Revisionism and Modern Islamic Theology

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„Until recently", stated Muhammad Kalisch, professor of Islamic Theology in Münster (Germany), „I was firmly convinced that in Muḥammad we are dealing with a historical person. (…) I have abandoned this point of view now (…)."[1] „It is only the Islamic tradition which assures us that the Koran", says Kalisch, „only goes back to Muḥammad. If Muḥammad did not exist at all, the Koran, of course, could not have come from him."[2] Even if „*the* Islamic tradition"[3] writes Kalisch, contains a kernel of historical truth, „how will one be able to find this kernel and discern it from myth and legend?"[4] According to Kalisch, Muslims have never been genuinely interested in the historical Muḥammad. The idea of the imitation of the prophetic example always had been a pious illusion. In reality, each theologian created his own Muḥammad, just like in Christianity, where there were as many theologians as there were views of Jesus. „Whichever person", adds the revolutionary theologian from Munster, „acknowledges this self-conceit, will also be able to easily practice Islamic Theology without the historical Muḥammad, just as Christian theology can be practiced without a historical Jesus. Muḥammad is then merely the symbol of the ideal human being, of an ideal to which man should aspire. It is then completely irrelevant whether a historical human being has practiced this ideal him/herself in this manner or not. (…) Islamic Theology then comes to portray Muḥammad as the ideal of the perfect man."[5]

Kalisch believes that „in religion metaphysical truth, rather than historical truth is at stake."[6] „In my view", stated Kalisch, „religion is [identical to, VK] mystical philosophy which, in the form of a myth, is presented in a graphic manner in order to make it understandable for the majority of the people. (…) This dual-track has also been continued in Islam by mystics and philosophers."[7] In other words: the myth of a prophet who had the name of Muḥammad and a of a divine book labelled the Koran were fabricated and maintained in order to teach the illiterate masses in a simple manner the lofty truths of a certain mysticism and philosophy. In the modern era however, added Kalisch, this dual-track can

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[1] Muhammad Kalisch (2008), *Theologie ohne historischen Mohammed – Anmerkungen zu den Herausforderungen der historisch-kritischen Methode für das islamische Denken*. [2009], Pdf-file, 30 pp., pp.1. http://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/religioesestudien/islam/_v/kalisch_islamische_theologie_ohne_historischen_muhammad.pdf.

[2] *Ibidem* pp. 8.

[3] „*Die* islamische Überlieferung" (my italics, VK). I will return to this key concept, which is generalising in nature in Kalisch's discourse below.

[4] *Ibidem* pp. 18: „Selbst wenn sie einen historischen Kern beinhalten sollte: Wie soll man diesen Kern finden und ihn von Mythos und Legende unterscheiden?".

[5] *Ibidem* pp. 18-19.

[6] *Ibidem* pp. 20.

[7] „Nach meiner Auffassung ist Religion mystische Philosophie, die in die Form des Mythos, die bildlich-anschauliche Darstellung gebracht wurde, um sie der Mehrheit der Menschen verständlich zu machen. In der ganzen Antike gab es die Parallelität von Mythos/Religion einerseits und Philosophie/Mystik andererseits. Auch im Islam ist diese Parallelität von den Mystikern und Philosophen weitergeführt worden" (*Ibidem* pp. 22).

no longer be maintained in the context of the omnipresence of the mass media and the Internet, and religion should now be discussed openly before all people. Kalisch considers the hiding of knowledge and the continuing classification of people into a „mass" who merely consume „myths" on the one hand, and an „elite" which is solely entitled to know the truth on the other, as being „profoundly undemocratic and (...) irreconcilable with a modern image of man, which presupposes that all people (or 'men') should be educated." Kalisch stresses that his position is „really nothing other than the consequent conclusion from the present state of knowledge."[8] He summarizes this current available knowledge in the following sentence: „We hardly possess original sources dating back to the first two centuries of Islam."[9] At this point, however, Kalisch must be refuted.

1. The Codex of ʿUṯmān

Islamic tradition tells us that Caliph ʿUṯmān promulgated the official text of the Koran around the year 28 (650). The study of manuscripts, inscriptions and historical data contained in written sources confirms the reliability of this information. This officially recognised text of the Koran has ousted other codices, which, according to the aforementioned Islamic tradition, had been compiled in the period shortly before. These earlier *muṣḥafs* were characterized by a different redaction, often a different order, of the chapters or sūras. It is conceivable that an old fragment from Yemen, in which a somewhat different reading has been found, originally came from a *non-ʿUṯmānic* codex of this nature.[10] Differing textual readings of the *non-ʿUṯmānic* codices have been documented with certain details in old sources.[11] Sources sometimes even refer to a concrete manuscript composed in a deviating arrangement of the Sūras, for instance to a *muṣḥaf* written in the handwriting of ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir (who died in 59/679), which was preserved in Cairo.[12] *Non-ʿUṯmānic* codices are quoted frequently in the exegetical literature when discussing the meaning of certain words or passages, but they ought not to be used for liturgical purposes when reciting the Koran. The consensually accepted official Codex ascribed to ʿUṯmān is exclusively valid when reciting the Koran. This official text is indeed the one which is generally employed. This is also the case in the oldest available manuscripts.

The earliest available manuscripts of the Koran contain a *defective* version of the written text. As a rule, the script lacks diacritical signs to distinguish between certain consonants; it also lacks signs for vowels and for the remaining punctuation marks. The 11th-century Andalusian specialist in the study of Koranic manuscripts, ad-Dānī, explains this situation in the following fashion: „[Originally], the Koran existed in the codices merely in its ductus, [as a rule without any additional signs to distinguish consonants, vowels,

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[8] „Ich halte meine Position eigentlich nur für eine konsequente Schlussfolgerung aus dem bisherigen Wissenstand" (*ibidem* pp.1).

[9] In a note to this sentence, Kalisch refers to Joseph van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. u. 3. Jh. H.*, Bd. 1, S.VIII. However, van Ess only discusses *Islamic theological and dogmatical* texts and provides no views on the Islamic sources in general; Kalisch's generalisation is unjustified.

[10] Gerd R. Puin, *Observations on early Qur'anic manuscripts in San'a'*. In: *The Koran as text*. Ed. Stefan Wild, Leiden: Bril 1996 pp. 107-111, esp. 110-111.

[11] See here amongst others: Abū ʿUbaid al-Qāsim ibn Salā al-Baġdādī, *Kitāb faḍāʾil al-qurʾān*. Ed. al-Ḥayyāṭī. Rabāṭ: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1995, deel 2, pp. 105-45. A. Jeffery, *Materials for the history of the text of the Qurʾân. The old codices.* Leiden: E.J. Brill 1937.

