This article presents Robert of Ketton’s (1143) and Mark of Toledo’s (1210) Latin translations of proper names appearing in the Qur’ān. Proper names represent a particular sub-group of words that challenges the translator in his task as a mediator between two cultures. Proper names are in fact tied to the person or the entity to which they belong and cannot, in absolute terms, be translated without losing their characteristic of being “proper.” In the article, the names are divided in different categories and the different methods are explained, that each translator uses to render the names in the translation. Final remarks try to formulate some hypotheses in order to explain the different choices of each translator in the context of their respective Qur’ān translation.

Key words: Proper Names; Latin Translation; Qur’ān; Robert of Ketton; Mark of Toledo; Spain; Iberian Peninsula; Cultural Transfer; Peter the Venerable; Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada.

En este artículo se presentan las traducciones latinas que Robert de Ketton (1143) y Marcos de Toledo (1210) hicieron de los nombres propios que aparecen en el Corán. Los nombres propios son un grupo particular de palabras que ponen a prueba al traductor en su tarea como mediador entre dos culturas. En efecto, los nombres propios son naturalmente vinculados a la persona o la entidad a las que pertenecen y no pueden ser traducidos sin perder su característica de ser «propios». En el artículo los nombres se dividen en diferentes categorías y se exponen de forma detallada los diferentes métodos que cada traductor utiliza para expresar los nombres en Latín. En las observaciones finales se formulan algunas hipótesis para explicar las diferentes soluciones que cada traductor ha elegido en el contexto de su propia traducción del Corán.

Palabras clave: nombres propios; traducción latina; Corán; Robert de Ketton; Marcos de Toledo; España; Península Ibérica; Transferencia cultural; Pedro el Venerable; Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada.
Introduction

The task of the translator is a difficult one: he has to transfer a conglomerate of sound, form, style, syntax, and of course meaning from a system of expression of those things to another, he has to convey a product of a cultural and intellectual environment to another cultural and intellectual environment that often does not share the same background knowledge, the same customs, the same beliefs, let alone the same language. Even among people who speak the same language there could be problems of understanding due a) to the different connotation that a word or an expression may have in different cultural contexts, b) to the semantic development that a concept can have as time goes by and as new ideas make use of an already existing lexicon, c) to the use and appropriation of foreign words, d) to the fall from the use of certain words and the creation of neologisms: “Multa renascentur, quae iam cecidere, cadentque / quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus, / quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi.” 1

The Qurʾān offers a wonderful example of a text that required explanations from its very beginning in order to be properly understood by the people who spoke the “same” language in which it was revealed. Though it was revealed in “clear, Arabic tongue,” 2 its style was poetic and elevated (so that its beauty and its inimitability were seen as a proof of its divine origin), 3 it contained rare and ancient words and it alluded to facts and traditions without explicitly naming them. Its verses, as it says about itself, are sometimes “clear” (muhkamāt, properly “fixed, definite”) and sometimes “ambiguous” 4 (mutashābihāt, properly “that resemble, allegorical”).

Moreover, the sacral character of the Qurʾān adds a further complication, because its message is one with its form and its strength lays in his “voice” and in his structure and rhymes no less than in the meaning conveyed by its words.

The medieval translator who had to express the Qurʾān in Latin words for a Christian audience, whose cultural heritage laid in the

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1 Hor., Ars poetica, 70-72.
2 Arab. lisānun ʿarabiyyun mubīnun. Cfr. Q 26:195 (The words in the quotation marks are from Arberry’s translation, The Koran interpreted, p. 379) and 16:103.
4 Cfr. Q 3:5. The words in the quotation marks are from Arberry’s translation, p. 45.
Latin-Christian and in the Roman tradition, had a huge task before himself.

The first two Latin translators of the entire Qurʾān, Robert of Ketton, who translated it in 1143 for the Cluniac abbot Peter the Venerable, and Mark of Toledo, who translated it in 1210 for the Toledan archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, chose different ways to convey the message of the Qurʾān.\(^5\)

The former chose the style corresponding to the elevated prose of his time, structured in complex periods with many subordinate clauses and a wide use of participles, modifying the word order and the order of the sentences of the original and occasionally merging more verses in one long sentence. He often translated a single Arabic word with two Latin words in order to convey its meaning more clearly and he was not afraid sometimes to add short explanations. However, this way of translating sometimes gives obscure results, because the long, convoluted sentences of the translation summarise more subsequent sentences of the original, losing their linearity in this way, so that only by knowing what the original says one comes to understand the translation.

Mark of Toledo, instead, translated respecting the word and verse order of the original, though respecting the Latin grammar too, so that his translation appears to be closer to the original at a first look and of easier understanding.

Given these premises, the case of the proper names represents a particular sub-group of words that challenges the translator in his task of mediator between two cultures.

The proper name is in fact tied to the person or the entity to which it belongs and, in absolute terms, it cannot be translated without losing its characteristic of being “proper.” Moreover, when it belongs to something that has not a correspondence in the target culture, how is its “meaning” going to be conveyed?6

In this paper, I will show how the two Qur’an translators dealt with these problems and the surprising solution that especially Mark of Toledo sometimes adopted.7

The translation of proper names

I

I divided the names in three categories. The first group is formed by the names which belong to a figure shared by both source and target culture, in which they bear practically the same name, only in a differ-

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6 This article focuses only on proper names (particularly personal names and those of supernatural entities such as Gods, demons and angels). A similar approach can be found for example in Glei and Reichmuth, “Religion between Last Judgement, Law, and Faith: Koranic Din and its Rendering in Latin Translations of the Koran,” and Martínez Gázquez, “Los primeros nombres de Allah en la traducción latina del Alchoran de Robert de Ketton.” A complement to this article with more general observations can be found, other than in Cecini, Alcoranus Latinus, in my other contributions: Cecini, “Main Features of Mark of Toledo’s Latin Qur’ân Translation”; Cecini, “Faithful to the Infidels’ Word. Mark of Toledo’s Latin Translation of the Qur’ân (1209-10),” and Cecini, “Tra latino, arabo e italiano. Osservazioni sulla riduzione in volgare italiano della traduzione latina del Corano di Marco da Toledo (Ms. Ricc. 1910, cc170vb-174rb).”

