

Mark of Toledo
Intellectual Context and Debates between Christians and
Muslims in Early Thirteenth Century Iberia



Edited by
Charles Burnett & Pedro Mantas-España

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Mark of Toledo's *Liber Alchorani* ('The Book of the Qur'an') and its reception in medieval Toledo*

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The Latin translation of the Qur'an entitled the *Liber Alchorani* (*The Book of the Qur'an*) was completed by Mark of Toledo, a deacon and priest of the cathedral of Toledo, in the summer of 1210. He dated his work not only according to the *anno domini*, but also supplied the date of the year 606 according to the Islamic Hegira calendar.¹ The translation was commissioned by two of Mark's ecclesiastical superiors: Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the archbishop of Toledo between 1209 and 1247, and the next most powerful cleric within the chapter, Master Maurice, archdeacon of Toledo, a much less well-known figure who would later go on to become the bishop of Burgos in 1213 until his death in 1238.

The *Liber Alchorani* was not the first Latin translation of the Qur'an. In 1142, Robert of Ketton had produced a translation on the orders of Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny, a work entitled the *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete*. However, to all appearances, this earlier Latin version was not used by Mark, and perhaps not

* I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for funding this research with a Study Abroad Studentship. I would also like to thank Mercedes García-Arenal and the European Qur'an project for inviting me to present some of these ideas for the first time at a conference on the Iberian Qur'an in Madrid in May 2021.

¹ 'Completa quidem fuit huius voluminis translatio, Domino et Salvatore nostro auxiliante, anno ab Incarnatione Domini millesimo ducentésimo [undecimo], et anno quo Mafometus 21excentési cepit arabibus heresim suam evomere 21excentésimo sexto', in M-T d'Alverny and G. Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède, traducteur d'Ibn Tūmart', *Al-Andalus* 16 (1951), pp. 260-307, p. 268; and also Ulisse Cecini, *Alcoranus latinus: eine sprachliche und kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse der Koranübersetzungen von Robert von Ketton und Marcus von Toledo*, Berlin: Lit, 2012, p. 116.

even known to him.² Indeed, the comparative analysis by Thomas Burman and Ulisse Cecini of the two Qur'an translations has revealed the *Liber Alchorani* to have been a very different sort of text.³ Unlike Robert of Ketton, whose translation had provided something of a paraphrase of the Qur'anic text, using an elevated Latin register that deviated considerably from the form and language of the original, Mark took great care to provide a translation that was as highly literal as possible, eschewing Latin conventions in order to do so on some occasions. Mark's translation respected not only the structural divisions, titles, and form of the Qur'an, but also the sentence order, and even the word order and syntax of the Arabic original.⁴ As a result, his *Liber Alchorani* was not simply a Latin rendition of the Qur'an text, but a highly literal word-by-word translation—indeed, one that was at times 'too faithful' a translation, to the extent that,

² See J. Martínez Gázquez and A. Gray, 'Translations of the Qur'an and Other Islamic Texts before Dante (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)', *Dante Studies*, p. 125 (2007), pp. 79-92, p. 86; and J. Martínez Gázquez, 'Trois traductions médiévales latines du Coran: Pierre le Vénérable-Robert de Ketton, Marc de Tolède et Jean de Segobia', *Revue des Études Latines* 80 (2002), pp. 223-236. D'Alverny also suggested that Mark disapproved of Robert of Ketton's translation, and so did not mention it; M-T d'Alverny and Georges Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède, traducteur d'Ibn Tūmart', *Al-Andalus* 16 (1951), pp. 99-140, p. 116.

³ Particularly T. Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), and U. Cecini, 'Faithful to the Infidels' Word: Mark of Toledo's Latin Translation of the Qur'an', in Reinhold Gleis (ed.), *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und außereuropäische Fallstudien*, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2012, pp. 83-98. See also, T. Burman, 'Polemic, Philology, and ambivalence: Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom,' *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15:2 (2004) pp. 181-209; U. Cecini, 'The Main Features of Mark of Toledo's Latin Qur'ān Translation,' *Al-Masāq*, 25:3 (2013) pp. 331-344; U. Cecini, *Alcoranus latinus*.

