

# The Sacromonte Parchment and Lead Books



# The Sacromonte Parchment and Lead Books

Critical Edition of the Arabic Texts and Analysis of the  
Religious Ideas

Presentation of a Dutch research project,  
Granada, 19 March 2019, 19.00-21.00 hours

With images of the original Lead Books and the Parchment

by

Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld,  
Professor Emeritus of Islamic Studies,  
Leiden University  
and  
Gerard Wiegers,  
Professor of Comparative Religious Studies,  
University of Amsterdam

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In the year 1588, when the old minaret of the former Great Mosque of Granada was about to be taken down, workers discovered a box with some saintly relics and a large sheet of parchment covered with texts in Arabic, Spanish and Latin. Then, from the year 1595 and onwards, a total of 22 Lead Booklets were discovered in the caves of Valparaiso Hill ("The Hillock of Paradise") outside Granada, together with some mortal remains (ashes and bones) attributed to the earliest apostles of Christianity to Spain, especially Granada, in the first Christian century. After the speedy authentication of the relics (not of the books), the Hillock of Valparaiso was renamed "Sacro Monte", Holy Mountain, and became a centre for pilgrimage and religious life. Under the personal supervision of the Archbishop of Granada, Don Pedro de Castro, detailed notes were made about the dates and circumstances of the discoveries. After his death, Estepa continued this work and his "Christianising" translation became the standard reference for the study of the Lead Books.<sup>1</sup> In our work, we were able to critically study the impressive, though not always impartial work of the translators and other scholars working for Castro and afterwards, and likewise we were able to make use of the voluminous archive of the Vatican Committees of scholars who deciphered, translated and evaluated the documents after their transfer to Rome, and who concluded that the Parchment as well as The Lead Books were heretical and to be prohibited. This judgment was confirmed by the Pope in a special bull of 1682. From that year onwards the materials remained inaccessibly preserved within the secret archives of the Vatican. At the recommendation of Cardinal Ratzinger (eo

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<sup>1</sup> Especially in the published version thereof by Miguel José Hagerty, *Los Libros Plumbeos del Sacromonte*. Madrid: Editora Nacional. 1980. Second edition: Granada: Editorial Comares [1997].

*tempore* head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and *hoc tempore papa emeritus*), Pope John Paul II decided to return the materials to Granada, where the Archbishop finally granted us permission to prepare a critical edition and translation, a project which now approaches its completion. We should like, once again, to express our deepest gratitude to His Eminence the Archbishop of Granada and to the staff of the Sacromonte Archives for having facilitated our work.

### **1. The Parchment**

When it was found in a box of lead, the parchment was folded. Its unfolded size is 63,5:49 cm. Its wild and cursive Arabic script with Maghribi features, combines elements of phantasy and of a hybrid nature, where individual letters are often completely obscured and diacritical signs are usually omitted, with the result of a largely undecipherable text. (See Plate 1). Though the condition of the ink has deteriorated through the ages, we believe that the opaqueness of the Arabic text was made wilfully by the writer(s) of the texts on the parchment, in order to add to its enigmatic character. In his time, the famous Arias Montano not only rejected it as a falsification but also concluded to its illegibility. Our conclusion does not differ essentially from his. The fact that Miguel de Luna and Alonso del Castillo were able to produce transcripts, implies, in our view, that at least one of them (probably Luna) had access to another copy of the same text, in a legible form. The Latin script used in the Spanish prophecy text is interspersed with various kinds of phantasy forms as well, including Greek letters, mainly capitals. The script of the Latin annotation, ascribed to a certain Patricius, on the other hand, is fairly legible and “normal”, fitting well into the Latin script forms of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The *composer* of the parchment calls himself in an Arabic signature “Cecilio, bishop of Granada”. Returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he had visited, among others, the grave of Jesus, in whom he believes as the second person in the Trinity, he brought back with him a prophecy about “the destruction of the world” ascribed to “San Juan the Evangelist and Apostle”. He, Cecilio, had translated this originally Hebrew prophecy from Greek into Spanish. Its commentary he translated from Greek into Arabic “on behalf of the ‘Mozarabs’ (arabophone Christians) living in Spain”. The precise meaning of both the Spanish prophecy and its poetical commentary in Arabic are opaque and obscure, and, as can be expected of oracles and prophecies in general, they can be interpreted in many different ways, especially because the poems of which the commentary consists, can, according to contemporary Morisco authors, be constructed in different manners.

In a final note on the parchment, this time in Latin, a servant of Cecilio by the name of Patricius, informs us that his master Cecilio, when he saw the end of his life and his martyrdom drawing near, had asked him to hide the treasure of the prophecy and relics in a safe place, lest they would get lost or ever come into the power of the “Moors” (Muslims). One thing that seems to be evident from all this is that the author postulates that Cecilio was living in a time prior to the arrival of Arabs and Islam in Spain. This corresponds with the belief that the former minaret of the Great Mosque of Granada, where the box with the parchment was discovered, was also dated back to ancient, pre-Islamic, viz. Roman times. The Lead Books will provide us with many more details about Cecilio’s background, activities and companions.

## 2- The Lead Books

It has become customary to speak nowadays of the “Lead Books”, but the materials concerned in fact consist of small round pieces of lead with a small hole in each of them to allow a cord of lead to pass and keep the various leaves of one booklet together.<sup>2</sup> Their size varies from a diameter of circa 75 millimetres weighing about 100 grams to one of circa 50 millimetres weighing some 50 grams. Some booklets have only a few lead “leaves” or “tablets”, others may have more than 20. Both by their material aspects and their added characteristics, they present themselves as Islamic amulets. Islamic lead seals are usually very old (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>3</sup>, which may have been the main reason why the author(s) chose this material, viz. to give them an ancient look and to lend credence to the claim that they had been made in times immemorial, viz. in the first century of Christianity. The main protagonists in the Lead Books are, first of all, Jesus (“sayyidunā Yaṣū’ ibn Maryam”: “our lord Jesus, the son of Mary”) and Mary (“al-Ṣāliḥa Maryam al-‘Adhra”: “The Holy Virgin Mary”). Then, there are the Apostle James, Ya’qūb al-Ḥawārī, and his disciple, Cecilio (“Sā’ is al-Āya”), whom we already met in the Parchment in his capacity of the Bishop of Granada. He is said to be of Arab origin, and usually functions as the secretary writing down the Arabic texts of the Lead Books, conveyed to him by the Apostle James, who often had received them from the Virgin Mary.

### 2.1. The Arabic Script of the Lead Books

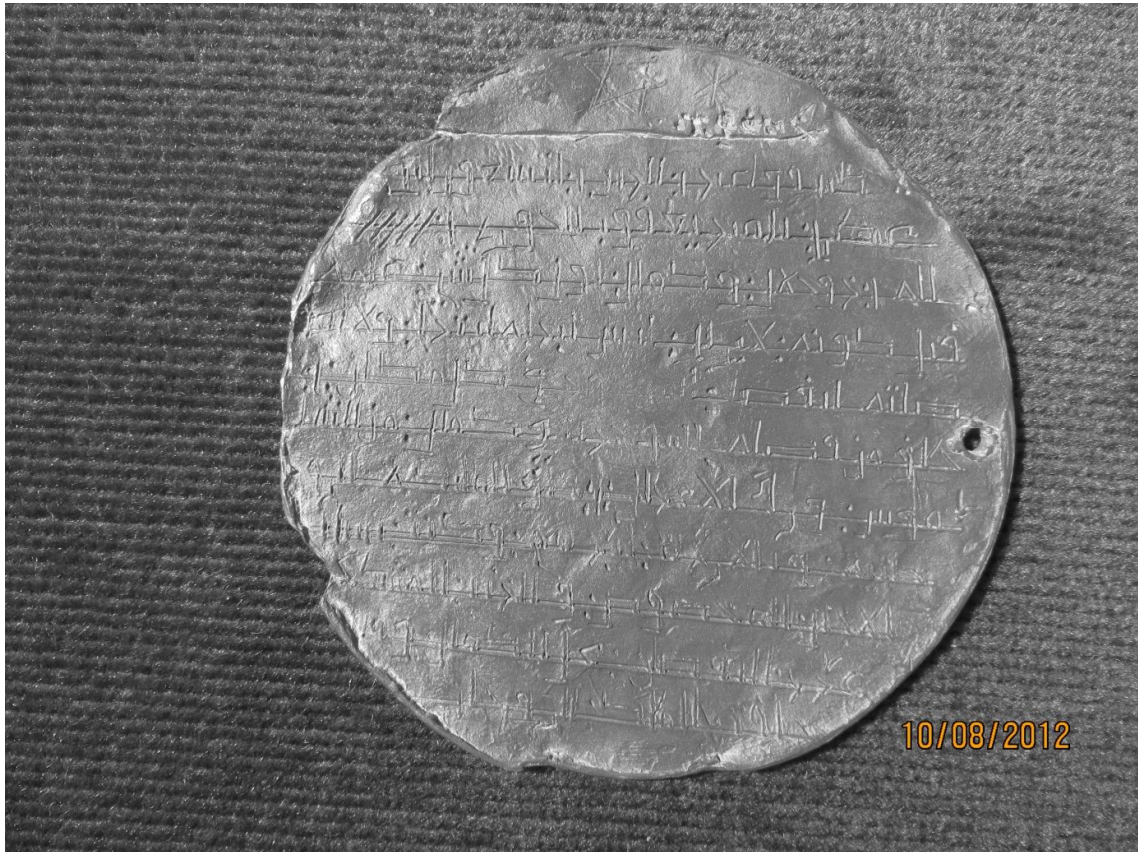
The rather archaic kind of Arabic script engraved on the leaves of the Lead Books is characterised by the sublimation of the lower part of some of the letters into the special lines

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<sup>2</sup> Hence the contemporary designation as “láminas”.

<sup>3</sup> See Venetia Porter, *Arabic and Persian seals in the British Museum*. London 2017, 2<sup>nd</sup> improved edition, pp. 28-30.