[12] Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Iṣāba*, nr. 5605; as-Samʿānī, *Al-Ansāb,* vol. 2, pp. 134; aḏ-Ḏahabī, *Taʾrīḫ al-islām*, 4, pp. 271-4.

etc.]".[13] This ductus, which is devoid of any additional signs, is called *rasm* in Arabic. Manuscripts in this archaic, defective script are extremely rare. Famous ancient manuscripts are preserved in Cairo,[14] London,[15] Paris[16] and St. Petersburg.[17] These manuscripts date back to the period preceding the reform of the Arabic script, which, on the basis of data derived from historical sources, must be placed at around the end of the 7th century (around the year 75 of the Islamic era). This reform is, among others, connected to the name of a famous scholar, Abū al-Aswad ad-Duʾalī (who died in 69/688). In the period following the reform, manuscripts of the Koran were as a rule copied with diacritical signs, vowels and other punctuation marks. Traces of an old dated manuscript from the period following the script reform can be found in the work of the already mentioned Andalusian scholar ad-Dānī (who died in 444/1053) who set out to look for the oldest Koranic manuscripts which had up until this period been preserved. He refers to a manuscript that had been copied by a certain Muġīrā ibn Mīnā and completed by the same person in Raǧab 110 (728). The vowels – as well as the signs for the *hamza*, the duplication of consonants and the *tanwīn* – consisted of dots in red ink.[18] A good example of an ancient manuscript with the same characteristics is the codex of the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul.[19]

Additionally, within the small group of Koranic manuscripts written in defective script, a further distinction can be made by examining the differing types of script, punctuation marks and other ornaments. In one group, represented amongst others by the codices in Paris and St. Petersburg as well as London, the lines are (still) disproportional and angular, and there are hardly any signs or ornaments marking the transition from one verse to another or one sura to another, there are no marginal signs for purposes of recitation etc. Verses may have been separated from each other by a few simple strokes in the same ink as the one used in the text, or by small spaces left blank. In another group, the script can, in contrast, be described as being proportional and even calligraphical at times. In addition, round forms and small circles are at times used in these manuscripts, and there is already some degree of ornamentation in the transitional spaces between verses and sūras, an ornamentation that would develop in later manuscripts to such an extent as to make the Koran the Islamic text with the richest forms of decoration and the highest degrees of calligraphy. Manuscripts belonging to the first group, represented amongst others by the manu-

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[13] „kāna l-qurʾānu muǧarradan fī l-maṣāḥif" (ad-Dānī, *al-Muḥkam*, 2).

[14] *Muṣḥaf ṯāliṯ al-ḫulafāʾ ar-rāšidīn amīr al-muʾminīn Ḏī an-Nūrain ʿUṯmān ibn ʿAffān.* CD of the Ministry of Awqâf in Cairo, 2009 (with complete images of the voluminous manuscript, preceded by an introduction with data about the history of the manuscipt).

[15] François Déroche et Sergio Noja Noseda, *Les manuscrits de style ḥiǧâzî.* Vol. 2, tome 1*, Le manuscrit Or. 2165 (f. 1 à 61) de la British Librar*y. ISBN 88-87281-01-7 Lesa Fondazione Ferni Noja Noseda, 2001, XCII-237 p: fac-sim.; 43 cm.

[16] Déroche, F. et S. Noja Noseda, *Sources de la transmission du texte coranique. I Les manuscrits du style ḥiǧâzî.* Losa: Fondazione Ferni Noja Noseda, 1998. Facsimile edition of Ms Arabe 328b of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

[17] A specimen of this fragmentary manuscript, that originally belonged to the same codex as the manuscript in Paris, has been reproduced in F. Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam. Le codex Parisino-petropolitanus.* Leiden-Boston: Brill 2009 185.

[18] *al-Muḥkam*, 87.

[19] Complete facsimile of this manuscript in the edition of IRCICA, *al-Muṣḥaf aš-šarīf* attributed to ʿUṯmān bin ʿAffān *(The copy at the Topkapi Palace Museum).* Istanbul 2007, 820 + 109 + 117 pages (With a study by Tayyar Altıkulac). Scriptio plena. Proportional, calligrafic script.

scripts of Paris, St. Petersburg and London, contain the oldest handwritten textual tradition of the Koran preserved. They can be cautiously attributed to the period between the years 50 (672) and 70 (692). Various ancient authors, who were experts in the study of ancient Arabic manuscripts, provided descriptions of the type of script employed in the oldest codices of the Koran they knew. The famous calligrapher of early ʿAbbāsīd Baġdād, Ibn Muqla (who died in 328/940), described it as a „large script in every aspect, in which any element of rounding was lacking.“[20] The bibliographer of Baġdād, Ibn an-Nadīm (who died around 400/1010), speaks in his book *The Catalogue* of an angular script with long obliquely hanging alifs.[21] The medieval expert in the field of documents and manuscripts, al-Qalqašandī (who died in 821/1418), compares the script of the oldest Koran with a type of script in documents of his own time, that is, the so-called *tūmār*-script, which was characterized, amongst other things, by very tall alifs.[22] These three experts seem to have commented upon the same group of Koranic manuscripts we have just described as being the oldest ones preserved.

Careful imitation of the Codex of ʿUtmān in the transmision of the Koranic text has always been and continues to be a duty in Islam.[23] However, this duty is only related to the mere *ductus* of the script, the so-called *rasm*. We have already seen that „the Koran“, as ad-Dānī expressed himself, „[originally] only existed in its ductus [i.e. without any additional signs or marks] in the codices.“ The diacritical marks introduced later, as well as the vowel signs and the punctuation marks, never acquired the same status as the ʿUtmānic *rasm*. This was impossible, as different „Masoretic“ traditions governing the reading of the holy text were developed by various Koranic experts. And even though seven of these traditions obtained authority sanctioned by consensus (*iǧmāʿ*), none of them could claim to be the one and only system that clearly indicated the way in which the Koran had been recited at the time of Uthman, or even before that, during the life of the Prophet. At the time of the Prophet, and in the first decades after his death, the script of Koranic codices was still defective and remained devoid of the refined system of signs and marks developed by the later philological scholars. The defective period in the transmission of Koranic manuscripts gave, quite logically, rise to the circulation of different reading traditions. It is impossible to „jump over“ these reading traditions and define the one and only authoritative reading of the Koranic text.

