A Definition of Islamophobia in Étienne Dinet's *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah*

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The late Étienne Nasreddine Dinet has been a fascinating companion throughout this journey and his paintings, observations, and prayers inspired me during my own visit to the holy sites of Islam in January 2018. I am hopeful his teachings will remain with me for years to come.

Abstract of Thesis

A Definition of Islamophobia
in Étienne Dinet's *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah*

Several sources date the first use of the term *islamophobie*, the original French version of 'Islamophobia' back to the early 20th century, when scholars Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim used it in their book *The Orient Seen From the Occident*.

Born in 1861, Étienne Nasreddine Dinet was a French painter who spent many years in Algeria and later converted to Islam. Dinet believed that, amity between Europe and Islam would guarantee peace in the world and committed great efforts to this cause. Shortly before his death in 1929, Dinet completed the Ḥajj, the Muslim pilgrimage, and counted his observations on the Muslim faith and Europe's hostility towards the religion in a travelogue, *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah*. Dinet's book presented one of the first detailed depictions of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in history.

Dinet's definition of Islamophobia is often dismissed from contemporary academic literature on the subject. This research project, however, argues that the painter's representation of Islamophobia presents many common themes with modern uses of the word.

This thesis first positions Dinet's Ḥajj travelogue in relation with other European travelogues of the era. Then, Dinet's definition of Islamophobia and his depiction of European hostility towards Islam in his work *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah* are examined. Finally, Dinet's representation of Islamophobia is compared with modern uses of the term and contemporary understandings of the phenomenon.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

It can be said that the gates for Ḥajj opened for European Muslims at the turning of the 20th century, with the beginning of the completion of the European colonial era, and many Westerners who embraced Islam were then able to perform the ritual. Certainly, many European accounts of the Ḥajj and the Hijaz were written with Western audiences in mind. For some authors, this was due to a feeling that, as a European, one could influence the relationship between Muslim lands and the Western colonial powers, or better yet to expose the beauty of Islamic practices and Muslim societies to their compatriots.

A French painter who completed the pilgrimage in 1929, Étienne Nasreddine Dinet himself counted his observations on the Muslim faith and Europe's hostility towards the religion in a travelogue, *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah* (1930), in which he also attempted a definition of the term *islamophobie* as the "persistence of Europe's more or less disguised hostility against Islam."

More than a type of individual ignorance about Muslims and the Muslim faith, Dinet framed Islamophobia as a political ideology that also took a structural form. This paper will thus examine how Dinet represented the phenomenon of Islamophobia throughout his book *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah.*

1.2. Review of Literature

When we look at academic literature surrounding Étienne Dinet, we notice that he is most acclaimed for his role as an Orientalist painter. Much scholarship examines his

paintings and positions him among other Orientalist painters of his time. It is more difficult, however, to find studies of Dinet's written works, which have only been thoroughly examined by a handful of scholars, notably Fernando Bravo López, François Pouillon, and Alain Gresh.

Academic scholarship on Islamophobia has become increasingly popular since the late 1990s. Among the works that study the etymology or origins of the word 'Islamophobia,' many mention Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim as the first user of the term. These works do not, however, present an analysis of his writings. Rather, it is the use of the term in the "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All" report published by the Runnymede Trust in 1997 that is taken as reference in most scholarship, and even encyclopedic entries, on Islamophobia. The evolution of the term 'Islamophobia' and the field of Islamophobia is also often based on the definition that is presented in the Runnymede Trust report.

The lack of scholarship on Dinet might be due to the fact that most of his works, including his two books mentioning the term 'Islamophobia,' *The Orient Seen From the Occident* and *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah,* have never been translated into English. Nevertheless, even in French and Arabic, most works on Dinet discuss his role as an artist during the colonial period and his political and religious engagements in Algeria. Others yet present detailed accounts from his life, including an important biography by Étienne Dinet's younger sister, Jeanne Dinet-Cornille, published nine years after Dinet's death. Few, however, provide an analysis of his representation of Islamophobia.

1.3. Research Questions

This thesis will particularly seek to answer the following questions: How did Étienne Dinet define the term "Islamophobia" and depict the hostile political climate towards Islam in Europe in his book *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah*? And how similar is Dinet's representation of Islamophobia to the framework in which the phenomenon is examined today?

1.4. Methodology

In order to put Dinet's understanding of Islamophobia into context, I will first look into some of the major trends defining Ḥajj travelogues in European languages written in the late 19th-early 20th centuries.

I will then rely on two major biographical works on Étienne Dinet, *La Vie de E. Dinet* by Jeanne Dinet-Cornille and *La Vie et L'Œuvre de Étienne Dinet* by Denise Brahimi, to provide a brief biography of Dinet and understand how his experiences might have affected his scholarship.

Finally, I will examine passages from *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah* in detail in order to make inferences about Dinet's definition of Islamophobia and representation of European hostility towards Islam. A translation of the Conclusion of the Book, which is the final chapter in which Dinet summarizes his analyses on Islamophobia, will be provided as an appendix.

Chapter 2: European Journeys to Mecca

2.1. Ḥajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage

The performance of Ḥajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and a duty upon every physically and financially able Muslim. The annual pilgrimage takes place during the month of Dhū'l-Ḥijjah of the Islamic lunar calendar and includes a series of highly symbolic rituals performed by the pilgrims in unity. It is, in fact, a reenactment of a series of events from the life of Prophet Abraham and his family. Regardless of worldly differences in race, nationality, culture, class, age, and gender, Muslims must don the *iḥrām*, a primordial and uniform dress that symbolizes equality and humility of all believers before God and that reminds one of the grave and of the Day of Judgment, before they perform the pilgrimage.[1]

In his book *Mecca: From Before Genesis Until Now*, scholar and philosopher Martin Lings says "There are many prophets and many pilgrimages; but just as the two words 'the Prophet' have come in common parlance to be a synonym for Muhammad, so also 'the Pilgrimage' is taken as a matter of course to refer to that pilgrimage which has been performed, as far as we know without a break, for the last four thousand years."[2] Indeed, the Ḥajj does not only symbolize an act of unity among Muslims from around the world and of all walks of life; it also represents a timeless tunnel that connects Muslims to hundreds of generations of believers who performed the same rituals, as far back as the time of Prophet Abraham.

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1. John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), s.v. "Hajj."

2. Martin Lings, *Mecca: From Before Genesis Until Now* (Cambridge: Archetype, 2004), 46.

2.2. A History of Ḥajj Travelogues in European Languages

In his book *A Thousand Roads to Mecca*, Michael Wolfe reports that, before 1250, Europeans rarely set out to Mecca in order to write about the Muslim world, except for commerce and pilgrimage. Travels from Europe to Mecca increased with the Renaissance, as some Westerners joined the trade caravans and developed a limited proficiency in Arabic in order to travel to Arabia and produce written accounts of their experiences. Since few Muslims bothered describing the routes and customs of their pilgrimage in written works and members of other faith communities were forbidden access to the holy sites, the Ḥajj constituted a great mystery for those who could not reach the Arabian lands. As such, the adventurers who set out on the journey were often Christians disguised as Muslims and had to write about their observations in secret.[3]

The literary precursors of the pilgrimage accounts are the adventure travelogues produced primarily by European explorers. So long as the process of colonization of Muslim lands continued from the 16th to 19th centuries, Mecca remained one of a few forbidden cities Western travelers risked their lives to "discover." Western observers were at times more concerned with their disguise rather than with the ritual of pilgrimage itself. Thus, their access to local information was often badly compromised by fears of being uncovered.[4] Scholar Marcia Hermansen reports that "some explorers took the authoritative attitude of the anthropologist or geographer" in documenting their findings

3. Michael Wolfe, *One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing About the Muslim Pilgrimage* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2015), 322.