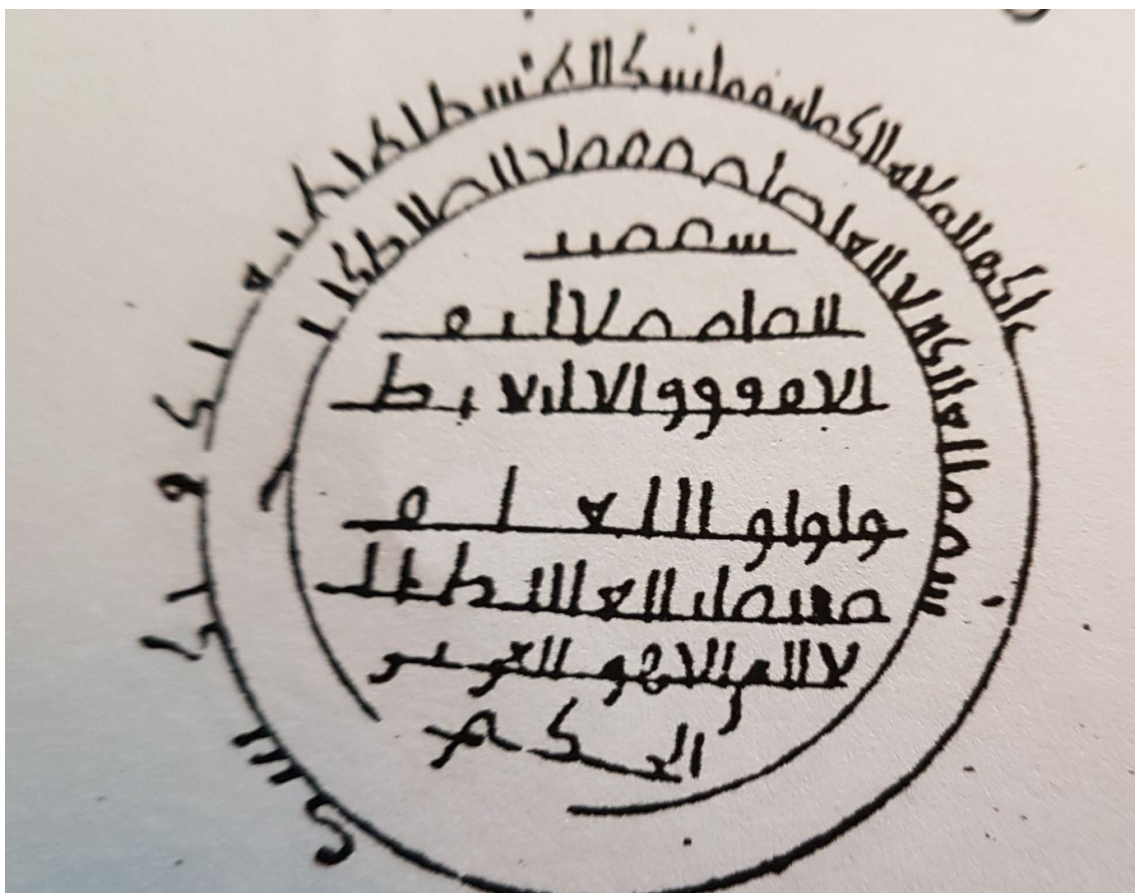


2 - LP1, fol. 1a, photographed in the Sacromonte Archives on which it is always written, as can be illustrated by the first page of one of the first booklets to have been found, the *Kitāb qawā'id al-dīn* (“Book of the Fundamentals of Religion”).

The script is not an innovation of the Lead Books but can be traced also in the texts of amulets and seals in magical writings that circulated among the Muslims of Spain, for instance in an acephalous 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript which had been hidden away in Ocaña (province of Toledo), photocopies whereof were published in Granada in 1987. In these magical texts, the script is used exclusively for the mysterious legends of the seals, as for instance on fol. 8b of the already-mentioned Ocaña manuscript.<sup>4</sup> Neither is the script specific for Spain or the Islamic West; it also figures on

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<sup>4</sup> Joaquína Albarracín Navarro and Juan Martínez Ruíz, *Medicina, farmacopea y magia: El « Misceláneo de Salomón »*. Granada 1987, p. 206. Specimens of the “linear Kufi” script also in Ana Labarta (ed.), *Libro de dichos maravillosos. (Misceláneo*



3 - “El Misceláneo de Salomón”, MS from Ocaña, fol. 8b

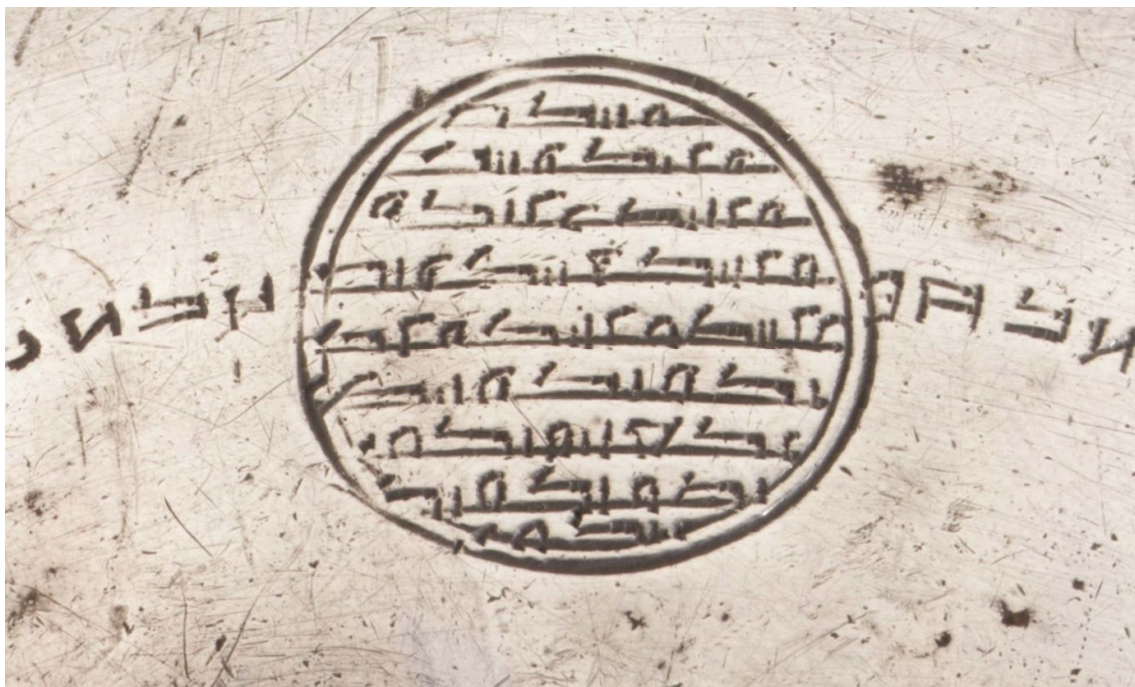
many seals from the Orient, as can be illustrated by inscriptions on a Mamluki silver magical bowl from Cairo, dated 710/1310. (See Plate 4).

In the Jewish and the Islamic tradition, magic and the use of seals were closely connected to the name of King and Prophet Solomon, witness the Arabic expression “khātam Sulaimān”, i.e. the “ring” or the “seal” of Solomon, which is often depicted as a five- or six-pointed star. In the Latin cover-text of the first Lead Book, the name of Solomon is applied to the type of Arabic script used in the Lead Books: “LIBER FUNDAMENTI ECLESIE SALOMONIS CHARACTERIBUS

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*Morisco de magia y adivinación*). Madrid: CSIC, 1993, passim (manuscript of around the year 1600AD that had been hidden in Monacíd de la Sierra).





4 - Seal on a magical bowl from Cairo, dated 710/1310 (private collection)

ESCRIPUS” (“The Book of the Fundament of the Church written in the characters of Solomon”). It is possible that the name “characters of Solomon”, “Solomonic script”, or, in Arabic “al-Qalam al-Sulaimānī” was the current name of this script among the Moriscos, though we have not been able to trace this name in Arabic or other Islamic sources which are independent from the Lead Books. In an article of 1921, the French orientalist Casanova who had come across the same type of script in several magical seals from the Near East, referred to a marginal note in an Arabic magical manuscript where this script was called “al-Qalam al-Nabaṭī” (“Nabataean script”). He himself coined this script as “Koufique linéaire”<sup>5</sup>. Contrary to the seals in magical texts, where the inscriptions usually seem to be devoid of any meaning, the Lead Books contain genuine texts, their script is

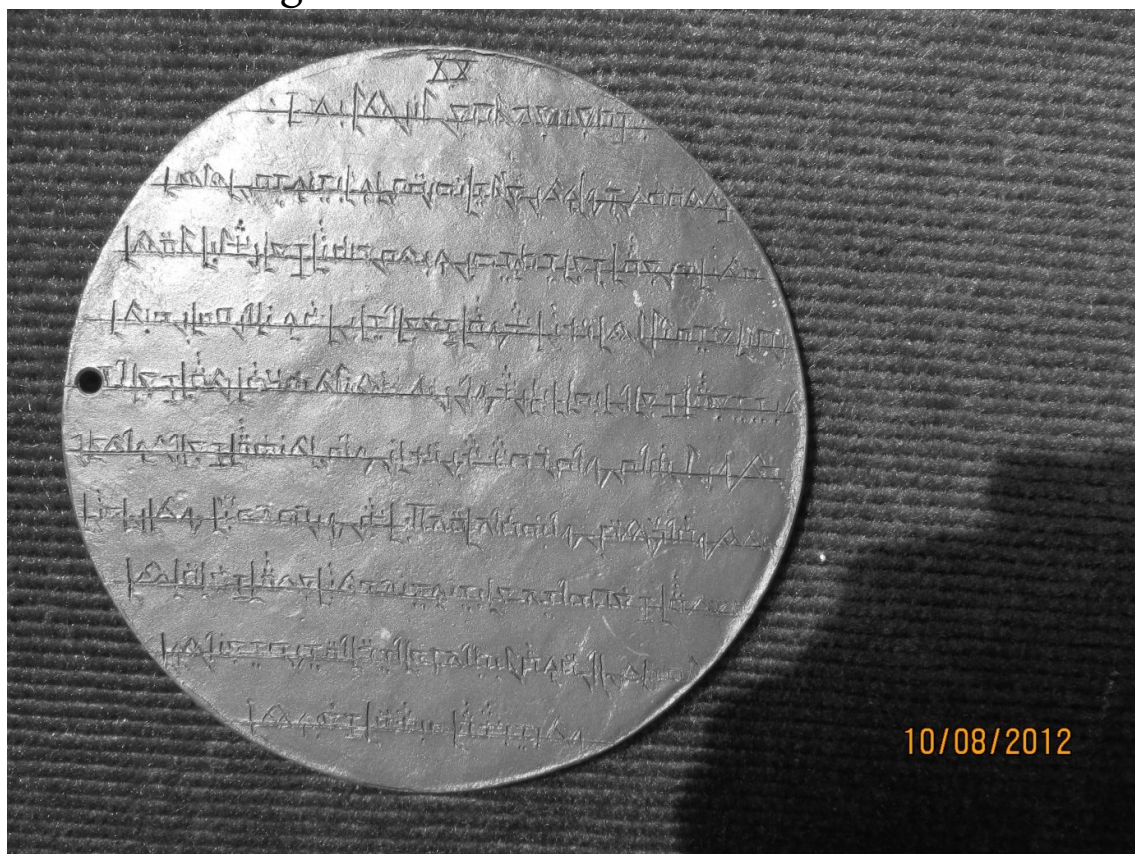
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<sup>5</sup> M. Casanova, “Alphabets magiques arabes”, *Journal Asiatique* 1921, pp. 129-143. See also Venetia Porter, “Islamic Seals: Magical or Practical?” In: Emilie Savage-Smith (ed.), *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*. Aldershot 2004, p. 190.

legible, incidentally diacritical dots have been provided, and spaces as well as certain reading signs often help the reader to distinguish between words and sentences.

## 2.2 Cryptography in three Lead Books

In three Lead Books, a cryptic script has been used that has defied all scholars who have worked with these materials, including the experts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Vatican Commission. In two instances, we are only dealing with a few words, but in a third instance we are dealing with an almost complete booklet. We are referring here to the Lead Book 17, entitled *Ḥaḳīqat al-Injīl*, “the Essence of the Gospel”. With the exception of a few lines in Arabic script provided as legends in a Seal of Solomon to serve as a kind of “cover-page”, the complete text of this booklet was written in the cryptic script we are referring to.



5 - LP17, fol. 3b: First page of “*Ḥaḳīqat al-Injīl*”, photographed in the Sacromonte Archives

It is possible to distinguish between two separate cryptographic traditions in Islamic civilization. The first of these figures in magical texts and consists of a variety of alternative *alphabets*, different from the usual Arabic alphabet, by which Arabic texts can be expressed. These strange, non-Arabic alphabets are dealt with by various authors, like for instance Ibn Waḥshiyya (d. circa 935 A.D.)<sup>6</sup> and Al-Jildākī (d. 1342 A.D.)<sup>7</sup>. In the alphabets presented by Ibn Waḥshiyya and Al-Jildākī the numbers of signs in one type of script are more or less identical to the number of the letters of the Arabic alphabet. The idea is here, that certain Arabic names or words, the author of a text wanted to keep secret or of limited access, were presented by him in one of these mysterious alphabets.