It is fully understandable, however, that in their studies Koranic scholars attempted, among other things, to obtain as exact as possible an image of the *ductus* of ʿUtmān's Codex and this for every single letter or even for parts of it. One method employed in an attempt to reach this goal, was to set out to trace the most ancient Koranic manuscripts preserved and to compare those written in one province, for instance Syria, with those from another province, for instance Iraq. By making use of this critical, comparative method, the scholars hoped to be able to identify any element of the script which might have entered the ductus of the Codex of Uthman as a novelty in its orthography. Another

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[20]   Aḥmad, *Našʾat*, 35, based on al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, 3/43, 145.
[21]   Déroche, 2009 (see note 17).
[22]   Aḥmad, *Našʾat*, 35, based on al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, 3/43, 145.
[23]   al-Šinqīṭī, *Kitāb īqāz al-aʿlām lī wuǧūb ittibāʾ rasm al-muṣḥaf al-imām,* Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿāhid, 1345, 62 pp. In Suyūṭī's *Itqān* one of the sources mentioned is: *ar-Radd ʿalā man ḫâlafa muṣḥaf ʿUtmān* by Abū Bakr al-Anbārī. Edition 1996, vol. 1, 31.

method consisted, of course, in directly searching for the original manuscript of Caliph ʿUṯmān, which is referred to in ancient sources as the „chief codex of the Koran" (*al-muṣḥaf al-imām*). The previously mentioned scholar Abū ʿUbaid al-Baġdādī (who died in 223/837 of 224/838) applied both methods in his book on Koranic readings (*kitāb al-qirāʾāt*) which, unfortunately, we only know from (numerous) quotations, as no manuscript has been traced so far.[24] He compared the manuscripts of different provinces and related that he had also been able to study the original chief codex of the Koran, in the library of an ʿAbbāsīd prince in Baġdād. He provides exact data on the ductus of this extremely important copy.[25] Abū ʿUbaid left Baġdād in the year 214/829 in order to settle in Mecca, where he later died.[26]

A report from the month of Rabīʿ I of the year 223/838 confirms the presence of the original Codex of ʿUṯmān in Baġdād in the early ʿAbbāsīd period. This report stems from a certain Abū Bakr Ibn Šayba, who, by order of Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, produced a new binding for this famous codex. „I measured", relates Ibn Šayba, „the hight of the Codex and I ascertained that it measured two spans and the thickness of four fingers. I counted the lines of a few leaves and these appeared to be 28 lines per page."[27]

The history of the Codex of ʿUṯmān can even be traced further. The highly respected historian of Medina, Ibn Šabba (who died in the year 262/876), relates that the *muṣḥaf* of ʿUṯmān, at his order, had been placed in the mosque in Medina so that it might be recited each morning. This report then describes that ʿUṯmān's *muṣḥaf* had come into the possession of his grandson, Ḫālid ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿUṯmān.[28] According to Ibn Qutayba (who died in the year 276/889), ʿUṯmān's codex had initially been inherited by his descendants, but their line had later died out.[29] The manuscript remained in Medina, where, according to the already-quoted commentary by Abū Šāma, the famous founder of the Malikite school of law, Mālik ibn Anas (who died in the year 179/796), who was in his time regarded as the leading scholar in Medina, was able to gain access to it. He is reported to have consulted it in order to verify whether the name of Ibrāhīm was read with an *alif* (thus reading Ibrāhām) or rather with a *yāʾ* (thus reading Ibrāhīm) in the Codex of ʿUṯmān.[30] According to another source, a study of the Koran by Ibn Kaṯīr (who died in 774/1373), the same Mālik ibn Anas had, when asked about the Codex of ʿUṯmān, at a later point in time, replied that it had „disappeared."[31]

I conclude that the Codex was transferred to Baġdād before the death of Mālik ibn Anas (as said, in the year 179/796). The ʿAbbāsīd rulers accorded an important role to this venerable manuscript of the Koran in the ceremonies of their court. In the well-known

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[24] See the detailed description of this source by al-Ḥayyāṭī in the introduction to his edition of Abū ʿUbayd's *Kitāb faḍāʾil al-qurʾān*. Rabat, 1995, 2 vols, vol. 1, pp. 130-133.

[25] ad-Dānī, *al-Muqniʿ*, 1983, 15; see also: *Ibrāz al-maʿānī min ḥirz al-amānī fi l-qirāʾāt as-sabʿ* of Abū Šāma ad-Dimašqī (died in 1268), Internet edition (Almeshkat.net), *passim*.

[26] GAL I, 107; al-Ḥayyāṭī estimates that he arrived in Mecca in the year 219 H. (op. cit., see note 24, p. 107).

[27] al-Marrakušī, *aḏ-Ḏayl wa-t-takmila li-kitābai al-mawṣūl wa ṣ-ṣila,* vol. 1/1 (ed. M. Ben Šarīfa, Bayrut: Dār aṯ-Ṯaqāfa, n.y, 165-166.

[28] 1996, vol. 1, 31.

[29] *Kitāb al-maʿārif*, edition Ṯarwat Ukāša, Cairo, p. 201.

[30] *Ibrāz al-maʿānī min ḥirz al-amānī fi l-qirāʾāt as-sabʿ* of Abū Šāma ad-Dimašqī. Internet edition (Almeshkat.net), vol. 1, pp. 279-80.

[31] Ibn Kaṯīr, *Faḍāʾil al-qurʾān*, 47.

book about the ceremonies of the caliphate by Abū Isḥāq aṣ-Ṣābī (who died in 384/994) it can be read how the Caliph was in session on his throne, covered by the mantle of the Prophet, girded with the Prophet's sword, with the Prophet's staff in his hand. The Codex of ʿUtmān was solemnly placed in front of him.[32]

The vicissitudes of the copies of the codex of ʿUtmān, which, in accordance with historical tradition, had been written with the intention of being sent to the main centres of the empire, where they were to serve as authoritative source-references for the further spreading of the official text, fall outside the scope of our discussion. For their part these copies played important ceremonial roles on various solemn occasions, such as those which took place in Mecca, Damascus, Cairo, Cordoba and Marrakesh, amongst others. However, what is of direct interest for our present discussion is the eye-witness report given by the Andalusian traveller Ibn Ǧubayr (who died in the year 1217) of the Koran Codex he saw in Mecca and here especially the date and the name of the copyist which he quotes from its colophon: „It was written in the handwriting of Zayd ibn Ṯābit – may God be pleased with him! – and copied in the year 18 after the death of the Messenger of God – may God bless him and grant him peace! Many leaves of it are missing. It is bound between two wooden covers with locks of brass, and it has large wide leaves. I saw it with my own eyes and cherished it by kissing it and placing it close to my cheeks. May Allah reward the intention of that act!"[33]

2. Muḥammad

The Koran documents the existence of a man named Muḥammad who acted as a prophet in order to convey messages in the Arabic language which he believed to have been inspired or revealed to him by Allah, usually through the intermediary of Gabriel (Ǧibrīl). This prophet or messenger occupies a central position, as the person addressed or directly involved, in numerous texts of the Koran. The name of this messenger, Muḥammad, is mentioned four times explicitly.[34] Amongst other things, this was done in order to explain that not the human and therefore mortal persona of the messenger but rather the divine message he conveyed within the framework of the prophetical office would be of lasting value. Sūra 3/144: „Muḥammad is but a messenger; and messengers have passed away before him. Will you, when he dies or is slain, turn back on your heels [go back to your old religion, VK]?" The passage this verse is part of is, according to Koranic commentaries, directly related to the Battle of Uḥud in the month of Šawwāl in the year 3, when suddenly the rumour was spread that Muḥammad had been killed, causing panic among the Muslim ranks and even the flight of some of them.[35]

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[32] aṣ-Ṣābī, *Rusūm dār al-ḫilāfa*, Bayrut 1986, 80-81; compare aḏ-Ḏahabī, *Taʾrīḫ al-islām*, volume 26, 273; the report refers to a session in the year 369(979-980).