7 For this I follow orientatively the list of proper names contained in Ambros and Procházka, A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic, p. 305-312. I focus on the section B and C (Angels, pagan deities, and the Devil; Humans). I carried out the research on Robert’s translation (in this article also appearing as R.) on T. Bibliander’s edition of 1543 (henceforth “Bibl.”), sometimes recurring to the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 1162 (henceforth A1) for dubious readings. For Mark’s translation (in this article also appearing as Ma.) I normally quote from the manuscript Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale, F. V. 35 (henceforth T), which I consider one of the best manuscripts for Mark. The other manuscripts that I quote for problematic passages are Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana L. I. sup (M); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 14503 (A); Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 4297 (V); Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine 780 (D); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 3394 (P); Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana R. 113 sup (F). A description of these manuscripts with further bibliography can be found in Cecini, Alcoranus Latinus, p. 73-81. A
ent form due to the different linguistic development of the tradition. In the Qur’an it is the case of the names shared with the Jewish-Christian biblical tradition. If they have a Latin equivalent they are expressed by the translators in this form: so ‘Īsā becomes Jesus, Yahyā / Iohannes, Ibrāhīm / Abraham, Jibrīl / Gabriel, Ishāq / Ysaac, Yā’qūb / Jacob, Nūh / Noe, Dāwūd / David, Sulaymān / Salomon, Yūsuf / Ioseph, Mūsā / Moyses, Hārūn / Aaron, Zakariyyā / Zacharia, Ilyās / Helias, Lūṭ / Loth, Maryam / Maria, Mikāl / Michael, Ayyūb / Iob, Ādam / Adam and Isrā‘īl (name of Jacob) / Israel.

Exceptions are represented by the following names: for the translation of ‘Imrān (Q 3:33; 3:35; 66:12), the father of Mary, mother of Jesus, Robert follows the Christian tradition and translates it ad sensum as Ioachim. Mark remains closer to the Arabic and translates it as Ambram. Actually the manuscript tradition is very uncertain regarding the translation of this name, as most of the manuscripts have Abraham. The fact that M, one of the oldest manuscripts, has Ambram, and that it would be more likely for a medieval copyist to correct the name into the more famous Abraham than the other way round, support in my opinion the hypothesis that Mark’s translation was Ambram, which would also avoid the confusion with Ibrāhīm. Anyway, the important point here is that Mark does not substitute the name following the Christian tradition, but remains close to the Arabic.

Yūnus is translated correctly by Mark with Ionas, Robert instead has in Q 4:163 Ionatha and in 6:86 and 10:98 omits its translation. In 37:139 he translates it correctly with Ionas. By the way, both resolve the epithet of Jonah Dhū-l-nūn (The one with the Fish) in 21:87, by translating it as Ionas.

The critical edition of Mark’s translation was accomplished by Nadia Petrus in her doctoral dissertation and finds itself in the library of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Alchoranus Latinus, quem transituit Marcus canonicus Toletanus: estudio y edición crítica, Tesis Doctoral dirigida por José Martínez Gázquez, 2008, awaiting publication). The English translation of the Qur’ān I used is, as already noted, the one of Arberry (The Koran interpreted, henceforth “Ar.”).

8 Cfr. Num 26, 59, where Amram is the father of Moses, Aaron and Mary. Cfr. also Q 19:28, where Mary, mother of Jesus, is called “Sister of Aaron” (Ar., p. 304).

A slightly different category contained in this group is represented by names whose spelling does not reveal who is meant at first sight. 

*Al-Yasāʿ*, who indicates the prophet Elisha, is translated by Mark in 6:86 as *Iosue* and in 38:48 as *Elyas*. This two translations could be explained as a misunderstanding of the consonantic succession, in the first case because close to the Hebrew *yhwsh*’, in the second to the Arabic *Ilyās*. Robert translates it in 6:86 as *Ezechia* and in 38:48 as *Alieza*. The latter is undoubtedly a simple transliteration, while the former could derive from al-Ṭabarī. *Al-Yasāʿ* was in fact identified in Muslim tradition with the son of the widow who hosted Elijah in Sarepta of Sidon during the famine and gave him food (cfr. I Kings, 17). After Elijah cured the son’s sickness, he became Elijah’s disciple and successor. That is why *al-Yasāʿ* is also called *Ibn al-ʿAjūz*, i.e son of the old woman.10 Other authors, however, (e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, 1, 535)11 attribute this epithet to *Hazqīl* (Ezekiel), which could explain Robert’s translation *Ezechia*.

To stay by Elijah, we also note that the name variant *Il Yāsīn*, which is found in 37:130, is translated correctly by Mark with *Helyas*, but just transliterated by Robert as *Iezin*.

*Ismāʿil* is translated as *Isma(h)el* by both Mark and Robert: only in 6:86 Robert translates it as *Samuel*.

In this group I will also include *Iblīs*, the proper name of the Devil, who disobeyed God and refused to bow down before Adam. It is considered a contraction of the Greek *diābolos*.12 Thusly, it is translated by Mark in the majority of the occurrences with *diabolus* (2:34; 7:11; 18:50; 20:116; 34:20; 38:74). Almost as frequent is, however, the translation *Demon* (15:31; 15:32; 17:61; 26:95; 38:75). *Demon* or *Demonium* is, by the way, Mark’s translation of *jinn*, too (cfr. e.g. sūrah 114:6: “Mina l-jinnati wa-l-nās.” Ma: “de demonibus et homi-

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12 Cfr. Ambros and Procházka, *A Concise Dictionary*, p. 305; Wensinck-[L.Gardet], “Iblīs,” in *EF*, 3, p. 668. The Arabic tradition refers it, however, to the verb *ablāsa* (to despair), as he cannot hope in the mercy of God (*ibidem*).
nibus”13; R: “hominibusque diabolicis atque perversis [te defendat]”14. One could wonder if in this double translation of Iblīs the unresolved issue whether he is an angel or a jinn plays a role.15 The second solution is supported for example by Zamakhsharī (Kashshāf, on sūrah 20:116) and sūrah 18:50, quoted by Zamakhsharī, also seems to allow this conclusion.16 The problem remains however open and there are also voices who speak for the angelic nature of Iblīs and some, like al-Ṭabarī (Annales, 1, 80), who say that the jinn are a category of angels.17 Robert, instead, translates Iblīs always as Belzebub, apart from 34:20, where he translates it as diabolus, although there he rephrases the verse, so that he does not use the word as a proper name.

