

<sup>45</sup> Cerulli, *Il "Libro della scala"*, pp. 360-366; Tommasino, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>46</sup> On Juan Andrés style of controversy see: Starczewska, "No es esto sino hystorias de los antiguos"; on the reception of his writing between the sixteenth and the end of the eighteenth centuries see: Szpiech, "Preaching Paul to the Moriscos", pp. 336-338.

<sup>47</sup> García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, pp. 117-119; Colombo, "La Compagnia di Gesù e l'evangelizzazione dei Musulmani nella Spagna del Seicento", pp. 208-211. On the work of Tirso González also see: Colombo, *Convertire i musulmani*; Colombo, "Even among Turks"; Vázquez Ruiz, "Una aproximación al *Manuductio*".

<sup>48</sup> Colombo, *Convertire i musulmani*, pp. 101-119. See also Colombo, "La setta malvagia dell'Alcorano", pp. 471-472. Tirso González de Santalla S.J., *Manuductio*, II, pp. 53-58 (on Baldassarre), 276-278 (on the *mi'rāj*). Guillaume Postel also reports a version of the *mi'rāj* based on Juan Andrés in *De orbis terrae condordia* (1544). See Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche sul Libro della scala*, pp. 202-205.

<sup>49</sup> Tommasino, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, pp. 161-188.

<sup>50</sup> See Miller, "Theodor Bibliander's Machumetis Saracenorum Principis"; Balserak, "The Renaissance Impulses that drove Theodor Bibliander to Publish Machumetis Saracenorum"; Gordon, "Machumetis Saracenorum Principis".

<sup>51</sup> Vigliano, "Blaise de Vigenère et les traductions du mirāj".

<sup>52</sup> In the sources, the name is not always spelt in the same way. It can be read: Baldassarre, Balthasar, Baldassare, Balthazar, Mandes, Mendes, Mandez, etc.

task.<sup>53</sup> In fact, there is disagreement among scholars regarding his regal origin. On the one hand, according to de Castries, Baldassarre belonged to a family related to the *Zāwiya* of Dilā', a Sufi brotherhood which increased its political power after the death of Aḥmad al-Mansūr and the subsequent instability.<sup>54</sup> On the other, Goldáraz stated that the reports regarding Baldassarre regal lineage were most likely true and, more recently, Colombo has suggested that Baldassarre belonged to the Sa'di dynasty, and was probably the great-grandson of Aḥmad al-Mansūr.<sup>55</sup> In disagreement with the preceding statements, Matar stated that Baldassarre had no regal origin.<sup>56</sup>

Returning to Baldassarre's life, he was captured by the Knights of Saint John in 1651 while he was travelling on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Imprisoned in Malta, he became a well-known preacher among the Muslim slaves, as well as a copyist and writer of Islamic books. Despite this intense activity as an anti-Christian preacher, Baldassarre was afflicted by visions and dreams that caused him torment and doubts regarding his faith. In particular, he had an unusual vision of a personification of the Holy Baptism in the middle of the sea, which finally led him to convert to Christianity right after his ransom was paid after five years of imprisonment.<sup>57</sup> He became a Christian in 1656, joined the Society of Jesus as a novitiate at Sant'Andrea al Quirinale in 1661, then became a priest in 1663 and finally spent the last few years of his life (1664-1667) trying to convert Muslims in Italian port cities like Naples and Genoa.<sup>58</sup> He died in Madrid on September 15 1667, shortly before travelling to India on a

mission. After his death, Baldassarre became renowned, with his story featuring in several Jesuit literary writings, and in 1669, the dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca wrote a sacred drama about his story called *El Gran Principe de Fez*.<sup>59</sup> The story of Baldassarre had been long forgotten since the eighteenth century, up until the twentieth century when Louis Lebessou, Włodimir Ledóchowski, and Louis Pouzet all mentioned it in their works.<sup>60</sup> However, until Colombo's latest studies, Goldáraz's work has been the only one to take the sources held at the Archive of Pontifical Gregorian University (APUG) into account.

### Text and Structure

The Latin version of the *mi'rāğ* Baldassarre wrote is found in a booklet (APUG, Ms. 1060-04) kept in the Archives of the Pontifical Gregorian University.<sup>61</sup> Specifically, the Latin *mi'rāğ* is located in the first part of the booklet (pp. 1-44), which consists of a discourse against Islam called *Oratio contra Mahomettem et eius sectatores*. The discourse begins with a brief introduction (pp. 1-2), after which Baldassarre sets out the tripartite scheme of his work (p. 3): 1) *Falsitas Mahomettanae legis* (pp. 3-19); 2) *in tenebris vita sequacium illius* (pp. 19-36); 3) *Lex Christi sola unicum medium ad salutem* (pp. 36-44). The *mi'rāğ* covers six pages (those between pages 8 and 13) in the first part of the oration, namely the section regarding the falsehood of Muḥammad's law. As can be read at the very beginning of the discourse, it was written by Baldassarre in 1665. The Latin text of the *mi'rāğ* is the following:

<sup>53</sup> Colombo, "A Muslim Turned Jesuit", pp. 479-486.

<sup>54</sup> De Castries, *Les sources inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc*, pp. 203-240; De Castries, "Trois Princes Marocains Convertis au Christianisme", pp. 151-154; Bono, "Conversioni di musulmani al cristianesimo", p. 440; Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity through Arab Eyes*, p. 163. On Aḥmad al-Mansur see: García-Arenal, *Aḥmad al-Mansur*.

<sup>55</sup> Goldáraz, *Baltasar Loyola Mandes, S.I.*, pp. 19-59; Colombo, "Baldassarre Loyola de Mandes (1631-1667), prince de Fez et jésuite", pp. 165-166.

<sup>56</sup> Matar, *Mediterranean Captivity through Arab Eyes*, p. 178.

<sup>57</sup> For the vision of the Holy Baptism see: Archivio della Pontificia Università Georgiana (hereafter APUG), Ms. 1060-02, ff. 24v-25v. On North African princes converted to Christianity in Europe see: Alonso Acero, *Sultanes de Berberia en tierras de la cristiandad*.

<sup>58</sup> For an example of Baldassarre's zeal see one of the few complete letters published, sent to Daniello Bartoli S.J. in March 1665: *Del P. Baldassarre Loyola Mandes Molto Rev. do in Cristo Padre*, pp. 152-154.

<sup>59</sup> Rodríguez-Gallego, "Príncipes musulmanes conversos sobre las tablas"; Colombo, "Conversioni religiose in Calderón de la Barca: *El gran principe de Fez* (1669)".

<sup>60</sup> The brief account of Baldassarre's life mainly follows the following article: Colombo, "A Muslim Turned Jesuit", pp. 479-486; see also: Colombo, "Baldassarre Loyola de Mandes (1631-1667), prince de Fez et jésuite"; Freller, "Osman and Muhammad el-Attaz", pp. 26-31; Lebessou, "Le seconde vie d'un sultan du Maroc"; Ledóchowski, "De Mahometanorum conversione rite paranda et promovenda"; Pouzet, "Motivations et contributions des Jésuites dans les études islamiques". For a general overview of the relationship between Mediterranean Barbary corsairs, slavery, and conversion from Islam to Christianity see: Bono, "Conversioni di musulmani al cristianesimo".