[33] Ibn Ǧubayr, *Riḥla* (1964), 80: „Wa-fī l-qubba al-ʿabbāsīya al-maḏkūra ḫizāna taḥtawī ʿalā tābūt mabsūṭ muttasaʿ wa-fīhi muṣḥaf aḥad al-ḫulafāʾ al-arbaʿa aṣḥāb Rasūl Allāh - ﷺ - wa bi - ḫaṭṭ yad Zayd ibn Ṯābit - raḏīya l-lāhu ʿanhu- muntasaḫ sanat ṯamāniya ʿašrata min wafāt Rasūl Allāh - ﷺ. Wa-yanquṣu minhu waraqāt katīra wa-huwa bayna daffatay ʿūd muǧallad -maǧālīq min ṣufr, kabīr al-waraqāt wāsiʿuhā. ʿAyannāhu wa-tabarraknāhu bi-taqbīlihi wa-masḫ al-ḫudūd fīhi -naffaʿa l-lāhu bi n-niyyati fī ḏālika".

[34] Sūra 3/144; 33/40; 47/2; 48/29.

[35] Ibn Katīr.- *Muḫtasar tafsīr Ibn Katīr*. Iḫtisār wa-taḥqīq Muḥammad ʿAlī Sābūnī. Bayrūt, 1981, vol. 1, 322; Muqātil ibn Sulaimān.- *Tafsīr muqātil ibn Sulaimān*. Taḥqīq Aḥmad Farīq. Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-

Another Koranic text, predicting the final victory of Islam over all other religions, contains a verse in which the Messenger of Allah is praised by name and the attitude of his followers towards infidels and towards each other is also praised: „Muḥammad is the messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are stern with disbelievers and merciful among themselves." (Sūra 48/29)[36]

With reference to his family relations it is said in the Koran: „Muḥammad is not the father of one of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal [viz. the concluding confirmer] of the Prophets" (Sūra 33/40). Elsewhere is said in the Koran: „And those who believe and do good works, and accept that which has been sent down to Muḥammad – which is the very Truth from their Lord – [Allah] will remove their sins from them and set their condition right." (Sūra 47/2)

Whenever „Muḥammad" is mentioned in the Koran, we are dealing with a genuine *proper name*. It is an Arab proper name already in use in pre-Islamic times. The 15th century scholar Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, perhaps the greatest expert in the field of Arabic onomastics in the history of Islamic civilisation, dedicated a short essay to those who were called Muḥammad in the period prior to Islam. He successfully traced some 15 persons with the name of Muḥammad in ancient Arabic sources. Two of these had also been the Prophet's contemporaries, viz. Muḥammad ibn ʿAdī at-Tamīmī as-Saʿdī and Muḥammad ibn al-Barāʾa al-Bakrī.[37] As Muḥammad is explicitly presented in the Koran as the prophet and messenger entrusted with the transmission of the divine revelation contained in it and at the same time the Koran only mentions one single person to which this office was entrusted, it is clear that the same Muḥammad is meant in all places where that messenger and prophet is mentioned without adding his name.

In his quality as Prophet of Messenger of Allah, Muḥammad drafted a series of treaties and letters. As a rule, the texts of these documents have only been preserved in historical sources, with only a few of them being also preserved as separate documents. An important part of this material was published by Julius Wellhausen in 1889, in Arabic with a German translation, drawn by him from the original works of Ibn Isḥāq (who died circa 770) and Ibn Saʿd (who died in the year 845).[38] The text of the document drafted by „Muḥammad the Prophet" to serve as a treaty between the „believers and the Muslims of Quraiš" and Yaṯrib (Medina), in which the foundation was laid for the earliest Muslim community and body politic at the same time, was judged by Wellhausen to be „an important document providing us direct and authentic information." Concerning the letters, the author remarked that „generally speaking there is no reason to doubt their authenticity." There are incidental cases of falsification, but these, says Wellhausen, "are few in number and do not hinder the historical use thereof." „If we possessed the originals themselves,

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ʿIlmīya, vol. 1, 2003, 194; ʿAbd ar-Razzāq as-Sanʿānī.- *Tafsīr ʿAbd ar-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī*. Ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿaǧī. Bayrūt: Dār al-Maʿrifa, vol. 1, 1991, 137; Abū al-Laiṯ as-Samarqandī.- *Tafsīr as-Samarqandī al-musammā baḥr al-ʿulūm*. Bayrūt, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, vol. 3, 1993, 305.

[36] Ibn Kaṯīr, op. cit., vol. 3, 354-5; Muqātil ibn Sulaimān, *op. cit*., vol. 3, 254; Abū al-Laiṯ as-Samarqandī, *op. cit*., vol. 3, 259.

[37] Quoted in a fatwa given by the Egyptian mufti ʿAṭīya Ṣaqr of May 1997, as an answer to the question „Who gave the Messenger of God Muḥammad his name? *Fatāwā al-azhar*, vol. 8, p. 188.