The second tradition is a cryptographic tradition in the real sense of the word, in that this tradition bears various examples of forms of cryptography used for official purposes, for instance in letters and documents, containing state secrets. This tradition is characterized by the substitution of Arabic letters by other Arabic ciphers and letters or by symbols of different origin, in accordance with certain (secret) formulas. The famous 9<sup>th</sup>-century scholar Al-Kindī wrote a study analysing the different types of encipherment.<sup>8</sup> In the case of our Lead Books we would be dealing with the first tradition, but the truth of the matter is that our mysterious script contains many more different signs than the letters of

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<sup>6</sup> *Shawq al-mustahām fī maʿrifat rumūz al-aqlām*, ed. Joseph Hammer, London 1806.

<sup>7</sup> Aidamūr al-Jildakī (d. 743/1342 in Cairo, according to others in 762), *Durrat al-ghawâss wa-kanz al-ikhtisâs fī maʿrifat ʿilm manâfiʿ al-khawâss*. GAL SII 172. 10. The survey of the magical alphabets is provided by the author at the end of his book, and fails in the lithographed Bombay edition of 1309/1891. We base ourselves on a photocopy of a manuscript in a private collection.

<sup>8</sup> M. Mrayati, Y. Meer Alam, and M.H. at-Tayyan, *Al-Kindi's Treatise on Cryptanalysis*. Ryadh 1423. This is volume 1 of a series on the "Arabic Origins of Cryptology". Various other important Arabic texts on Arabic cryptology have been published in this series.



the Arabic alphabet. We are thus inclined to assume that we are dealing here with a case of pseudo-cryptography, not uncommon in magical texts and inscriptions, where the text is in fact devoid of any meaning at all. Here we are reminded of the warning expressed repeatedly by the Lead Books themselves with respect to each of the texts presented in this mysterious script, viz. that their meaning will only be revealed at the end of time, under divine intervention!

### 2.3. The Images of the Seal of Solomon in the Lead Books

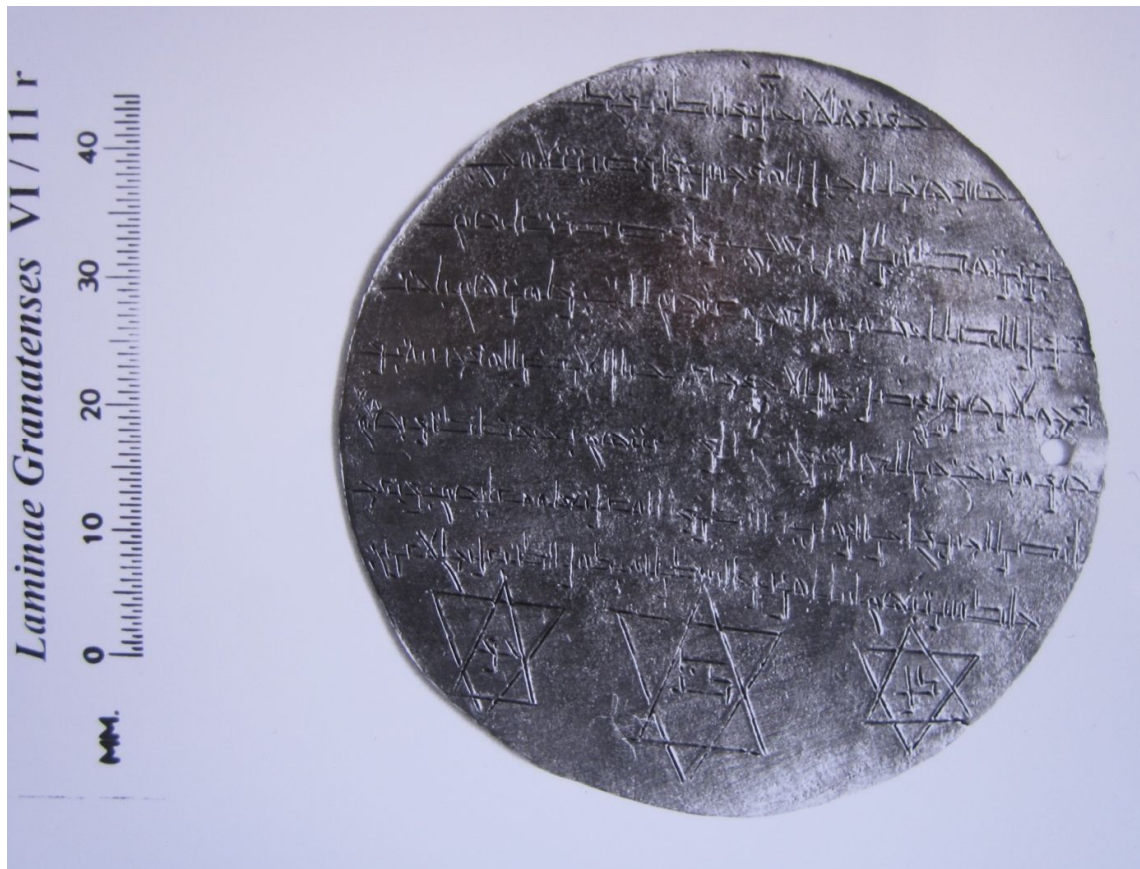
Drawings of the already-mentioned “Seal of Solomon” figure at the beginning and end of most of the Lead Books. Apart from their decorative role, especially in the case of more or less complex constellations of various “Seals of Solomon”,



6 - LP7, fol. 22a: Seals of Solomon with Creed: “Lā ilāha illā Allāh; Yaṣūʾ rūḥ Allāh”. Photographed in the Sacromonte Archives

their function is to emphasize the divine truth of the Lead Books. Often, they are devoid of any legend, but in some cases

they are filled or surrounded with short texts, or even with the first letters of these short texts. The first of these is what presents itself as the “creed” of the Lead Books: لا اله الا الله - يسوع روح الله - “There is no god but God, Jesus is the Spirit of God” (See Plate 6). Then, there is a short text that can be characterised as an article of faith or a conviction which seems to lie at the basis of many Lead Books, viz: كل كتب حق - “Every (sacred) Book is the Truth”.



7 - LP15, fol. 11a: Three Seals of Solomon with article of faith: “Kullu kitāb ḥaqq”, photographed by the Vatican Library.

Finally, there is the poetic text introducing the “Essence of the Gospel”. Its six lines were constructed after the pattern one observes in the Arabic poetical “commentary” on the Spanish prophecy of the Parchment, we mentioned earlier (See Plate 8).

كبيرة القدر	مقلبة العلامة	حقيقة الانجيل
لتعظيم الاجر	واليمن والنعمة	تهدي الى السبيل
يسراً على يسر	جلية العظمة	كلمة الجليل
ايضى من الشمس	من جمر الكرمة	فهي للمكتبس
لحظة القدس	في مشهد القيامة	تنجيه من النحوس
بالروح والنفوس	يا سعد من اقمه	فلاح النفوس

In our translation, its meaning would be as follows:

- (1) “(This is) the Essence of the Gospel, in an inverted sign, of great power.”
- (2) “It leads to the way of prosperity and to the assiduous glorification of the reward.”
- (3) “(It is) the word of the Exalted (God), of lofty sublimity, ease upon ease.”
- (4) “For him who derives light from the embers of grace it is more splendid than the sun.”
- (5) “It will save him from disasters on the day of Resurrection, in the presence of the Most Holy.”
- (6) “Salvation of souls; whoever will uphold it will be happy in spirit and soul.”





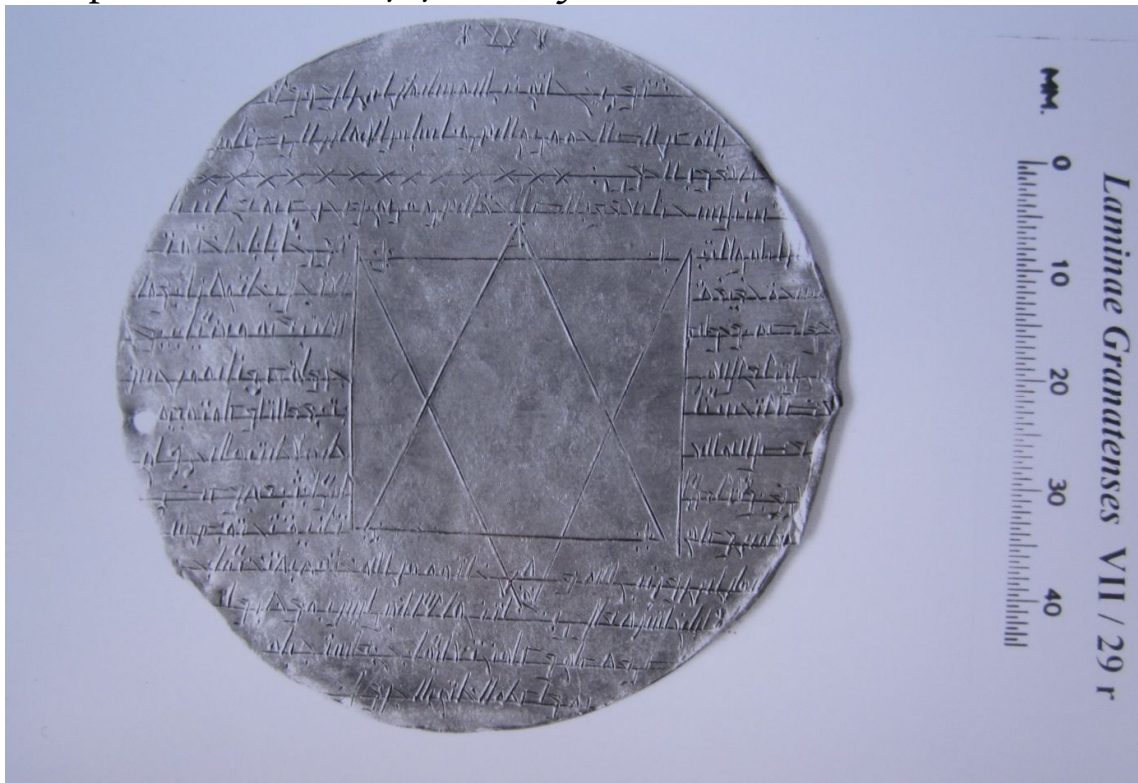
8 - LP17, fol.10a: Seal of Solomon with poetical prophecy. Photograph of the Vatican Library.

In one of the smaller Lead Books, an explanation is given of the origin and power of the Seal of Solomon. (See Plate 9). It describes how Solomon received the sign from God on his ring, empowering him to rule over demons and spirits. Seduced by the Devil in the form of a woman of outstanding beauty, he lost the ring, but in the end was able to retrieve it, and restore order in his realm. The “Shield of David” (*Magen David*) or the “Seal of Solomon” (*Khātam Sulaimān*, as it is exclusively called in Arabic), has its origin in pre-Islamic Jewish magic.<sup>9</sup> Originally, Solomon’s ring was not covered by the magical emblem of a six- or five-pointed star, but by the holy, unpronounceable name of God, the *tetragrammaton*. Important elements of the story as recounted in LP11, are of

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<sup>9</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Das Davidsschild. Geschichte eines Symbols*. This is a chapter in the author’s “Judaica”, published in the Bibliothek Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1963, pp. 75-118.

Jewish origin as well, but with important Islamic elements added, just as is the case with so many other so-called “Prophetic Tales” (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*).



