

Is there an Islamophobic Literary Tradition? Islamophobia in Literature 1- up to AD 1300

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Abstract

Islamophobia is in vogue and is a hot topic of discussion both in academia and outside. Islamophobia appears in the daily life in various forms like, public humiliations, physical attacks, throwing abusive words etc. On the other hand, both in media and literature Muslim names and characters are misrepresented and quite often presented as dangerous beings. Some believe that this wide spread of Islamophobia is a recent phenomenon especially triggered by terror attacks of Sep 11. However, a historic analysis will expose Islamophobia of early centuries and can find that it was never less fierce than the surge of Islamophobia we find in current media and literature. This paper is attempting to find a tradition of Islamophobia beginning with 7th century Arabic and Greek writings distorting Islam and its prophet to English plays of 14th century.

Key words: Islamophobia, Islamophobia tradition, Polemic biography, Latin polemics

Introduction

The compound word Islamophobia generated controversies of two types: One is from the confusion of what does it signify. Is it fear of Islamic practices by Muslims? Or fear of Muslims and Islam by non Muslims? In Komeini Iran many modern women were unwilling to wear *hijab* and it was described as fear of Islamic practice, or Islamophobia. But as it is commonly understood, it signifies the fear and consequent prejudice and actions thus motivated against Muslims. In this sense the word can be found similar to the words like Judofobia, homophobia, etc. The other controversy is regarding its origin and etymology. According to Oxford Dictionary the word first appeared in print in 1991 in *Insight*, an American periodical (Allen 05). Further he says that, a PhD thesis by Alain Quellien titled *Muslim Politics in French West Africa*, published in Paris in 1910 also used the word. Whatever might be the origin and various possibilities of denotations, the general understanding is that, it denotes the fear of and prejudice against Muslims and consequent hatred and actions or responses thus result against the religion of Islam or Muslims.

Islamophobia can be manifested in a variety of ways. 14th OIC Annual Report (OIC report 30) on Islamophobia cites at least six types of manifestations of Islamophobia. They are discriminations of Muslims, policies to corner Muslims, Anti Muslim campaigns by far right groups, verbal and physical assault, targeting Mosques and Islamic centres, hate speech, online hate spread and defaming of Muslim identities like *hijab* and beard. Of all these the most serious one from an individual perspective is physical assault. A very visible form is verbal, emotional and physical assault motivated only by his being a Muslim. After September attacks in US alone reported 1617% increase in hate crimes against Muslims (Alfonseca). The horror of this situation is understood when we read that many non Muslims, like Sikhs,

got assaulted in the US and European countries only because they worn turban or had beard like some Muslims do. It means that it is the appearance of a person than his or actions that attracted physical violence against them.

Post 9/11 world and Islamophobia

The terrorist attack on World Trade Centre on 2001 September 11 caused a tremendous change in the modern world. Different people were affected by it in various ways, but Muslims all over the world were directly affected as they have been stigmatized with the accusation of terrorism. When more than 3000 people lost lives in the 9/11 attack, millions in the USA lost peace of mind and became victims of anxiety in feeling of insecurity. It contributed days of existential threat for the Muslims in the US. The war on terror initiated by the USA resulted in the brutal murders of millions of Muslims in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya. Muslims all over the world face physical threat and violence, just because they are Muslims, or wore *hijab* or had beard. Many countries came out with new legal measure ostensibly to fight terrorism, but in effect curbed the freedom of Muslims. Muslims had to face complete naked body check up at the international Airports. The situation became such worse that a Muslim should feel afraid to go anywhere as he might be prone to any type of discrimination, detention, physical assault or even attempt against his life.