4. Wolfe, 322.

on local practices.[5] For example, Albert Le Boulicaut, a French orientalist of that period, titled his travelogue *Au Pays des Mystères: Pèlerinage d'un Chrétien à la Mecque et à Médine* ('In the Country of Mysteries: Pilgrimage of a Christian to Mecca and Medina'), exoticizing the region and playing on the curiosity that the Arabian lands triggered in Europeans.

In 1811, the Swiss J.L. Burckhardt was said to have become the first European scholar to penetrate the Hijaz and reach Mecca, although he could not complete his exploration due to illness. [6] Three years later, Italian adventurer Giovanni Finati followed him under the assumed name of Mahomet and, by the mid-19th century, French government representative Léon Roches had also traveled to the Hijaz.[7] English explorer Richard Burton performed the pilgrimage in Muslim garb in 1852 and wrote about his experiences in his *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*.

Europeans, such as von Maltzan and Keane, also entered Arabia during the latter half of the 19th century and information about Mecca and Medina was becoming increasingly available in European languages, especially in the years immediately preceding the First World War.[8] In the period following the war, other Europeans, such as Eldon Rutter,[9] made the pilgrimage and, at the same time, more Muslims began publishing descriptions of the holy cities of Islam in European languages.

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5. Marcia Hermansen, "Roads to Mecca: Conversion Narratives Of European And Euro-American Muslims," *The Muslim World* 89, no. 1 (January 1999): 65.

6. Jacob Landau, *The Hejaz Railway and the Muslim Pilgrimage* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1971), 26.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Wolfe, 329.

It can be said that the gates for Ḥajj opened at the turning of the 20th century, with the beginning of the completion of the European colonial era, and many Westerners who embraced Islam were then able to perform the ritual. Some of these travelers had to pass religious tests that would verify their faith and grant them access to Arabia. Later, in order to prevent "cover" Muslims from attempting to perform the pilgrimage as an adventure to collect information, King Ibn Saʿūd established a rule in the 1930s that a person had to have been Muslim for six years to be able to undertake the Ḥajj.[10]

Naturally, the Ḥajj accounts of the Europeans who traveled before the late 20th century do not begin in the sacred lands but rather, several months before reaching the Hijaz, as soon as they step out of their home. Travelogues written during the 19th-20th centuries suggest that France, England, and the Netherlands were the first countries to start the visa application process for the pilgrims. With the spread of steamships starting from the early 19th century and the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, there was a considerable increase in the number of pilgrims who traveled to Arabia by sea.[11] Giovanni Finati, Léon Roches, Richard Burton, and Jules Gervais-Courtellemont all reached Arabia by sea through Egypt during that period.[12]

Constructed by the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, the completion of the Hijaz railway system in 1908 was a major development for the logistics of Ḥajj travel. Pilgrims who embarked from Istanbul were thus able to reach Medina in five days instead of forty and travelers from Russia, Central Asia, Iran, and Iraq all met in Damascus to take the

10. Hermansen, 65.

11. Wolfe, 192.

12. Landau, 26.

train, although the line never reached Mecca. It is important to note, however, that few Europeans joined the Syrian Ḥajj caravan that set out from Damascus, which was likely to be a more difficult route.[13]

2.3. Common Themes Among European Ḥajj Travelogues of the Late 19th-Early 20th Centuries

With the completion of European colonization start the numerous Ḥajj accounts of European and Euro-American Muslim narrators. One common feature among European Ḥajj travelogues is that they provide rigorously detailed descriptions of every aspect of the traveler's journey, including the meaning and symbolism behind each religious ritual performed. Certainly, many European accounts of the Ḥajj and the Hijaz were written with Western, non-Muslim audiences in mind. For some authors, this was due to a feeling that, as a European, one could influence the relationship between Muslim lands and the Western colonial powers, or better yet to expose the beauty of Islamic practices and Muslim societies to their compatriots.[14]

Nevertheless, many travelogues that describe journeys to Mecca and the Hijaz could not completely refrain from the colonial gaze and attitudes.[15] For example, although a Muslim himself, in *Triumphant Pilgrimage: An English Muslim's Journey from Sarawak to Mecca*, David Chale (pseudonym for Owen Rutter), recurrent of any other orientalist narrator of the period, describes Arabs as slaves to their sexual desires.[16]

13. Ibid, 27.

14. Hermansen, 64.

15. Ibid., 63.

16. Ibid., 67.

Many other accounts depict the difficulty with which European Muslims dealt with the complexity of being both European and Muslim during the colonial era.[17]

From 1900 onwards, Muslims had been immigrating to Europe in large numbers, first to fill a low-wage labor vacuum and then to join the European ranks during the First World War. Consequently, many authors of Ḥajj travelogues were concerned with Middle Eastern politics and the impact of the European strategy on the region. Since Mecca was conquered by Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ūd and his Wahhabi followers in the early 20th century, the decade following this conquest witnessed the production of many Ḥajj travelogues by European Muslim converts who generally expressed a positive attitude towards Wahhabi piety. Travelers like Eldon Rutter and Lady Cobbold wrote well-observed passages about Ibn Sa'ūd, while Muhammad Asad and Harry St. John Philby developed an intimate friendship with the King.[18]

Although they performed the same rites and rituals, each traveler seems to have gone through a unique pilgrimage experience, influenced by their respective identities, backgrounds, and surroundings. For example, Lady Cobbold, an English convert to Islam who completed the pilgrimage in 1933, had intimate access to the female side of domestic life in the two holy cities that others before her had not been afforded the opportunity to experience.[19] She approached the Ḥajj with a very spiritual lens and in line with the Sufi tradition, often describing the higher symbolic dimensions and meanings of the rites she was performing.[20] Having been involved with politics and diplomacy for the

17. Ibid.

18. Wolfe, 321, 408.

19. Ibid., 408.

20. Evelyn Cobbold, *Pilgrimage to Mecca,* (London: John Murray, 1934).

most part of his life, Muhammad Asad, in his turn, embraced Islam as an alternative to bourgeois Occidental values and was more interested in shaping the relationship between a "post-Christian" Europe and the Muslim world.[21] Others yet embarked on the journey for the sole purpose of documenting the practices observed by the pilgrims and relate them to a non-Muslim audience. European travelogues of the 19th-20th centuries all tell different accounts of the same ritual. However, they all played important roles in shaping the European opinion on Islam and Muslims.

