

Coptic texts and Arabic-Christian intellectual history in Medieval Iberia

Thomas E. Burman

The University of Notre Dame, Medieval Institute, USA
tburman@nd.edu / ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1153-2569>

Abstract: The essay that follows is an attempt to think about the circulation of Arabic books and ideas and to reflect on what the introduction of Copto-Arabic texts in the Iberian Peninsula means for the understanding of the intellectual history of the Andalusī Christians, of scholars such as Ramon Martí who lived primarily in the Latin-Christian intellectual orbit, but knew Arabic well and read widely in Arabic texts, and of the possible interconnections between them.

Keywords: anti-Islamic polemic; Ramon Martí; Copto-Arabic texts.

Textos coptos y la historia intelectual del cristianismo arabizado en la península ibérica medieval

Resumen: El ensayo que sigue es un intento de repensar la circulación de libros e ideas árabes y de reflexionar sobre lo que la introducción de textos copto-árabes en la península ibérica significa para la comprensión de la historia intelectual de los cristianos andalusíes, de eruditos como Ramón Martí que vivieron principalmente en la órbita intelectual latino-cristiana, pero conocían bien el árabe y leían ampliamente textos árabes, y de las posibles interconexiones entre ellos.

Palabras clave: polémica antimusulmana; Ramón Martí; textos coptos árabes.

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1. RAMON MARTÍ'S COPTIC SOURCES

Within the last five years, two scholars have made discoveries that require us to rethink both the history of anti-Islamic polemic and apologetic as well as the broader intellectual history of Arabic-speaking Christians in Iberia. In 2018, Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld showed that Ramon Martí's polemical *De secta Machometi* (c. 1258, hereafter, *On the Sect of Muhammad*) depended heavily on an Arabic treatise against Islam written by a Copt in the thirteenth century.¹ Then, in 2022, David Bertaina discovered that a lengthy Arabic treatise against Islam written by a Muslim convert to Coptic Christianity was the source text of the Latin *Liber denudationis siue ostentionis aut patefaciens* (hereafter, *Book of Denuding*), a translation made in Iberia, meaning that its Arabic original circulated in Iberia as well.² Each of these Copto-Arabic texts was certainly in the Peninsula, as we will see, by the second half of the thirteenth century. These facts call for a reconsideration of what we think about the circulation of Arabic books and ideas both among Andalusī, Arabic-speaking Christians³ and among Latin-Christians such as Martí who had learned Arabic in order to read Islamic texts and refute Islamic beliefs.

Undertaking such a reconsideration, however, requires wrestling with uncomfortable unknowns, for we have no idea when or how these two works arrived in Iberia. In the case of the first, the Coptic work that is the major source of Ramon Martí's *On the Sect of Muhammad*, the unknowns are slightly less grave since that work was almost certainly written in the mid-thirteenth century, and must have arrived in the west soon after, since Martí probably wrote *On the Sect of Muhammad* in the late 1250s. In the case of the second, the refutation of Islam of which the *Book of Denuding* is an abbreviated Latin translation, these unknowns loom large. The Arabic treatise in question was written early in the eleventh century and could have made its way to Iberia anytime between then and the mid-thirteenth century when we know that Ramon Martí was reading it as well. As to the manner or path by which these texts wound up in Iberian hands we are completely in the dark. But there are only three possibilities: 1] they may have arrived more or less directly through contacts between Martí or his Dominican Order with Coptic Christians, 2] they may have circulated first among the Andalusī Christians, or 3] one may have arrived directly and the other through Andalusī Christian mediation.

The essay that follows is an attempt to think through these three possibilities and to reflect on what they mean for how we understand the intellectual history of the Andalusī Christians, of scholars such as Martí who lived primarily in the Latin-Christian intellectual orbit, but knew Arabic well and read widely in Arabic texts, and of the possible interconnections between them. As we will see, there is no way to be certain which of these scenarios obtained, though each possibility raises important questions that scholars of Arabic-speaking, Iberian Christianity need to engage.

The Truthful Exposer (and Liber denudationis)

Before considering those scenarios, though, I need first to say more about each of these works. The earlier of these two Coptic Arabic texts was written in the first few decades of the eleventh century by a scholar originally named Yūsuf ibn Rajā' (c. 955-c. 1020), the Muslim son of a leading Cairene jurist, who converted to Coptic Christianity in the 980s, and took the name Būluṣ (Paul). Living mostly in Coptic monasteries, Būluṣ went on to compose three works that attacked Islam and Muslim scholarly practices. Only one of these works—among the first Coptic texts to be written in Arabic—survived, *Kitāb al-wāḍiḥ bi-al-haqq* (hereafter, *The Truthful Exposer*⁴). The Latin *Book of Denuding* is an abbreviated translation of this work, and while that Latin text survives only in a single, late (sixteenth-century) manuscript, and we know of only two readers of it, Martí and his younger Dominican confrere, Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, it nevertheless had a huge influence, since it was the principal source for the latter's *Contra legem Saracenorum*, by far the most influential high-medieval Latin work against Islam.⁵