The surge of this visible Islamophobia didn't stop there, but its repercussions were in every walk of civilization. Both electronic and print media played a very important role in exacerbating this witch hunt. Islamophobia in media got its expression in various ways. Whenever a terror attack was reported if the suspect behind it was either unknown or one with a Muslim name, the headlines would have the phrase ,”Muslim terrorist”, whereas if the accused was a non Muslim, the report never included the religion of the culprit. Purposeful media portrayals of Muslims equating with terrorism, resulted in creating normalization among the general reading public that Muslims as a religious group was responsible for the brutalities in the world. We understand the set agenda behind this only when we compare the facts related to terror activities worldwide. According to Charles Kurzman, the author of *Missing Martyres: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists*, out of 140000 murders happened in the USA between September attacks and 2010, Muslims are responsible only for thirty murders (13). Negative coverage of Islam and Muslims in the mass media has been disproportionate comparing to the number of Muslims involved in terror activities and the media coverage assigned to them. This becomes problematic when a major share of the population depends on the mass media as their primary source of information.

Similarly movie world, especially Hollywood has been contributing to the misunderstanding about Muslims by its misrepresentation, distorted images and undue highlighting of negligible negatives. According Jack Shaheen, majority of Holly wood movies depicted Muslims as negative characters. Muslims are “...brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women” (Shaheen 8). It is very rare movies portray a Muslim or Arab as a normal human being.

Since 9/11, the number of Islamophobic movies and media reports has witnessed a huge hike and the result was that Muslims as a community became more and more alienated from the mainstream society, this in return would water more unhealthy thoughts and actions from the Muslim's side.

Islamophobia in Literature

Though the most visible and immediately felt form of Islamophobia is physical and verbal assault, there is another type of Islamophobia that can produce long lasting impact and can influence people for unlimited time. That is the Islamophobia appears in literature. Since literature is not meant for a specific time or place, that can reach eventually anyone in any place. As we know in modern times literature has multiple forms and some like movies are more powerful. All forms of literature have been utilized to spread Islamophobia and modern technology ensured the reach of such works everywhere in the world.

There is no scarcity of studies of Islamophobia explicit and implicit in literature, movies and media. There appeared many PhD dissertations probing Islamophobia latent in literary works. Warner G. Rice, Mohammed Fuad Sha'ban, Thoraya Obaid, Anthony Gerald Barthelemy and Gerry Brotton had written PhD dissertations on the image of Moors and Muslims in English literary works. *The Image Of Moors In The Writings Of Four Elizabethan Dramatists: Peele, Dekker, Heywood And Shakespeare* by Mohamed Ibrahim Hassan at the University of Exeter in 2008 has analysed meticulously the representation of Turks in Elizabethan authors. Recently many authentic studies analyzing the approach of the non Muslims, especially western people towards Muslims came out. Dr.Jack Shaheen has published a thorough study of around a thousand movies and brought out the realities of misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims by the western movies. Similarly Nathan Lean has attempted an in-depth study in his book *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Hatred of Muslims* on how Islamophobia get manifested and establish in the western psyche. *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perceptions of the Other*, edited by David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto details the background of Islamophobia in the West.

Thus Islamophobia in literature and other creative arts were enough probed and published, but this paper concentrates not on further exposing Islamophobia latent in any particular work, but rather on establishing possible connecting between and among various works with Islamophobic narrations and portrayals. This paper posits question that if a tradition of Islamophobia in literature existed or not. Even in the olden times, when international communication and transportation were very difficult, books written in one at one end of the world travelled to other parts of the world and influenced the way people look at other men and cultures. The similarities of distortions and misrepresentations of Islam as a religion and Muslims as a people, found in the authors of different countries of different time period makes us believe that there existed some type inter relations or at least influences among them.