21. Wolfe, 321.

Chapter 3: A Biography of Étienne Nasreddine Dinet

3.1. Dinet's Early Years and His Conversion to Islam

Alphonse Étienne Dinet was born on March 28th, 1861 in Paris to a family of the French middle bourgeoisie. When he was ten years old, Dinet joined the prestigious Lycée Henri IV[22] and, upon graduation, enrolled into the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris to pursue an academic training in painting, renouncing a family tradition of pursuing a career in law. Upon graduation, Dinet received a formation under the auspices of renowned French painters such as William Bouguereau and Tony Robert-Fleury. [23]

It is only a fortunate coincidence that led Dinet to travel to Algeria in 1884 and change his life forever. As he had recently completed his studies, Dinet was told by his friend Lucien Simon that Simon's brother, an entomologist, was to travel to Algeria with a group of scientists to look for a rare type of beetle. The two painters thus decided to join the cohort of scientists, thinking it would be a good opportunity to discover and paint new landscapes.[24]

This first one-month trip to Algeria had considerable impact on Dinet, who had already decided to come back a year later, having secured a scholarship.[25] For the following three years, Dinet returned to Bou Saâda and spent the summer exploring others parts of Algeria and painting scenes from the country. During his fourth visit in

22. Denise Brahimi, *La Vie et l'Œuvre de Étienne Dinet,* vol. 2, Les Orientalistes (Courbevoie: ACR, 1984), 12.

23. Ibid., 14.

24. Ibid., 20.

25. Ibid., 21.

1888, Dinet met Sliman ben Ibrahim, a religious scholar who was introduced to him as a guide and later became one of Dinet's closest friends.[26]

Sliman ben Ibrahim eventually became a major driver in Dinet's interest in the religion of Islam and assisted Dinet in navigating through religious teachings over the years. Finally, in 1913, Dinet officially converted to Islam and took the name Nasreddine, although many believe he had already adopted the religion years before.[27] In *Le Pélerinage à la Maison Sacrée d'Allah* (The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah), the painter affirms nobody had ever approached him to convert him to Islam, but that his conversion was the result of "thirty years of study, meditation, and contemplation."[28]

Dinet holds a very important place in the history of Orientalist painting. In 1889, he exhibited some of his works in the Algeria pavilion of the famous Exposition Universelle. He was also part of a circle of French Orientalist painters and art collectors that included names like Paul Leroy and Baron Arthur Chassériau.[29]

Dinet's accuracy in painting scenes from Algeria and showcasing life in the desert with authentic emotions made him gain considerable legitimacy in the eyes of Western intellectuals. Even before Dinet's conversion to Islam, scholar Frederick W. Morton mentioned in his article "Étienne Dinet, Painter of the Orient" published in 1904, that "no other painter had evidenced such an intimate knowledge of the East."[30] While other

26. Ibid., 27.

27. Ibid., 116.

28. Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim, *Le Pélerinage à la Maison Sacrée d'Allah* (Paris: Hachette, 1930), 184.

29. Brahimi, 28.

30. Frederick W. Morton, "Étienne Dinet, Painter of the Orient," *Brush and Pencil* 13, no.4 (January 1904): 251.

painters would "give transcripts of the East from an Occident standpoint,"[31] Morton argued Dinet had "entered into the life he sought to depict and had caught its true spirit."[32]

3.2. Dinet's Role in Shaping the Outlook of Islam in France

Dinet strongly believed that "if Islam and France could get along, then peace in the world would be ensured"[33] and spent his life in the hopes to contribute to the making of this bridge. On one occasion, he expressed not wanting "to die before having witnessed the complete unity of hearts between the Motherland (France) and Algeria."[34]

Although a painter by formation, Dinet was heavily involved in political efforts during the French colonial rule and was thus called "a militant artist." He was particularly outspoken about the expansion of Algerian civil rights, "notably the right to vote for what was then called the 'indigenous' populations." [35] The painter was also concerned with the question of assimilation and, being himself immersed in Algerian culture, did not condone the view that Algerians had to renounce their faith and culture.

Most importantly, Dinet was deeply troubled by the lack of gratitude shown by the French government to Muslims. He spent great efforts to secure an official ceremony by the French government to honor and recognize the Muslim soldiers who fought for

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., 260.

33. Dinet, *Pélerinage*, 175.

34. Brahimi,138.

35. Ibid., 139.

France during World War I.[36] The painter was also involved in the project of the famous Grande Mosquée de Paris, the oldest mosque of metropolitan France, and attended its inauguration in 1926. This mosque was financed by the French state as a token of gratitude for the "Muslims of Africa who did not hesitate to come to her defense when France had found itself in danger in 1914."[37]

3.3. Dinet's Works and Influences

In 1918, Dinet completed his book *La Vie de Mohammed* (The Life of Mohammad) together with his friend Sliman ben Ibrahim. *La Vie de Mohammed* is said to be the first biography of the Prophet Muhammad redacted in French. Already in this book, Dinet affirms that his goal was to present a true alternative to the numerous "innovations" that were then introduced by Orientalists to the history of the religion of Islam. In the preface to their book, the authors write:

"These remarks will serve to warn the reader that in this work will be found none of those learned paradoxes destined to destroy traditions, such sophisms delighting modern Orientalists by reason of their love of novelty. The study of innovations introduced in this way into the Prophet's history has caused us to note that they were often prompted by feelings inimical to Islam which were not only out of place in scientific research, but were also unworthy of our epoch. As displayed by their authors, they generally denoted strange ignorance of Arab customs, notwithstanding that these

36. Ibid.

37. Marya Hannun and Sophie Spaan, "When Europe Loved Islam," *Foreign Policy*, May 5, 2016, accessed April 26, 2018, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/05/when-europe-loved-islam-interwar-weimar-republic-wilmersdorf-mosque/.

commentaries were accompanied by considerable erudition, although too bookish."[38]

Together with his friend Sliman Ben Ibrahim, their ambition was to compile a biography of the Prophet that was solely based on the narrations of classical Muslim scholars such as Ibn Hisham and Ibn Sad but that could appeal to Western audiences as well. *La Vie de Mohammed* was dedicated to the memory of all Muslim soldiers who lost their lives for France and was later translated into both Arabic and English.

A few years later, in 1922, Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim published *L'Orient Vu de l'Occident* (The Orient Seen from the Occident). This was the first book in which the scholars employed the term *islamophobie*, although they did not explain its meaning in detail, nor did they provide a description of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in it. This essay was rather a critical response to the work of some Orientalist scholars, particularly the writings of Henri Lammens, a Belgian historian and Jesuit, and Paul Casanova, a French Arabist author. Dinet and Ben Ibrahim use the term *islamophobie* in their essay to merely refer to Lammens and the "degree to which Islamophobia can lead a learned man." The two scholars also complain that Lammens' "entire interpretation of Islamic traditions is made in bad faith and based on a biased selection of the traditions that conform more easily to Lammens' preconceived image of Islam."[39]

It is interesting to note that Dinet and Ben Ibrahim did not provide a clear definition of the term 'Islamophobia' in *L'Orient Vu de l'Occident.* This could be explained in two ways. Either the term was used frequently and the authors assumed

38. Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim, *The Life of Mohammad: The Prophet of Allah* (Paris: Paris Book Club, 1918), VII.

39. Fernando Bravo López, "Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 4 (April 2011): 560-561, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2010.528440.

everyone knew what it meant, which was highly unlikely since most scholarship refers to this book as one of the first written records of the use of the term, or Dinet and Ben Ibrahim believed the term itself made its definition obvious and thus did not need a clarification.