Ibn Rajā's *Truthful Exposer* is a wide-ranging attack alternately on Muhammad and the Qur'ān.⁶ He criticizes the Qur'ān for its many literary deficiencies and for being derivative of Jewish and Christian scriptures and legends. Its process of canonization was hazy and there are obvious additions as well as reports of passages that have gone missing. Numerous repetitions and much inappropriate content mar the text as well. Furthermore, Ibn Rajā' argues, Muhammad invented revelations and accounts of impossible journeys to make himself look like a prophet. Indeed, his own doubts about whether he was receiving true prophecy make clear that he was not a prophet at all. Thus, he had to use violence to spread his faith. He was, finally, a fallible, polygamous human who produced no true prophecies at all, and was thus inferior to Jesus in every way. In making these many points, Ibn Rajā' quotes countless Qur'ānic verses, as well as the Hadith and Muslim Qur'ān commentaries, and depends heavily, as David Bertaina makes clear, on the rhetoric and disputational strategies of Sunnīs, Ismā'īlīs, and Mu'tazilīs as they argued among themselves in Fatimid Egypt. As he puts it, "Ibn Rajā' redirected the arguments from these debates so they applied not just to one sect but to the entirety of Islam."⁷

While no Arabic manuscripts of Andalusī origin survive of the *Truthful Exposer*, we know that it was in Iberia by the mid-thirteenth century, since Ramon Martí quoted it at least twice in his two earliest works, both completed in the late 1250s (Fig. 1). In his polemic against Muhammad and Islam, *On the Sect of Muhammad*, Martí includes a passage containing a quotation of Q. 15:9. Here he is arguing against the Muslim accusation that Jews and Christians corrupted

¹ Koningsveld 2018, *passim*.

² Bertaina 2022, *passim*. For further bibliography Swanson 2010.

³ I will refer to such Arabic-speaking Christians of al-Andalus in the rest of this essay as "Andalusī Christians."

⁴ I follow the text's editor and translator in using this English title. See Bertaina 2022, 1 and *passim*. The Arabic text survives in four manuscripts from Cairo, Aleppo, Paris, and Dayr al-Anbā Antuniyus (Egypt) respectively. For details see *ibid.*, 93-97.

⁵ See Burman 2015.

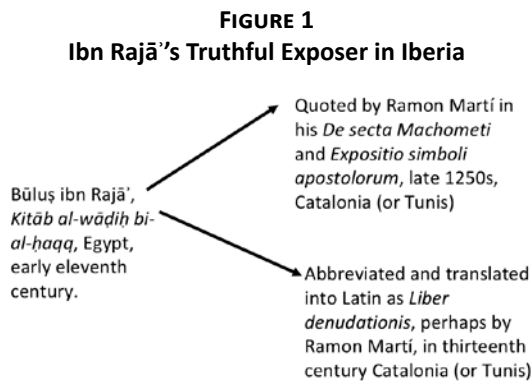
⁶ The description of the work's contents that follows is based on Bertaina 2022, 3-56.

⁷ Bertaina 2022, 61.

their scriptures through changes, additions, and deletions so that they are now no longer valid:

Item, in Alcorano, in tractatu Higer introduxit Deum sibi loquentem: *Nos dimisimus uel facimus descendere memorial, et sumus eius custodes*. Vocant autem Legem et Euangelium memoriale Dei, ut dicunt Sarraceni.⁸

[Likewise, in the Qurʾān, in the Chapter of Higer, he introduces God speaking to himself [i. e., to Muhammad]: *We sent or make descend the remembrance, and we are the guardian of it*. Now they call the Law and the Gospel “the remembrance of God,” as the Muslims say.]⁹



The Latin translation of Ibn Rajā's *Truthful Exposer*—the *Book of Denuding*—contains a passage in its argument against the same charge that says virtually the same things, though in a rather different Latin formulation:

Sicut dicit in Alchorano in Capitulo *Elhagar* quod interpretatur “Lapis:” *Nos, inquit in persona Dei, descendere fecimus recordationem Dei et nos eandem custodiemus*. Lex et Euangelium apud eos dicuntur *recordatio*.

[Just as he says in the Qurʾān in the Chapter of *Elhagar*, which is translated “the Stone:” *We, he says in the persona of God, made the remembrance of God descend, and we will protect the same*. The Law and the Gospel are among them called “the remembrance.”]¹⁰

Other than the fact that the translator of *Book of Denuding* misunderstood the surah name *al-Hijr* as *al-hajar*, meaning “stone” or “rock,” the two passages offer the same substance: they both identify the same surah, quote the same verse from it, and then say that the “remembrance (whether translated *memoriale* or *recordatio*) of God” refers, according to Muslims, to the Torah and Gospel. So here, in both Latin texts, we have God himself saying that he would protect a “remembrance” which is identified with the Torah (*lex*) and Gospel. The unspoken implication is that, according to the Qurʾān itself, God preserved and preserves the Jewish and Christian scriptures from such corruption.