[38] In: *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*. Viertes Heft: 2. Muhammads Gemeindeordnung von Medina, pp. 67-83; 3: Seine Schreiben, und die Gesandtschaften an ihn, pp. 67-194 + 78 pp. Arabische Texte.

then a palaeographical verification would be possible and perhaps also decisive."[39] Wellhausen's work was continued in the 20th century by Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, whose political documents from the time of the Prophet and the Righteous Caliphate were published in a 5th edition in 1984, containing the text of more than 400 documents, based on a comparative study of the texts as they appear in a wide variety of sources.[40]

In these documents, Muḥammad's numerous contacts with the different regions and tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, the contacts leading to their joining Islam and the exact conditions and agreements under which this took place figure. Also his international contacts for instance with Arab tribes under Byzantine protection and with Egypt, are reflected in these documents. The very idea that such a rich treasure of data could have been invented with the aim of falsifying history and disseminated over hundreds of different sources in order to parachute into history a purely mythical Muḥammad, seems to be insane. As a rule, scholars of history[41] have followed the line of Wellhausen and accepted, with occasional exceptions, these documents as authentic sources of the history of early Islam. These sources indicate, amongst other things, that Muḥammad could read but did not practice writing, although he was able to write his name as a signature under a treaty.[42] He made use of secretaries for the writing of his letters and documents. Sources mention the names of approximately 48 persons who served him as scribes or secretaries.[43] Drawing a cross-cultural comparison, we can say that about one and a half centuries later, the great European emperor Charlemagne showed an almost identical profile of literacy profile.[44]

Generally speaking, the oldest Jewish and Christian sources from the Near East are fairly well informed about the early expansion of the Arabs and Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula that commenced shortly after the death of Muḥammad. Their respective authors lived mostly at the same time as these events took place or shortly afterwards. In the absence of more accurate information available to them, these sources, however, invented an image of Muḥammad primarily based on their own, often negative evaluation of the new power structures. Nau published a Syriac document in 1915 with the report of a conversation between the Jacobite patriarch John I and a certain „Emir Amrou", in a city in Syria, on Sunday 9 May 639 (in the year 18 of the Hiğra). This „Emir Amrou" is the Arab general ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, whose activities are also documented in detail in Arabic sources. In his report, the patriarch calls on the Christians of Mesopotamia to pray for the emir, lest God grant him wisdom, etc. It can be assumed that the patriarch had circulated the letter among

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[39]   *Ibidem*, pp. 67, 90, 91.
[40]   *Maǧmūʿat al-waṯāʾiq as-siyāsīya li l-ʿahd an-nabawī wa l-ḫilāfa ar-rāšida*. Ǧamaʿahā Muḥammad Ḥamīdallāh. Bairūt: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 1984.
[41]   M. Lecker, *The Banū Sulaym. A contribution to the study of early Islam*. Jerusalem 1989, 160 („wa-kataba al-ʿAlā ibn ʿUqba wa šaḥida"); ibidem („šaḥida ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib wa-Ḫāṭib ibn Abī Baltaʿa"); 161; 162; 174; 177 („wa-kataba Ḫālid ibn Saʿīd"); 183-4 („wa-kataba Ḫālid ibn Saʿīd"); 185 („wa-kataba al-Arqam"); 187; 197 (kataba al-ʿAlā ibn ʿUqba wa šaḥida").
[42]   Compare ʿAṯamina, Ḫ.: „an-Nabiyy al-Ummiyy": An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Qurʾanic Verse". Der Islam 69 Heft 1 (1992) 61-80. See also: al-Bāǧī (died in 474/1081), Taḥqīq al-maḏhab li-Abī al-Walīd Sulaimān ibn Ḫalaf al-Bāǧī. Yatlūhā aǧwibat al-ʿulamāʾ bayna muʿayyid wa-muʿārid ḥawla daʿwā kitābat ar-rasūl (ﷺ) li-ismihi yawm ṣulḥ Ḥudaybīya. Ed. Ibn Aqīl az -Ẓāhirī. Ar-Riyāḍ, 1983.
[43]   M.M. al-Aʿzamī, Kuttāb an-nabī. Bairut: al-Maktab al-islāmī, 1974.
[44]   Allesandro Barbero, Charlemagne. Father of a continent. London: The Folio Society, 2006 pp. 216-217.

his communities in Mesopotamia. It can also be assumed that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, when conquering Mesopotamia shortly afterwards, did so too, with the support of the patriarch.[45]

The same Arab general ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ also figures several times in the chronicle of John, Coptic bishop of Nikiu, who was born around the time of the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs[46] and who still lived in the year 690 of the Christian era. In his study of the Arab conquest of Egypt, Butler rightfully qualifies this chronicle as „indispensable."[47] „And now many of the Egyptians" states John, „who had been false Christians denied the holy orthodox faith and life-giving baptism, and embraced the religion of the Moslem, the enemies of God, and accepted the detestable doctrine of the beast, this is, Mohammed, and they erred together with those idolaters, and took arms in their hands and fought against the Christians. And one of them, named John, the Chalcedonian of the Convent of Sinai, embraced the faith of Islam, and quitting his monk's habit he took up the sword, and persecuted the Christians who were faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ."[48] Muḥammad is identified in this source with the Beast from the Abyss, a manifestation of the Antichrist, figuring in the Revelations of John in the New Testament as the future ruler of the world, dominator of world power in its final form, or ruler of the last world-empire. He will rise against God and pass himself off as God, fully inspired by Satan whom he will represent personally.[49] We have here one of the oldest documents of a Christian theological view of Muḥammad.

Although in the aforementioned text of John of Nikiu the terms „Muslims" and „faith of Islam" are used, we are not entitled to automatically conclude that the author would have used both terms literally himself. This should be verified in the original. But we only have an Ethiopian translation of a (so far unknown) Arabic original at our disposal. This Arabic original for its part was a translation of the Coptic original of which no manuscript has been found so far. For a correct understanding of the early history of Islam, it is important to realise that the meaning of the concept „al-islām" as used in the Koran could not yet have been identical to the complex social phenomenon of the „religion of Islam" which, when examined in hindsight, appeared to have resulted from the movement Muḥammad had initiated. In the Koran, al-islām is primarily an indication of the single and continuously identical religious conviction which was preached to mankind by the prophets over the centuries and transmitted by those through the divine revelations that were conveyed to them, from Adam up until and including Muḥammad. This conviction consisted of the belief in one God. Islām, in other words, is primarily monotheism. Only gradually could this central concept become the name of the new religion which, as a complex social phenomenon, developed into a system of fixed doctrines and institutions. An important step in the process of the formation of Islam as a system was certainly the promulgation of the official text of the Koran by Caliph ʿUṯmān, an event that probably took place in the year 28 (650), as we saw earlier.

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[45]   Nau, F., Un colloque du patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 716 d'après le ms. du British Museum Add. 17193. Journal Asiatique 5 (1915), 225-279; pp. 226-7.

[46]   The chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic text by R.H. Charles. London and Oxford 1916, chapters 112, 114-9.

[47]   Butler, Arab Conquest of Egypt, p. ix.

[48]   Charles (1916), 121, 10-11.

[49]   *Christelijke Encyclopaedie*, s.v. Beest (article by S. Greijdanus).