Islamophobia in Early period- non English works

As we know Islam spread from its source in Hijaz (parts of modern Saudi Arabia) to neighbouring countries within a century of its foundation. Within a period of four decades Islamic rule spread to the entire Arabian Peninsula, parts of northern Africa and a major share of North East Asia. Within a century Islam spread from Magrib in Africa to Korasan in East Asia and parts of Europe. It is quite natural that when a new religion with such vigour and colour spread so fast both in the realm of politics and beliefs, the existing forces might be anxious to block it. In this case it was Christianity and Christian kingdoms who found threatened by the rapid expansion of Islam and Muslim political powers. The wide spread conversion of Christians in the conquered lands to Islam compelled the Christian authorities to speak against the new religion. So as means of preventing its followers from being attracted to Islam many Christian theologians and political aspirants wrote about Islam and Muslim in derogatory terms. The Christian world maintained an attitude of hostility and ignorance towards Islam. The result was a complex network of legends, polemic biographies and derogatory distortions Qur'an, Islamic principles and the character of prophet Muhammed.

St' John of Damascus (675 or 676 -749)

The *Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (Orthodox) written by St' John of Damascus is considered to be the first among such Christian defenders. He was a Syrian monk who was born decades after the death of the prophet and believed to have died in 749. He wrote a monumental book named *The Fountain of Wisdom* (Knowledge) that had three parts. The second part of this books deals with heresies and was titled *Heresies in Epitome: How They Began and Whence They Drew Their Origin* (generally referred as *Concerning Heresy*). This section has several chapters and the last chapter is dealing with *Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (how Muslims are in wrong path). Unlike earlier chapters of this section, this chapter is comparatively long and tried to tell the world why Christianity cannot accept Islam and in what way Islam is heresy of Christianity. This work often is considered as the first Christian refutations against Islam.

It is from this chapter we get the origin of the derogatory term 'Saracen'. According to John the term was used to intent that Muslims genealogy goes back to Sara, the slave woman of Hagar, the wife of Abraham the prophet. Christians are believed to be from the gene of Hagar, the actual wife of Abraham, hence Muhammed is not likely to be a prophet as Muslims claim because their grandmother is a slave girl. He said that "These used to be idolaters and worshiped the morning star and Aphrodite, whom in their own language they called Khabár, which means great" (Chase Jr. 153). He further accuses Prophet of falsehood and that there is no evidence for his prophet hood. He said that Muhammed got all this knowledge from his communication with Christian priests, especially Ariens, and devised a book claiming that it was God given (153-154). He further called Muslims idolaters as they kiss the holy stone in Ka'aba, "This stone that they talk about is a head of that Aphrodite whom they used to worship"(157).

Thus John was presenting a very distorted picture of Muslims as the followers of antichrist and idolaters. This was to protect Christians from converting to Islam as Islam was so strict against worshipping anything other than One God, who has no forms that human beings can imagine.

Ademar de Chabannes (989-1034)

Ademar was French clergy man who became famous as a historian, poet and linguist. In his *Psychomachia* Ademar describes Saracens as the followers of antichrist, because he believed that Antichrist will destroy Churches and will kill Christians. Like that caliph al Hakim destroyed Holy Sepulchre in 1010. He has seen Saracens as heretics who are out of fold of 'true' believers, and in his sermon *De Eucharistia* he differentiated between true believers from false believers.

Robert of Ketton (1110–1160)

After John of Damascus there come a slight gap of Islamophobic literature, but then appeared in 12th century Robert of Ketton with his polemic biography as if it is the translation of Qur'an. Though he was an English man his presence was in Spain by virtue of his being an ambassador there. He was a polymath well known as an astronomer, translator, and priest. He translated several works of Arabic into Latin, including the first partial Latin translation of the Quran, which in turn was the first translation into any Western language. His project Qur'an translation was the result of his collaboration with Abbot Peter the Venerable. Peter was Abbot of the monastery of Cluny, therefore had high influence in the Christian world due to its relation with Papacy and the strong bonds with the European monarchs. He encouraged Robert to translate some Islamic texts for the latter's collection, known as the Toledan Collection. He translated a history of the early Caliphate under the title *Chronica mendosa Saracenorum* (Lying Chronicle of the

Saracens). This Quran translation, believed to be written in 1143 was titled *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* (Law of the False Prophet Muhammad) and it enjoyed the honour of being the standard version of the Qur'an for Europeans until the 18th century. He didn't translate entire Qur'an but took whatever passages he thought would be helpful to defame Muslims and presented them as the translation. He never retained the original chapters, or their order or even the number of verses in a single chapter.