The other name that designates the Devil, al-Shayṭān (Satan), or other demoniac creatures, also occurring in the plural form (al-Shayṭān),18 is translated by Robert mostly (53 of 70 occurrences of al-Shayṭān and 15 of 18 occurrences of al-Shayṭān) as Diabolus, counting also the occurrences in which he alters the proper name into an adjective (e.g. diabolica suggestio in 2:36; 7:200; diabolica commixtio in 12:100; diabolicae suggestiones et voluptates in 22:52). He translates it only one time (2:268) as Sathanas and 5 times as daemon / demoniacus. A few times he uses the plural for the singular (4:38 “wa-man yakuni l-shayṭānu la-hū qarīnan.”19 R. “diabolis consociabuntur”20; 19:45: “fatakuña li-l-shayṭāni waliyyan.”21 R. “et te diabolis associaturum”22) and

13 T., f. 84rb.
14 Bibl., p. 188.
15 For this problem, see Wensinck-[L.Gardet], “Iblis,” in EF.
16 “Wa-idh quñā li-l-malī’ikatu usjudū li-ādama fa-sajadū illā iblīsa kāna mina l-jinnī fa-fasaqa ‘an ami rabbī-hi [...].” (Ar.: “And when We said to the angels, ‘Bow yourselves to Adam’; so they bowed themselves, save Iblīs; he was one of the jinn, and committed ungodliness against his Lord’s command”). Ma. (T, f. 39va): “Et quando diximus angelis: ‘Adorate Adam’. Adoraverunt omnes excepto Dyabolo, qui fuit ex demonio: inobediens enim fuit precepto creatoris sui.” R. (Bibl. p. 96): “Quando nos inunximus angelis, ut sese Adae subijecerent, omnes praeter Belzebub, qui et diabolus factus a Deo discessit, praeceps to perfecer.”
17 Cfr. Wensinck-[L.Gardet], “Iblis,” in EF.
18 According to Fahd (“Shayṭān,” in EF, 9, p. 406), the term al-Shayṭān “denotes the deities of paganism (2:14; 4:76, 117:119-120; 5:90-1; 19:44-5 etc.).” Otherwise Rippin, “Shayṭān,” in EF, p. 408: The references suggest that the word is used to refer to the hosts of evil (e.g. Q 2:102; 6:121), the evil leaders among humans (e.g. 2:14; 6:112) and mischievous spirits very similar to jinn (e.g. 6:71; 21:82).
19 Ar., p. 78: “Whosoever has Satan for a comrade.”
20 Bibl., p. 31.
21 Ar., p. 306: “so that thou becomest a friend to Satan.”
22 Bibl., p. 99.
the singular for the plural (6:71: “ka-l-ladhī stahwat-hū l-shayāṭīnu fī l-arqī ḥāyrānā...”23 R. “sicut ille brutus et inscius quia diabolo seductus et irrisus”24). Sometimes he omits the translation or substitutes the proper name with a pronoun for stylistic reasons (e.g. 29:38 (om.); 4:120 (Qui); 17:64 (om.)).

Mark instead translates al-Shayṭān mostly (39 times) as Sathanas, 23 times as diabolus, 5 as demon (one of them plural for singular: 7:201: “Inna l-ladhīna ttaqaw idhā massa-hum ṭā‘ifun mina l-shayṭāni tadḥakkarū fa-idhā-hum muḥṣirūn.”25 Ma.: “Illi enim qui metuunt quando turba tangit eos demonum recordantur eisque videntibus”26), one time as demonium and two times with a pronoun in order to avoid a repetition in the same sentence (17:53 (qui); 22:52 (eius)). Al-Shayṭān is translated by him 14 times as demones (thus expressing the difference with Satan), but one time as diabolus (sg.) and 3 times as Satan (sg.).

The name Jālūt (Goliath; cfr. Hebr. gālīyath) appears three times in sūrah 2 (vv. 249, 250, 251) and is translated all the time by Robert as Golia and by Mark as philisteum.

In these verses (247 and 249) occurs also the name Tālūt: both translators identify him correctly and translate it as Saul.

Āzar is the name of Abraham’s father in sūrah 6:74. In Gen. 11:27 Abraham’s father is called Terakh. According to A. Jeffery27:

There can be no doubt that it [scil. Āzar] is a deformation of the Hebrew Eleazar, the name of Abraham’s faithful servant in the Genesis story which, as that story came to Muhammad, was mistaken for the name of his father.

Mark makes a translation of the name, while Robert transliterates it. I think it is worth noting that none of them, who were certainly aware of the name reported by the book of Genesis, thought of changing it.

23 Ar., p. 129: “Like one lured to bewilderment in the earth by Satans.”
24 Bibl., p. 47.
25 Ar., p. 168: “The godfearing when a visitation of Satan troubles them, remember, and then see clearly.”
26 T, f. 23ra. This translation is probably due to the misunderstanding of tā‘if: Ambros and Procházka, A Concise Dictionary, p. 176: “‘walking around’, poss. to be understood as ‘phantom, apparition’ [...] [in 7:201] also explained as ‘impulse [to do s.th]’”; with tā‘ifā (pl. tawā‘if), Ambros and Procházka, A Concise Dictionary, “‘group, section, party (of people)’”. The translation as turba probably made Mark turn the members of the “group,” i.e. the demons, to plural.

Due to the shortness of the verse I quote it entirely, so that the reader could get a sample of the two interpreters’ way of translating: Arabic: “Wa-idh qāla ibrāhimu li-abi-hi āzara a-tattakhidhu aṣnāman alīhātan innī arā-ka wa-qawma-ka fi ḍalālin mubīn.”

Ma: “Quando dixit Abra- ham patri suo Lazaro: ‘Cur suscipitis ydola in deos? Video enim te et populum tuum in manifesta perditione.’”

R.: “Abrahe patrem suum Azar increpando quaerenti, cur imagines sibi deos efficeret, unde ipse gensque sue tota in errorem manifestum incideret, dixi...”