All the pieces of the argument that we find in Martí's polemic and *Liber denudationis* appear in much the same order in the *Truthful Exposer*:

Wa-dalīl ākhir ḥaythu yaqūlu fī sūrat al-Ḥijr: innā naḥnu nazzalnā al-dhikr wa-annā lahu al-ḥāfiẓuna. Wa-al-Taurah wa-al-Injīl ‘indakum humā al-dhikr al-manazzal.

[Another proof is where it says in surat “al-Ḥijr”: “It is we who revealed the reminder and we will indeed be its Guardian.” For you, the Torah and the Gospel are the revealed reminder.]¹¹

Here again, we have the citation of the surah name, the quotation of its ninth verse, and the observation that Muslims say that the “remembrance” or “reminder” in this verse is the Torah and the Gospel. The fact that this last claim is tendentious—the Qurʾān commentaries that I have consulted all identify the *dhikr* mentioned here as the Qurʾān¹²—only magnifies how similar all three passages are. It is difficult not to conclude that Martí was working with the same Arabic text, the *Truthful Exposer*, that the anonymous translator was Latinizing and abbreviating into the *Book of Denuding*.

I suggested three decades ago, moreover, that this translator was abbreviating the text as he went through it, something that Bertaina has been able to confirm beyond any doubt in his comparison of the Arabic and Latin versions.¹³ We see this in the second passage of the *Kitāb al-Wāḍiḥ* to find its way into Martí's work. In his *Explanatio simboli apostolorum ad institutionem fidelium* (a very typical Dominican pastoral work meant to instruct younger confreres and parish priests on how to understand the Apostles' Creed),¹⁴ he likewise defended the validity of the Bible as scripture. Here Martí relates how the Jews asked the Muslim judge Abū Ḥurayrah (d. 678) for a judgment, and he responded that he would not do so until he had consulted with Muhammad, at which point Muhammad spoke the words of Q. 5:42-43, this quotation ending with the question, “How do they (i. e., the Jews) come to you for judgment when they have the Torah in which God has delivered judgment?” Thus, Martí concludes, Muhammad testified that the Torah (*lex*) “was with the Jews, in which was the judgment of God, whence it is clear that it had remained uncorrupt.”¹⁵

The *Liber denudationis* makes precisely the same argument, including explicit reference to Abū Ḥurayrah, but in sparer language—seven lines of Latin text as opposed to thirteen in Martí's work. “The evidence,” I averred, “is strongly in favor of the view that this passage of *Liber denudationis* is an abbreviated version of the original Arabic.”¹⁶ And, indeed, if we look at the Arabic version we find that the relevant passage is much longer than what we

⁸ Martí 1988, 3.996; 1983, 56. I cite both editions here and below because the former, while superior to the latter, is quite difficult to get ahold of.

⁹ Anonymous 1994, 254-255.

¹⁰ For more on both these passages, see Burman 1994, 47-48.

¹¹ Ibn Rajā' 2022, 117-19.

¹² See, for example, al-Ṭabarī 1997, 7.493; Ibn Abī Zamanīn 2003, 1.420; Ibn 'Aṭīyah 1977-91, 8:284.

¹³ Burman 1994, 57-59; Bertaina 2022, 85-93.

¹⁴ See Goering 1998.

¹⁵ “Et ecce hic testatus est Machometus, quia tempore suo lex erat apud iudeos, in qua erat iudicium Dei; unde ex hoc patet quod remanserat incorrupta” (Martí 1908, 454, ll. 30-38). See also Burman 1994, 57.

¹⁶ Burman 1994, 58-59.

find in that Latin text, and that, while Martí's passage is not a word-for-word translation it is much closer in length to the corresponding passage in *The Truthful Exposer*.¹⁷

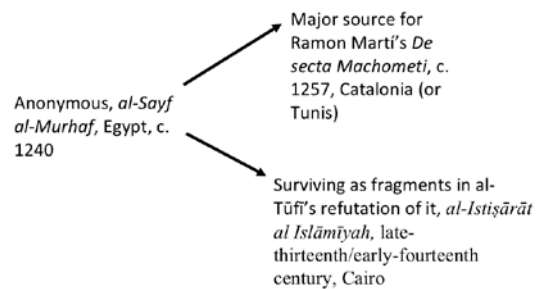
It is certain, therefore that Martí knew the *Truthful Exposer* and borrowed from it in the 1250s. In passing it is worth noting, furthermore, that there is some reason to think that Martí may, in fact, be the anonymous translator of *The Book of Denuding*. Though the clear differences between the Latin of his borrowings from *The Truthful Exposer* and the corresponding passages of *The Book of Denuding* would seem to argue against such a conclusion, on closer inspection of these texts, it begins to seem like a distinct possibility. Notice, for example, that while the three versions of the Q. 15:9 passage all have the same elements—identification of surah, quotation of the verse, the assertion that the “remembrance” (whether *recordatio*, *memoriale*, or *dhikr*) was understood by Muslims to refer to the Torah and Gospel—the two Latin versions add something additional. In Martí's version just after the reference to the surah name, we have an insertion not found in the Arabic: *introducitur Deum sibi loquentem* (“He introduces God speaking to himself [i. e., Muhammad]”). In the passage in *The Book of Denuding* we find an insertion just after the first word of the verse: *inquit in persona Dei* (“He says in the persona of God”). Both Latin insertions, different as they are, are doing the same work: subtly making the point, as so many Christian polemicists against Islam did, that Muhammad, the very human author of the Qurʾān, scandalously puts his own words in God's mouth. We have, therefore, not only two translations of the same passage of *The Truthful Exposer* but in both cases the same polemical point is registered. It feels very much like the same mind is behind both translations, and it would not be surprising that Martí, having drawn directly on the Arabic a few times as he wrote his early works, then decided to translate and abbreviate the whole of the work later.