The prologue of the *Liber contra sectam* itself testifies the nature of Islamophobia of these translations. In his prologue Peter the Venerable explains his rationale, "This is the reason why I contacted some scholars of expertise in Arabic language, from which *that mortal poison infected half of the world*" (Italics mine). The Toledan Collection had the translations by both Robert of Ketton and other translators including Peter. All the works in this collection related to Islam and Muslims are Islamophobic, as they are misrepresenting Islam and distorting both facts and characters. Works translated by Robert of Ketton are the *Fabulae Saracenorum* (The History of Muslims), and the *Lex Mahumet Pseudo prophetae* (The Law of Muhammad the Pseudo Prophet). Whereas, the *Liber generationis Mahumet* (The book of the birth of Muhammad), and the *Doctrina Mahumet* (The teachings of Muhammad) were translated by Hermann of Dalmatia. The *Epistula saraceni et rescriptum cristiani* (The Letter of a Muslim and the Christian Answer) was translated by Peter of Toledo and Peter de Poitiers. They presented Muslims as heretics and uncultured, Islam as distortion of Christian teaching and hence heresy and their prophet as false and imposter.

The Song of Roland (written between 1040 and 1115)

The Song of Roland is an early French epic narrative written in Old French or Anglo-Norman. The authorship was not sure but often attributed to one Turoldus (Turold) as the manuscript referred to the name. It tells the story of Roland a military leader under the Carolingian king Charlemagne and participated in many battles against Muslims and finally sacrificed himself by blowing the large ivory horn until his crowns burst out. The story is primarily a hero worship towards Roland but it equally portrays Muslims in all possible dirty terms.

The Song served the propaganda function during the first Crusades. The song was clearly glorifying all the Christian leaders including Roland where as Muslim kings and their military leaders were portrayed as vile and evil. Roland himself declares that "The pagans are wrong and the Christians are right" (Burgess 47), and further there is divine intervention in favour of Christian King Charlemagne. There are two occasions in the poem divine help comes directly: when the "God performed a great miracle for Charlemagne, for the sun remained where it was" (49) helping the king to go ahead with his battle against Muslims, and when he send Gabriel, the archangel to guard and advise the King.

Mark of Toledo (fl.1193-1216)

Another writer we find after Robert of Ketton, is Mark of Toledo who has translated some parts of Qur'an (1210) into Latin for the Toledan arch-bishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada. His translation of Qur'an was better than that of Robert of Ketton in terms of accuracy and in its adherence towards original, but it does not mean that Mark was doing a pure literal translation of the holy book without any religious agenda, rather it was with clear missionary agenda he attempted this and this fact was openly stated in his prologue.

He calls Mecca, the birth place of the Prophet 'adulterous' city as he thinks that the word denotes it (Al Tamimi). He accused prophet Muhammed as an imposter who got partial knowledge of Christianity and Judaism from different nations he travelled and mixing up them he developed his new religion, "...under

the cover of a merchant, he came into Syria and ... perfectly learnt...the language of the Syrians...then he set out to Greece and ...he heard ... the law of the Christians...” (Al Tamimi) Further Mark wrote that the Prophet himself composed Quran, “... composed this in secret and dividing it into 112 tracts or chapters...”. To refute the Muslim claim of divine origin or Qur’an Mark said that they were not words brought by Gabriel, “... because he was not of such great merit that the angel Gabriel should be sent to him, but rather words that he forged and preached to the crude and uncultured people...”. He proclaimed the intention behind attempting a Qur’an translation as to save the Christian people and lands from listening to blasphemy, “... Because indeed in the places where... once offered holy sacrifices to Jesus Christ, now the name of the false prophet is extolled, and in the towers of the churches in which the bells once resounded, now certain profane calls deafen the ears of the faithful.”