"Uzayr, appearing in 9:30, is identified with Ezra by Muslim commentators. Mark translates it as Eleazar, Robert transliterates it as Ozair.

Qārūn is the biblical Qorah from Num. 16. However, he is depicted as one of Moses’ people only in Q 28:76-82. In the other two passages in which he appears (29:39 and 40:24), he is depicted as a minister of the Pharaoh together with Ḥāmān. Robert translates this name as Karon (40:24 Karaon) and Mark as Charon.

Ḥāmān is translated by Robert as Hemen (in 28:6; 28:38; 40:36) or Hamen (in 29:39) or Haamen (in 40:24). Mark translates it as Haman.

Among the names which belong to the Hebrew-Christian tradition we find also Ba’l (Ma.: Baal; R.: Bal in the accusative form Balen), who is mentioned in 37:125 by Helija (cfr. 1 Kings 18); Ya’jūj wa-Ma’jūj (Gog and Magog, cfr. Ez. 38 and 39; Apoc. 20:7-10) are always translated as Gog et Magog by Mark. Robert translates them in this way in 21:96, but, interestingly, in 18:94 and 97 as transmontani. For this, note that Robert translates the beginning of 18:93 “ḥattā iḍhā bal-

28 English translation by Arberry, p. 130: “And when Abraham said to his father Azar, ‘Takest thou idols for gods? I see thee, and thy people, in manifest error.’”

29 T, f. 18ra.

30 Bibl., p. 47.


32 Macdonald (“Kārūn,” in EF, 4, p. 673), notes that this could come from a legend derived from rabbinical literature in which “Ḥāmān and Kārūn are bracketed together because of their riches and their avariciousness, thus explaining why the latter has become Pharaoh’s minister.”

33 The variant Acharon is also present, e.g. in T., 52vb (Q 28:76) and elsewhere, but Charon is in my opinion to prefer for an analogue reason to that one illustrated above for Ambram / Abraham (Acharon being the Hebrew spelling for Aaron).

34 A1, f. 101vb; Bibl., p. 126: “Hamar.”

35 A1, f. 114rb; Bibl., p. 146: “Haaran.”
agha bayna l-saddayni” as “Demum ipso ad montes applicante.”

Gog and Magog are the ones who are beyond these montes and the “he” is Dhū-l-qarnayn (the Two-horned), i.e. Alexander the Great, who built a barrier to defend the people who were before the saddayni / montes from Gog and Magog. Robert gives an explicit translation of Dhū-l-qarnayn as Alexander, Mark instead remains close to the Arabic and translates it as Bicornis.

A last particular case of this group is that of Idrīs, who is also somehow connected to the romance of Alexander: he is mentioned twice in the Qur’an (19:56-57: “Wa-udhkur fi l-kitābī idrīsā inna-hū kāna sid-dīqan nabīyyan / Wa-rafa’ā-hu makānā ‘aliyyan” and 21:85-86: “Wa-ismā‘īla wa-idrīsa wa-dhā-l-kiflī kullun mina l-ṣābirin / Wa-adkhalā-hum fī rahmati-nā inna-hum mina l-ṣālihin”), and at first his name does not sound like someone known to the biblical tradition. It is considered by Nöldeke to come from the name Andreas, which he referred to Jesus’ apostle. Hartmann refers into the “cook of Alexander the Great who achieved immortality by accident, according to the romance of Alexander,” without “material evidence,” but with very reasonable argumentation. The Muslim commentators, referring to 19:57, identify him, among others, with the biblical Enoch. P. Casanova, instead, connected it with Ezra (from the Greek Esdras).
We can relate the translation of Robert to the one or the other of these exegetic traditions, as he translates the name as Hesdra⁴⁶ (19:56-57: “Hesdram quoque veridicum atque prophetam a nobis elevatum in locum excelsum in hoc volumine nomina”⁴⁷; 21:85-86: “Ismael et Hesdra et Alchifla, indurantes omnes, et patientes ac boni nostram senserunt pietatem et misericordiam⁴⁸) and Mark, who chooses Enoch (19:56-57: “Et recole in libro Enoch: enim fuit verax propheta et sublimavimus eum in locum excelsum”⁴⁹; 21:85-86: “Et Ysmael et Enoch et qui susceptus est in cunabulis, omnes patientes, et misericorditer egimus cum eis quia iusti erant⁵⁰).

II

This last quotation of Mark of Toledo and his translation of Dhū-l-kifl as “qui susceptus est in cunabulis” brings us to the second group of names, i.e. the names who have not a parallel in the target language / culture.

In this case the only method of “translating” the name seems to be the transliteration.

This is, in fact, the method mostly employed by both translators when they meet this kind of names: Tubba', king of Yemen, (44:37 and 50:14) is translated by Mark as Thoba and by Robert as Tuba; The Thamūd (first mention 7:73), the people to which the prophet Sālih (about whom we will speak later) was sent, are translated by Mark mostly (ca. 2/3 of the times) as Thamude (plural), or as Thamud. Robert translates it always as Themut(h), except in 7:63, where he has Teuth⁵¹; the prophet Shu’ayb (first mention 7:88) is translated by Mark as So(h)ab or Sohaib; by Robert as Sc(h)aib or Schaibe(h). The people ’Ād (first...
mention 7:65) is translated by Mark as Had (only in 29:38 he has Hud).
Robert translates it as Ha(a)t(h); Hud, the prophet sent to the people
’Ad is translated by Robert as Hut(h) and by Mark as Hud; The Sabians,
arab. al-Šabī‘un,52 appearing three times in the Qur’an (2:62; 5:69;
22:17)53 are translated by Mark in 5:69 as Sabbahonite54 and in the
other two times they are omitted in the translation (Was the fact that in
2:62 and 22:17 they appear in Arabic in the indirect case the reason of
Mark’s problems?).55 Robert’s translation is way more interesting: In
2:62 they are translated as “those who redirect themselves towards an-
other law (=religion), after having left their (previous) one” ([omnis]
leges variantium).56 Similarly, they are translated in
22:17 (leges variantium).57 In 5:69 another interpretation is added: The