<sup>61</sup> The booklet also contains a copy of the theological correspondence with Qur'ānic translations into Italian between Baldassarre and Muḥammad Bulğayth al-Darawī. The aim of our research will be to publish a critical edition of the discourse and the letters (in both versions: within the correspondence and booklet) with a preliminary essay in which we will explain how Baldassarre dealt with the Qur'ān and the development of the personal, intellectual and religious relationship between him and Bulğayth.

[8]

Attamen ut clarius ostendatur praedicta falsitas, non desunt profecto quamplurima similia mendacia, et quidem maiora, quae cum omnibus sit notum esse innumerabilia, ideo aliqua solum obiter tangam, ut lectores huius orationis de illis manifestè certiores faciam. Ecce igitur dicit falsissimus ille pessimusque Propheta, quod cum adhuc esset in terris, ad eum descendit de caelis civis Angelicus equitans supra mulum, et cum eo erat asinus luce confectus, ut posset instar fulguris corruscantis Mahomettem supra ipsum in caelos trahere; antequam verò hoc fieret, ille Angelus habens prae manibus [9] poculum aureum Dei gratia plenum, statim cor Mahomettis accepit, et, purgavit, demum iterum atque iterum in eum induxit gratiam, quam ferebat in vase; hoc facto ambo coeperunt ad primum caelum ascendere, ubi statim ostia caeli aperta sunt: tunc habitatores caelestes Angelum interrogaverunt, quis esset? Respondit, se esse Gabrieli deinde quis esset illes socius, qui secum erat? respondit esse Mahomettem; et statim omnes caelestes in eo primo caelo exclamaverunt, salve Mahomettes; ò felicem adventum! deindè ingressi ambo invenerunt Patrem Adam, qui occurrit eis. Post mutuas salutationes, et notitiam Adami traditam [10] Mahometti, dixit ille, salve o filij Sancte, et Propheta magne. Hoc facto evolaverunt ad secundum caelum, ubi facta interrogatione reddita responsione, et habita salutatione sicut in primo caelo factum est ipsis obviam venit Jesus Christus, et Joannes Baptista; et illico gaudentes dixerunt, salve noster frater, et Propheta Sancte. In tertio caelo inventus est Joseph castus; in quarto Elias; in quinto Aaron; in sexto Moises; in septimo Abraham: et in singulis caelis evenit totum id, quod contigerat in primo; ò quàm gravia sunt haec mendacia! tot sunt, quot verba: supersunt verò solemniora. Secutus igitur hic pessimus vir iter suum cum eodem spiritu caelesti intravit in quandam terram fluentem lacte, et melle, ubi exundabant quattuor flumina, manantia melle, lacte, vino, et aqua purissima. Tunc Mahomettes pro [11] se, atque suis sequacibus elegit illud lactis flumen: cui socius statim dixit, optimam parte elegisti, quia hòc flumen sic candidum est symbolum tuum, sectatorumque fidei tuorum: tunc deliberavit fundamenta suae legis plantare, nempè ut sicut à Deo praeceptum fuerat, quinquagies in die sequaces procumbentes Deum adorarent. Sed cum redijisset ad Moysen ab eo interrogatus circa numerum praedictum orationis, eo suadente, ad Deum confugit, ut illud onus sequacibus precum minuerat: id factum, et decem ablatis ad Moysen iterum regressus ab illo intellexit humanam fragilitatem laturam aegrè illud pondus, addita oratione, quia Moysen ipsum ita experientia docuerat.

[12]

Regressus quater ad Deum ita semper ut dictum est consulente Moise, qualibet vice minutis decem decretus demum est numerus quinque in die orationum. Relinquo alia quam plurima mendacia similia his, quae iam praedicta sunt, quia si mihi placeret, ac tempus permetteret sequi mendaciorum Mahomettis narrationem, finem nunquam invenirem. Attamen praetermitto quod alij cogitent quanta, et quam manifesta sint omnibus, non tantum ista, sed etiam reliqua, quae superessent commemoranda; sic volui solum supra dictam narrationem falsitatis instituere, quamvis aliquantulo longiorem, ut inde perspicuè omnibus fundamenta Mahomettanae legis falsissima apparent; ex quibus argumentari possunt omnes [13] quàm fragilis esse Mahomettis debeat tota aedificatio, dum ipsius fundamenta sunt adeò infirma.<sup>62</sup>

The text can be divided into the following core themes:

- 1) The epiphany of the Angel who is riding *al-Burāq* to Muḥammad, the purification of his heart, and the beginning of the ascension (pp. 8-9).
- 2) The seven heavens where Muḥammad meets the prophets and the rivers of Paradise (pp. 9-10).
- 3) The “river test”, the foundation of Islamic law through the negotiation with God (and Moses’ suggestions) concerning the number of daily ritual prayers, and final remarks (pp. 10-13).

The story of the ascension is interspersed with several of Baldassarre’s polemical comments.

## Sources and Content

An initial and crucial clue regarding the sources of this version of the *mi'rāj* is provided by Baldassarre himself in a letter he sent from Genoa to his spiritual director Domenico Brunacci S.J. in Rome dated June 26th, 1664 (hence before the oration was written). The text of the letter that most interests us here is the following:

Intorno poi il libro che Vostra Reverenza mi ha mandato scritto in arabico lo ho consegnato al Padre finché haverò per mezzo di Vostra Reverenza la licenza della quale mi ha detto il medesimo Padre che quella

<sup>62</sup> See the transcription of the complete oration undertaken by the author of the present article on the web-platform of the Archive of the Pontifical Gregorian University: <[https://gate.unigre.it/mediawiki/index.php/Balthasar\\_Loyola\\_Mandes\\_Collection](https://gate.unigre.it/mediawiki/index.php/Balthasar_Loyola_Mandes_Collection)>

del Maestro di Sacro Palazzo no serve qui in Genova perché ce vuole quella della congregazione diretta. Il titolo del libro è questo *Hadit almehrag* cioè la storia dell'andata di Mahometto al cielo in vita. E l'autore di esso libro non stà ivi scritto il suo nome ma andava descrivendo tal storia per discendentia, che uno ha sentito tal cosa dall'altro sino all'ultimo il quale dice che l'habbia sentita raccontar dal medesimo Mahometto. Si che il libro si chiama *Hadit almehrag* et il suo trattato è cose dette da Mahometto, dicendo certe favole havute in vita. Vostra Reverenza mi faccia gratia di prender la licenza che si deve havere per leggerlo, et tenerlo perchè mi serve molto intorno la salute di questi ciechi turchi.<sup>63</sup>

After two quick reminders Baldassarre sent to Brunacci on August 28th,<sup>64</sup> and September 21st,<sup>65</sup> Baldassarre finally got the Arabic book on October 12th, 1664: *Rendo gratie infinite à Vostra Reverenza della licenza, che procurò per me di leggere quel libro arabico, e l'Alcorano.*<sup>66</sup>

In the first astonishing source quoted, Baldassarre is asking Brunacci to approve the reading of an Arabic book called *Hadit almehrag*<sup>67</sup> that according to modern transliteration is *Hadīṭ al-mi'rāġ*. Moreover, the second sentence of this request provides additional information regarding the nature of the book: on the one hand, Baldassarre reports that the author of the book is anonymous (*E l'autore di esso libro non stà ivi scritto il suo nome*). On the other, when he asserts that the sources of the unknown author can be traced back to Muḥammad as the first relater of the story (*ma andava descrivendo tal storia per*