Table 1: Important Dates in the Life of Étienne Dinet

Birth of Étienne Dinet	28 March 1861
Start of Dinet's training as a painter at the École des Beaux-Arts	1880
Dinet's first visit to Algeria	1884
First meeting with Slimane ben Ibrahim during Dinet's fourth visit to Algeria	1888
Purchase of a house in Bou Saâda	1904
Dinet's official conversion to Islam. He takes the name Nasreddine.	1913
Publication of *La Vie de Mohammed*	1918
Publication of his critical essay *L'Orient Vu de l'Occident*	1921
Purchase of a villa in the suburbs of Algiers with his part of the family inheritance	1923
Official inauguration of the Grande Mosquée de Paris	July 1926
Dinet pronounces the profession of faith in front of the Mufti of Algiers during a public ceremony in the Mosque Djama'a al-Djedid in Algiers.	1927
Departure for Ḥajj from Bou Saâda	2 April 1929
Beginning of Ḥajj	10 May 1929
Departure from Jeddah	1 June 1929
Arrival to Marseilles	20 June 1929
Completion of his book *Le Pélerinage à la Maison Sacrée d'Allah*	9 November 1929
Dinet is admitted into a nursing home	22 November 1929
Death	24 December 1929
Dinet's body is brought from Marseille to Algiers.	6 January 1930
Funeral ceremony in Bou Saâda	9 January 1930
Publication of *Le Pélerinage à La Maison Sacrée d'Allah*	1930

Chapter 4: Islamophobia in Dinet's Ḥajj Travelogue

4.1. An Overview of The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah

On April 2nd, 1929, Dinet departs from the city of Bou Saâda with his friend Sliman Ben Ibrahim and Sliman's wife to finally fulfill his dream of completing the Ḥajj. Passing through Algiers and Marseille, the painter and his two friends finally arrive to Suez, where pilgrims are subjected to "endless and vexatious formalities" by the Egyptian government "under the pressure of a European power that jealously watches over all the neighboring regions of the canal."[40] All the pilgrims then board a ship that will take them to Jeddah after a stop in the port of Yanbu al Bahr.

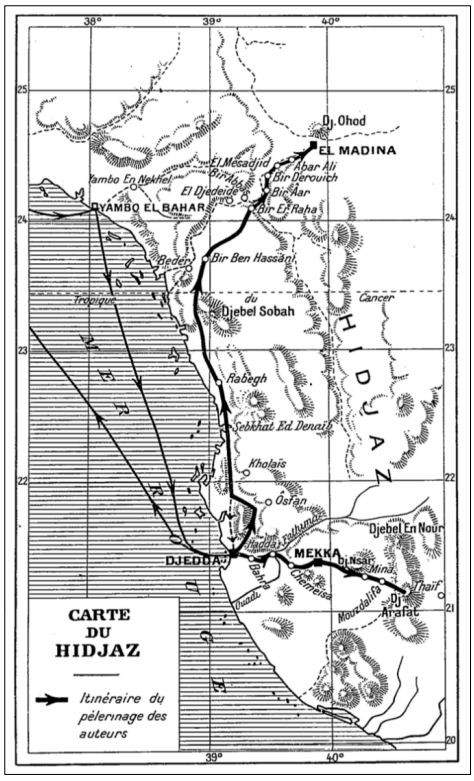

Figure 1: Itinerary of the Authors' Pilgrimage

40. Dinet, *Pélerinage*, 3.

Two years earlier, in 1927, Dinet had already made the intention to travel for the pilgrimage due to his deteriorating physical strength. He had thus pronounced the profession of faith one more time in front of the Mufti of Algiers during a public ceremony in the Mosque Djama'a al-Djedid[41] to be able to later facilitate official visa procedures. Like any other European convert to Islam of the early 20th century, Dinet had to go through lengthy visa procedures in order to be permitted entry to the holy sites of Islam. Hence, when the boat arrived to the port Jeddah, the painter was initially not allowed to disembark with his European passport.[42] Following the intervention of some of his political contacts and a phone call made by Fu'ād Bey Ḥamzah, a foreign affairs advisor to King Ibn Saʿūd, to the mayor of Jeddah, however, Dinet receives the necessary paperwork allowing him to complete the Ḥajj.[43]

From the very beginning of his travelogue, Étienne Dinet makes his intention clear: he hopes his book will prove false the many myths that Europeans have about Islam and Muslims by showcasing the true values and teachings of his religion. Already in the Preface of *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah*, Dinet prays that "[his] small book, by restoring the truth about the pilgrimage to Mecca, [dissipates] the misunderstandings that are dangerous to the future of peace in the Orient, and thus contribute, in a modest measure, to the establishment of a cordial understanding between Judaism, Christianism, and Islamism, an understanding that civilization has a duty to forge."[44]

41. Brahimi, 292.

42. Dinet, *Pélerinage*, 16.

43. Ibid., 18.

44. Ibid., 10-11.

It is therefore with the ambition of demystifying Islam for Europeans that Étienne Dinet completes his travelogue. Dinet's book is in this sense very comparable to other European Ḥajj travelogues of the time. First, it is clearly intended for a Western audience; Dinet is meticulously describing religious rituals and the meanings behind them. He is also very admiring of King Ibn Saʿūd throughout the book, praising the King's "modesty" and "simplicity," along with the many reforms he initiated in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including the various infrastructural developments in the cities.[45]

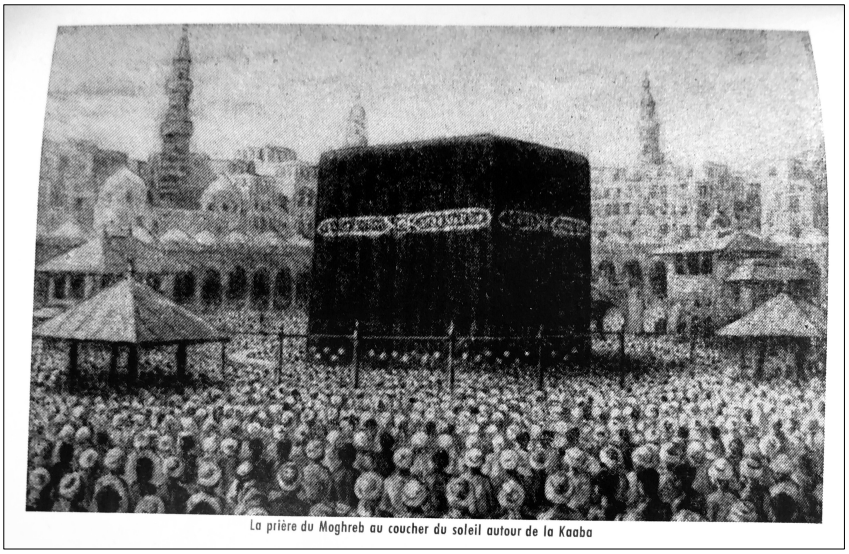
La prière du Moghreb au coucher du soleil autour de la Kaaba

Figure 2: The Maġrib Prayer of Sunset Around the Kaʿbah (1929), Étienne Dinet

However, Dinet is extremely careful not to fall into the Orientalist gaze represented by some Europeans who traveled to the Hijaz and wrote about their experiences before him. Upon returning from the pilgrimage, Dinet writes in a letter to his sister that he did not take any notes, nor draw any sketches during his travels.[46] This is because he did not want to seem like a foreigner who had come to explore and observe the lands and the people of the Hijaz. Rather, he wanted his intention for completing the

45. Ibid., 19, 23, 44, 50, 104, 116, 128, 142.

46. Jeanne Dinet-Rollince, *La Vie de E. Dinet* (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve, 1938), 221.

Ḥajj to remain strictly religious and spiritual, and his worship not to be compromised by his willingness to narrate his experiences.