The Whetted Sword

The second Coptic text to find its way into Iberian hands bears the title *al-Sayf al-Murhaf fī al-radd ʿalā al-Muṣḥaf*, *The Whetted Sword in Refutation of the Book* (hereafter, *The Whetted Sword*), and was written by an unknown author. Unfortunately, this text, composed probably in the mid-thirteenth century, survives only as it is quoted in a Muslim rebuttal of it, *al-Istiṣārāt al-Islāmiyah fī kashf shubah al-Naṣṣrāniyah*, by Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316).¹⁸ While it is impossible to know what the full range of its contents was the fragments that do survive focus overwhelmingly on how Muhammad lacked the four preconditions or signs (*shurūṭ*) of prophecy: veracity (*ṣidq*), holiness and blamelessness (*ṭahārat al-naḥs wa-nazāhatuhā*), the production of a miracle (*izhār al-muʿjiz*), and coherence of his revealed law with natural law (*al-sharʿ al-rābīʿ an yakūn al-dīn alladhī*

yashraʿu muwāfiqan lil-dīn al-ṭabīʿī).¹⁹ As Koningsveld points out, the two most important parts of Martí's *On the Sect of Muhammad* correspond closely with this basic structure and content of the fragments of *The Whetted Sword*. Martí's treatise has five parts: 1] an introduction which asserts that a true prophet is identifiable from four signs—the first three identical with those specified by *The Whetted Sword* (*quod sit verax; quod sit bonus uel virtuosus; quod faceret miracula*), the final one being that the prophet should come with a law that leads the nations to the worship of one God;²⁰ 2] a brief polemical biography of Muhammad, 3] a lengthy demonstration, with abundant quotations of the Qurʾān and Hadith, that Muhammad lacked each of these four signs of prophecy; 4] a brief overview of Muhammad's mishaps and death; and 5] a brief defense of the Bible's validity against the Muslim charge of *tahrīf*, of corruption. Parts one and three, what Van Koningsveld rightly describes as the “major substance” of *On the Sect of Muhammad*, derive quite directly from *The Whetted Sword*, as the many similarities between them attest.²¹ “Ramon Martí's *De Se[c]ta Machometi* was largely,” Van Koningsveld concludes, “based on *al-Saif* (sic) *al-murhaf*” (Fig. 2).²²

FIGURE 2
The anonymous *Whetted Sword* and Its Legacy



Curiously, much of what we know about the *Whetted Sword* suggests that it must have been written in the middle of the thirteenth century, quite close in time to when Martí was using it in his own works. For one thing, the text quotes many prominent Arabic-language philosophers, including Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd. The latest such thinkers are Maimonides (d. 1204) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210). Thus, the text had to have been written after the first decade of the thirteenth century. The Christian author's deployment of such seminal philosophical texts, moreover, suggests that he was remarkably learned, and probably associated with the so-called “Coptic Renaissance.” Indeed, as Gregor Schwarb has shown, there were a series of intellectuals associated with the Renaissance who, in fact, knew both Maimonides' and al-Rāzī's thought well, such as the Awlād al-ʿAssāl (“the sons of al-ʿAssāl,” four brothers of a prominent Coptic family of Old Cairo).²³

¹⁷ Ibn Rajāʾ 2022, 116–117.

¹⁸ All the surviving fragments of this Coptic work have been collected and translated in Koningsveld 2018. He extracted the fragments from the critical edition of that Muslim work, based on three manuscripts now in Istanbul: al-Ṭūfī 1999. For further bibliography Demiri 2012.

¹⁹ Koningsveld, 2018, 46, 49–50. The author explains at length how Muhammad lacked these four preconditions on pp. 52–104 (veracity), 105–108 (holiness), 108–122, and 123–150 (coherence of revealed law and natural law).

²⁰ See Martí 1988, 3.902–06; Martí 1983, 14–16.

²¹ I follow here Van Koningsveld 2018, 25–27.

²² Van Koningsveld 2018, 34.

²³ Schwarb 2016. See also Sidarus 2002.