Revisionism and Modern Islamic Theology

The public proclamation of the Islamic doctrine via monumental inscriptions on public buildings and texts on official coins meant for public circulation, were further important steps in the process of the formation and institutionalisation of Islam. These subsequent steps could only be taken after the completion, to a certain extent, of a process of administrative centralisation of the enormous multicultural and multi-religious empire. An important part of this process was the introduction of Arabic as the official language of the empire during the reign of Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, who ruled from 65-86 (685-705). This Caliph ordered the earliest public monumental texts with a compilation of Koranic texts to be placed in a position on the outer and inner walls of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, in the year 72 (691-2). In the selected Koranic texts derived from various sūras, the two main elements of the Islamic creed – the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Muḥammad – are emphasized, in addition to the rejection of Jesus' divine nature.[50] It appears from historical sources that the Dome of the Rock had originally been designed as the centre of an alternative pilgrimage centre for Muslims at a period in which important parts of the Islamic Empire were ruled by a rebellious anti-Caliph who had entrenched himself in Mecca and was challenging the central power of the Umayyads in Damascus from there.[51] In these inscriptions, the ruling dynasty in Damascus legitimized itself in front of its Muslim subjects with this genuinely Islamic testimony at a time in which the great majority of the population were still Christians. It was also during the rule of the same Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān that the first official monolingual coins were minted in Arabic with, amongst others, the two main articles of the Islamic confession of faith. Earlier coins in the Islamic empire had, as a rule, been bilingual, and, in a religious sense, more „ecumenical" or „trans-religious" in the legends displayed on the coins as well as in their iconography. Thus, the establishment of Islam as the *public* religion of the state took place no more than about 40 years after the promulgation of an official Koran text by Caliph ʿUṯmān. The rapid speed of this process can scarcely be explained without pointing out the fact that Islam was the faith of the new Arab rulers and thus found itself in a very favourable position for further establishment and institutionalisation.

Caliph al-Walīd I ordered the inscription of a second important series of Koranic texts onto the southern wall of the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina between 88 (706) and 91 (710). The verses include the complete text of the shorter sūras 1 and from 91

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[50]   M. van Berchem, „Jérusalem „Haram", *Materiaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, pt. 2, Memoires de l'Institut francais d'archeologie orientale, 154.1-2 (Cairo, 1925-27): 22946, no. 215. Cf. Busse, „Die arabischen Inschriften in und am Felsendom in Jerusalem," *Das Heilige Land* 109 (1977): pp. 12-14, cf. pp.22-23; O. Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton, 1996), 58-61. S. Nuseibah & O. Grabar, *The Dome Of The Rock*, 1996, Thames and Hudson: London (UK); C. Kessler, „ʿAbd al-Malik's Inscription In The Dome Of The Rock: A Reconsideration", 1970, *Journal Of The Royal Asiatic Society*, pp. 2-14; K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture: Part 1 Umayyads, A.D. 622-750.* With A Contribution On The Mosaics Of The Dome Of The Rock In Jerusalem And Of The Great Mosque In Damascus By Marguerite van Berchem. 1932, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Plates 6-9, 13-22; M. van Berchem, *Matériaux Pour Un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, 1927, Tome 2 / 2, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale: Le Caire, No. 215, pp. 228-246.

[51]   A. Elad, „Why did ʿAbd Al-Malik build the Dome of the Rock? A re-examination of the Muslim sources". In J. Raby and J. Johns (Eds.), *Bayt al-Maqdis. ʿAbd al-Malik's Jerusalem*. Vol. 1 (Oxford 1992), pp. 33-58; idem, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship. Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*. Leiden 1995.

through 114, which, among other things, play an important liturgical role in Islamic religious services. These inscriptions were made on the occasion of the expansion of the mosque, during which process the sepulchral chamber of the Prophet (*al-ḥuǧra*) was also incorporated into the inner space of the mosque. This chamber had previously been the private property of Muḥammad's wife ʿĀʾiša and of members of her family in the years following her death. The expropriation of the Prophet's grave and the ensuing expansion of his mosque crowned the restoration of Marwanīd power over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and considerably strengthened the legitimacy of their dynasty as the ruling dynasty of the whole Islamic Empire.[52]

3. Revisionism and Early Islamic History

Let us now return to the revolutionary theologian from Münster! Mohammed Kalisch grounds his sceptical views in the first place on the authority of a Dutch author. „The fact that one is obliged to develop a sceptical attitude towards the facts known concerning the historical existence of Muḥammad, is also shown by the recently published biography of Muḥammad by Hans Jansen, who clearly elaborates the incredibility of the Islamic tradition.“[53] I am afraid that Kalisch, who as a Protestant young man converted to Islam only later in his life, did not realise when writing this that Jansen, who was once also a Protestant young man, also later converted, not to Islam but to Catholicism, when he was about 40 years old. Jansen converted to Catholicism, „because of“, as he himself explained, „the high degree of organisation of that religion and its greater readiness to fight against Islam.“[54] – Jansen also finds it difficult to understand conversions of Westerners to Islam and is convinced that „a number“ of these conversions have „undoubtedly resulted from muddle-headedness.“[55] In the Netherlands, Jansen is also known as the author of sensa-

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52   Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, *The Tomb of the Prophet. Attitudes and Discussions Around A Major Religious Symbol in Islam*. Lecture Inaugurating the Academic Year 2006-2007 at the Faculty of Theology (now Faculty of Religious Studies) Leiden University, Netherlands. Originally in the Dutch, now in the English Language. Followed by the Arabic translation of the preceding lecture prepared by Mohammed Ghaly. With a selective list of the author's other publications. Leiden University 2007. Estelle Whelan, „Forgotten Witness: Evidence For The Early Codification Of The Qur'an“. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118, 1998, 1-14. Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-aʿlāq an-nafīsah*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1892; repr. Leiden, 1967), p. 70; cf. J. Sauvaget, *La Mosquée omeyyade de Médine* (Paris, 1947), 79. [39] See also Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī (246-328/860-940), *Kitāb al-ʿiqd al-farīd*, ed. A. Amīn, I. al-Abyarī, and A. Harūn (Cairo, 1368/1949), 6: 261; *cf.* M. Shaft, „A Description of the Two Sanctuaries of Islam by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī (940),“ in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne on His 60th Birthday*, ed. T. W. Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1922) pp. 420-21.

53   *Ibidem*, p.1. Het geciteerde boek van Jansen is: Hans Jansen (2008), *Mohammed – Eine Biographie*. München 2008.

54   Mohammed als ijskonijn by Herman Veenhof. Nederlands Dagblad, 28 maart 2007. Elseviers Magazine 19.10.1985, pp. 98-111: „De Islam in opmars“ (interview with an anonymous Dutch Islamicist = Hans Jansen): In order to arm himself against the current march of Islam, the interviewed Islamicist had considered becoming a Catholic, because, as he had told his colleagues, of the high degree of organisation of this religion and the higher degree of readiness to fight Islam which came with it.“ (cf. Shahid & van Koningsveld, De mythe van het islamitische gevaar. Hindernissen bij integratie. Kampen, 1995 (2de druk), 16.