Le Pélerinage à la Maison Sacrée d'Allah also contains two appendices. The first of these is an assessment of previous narrations of pilgrimage to Mecca, particularly those written by European travelers. The second appendix is a chapter on the creed of Wahhabism and the Saʿūd family, based on works from other authors.

Table 2: Table of Contents of *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah* (1930)

Preface.....p.9
Chapter I: From Bou Saâda to Jeddah.....p.13
Chapter II: Medina al-Munawwarah.....p.33
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Chapter VII: From Jeddah to Beirut.....p.157
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Appendix II: Wahhabism and the Saud Family (According to Burckhardt, Charles Didier, Palgrave, and Adolphe d'Avril) p.199

On his way back from Jeddah, Dinet started writing about his experiences and drawing sketches from memory. He completed his travelogue in approximately five months but, unfortunately, could not live to see its publication. The painter passed away in the city of Marseilles in December 1929 and was buried in the Algerian city of Bou Saâda in January 1930 in accordance with his will. His home was later turned into a museum in his name, thanks to the efforts of his younger sister Jeanne Dinet-Cornille and his friend Sliman Ben Ibrahim.

4.2. The Thing: Dinet on European Hostility Towards Islam

First of all, *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah* represents a reevaluation and response to past Ḥajj travelogues authored by European explorers. In particular, Dinet refers to two renowned narrations. The first is *Travels in the Hijaz of Arabia* by Swiss traveler and Orientalist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt who is often cited as the first European to have ever penetrated into the Hijaz in 1814, masquerading as a Muslim. In Mecca, Burckhardt gathered information on everything, from local proverbs to the taste of the water and the geology of the desert, but he could not complete his itinerary due to illness.[47] The second travelogue that Dinet assesses in his own is *A Personal Narrative of a Journey to al-Madinah and Meccah* by English explorer Richard F. Burton, who is known to have performed the pilgrimage in 1853, also in Muslim garb.[48]

It is worth noting that Dinet also refers to the book *Revolt in the Desert* by T.E. Lawrence, the famous British intelligence officer who was involved in the 1915-1918 Sinai and Palestine Campaign, as well as in the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire. In his own travelogue, Dinet blames T.E. Lawrence for "having made promises devoid of any sincerity to the unfortunate Arabs in order to incite them against their brothers and the Turks." In fact, the name of T.E. Lawrence is not even spelled out, but rather written as "Colonel L***."[49]

In his own travelogue, Dinet alludes to the information and descriptions provided by Burckhardt and Burton on several occasions, either to correct or confirm the accounts

47. Wolfe, 163.

48. Ibid., 198.

49. Ibid., 59.

of the two explorers. For example, he affirms the authors' descriptions of the Black Stone, but accuses Burckhardt of incorrectly placing it on the North-East angle of the Ka'bah, while it is in fact on the South-East corner.[50] Dinet also criticizes Burckhardt and Burton for their much exaggerated depictions of the tomb of Prophet Muhammad[51] and the water of Zamzam respectively.[52] He also provides updates to these two travelogues, once again praising the reforms of King Ibn Saʿūd, thanks to whom beggars and dirtiness have disappeared from the streets of the country.[53]

Dinet treats the Ḥajj travelogues of Burckhardt and Burton in the context of a broader attempt by Orientalist authors to misrepresent the religion of Islam. Hence, he individually responds to the unfounded claims made about Muslims and the Muslim faith in an attempt to debunk some of the common myths about the religion in Europe. For example, Dinet refutes Orientalists who accuse Muslims of practicing "fetishism" and "superstition" by "worshipping the Kaʿbah or the Black Stone."[54] He also disproves scholars who describe Muslims as "polytheists" by mistranslating parts of the Qur'ān or introducing innovations to the biography of Prophet Muhammad.[55] Dinet characterizes all of these claims as "incompatible with the scientific method," since they are devoid of facts and follow illogical chains of arguments.[56]

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50. Dinet, *Pélerinage*, 91.

51. Ibid., 36.

52. Ibid., 82.

53. Ibid., 111.

54. Ibid., 80-81.

55. Ibid., 178.

56. Ibid., 176.

Another element that is included in Dinet's representation of Islamophobia is the issue of race. The scholar asserts that "Islam is a universal religion and not the religion of the Arabs only, as claimed by the ignorant" and denounces this hostility towards Muslims that is in reality mixed with anti-Arab sentiment.[57] He also positions the religion's take on the issue of race in complete opposition with the West, saying "numbers of colored men look for in Islam an equality and fraternity that they haven't always found in some countries of Europe and America."[58] Just like numbers of other European travelers who performed the pilgrimage, Dinet is impressed with the lack of "the slightest trace of the barbaric prejudice directed against colored skin."[59]

After the completion of the Ḥajj, as boats full of pilgrims arrive at the Suez Canal, Muslims are taken into quarantine for three days in lazaretto ships and are subjected to additional sanitary checks enforced by European officials.[60] Travelers coming from regions affected by the plague or cholera are not subjected to the same treatment, nor are "the Abyssinians, Copts, Orthodox, Armenians, Levantines, Polish Jews, etc." traversing from Jerusalem.[61] Dinet criticizes the discriminatory nature of these measures, since it is "only towards Muslims that [Europeans] can exercise their role of inquisitor."[62] This incident is one of the primary examples given by Dinet of Islamophobia taking a

57. Ibid., 102.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., 89.

60. Ibid., 159.

61. Ibid., 161-162.

62. Ibid.

structural form and actually translating into a policy enforced on Muslims by government officials.