Moreover, a precious anecdote preserved in a late thirteenth-century Muslim treatise attacking the dhimmah peoples, by one Ghāzī Ibn al-Wāsiṭī (d. 1312), seems to identify the author of the *Whetted Sword* as one of these brothers, Mu'taman al-Dawla Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Ibn al-'Assāl (d. after 1270). In describing the riots in Damascus after Hulugu had granted all religious communities the right to express their faiths publicly in 1259, al-Wāsiṭī notes that "the Christians had (even) brought out into the open a treatise composed by Mu'taman Ibn al-'Assāl al-Mustawfī in Damascus in the days of al-Malik al-Nāṣir.²⁴ (The author) had entitled this treatise *The Whetted Sword in Refutation of the Book*."²⁵ Whether this attribution is correct is anyone's guess, but it certainly points in the same direction as the quotations of Maimonides and al-Rāzī—toward the authors of the Coptic Renaissance. Gregor Schwarb, furthermore, has suggested that another author of that Renaissance, al-Rashīd Abū al-Khayr Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. after 1270) might be the author of the *Whetted Sword*.²⁶ Whatever the case, the Coptic scholars knowledgeable of Maimonides and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī all flourished in the mid-thirteenth century and later, making it likely that the *Whetted Sword* was written somewhere between the 1230s and the 1250s when Martí probably wrote *On the Sect of Muhammad* which borrows heavily from it.

2. THREE SCENARIOS FOR THEIR ARRIVAL

Two Coptic treatises against Islam, therefore, written respectively in the early eleventh and mid-thirteenth century, both washed up in Iberia, and Martí is the only Iberian scholar whom we know to have read them. As I noted earlier, we can only speculate about how and when these works arrived in the west, since, to my knowledge, no relevant evidence survives. There are three scenarios, however, that are worth considering. First, it is entirely plausible that both these works—products of the still thriving Coptic-Christian community of Egypt—arrived in Iberia not long before Martí made use of them. This, indeed, is what Koningsveld suggests, ever so briefly, regarding the *The Whetted Sword*:

Ramon Martí may have partaken in 13th (sic) century contacts between Aragon and Egypt or Syria and have met the author in the Near East. They may have discussed the project [i.e., Martí's *De secta Machometi*] . . . But the author may also have visited Europe himself and have been in contact with various Dominicans directly.²⁷

Though he does not elaborate on this suggestion, it is not all that far-fetched that Martí was in direct contact with Copts. This is precisely the period, after all, when, as J. N. Hillgarth put it, "the Crown of Aragon . . . became a Mediterranean power" through conquest of the Balearic Isles and the Kingdom of Valencia.²⁸ Catalan merchants had been doing business in Alexandria since at least the later twelfth century, and in 1264 King Jaume I appointed the first Catalan consul in that city.²⁹ We can easily imagine people or books going back and forth between Egypt and Barcelona on ships primarily meant for trade goods.³⁰ Indeed, we know, for example, that the works of Maimonides traveled from Egypt to northern Spain and Provence remarkably quickly. The Spanish Jew, Samuel ibn Tibbon, was already at work translating Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* in the 1190s, well before its author's death in 1204. Moreover, Ibn Tibbon himself visited Alexandria twice in the first decades of the thirteenth century.³¹

While we lack any evidence that Martí made his way to Egypt, it is possible that he spent time in Tunis, perhaps studying at one of the order's famous language schools. The Crown of Aragon had far closer trade relations with Tunis during most of Martí's life than with Egypt,³² and this would help explain why the Dominicans may have founded such a school there. We know that Martí was sent to a language school in 1250, and the fourteenth-century chronicler, Petrus Marsilius, vaguely averred that Martí had spent time in Tunis, so many scholars have argued that his Tunis sojourn was passed at a language school. If that is so, then he could have come across the *Whetted Sword* there, especially if we consider that it would have been natural for such a school to acquire apologetic and polemical works directed at Islam.³³ If, finally, Martí had direct access to Copts or Coptic books in the 1250s, whether by connections with Egypt or during a sojourn in Tunis, he could well have acquired Būluṣ ibn Rajā's eleventh-century *Kitāb al-Wāḍiḥ*—another Coptic work—at the same time and by the same means.

A second plausible, but quite different scenario is that both Coptic works circulated among Andalusī Christians before they reached Martí's hands. There are two good reasons to think that they might have. First, Eastern Christians and Eastern-Christian Arabic texts had been making their way to Iberia for centuries before Martí's day. Second, Andalusī Christians and Latin-Christian intellectuals interacted, at least in the twelfth and early thirteenth century, exchanging ideas and texts. Allow me to linger over both points.

Connections between Andalusī Christians and Eastern Christians go back as far as the ninth century when we know that a Melkite monk named George arrived in al-Andalus eventually to be put to death during the Cordoban martyrs'

²⁴ I. e., Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf who, as Van Koningsveld points out, ruled Damascus. See Van Koningsveld, 2018, 18.

²⁵ "Dhukira ilayya anna al-naṣārā aḥdarū kitāban taṣnīf al-Mu'taman ibn al-'Assāl fī al-Mustawfī bi-Dimashq ayyām al-Malik al-Nāṣir wa-sammāhu al-Sayf al-murhaf al-radd 'alā al-muṣḥaf" (Ibn al-Wāsiṭī 1921), 408 (Arabic) and 447 (English). See also Van Koningsveld 2018, 18.

²⁶ Schwarb 2014, 149-150.

²⁷ Koningsveld 2018, 24. He also posits that both *De secta Machometi* and *al-Sayf al-Murhaf* show certain influences from Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*. He does not, in my view, offer sufficient evidence of this to warrant his suggestion, *ibid.*, that the Coptic author may actually have met Aquinas as well.