53 Q 2:62: “Inna l-ladhina āmanū wa-l-ladhina ḥādū wa-l-naṣāra’ wa-l-ṣābī’ina man
āmanā bi-l-lāhī wa-l-yawmī l-ākhirī wa-’amila ṣāliḥān fa-la-hum ajru-hum inda rabbi-him
wa-lā khawfun ‘alay-him wa-lā hum yahzanūna.” *Ar.*, p. 8: “Surely they that believe, and
those of Jewry, and the Christians, and those Sabaeans, whose believes in God and the
Last Day, and works righteousness – their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear
shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow” Q 5:69: “Inna l-ladhina āmanū wa-l-ladhina
ḥādū wa-l-ṣābī’ina wa-l-naṣāra’ man āmanā bi-l-lāhī wa-l-yawmī l-ākhirī wa-’amila ṣāliḥān
fa-lā khawfun ‘alay-him wa-lā hum yahzanūna.” *Ar.*, p. 111: “Surely they that believe, and
those of Jewry, and the Sabaeans, and those Christians, whosoever believes in God and
the Last Day, and works righteousness – no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sor-
row” Q 22:17: “Inna l-ladhina āmanū wa-l-ladhina ḥādū wa-l-ṣābī’ina wa-l-naṣāra’ wa-l-
majūsa wa-l-ladhina ashrakū inna l-lāhā yafṣīlu bayna-hum yawma l qiyyāmati inna l-lāhā
’alā kulli shay’in shahidūn.” *Ar.*, p. 335: “Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, the
Sabaeans, the Christians, the Magians and the idolaters – God shall distinguish between
them on the Day of Resurrection; assuredly God is witness over everything.” (Arberry’s
translation probably originates in a confusion of the Sabian with the “Sabaeans, the inhab-
itants of Saba’, the biblical Sheba” against which warns the François de Blois in his article
Sabians, in the *Encyclopædia of the Qur’ān*, p. 511-512.)
54 T, f. 15vb: “Illī enim qui crediderunt et Iudei et Sabbahonite et Nazareni qui credi-
derunt in Deum et diem ultimum et bona fecerunt non timebunt nec contristabantur.”
55 Q 2:62 = T, f. 2ra: “Illī enim qui crediderunt et Iudei et Christiani qui crediderunt in
Deum et diem ultimum et operati sunt bonum et habebunt apud Deum mercedem nec for-
midabant nec dolebunt”; Q 22:17 = T, f. 44va: ”Illī autem qui crediderunt et qui iudaisarunt
et Nazareti et gentiles et ydolatre Deus utique dirimet inter eos die resurrectionis. Deus
enim testis est in omni re.”
56 Bibl., p. 10: “Sciendum autem generaliter, quoniam omnis recte vivens, Iudaicus seu
Christianus, seu lege sua relecta in aliam tendens, omnis scilicet Deum adorans, bonique
gestor, indubitanter divinum amorem assequetur.”
57 Bibl., p. 107; “[Deus] qui super omnia potens, illa die credentium et Iudaeeorum, ac
leges variantum, Christianorum, item et gentilium ac incredulorum iudex atque discussor
intererit.” (I put the comma after “variantium,” which is absent in Bibliander’s edition.
This comma is very important to convey the proper meaning and could be put there only

Sabians are in fact rendered as “those who adore the angels instead of God or those who change [their] religion for another one” (angelos loco Dei adorantes, qui scilicet legem pro lege variant).\(^{58}\) Now, these translations support Burman’s thesis\(^ {59}\) of the use of traditional Islamic exegesis by the translators. These explanations can be found, among others, in al-Tabari’s\(^ {60}\) and in Ibn ‘Atiyya’s\(^ {61}\) commentaries.

Zayd, the Prophet’s adoptive son (33:37) is translated by Mark as Zeidus, while Robert does not write his name explicitly, but, while talking about Zaynab, Zayd’s wife, he says “her husband” (maritus suus).\(^ {52}\) Luqman (31:12-13), a legendary character, is translated by Robert as Aluchmen and by Mark as Locmanus.

The Quraysh (106:1), Muhammad’s fellow tribesmen, are translated by Robert as homines Corash and by Mark as generationes Corressi.\(^ {63}\) Harut and Marut (2:102), the two fallen angels, are translated by Robert as Arot et Marot and by Mark as Harot et Maroth.

Hārūt and Mārūt (2:102), the two fallen angels, are translated by Robert as Arot et Marot and by Mark as Harot et Maroth. The name Muhammad is translated by Mark as Machometus (with the variants Mahometus and Mafometus) and by Robert as Machometus or Machometus (one time, in 48:29, as ille). For the name Ahmad, however, contained in 61:6 in Jesus’ prophecy about a subsequent prophet bearing that name, Mark makes a literal translation, from the meaning of the root h-m-d as “praise,” while Robert transliterates it: “Wa-idh qāla ‘isā bnu maryama [...] inni [...] wa-mubashshiran bi-rasūlin ya’ti min thank to the comparison with the Arabic original. Thusly one understands that this passage is not about some “religion changing Christians,” but two separate groups i.e the “leges variantes” (="Sabaëans") and the Christians. This is a very good example of an editorial choice which changed a fundamentally correct translation into a mistaken one.

\(^{58}\) Bibl., p. 41-42: “Credentes atque Iudaei, et angelos loco Dei adorantes, qui scilicet legem pro lege variant, Christiani etiam, omnes hi inquam si in Deum crediderint, et iudicij diem expectantes benefecerint, nihil timeant.”

\(^{59}\) Firstly conceived in his article “Tafsir and Translation,” cfr. above n. 5.

\(^{60}\) Al-Tabari, Ḥāmi’ al-bayān fi tafsīr al-qur’ān, 1, p. 319: “wa-kullu khārijin min dinīn kāna ‘alay-him ilā ākkhara ghayru-hu tusammi-hu l’-arabu shībi’ān” (“The Arabs call Sabian everyone who leaves a religion, which he belongs to, for another, different one”; my transl.); ibidem: “man kharaja min dinīn ilā dinīn” (“and the Sabian [...] is who exits from a religion for (another) religion”). ibidem: “hum qawmun ya’budūna l-malā’ikata” (“they are a people who adore the angels”; my transl.).