*discendentia, che uno ha sentito tal cosa dall'altro sino all'ultimo il quale dice che l'habbia sentita raccontar dal medesimo Mahometto*), he makes an implicit reference to the *isnād*, the chain of transmitters from the Prophet which validates the probity of each *ḥadīṭ*. Furthermore, the reference to *isnād* (*discendentia*) is conclusive proof that the book Baldassarre was asking for is an Arabic one: *Liber Scalae Machometti* (with the exception of the reference to Ibn 'Abbās at the very end of the text) and other Western *mi'rāġ* literature make no reference to the chain of the transmitters, even when they are related to Anas ibn Mālik's report and *ḥadīṭ* literature (*Historia Arabum, Crónica General, Contra legem Sarracenorum*, etc.). In addition, in the letter dated September, he is also informing Brunacci that it is of great importance for him to obtain this Arabic book.

As regards the internal evidence, Baldassarre's narrative begins with an angel (*civis angelicus*, later introduced as Gabriel) who is descending from heaven riding a mule and followed by a donkey, with the aim of making Muḥammad able to shoot lightning. According to al-Buḥārī's reports, the creature outlined is indubitably *al-Burāq* — smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey — which Baldassarre represents as two different animals: a mule, which Muḥammad is riding, and a donkey, which is following them. Then, Baldassarre describes the purification of Muḥammad's heart.<sup>68</sup> It differs from ibn Ḥiṣām's recension of ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* and ibn 'Abbās who do not report this event,<sup>69</sup> as Baldassarre relates the purification of Muḥammad's heart as taking place just before the ascent to the first heaven, while the prophet was dozing. This scene can be found in all four al-Buḥārī's long accounts, even though here Baldassarre's version seems closer to those of Abū Ḍarr and Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a who do not refer — unlike Anas ibn Mālik and Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a, Version 2 — to the night journey. However, the manner in which Baldassarre out-

<sup>63</sup> APUG, Ms. 1060-01, f. 232r-v.

<sup>64</sup> “Sto aspettando da Vostra Reverenza la licenza per poter leggere quel libro, che mi ha mandato, come anco quello che manca de'scritti particolarmente, quella spiegatione del Paradiso” APUG, Ms. 1060-01, f. 134r-v. Perhaps, in this letter Baldassarre was also asking for a writing in which he depicted and drew his vision of Paradise reported here: APUG, Ms. 1060-03, ff. 16-21. See Colombo, “Baldassarre Loyola de Mandes (1631-1667), prince de Fez et jésuite”, p. 187.

<sup>65</sup> “Vostra Reverenza si ricordi della licenza del libro arabico perché ne ho molto bisogno”. APUG, Ms. 1060-01, f. 219r-v.

<sup>66</sup> APUG, Ms. 1060-01, f. 47r-v. Many thanks to Lorenzo Mancini for helping me in finding this letter.

<sup>67</sup> Bakrī's *Hadīṭ al-Mi'rāġ 'ala al-tamām wa-l-kamāl* could be compared to Baldassarre's story for two reasons: on the one hand, because Baldassarre was asking for a book with the same title (*Hadit almehrag*) and, on the other, because Bakrī's version — as scholars have stated — was one of the sources of *Liber Scalae Machometi* (*Halmahereig* as it is called in *Liber Scalae Machometi*, LXXXV, §215, p. 225) as well as of many Islamic traditions. Nevertheless, several textual indications suggest that Baldassarre's version is not directly related to Bakrī's, or to a previous Latin version of the story. See Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 156-158.

<sup>68</sup> The Qur'ānic reference to the purification of the heart of Muḥammad is in Q. 94:1: *alam naṣraḥ laka ṣadrak* (“Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet]”). On the tradition of the cutting open of Muḥammad's breast and the purification of his heart, which early Muslims sometimes traced back to his childhood, not to the ascension, see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, pp. 59-75. For a study on how the purification of the heart has been interpreted by Giovanni Battista Castrodardo (translator of *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, 1547) and by his sources, namely Juan Andrés and his translator into Italian Domingo de Gaztelu see: Tommasino, *L'Alcorano di Macometto*, pp. 164-173. See also Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche sul Libro della scala*, pp. 277-279.

<sup>69</sup> Zilio-Grandi, *Introduzione*, p. XXXVI.



lines how the angel purified Muḥammad's heart is slightly different from the *ḥadīṭ*'s reports: while in al-Buḥārī's version, Gabriel brought Muḥammad a golden tray full of wisdom (*ḥikma*) and faith (*imān*) and then cut his body to purify his heart, Baldassarre does not make any reference to the body-cutting scene, but refers only to a golden tray full of God's grace by means of which the angel purified his heart (*ille Angelus habens prae manibus poculum aureum Dei gratia plenum, statim cor Mahomettis accepit, et, purgavit*).

The reason why a Western text could not have been a source becomes clear when we compare some of the events and sentences of Baldassarre's version with other Western versions of the *mi'rāj*. The first event is the question Gabriel and Muḥammad are asked upon reaching the first heaven. After they reply to the questions at the gate to the first heaven, they are admitted through the gate of Paradise in the versions of the story according to *Liber Scalae Machometi*, Juan Andrés' *Confusión*, and Baldassarre. According to both the *Confusión* and Baldassarre, but not to *Liber Scalae Machometi*, Gabriel and Muḥammad also meet Adam just after the admission into the first heaven, as shown in Table n. 1:

The events narrated in the table immediately reveal the following differences: those who ask Gabriel and Muḥammad to disclose their identity are respectively: an angel (*angelus*, according to *Liber Scalae*), a gate-keeper (*el portero*, according to Juan Andrés) and the heavenly citizens (*habitatores caelestes*, according to Baldassarre).<sup>73</sup> The sentence *habitatores caelestes* can be easily identified as a translation from the Arabic *ahl al-samā'* (the people of the heaven who ask Muḥammad and Gabriel to disclose their identity) which can be found in Anas ibn Mālik's account. Then, after the greetings, in both Juan Andrés and Baldassarre's accounts, Adam appears on the scene as the prophet of the first heaven, while after entering the first heaven, *Liber Scalae Machometi* presents additional angels, creatures and eschatological symbols before the moment when Gabriel and Muḥammad meet John the Baptist and Jesus.<sup>74</sup>

The sequence of the prophets whom Gabriel and Muḥammad met in their way through the seven heavens lead us to further evidence.<sup>75</sup> In Table n.2 Baldassarre's order has been compared with the prophets' order included in a wider range of versions:

Table n.1

<i>Liber Scalae Machometi</i> <sup>70</sup>	Juan Andrés, <i>Confusión</i> <sup>71</sup>	Baldassarre, <i>Oratio</i> <sup>72</sup>
[25] Tunc vero Gabriel venit ad unam portarum ut intraret et cum vellet hoc facere quidam angelus dixit ei: «Gabriel, quid vis et quis tecum est». Ipse quoque respondit: «Mecum est Machometus, prophetarum sigillum omnium et cunctorum dominus nunciorum, et volumes ibi intus intrare». Hoc autem dicto, mox nobis porte aperte sunt et intravimus. [26] Et cum introissemus omnes angeli qui errant ibi salutaverunt me et dixerunt michi valde bona nova de quibus non modicum sum gavisus.	Tocó el ángel Grabiél a la puerta del cielo y dixo el portero quién era, y dixo: “Yo soy el ángel Grabiél y comigo Mahoma, propheta y amigo de Dios”. Y así como oyó el portero el nombre de Mahoma, luego abrió la puerta del primero ciclo y entraron y fallaron un hombre viejo y muy cano, el qual viejo era Adam. Y luego vino Adam y abraço a Mahoma y dio gracias a Dios porque le havia dado tal fijo y encomendóse Adam a Mahoma.	Tunc habitatores caelestes Angelum interrogaverunt, quis esset respondit, se esse Gabrieli deinde quis esset illes socius, qui secum erat? respondit esse Mahomettem; et statim omnes caelestes in eo primo caelo exclamaverunt, salve Mahomettes; o felicem adventum! Deindè ingressi ambo invenerunt Patrem Adam, qui occurrit eis. Post mutuas salutationes, et notitiam Adami traditam [10] Mahometti, dixit ille, salve o filij Sancte, et Propheta magne

<sup>73</sup> According to Tottoli, the Islamic versions also differ regarding the nature of those who ask the question: a guardian (*ḥāzin*) of Paradise, the angel Riḍwān and an unknown voice. Tottoli, *Muslim Eschatology and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad*, pp. 878-879.

<sup>74</sup> Longoni, *Introduzione*, p. XII; Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 7-14.

<sup>75</sup> For further information regarding prophets and prophethood within the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition see: Bell, “Muhammad and Previous Messengers”; Tottoli, *I profeti biblici nella tradizione islamica*; Rubin, *Prophets and Prophethood*.

<sup>70</sup> *Liber Scalae Machometi*, XII, §25, pp. 60-61.

<sup>71</sup> Juan Andrés, *Confusión*, VIII, p. 177.

<sup>72</sup> APUG, Ms. 1060-04, pp. 9-10.

Table n.2

<i>Liber Scalae Machometi</i> <sup>76</sup>	Ximénez de Rada, <i>Historia Arabum and Crónica General</i> <sup>77</sup>	Alfonso Bonihominis, <i>Disputatio Abutalib</i> <sup>78</sup>
John son of Zacharia and Jesus son of Mary	Adam	Adam
Joseph son of Jacob	Jesus son of Mary and John son of Zacharia	Jesus son of Mary (later in the text called as the Christ) and John the Baptist
Enoch and Elias	Joseph son of Jacob the Patriarch	Joseph son of Jacob
Aaron	Aaron ( <i>Aroho</i> in <i>Crónica General</i> ) and Idrīs <sup>79</sup>	<i>Aarcho</i> and Idrīs
Moses	Aaron son of Abraham (Aaron son of <i>Amram</i> in <i>Crónica General</i> )	Aaron brother of Moses
Abraham	Moses	Moses
Adam <i>pater noster</i>	Abraham	Abraham
Ibn ‘Abbās’ Primitive Version <sup>80</sup> (before 965)	Ibn Hišām (Ibn Ishāq), <i>Sīra</i> <sup>81</sup>	Bakrī, <i>Ḥadīṭ al-mi ‘rāğ</i> <sup>82</sup>
Jesus	<i>Abūnā</i> Adam	Noah
/	Jesus son of Mary and John son of Zechariah	John son of Zechariah and Jesus son of Mary
/	Joseph son of Jacob	David and Salomon
Idrīs	Idrīs	Moses
Aaron	Aaron son of ‘Imrān	Idrīs
Moses	Moses son ‘Imrān	Hūd
Adam, Noah and Abraham	Abraham	Adam
Juan Andrés, <i>Confusión</i> <sup>83</sup>	Al-Buḥārī (Mālik ibn Ṣa‘ṣa‘a), <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> <sup>84</sup>	Baldassarre, <i>Oratio</i> <sup>85</sup>
Adam	Adam	Father ( <i>Patrem</i> ) Adam
Noah	Jesus and John	Jesus Christ ( <i>Christus</i> ) and John the Baptist ( <i>Baptista</i> )
Abraham	Joseph	Joseph the caste ( <i>castus</i> )
Joseph son of Jacob	Idrīs	Elias
Moses	Aaron	Aaron
John the Baptist	Moses	Moses
Jesus Christ	Abraham	Abraham

<sup>76</sup> *Liber Scalae Machometi*, XII-XVIII, §25-46, pp. 60-79.

<sup>77</sup> Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 338-342.

<sup>78</sup> Alfonso Bonihominis, *Disputatio Abutalib*, pp. 140-141. Alfonso calls John Hyahyda (clearly a transliteration from the Arabic Yaḥya) and then says that the Christians refer to him as *Iohannem babtistam*.

<sup>79</sup> Perhaps, since Muḥammad meets Aaron again in the fifth heaven, his presence in both heavens is a mistake on the part of Ximénez de Rada. The same mistake also transpires in *Crónica General*, which has the *Historia Arabum* as its source and in *Disputatio Abutalib*. Cerulli, *Il “Libro della scala”*, pp. 340-342.

<sup>80</sup> See the table and the translation in Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad’s Night Journey*, pp. 138-140, 175-193. Colby correctly stresses that the primitive version of Ibn ‘Abbās is mainly focused on angels rather than prophets. See Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad’s Night Journey*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>81</sup> Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>82</sup> Table and translation in Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad’s Night Journey*, pp. 138-140, 195-234.

<sup>83</sup> Juan Andrés, *Confusión*, VIII, pp. 177-180. On Juan Andrés’ version of the *mi ‘rāğ* see: Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche sul Libro della scala*, pp. 121-167.

<sup>84</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Bad’ al-Ḥalq*, *Ḍikr al-Malā’ik* (no. 6), no. 1.

<sup>85</sup> APUG, Ms. 1060-04, pp. 9-10.

According to Table n.2, a clear substantiation of the relationship of Baldassarre's narrative with the *ḥadīṭ* is the order in which Gabriel and Muḥammad met the Prophets, the same found in Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a's report and the *Sīra* — the “standard order”, according to Colby<sup>86</sup> — while in *Liber Scalae Machometi* Adam is the last prophet and John the Baptist is mentioned before Jesus, even though in this text they are in the first heaven. There follows a second negative indication: Baldassarre does not make any references to Hell's punishment, just as the early *ḥadīṭ* accounts did not: for example, al-Buḥārī's accounts of the *mi'rāğ* attributed to Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a and Anas ibn Mālik.<sup>87</sup> Finally, as a third confirmation we have to look at the content: in some passages Baldassarre appears to translate the *ḥadīṭ* attributed to Anas ibn Mālik quite literally from Arabic into Latin. Let us consider the passages when Gabriel and Muḥammad are going to enter the first and then proceed to the second heaven:

Gabriel, the already mentioned *ahl al-samā' / habitatores caelestes*, Adam as the father, the titles that Adam, Jesus and John gave to Muḥammad (the former called him *son* while the others refer to him as *brother* and *prophet* and Baldassarre simply adds the adjective *Sancte* to the second title) are practically the same in both Anas ibn Mālik and Baldassarre. At the same time, Baldassarre seems to carry out a de-islamization of the narrative. He only refers to Muḥammad as a prophet once, omitting the question the heavenly citizens ask Gabriel about Muḥammad: “Has he been called?” (*bu'ṭa waqad*).<sup>89</sup>

After the meeting with the prophets, Muḥammad arrived near the rivers of Paradise. The Qur'ānic description of Paradise portrayed as a place crossed by four rivers made of honey, milk, wine, and water (*melle, lacte, vino, et aqua*)<sup>90</sup> is a setting that can also be found in al-Buḥārī's reports. On the

Table n.3

Al-Buḥārī (Anas ibn Mālik), <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> <sup>88</sup>	Baldassarre, <i>Oratio</i>
<p>ثُمَّ أَطْبَقَهُ ثُمَّ عَرَجَ بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا فَضَرَبَ بَابًا مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا فَنَادَاهُ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ مَنْ هَذَا فَقَالَ جِبْرِيلُ. قَالُوا وَمَنْ مَعَكَ قَالَ مَعِيَ مُحَمَّدٌ. قَالَ وَقَدْ بُعِثَ قَالَ نَعَمْ. قَالُوا فَمَرْحَبًا بِهِ وَأَهْلًا. فَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَ بِهِ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ، لَا يَعْلَمُ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِهِ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَتَّى يُعَلِّمَهُمْ، فَوَجَدَ فِي السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا آدَمَ فَقَالَ لَهُ جِبْرِيلُ هَذَا أَبُوكَ فَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِ. فَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ وَرَدَّ عَلَيْهِ آدَمَ وَقَالَ مَرْحَبًا وَأَهْلًا بِأَبْنِي، نِعْمَ الْإِبْنُ أَنْتَ.</p>	<p>hoc facto ambo coeperunt ad primum caelum ascendere, ubi statim ostia caeli aperta sunt: tunc habitatores caelestes Angelum interrogaverunt, quis esset? Respondit, se esse Gabrieli deinde quis esset illes socius, qui secum erat? respondit esse Mahomettem; et statim omnes caelestes in eo primo caelo exclamaverunt, salve Mahomettes; ò felicem adventum! deinde ingressi ambo invenerunt Patrem Adam, qui occurrit eis. Post mutuas salutationes, et notitiam Adami traditam [10] Mahometti, dixit ille, salve o filij Sancte, et Propheta magne. Hoc facto evolaverunt ad secundum caelum, ubi facta interrogatione reddita responsione, et habita salutatione sicut in primo caelo factum est ipsis obviam venit Jesus Christus, et Joannes Baptista</p>

Thanks to this comparison, we can clearly see how some passages of the Latin version undertaken by Baldassarre seem to be a translation of a text related to the *ḥadīṭ* attributed to Anas ibn Mālik. Passages and sentences, such as the questions put to

one hand, Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a and Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a, Version 2 simply state that the four rivers have their sources in *Sidrat al-Muntahā* (the Lotus tree in Paradise): two of them are hidden and located in Paradise, while the other two are visible and are the Nile and Euphrates.<sup>91</sup> On the other, Anas ibn Mālik refers to three rivers situated between the first and

<sup>86</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>87</sup> Tottoli, “Tours of Hell and Punishments of Sinners in *Mi'rāj* Narratives”, p. 12.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṭawḥīd*, no. 37. See the online Arabic text (with English translation) from which we have quoted the passage: <<https://sunnah.com/bukhari/97/142>>; also see Abū Darī's report with reference to the lotus tree (*Sidra al-Muntahā*) in al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṣalāt*, no. 1.

<sup>89</sup> See Q. 62:2: “It is He who raised (*ba'ata*) a messenger, among the people who had no Scripture”.

<sup>90</sup> Q. 47:15; Tottoli, “Muslim Eschatology and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad”, p. 866.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Bad' al-Ḥalq, Dīkr al-Malā'ik* (no. 6), no. 1; al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Al-manāqib al-ansār*, no. 42.

the second heavens; the third of these is called *al-Kawṭar* (Abundance).<sup>92</sup>

Once he arrived near the rivers of Paradise, according to Baldassarre's narrative, Muḥammad chose the river of milk as a symbol of himself and of the pure faith of his followers; this passage could be either an echo or a misunderstanding of what Colby calls the "cup test". According to Colby:

[...] references to a scene in which Muḥammad is tested by being offered different cups of liquid, and the drink he chooses carries with it ultimate consequences for the fate of the Muslim community. This scene, which I will refer to as the "cup test," becomes a standard feature of most extended night journey and ascension narratives, even though its origin remains obscure<sup>93</sup>

The "cup test" is outlined in many *mi'rāğ* narratives, like *Liber Scalae Machometi*, *Historia Arabum*, *Crónica General*, Bakrī's *Ḥadīṭ al-mi'rāğ*, Ibn Ishāq's account as it is reported in Ibn Bukayr's fragment,<sup>94</sup> Ibn Hišām version of Ibn Ishāq and others, albeit in different ways: according to the *Liber Scalae Machometi*, Muḥammad took this "cup test" near the very end of his journey through Paradise. There are four cups, and he chooses to drink from three of them (milk, honey, and water), but not from the one containing wine. Bakrī's version, both versions of the *Sīra* — Ibn Hišām refers to three vessels containing milk, wine and water<sup>95</sup> — *Historia Arabum*, *Crónica General*, and further narratives state that the event takes place in Jerusalem and Muḥammad only drinks from the cup of milk.<sup>96</sup> Despite the similarity between Bakrī, the *Sīra*, the two Medieval Iberian versions, and Baldassarre, the significance of the choice is quite different. Bakrī professes that in making his choice Muḥammad was guided by a voice, and that the cup of milk is related to punishment in Hell. In fact, according to Bakrī, Muḥammad did not drink all the milk, and thus a part of his community will be destined to Hell. On the contrary, according to Ibn Hišām's ac-

count of the *Sīra*, *Historia Arabum*, and *Crónica General* the cup of milk is a sign of the right path Muḥammad and his followers will keep. This last interpretation is also followed by Baldassarre himself, according to whom, Muḥammad intentionally chooses the river of milk as a symbol of the purity of his community.

Baldassarre's "river test" sounds similar to Malik ibn Ṣa'sa'a, Version 2,<sup>97</sup> which is Buḥārī's only long report narrating the "cup test": like in the *Oratio*, according to Malik ibn Ṣa'sa'a, Version 2, Muḥammad chooses the milk (the cup) making his choice without any sign or external voice to lead him or help him decide, near the end of the journey. This choice represents the nature (*fiṭra*) of the community (*umma*) he is going to establish: *fa-qāla hiya l-fiṭra anta 'alayhā ummatuka*. The outcome of this choice appears to be similar to that in Baldassarre's narrative, where Muḥammad establishes his law, right after having chosen the river of milk. However, despite some shared aspects with other narratives, to our knowledge, the origin of the change from cups to rivers — from a "cup test" to a "river test" — is unknown, but despite this is most interesting.