²⁸ Hillgarth 1976, 244-245. See also Hillgarth 1975, 17.

²⁹ Olwer 1974, 32-33.

³⁰ In this connection, see the excellent Echevarría 2022.

³¹ Robinson 2019, 38-39. See also, Silver 1965, 69, nn. 1-2.

³² Bensch 1995, 299.

³³ The evidence here is scanty indeed. For a maximalist interpretation of it that confidently asserts both that the school existed and that Martí studied at it, see Cortabarría Beitia 1998, 264-266. For a minimalist interpretation that denies both (and with which I am inclined to agree) see Vose 2009, 104-115, especially, 106-107.

movement.³⁴ Furthermore, Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala has shown that an Arabic version of the Pentateuch copied in Maghribī script was based, remarkably enough, on the Nestorian version of the Peshitta (the Syriac Bible). While it is not clear when this translation was made, it must have arrived in Iberia in the hands either of Nestorians traveling there or those of Andalusī Christians returning from a sojourn in the Middle East.³⁵ There is no question, then, of contacts between the Arabicized Christians of the Middle East and those of Iberia.

Moreover, such travels undoubtedly brought Eastern-Christian apologetic and polemical texts to al-Andalus as well. It has come recently to light that at about the same time that George, the Melkite monk, arrived in Iberia, so also did a Melkite-Arabic version of a fictitious letter from the Byzantine emperor, Leo III (r. 717-741) to Caliph Umar II (r. 717-20). References to a polemical correspondence between the two can be found in various sources in this period, and eventually, a handful of quite different versions of the exchange would survive from the Middle Ages in Armenian, Arabic, Latin, and Aljamiado.³⁶ This Melkite-Arabic version that someone brought to al-Andalus was then translated into Latin, surviving in its earliest form in a manuscript from before 850, and extant as well in three later Iberian manuscripts, the last of which dates from the fifteenth century.³⁷ In the surviving Latin translation, after calling on Umar to scrutinize the Bible for evidence of the Trinity and Incarnation, the author recalls the history of both the devil's and God's dealings with humanity, describes how the divine word could be born of Mary, defends Christian veneration of the cross, and describes St. Helena's discovery of the true cross, among other polemical topics. Already in the ninth century, therefore, Andalusī Christians were learning from Eastern Christians how to defend their Christian beliefs under Islamic rule.

Similarly, travelers of some sort brought the famous ninth-century *Apology of al-Kindī* to Iberia as well. Consisting of a short letter attributed to one al-Hashīmī, inviting his Christian friend, al-Kindī to convert to Islam, followed by al-Kindī's vastly longer, and unstintingly hostile response, this text gained a wide readership in the Islamic world. Some thirty manuscripts survive, ranging from the thirteenth to the twentieth century.³⁸ The team of Iberian scholars formed by Peter the Venerable in the mid-twelfth century to translate the Qur'ān and other related texts chose to include the *Apology* in their anthology, presumably gaining access to it from Andalusī Christians.³⁹

The arrival of Eastern Christians and their texts to al-Andalus even shaped the Arabic language of Andalusī Christians. Monferrer-Sala has also demonstrated in a forthcoming article that the terms for ecclesiastical offices as they are laid out in the remarkable Arabic translation of Iberia's Latin canon law, *al-Qānūn al-muqaddas*, are very

often of Eastern Arab-Christian origin. Thus, rather than transliterating the Latin terms, *episcopus* or *presbyter*, when discussing these offices, the translator uses the standard Eastern-Christian terms, *usquf* and *qass*. Similarly, "church" is *bī'ah* or *kanisah*, while the Eucharist is *qurbān*, all usages "favored by Eastern Christian Arabic translators."⁴⁰

Furthermore, we find that Christian arguments originating in the East appear in apologetic literature written by Andalusī Christians. Thus, the fragmentarily surviving *Trinitizing the Unity [of God]*, written sometime after about 1150 by an anonymous Iberian Christian, attempted to defend the doctrine of the Incarnation in Arabic by noting that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all agree that God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. Since there is no doubt about the truthfulness of the burning bush when it said, "I am God," the treatise argues, there can be no doubt about the veracity of Jesus when he says, "I am God." Such Incarnational arguments rooted in God's appearance in the burning bush had been advanced much earlier in Arabic by Eastern Christians such as 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. c. 825). The same treatise offered an argument in support of the Trinity that likewise had much earlier Eastern-Christian origins: that the attributes of God, such as omnipotence, mercy, sight, hearing, and so on, widely discussed in Muslim theology, can all be reduced to three, these three corresponding to the members of the Trinity.⁴¹

But if Eastern-Christian people, texts, and ideas shaped Andalusī-Christian thought, Andalusī Christians were also interacting with Latin Christians, as several twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century examples make plain. For one thing, we know that certain Andalusī Christians collaborated with Latin translators to produce Latin versions of Arabic texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One of the members of Peter the Venerable's mid-twelfth-century team of translators, Peter of Toledo, for example, who did the initial translation (later brushed up by Peter of Poitiers) of the *Apology of al-Kindī*, was very likely an Andalusī Christian, since he knew Arabic better than he knew Latin.⁴² According to the English philosopher Daniel of Morley (d. c. 1210), who had spent time in Toledo during the height of the Arabic-to-Latin translation movement, the great translator Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187) worked with another Andalusī Christian named *Gallipus mixtarbis* ("Ghālīb the Mozarab") on at least one translation.⁴³ Finally, Mark of Toledo (fl. 1190-1220), who translated the Qur'ān for the second time into Latin, was almost certainly a native Arabic-speaker as well.⁴⁴ Arabic-speaking Christian scholars, therefore, worked alongside Latin intellectuals in making Arabic texts available for the Latin world.

