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The 'Long March' towards West – How Did Europe get to Know the Qur'ān? The Earliest Non-Arabic Translation of the Qur'ān and its Impact throughout the Centuries

The paper examines the very first translation of the Qur'an, which is a Greek translation from the 8/9th century CE and called by myself as the 'Coranus Graecus'. The research compares the 'Coranus Graecus' with the original Arabic text of the Qur'an. The translation by an anonymous author, while generally very accurate, contains some textually subtle, but theologically highly important differences with respect to the Arabic text. It seems to be the result of a Christian hermeneutical reading of the Qur'an.

I could show that this translation, whose original is nowadays lost, was copied before being used in a Byzantine polemic against Islam, the so-called "Refutation of the Qur'an" («Ἀνατροπή τοῦ Κορανίου», q.e. *Anatropè*) by Nicetas of Byzantium in the 9/10th century CE. This is the only remaining early source of the fragments of the Greek Qur'an (Vat. gr. 681, *codex unicus*). Additionally, I was able to show how the Nicetan argumentation and his image of Islam 'travelled throughout time and space', not only within the Byzantine world, but also into the Latin Middle Ages and even up to the Early Modern Period.

Nicetas is one of the first to use the Qur'an itself for the refutation of the Islamic faith. His attempt had a vast influence on later Byzantine and even mediaeval European apologetic writing against Islam, like Euthymios Zigabenos (12th century), the scarce details of monk Euthymios (11/12th century) and the tradition of Bartholomew of Edessa (12th century). As it seems, also the so-called *Abiuratio* (confirmed 13/14th century) depends on the 'Coranus Graecus'. It is astonishing, therefore, that until now there has been no complete analytical research on Nicetas' writings. And likewise, no studies have been written about possible interrelations between the first translation of the Qur'an, used by Nicetas, and later ones in the Latin world, like the one commissioned by Petrus Venerabilis (1142), from which Martin Luther (1483–1546) was inspired, and the later one made by Marcus of Toledo (1209/10).

This research is related to Byzantine and Qur'anic studies as well as Christian and Muslim theology and Greek and Arabic philology. The project opens a whole field of research about the translation or, better, the transformation of the meanings of the Qur'anic text into European languages and therefore also their religious conceptual frameworks. This information would give us new insights into Western perceptions of Islam since the Middle Ages, some of which have persisted even through today, as global politics of the last decades has amply shown.