\(^{63}\) Q 106:1: Li-ilāfi qurayskin (Ar., p. 661: “For the composing of Koraish”); Bibl., p. 187; T. f. 83vb.
ba’di smu-hū aḥmadu [...].”

Mark translates as follows: “Et quando dixit Ihesus, filius Marie [...] Ego [...] et annuntio vobis legatum post me venturum, cuius nomen est ‘gloriosus’ [...]”.

Robert instead: “Christum item Mariae filium dicentem: [...] ego [...] vobisque nuncium affero, de nuncio post me venturo, cui nomen Ahametthus [...].”

Mark’s translation of Ahmad introduces a solution he uses for this kind of names: when the name allows it, he literally translates it into Latin.

So Mark’s translation of Dhū-l-kifl, a mysterious prophet about whose identity even the Muslim exegetic tradition has not an univocal explanation, in 38:48 is Alumpnus. Kafala means in fact “to nurture” (like Latin alo, from which alumnum comes). For the already seen translation in 21:85 as qui susceput est in cunabulis I unfortunately have not found a satisfactory explanation and I have to leave the problem open. Robert translates the name in both occurrences as Alchifla.

Also Șālih, the prophet of the Thamud, is translated into Latin by Mark as Prosper, (the root s-l-h meaning, among other meanings, “to prosper”), while Robert has Schale.

As for Mark’s translation of Ašhābu-l-rass (“the people of the ditch” or “of the well”) as consortes capitis in 25:38 and as socii capitis in 50:12, we can suppose a connection with the word ra’s (=head). Robert has Arazee gentem in the first passage and in the second one superbi, if this translation is to be related to Ašhābu-l-rass. In this passage, in fact, not all the names that appear in the Arabic text are translated by Robert. If we would suppose that Robert, too, connected rass with the meaning of “head,” maybe he could have meant, “those who held their head high,” hence “haughty.”

64 Ar., p. 580: “And when Jesus son of Mary said, ‘[...] I am indeed [...] giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me whose name shall be Ahmad.”

65 T. f. 76ra. In the manuscript the “s” is corrected and a line is put over the “u” (to give gloriosum) to comply the word to nomen. the manuscripts V, f. 193v. and P, f. 215r, too, have gloriosum. A, f. 210rb, has gloriosus and D, f. 99va has graciosus. I chose the variant with “s” as lectio difficilior, to be understood as a translated proper name, rather than the adjective predicated to nomen.

66 Bibl., p. 171, actually has Machumetus in the text, but in A1, f. 128rb, this is just an interlinear gloss above the word Ahametthus.


68 The verses 50:12-14 (“Kadhdhabat qabla-hum qawmu nūhin wa-ašhābu-l-rassi wa-thamūd / wa-‘adun wa-fr’awmu wa-ikhwānu lūt / Wa-ašhābū l-aykati wa-qamwu tabba’in kullun kadhdhaba l-rusula fa-haqqā wa’id.” Engl. transl. Ar., p. 539-40: “Cried lies before them the people of Noah and the men of Er-Rass, and Thamood, and Ad and Pharaoh, the brothers of Lot, the men of the Thicket, the people of Tubba’. Every one cried lies to the
The Ašḥābu-ʾl-ayka ("people of the thicket") are named four times in the Qurʾān. Two of these are translated by Robert referring to the meaning of ayka (thicket) as people who has a sort of religious cult connected with trees (in 15:78: "De hominibus arboribus invitabantibus et sic temerarie deviantibus nostram vindictam sumpsimus") or simply as homines aboris in 38:13. In 26:176 they are, however, translated as gens Ale-icha and in 50:14, as we have seen, he omits them (or incorporates them in the superbi). Mark translates the expression in 15:78 as habitatores Gomorre, in 26:176 as socii Lechate, in 38:13 as populus Lechate and in 50:14 as fratres Lechate. The explanation for the translation with habitatores Gomorre can derive from the context of 15:78. The Ašḥābu-ʾl-ayka are here described to be punished because of their impious conduct. Right before their mention (vv. 49-77) the story of Lot (cfr. Gen. 18-19) and his city’s destruction by a rain of stones of baked clay (v. 74) is told. The v. 79 recites then like that: "Fantaqamn a min-hum wa-inna hum a la-bi-imāmīn mubīn." Now, Bobzin explains that the huma (="both of them") refers to the aforementioned "people of Lot" and the subsequently named "people of the Thicket" and Bausani explicitly translates the verse as "and We took vengeance on them, and, behold, those two cities,

Messengers, and My threat came true."

are summarised in one sentence by Robert (Bibl., p.160): "Sui quoque predecessores videlicet homines Noe et Hat superbique Pharaonis, nec non et Tuba, nostris praeceptis atque prophetis contradixerunt illisque contigit quod illis praedictum est et praedicatum.”

69 Bibl., p. 86.
70 Bibl., p. 114.
71 Bibl., p. 118.
72 Ar., p. 257: “We took vengeance on them. The two of them were upon a roadway manifest.” My interpretation of the verse is: “We took vengeance on them and indeed both of them [have become] clear examples!” By the way I find worth noting Mark’s translation of Imām as “sacerdos” (the translation of the whole verse is: “ulti [all mss. but T, f 35ra, which has: multi] sumus in eos, licet sacerdotem habeant manifestum”). He does not understand the Quranic connotation of the word as “s.o. or s.th. exemplary or serving as a standard,” (Ambros and Procházka, A Concise Dictionary, p. 29), something that stands before oneself (cfr. the preposition amāma = in front of) to serve as a guide and a model (an idea very good conveyed by the German word Vor-bild). On the contrary he translates the word with the first meaning that one finds, for example, in the Lexikon der islamischen Welt under the article “Imām”: ”Vorbeter bei einem rituellen Gemeinschaftsgebet” (Falaturi, “Imām,” i.e. the person who stands in front of the praying community and guides the prayer. That was probably the most common meaning in Mark’s time, too. He translates imām as sacerdos also in 2:124. I spoke of Mark’s custom of translating a word with a standard meaning, neglecting the nuances given by the context also in Main Features, p. 334-336).

clear exemplar Signs.” 74 So, if the story of Lot and the one of the Ašḥābu-l-ayka constitute a unity which is sealed by the v. 79, and if this is the story of the destruction of two cities, Mark must have concluded that, as according to the biblical tradition the city of the people of Lot was Sodom, the city of the Ašḥābu-l-ayka must have been Gomorrah.