These words from his prologue tell us two things: the negative approach of the translator towards Islam and Muslims, and his aim of strengthening Christianity by exposing the follies of Islamic laws. To achieve this second goal Mark has distorted many verses with partial translation, wrong translation, omissions and additions.

Jacobus de Voragine (1230-1298) and his *Golden Legend* (1250) Jacobus de Voragine, a thirteenth century chronicler was the Arch Bishop of Genova, but was more famous as the compiler of legends related to Christian saints under the title *The Golden Legend*. The work was so popular during medieval period that hundreds of its manuscripts have survived to this day.

Though his primary aim was to help the believers and Christian posterity to have a thorough knowledge about each saint, in one section he explored the topic Islam and its prophet. He has narrated in detail the etymology of names of each saint, detailed life history and the miracles each one performed. It was William Caxton who translated the *Legend* to English and printed to circulate.

The chapter *St Pelagius, Pope and the History of the Lombards* attempts an analysis of Islam and its teachings. As others before him, He called the prophet imposter and false. A book about saints and their lives has no scope to discuss other religion or its principles, but interestingly Jacobus did that. Lombards are German tribes who controlled Italian peninsula until the end of eighth century and they had no connection or anything in common with Muslims. Yet it is in the chapter he started his deliberations over Muhammed and his teachings. The fact of untimely introduction of new and unrelated topic and violent wedging in of the topic inside the discussion of totally strange area itself is enough to reveal the Islamophobic nature *The Golden Legend*. The subject of Mahomet and his teachings appear from page number 112 to 131, and neither the beginning or nor the end has any natural connection between the subjects of discussion.

Jacobus repeated almost all the accusations of earlier Christian thinkers. His anti Islamic verdicts can be categorized into two: about the person Muhammed and his beliefs and laws. As it was common, he used the name prophet in distorted form, Mahomet. Regarding the person, he said that Mahomet is power monger, womanizer and above all an imposter. He was accused of secretly learning Christian and Jewish teachings and mixing them with his own fancy and thus, “*this false prophet, meddled and affirmed some true things with the false*”(Voragine 126). Referring to the marriage of the prophet to Khadija, he said, “...here was a lady named Cadygam... saw that this Mahomet was keeper and governor of a great company of Saracens and Jews and supposed that divine majesty had been in him hid... and she took Mahomet to her husband, and thus was Mahomet prince of that province”(113). In fact the Khadija was only a business woman and that marriage could not provide the prophet any position, as she herself was

not a ruler or having any political authority at all. Besides, the prophet and his followers had to migrate to Medina to escape the religious persecution in Makah. He further said that Mahomet realized that claim to be prophet alone will help him to attain power of all Arabia. So he utilized Sergius a Christian monk turned heretic, and Mahomet learnt all teachings of Christ, and together they concocted new version of their preaching. To give the people impression of receiving frequent revelations, Mahomet and Sergius devised a technique of taming a dove that it sits often his shoulder and fed it out his ear, so that the dove always put it peaks to Mahomet's ear. They claimed it was Gabriel and the he was bringing divine revelations. It is really surprising and shocking to see that Jacobus didn't have much of an idea about Muslims and their religion. He was unaware of the fact that Muslims pray turning towards Ka'aba in Makah not to any particular direction. He said that, "And because that the Jews worship towards the west, and the Christian men towards the east, therefore he would that his people should adore towards the south, and so do yet the Saracens" (128). Jacobus made more fanciful stories about the Prophet than any other Islamophobe of the Middle Ages. According to him Muslims consider Friday as holy day because, "All the people of Arabia, with Mahomet, worshipped Venus for a goddess, and thereof cometh it that the Saracens hold the Friday in great honour"(128) In later pages the book has satirized Muslim laws of dismembering for theft, allowance to have four wives, their belief of rich paradise with all types food, etc.