9 - LP11, fol. 1b: *History of the Seal of Solomon*. Photograph of the Vatican Library

### 3. Style and Language

#### 3.1. Style

The Lead Books present different styles in relation to a variety of subject-matters. First of all, there are *discursive treatises of religious doctrines and rules*. Among them, we find texts on the fundamental articles of faith (LP1), the divine essence (LP2), the ritual of the mass (LP4), a “catechism” in two copies (LP5, LP9), a text about paradise and hell (LP12), one on the nature of the angels (LP13), and a list of religious rules and wisdoms (LP14).

The *dialogue in the form of questions and answers*, is a second characteristic style to be observed in some Lead Books. Sometimes, the questions are posed by Peter the Vicar

and the answers given to him by the Holy Virgin Mary, as in the History of the Essence of the Gospel (LP15). In the Ascension of Mary (LP16), it is Mary herself who asks the questions, while Gabriel and others give the answers. We find the same form and style in the “Virtues of the Essence of the Gospel” (LP18). Stylistically speaking, these texts are strongly reminiscent of the Islamic literature of the so-called *munājāt* (“intimate conversations”), for instance between Moses and God.

Then, there are *narrative texts*, in a third group, as in the Life of Jesus (LP7), and the Life of James (LP20 and LP21 and LP22).

A fourth group has *theological texts in a solemn and elevated language, in rhymed prose, strongly reminiscent of the Koran*, as LP8 and LP10 (both on predestination and free will). This same style is occasionally also applied in a “historical” text, as in LP11, dealing with the history of the Seal of Solomon. The author numbered each sentence with a letter of the alphabet, evoking the “loose letters” to be found at the beginning of some Suras of the Koran.

Finally, there remain a few small texts with an *amulet* (LP3), a *prayer* (LP6) and a *magical text which presents itself as the “Seal of the Sacromonte”* (LP19).

### 3.2. Grammar

Several aspects of the Arabic language of the Lead Books and Parchment, lead to the conclusion that we are dealing with a variety of the Andalusí dialect, as described in Federico Corriente’s *Grammatical Sketch of the Spanish Arabic Dialect Bundle* (1977).<sup>10</sup> In the present context, we can only illustrate this with a few examples:

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<sup>10</sup> Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1977.

Our first example. Consistently, and with very rare exceptions, the undefined form of a noun has its ending, the Arabic *tanwīn*, exclusively in the form of *-an*, in all cases, thus excluding the use of *-un* and *-in*, for nominative and genitive, respectively, a phenomenon analysed by Corriente in his *Sketch*<sup>11</sup>. This is to be observed, for instance, in the small sentence: “lahu mulkan lā yazāl”, instead of: “lahu mulkun lā yazāl” (“He possesses a kingship that has no ending”, in LP1). Another example from the same first Lead Book is: “laysa bāban aqrāban dalīl ‘alā Allāh min al-qurbān”, instead of *laysa bābun aqrābu dalīl ‘alā Allāh min al-qurbān* (“there is no closer gate leading towards God than the mass”).

A second example to illustrate the Andalusiness of the dialect of the Lead Books is the substitution of an initial *wāw* by *alif*, as in *ajaba*, instead of *wajaba* (“to be obliged”); and, likewise, *ahaba*, instead of *wahaba* (“to donate”), and *ūjūd*, instead of *wujūd* (“existence”, “world”), and *aṭā*, instead of *waṭa'a* (“to step”), etcetera. Compare the examples mentioned by Corriente: *irātha* instead of *wirātha* (“inheritance”, quoted from the *Vocabulista* of Pedro de Alcalá), and *zain al-izāra* instead of *zain al-wizāra* (“ornament of the ministry”, quoted from the *Dīwān* of Ibn Quzmān).<sup>12</sup> A comparable phonetical change is the substitution of *sīn* by *ṣād*. Corriente provides many examples, as e.g. *ṣurra* instead of *surra* (“navel”)<sup>13</sup>, and the same phenomenon occurs in the Lead Books with similar frequency, as e.g. in *Yaṣū'* instead of *Yasū'* (“Jesus”). The very frequently occurring name of Jesus is always written with *ṣād*, not with *sīn*, following the phonetic characteristics of Andalusī Arabic.

<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 7.1.1, pp. 121-122.

<sup>12</sup> Corriente, *Sketch* (1973), 2.5.1, p. 36

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.15.2, p. 48.

A third and last example to be mentioned here is the use of the denying particle *lam* followed by a verbal form in the imperfect, to deny something in the present or future, different from the well-known use of *lam* followed by a verbal form in the apocope in order to deny something that already happened in the past. An example from LP4: “li-anna mā kāna li-‘ibādat Allāh lam yajibu li-manfa‘at ‘ibādihi” (“because what is [destined] for the adoration of God should not be used by His servants”). And from the same booklet: “wa-dhālika ba‘da iqrāran min al-dhunūb faṣīḥ wa-‘ahdan [an]<sup>14</sup> lam ya‘ūdu ilaihim abadan” (“and that, after a clear confession of the sins and a promise that he will never return to them”).<sup>15</sup>

Among the relatively scarce materials for the study of the late Granadan Andalusī dialect, the Lead Books certainly present themselves as important new sources with authentic linguistic testimonies of the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.3. Vocabulary

The Islamic background of the author transpires on every page of the Lead Books by his use of expressions, even the shortest ones, derived from the two fundamental normative sources of Islam, viz. the Koran or the Tradition literature (*Ḥadīth*) which consists of reports about saying and deeds of Muhammad or one of his Companions. Here, we are witnessing the creation of an Islamic “atmosphere”, where an audience with a Muslim background would easily feel at home. At the same time, there is a complete avoidance, of the exposition of any specific Islamic doctrine or any explicit reference to Islam, the name of Muhammad, for instance, not

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<sup>14</sup> We have an example here of the frequent phenomenon of “*involution*” in the Lead Books, where two identical graphemes directly following each other are only written once.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, par. 9.3.2, pp. 144-145.

being mentioned a single time in any of the 22 Lead Books. The Islamic expressions, as well as major Islamic images are applied here to Christian figures. The ascension of the Holy Virgin Mary (“*Maryam al-ṣāliḥa al-‘adhra*”), for instance, has been calqued from the Ascension (*mi‘rāj*) of Muhammad, a major event in Islamic sacred history (LP16). An example of an Islamic tradition applied here to Jesus is, for instance, the passage in the “Catechism”(LP5): “While our lord Jesus, His Spirit, is stretching out His arms before him, in accordance with His words: ‘Whosoever approaches me one span, I will draw near to him one cubit, and whosoever draws near to me a cubit, I will draw near to him the length of two arms, and whosoever comes to me walking, I will come to him running.’” These words, attributed here to Jesus, are a widespread so-called “sacred tradition” (*ḥadīth qudsī*), in which God speaks Himself directly, mentioned in many different Islamic sources. Used in this way, it could easily be understood as suggesting that Jesus is in fact God.

In addition, numerous specifically Islamic concepts are used in the Lead Books to indicate specific Christian institutions, rituals and customs. This is a phenomenon already *en vogue* in Christian missionary texts directed towards the Moriscos. In his Catechism of *circa* 1554, Bartolomé Dorador, for instance, used Islamic concepts like *faqīh* for “priest”, *ṣalāt* for Mass, and *miḥrāb* for “altar”.<sup>16</sup> The Lead Books considerably increase an identical use of such Islamic concepts. They use, for instance, *al-jamī‘ al-muqaddas*, which is the Andalusī form of *al-jāmi‘ al-muqaddas* for “the Holy Church”, rather than the “Holy Mosque”.

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<sup>16</sup> María Paz Torres, *Bartolomé Dorador y el árabe dialectal andaluz. Resumen de Tesis Doctoral*. Granada 1971 (Tesis doctorales de la Universidad de Granada), p. 43.

Apart from all the Andalusí specificities in the morphology of its vocabulary, the vocabulary of the Lead Books presents several *idiosyncrasies*, to be found especially in certain proper names and institutions. *Jarjalān* is, for instance, used for Jerusalem<sup>17</sup> and *Batlān* for Bethlehem. Perhaps we have to understand these forms in the context of corresponding contemporary Spanish names, like for instance *Jerusalén*. The author seems to have faced some difficulty in writing the letter *p* in Arabic. The very frequently occurring name of Peter, for instance, is written as *Yadru* (with *yā'*). We can only guess why he chose the letter *yā'* in this case. Thesiphon, whose name is mentioned once in Latin, bears the Arabic name *Tis'ūn ibn al-'Aṭṭār* in the Lead Books. Are we to believe that, in the author's view, the name Thesiphon had been derived from his original Arabic name?<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. Our Publication of the Parchment and the Lead Books

##### 4.1. Introductory Study

Even though the Arabic text of the Lead Books remained unknown and hidden, they have been the object of extensive discussions, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In a general introduction, entitled “Crypto-Islam in Early Modern Iberia. Deciphering and Interpreting the Sacromonte Lead Books”, we will present a survey of their vicissitudes from the late 16<sup>th</sup> up till and including the present time. First of all, we shall focus on the discovery of the parchment of the “Turpiana Tower” and the first series of nine lead books (1588-1596). Then, we will deal with the period 1597-1599,

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<sup>17</sup> Note that this idiosyncrasy appears both in the Parchment and the Lead Books, once again confirming the common authorship of both.

<sup>18</sup> Compare the Latin cover text of Lead Book 2: “LIBER DE ESSENTIA DEI QUEM DIBUS THESIPHON APOSTOLI IACOBI DISCIPULUS IN SUA NATURALI LINGUA ARABICA SALOMONIS CHARACTERIBUS SCRIPSIT”.



where we discuss the discovery of Lead Books 10 to 22), the translation activities of Ignacio de las Casas (1597-1598) and Al-Ḥajarī (1598-9), and the approval of the devotional veneration of the relics in 1600. This is followed by a survey of the interpretation process in Spain between 1600 and 1643, focusing on translators in Spain who had access to the Parchment of the Torre Turpiana and the original Lead Books: Pedro de Valencia (1607), Francisco de Gurmendi (1616-1617), Juan Bautista Hesronita (1618), the Marquis of Estepa (Adán Centurión) (1628-9) and Marcos Dobelio (1610-1638). Following the Lead Books on their way to the Vatican in Rome, we will then discuss the translation work of Bartolomeo a Pectorano, the translations and critical judgment of the Vatican Committee, and, finally, the condemnation of the Lead Books by Innocent XI in 1682. As a last section of this historical survey, we present a survey of the Academic studies on the texts of the Parchment and the Lead Books in the modern age.

In a second section, we will be introducing our edition of the Arabic texts and our English translations. We are dealing here, first of all, with the material aspects of Parchment and Lead Books, including script and decoration. We shall also present a detailed discussion of the linguistic aspects, including grammar and vocabulary. Then we will deal with style and contents, with special focus on the religious doctrine of Parchment and Lead Books. Finally, we will explain in more details the methodological criteria we have applied in our edition and translation.

#### **4.2. Edition**

Briefly discussing the method followed in our edition, we have to distinguish between the Parchment and the Lead Books. In our edition of the Parchment, we focus on the transcripts and translations made by Miguel de Luna and



Alonso del Castillo. In all probability, it seems to have been Luna who had access to another copy of the text in a more legible form, on which he could rely to produce his transcripts and translations. Alonso del Castillo seems to have relied on Luna's transcripts, standardizing and correcting it, wherever he thought this was desirable in the light of the opaque script of the Parchment itself. Our edition registers the work of them both and points to the differences between their reading of the Arabic texts.