Finally, having established his law, Baldassarre ends his account of the *mi'rāğ* with Muḥammad's negotiation regarding the number of daily ritual prayers which — thanks to Moses advice — decrease from fifty to five, in a similar way as how they do in both al-Buḥārī's long accounts and Ibn Hišām's recension of the *Sīra*.

Despite the strange transformation of the "cup test" into a "river test", we are definitely convinced that all of these verifications and common elements lead us to state that, on the one hand, Baldassarre used an Arabic text as a source for his Latin version of the *mi'rāğ* and, on the other, that the text he used was closely related to the reports attributed to Anas ibn Mālik and Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a or to *ḥadīṭ*-oriented literature, which is nonetheless closely related to what Colby calls the extended narrative of the *mi'rāğ* in al-Buḥārī and Muslim's *ḥadīṭ* collections. In fact, despite a brief mention of the night journey in Anas ibn Mālik's report, both him and Mālik ibn Ṣa'sa'a focused their extended accounts more on the ascension of Muḥammad through the heavens rather than on the part related to the journey from Mecca to Je-

<sup>92</sup> Q. 108:1.

<sup>93</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 53.

<sup>94</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>95</sup> Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 182; Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 51-56.

<sup>96</sup> Cerulli, "Il Libro della Scala", p. 336 (*Historia Arabum*); *Crónica General*, pp. 270-271; Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 220; Longoni, *Introduzione*, pp. XXV-XXVI.

<sup>97</sup> Al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Al-manāqib al-ansār*, no. 42.

rusalem;<sup>98</sup> the contents they have developed can then be found — as we have already shown — in Baldassarre's narrative use of similar words and order.<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, al-Buḥārī's collection of *ḥadīṭ* was already circulating around Europe, the Mediterranean area and among Catholic circles in the seventeenth century as evidenced by the use Ludovico Marracci made of it in his work of translation and refutation of the Qur'ān, started circa 1650.<sup>100</sup>

### Controversy and the Christianization of an Islamic Tradition

Baldassarre has obviously added several polemical sentences amid his narrative of the *mi'rāğ*. These sentences are mainly directed at Muḥammad and the falsehood of his doctrine. These claims are nothing more than classic Medieval charges against Islam. What is more interesting to note is that these claims are not very plentiful nor particularly vehement (we are obviously referring to the account of the *mi'rāğ*, and not to the whole *Oratio*). Why did Baldassarre choose to narrate the ascension only making use of a few sarcastic comments? Undeniably, he could have been more critical or aggressive. On the one hand, perhaps, he believed that due to its excessively extraordinary, absurd, and implausible elements this legend did not require many further negative comments. Beyond Baldassarre's polemical purpose, we are inclined to see an additional approach in his own way of dealing with Islam, which appears to mirror the Jesuits ambivalent attitude towards Muslims.

According to Colombo, on the one hand the Jesuits demonstrated familiarity with the classic Christian polemic arguments against Islam, and they often dealt with Islam with the “rhetoric of war” understood as a “defensive war” from the

aggressive Islamic attitude. At the same time, they used to say to fight Islam “with pen and ink”<sup>101</sup> demonstrating “the falsity of the Qur'ān using the Qur'ān itself”.<sup>102</sup> Absurd and ridiculous stories — like the *mi'rāğ* Baldassarre has narrated in his *Oratio* — are proof of the falsehood of Islam.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, they had a true interest regarding the Islamic religiosity; in fact, the Jesuits were a part of a pioneering early modern European movement involved in studying Oriental languages and Islam starting from the sixteenth century.<sup>104</sup> This dual attitude can be found in both Baldassarre's spiritual director Domenico Brunacci S.J. and in Baldassarre himself: he often directed harsh words against Islam (especially in his *Oratio*) and perpetrated disrespectful acts against the Qur'ān, but, at the same time, he does seem to have true compassion and concern for the fate of Muslim's souls.<sup>105</sup>

The same dual attitude could also be found in his account of the *mi'rāğ* in which — besides not actually including many sarcastic comments — he also develops a more or less conscious Christianization of the legend. This attitude corresponds with his own style in his deliberations with the Muslim jurist slave in Livorno Muḥammad Bulğayt al-Darawī, which consists in a discovery of the Christian truths within the Qur'ān. Likewise, this theological strategy was not discovered by Baldassarre himself, but it had a long tradition that can be traced all the way back to the long-forgotten Dominican William of Tripoli (1220-unknown but definitely after 1273)<sup>106</sup> and then to the well-known *De Pace Fidei* (1453) by Nicholas of Cusa. This strategy was then also widely employed by the Jesuit General Tirso González de Santalla S. J. (1624-1705) in his *Manuductio ad conversionem Mahumetanorum*;<sup>107</sup> ac-

<sup>98</sup> According to Colby: “All the extended accounts in the *ḥadīṭ* collections of Buḥārī and Muslim focus on the heavenly ascension portion of the journey, refraining from narrating the specific details of the Mecca to Jerusalem portion of it, if mentioning that portion of the journey at all”. Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, p. 81.

<sup>99</sup> Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, pp. 81-85.

<sup>100</sup> Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters*, p. 54. Moreover, Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville also refers to al-Buḥārī in his *Bibliothèque Orientale* published in 1697 (see p. 115). See also Nallino, *Le fonti arabo manoscritte dell'opera di Ludovico Marracci sul Corano*, p. 114. On Marracci's Islamic sources see: Gleis and Tottoli, *Ludovico Marracci at work*, pp. 15-40.

<sup>101</sup> Colombo, *Jesuits and Islam in Early Modern Europe*, p. 354.

<sup>102</sup> Colombo, *Jesuits and Islam in Early Modern Europe*, p. 354.

<sup>103</sup> Colombo, *Jesuits and Islam in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 353-356.

<sup>104</sup> Colombo, *Jesuits and Islam in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 359-369.

<sup>105</sup> Colombo, “A Muslim Turned into Jesuit”, pp. 493-495.

<sup>106</sup> Rizzardi, “La ‘Cristologia coranica’ di Guglielmo di Tripoli”; O'Meara, “The Theology and Times of William of Tripoli”.

<sup>107</sup> As regards the Jesuits and Islam see: Vincent, *Les jésuites et l'Islam méditerranéen*; Vincent, *Musulmans et conversion en Espagne au XVII siècle*; Colombo, *Jesuits and Islam in Seventeenth-Century Europe*; Copete and Vincent, *Missions en Bétique*; Ruii, “Conflicting Visions of the Jesuit

ording to Colombo, the second question of the handbook written by Tirso González was focused on finding the truth of Christian doctrines in the Qur'ān, while the first dealt with the errors and the falsehood of Muslim doctrines and the third with the truth of Christian faith shown through its miracles, beauty and greatness.<sup>108</sup> More than twenty years before Tirso González, Baldassarre was already seeking out Christian elements in Islamic doctrines by demonstrating how the Qur'ān contained the Christian dogma (in the letter he sent to Muḥammad Bulḡayt al-Darawī, he used the strategy of the *inventio*, that means addressing to the Qur'ān some Christian doctrines which were actually not present within it) and by giving a Christian-oriented reading of the *mi'rāḡ*.<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, one should not forget that as a Jesuit, Baldassarre shared the Ignatian spirituality: this means that one of his main goals was to lead Muslims to the divine light of Jesus Christ, and thus saving them from darkness. In the entirety of the *Oratio*, Baldassarre seems to be moved by true mercy and compassion (he said he cried a lot for them), which was probably due to both his former status as an “infidel” — even though he was strongly judgmental of Muḥammad and his doctrines — and his Ignatian spirituality, which he tried to apply for enlightening the souls of the Muslims. In fact, bringing the light of Christianity “even among Turks” was one of Ignatius’ primary dreams, as the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus state.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, Baldassarre is employing Jesuit rhetoric, which, according to O’Malley is “the orator’s ability to be in touch with the feelings and needs of his audience and to adapt himself and his speech accordingly”.<sup>111</sup>

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Missions to the Ottoman Empire, 1609-1628”; Shore, “Contact, Confrontation, Accommodation: Jesuits and Islam, 1540-1770”.