Referring to Islamophobia, Dinet writes that "this vile sentiment does not generally exist among the crowd; there are even many people who, amateurs of art and tourism, feel a sincere sympathy and a real admiration for Islam, so poetic and creator of so many marvels."[63] Rather, Islamophobia is a strategically planned ideology that promotes hostility towards Muslims for strictly political purposes and personal interests. In this context, the painter also alludes to "a group of Orientalists who only study the Arabic language and the Muslim faith for the sole purpose of smearing and denigrating them."[64]

4.3. The Name: Dinet's Definition of Islamophobia

The words *islamophobe* (referring to a person) and *islamophobie* (referring to the broader phenomenon) are used on several occasions throughout the book. Often, Dinet uses the terms "Islamophobe," "bitter enemy of Islam," "Orientalist" or "ignorant" interchangeably to generally designate anyone who makes incorrect generalizations about Muslims, misrepresents the religion of Islam or displays an unfounded hostility towards it. For example, at times, the term "Islamophobe" is used to directly qualify statesmen like William Gladstone and Lord Cromer or missionaries like S.W. Zwemmer and the Archbishop of Canterbury.[65] At others, "Islamophobe" is used to broadly designate

63. Ibid., 173.

64. Ibid., 177.

65. Ibid., 37, 173.

anyone who falsely accuses Muslims of barbaric animal slaughter[66] or who consciously mistranslates verses of the Qur'ān.[67]

Finally, in the Conclusion of his Ḥajj travelogue, Dinet provides his only elaborate definition of the term *islamophobie*. He refers to it as a "more or less disguised hostility of Europe towards Islam."[68] It is important to note, however, that this does not only amount to erroneous representations of the religion of Islam. Rather, Islamophobia is "the motivation underpinning these types of misrepresentation."[69]

Dinet also distinguishes between two types of Islamophobia. The first is 'pseudo-scientific Islamophobia,' which is exercised by Orientalists who base their arguments on twisted religious sources that go against the scientific method.[70] The second is 'clerical Islamophobia,' which is the kind ascribed to certain Evangelical missionaries.[71] Although his typology of Islamophobia is very much framed in a context of Orientalism, Dinet's actual representation of Islamophobia presents many features that will later appear in modern conceptualizations of Islamophobia.

66. Ibid., 141-142.

67. Ibid., 178.

68. Ibid., 173.

69. Bravo López, 561.

70. Dinet, *Pélerinage*, 176.

71. Ibid., 183.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Many European travelers of the late 19th-early 20th centuries have sought to influence the relationship between the West and the Muslim world. Particularly in relation to the Ḥajj, many travelogues were marked by meticulous details about Islamic rituals and the daily practices of Muslims.

Written in 1929, however, Étienne Dinet's account of the pilgrimage distinguished itself from the others from the very beginning. In his own narration, Dinet sought to expose the beauty and true face of the religion of Islam, while heavily criticizing the biased misrepresentations of Muslims in Europe and the hostile political climate surrounding them. *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah* thus became one of the first works that defined and detailed the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

Dinet's struggle to defeat misrepresentations of the Muslim faith, and therefore his definition of Islamophobia, were framed by scientific, religious, and political arguments that fought an intrinsic ignorance about Islam and revolved around colonialism. However, the painter's representation of Islamophobia also presented many themes that are in parallel with contemporary scholarship in the field.

Almost seventy years before the first modern depiction of Islamophobia, Étienne Nasreddine Dinet was already arguing that, "Islamophobia, not being able to bring anything back [to anybody], should therefore be extinguished and disappear."[72] Particularly, Dinet's depiction of Islamophobia as a networked political ideology developed in bad faith argued against a structural form of Islamophobia, rather than a simple issue of ignorance about the Muslim faith at the individual level.

72. Ibid., 174.

While his work is often dismissed from modern academic scholarship on Islamophobia, Étienne Dinet's representation of anti-Muslim racism had already planted the seeds of many contemporary frameworks around which Islamophobia is understood today, and therefore deserves greater presence and more scrutiny in current debates surrounding the field.

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Appendix: Translation of the Conclusion of *The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah*

The Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah
El Hadj Nasreddine Étienne Dinet

Conclusion

Three things in particular stroke us during our journey due to their importance for the future; these are: the prodigious vitality of the Arabic language, the formidable power of the Muslim faith, and the persistence of a more or less disguised hostility of Europe towards Islam.

Vitality of the Arabic language. — It is quite a widespread mania among certain "Latinizers" to present literary Arabic as a dead language that is incomprehensible to three quarters of the Arabs. As for spoken Arabic, they depict it as a dust of vulgar dialects, which have no connection to each other and are also destined to die in a short time.

It suffices to go to the Orient, to Egypt or Syria, to witness that, Arabic, prematurely buried, is, on the contrary, a language that is extraordinarily alive with its innumerable newspapers, so alive that all the Europeans residing in these countries find themselves obliged to learn it so as not to be obstructed in all their affairs.

But it is in Mecca that we find the most dazzling confirmation of this vitality. The spoken language is of a purity that is almost literal and is only better understood by Arabs of all countries.

As for the differences in dialect, they are so insignificant that they do not prevent Moroccans, Syrians, Yemenis, etc. from perfectly understanding each other from the very

beginning. The only appreciable inconvenience is found in the Egyptian dialect because of the faulty pronunciation of the letters *jim* and *qaf*.

Thousands of Adjem pilgrims (that is, non-Arab) are themselves passionate about studying the Arabic language in order to be able to read and understand the Qur'an. And most of them perhaps speak it with an imperfect pronunciation, but with rather great accuracy. Thus, we were able to talk with Javanese, Hindus, Persians, Khorasanis, Bosniaks, Turks, Albanians, Caucasians, Senegalese, Sudanese, etc.[73]

As for the Arabs and the Bedouins of the Hijaz and Najd, we were astonished at the similarity of their expressions, their intonations, and their thoughts with those of our Saharan nomads.

In reality, literary Arabic can be likened to classical French; it is also alive and used and understood in the same way. As for spoken Arabic, it does not differ more in its dialects than the French of the peasants of the North differs from the French of the peasants of the South.

The study of this admirable language presents a unique interest since, out of all the ancient languages, it is the only one that is still alive. If a contemporary of the Prophet were to be resurrected, he would have no difficulty making himself understood in all Arabic-speaking countries. A contemporary of Caesar would be reduced to chatting with a few professors and, still, it is not certain that he would be perfectly understood by them. A contemporary of Francis I himself would be much embarrassed in his relations with the French of today.

73. Our Javanese driver, ignorant of Arabic, is an exception. Outside of his job, he was poorly intelligent. And, on the road to Al Madina, we met many Javanese who spoke Arabic perfectly and served as interpreters between him and us.

Of all the great literatures, Arabic literature is the least well known because its translation is the most difficult and because the translation samples that we have of it are, for the most part, of deplorable inaccuracy and, especially, dullness.

Indeed, to understand it and make it understood, the translator does not only need to be a scholar of Arabic, but also a poet, and to have lived the Arab and Muslim life for a long time. But that one would discover treasures that are almost unexplored, of an incomparable beauty, and of a brand new type.

Finally, Arabic presents this advantage of being spoken in an immense region, from the Atlantic to Persia and the Persian Gulf and from the Mediterranean to Sudan. And from India and Persia to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, there are everywhere innumerable Muslims to whom this language is familiar.

For France in particular, the study of the Arabic language is of incontestable utility, superior to that of the study of Greek and Latin, equal to that of the study of English and German. It should be taught in all high schools of France, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

Power of the Muslim faith. — In our narration, our readers were able to judge the formidable power of the Muslim faith. We will not come back to the miracles of energy that we have seen it perform.[74]

However, to show its consequences, we will quote some passages from the book in which S.W. Zwemmer notes the fantastic progress of Islam, awakened by the misfortunes that have overwhelmed it since the war: "In Russia," he writes, "since 1905, fifty thousand Christians by name have reverted to Islamism. (p.210) The huge Sudan,

74. Let us simply note that, today, the pilgrimage is much more crowded and fervent than in the days of Burckhardt and Burton.

with its population of fifty million souls, the great tribe of Haoussa, the tribes of Niger and the Gold Coast are partly Islamized and risk being entirely Islamized before long. The flow rises surely, irresistibly. (p.235) In Bengal, more than ten million people have turned to Islamism; in Burma, the Muslim population has increased by a third in ten years, etc."[75] We will add that, in the Dutch Indies, according to what a former Dutch consul told us, the number of Muslims has increased by fifteen million in recent years.