Beyond these collaborations, however, we have other evidence of the overlapping of the Latin-Christian and Andalusī-Christian intellectual worlds. I argued thirty years ago that a Trinitarian argument that we find in two Andalusī Christian works had roots in both the Eastern Arab-Christian

³⁴ See Millet-Gérard 1984, 154-155, 159-163, and 166. On the complex history of cross-cultural/cross-religious contact in Iberia, see Monferrer-Sala, 2020.

³⁵ The manuscript in question is Codex Monachensis Aumer 234, on which see Monferrer-Sala 2008.

³⁶ See Burman *et al.*, forthcoming.

³⁷ See Burman 2021.

³⁸ See most recently Samir 2008, 41-42.

³⁹ See Kritzeck 1964, 101-107.

⁴⁰ Monferrer-Sala forthcoming.

⁴¹ Burman 1994, 115-120.

⁴² Kritzeck 1964, 56-58.

⁴³ "Girardus Tholetanus, qui Galippo mixtarabe interpretante Almagesti latinavit . . ." (Daniel of Morley 1917, 39-40. See also d'Alvernay 1991, 453.

⁴⁴ See Mantas and Burnett 2022, 9.

tradition and in contemporary Latin thought. The basic structure of the argument—that the several attributes of God recognized by Muslim theologians could be shown to be reducible to just three which correspond to the three persons of the Trinity—was widely familiar among Arab Christians in the East. The particular triad of attributes that the works argued for, however, power (*qudrah*), knowledge (*'ilm*), and will (*irādah*) corresponding to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, did not occur in this configuration in any Arab-Christian works from the east, though Latin-Christian intellectuals employed the exact triad of attributes (*potentia*, *scientia/sapientia*, *voluntas*) in explaining the Trinity. Thus, I argued, these Andalusī-Christian arguments must be seen as creative fusions of Arab-Christian and Latin-Christian theology. While this argument proved to be controversial, I am more confident of its soundness now than I was when I first advanced it.⁴⁵

Since, therefore, Eastern-Christian texts had long circulated among Andalusī Christians, and Andalusī-Christian intellectuals were clearly interacting with Latin-Christian scholars and texts, it is not difficult to imagine that both the anonymous *Whetted Sword* and Ibn Rajā's *Truthful Exposer* found their way onto Martí's desk after having traveled among Andalusī-Christian intellectuals first. In this scenario, Martí would have encountered these Coptic works much as Peter the Venerable's team of translators encountered the *Apology of al-Kindī* a century earlier: as texts circulating in a local Arabic-speaking community whose intellectuals had already been reading them and who may well have had interactions with Latin-Christian scholars such as Martí.

A third scenario would see one of the works taking the direct path from Egypt to Tunis or Barcelona where Martí encountered it, while the other came through the slower, more organic route of circulation among Andalusī Christians first. Indeed, the late date of the *Whetted Sword*—completed in just the few decades before Martí read it—argues for a more direct path to Martí's hands, while the older polemic of Ibn Rajā' could have circulated for generations among the Andalusī Christians.

3. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF EACH SCENARIO

In the current state of scholarship, it is not possible to adjudicate among these three possibilities, but it is feasible to point up some of their inherent strengths and weaknesses. The first scenario—Martí acquiring the *Whetted Sword* and the *Truthful Exposer* directly from Egypt or Tunis—has a certain coherence with the geography of his life. Both Martí and the Crown of Aragon were well connected to the broader world of the Mediterranean. Martí spent much of his life in the Mediterranean-facing city of Barcelona and may have lived in Tunis. This Mediterranean orientation, together with the fact that there were really no surviving communities of Andalusī Christians in the Crown of Aragon in this period, adds plausibility to the notion that Dominicans such as Martí could be in contact with Copts, or at least have acquired Coptic works in some way that by-passed the Andalusī Christian community.