Mark makes a translation also of the name Abū laḥab (=Father of the flame), “nickname” of Muhammad’s uncle and fierce opponent ’Abd al-‘Uzzā b. ’Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hishām, mentioned in 111:1, as Flammeus. Robert writes Avileahab. 75

III

The third and last group in which I divided the proper names appearing in the Qurʾān is the one containing the proper names of pre-Islamic and pagan gods and idols. I had to create a separate group for these mostly because of Mark’s translation of them, which is at once surprising and interesting. Before, let us have a look of such translations: in surah 53:19 and 71:23 76 he replaces the proper names occurring in these verses, “the three most venerated deities of the pre-Islamic pantheon” 77 and “the five gods dating from the time of Noah” respectively, with names derived from the Greek-Roman religion and mythology. He translates the names al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, appearing in surah 53:19 as Pallas, Venus et Dyana and the names Wadd, Suwā’, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq and Nasr, mentioned in 71:23, as Proserpinam, Plutonem, Cerberum, Venerem, Naiades, Pleiades. (Robert’s translation of these names is respectively Alleto, Alance, Meneth, Huden, Schuan, Jaguta, Iamucu, Naceren). 78

Moreover, he translates the Tāghūt (8 times) as Astaroth (Robert has Idola / Theut / Thaut / diaboli et idola) and Jibt as Mandroth (Robert has, probably – but it is not sure that it refers to Jibt, magi 79).

75 A1, f. 138ra; Bibl. p. 188: “Avileah.”
76 Cfr. Cecini, Alcoranus latinus, p. 132, n. 522; Cecini, Main Features, p. 337.
79 Cfr. Atallah, “Gibt et Tāghūt dans le Coran,” esp p. 69, where he notes that M. Hamidullah translates Jibt as magie (Hamidullah, Le saint Coran, p. 93). Atallah (p. 73) recalls also that Suyūtī explains Jibt as an ethiopic word that Ṭabarî, basing himself on the tafsir author Saʿīd b. Jubayr, says to mean sorcerer.”

The name *Mālik* (43:77), by which Moloch is probably meant, is translated by Mark as *Reges*, while Robert transliterates as *Melich*.

This last one is of course the easiest to explain: Mark just translates the name (due to the Quranic defective writing he must have read *malik* (=king); it is not clear why he translated in plural). This name could also fit in the precedent group, but I put it here because he refers to a pagan deity.

Coming now to *sūrah* 53:19, it is striking that Mark tries to convey the essence of the proper names by replacing the three Arabic goddesses with three goddesses of the Greek-Roman pantheon. There are elements which could support the hypothesis that these translations are not randomly made. The association *al-‘Uzza-Venus*, is well known.\(^{80}\)

As to *al-Lāt*, she also has, among others, some traits of a warrior goddess which approach her to *Athena*.\(^{81}\) About *Manāt*, Fahd informs us that in the hellenised Orient she took different roles, from simple *Tychē* to Venus-Good Fortune to Nemesis. The root from which the name comes (*m-n-w/y*), Fahd continues, conveys the idea of counting and dividing, with the particular application to the idea of “counting the days of life,” hence Death (*maniyya*), and giving each one his part, hence “Fortune, Destiny.” This could be the characteristics which drew *Manāt* near *Diana/Artemis*, who for example could bring sudden death with the strike of her arrows\(^{82}\) and, in his role of *Diana-Proserpina-Hekate* ruled over the dead in the underworld.\(^{83}\)

The explanation of 71:23 is more difficult and I did not find almost any characteristics that could associate this names of the five idols of Noah’s times to the respective Latin translations. By the way – feature very unusual for Mark – we have here six Latin names for five Arabic ones. Moreover, they are all supposed to be male\(^{84}\) and singular, while

\(^{80}\) Cfr. Zayadine, “Al-‘Uzza Aphrodite.”


\(^{84}\) Fahd, *Le panthéon*, p. 155.
in the translation we have a female and two plural names. Nasr is supposed to be a vulture and I do not see an explicit connection to Naiads or Pleaids.

The only elements I have found that justify Mark’s translation is that Wadd could have been a lunar God, thusly being connected to Proserpina, and that Suwā’ was supposedly associated in the cult to Wadd (fitting in this way to Pluto to create a couple with Proserpina), which, however, is not sure.

So in this case we have to suppose for now that Mark just connected the names to infernal entities and creatures (Proserpina, Pluto, Cerberus) and pagan rural cults (Naiads, Pleaids).

The translation of Jibt, which together with Ṭāğhūt is generally considered to indicate idols, as Mandroth is quite mysterious, too. I could not find the name Mandroth in the semitic pantheon or in the Bible. I could hypothesise it to be a corruption of Nemroth (cfr. Michea, 5:5 – where it stands quintessentially for Assiria, so being connected in a way to Astaroth, Mark’s translation of Ṭāghūt, next to Jibt in 4:51 – and Gen. 10:8 and 11). Other similar names which I could find in Jerome’s Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum are Mazaroth (cfr. 2 Kings. 23:5), which should be referred to the zodiac constellations, and is