<sup>108</sup> Colombo, *Convertire i musulmani*, p. 39; Colombo, “La Compagnia di Gesù e l’evangelizzazione dei musulmani nella Spagna del Seicento: il caso González”; Colombo, *Even among Turks*, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> This strategy for reading the Qur'ān was used before Baldassarre employed it, for example in Giovanni Battista Castrodardo’s *L’Alcorano di Macometto* (especially in the debate regarding the Purgatory) and it would be used again two centuries later Baldassarre by Antonio Rosmini. Tommasino, *L’Alcorano di Macometto*, pp. 192-220 (on the *inventio* pp. 218-220); De Giorgi, *Introduzione. Rosmini e lo studio su Maria nel Corano*.

<sup>110</sup> See Colombo, *Defeating the Infidels, Helping Their Souls*, pp. 179-180. See also Colombo, “La setta malvagia dell’Alcorano”, pp. 486-487.

<sup>111</sup> O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, p. 255; on this topic see:

Having said this, an initial clue that reveals the way Baldassarre has “translated” some Islamic themes in a Christian-oriented way can be found in the sentence regarding the purification of Muḥammad’s heart. On the one hand, Baldassarre’s report makes no mention of the body-cutting incident, while, on the other, the angel purified the heart of Muḥammad with a golden tray full of God’s grace (*Dei gratia plenum*), rather than a golden tray full of wisdom (*ḥikma*) and faith (*imān*). The sentence Baldassarre chose for his translation sounds like the Annunciation of the angel to Mary (*Ave gratia plena*) in Luke 1:28.<sup>112</sup>

In order to ascertain how Baldassarre has included some Christian themes in his report of the *mi'rāḡ*, we have to draw a comparison between the sequence and the appellations he gave to the prophets, with the one completed by the other converted Muslim Juan Andrés, who has been discussed above, and who also carried out a Christianization of the order. As one can easily observe in Table n.2, Juan Andrés chronologically Christianized the encounters Muḥammad had with the Biblical characters in the heavens: he encountered them starting from the first who was Adam, to the last who was Jesus Christ, no longer referred to as the son of Mary in following with how Islamic tradition used to refer to him from the Qur'ān onwards. Baldassarre did not classify the encounters chronologically, but he did more than Juan Andrés to Christianize the legend.

Baldassarre calls Adam father like the *Liber Scalae Machometi*, Ibn Hisham’s version of the *Sira* and Anas ibn Malik’s report. Then, regarding Jesus and John — often known as Jesus son of Mary and John son of Zechariah as we can observe in several accounts — Baldassarre carries out a Christianization of the narrative.

As regards Jesus, he gives him the appellation of *Christ*.<sup>113</sup> The intellectual process which led Baldassarre to call Jesus Christ in this frag-

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Stephen Schloesser, “Recent Works in Jesuit Philosophy *Vicissitudes of Rhetorical Accommodation*”, pp. 106-107.

<sup>112</sup> See also the *Spiritual Exercises*: San Ignacio de Loyola, *Ejercicios espirituales*, §262.

<sup>113</sup> We find the appellation of Christ in the *Vita Mahometi*: Valcárcel, “La Vita Mahometi del código 10 de Uncastillo (s. XIII)”, p. 245. In his little studied translation of the Qur'ān, Ignazio Lomellini S.J. translated the Arabic *al-Masīḥ* with the Latin *Christus* (Michel Nau S.J. will also do in *Religio Christiana contra Alcoranum*, 1680): P. Shore, “Lexical Choice and Rhetorical Expression in Ignazio Lomellini’s 1622 Translation of and Commentary on the Qur'ān”, pp. 44-46.

ment, is far from being clear. In the Qur'ān Jesus is often called “son of Mary”, which could be — according to several scholars — a polemical title.<sup>114</sup> Along with this and other titles,<sup>115</sup> the Qur'ān attributes the name of *al-Masīh* to Jesus several times in Medinan suras, but without stressing the Davidic genealogy in his Messianic role. Despite this vague link between Jesus the Messiah and the Davidic genealogy, the Qur'ān claims that Jesus was sent as a Messenger for the Israelites (Q. 3:49).

Now, since the Arabic word *Masīh* comes from the Hebrew *Māshīaḥ* and the Greek *Christos* is its translation,<sup>116</sup> a question must be asked: was Baldassarre aware that the Latin *Christus* could have been a translation for *al-Masīh* or did he use that title to give a Christian reading of Jesus? We are inclined to believe that Baldassarre's main concern — without questioning his linguistic skills, since he had masterly knowledge of Arabic, Latin and Italian — was theological, and thus the way he used the word *Christus* was mainly focused on his more or less conscious attempt to Christianize the Islamic legend.

Furthermore, according to a Christian viewpoint, connecting Jesus the Christ to Adam the father could be read as a direct reference to both the genealogies of Jesus stated in Luke 3:23-38 and Matthew 1:1-17: to Luke, on the one hand, due to the connection between Adam and Jesus (Jesus as a son of Adam), to Matthew, on the other hand, due to the title of Christ this Gospel gives to Jesus in its very beginning.<sup>117</sup>

As a consequence of this theological concern, Baldassarre refers to John as the *Baptist*.<sup>118</sup> The title of Baptist that Baldassarre gives to John is a clear act of de-Islamization of the legend, due to the fact that, despite later Islamic tradition reports that John baptized Jesus, John as the Baptist was unknown to the Qur'ān.<sup>119</sup> Called noble (*sayd*), caste (*ḥaṣūr*), and prophet (*nabī*), the Qur'ān also states that John confirms

a word coming from God (*anna Allah yubašši-ruka bi-yahya muṣaddiqan bi-kalima min Allāh*, Q. 3:39) that means Jesus. However, despite this verse, the Qur'ān principally regards John as a prophet and a sign from God, just as Jesus will be later. Whereas now, in giving him the appellation of Baptist, Baldassarre elevates John to being a central character in his account, and thus developing a close connection — in accordance with Christian doctrine — between the father Adam, Jesus Christ and John the Baptist.