⁴ See above, footnote 3, and also T. Burman, 'Tafsīr and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo', *Speculum* 73 (1998), pp. 703-732; N. Petrus i Pons, *Liber Alchorani quem transtulit Marcus Toletanus: Estudio y edición crítica*, Madrid: CSIC, 2016; N. Petrus i Pons, 'Marcos de Toledo y la segunda traducción Latina del Corán', in M. Barceló and J. Martínez Gázquez, *Musulmanes y cristianos en Hispania durante las conquistas de los siglos XII y XIII*, Bellaterra: Servei de Publicacions UAB, 2005, pp. 87-94.

despite his lucid Latin elsewhere, Mark 'uses imprecise grammar on purpose in order to be as close as possible to the original'.⁵

The translation itself was preceded by a long, highly polemical prologue, providing the reader with a theological and contextual framework through which to approach the 'sacrilegious principles' (*sacrilega instituta*) and 'monstrous precepts' (*enormia precepta*) to come.⁶ It contains a lengthy polemical biography of Muhammad and an account of early Islamic expansion. It also provides some background to the translation itself. Since the Castilian defeat at Alarcos in 1195, Toledo had been on the frontline with the Islamic Almohad Empire, and ongoing hostility towards the Andalus south is clear throughout Mark's rhetoric. Archbishop Rodrigo, we are told, wished to act against the 'enemies of the cross' who had 'infested' the Peninsula: 'for in places where suffragan bishops were at one time offering holy sacrifices to Jesus Christ, now the false prophet is extolled in name'.⁷ The *Liber Alchorani* was a resource for those who wished to fight with words in place of swords, and although there are in fact numerous references to Castilian clerics fighting in battles against Al-Andalus, it is clear that this translation was to become the basis for a different form of combat with Islam.

Much scholarship has been devoted to the *Liber Alchorani*, and, in particular, to its place within Archbishop Rodrigo's wider approach to the ongoing Islamic threat from the south.⁸ For Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, who transcribed and

⁵ U. Cecini, 'Faithful to the Infidel's Word', pp. 95-96, and N. Petrus i Pons, 'Marcos de Toledo', pp. 87-88.

⁶ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 267: 'ut liber in quo sacrilega continebantur instituta et enormia precepta translatus'. Also see Burman, *Translating the Qur'an*, p. 17.

⁷ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 267: 'quoniam quidem in locis ubi suffraganei pontiffices sacrificia sancta Ihesu Christo quondam offerebant, nunc pseudo-prophete nomine extollitur'. On this rhetoric, see John Tolan, 'Las traducciones y la ideología de la reconquista: Marcos de Toledo', in J. Martínez Gázquez, eds., *Musulmanes y cristianos en Hispania durante las conquistas de los siglos XII y XIII*, Bellaterra: Servei de Publicacions UAB, 2005, pp. 79-85.

⁸ For some of the principal scholarship on this important text, see M.-T. d'Alverny, 'Deux traductions latines du Coran au Moyen Age', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, 16 (1947), pp. 69-131; Burman, *Reading the Qur'an*; Tolan, 'Las traducciones y la ideología de la reconquista', pp. 79-85; Petrus i Pons, *Liber Alchorani quem transtulit Marcus Toletanus: Estudio y edición crítica*, Madrid: CSIC, 2016; Petrus i Pons, 'Marcos de Toledo y la segunda traducción Latina del Corán', in Barceló and Martínez Gázquez, *Musulmanes y cristianos*, pp. 87-94, and Cecini, *Alcoranus latinus*.

published the prologue to the *Liber Alchorani* in 1951, Rodrigo's interest in the text reflected that of Peter the Venerable some seventy years earlier; namely making available 'serious' texts for the writing of polemic against Islam.⁹ The battle with the Almohads at Las Navas de Tolosa, not far south of Toledo, in July 1212 provides an essential context to the translation. Archbishop Rodrigo had played a leading role in preparations for the battle from as early as 1210, and it was an event in which he was deeply invested. As John Tolan has pointed out, the *Liber Alchorani* and in particular, its prologue, with its exhortation for the liberation of the Peninsula from Muslim power, provided the necessary ideological and political impetus for war (and all the hardships that war entailed).¹⁰ It was, thus, an 'inward-looking' text, designed to stir the Christian reader to war with Islam. Another level of significance has been posited by Lucy Pick: not only was the *Liber Alchorani* intended to inspire Christians to go to war, but also to illustrate to them the superiority of their own religion over that of the Muslims with whom they interacted, both at war and, importantly, also in peace time, within the multi-religious society of Toledo.¹¹

All of these suggestions provide compelling explanations for Archbishop Rodrigo's interest in the Qur'an. However, they do not entirely address the related question of why Mark chose to translate the text in the way he did, with his apparent goal being philological accuracy rather than an eloquent Latin text, and the sorts of use that this translation was intended for amongst the intellectuals of the early thirteenth-century Toledo. As both Burman and Cecini have pointed out, Mark's highly literal translation would lend itself most naturally not to being read as a stand-alone Latin Qur'an, but to a philological comparison with the Arabic original. Indeed, by around the year 1400, the *Liber Alchorani* was being used in precisely this manner by Dominican friars, as evidenced by an early fifteenth-century manuscript containing a series of marginal notes supplying the original Arabic terms of the Qur'an and clearly indicating that the reader was comparing the two texts side-by-side.¹² However, the question of whether Mark intended such a reading, or whether such usage may have been likely in the

⁹ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', pp. 260-268.