85 Fahd, Le panthéon, p. 133-134.
86 Fahd, Le panthéon, p. 189.
87 Fahd, Le panthéon, p. 156.
88 Cfr. Stewart, “Ṭāḡhūt,” in EF, 10, p. 93-95; Nöldeke, Neue Beitrage zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft, p. 47-48. Atallah, “Gibt et Ṭāḡūt,” p. 77f., however, connects, with a plausible argumentation, the word Ṭāḡhūt with the Egyptian deity Thoth and the word Jibt with Qibṭ, the name that the Arabs give to the Egyptians. So, the Ṭāḡhūt should be “des sages versés dans toute la science égyptienne révélée par Thôt et ses écrits” (p. 80) and Jibt should stand for “pratiques divinatoires et magiques” (p. 81), this last hypothesis being supported by the often quoted ḥadīth (Atallah mentions Jawhari, Ṣaḥāḥ, s.v. jibt; Ibn Manẓūr): “al-ṭiyaratu wa-l-’iyāfiatu wa-l-ṭarqu mina l-jibt” (The belief in presages, the orichomancy and the lithomancy belong to / come from the jibt), ibidem.
89 Q 4:51: “A-lam tara ilā l-ladhīna utū nasīban mina l-kitābiyu’minūna bi-l-jiibti wa-l-ṭāḡhūti wa-yaqūlūna li-l-ladhīna kafarū hā’ulā’i aldā mina l-ladhīna ʾāmanū sabīl(ān).” (Ar., p. 80: “Hath thou not regarded those who were given a share of the Book believing in demons and idols, and saying to the unbelievers, ‘These are more rightly guided on the way than the believers’?”) Ma. (T, f. 11va): “Nonne vides eos quibus communicatus est Liber? Credunt in Mandroth et Astaroth, dicentes blasphemis: ‘Isti sunt in via magis recta quam credentes .’”
also spelled *Mazuroth* in Iob 38:32. By the way, the Hebrew root *n-d-r* (cfr. Arabic *n-dh-r*), to which the word *Mandroth* could be connected, means “to make a vow.”

As of *Ṭāghūt*, considering that Mark assumes it to be an idol, he translates it with a name which has a similar ending and stays quintessentially for idolatry in the Bible. (Cfr. Judg. 2:13; 1 Sam. 7:3-4; 2 Kings 23:13; and as *Astarthen* 1 Kings 11:5).

**Conclusion**

This quick overview on the Latin translations of proper names in the Qur’ān by Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo has shown that our translators have made use of all the possibilities of transfer that are available in this kind of situation. They used a proper name existing in their language when they could identify the Quranic character with one from “their own” tradition; they transliterated the name; they translated the meaning of the name; they used another proper name, which was not linguistically derived from the source name, but which in their opinion could make the character, which the proper name referred to, understandable to the audience, belonging to an analogue reality.

We can see a tendency towards transliteration in Robert and towards translation “at any cost” in Mark, however, we have shown that there are exceptions and that the tendency cannot be seen as an unbreakable rule. Even for the same name we have found different translations and different ways of translation used by the same translator, for example *Aṣḥābu-l-ayka* was translated by Mark in 15:78 (*habitatores Gomorre*) and was transliterated instead in 26:176 and 38:13 (*socii / populus Lechate*, if *Lechate* is not a translation, too, that I cannot identify). Otherwise, Robert has both *idola* and *Theut* corresponding to *Ṭāghūt* or both *homines arboris* and *gens Aleicha* for the same *Aṣḥābu-“Mazuroth” in Iob 38:32. By the way, the Hebrew root *n-d-r* (cfr. Arabic *n-dh-r*), to which the word *Mandroth* could be connected, means “to make a vow.”

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l-ayka. Mark, who replaces Jonas for Dhū-l-nūn, does not the same for Dhū-l-qarnayn, who remains the Bicornis, while Robert has Alexander. Robert, who normally strives towards variatio, can be very consistent (for example in the translation of Iblis) and Mark, who is normally consistent and repetitive (and who pays attention to etymological relationships between words), does not translate all the time – for example – al-Shayṭān as the apparently obvious Sathanas, but he uses other words, too, and the same Mark who does not render explicit to his public who the “Two-horned” is, goes that far to transform Semitic idols into “western” deities. 94

However, I notice an effort on Mark’s side to render every name understandable by his western Latin-Christian public, whenever he can. This public maybe would not have understood who the “Two-horned” was, but they would have understood the word Bicornis, as they would have understood the word Prosper or Alumnus even without knowing who was meant. Astaroth is not a Latin word, but it is present in the Bible. As for the name of the goddesses, the Latin public could relate more easily to the name Pallas then Alleto. On the other hand, one could say that the indissoluble bond between the proper name and its object should not be broken with a translation and that even if source and target proper name object may have common characteristics or even be “the same” person or deity, their proper designation with sounds deriving from the one or the other language would determine their cultural belonging, with all the background knowledge and connotations about them that this implies.

So the question about which is the better way of translating must still remain unanswered, as there is no method which is absolutely better or worse. We should ask us instead what understanding and aim of the own work can be supposed by the choice for the one or the other translation method.

If we focus on the proper names, we have the impression that Mark, more than Robert, tends to carry out a transfer which involves the cultural contents of the names, making them understandable for the audience and relating to their cultural background. Robert instead tends to leave the name in transliteration, keeping its alterity. On the contrary,

94 For other examples of the same word translated in different ways, cfr. Cecini, Main Features, p. 338-344.
on the level of the style, Mark’s phrasing is plain and respectful of the original, so that a comparison with it is easy. Robert, instead, reformulates the sentences very much and writes them in an elevated and complicated style. If we put these two aspects together, we could ask ourselves if Robert’s translation was not supposed to substitute the original, having the style and the syntax of a ripe Latin work, in which the proper names are not translated, but left as they are to better convey the alterity and the original connotation of their object, while Mark’s translation, even if it is perfectly legible alone, was not supposed to be read next to the Arabic original. Its plain style, in fact, would have simplified the comparison with the original. Moreover, the translation of proper names, which could be read in their original form in the source text, would have functioned as a sort of little commentary, like an interlinear gloss, a cultural aid for the reader, who could receive an idea of the reality the proper name pointed to. This way would have reduced the difficulties proper to every translation, and in particular to the “untranslatable” Qur’ān, to a minimum, leaving the level of style, sound, form, graphic appearance and property of language (for example in the case of the proper names) to the original and completing it with a translation that conveyed the meaning and helped to enable a transfer on cultural level, for a more profound comprehension of the text.

This hypothesis, as some of the translation explanations above as well, still calls for further research. It was however important for me to call attention to these interesting aspects of the Latin translations of the Qur’ān and I will be glad if this will encourage further studies on the subject.95

95 Many thanks to Pier Mattia Tommasino and Reinhold Glei for the support with which they accompanied the publication of this article, as to Heike Cosson for reviewing my English.

### Table: Gods, demons, angels and people in Robert of Ketton’s and Mark of Toledo’s Latin Qur’ān translation

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<td>does not translate, instead paraphrasis “maritus suus”</td>
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**Bibliography**


Some Remarks on the Translation of Proper Names in Mark of Toledo’s


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