Finally, we note what S.W. Zwemmer forgets to point out: that, among all nations of Europe and America, there have been conversions to Islamism. And these conversions, if they are not already important for their respectable number, they are important for the quality of the converts who belong to the intellectual elite of their nation. Let us remember, for example, the conversion of Lord Headley, peer of England, and that of our late friend Christian Cherfils, disciple of Auguste Comte, a scholar and philosopher of the highest value.

If true Islam had been better known in Europe, it is likely that it would have been the main beneficiary of the return to the religious spirit caused by the war. Indeed, it responds to all the aspirations of the different kinds of faithful. In supreme simplicity with the Mu'tazila, desperately mystic with Sufism, it brings a direction and a comfort to the European or Asian scholar, without hindering the absolute freedom of his thought, just as it grabs the Sudanese negro away from the superstition of his fetishes. It exalts the soul of the practical English merchant, for whom *time is money*,[76] just like it exalts the soul of the deist philosopher, and that of the contemplative Oriental, as much as that of the Occidental who is captivated by art and poetry; it will even seduce the modern

75. S.W. Zwemmer, *Islam*, p.236.

76. Translator's Note: Written in English in the original text.

physician by the logic of its repeated ablutions, the rhythm of its inclinations, and its prostrations that are no less salutary to the culture of the body than to the health of the mind. The free thinker himself, who is not inevitably atheist, may consider Islamic revelation to be a sublime manifestation of this mysterious force called "inspiration" and accept it without difficulty, since the revelation does not contain a single mystery that is unacceptable to the reason.

Europe's hostility towards Islam. — Many readers will protest against our observation about Europe's more or less disguised hostility toward Islam. And, indeed, this vile sentiment does not generally exist among the crowd; there are even many people who, amateurs of art and tourism, feel a sincere sympathy and a real admiration for Islam, so poetic and creator of so many marvels.

Unfortunately, Europe has political traditions that date back to the Crusades; she has not abandoned them and, if she is tempted to forget about them, Islamophobes like Gladstone, Cromer, Balfour, the archbishop of Canterbury, and missionaries of all faiths, etc. immediately stand up to bring them back.

In all the wars that have ravaged Eastern Europe and the Near East for fifty years, it is always at the expense of Muslim nations that the European Concert concluded all the treaties and, most of the time, in violation of justice and formal commitments.

The saddest example is the misfortune of the Arabs after the world war: the Arabs held the fate of the Orient in their hands; if they had joined their Turkish coreligionists and the Germans, the Suez Canal would immediately fall into their power; the Indian route would be cut off and the war would be irrevocably lost in the Orient for the Allies.

Also, what cajoleries, what promises, what formal commitments were lavished on them by the famous Colonel L*** in the name and with the official approval of his country!...

As soon as the victory was obtained, all the oats were forgotten and these precious allies were more mistreated than the most detested enemies. The Arab Nation can also be considered a great victim of the war.

Today, apart from Turkey, which proved that she was too ripe to let herself be harvested, there is no longer a Muslim territory that is rich enough to excite the envy of Europe. On the other hand, Muslims never think about waging war against the beliefs of Christians like the latter wage war against the beliefs of Islam. Islamophobia, not being able to bring anything back, should therefore burn out and disappear. If it persisted, it would definitely prove to all Asia and to all Africa that Europe wants to enslave them in an increasingly tyrannical yoke, the one that a famous movie stigmatized under the name *White Shadows in the South Seas.*

And would not it then be feared that, losing all hope of a cordial understanding, all the nations of these two continents join Bolshevism in a formidable coalition for the destruction of the present society, upon which the power of the European nations is based?

If, on the contrary, Europe could get along with Islam, the peace of the world would be ensured because, if the threat of the Yellow Peril, which haunted the spirit of the former Kaiser, became a reality, Islam, united with Europe, would obstruct it with an insurmountable barrier.

In any case, let us hope that France will devote all her efforts to the realization of this amity. It is the most beloved nation in Muslim countries because it is the country of

the Declaration of Human Rights, of the equality of the races and religions, and because one of its greatest minds, Napoleon, manifested the greatest sympathy for Islam.

In one of his letters, he called Mohammed *Our* Prophet; in his famous proclamation in Cairo, he declared himself *Muslimoune Muhaidone*, meaning Unitarian Muslim. And he had conceived the grandiose project of becoming the Caliph emperor of the Orient by converting his army to Islam and taking the Sherif of Mekka as the religious leader of his empire, when he was suddenly recalled to Europe.

These memories are still alive in the Orient and this is why France still remains the favorite nation despite the mistakes she may have committed in Syria.

It is also home to an element that realizes the madness of an anti-Muslim policy because it would be its first victim. It is the "colonizer" element that has an absolute need for the collaboration of Muslims, while having everything to dread from their hostility. And it knows that the future of its descendants can only be assured by a sincere Franco-Muslim understanding.

Pseudo-scientific Islamophobia. — Ordinarily, when a scientist studies a subject, he is fascinated by it and discovers in it all the beauties imaginable, even when his subject hardly evokes them. We remember the ecstatic enthusiasm of one of our professors for the poetry of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which he condemned us to memorize by heart, and the no less ecstatic enthusiasm of a naturalist scientist at the sight of the intestinal worms of a dead dog.

There is only one exception to this rule, and it is once again Islam that is its victim. Indeed, there exists today a group of Orientalists who study the Arabic language and the Muslim faith for the sole purpose of smearing and denigrating them.

Because a conscientious scholar, Professor E. Montet, had recognized that "the Qur'an may be the most monotheistic religious book ever written," our Orientalists swore to snatch this monotheistic superiority from Islam by proving the contrary. In vain efforts, they have only ended up in puerility based on their claim to know Arabic better than all the Arabs of the past, the present, and the future.

Here are two examples: instead of translating the phrase that precedes the surahs in the Qur'an in the following manner: "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful," meaning in the way in which it has been understood by all the Arabs since the Hijrah, they entertain themselves by turning the qualifier Rahman, meaning Gracious, into a proper name; they translate it: "In the name of the God Rahman, the Most Merciful" and they triumphantly exclaim: "There are two divinities in the Qur'an, the god Rahman, and the god Allah!"[77]

Then, instead of translating a verse that is repeated several times in the Qur'an in this way: Allah commanded the Angels "to prostrate before Adam" (The Qur'an, II, 32; VII, 10; XVII, 63; etc.), that is to bow down before the superiority of Adam as all Muslims have understood it since this verse has been revealed, our Islamophobic scholars translate: Allah commanded the Angels "to worship Adam," which is an unacceptable mistranslation from the point of view of the language and a stupidity from all other points of view. But this allows them to proclaim: "See! In the Qur'an, it is not Allah alone who is adored!" And it also allows the missionary S.W. Zwemmer to make this reflection: "In the Qur'an, Allah Himself is not bound to any ideal of justice. For example, worshipping

77. The qualifier "Rahman" being one of the 99 qualifiers called "Names of Allah," these Orientalists could thus, if they continued in this way, attribute 99 divinities to Islam!