Furthermore, the title of *castus* that Baldassarre gives to Joseph merits attention as well. As is well known, Q. 12 contains the longest story devoted to a single prophet in the Qur'ān, highlighted as the best of the stories (*aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*, Q. 12:3). In both the Biblical (*Genesis* 39:1-20) and Qur'ānic tradition, the wife of the Egyptian officer Potiphar (not called by his name in the Qur'ān) who bought him, tried unsuccessfully to seduce him. Known for his beauty, according to the Qur'ān and Rabbinic literature, Joseph would have given into temptation, if he had not witnessed a sign from God (Q. 12:24), while, according to *Genesis* he withstood the woman's passion without any sign.<sup>120</sup> However, despite the accordance between *Genesis* and Qur'ān, the Islamic holy book does not mention the adjective *ḥaṣūr* (caste) that it has already applied, already applied to John. This means that here Baldassarre adds a well-known title that the entire Christian tradition has attributed to the Patriarch Joseph.

Unknown to Christian tradition, and usually placed in the fourth heaven (following the “standard order”), Idrīs appears to be translated as Elias in the set of characters Muḥammad and Gabriel met during their ascension, in the same way as the *Liber Scalae Machometi* previously had but together with Enoch, who in the Islamic interpretation is identified with Idrīs (Q. 19:56-57), or sometimes with Elias as well. However, Elias was also recognized in the Islamic tradition: he appears as Iliyās in Q. 6:85 and Q. 37:123-132. Tradition also identifies Elias as the wise man who leads Moses in Q. 18.<sup>121</sup>

Once Muḥammad arrived in Paradise, we can observe a further example of how Baldassarre interpolates the Islamic legend with biblical

<sup>114</sup> Merad, “Le Christ selon l’Islam”; Tottoli, *I profeti biblici nella tradizione islamica*, pp. 70-75.

<sup>115</sup> A word from God (*kalima min Allāh*, Q. 3:39), a word from Him [God] (*kalima min-hu* Q. 3:45), a Messenger and a word from God (*rasūl Allāh wa-kalima*, Q. 4:171), a spirit from Him [God] (*rūḥmin-hu*, Q. 4:171).

<sup>116</sup> Robinson, *Jesus*, pp. 11-13. See Q. 5:78.

<sup>117</sup> Kuschel, *Natale e il Corano*, pp. 40-41. (Orig. *Weinachten und der Koran*).

<sup>118</sup> John as the Baptist can also be found even in Alfonso Bonihominis' Latin version of the *mi'rāj*. See Table 2.

<sup>119</sup> Rippin, *John the Baptist*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>120</sup> Tottoli, *I profeti biblici nella tradizione islamica*, pp. 52-57.

<sup>121</sup> *Liber Scalae Machometi*, XIV, §33, p. 67; see the footnotes in Longoni's edition: *Il Libro della Scala di Maometto*, p. 73 (n.43 and 44).

themes. Depicting the landscape in Paradise as made up of the Qur'ānic rivers of honey, milk, wine, and water, Baldassarre adds the following sentence: *intravit in quandam terram fluentem lacte, et melle*. This sentence is taken almost literally from *Exodus* 33:3 (*et intres in terram fluentem lacte et melle*) when God reminded Moses and the People of Israel of the Promised Land he announced to Moses during the episode of the Burning Bush with similar sentences in *Exodus* 3:8 and 17 (*in terram quae fluit lacte et melle*, and *ad terram fluentem lacte et melle*). Therefore, it can be said that the landscape of Paradise portrayed by Baldassarre is both Biblical and Qur'ānic: according to the *Exodus*, it is a land where milk and honey flow and as indicated by the Qur'ān, a land in which rivers of honey, milk, wine, and water flow. Briefly, it is an Islamo-Christian Paradise.

As a final remark, we should remember that as a Christian, Baldassarre had two further examples of ascensions in mind. On the one hand, the ascension of Jesus as it is narrated and referred to in several books of the New Testament (Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:3-11), on the other, Paul's journey to the third heaven (*raptus Pauli*) described in 2Corinthians 12:2-4<sup>122</sup> and mentioned by several Christian authors such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, some of whose sentences Baldassarre quotes in his response to Muḥammad Bulḡayt al-Darawī. This indicates that Baldassarre had several references for the mystical experience of the vision of heaven, both from his former religion and then after his conversion, from Christianity.

## Conclusion

Baldassarre's report of the *mi'rāğ* is a remarkable source for several reasons. Firstly, owing to the reason that he was a Muslim now converted to Christianity who was recounting a well-known Islamic tradition as a means to bring about religious controversy. The second reason was due to his ambiguous standpoint between polemic, cultural and religious appropriation. It is true that Juan Andrés was in the same position as Baldassarre, however the manner in which he incorporated that Islamic story into his new religious identity was slightly naive. On the contrary, the way Baldassarre interpolated the *mi'rāğ* seems to be more complex, not least in its inter-

pretation. We never know exactly to what extent Baldassarre's attempt at Christianizing the *mi'rāğ* was more or less consciously motivated. However, following Wolfgang Reinhard's suggestions we can assert that Baldassarre definitely proves to have an active identity; he did not passively suffer his new religious identity, but he developed it creatively by picturing, for instance, new landscapes in Paradise. According to Reinhard, it can be finally said that Baldassarre got an identity as a process.<sup>123</sup>

A question now arises: can Baldassarre's interpretation of the *mi'rāğ* be read as a case of cultural transfer — or rather, as an interreligious transfer — with the aim of reinterpreting and resemantizing a cultural theme,<sup>124</sup> as Martin Mulso has suggested referring to the relationship between Socinianism and Islam?<sup>125</sup> Could the concept of cultural transfer be applied to the way Baldassarre dealt with his former religious tradition? Perhaps here we are dealing with an interreligious transfer, due to the reason that Baldassarre seems to have and possess knowledge of the *mi'rāğ* tradition from the Islamic standpoint rather than from the Western diffusion of the narrative. This signifies that Baldassarre's knowledge of this tradition comes from his former religious affiliation and is then transferred by means of translation to his new religious identity with a polemical goal, but also with the aim of Christianizing it. In other words, Baldassarre dealt with Islamic tradition through of a twofold movement: translating the Arabic text into a Western language and inserting Christian themes within the translated Islamic text, as if they were Islamic doctrines too.

In conclusion, Baldassarre's attitude towards the *mi'rāğ* and Islam reflects a common inclination which developed among Christians and Jesuits in the Early Modern Age, but that also had its antecedents in authors such as William of Tripoli and Nicholas of Cusa. This attitude is precariously in equilibrium

<sup>123</sup> Reinhard, *Religione e identità — Identità e religione*, pp. 93-94. According to the Italian text: "identità come processo".

<sup>124</sup> The concept of cultural transfer was coined by Michel Espagne in Espagne and Werner (eds.), *Transferts. Les Relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle)*. On the concept see: Rossini and Toggweiler, "Cultural Transfer: an Introduction", pp. 6-7; on religious transfer: Dubrau, Scotto and Vimercati Sanseverino, "Introduction. Religious Transfer in the History of the Abrahamic Religions. Theoretical Implications and Case Studies".

<sup>125</sup> Mulso, "Socinianism, Islam and the Radical Uses of Arabic Scholarship", pp. 550-555.

<sup>122</sup> Thomson, "Dante and Bernard Silvestris"; see Németh, "Paulus Raptus to Raptus Pauli".



between a “heresiological framework”<sup>126</sup> — this approach begun to wane from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onwards, but was still alive in a Catholic context until at least the nineteenth century — and an attempt to understand Islam by means of a Christian reading of the Islamic doctrines without the use of warlike words or the lexicon of heresy.

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