In our edition of the Lead Books we aim at giving a transcription of the original lead tablets which is as truthful as possible, while maximizing their accessibility to the modern reader. It is not a so-called "*diplomatic* edition", because: (1) we do not follow the lay-out of the texts as found on the tablets but are editing them in paragraphs and sections, in accordance with their inner structure and contents; (2) we are not confining ourselves to the incomplete diacritical dots as found on the tablets but are continuously adding those we deem necessary in order to produce a readable text. However, we do faithfully reproduce all errors we believe were committed (usually by a scribe) in the main text, while suggesting a more correct reading in the notes only.

Our method implies a constant process of interpretation, even at the level of the edition of the Arabic texts, which, we believe, is inevitable, in view of the characteristics of the Arabic script in handwritten texts in general, with their customary and continuous omission of numerous diacritical signs, and the usual absence of the slightest editorial order in these texts, especially when they are prose-texts. However, in order to enable the reader to verify our edition to the fullest extent, we are adding a CD-Rom with two sets of digital reproductions of all tablets, one

set based on photographs made in the Vatican Library before the tablets were transferred to Granada, and another set made by ourselves with a digital camera in the Sacro Monte Archives. The order we follow in arranging the various texts in our edition, is based on the well-documented chronological order of the discoveries. The chronology of the texts themselves may of course differ from that initial chronology as established by the events of discoveries.

In the course of the more than 400 years of their existence outside the caves of Valparaíso Hillock, various tablets were damaged and passages were effaced, resulting in irreparable loss of texts. In all those cases, we made grateful but critical use of the transcripts of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century translators working in Granada and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Vatican Commission working in Rome who were working with the same, but less damaged materials. Wherever we collected the various solutions to be found in those external sources in order to propose a text of our own choice, we always added texts of various lengths, varying from a few letters to the texts of our choice within square brackets. Let us not forget, however, that our edition is no more than an “editio princeps” of extremely difficult texts, likely to be in need of correction at various points after a certain period of time will have elapsed and specialists of various disciplines will have been able to work with them.

### **4.3. Translation**

Our translation aims to do justice to the meaning of these very difficult texts, and especially to the Islamic culture of their author(s) transpiring on almost every tablet. In Estepa’s 17<sup>th</sup> century translation, published with some modifications by Hagerty, the Islamic backdrop or “soul” of these texts has almost completely remained obscure. We have refrained from entering upon an elaborate discussion

with Estepa and Hagerty about the meaning, and especially: the Islamic meaning of ever so many words and passages. The critical evaluation of the work of the 17<sup>th</sup> century translators from Granada and Rome, merits a separate study, which will be possible with the help of our edition of the Arabic originals. Yet, in addition to notes of an Islamological nature, we have introduced many references to the translations and some of the transcriptions of the two main protagonists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century group of Morisco translators, viz. Alonso del Castillo and Miguel de Luna, wherever these were available. These critical notes show, among others, how and to what extent both scholars were personally engaged in these texts and may be helpful in further discussing the problem of the authorship.

### 5. The Historical Narrative of Parchment and Lead Books

The Lead Books present themselves as *direct* sources for a hitherto unknown *history of early Christianity*, in which a turning point appears to be the revelation to Mary of a holy book (kitāb), called the *Essence of the Gospel* (Ḥaqīqat al-Injīl). Mary was chosen, as unique among women, to make it known to the world (LP 16, fol. 3a). During her spiritual (Ar. rūḥānī) journey to the heavens Mary saw her beloved son Jesus seated to the right of the Heavenly Throne<sup>19</sup>, close to a dome (Ar. qubba) in which she saw a book (LP 16, fol. 20b). She asked that she be granted to reveal this book to mankind. This wish was granted and the Essence of the Gospel ‘descended’ on her. The Lead Books inform us that this scripture was revealed after Jesus’ demise<sup>20</sup>, and sent

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<sup>19</sup> This indicates that the author of the Lead Books posits that Jesus had been elevated (raf) to God (i.e. after the Ascension, 40 days after his demise (in Christian terms: Passover).

<sup>20</sup> Described in LP 7, *Kitāb Maḥāsin Sayyidinā Yaṣū’ wa-Ma’ājizihī wa-Ummihī Maryam al-Ṣāliḥa al-’Adhra* and LP 6: *Bukā Bidruh al-Ḥawārī al-Khalīfa*, a prayer

down on her immediately after Pentecost (LP 15, fol. 2a-b, LP 16, fol. 2b, fol. 23b, LP 20, fol 4b (without the context of Pentecost), cf. Acts 2: 1-31).<sup>21</sup> In Jerusalem, Mary wrote the book (referred to as “the original” (Ar. al-aşl), LP 20, fol. 36a) by her own hand with brilliant light on tablets made of precious stone. A copy, written on tablets of lead, was sealed by her with the Seal of Solomon, her paternal ancestor (see LP 15, fol. 1b-2a; LP 20, fol. 4b). This copy on lead is LP 17 (LP 16, fol. 23a, cf. LP 20, fol. 4B). Codicologically speaking, LP 17 has the *form* of all other Lead Books, viz. it has a title page, and opens and closes with the Seal of Solomon, but it presents, with the exception of the folio mentioned above, an unreadable script. The original *Essence of the Gospel* disappeared in the interior of Mount Olives which burst open and closed again (LP 20, fol. 6b). Directly connected to the *Essence of the Gospel* is LP 18, Kitāb Mawāhib thawāb Ḥaḳīqat al-Injīl lil-mu’minīn, *The Book of the Gifts of Reward to Those Who Believe*, a book which discusses why it is mandatory to believe in the Essence of the Gospel. We will return to the *Essence of the Gospel* in more detail below. For now it suffices to say that our research unequivocally shows that it is

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(du’ā’) which stems from the weeping of Peter, and describes his penance after denying his master.

<sup>21</sup> The narrative deserves some further comments here. First of all, it takes place 52 days after Jesus’ demise (wafāt, LP 16, f 1b). Second, on that occasion the number of twelve disciples is restored with Matthias, following a revelation (waḥy). First of all, the number of 52 days is odd, since the Christian tradition speaks about 50 days. Here, as elsewhere in similar cases, the purpose is to focus the attention on an alternative historical and religious trajectory. In this case, the author sheds doubt on the early Christian calculation of Pentecost (from the Greek fifty) fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection on Eastern Sunday, and by implication on Jesus’ crucifixion (on the Friday before Passover Sunday (the fiftieth day). The completing of the number of disciples/apostles is based on Acts 1: 15-26, in particular verses 24-26, which tells us how Matthias was chosen on the basis of the casting of a lot, replacing Judas. The Lead Books do not mention *Judas* here (but they do so in LP 7).

identical to the Quranic revelation and that hence the Lead Books prophesize the conversion of the entire world to Islam.

The Lead Books go on describe two journeys made by James to Iberia.<sup>22</sup> The *first one*, a *missionary* journey, is described largely in LP 20, Kitāb Maḥāsīn Ya‘qūb al-Ḥawārī, the *First Book of the Good Deeds of James*. This book describes how James sets out to Iberia with the *Essence of the Gospel* and six disciples and goes amongst other places to the city of Illabbula, i.e. Illapula (Granada) (LP 20 fol. 8a-9a).<sup>23</sup> His mission was to convert at least one person. Near to a Holy Mountain, James indeed converted one person, an Arab, called Ibn al-Mughīra (LP 20, fol. 34a), who received the name of Dāyish al-Kufr, or “Trampler of Unbelief.” James took him to Jerusalem to meet Mary with the other six (LP 20, fol. 35a).

<sup>24</sup>

While in Granada, James writes LP 15, Kitāb Tawrīkh Ḥaqīqat al-Injīl, *the Book of the History of the Essence of the Gospel* (cf. LP 20, fol. 9b). This is an eschatological prophecy rather than a history (Ar. jafr). Upon divine revelation he also writes LP 19 and 22, two different books with the same title, viz. Kitāb al-Asrār al-‘azīma, *The Book of the Great Secrets*, which contain Prophetic visions. James and his apostles then return to Jerusalem. After the death of Mary and her ascension to the heavens a council takes place (LP 20, fol. 37a-b). In the Lead Books, this event marks the moment

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<sup>22</sup> Márquez Villanueva, Francisco. *Santiago: Trayectoria de un mito*. Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> As a response to the arrival of the Essence a man named al-ḥaqq (the Truth) rises from the dead, see LP 20, fol. 9b.

<sup>24</sup> According to Estepa and accepted by Hagerty (p. 250), Dayish had to be understood as Indaletius, completing the number of seven apostolic men (referring to the Spanish myth of seven ‘varones’ who had brought Christianity to Spain, see LP 20 fol. 7b).

when the decision comes about under the guidance of Peter and James with regard to the teachings of the religious community, called “al-jamī al-muqaddas”, i.e. the ‘Holy Church’. Based on the consensus of the community (LP 20) and the highest authority of Peter, the successor to Jesus, who is called “al-khalīfa”, the “Vicar” (Pope), James is authorized to write the *Liber Fundamenti Ecclesie* or Kitāb Qawā’id al-dīn (the *Book of the Fundamentals of the Faith* - both the Arabic and Latin title are preserved) (LP 1), a summary of the theology of the Lead Books (LP 20, fol. 36b-37a) and LP 2, the *Liber de Essentia Dei* or Kitāb Fī al-Dhāt al-karīma (*the Book of the Divine Essence* - again, both an Arabic and a Latin title are preserved) (see LP 20, fol. 37b). There are several lead books dealing with ritual (for example, LP 4: Kitāb ṣifat al-qurbān, (the *Book about the Characteristics of the Mass*), theology and ethics. After his return to Jerusalem, James and his (now) seven disciples undertake a short journey to the land of the Samaritans (LP 20, fol. 37b).

Next, after a second journey, James and his Apostles, now seven, return to Iberia (Ishpanya), where James wishes to die (LP 21). All the Lead Books (including the copy of *the Essence of the Gospel*) were hidden in the Holy Mountain (LP 15, fol. 11b; LP 21, fol. 7b) and James encourages his disciples to visit (Ar. ziyāra) it after his death. The martyrdom and burial of James at the ‘seaside’ followed (see LP 21, Kitāb Maḥāsīn Ya’qūb al-Ḥawārī, the *Book of the Acts of James*, part 2). Finally, the apostles are martyred in Granada and their martyrdom is recorded in the Parchment (P). While the historical narrative claims that the Parchment was the *last* document to have been written by this group, our research demonstrated that the *empirical* history of the Parchment and the Lead Books is in fact completely *the reverse*. The Parchment is *the oldest document*, the Lead Books were

written *later*. The Parchment includes elements that do not return later, such as the reading of the canonical Gospel (of John), the use of Spanish, and the use of the Quranic name of Jesus, ʿĪsā b. Maryam, instead of Yaṣūʿ, as used among Christian Arabs. Internally, there are also changes to be observed. For example, the concept of the *Essence of the Gospel* is only found in the books that were discovered later. The first book in which it is mentioned is LP 11. The concept of the Trinity, however, seems to be mentioned especially in the Parchment and the *first* Lead Books and it disappears from later books. The same holds true for the use of Latin. Only in the parchment and the first two Lead Books Latin is used. This seems to suggest that in the earliest stages of his activities, the author(s) tried to attract the attention of the Old Christian population, in particular the clergy. This suggests that the books show a tendency towards *an increasingly clearer Islamic message*. The historical narrative of the Lead Books presents itself as Christian, but on closer inspection this character appears to be superficial, and only geared toward its *outer appearance*. The -much more important- subtext is an Islamic narrative. This narrative is heavily imbued with mystical notions. In it, the key notion is that of the Ḥaqīqat al-Injīl, *the Essence of the Gospel*, a concept we have not been able to trace in Islamic sources. We would, however, propose that the concept of *Essence of the Gospel* in the Lead Books is to be understood as a “counterpart” or “precursor” of the Islamic mystical concept of “al-Ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya” (“*the Muhammadan Reality*”). This concept finds its origins in the widespread Islamic mystical philosophy of the “Unity of Existence” (waḥdat al-wujūd) of which the idea of *the unity and oneness of religions* formed part as well. (Represented, among others, in the works of the Andalusian mystical philosopher Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī

whose works were read among the Moriscos of Granada, as the *Tafsira* by El Mancebo de Arévalo shows.)<sup>25</sup> This unity and oneness was thought to find its ultimate manifestation in Islam. The expression “Every Book is the Truth”, which is used repeatedly in the Lead Books, points into this same direction, as does the idea that the *Injīl* is the spirit of the *Tawrāt*, while the *Essence of the Gospel* is the spirit of the *Injīl*. This major essentialist trend in Islamic mystical philosophy is constantly searching the distinction between *wahm* (illusion) and *ḥaqīqa* (reality; essence). The logical implication is also that the Quran is the ultimate manifestation of the single and unique reality as contained in the previous revelations. This idea is clearly suggested by the various data provided concerning the *Essence of the Gospel*. LP15, fol. 2a, reads “from its light and its truth (viz. of the *Essence of the Gospel*) was created everything”. This is most precisely one of the major attributes of the mystical concept of *al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya* as developed by Ibn al-‘Arabī and other mystical philosophers. *Al-Ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya* comprises the essence of Muhammad which is manifested in the Quran. With his use of the concept of the *Essence of the Gospel*, the author refers to this reality, as crystallized in the Quran. We will return to this aspect below.

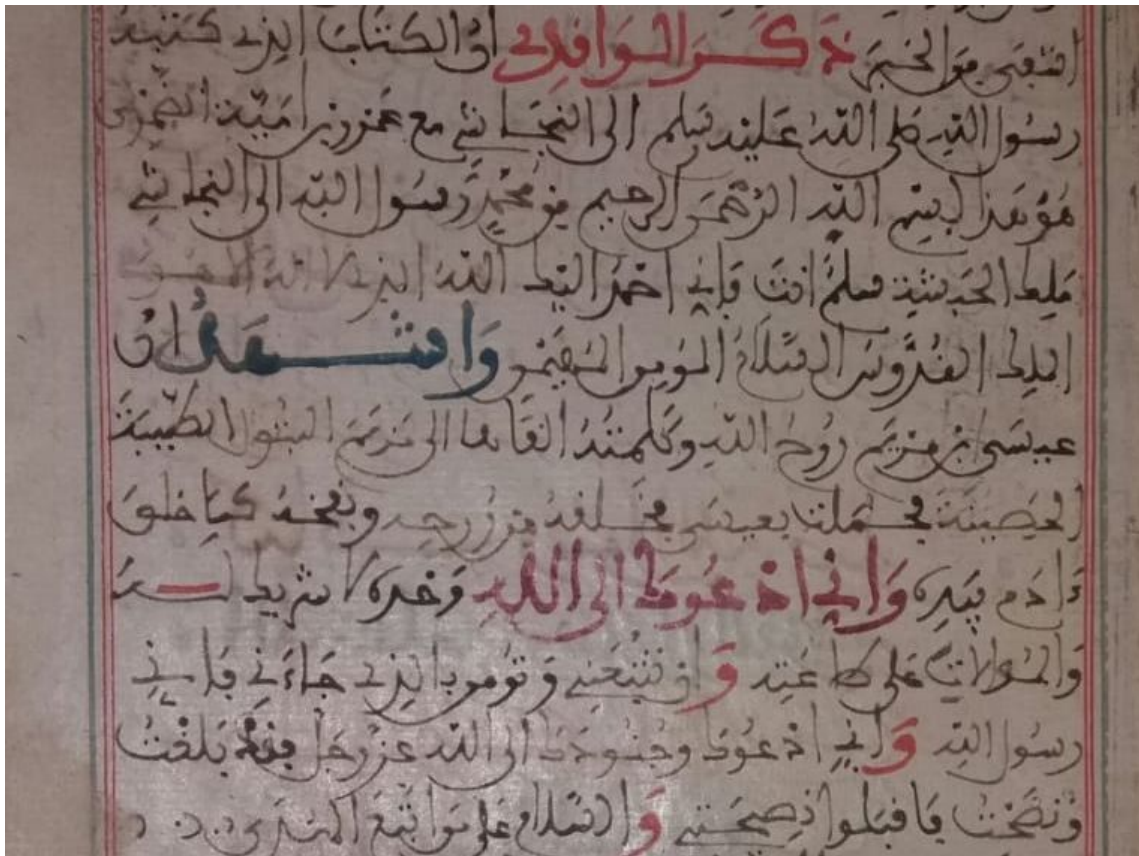
### 6. Jesus and the Trinity in Parchment and Lead Books

The central doctrinal expression, found throughout the Lead Books reads: “There is no god, but God and, Jesus is the Spirit of God” (*Lā ilāha illā Allāh, Yaṣū‘ rūḥ Allāh*). We can characterize this creed, or “shahada”, as an expression of the Christian creed in Islamic monotheist terms. The first part (“kalima”) of this testimony of faith (“shahada”) is identical to the first part of the Islamic testimony of faith. In line with

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<sup>25</sup> Mancebo de Arévalo. *Tratado [Tafsira]*. Edición, traducción y notas de María Teresa Narváez Córdova. Madrid : Editorial Trotta 2003.





10 - Passage from a manuscript in Maghribi script of the Andalusī type of Al-Kalāī's *Kitāb al-Iktifā'* with creed professed by Muhammad (private collection)

Quranic terminology and Muslim Tradition (Ḥadīth), throughout the Lead Books, Jesus referred to as *rūḥ Allāh* (or *Spirit of God*), though in one instance he is called “a word from Him”, as also in the Quran (LP14, f 3v, cf. sura 4:171). According to Islamic sources concerning the biography of the Prophet, the second “*kalima*” of the “*shahāda*” of the Lead Books was pronounced by Muḥammad himself in a letter in which he addressed the Christian ruler of Ethiopia, where he is reported to have said: “*ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh wa ‘Īsā ibn Maryam rūḥ Allāh alqāhā ilā Maryam al-batūl...*” (I confess that there is no God but God, and Jesus is the Spirit of God and His

word that He laid on the Virgin Mary...).<sup>26</sup> In the Lead Books, it seems to suggest a certain closeness to the concept of the “Son of God”, a type of Islamically recognizable “evocation” of a Christian belief which is quite characteristic for the doctrines of the Lead Books. Jesus is also qualified as *al-man’ūm*, which can be translated as “the promised one.” We will return to the meaning of this title below.

### 6.1. God and the Trinity

Trinitarian formulae appear in the Parchment and the earliest Lead Books. In LP 2, the essence of God is qualified as follows: “He is one in Trinity (Ar. tathlith), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ar. rūḥ qudūs), three persons (Ar. nufūs), One God”.<sup>27</sup> In LP 1 this Trinitarian expression is explained as follows: The Father looks in the mirror and sees through the spiritual light (bi’l-nūr al-rūḥānī) the son (ibn). Mary is the mirror. The Father is the first person (nafs), the Son is the second person, and the Holy Spirit a third person (fol. 2b). This kind of explanation of the Trinity seems to have its roots in a Christian context, not only in the works of such sixteenth-century authors such as the Dominican friar and theologian Luis de Granada (1505-1588), but also in earlier Christian Arabic texts.<sup>28</sup> The meaning of the expression ‘son’ becomes clear in other passages. In LP7, Satan says to Jesus: “If you are the Rūḥ Allah, make then from that [stone] a bread”. Compare this with the same story in the Gospel of Matthew (4:3) and Mark (4:3), which refer to Satan’s challenging Jesus as the *Son of God*. The conclusion must be

<sup>26</sup> E.g. in the work of the Andalusī author Ibn al-Kalā’ī’ (d, 634), *Kitāb al-Iktifā’ bi-mā taḍammanahu min maghāzī Rasūl Allāh (...)*. Here, of course, the Islamic name of Jesus is used, viz. ‘Isā ibn Maryam. See Plate 10.

<sup>27</sup> انه وحدا بتثلث ابي وابن وروح قدوس، تلاثة نفوس، الالهًا وحداً, LP 2, fol. 2a-3b, and Parchment.

<sup>28</sup> David Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*, Leiden, Boston: Brill 2008, p. 75.

that in the vision of the author of the Lead Books the concept of *Rūh Allah* is to be preferred.<sup>29</sup> Noteworthy as well is the role ascribed to Mary as a mirror. We will return to this aspect below.

## 6.2. Incarnation

In order to determine the place of the doctrine of the incarnation we have to analyze the relationship between Jesus' human and divine natures (LP 2, 4b). The earliest books, such as LP 1, state that humanity and divinity are both present in Jesus, and that he will hide his divinity (*ilāhiyya*) from the evildoers on the day of Judgement by his humanity (*insāniyya*). The clearest statement is found in the Parchment, in particular in the long reading of the Gospel of John 1: 1-14, which, though differing from the canonical text, indeed mentions the verse which states that the word has become flesh (P: *al-kalām raja'a laḥm*, Vulgate: *verbum caro factum est*, John 1:14). But in LP 10, fol. 3b, *Dāl*, Jesus is said to have one essence/nature (Ar. *Dhāt*), not two: "the being sent (into her, viz. Mary) was one, not two beings." LP7, 13b reads: "because in reality he was a human being".

## 6.3. Crucifixion

With regard to the Crucifixion the Lead Books express various views. In LP 2, fol. 3a, we read that Jesus was sent to save man, was crucified under Pontius Pilate/Tiberius, descended into limbo, and carried the souls away. He is resurrected on the third day, ascends to Heaven, and is now

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<sup>29</sup> The same implication in LP7, fol. 20a, when describing the reaction of people dumbfounded after the crucifixion: "This is surely the Spirit of God", referring to: This is surely the *Son of God*. Note that some mystics, such as Ibn al-'Arabī accepted the idea that Jesus had a progenitor and that he could be considered as a son, see Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time. Ibn al-'Arabī's Book of the Fabulous Griffon*, Leiden: Brill etc. 1999, pp. 523-524, and appendix IV, p. 601. Ibn al-'Arabī refers to Jesus as "The Spirit and the son of the Spirit [of God] and the mother Mary".

seated at the right hand of the father. Similar references to Jesus' crucifixion are found in other places.

In the *Book of the Outstanding Qualities and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus and of his Mother the Holy Virgin Mary* (Kitāb Maḥāsīn Sayyidinā Yaṣū' wa-Ma'ājīzihi wa-Ummihi Maryam al-Ṣāliḥa al-'Adhra, LP7), however, we come across a passage that suggests another view. Here we read "that Jesus was taken away by God in the garden (of Gethsemane)", and that "God completed his time through the angel"<sup>30</sup>, an expression reminiscent of Q. 3: 54-55, tawaffāhu. In this passage, the suggestion is made that it was not Jesus who was crucified, but another person, instead. This is in agreement with majority Muslim doctrine.