Alexandre du Pont and his Roman de Mahomet (AD1258)

Alexander du Pont was a French writer believed to have lived in city of Laon in northern France in the thirteenth century. His whereabouts were not recorded, but surprisingly the original manuscript of *Roman de Mahomet* was preserved, and the date of his work was given in at the end of his poem. This Romance was based on *Otia de Machomete*, a Latin verse biography by Walter of Compiègne, a twelfth century French poet and monk. It was written for the ordinary Christian audience and it tells the birth, marriage, revelations, claim of prophet hood and death of Muhammed, without worrying much about the facts or historic accuracy.

The Romance begins informing readers on the background of the book which says that information in the book was provided by a Muslim who denounced Islam, "For he knew about all the deceit, Trickery, and fraud/That Muhammad had practiced during his lifetime" (The Romance L9-12). The second stanza mentions about parentage of the Prophet, but erroneous facts. Instead of Abdulla, father of the Prophet was named Audimenef, could be a French version of Abdu Manaf, who was the uncle of the Prophet. So the author visibly declares his ignorance and inaccuracy of facts in his Romance. According to lines 39-42, the Prophet was "... very learned in geometry/Music and astronomy,/Grammar and arithmetic,/Logic and rhetoric". Recorded history both by the followers of Prophet and non Muslims unanimously accepts the fact that Muhammed was illiterate, who could not neither write nor read. All his predecessors who wrote against Muhammed and to protect Christianity from his satanic affluence argued that Muhammed was a well learned man and he was an imposter who had only modified the Judo- Christian doctrines to make a new religion. The difference we see on our journey from St'John of Damascus to Alexandre is that while others attributed the scholarly nature of Muhammed only to prove that he got his teachings from already existing sources of Jud-Christian books and priests, Alexandre added all branches of existing knowledge, thus attributing him a picture of a polymath.

The Book of Muhammad's Ladder (AD 1264)

This is again a French work claimed to have translated from Spanish by one Bonaventura Da Siena. Both these books are available under the title *The Prophet of Islam in Old French: The Romance of Muhammad*

(1258) and *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* (1264) in English authored by Reginald Hyatte and published by Brill publishing house. In the preface to the book Bonaventura says that originally the book was a narration by Muhammad himself about the journey to heaven and the ladder he had to use to ascend heaven. But in Islamic sources there are only two accounts available on the journey of the Prophet to heaven: one mentioning of Qur'an in chapter 17 and the other is various *Hadith* (Prophet's traditions) recorded by his followers. There is no single book available as claimed by Da Siena. According to him Abraham, a Jewish physician first translated the book from Arabic to Spanish and Da Siena from Spanish to French. His reason for this great venture was "...that people may learn about Muhammad's ...errors and unbelievable things that he recounts in this book, the legitimate Christian religion ...will thus be more fitting and pleasing to embrace..." (Hyatte 97). The book has been divided into several chapters, each of which was assigned a particular stage in Prophet's heavenly journey. It used all possible ways of distortion of the original version from *Hadith*, and made fun of the very concept of journey of the prophet to the heavens.

Sir Beues of Hamtoun (AD 1300)

Sir Beues of Hamtoun or Beves of Hampton is a long narrative romance in Middle English. There is no proven author, but could be multiple authors of different time period as it is common with folk songs. Though it is not primarily a story dealing with Islam or Muslims unlike all earlier books referred here, there are at least two Muslim characters who are described as Saracen against whom the hero Beves had to fight on the long adventurous journey. The first one is Saracen king Brademond, who caused rebellion against Ermin, King of Armenia. Beves fought the Saracen for the king. Though he was victorious against Brademond, Ermin was not happy with Beves as the latter had relation with the princess. So Ermin again sent Beves to meet Bredemond. Beves disliked Sarcens (Muslims) and he despised their gods. The narrative presented Muslims as idolaters and polytheists. This folklore took available opportunities to defame Muslims as heretics and far inferior to Christians. The paradox is that, perhaps Islam could be the only religion that completely prohibited idol worship, yet they were portrayed as idol worshippers.