Certainly, we have no evidence that Martí ever traveled west to Toledo which had become the principal home of Andalusī Christians well before Martí's life.⁴⁶ This is a weakness of the second scenario. While there was a long history of Eastern-Christian texts and ideas circulating among Andalusī Christians, and of Latin-Christian intellectuals interacting with Andalusī Christians, the Andalusī Christians of Martí's day were nearly 700 kilometers away in central Castile. Like his fellow Catalan Arabist and missionary, Ramon Llull (1232-1316), who travelled very widely in the Mediterranean, but never made it to Castile,⁴⁷ Martí may never have been anywhere near a living Andalusī Christian. There was, it is true, a thriving Dominican convent in Toledo, but we know of no one affiliated with it who knew Arabic or interacted with the Andalusī Christians of the city.⁴⁸

In the third scenario—Martí acquiring one Coptic work from the east, another by way of the Andalusī Christians—we meet him as an especially zealous opponent to Islam, someone who has turned in all possible directions to acquire ammunition for his inter-religious war. Yet this image conflicts with the broader pattern of Martí's life. As I have observed elsewhere,⁴⁹ all told, Martí had relatively little to say about Islam. The great majority of his output, both his lengthy *Capistrum Iudaeorum* (c. 1267) and his enormous *Pugio fidei* (c. 1278) addressed Judaism alone. His one treatise that clearly targets Islam, *On the Sect of Muhammad* is twenty-five pages long in one modern edition; the *Capistrum* is some ten times longer, while the *Pugio fidei* is a full 431 folios long in the autograph manuscript. So if Martí was, early in his career, an adamant anti-Muslim controversialist who had turned to both Copts and Andalusī Christians for useful models, he soon ceased to be.

4. CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF EACH SCENARIO

In addition to pointing out strengths and weaknesses, we can also, finally, say a few things about the implications of each scenario for how we think about Christian-Arabic texts and Arabic-speaking Christians in medieval Iberia. If Martí got his hands on these Coptic works in a way that bypassed the Andalusī-Christian community, then we would have to see him as having even broader intellectual horizons than we thought—as being aware that Christian communities in the Eastern Islamic world possessed useful resources for confronting and combating Islam. Certainly, there were channels within his order by which this awareness of Eastern Christianity might have reached him. There were, after all, Dominicans in the Middle East in his lifetime, such as William of Tripoli (fl. 1254–1273) who also wrote treatises against Islam.⁵⁰ Moreover, we know of relevant connections between these Middle-Eastern Dominicans and those in the west. A Dominican identified only as the Cantor of Antioch sent a series of questions that

⁴⁶ Burman 1994, 13-31.

⁴⁷ See Domínguez and Gayà 2008.

⁴⁸ For the institutional history of the Dominicans in Toledo see Serrano Rodríguez 2014.

⁴⁹ Burman 2018, 45-47.

⁵⁰ See the edition of his works see William of Tripoli 1992. For bibliography, see Burman 2012. In general on William, see Pearson 2018.

⁴⁵ See Burman 1994, 163-171; and Burman 2019. But see the important refinements of this argument in Monferrer-Sala 2022.

Muslims and Orthodox Christians were asking his confreres to Thomas Aquinas hoping for guidance. That guidance survives in the latter's short treatise called *De rationibus fidei*, a text that answers each of these questions in turn.⁵¹ In this scenario, Martí and his Aragonese confreres were active participants in the rapid movement of ideas and texts in the thirteenth-century Mediterranean, making use perhaps of the Dominican Order's network of houses around that sea in the knowledge that the still vital Eastern-Christian culture could benefit Latin Christians.

The second scenario would narrow Martí's intellectual horizons but connect him directly with the Arabic-speaking Christians of Iberia. The Andalusī Christians, in turn, would appear as far more intellectually alive—in this their last century of speaking Arabic⁵²—than we knew. Rather than encountering these Coptic texts by an Eastern route (from Egypt directly) or southern route (via Tunis), in this scenario, Martí's attention would have been turned toward Toledo in the west, where the bulk of the Andalusī Christian community had gathered by this time. There, where we know that Andalusī Christians were still having contracts and charters drawn up in Arabic,⁵³ and where many members of the cathedral chapter were Arabic-speaking until at least the first decades of the thirteenth-century,⁵⁴ we would have to imagine Arabic anti-Islamic texts still circulating as well. Martí, following in the footsteps of earlier Latin-Christian scholars who had contacts with Andalusī Christians, would, then, have sought out texts among Arabic-speaking Christians much closer to home.

The final scenario—one Coptic text arriving by the eastern or southern path, the other from Andalusī Christians to the west—is the most intriguing. On this view, Martí had both broad, Mediterranean horizons and important connections to the centuries old Arabic-speaking community of his homeland. Concerned to confront and combat Islam, we see Martí in this case turning in all possible directions for helpful texts and ideas, deeply aware both of the continued intellectual vitality of Christians in Egypt, and of the enduring relevance of the long engagement of Andalusī Christians with Islam as well.

While we cannot, therefore, say anything more definitive—at least in the current state of research—about how and by what means the *Truthful Exposer* and the *Whetted Sword* arrived in medieval Iberia, it should be clear that the relationship between Eastern Arabic-speaking Christianity and Iberian Christian thought remained important well into the thirteenth century. Even in the scholastic period, five centuries after Arab-Muslim armies had conquered most of the peninsula, Iberian Christians were still turning to Eastern-Christian texts to help them understand and confront Islam.

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The author of this article declares that he has no financial, professional or personal conflicts of interest that could have inappropriately influenced this work.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Thomas E. Burman: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, methodology, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing.

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⁵² Burman 1994, 28-29.

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