### 7. Mary and the Essence of the Gospel

In the Lead Books, and especially the oldest ones, Mary is referred to as being virgin before, during and after giving birth, in complete accordance with Islam, and as pure (ṭāhir) with regard to the sin of Adam, the "first sin" (Ar. al-dhanb al-awwal) as it is called in the oldest books. The last statement was interpreted by the Roman Catholic defenders of the Books as a confirmation of the correctness of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which at the time was a very controversial doctrine (LP 2, fol. 3a). In the later books, and in particular LP 16, *The Book of the Intimate Conversations of the Holy Virgin Mary* (Kitāb Munājāt al-Ṣāliḥa Maryam al-'Adhra) another expression is used, viz. that Mary was pure from all sins, and never had been touched by anything related to it (LP 16, fol. 7a). We may perhaps see this as an evocation of the Islamic doctrine of the protection of prophets from sin (iṣma). Mary indeed functions as a prophetess, to whom a scripture, the *Essence of the Gospel*, is revealed. In the Lead Books, Mary ascends into heaven and is

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<sup>30</sup> LP 7, fol. 19b.

the recipient of revelations, events comparable to the ones narrated in the framework of such genres as the “munājāt” (“intimate conversations”, for instance in Islam between Moses and God) and “mi’rāj” (“Ascension” especially of Muhammad) (LP 16). Books mentioned as being revealed to Mary are: LP 11, LP 14, LP 15, LP 16, LP 18 and LP 17. At the end of her nightly journey, she sees the *Essence* as a book (kitāb) in a heavenly dome (LP 16, fol. 19a). Pentecost itself was announced by the appearance of a Heavenly Light (LP 16, fol. 2a, 22b-23a), and of the sending down of the Holy Spirit (نزول الروح المقدس - LP 15, 2b). Here, the Quranic concept of revelation is used. LP 15 tells us that Mary shows those present in Jerusalem during Pentecost both the original *Essence of the Gospel* as well as its copy. The original tables containing the *Essence of the Gospel* disappeared during the night when a great light appeared, and Mount Olives (Jabal al-Zaytun) opened itself and the *Essence* disappeared in it. The history of the original Tablets is therefore a parallel of the history of Moses’ Tablets, which after being rejected by the people of Israel for a first time, were kept in the Ark in the Temple in Jerusalem. It is very significant that Jerusalem is in the Lead Books referred to *Ramat al-Hamal* (the Height of Neglect). This notion has a strong anti-Jewish polemical connotation in Islam. In our context it symbolises the Divine rejection of the Jews and God’s election of the Muslims. The copy (nuskha) of the *Essence of the Gospel* is thus, in a way parallel to the Tables of Moses, taken to the extremities of the World, where it will be kept safe (LP 15, fol. 4b) and serves, together with the original in Jerusalem, as the perfect guidance for those living there at the End of Time.<sup>31</sup> The apostles ask Mary about the contents of the *Essence*, but Mary replies that the full understanding of the *Essence of the Gospel*

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<sup>31</sup> LP 16, fol. 20b.

is reserved to those who live in the Last Days (LP 15, fol. 2b). LP 20, 3b reads: “All these things were predestined by God in agreement with his eternal (pre-existing) knowledge” (kullu shay qaḍāhu Allāh ‘alā ‘ilm fī sabiq ‘ilmihi). As we have seen, one of the things God predestined for the End of Time is the *Essence of the Gospel*, which itself (viz. the Gospel) is revealed to the Blessed One (man‘ūm) mentioned in the *Tawrāt* on the strength of His overwhelming bounty. In it is “al-dhikr al-ḥakīm”, the wise admonition”. This last expression is a clear reference to sura 3: 58, where this expression “Reminder Full of Wisdom” is found. With this same expression, Muslim tradition also refers to the Quran itself. Adding to this is also the fact that the *Essence of the Gospel* is described as uncreated (LP 15, fol. 2a) evoking to the Muslim reader the dogma of the uncreatedness of the Quran. In conclusion: The *Essence of the Gospel* is conceived as identical to the Quran, but revealed to Mary, who in the Lead Books acquires the traits of a prophetess, and above all, a saint. As many mystics, she makes a spiritual<sup>32</sup> heavenly journey, and as a perfect example she has to impersonate the *Essence of the Gospel* on Earth until her death (LP 16, 20b). In Muslim readers this will evoke the idea of the *insān kāmīl*, the perfect human being. While mystics in general venerated Mary, as Schimmel has pointed out, according to historical records, Granadan Mudejares and Moriscos venerated Mary in a special way, even in comparison to the Old Christian community.<sup>33</sup> In

<sup>32</sup> Only the Prophet was believed to have made a corporal journey (Ar. bi-jismihi), see Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur. The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī*. Lahore: Suhayl Academy 2000, p. 154.

<sup>33</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam. Geschichte des Sufismus*. Köln: Diederichs 1985, p. 609. Schimmel argues that Ibn Arabi considered it possible that women were *abdāl*. Amalia García Pedraza, “El otro morisco: algunas reflexiones sobre el estudio de la religiosidad morisca a través de fuentes notariales”, *Sharq al-Andalus* 12 (1995), pp. 223-234, pp. 229-231; ídem, *Actitudes ante la muerte en la Granada del siglo XVI. Los Moriscos que quieren*

conclusion, the place of Mary in the Lead Books is virtually that of a sinless prophetess and a saint. Even though her prophetic characteristics do not present a conflict with the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad (for she lived before, not after him), this element is remarkable and certainly exceeds the boundaries of Islam.<sup>34</sup>

#### **8. The chain of revelation in the Lead Books: The *Ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm*, the *Zabūr*, the *Tawrāt*, the *Injīl*, and the *Ḥaḳīqat al-Injīl***

What is the place of the *Essence of the Gospel* in the chain of prophecy in the Lead Books? Just like the Quran, the Lead Books describe a sequence of revelations starting with the *Scrolls of Abraham* (Ar. *Ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm*), followed by the *Psalms of David* (the *Zabūr*) (LP 10, fol. 2b LP 16, fol. 19b), the *Torah* (*Tawrāt*), and the *Gospel* (*Injīl*), while the truly perfect book is the *Essence of the Injīl*, to be the guidance for the believers at the end of time (as set out in LP15).<sup>35</sup> Central is God's light that permeates all revelations, and which was pre-existent. With regard to its form, on tables, the *Essence of the Gospel* can be seen as a restored and perfected *Tawrāt* and *Injīl*. The *Injīl* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of the *Tawrāt* and the spirit of the *Injīl* is the *Essence* (LP 15, fol. 2a). Furthermore, we read in many places in the Lead Books that "every (revealed) book is the truth (*kullu kitāb ḥaqq*)", i.e. is taken from of the "Well-preserved Tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), in which Jesus as *Rūḥ Allāh* figures as well (LP 7). This is the clearest sign of the inclusive, mystically inspired message of the Lead Books we referred to above.

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*salvare*. Granada: Universidad de Granada 2002, 2 vols.; Amy G. Remensnyder, "Beyond Muslim and Christian: The Moriscos' Marian Scriptures," in: *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 41: 3 (2011), pp. 545-576.

<sup>34</sup> Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad. "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary." *The Muslim World*, LXXXIX (1989), pp. 161-187.

<sup>35</sup> The other Lead Books may be seen as a parallel to the *Ḥadīth*.

But this mystical unity does not exclude the sometimes polemical nature of the Lead Books. The original *Tawrāt* is said to have been corrupted by the Jews. These corruptions include the alleged original passages in it about the promised savior, but the Jews are accused of having wiped those verses out (LP 22, fol. 3b). We have seen above that the removal of the *Essence of the Gospel* from the Height of Neglect to the farthest West also symbolizes that the Divine covenant with the Jews had been abrogated, and a new one concluded. In that covenant, a vanguard of the Muslims, viz. the Moriscos of Granada appear as the newly chosen people. The corruption of the Gospel (Injīl) is less conspicuous in the Lead Books, but the authors do not present it as perfect either. As we have seen, that perfection is exclusively projected on the *Essence of the Gospel*, viz. on Islam, albeit with a number of peculiar elements, such as the elevation of Mary to the level of a prophetess. The overall picture of the testimony of the Lead Book narrative is that while presenting a better, improved version of Christianity, it implies at the same time that the perfect religion is that of Islam. The phrase that all books are the Truth, and that the *Essence of the Gospel* permeates the universe, however, suggests that the author holds mystical views.

### **9. The eschatological scenario of Parchment and Lead Books**

The universal claims of the Lead Books are also found in their eschatological scenario. As we have seen, in a number of Lead Books Jesus is referred to as the *Blessed One* (al-man'ūm, LP 7, fol. 10b)<sup>36</sup>. This suggests that Jesus, as in the Christian tradition, is the Promised Saviour, the messiah. The epithets attributed to Jesus are: al-amīn, al-ḥaqq al-mubīn al-ṣidiq al-amīn (LP3); sayyidunā Yaṣū' rūḥ Allāh al-amīn, Rūḥ Allāh

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<sup>36</sup> LP7: He is the *man'ūm* announced by 42 prophets preceding him in the *Tawrāt*.



shafī' al-'ibād bi-al-Injīl al-'azīz; rūḥ Allāh al-a'lā (LP7); Rūḥ Allāh al-marḍī (LP10); al-amīn (LP10); sayyidunā Yaṣū' Rūḥ Allāh; also: 'abd (LP10); (LP16); rūḥ Allāh al-shafī' laka (LP16); al-Masīḥ Yaṣū' ibn Maryam Rūḥ Allāh sayyidunā (LP20); Rūḥ Allāh al-amīn shafī' al-'ibād; - *several of these epithets are also well-known Islamic epithets of Muḥammad*. This seems to be a rhetorical device to even increase the acceptability of the doctrine that Jesus occupies a very lofty place, but alongside Muhammad, even though he is never mentioned explicitly. The author of the Lead Books here stresses his particular Islamic veneration for Jesus. But there are ambiguities. LP7 (The Life of Jesus and Mary) confirms that the Blessed One is Jesus, but uses epithets which in Muslim anti-Jewish polemical texts are connected to the future coming of Muhammad. This holds true in the first place for the words *hīd mīd*, which according to LP 7 were originally found in the Scrolls of Abraham (the *suḥuf Ibrāhīm*). However, the words *hīd mīd* are references to the Hebrew *bi-meod meod* in Genesis 17:20 and used by Muslim anti-Jewish polemicists to prove *the future appearance of Muhammad from the Jewish scriptures*.<sup>37</sup> The same passage in LP7 also refers to the promised one as *al-Māḥī*, which is one of the names of the prophet Muhammad meaning “he who wipes out [Unbelief]”.<sup>38</sup> In

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<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the words found in Genesis 17:20, play a key role in anti-Jewish polemical texts. We find them, for example, in Samau'al al-Maghribī's well-known anti-Jewish polemic *Ifḥām al-yahūd*, see the references in Hava Lazarus Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton, 1992, p. 107, and see Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld and Gerard Albert Wieggers, 'Marcos Dobelio's Polemics against the Authenticity of the Granadan Lead Books in Light of the Original Arabic Sources' in Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wieggers (eds.), *Polemical Encounters: Polemics between Christians, Jews and Muslims in Iberia and Beyond*. Pennsylvania 2019, pp. 203-268, p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> Compare “Trampler of Unbelief” (Dayish al-kufr), Ibn al-Mughīra's name. Two other epithets are mentioned: one is Farūq jamī, ‘the separator who

other lead books texts, such as LP 14 (fol. 3b), Jesus is clearly *not* the culmination of the messianic expectations, as the text points to another, future saviour. We read here: “After Jesus the Spirit of God will come to the world a Light from God (nūr min Allāh), called the Enlightened al-Māhī, which is in Greek “Paraclete”, who will be the seal of the messengers (*khātam al-rusul*), with God’s support.” We can see here that these texts are at best ambiguous, and may even be contradictory. In the first text, LP 7, Jesus is presented as the saviour, but from the attribute it clearly appears that he is to be understood as the prophet Muhammad. The second text (LP14) is an evident reference to Muhammad. We argue that this is similar to the relationship between the revealed books. Both tend to argue in the same direction: the revelation culminates in the spirit of the Injīl, its Essence. While the descriptions of the *Essence of the Gospel* evoke the Quran, the Paraclete and other titles evoke the prophet Muhammad. At the end of time a man called “Ṣāliḥ al-faqīh” (“Pious Priest”), will make the contents of the Essence known (see LP 1 fol. 5a, and repeated in LP 15 and LP 18). Aided by the Vicar, viz. the Pope, a Great Council will be held on the island of Sapar (Cyprus), in the eastern regions of Venice, presided by a Conqueror, a king of the Arabs who lives in the Eastern lands of the Greeks, though not being an Arab himself. The *Essence of the Gospel* will be explained at the great assembly by the most humble of God’s creatures. He will in this way also resolve the differences of opinion about the correct interpretation of the scriptures, and in particular the interpretation of the contents of the Gospel (LP 15): فعند ذلك يبعث الله فيه بينهم اضعف خلقه ليشريح حقيقة الانجيل الذي هم فيها يختلفون. Jesus returns (again the Lead Books are in agreement with