55   „Bekeringen van Nederlanders en andere Westerlingen“, aldus Jansen, „zijn moeilijker verklaarbaar. Ongetwijfeld komt een aantal bekeringen uit warhoofdigheid voor (…)“ („Conversions to Islam of Dutchmen and other Westerners are more difficult to explain. Undoubtly some of these result from muddle-headedness.“) (J.J.G. Jansen, Inleiding tot de islam. Muiderberg 1987, 163).

tional booklets which surf on the current waves of Islamophobia with titles, such as the following, which do not require any further comment: *Islam voor varkens, apen, ezels en andere beesten* („Islam for pigs, apes, donkeys and other animals").[56]

In reality, Kalisch continues a longstanding tradition of radical scepticism and indeed of *revisionism* that came to the forefront in different periods of the Western study of early Islamic history. Since the 1970s, English authors such as Wansbrough,[57] Crone, Cook and Hawting and German authors such as Lüling,[58] Luxenberg,[59] Puin, Ohlig, as well as Popp have themselves taken an increasingly radical, sceptical and indeed *revisionist* approach towards the early history of Islam. The term 'revisionist' or 'revisionism' indicates the radical approach which categorically rejects all ancient Islamic sources as unreliable in their representations of the early history of Islam. This approach usually attempts to re-write this early history by making use of non-Islamic sources, usually Christian, Jewish or others. As a rule, when examining the work of these authors, we are dealing with an implicit or explicit conspiracy theory which aims to explain the origin of Islam, a kind of pathological impulse with fanaticism to match, towards a radical revision of the history of the origins of Islam. This impulse finds expression in various apodictly formulated „idées directrices" („leading ideas") which function as dogmas to which the interpretation of the available sources is subjected. Thus, according to this theory, all sources contradicting the revisionist dogmatic have to be continuously rejected as being completely unreliable. In the course of history we can distinguish between various manifestations of revisionism.

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[56]   Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Van Praag; first impression March 2008; fourth impression April 2008.

[57]   John Edward Wansbrough (February 19, 1928 – June 10, 2002) was an American historian who taught at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He argued that the Koran was put together from various sources some 200 years after the Prophet Mohammed's death. Wansbrough's research suggests that a great deal of the traditional history of Islam appeared to be a fabrication of later generations seeking to forge and justify a unique religious identity. Within this context, the character of Muhammad could be seen as a manufactured myth created to provide the Arab tribes with their own Arab version of the Judeo-Christian prophets. Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1977. The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition Of Islamic Salvation History. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1978. he argued that the Koran was put together from various sources some 200 years after the Prophet Mohammed's death. „We don't really have any Islamic literature that you can really date much before about 800 AD." („John Wansbrough remembered. 26 June 2002. Radioprogramma Radio National, Australia". Interview with Gerald Hawting, disciple of Wansbrough).

[58]   Günter Lüling: (1) *Über den Ur-Qur'an. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qur'an*. Erlangen: 1974; 3ʳᵈ, revised edition, Erlangen: 2004; English version of the 2ⁿᵈ German edition of 1993: *A challenge to Islam for reformation: the rediscovery and reliable reconstruction of a comprehensive pre-Islamic Christian hymnal hidden in the Koran under earliest Islamic reinterpretations*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers 2003. (580 pages). ISBN 81-208-1952-7. (2) *Der christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und christlichen Theologie*. Erlangen: Lüling, 1977; 2nd, revised edition, *Erlangen 1992*.

[59]   'Christoph Luxenberg', *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*. 2000, Das Arabische Buch: Berlin. Rev. by François DE BLOIS, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2003, Volume V, Issue 1, pp. 92-97; see also „Qur'an and History - A Disputed Relationship. Some Reflections on Qur'anic History and History in the Qur'an", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 2003, Volume V, Issue I, pp. 1-18; Hoyland, Robert: „New Documentary Texts and the Early Islamic State", in: BSOAS: vol 9, part 3, 2006; Corriente, F.: On a prosposal for a 'Syro-Aramaic' reading of the Qur'an, in: *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* No.1.

Article / Artikel

1. The *first revisionist movement* was that of the *European-Christian Middle Ages.* Here the view prevailed that Islam had come into being as an heretical development from Christianity and in fact was the product of an anti-Christian conspiracy. The origin of this conspiracy can be found in the rancour of a cardinal or bishop who had been excommunicated by the Pope, and who infused Muḥammad with anti-Christian views behind the screens. We find this view expressed in many variants in medieval Christian writings and even up until the period of Enlightenment. This approach has been analysed by, amongst others, Norman Daniel in his well-known book *Islam and the West: The making of an Image.*[60]

2. A *second revisionist approach* taken towards the history of the origins of Islam was defended by the Dutch Arabist Reinhard Dozy (1820-1883) in his book *De Israëlieten te Mekka. Van Davids tijd tot aan de vijfde eeuw onzer tijdrekening*[61] („The Israelites in Mecca. From David's time until the fifth century of our era"). In this book, the author defended the theory that one of the twelve tribes of ancient Israël, viz. that of the Simeonites, established themselves in Mecca where they built a copy of the ancient Israelite temple, in the form of the Kaʿba. The religious rituals related to the Kaʿba in pre-Islamic times, including the hajj, were, according to Dozy, of Hebrew-Israelite origin. In order to substantiate his thesis, Dozy cited as evidence the existence of an ancient inscription on the Black Stone in the wall of the Ka'ba. This inscription was first documented by the author al-Fākihī in his *History of Mecca*. Dozy identified the language of this inscription as Hebrew and deciphered its text. However, his theory was totally rejected[62] and forgotten.[63]

3. A *third revisionist approach* was presented in Germany in the 1970s. This approach claims that Islam was originally a continuation of the ancient, genuinely Unitarian, „Semitic" Christianity which had come into conflict with Hellenistic Christianity in Arabia. However, in a further stage of development this ancient form of genuinely Unitarian Christianity, including its polemics with Hellenistic Trinitarianism, had been overgrown by the suffocating weeds of Arabian paganism. As a consequence, we find in the Koran two different „editorial layers." The first and original „layer", that of the so-called *Urkoran* (the Koran in its most original form) was, in Lüling's view, purely Unitarian and Christian and even contained several Christian hymns (!). In its second and last „layer" the text of the Koran had, however, been reworked and imbued with the spirit of Arabian heathenism. This view was first proposed by Günter Lüling in his book *Ueber den Urkoran* and in his work *Der christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und christlichen Theologie*. As can be gauged from the latter title, Lüling assumed that the central sanctuary in Mecca (the Ka'ba) was in pre-Islamic times a church and he was also convinced that the Meccans at that time were the result of a systematic falsification of the sources with the aim of