It is exactly as if we would turn the qualifiers Eternal, Creator, Most Powerful, etc. into names of distinct gods in Christianity.

a creature is an abomination and yet, Allah punishes Satan for not wanting to worship Adam!"[78] Islam surely has to be divine for its enemies to be reduced to such pitiful arguments.

There is, however, a much more dangerous attack that some Orientalists have just triggered: they declared war on the Arabic script and, giving as pretext the sympathy they feel for the Arab race, they want to gift it, in exchange, Latin characters that they depict as much more practical.

We had the pleasure of observing the indignation that such an idea generated in the Orient. But we make a call to all friends of Beauty, without distinction of race or religion, to boo these Orientalists who, *out of hatred of the Qur'an*,[79] the first inspiration behind the unmatched Arabic calligraphy, conceived such a sacrilegious project.

The Arabic script is perhaps the most wonderful decorative system that man has imagined; it is the only one about which we can say, without exaggeration, that it possesses a soul; like the human voice, it expresses the thought. Borrowing nothing from even the most stylized outside world, it is similar to music and seems to be a stenography of the most intimate movements of the heart.

See these letters that spring from right to left in rapid horizontals, then, as if they were under the impulse of an inner life, roll on themselves in discrete or passionate curves, then straighten up to suddenly stop frozen or perpendicular, proud. They soon resume their frantic race, rolling their interlaces, overlapping each other with a delightful fantasy and leading the imagination to lost dreams. It is not necessary to be an Arabian

78. S.W. Zwemmer, *Islam*, p.135.

79. Indeed, they know that they would strike a serious blow to the Qur'an if they manage to remove the admirable characters with which it has been written since its revelation. What would Catholics say if we suppressed the church Latin under pretext that it is not practical?

emeritus or a subtle graphologist to take joy in the pure distinction of their forms or the intense emotion of their curves; every artist's soul will effortlessly penetrate into the secrets of their souls.

This art of Arabic calligraphy, which has no precedent, which was born of Islam, and which materializes the ideal of its nation, then folded under its almost religious yoke everything that was meant to support or frame it, meaning architecture and other decorative systems, by forcing them to marry the style of its forms.

The Arabic script is the mother of all Muslim arts, and it is this admirable mother that these Orientalists want to assassinate!

Amateur friends of Beauty, stand up and, like the Muslims curse those who attack a script of such beauty and want to replace it with the cold Latin characters at the very moment when the European fashion is disgusted by them and seeks to modify them, strangely, by introducing practices that were borrowed from the Arabic script: suppressing capital letters, cutting words with the letter O and S written inverted, replacing the curves of the letter S by a simple line, like the letter Sin in the Orient, broadstrokes and finestrokes inverted of their usual order, the imitation of the angular and decorative Kufic characters, etc.

But let's leave the aesthetic side that is always the last of modern concerns and examine the practical side on which the Vandals rely.

We cannot judge the practical results obtained in Turkey by the adoption of Latin characters because we ignore the Turkish language. But we will point out that this country only exchanged characters borrowed from foreigners for characters borrowed from other foreigners, while Arabic script is born out of the very soul of the Arabic

language. And the refined writing of such a refined language is irreplaceable from every point of view.

In terms of practicality, Arabic characters are not exempt of defects, no more than Latin characters. But they possess many advantages, the study of which would be beyond the scope of this chapter.

Let us nevertheless indicate this invaluable superiority from the practical point of view: Arabic, written from right to left, follows the natural movement of the hand; consequently, there is much less fatigue and nervousness, and the cramp of writers is less to be dreaded than writing in Latin, going from left to right, against the natural movement of the hand. In one word, writing in Arabic is for the right-handed and writing in Latin is for the left-handed. A genius Latin artist, Leonardo Da Vinci, had understood this, since he wrote his manuscripts from right to left, in the same direction as the Arabs.[80]

Let us also indicate this incontestable superiority from the point of view of the quick comprehension of the Arabic sentence. In Arabic writing: vowels are only indicated by symbols that are often omitted; it may be a defect; but as a result, a huge advantage arises in compensation: the three consonant root letters that are of crucial importance immediately become obvious to the eye and the general comprehension of the sentence is, so to speak, instantaneous, while in the extremely pedantic and complicated transcriptions in Latin characters that came out of the imagination of these Orientalists, the three root letters are so much drowned in the middle of others that it requires a long effort of attention to discover them.

80. To drag the pen from left to right, the tendons of the thumb, those of the back of the hand, and the muscles of the wrist are forced to very painful contractions, while they don't need to make an effort to direct the pen from right to left.

Let us finally note that, for the Arabs, Latin characters will always hold a little of the intonations that are so different from each other in the European languages that they would have learned, while Arabic characters were directly created upon the sounds emitted by the voice of the Arabs.

In reality, wanting to replace Arabic characters by Latin characters to write in Arabic is as absurd as it would be to replace Latin characters by Arabic characters to write in Latin.

Clerical Islamophobia. — The unexpected help of scientists who are forgetful of the principles of impartial science has elated the missionaries who, on their side, have redoubled their proselytist ardor.

Here is the call to war against Islam launched by the missionary S.W. Zwemmer:

"The offensive needs to be conducted with tact and wisdom, but it must be pushed vigorously. From the East to the West, from the North to the South, the Church needs to mobilize its forces and enlist them under the banner of its leader... The bloody fields of Africa and Asia await new martyrs!" (S.W. Zwemmer, *L'Islam*, p.295)

Despite all their efforts and the millions spent on their proselytism, the missionaries did not obtain any results, if it's not for jeopardizing the peace of the world with the anger they cause and for undermining the loyalty and influence in the Orient of the colonizing nations to which they belong and who have committed themselves to respect Islam.[81]

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81. A very religious Catholic Orientalist, Count Henry de Castries has clearly demonstrated the cause of these failures with the following observation: "It is very difficult, if not impossible, to get an exact idea of what would be the state of the soul of a Muslim evangelized by a Christian; one would only have an approximate image of it by thinking of the feelings of an enlightened Christian whom an idolater would seek to convert to his gross superstitions." (Count Hendy de Castries, *L'Islam*, p.212)

Muslims never importune the "People of the Book," meaning Jews and Christians, with their proselytism. The orientalist Dinet can affirm that, no Muslim ever made the slightest attempt to convert

Also, as a conclusion, we will invoke the mercy of the Compassionate and Generous Lord so that He will remove any spirit of incomprehensible sectarianism from the hearts in our time of progress.

And we hope that humanity will adopt as its rule the most admirable words as tolerance and as wisdom, and the most proper words to ensure peace in the world that it has ever heard: "No compulsion in religion" (The Qur'an, II, 257) — "To you, your religion and to me, my religion." (The Qur'an, CIX, 6)

him. It he has come to Islam, it is by himself, after thirty years of study, meditation, and contemplation. In their turn, don't Muslims have the right to ask that the missionaries leave them, their families, and especially their children, alone?