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brings together’ an expression that we have not been able to find elsewhere, and Tabtabā’, for which the same holds true.

the Parchment, which also speaks about a second Jesus) and struggles against the false messiah (the dajjāl). The sun will rise in the West (LP 15, LP 18) and one religion will prevail. This religion is Islam. While these events coincide with Islamic descriptions of the Hour and its Signs, including the turmoil with regard to the social order, LP 1, fol. 5a, LP 15, LP 18) they are set in the time that is closely associated with the fate of the Moriscos in Spain, as we encounter it in a number of Morisco prophecies and eschatological Traditions. It is in this context that LP 15, fol. 3b, mentions the fact that the religion (dīn) will again be a “stranger”(gharībān), as it had started its existence. This is a reference to a Prophetic Tradition that states that Islam (!) had started as a stranger, and will return to being one. As we know from other sources, the Moriscos applied this well-known, but spurious Tradition to their own situation as oppressed minority living at the end of the time.<sup>39</sup> We also find a reference to Moriscos as “strangers” in a well-known initial response to the forced conversion of Muslims in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, it was a time in which the Christians were divided because of the Reformation, a fact to which a clear reference is made in the Spanish prophecy contained in the Parchment, as well as in its Arabic commentary.

### 10. Dating and Authorship

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<sup>39</sup> Leonard Patrick Harvey, “A Morisco Collection of Apocryphal Ḥadīths on the Virtues of Al-Andalus” in: *Al-Masāq*, 2 (1989), pp. 25-39, p. 29, idem: *Muslims in Spain 1500-1614*, Chicago and London 2005, pp. 60, 63, note 8.

<sup>40</sup> We are referring to the fatwā by Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Abī Jum‘a al-Maghrāwī al-Wahrānī (d. 917/1511). He was a mufti at Fez wo wrote a fatwā for Muslims living as “strangers” (ghurabā’) and forced to express unbelief, in about 1504, so two years after the general conversion edict in Castile and the kingdom of Granada. Several manuscripts of this fatwa are extant in Romance, one in Arabic: Vatican Library, MS Borgiano Arabo 171, fol. 2-4.

We have established above that the Parchment is the earliest document to have been composed, which means that 1588 is a *terminus post quem* for the Lead Books, but, as we have shown, together constitute an ideological unity and must have been written by one author or a number of cooperating authors. Together, Parchment and Lead Books can be seen as an attempt to picture the Granadan Moriscos as a vanguard at the end of time that presents itself as both Islamic and as heirs to an authentic early Christianity on the Iberian Peninsula, while strongly rejecting Judaism. The use of Spanish and Latin in the Parchment and first two Lead Books served to sensitize the Old Christians, and very likely in particular the archbishopric, first Juan Méndez de Salvatierra and later Pedro de Castro for the ‘Christian’ aspects of the message of the Lead Books, while maintaining and promoting the role of Arabic and particular aspects of Morisco religious culture. At their core, they present Moriscos as an integral part of the Spanish population that should not be expelled. In later Lead Books, through the doctrine of the *Essence of the Gospel*, a messianic and esoteric Islamic message starts to dominate. The Parchment consist of a Spanish prophecy about the End of Time, which is commented upon in Arabic. This commentary presents an explanation of the Spanish prophecy within the ideology of the Lead Books. The Arabic commentary is written in poetic form. Amidst all the translators who worked on the Parchment it was only Miguel de Luna who was able to decipher it and offer a plausible interpretation. We may assume that LP 17 was written with the aim to be incomprehensible (apart from the one page we have discussed already). Rather, the author wished to stick to the *promise* of an Islamic scripture only, knowing that the perfect revelation already existed, and circulated in sixteenth-century Spain, viz. *the Quran itself*. It is very

striking that the poetical text in the Seal of Solomon, attached to the undecipherable text, is composed according to *exactly the same structural principles as the poetical commentary in the Parchment*. This points to the unity of authorship of both texts, and since only Miguel de Luna was able to offer a solid interpretation, he is very likely to have been the author of both the parchment and the Lead Books. Luna was also the author of another historical and literary forgery, viz. the *Historia Verdadera del Rey Don Rodrigo*, the alleged Arabic original of which he defended for some time as an authentic source. Luna defended the authenticity of the Parchment and Lead Books on many official occasions, in the presence of the Archbishop and notaries, but in 1603 he was mentioned in an Inquisition trial as having said to other Moriscos that their contents were fully Islamic.<sup>41</sup> Both viewpoints may not have been mutually exclusive, however, as we have shown above.

This is even clearer in the case of a man who was in all likelihood a son of Miguel de Luna, Alonso (born in about 1570) who defended the Islamic Truth of the Lead Books in 1618-9 when tried before the Inquisition.<sup>42</sup> He spoke about his father as “el doctor Luna”, who is said to have died earlier (“aunque era defuncto”, and indeed he had died in 1615). We think that he was the son of Miguel de Luna who

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<sup>41</sup> Mercedes García-Arenal, “Miguel de Luna y los Moriscos de Toledo: ‘No ay mejor moro’,” *Chronica Nova* 36 (2010), pp. 253-262, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Inquisición, expediente 197-5.

<sup>42</sup> Archivo Histórico Nacional, Inquisición 1953, exp. 65, fol. 1a-3b. In earlier publications we already drew the attention to his possible role, see for example Gerard Wiegers, “The persistence of Mudejar Islam? Alonso de Luna, the ‘Lead Books’ and the Gospel of Barnabas,” *Medieval Encounters*, 12:3 (2006), pp. 498-518. The document we are referring to was discussed by and published in Bernard Vincent, “Et quelques voix de plus. De Don Francisco Núñez Muley à Fatima Ratal” in: *Sharq al-Andalus* 12 (1995), pp. 131-145. We base ourselves on the original document.

lived in Rome around 1609-1610 and mediated between Miguel de Luna and the Vatican (including one of the physicians of the Pope) about a possible transfer of Miguel de Luna to Rome.<sup>43</sup> He was a Morisco physician (although he claimed to be an old Christian, which implies that he saw himself as having that status; Miguel de Luna, very likely his father, had claimed the same). He was a citizen of the city of Granada, born in Linares. He knew Arabic from childhood onwards and was steeped in the Quranic sciences. He had studied medicine and earned a licentiate in it, philosophy and Latin. He mastered four languages: Castilian, Latin, Italian and Arabic. The Inquisitors found one letter to the Pope and three to the Spanish King which had been signed by him and were written in “a Moorish way”. In them, he stated that he had received a revelation in which he had been taken to the heavens (i.e. had performed a “Mi‘rāj”) where God had told him that the Time of the Resurrection was near, all heresies would come to an end and that the Arab nation and the Arabic language would be a help and that all the world would convert to the Holy Catholic faith. He was to bring this Divine message to the Pope and the Spanish King and act as an interpreter of a book that had hitherto proved to be impossible to decipher, which was found among the Books of the Holy Mountain in “this city” (i.e. Granada) and that all this would serve to bring about a general conversion and a “general reformation.” He claimed that the Lead Books he was going to explain contained “the complete Catholic and evangelical truth” while, according to him, the Quran was divine revelation as well.<sup>44</sup> *The complete Catholic truth was thus equivalent to the truth of Islam.* This, we

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<sup>43</sup> See Dario Cabanelas Rodríguez, “Cartas del morisco Miguel de Luna”, *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, XIV-XV (1965-1966), pp. 31-47, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> The expression used was ‘*rerum divinarum collectio*’.

have seen, is identical to the views we have identified as the core message of the Lead Books.

He thus claimed a number of things that do very well match the message of the Lead Books and display an intimate knowledge of their contents which were unknown to the outside world. Might he be one of those who had served as interpreters?, the Inquisitors wrote in the margin of the document. His knowledge of their contents included their mystical aspects, related to the doctrine of the Oneness of Being. The conclusion seems therefore inescapable that he, as well, must have had a hand in the affair as an author. As the son of Miguel de Luna, he probably cooperated with his father. This may also explain why Miguel de Luna sometimes does not seem to understand particular passages in the Lead Books. Under pressure of torture, Alonso de Luna took back some of his earlier statements, but the things he then said in our eyes only confirm his authorship: he confesses that he had made up that these things had been revealed to him by Divine intervention, and that he had merely wanted to propagate the Sect of Muhammad.<sup>45</sup> We conclude from this that he indeed believed to have been Divinely inspired to transmit the message, but probably also created it himself. In the end, the Inquisitors found the man guilty and convicted him to life-long imprisonment. Taking this information into account, and within the framework of the Islamically heterodox views of the Lead Books on Mary as a prophetess, we may wonder whether we are dealing with an esoteric group, a kind of of ‘cofradía de nuestra señora del Sacromonte’, of which Miguel de Luna and Alonso de Luna

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<sup>45</sup> “avia sacado las proposiciones y escriptos arabigos que contenían las dichas cartas y les abía escripto a fin de que se supiese la secta de Mahoma y se conviertesen todos a ella y para que le diesen más credito avia dicho que eran revelaciones de Dios y que estaban en los libros del monte sancto”.

formed part. What was the goal of this extensive and ingenious historical and religious invention? In its most practical aspect: it legitimized the existence of a group under threat of marginalization and expulsion, the Moriscos in general, but more particularly the group of outwardly completely assimilated Granadan Moriscos that still lived in Granada after the forced expulsions to Castile following the revolt of 1568-1570. Recent research has made clear that such a group came into being shortly before and after the incorporation of the Mudejars around 1492. These were Mudejars who had voluntarily converted and sought assimilation into Christian society. As New Christians many of them flourished economically and rose to the higher levels of the populations. Some even rose to nobility. At the end of the sixteenth century these groups and individuals started forging documents to prevent that they were included in the imminent expulsions, proofs of their Old Christian status and even nobility.<sup>46</sup> Luna was among those who aspired for a 'hidalguía'. The Lead Books fit into this pattern, but follow a very different path than the forgeries of other juridical and historical documents, viz. that of an inclusive, mystical, Islamic message, a remarkable fruit of the religious imagination.

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<sup>46</sup> See, for example, William Childers, "An Extensive Network of Morisco Merchants." *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond*, II, *The Morisco Issue*, K. Ingram (ed.), Leiden etc., 2012, pp. 135-160; Enrique Soria Mesa, "Falsificadores, usurpadores y herejes. La familia Baños de Granada, de moriscos islamizantes a marqueses," *eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies* 40 (2018), pp. 296-315.