Riccoldo da Monte di Croce (1240-1320) and Contra legem Sarraccenorum (1300)

Riccoldo da Monet di Croce was a Dominican Friar believed to have stayed in the Middle East between 1288 and 1300, and his experience there helped him produce the polemic *Contra legem Sarraccenorum* (Against the laws of the Saracens). This work, originally written in Latin was highly influential among the Western thinkers; hence it had multiple translations in Greek, German, and Spanish. The primary motive of this polemic was conversions of Muslims into Christianity. As we have seen already almost all polemics are similar in their portrayal of Muhammed, the prophet of Islam either as false prophet or the anti-saint, or the precursor to the Antichrist, or the Antichrist, a pagan deity, or a heresiarch. Riccoldo doesn't show any difference and his Muhammed also posits a similar picture. He presented a Muhammed who is bad human being, false prophet and heresiarch. According to Riccoldo, the heresy of Muhammed is the totality of all the villainies spread by Satan through earlier heretics.

According to chapter 13 of *Contra Legem*, Satan chose Muhammed a man of evil nature (*homi-nem diabolicum*) to defeat Christianity by putting them to idolatry. For that purpose Satan devised some scriptures that can stand between Old and New Testament, sufficient to confuse believer s (Dawczyk 5). This argument is something new though akin to earlier accusation that Muhammed is a usurper of prophet hood. Riccoldo also repeats earlier charges like Muhammed became influential through his marriage to rich widow, he was epileptic, and he used his epileptic fits to claim to have communication with Gabriel.

In chapter 10 of this book Riccoldo stated that devil advised Muhammed to use his sword against anyone who refuted him (6). A major difference we see in Riccoldo is that he admits illiteracy of Muhammed, but he added that that illiteracy and ignorance of Muhammed made it easy for Satan to insert anything to his head.

The King of Tars (1300?)

This medieval romance that can be described as hagiography, political drama, and even miracle tale has no single known author, but different manuscripts exist dates back to 1330. The original might have been written even as early as 1300. The romance is interesting to consider from Islamophobic point of view, as the story is moving around the superiority of Christians and Christianity over Muslims and Islam. Saracen King of Damascus wage war against King of Tar to get the princess of Tar and a defeated Tar accepts the proposal to give his daughter. She was forcefully converted to Islam, but when Saracen King had a son from her, it was formless and each of them accused the other's religion for this curse. Though the King prayed to his deities, nothing happened but when a Christian priest baptised the child it got complete human form. Understanding the truthful nature of Christianity King of Damascus baptised himself and miraculously turned his black colour to white.

While we proceed in the story we can see Muslims are described as idolaters. When the princess entered the Saracen's chamber she saw idols of Mahomet, Jove, Jupiter, and Apollo. A common accusation against Muslims that they worship Mahomet was just reinforced here.

Conclusion

From the above chronological arranging of polemic writers it is clear that Islamophobia in literature was not an isolated happening, rather there is a continuation, up to the level that, it can be called a '*tradition of Islamophobia*'. Many of the aforementioned authors were connected to each other in the sense that, later authors were influenced by the earlier ones, and sometimes even the arguments they placed against the Prophet were similar and same in tone. What was believed to be begun with John of Damascus is still continuing from generation to generation, but with different stories and different accusations. The difference is the earlier ones accused them of idolatry and heresy while the modern ones focussed on their terrorism, violence, and misogyny. Our time is noted for two features when it comes to interaction between cultures: ensuring at most freedom of expression for anyone to criticize any philosophy, religion or belief, and exposing phobia in any writer when criticism becomes ungrounded. But in the middle ages literate men are very few, and even those who are literate may not have capacities at their disposal to respond to criticisms. So those who were favoured by the political authorities could survive and anti Islamic writings thrived thus.

There is sufficient number of anti Islamic writings in all spears of human civilisation in modern times, but what makes our time different is its openings of multiple sources to verify the facts. Tradition of portraying Islam and Muslims as idolaters and evil developed later more vehemently during early modern ages, especially during European colonial period, and still continuing in our time.

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