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[60]   Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd, 1993 (revised edition).
[61]   Haarlem: Kruseman, 1864.
[62]   See among others: K.H. Graf, *De Israëlieten te Mekka van Dr. R. Dozy. Beoordeeld door K.H. Graf.* translated from the German by H.A. Leenmans. Utrecht: Kemink, 1866; H. Oort, *De dienst der Baälim in Israël : naar aanleiding van het geschrift van Dr. R. Dozy „De Israelieten te Mekka".* Leiden 1864.
[63]   See his dissertation of 1880, entitled *Het Mekkaanse feest*, C. Snouck Hurgronje aimed at replacing the book of Dozy.

obscuring the Christian origin of the Meccans. Lüling – himself a Unitarian Christian – calls on all Muslims to return to what he believes to be their Unitarian Christian origins. If the Muslims followed his call, he believes, worldwide ecumenism would be supported considerably.

Luxenberg followed a more or less similar line of thought but added his own, completely novel accent. He postulated, amongst other things, that the Meccans used a language which was a mixture of Aramaic and Arabic and in which also the Koran had been written. In an attempt to conspire against history, the Aramaic origins of the Koran had been obscured, just as in the writings of Lüling, it had been the Christian fate of the pre-Islamic Meccans that had been concealed. However, this theory of mixed Aramaic-Arabic language in pre-Islamic Mecca stands in contradiction to the numerous sources available that cast a clear and unequivocal light on the language used by the Meccans in pre-Islamic times in general and in the Koran in particular. Luxenberg's theory that the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem originally had nothing to do with Islam, but marked the grave of a Christian saint is also characterised by a complete absence of any form of evidence. In further elaboration of Luxenberg's theory, other authors even proposed that the Dome of the Rock had in fact been the grave of Jesus. I have already indicated that there is clear and detailed evidence in reliable sources available, which detail the motives behind Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik's decision to have the Dome of the Rock built and the approach he took towards realising his historical project. However, this evidence is completely ignored by Luxenberg and his followers.

4. The *fourth revisionist approach* was first presented in the second half of the 1970s. It claims that Islam was originally a Judeo-Christian sect. This sect was, according to this theory, more Jewish than Christian, as it was a messianistic movement where aim was the return to the Holy Land from North Arabia. We are dealing here, in other words, with a kind of Zionism „avant la lettre". Originally, Mecca and Medina played no role in this movement. Their role as holy cities of Islam where the Prophet had lived and preached was, in the view of this Anglo-Saxon school, only an invention, just like the whole biography of the Prophet itself, after the messianic movement had burnt out and had frozen to fixed matter in the form of Islam. This is especially the view of authors like Crone and Cook. According to the founder of the Anglo-Saxon approach, Wansbrough, the text of the Koran had only been fixed around the year 800 and it had been compiled from different pieces which had existed as separate and independent units of different origins. If Muḥammad had ever existed, he most certainly would not have been the „prophet Muḥammad" of whom is spoken in the Islamic sources. At this point I should like to refer the reader back to what was said at the beginning of this article about the oldest Koranic manuscripts preserved. It seems to be crystal clear that the evidence of these ancient manuscripts alone is a largely sufficient refutation of the Anglo-Saxon and the German revisionists together. Leave alone the tenability of their arguments in the light of all the other available evidence!

5. *Finally,* there is now also the approach taken by Kalisch, a fresh shoot from the old revisionist trunk! Kalisch has embraced the ideology of the so-called „Traditionalism", in the meaning of the *philosophia perennis.* This is the „ongoing philosophy", which, according to its adherents, existed and survived through all ages and civilizations and consequently can be traced all over the world in various traditions and eras. This „on-

going philosophy", according to Kalisch, is also found in Islamic mysticism and philosophy, in which the salvation of mankind is described as a cognitive process in the human soul, without the attached condition of the belief in a certain religion. In the view of „Traditionalism", Islam is only one of the many ways to find this *philosophia perennis*. No single religion can claim for itself the absolute truth, because every religion results from subjective, spiritual experience. In the last instance, religion should thus, in the view of Kalisch, be replaced by philosophy, as human beings do not need anything more than science, philosophy and mysticism. According to its adherents, the esoteric-Gnostic stream of thought of „Traditionalism" counts among its adherents a remarkably large number of European intellectuals who initially converted to Islam but in the end appeared not to feel at home in what they experience as the pinching shackles of Islamic doctrines and laws.

According to Kalisch, Islam was originally a form of Gnostics. Muḥammad was (like Jesus) originally a myth, one of the stages of spiritual development in Gnosticism, represented for simple people with limited intellectual faculties in the form of the biography of a human being with a revelation (the Koran). We are dealing here with an author who is using his revisionist approach in order to lay the foundations for his personal liberation from what he perceives as the pinching ties of his Islamic religious convictions. Denial of the historicity of Muḥammad is the solution Kalisch chooses for his personal crisis. He apparently does not consider this denial as injuring his Islamic identity, as he believes religion is not about *historical* but *metaphysical* truth. As a reply to this, I should like to say the following: I can understand what Kalisch wants to say, but why does he stress to such an extent the fact that his view concurs with the present state of scholarship? In fact, it does not. Revisionism and conspiracy theory are identical twins. Both of them are mere aberrations of genuine scholarship. They are polemical models of zealots and charlatans[64] which, under the very special circumstances in which our world finds itself today, obtain enormous attention which they do not deserve on strictly scientific grounds.

Muḥammad was, is and will remain, not only in the view of Muslims but also on strictly scientific grounds, a historical person who, in the faith of a prophetic mission, preached messages he believed to have been revealed to him. Various codices (*muṣḥaf's*) in which these Koranic messages had been brought together were replaced around the year 650 by the official text of the Codex of ʿUṯmān. The Koran, just like the numerous documents drafted by order of Muḥammad, forms the basis of the study of his biography, in addition to the philologically sifted poems of contemporaries (both in support of him and also occasionally against him), as well the extensive data in the sources of Ḥadīṯ (prophetic traditions), after having been duly verified with the methods of historical criticism. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the right method to teach and to research which I have tried to follow myself and which I recommend to you, once again, as the most reliable guideline for your own studies in the future.

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[64]   In the Netherlands, apart from Hans Jansen also Eildert Mulder and Thomas Milo in their newspaper articles bundled in the book *De omstreden bronnen van de islam*. („The disputed sources of Islam"). Zoetermeer: Meinema 2009.