¹⁰ Tolan, 'Las traducciones y la ideología de la reconquista', pp. 79-85. For a development of the same idea, see J. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York: Colombia University Press, 2002, pp. 171-184.

¹¹ L.K. Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence, Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004, *passim* especially p. 127ff.

¹² Burman, *Reading the Qur'an*, pp. 123-132.

Toledo of the early thirteenth century remains to be fully considered. The present contribution seeks to explore this question in more depth, by examining the immediate social, linguistic, and intellectual context in which the *Liber Alchorani* was produced, and the sort of audience for which it may have been intended. Particularly important will be the role of Mark's two patrons, especially the figure of archdeacon Maurice, who has formerly been considered little more than Archbishop Rodrigo's assistant in this endeavour. This is largely a result of the fact that, until recently, rather little was known about Maurice, whilst there exists a plethora of sources both about and by Archbishop Rodrigo, in comparison. In the following pages, I shall consider Mark's relationship with his patrons, and particularly the influence of Maurice, as well as the intellectual circles within which the *Liber Alchorani* would have been received, in order to provide a new perspective on Mark's endeavours as a translator in the complex and turbulent society of early thirteenth-century Toledo.

* * *

Much of what we know about the production of the *Liber Alchorani* comes from the work's prologue. Like many translators, Mark himself remains a relatively little-known figure. He can be found signing documents in Toledo cathedral chapter from 1193 until his death in or shortly after 1216, the year in which he made his will,¹³ and he describes himself as a deacon (*diaconus*) and from 1213, also a priest (*presbyter*).¹⁴ He appears to be from Toledo, as his will informs us that he held an inheritance in Huecas, around 15 miles north of the city, which he inherited from his father, who was 'a Castilian'.¹⁵ The land is left to the canons of the cathedral, with the exception of two vineyards, one of which is granted to the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, in Burgos, and the other to his nephews. Mark could evidently read and write fluently in Arabic, a fact that made him stand out when he went to study the 'medical arts' —presumably sometime

¹³ D'Alverny has made a list of all of the Latin and Arabic charters in which Mark appears; see d'Alverny, 'Marc de Tolède', pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ For more on Mark, see d'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 267.

¹⁵ 'Donavi...hereditatem duorum iugorum boum cum domibus suis ibidem et cum area quam possidebam apud Occas... Hanc hereditatem a patre meo castellano possedi', d'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 284.

before 1193.¹⁶ Little is known of the specifics of Mark's education, but what we do know is to be inferred from a preface to his translation of Galen's *De Tactu Pulsu* sometime later, on his return to Toledo. Mark informs us that:

As I was studying the art of medicine and harkening to the books of this faculty in Latin speech, the regent masters and scholars there, to whom it was already known that I knew the Arabic tongue and had perused the works of Galen and of the other doctors in the same science, diligently insisted in pleading that amongst the numerous multitude of books, I should select those which the Arabs, taking from the source of the Greeks, translated into the Arabic tongue, by the inspiration of God and for the benefit of the scholars, I should translate some into Latin words.¹⁷

It is unfortunate that Mark does not give us the location of his place of study, but it was clearly somewhere without access to the Arabic texts mentioned. Salerno, Montpellier, or Paris, have all been considered likely options, and indeed, Lucy Pick has pointed out that at Montpellier, Mark is very likely to have encountered a number of other Toledans, including the future archbishop himself.¹⁸ Since Mark refers to 'regent masters' as well as 'scholars', this was evidently a *studium* of some size; we know, for example, that the university of Paris sported four regent masters in each faculty, including in medicine, by the

¹⁶ He seems to have left from Toledo, since he describes himself 'returning' there (*quamcitius Toletum rediens...*), d'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 259. D'Alverny wonders whether he might have gone away again between 1203 and 1208, when we don't see him in the Toledo documentation.

¹⁷ 'Cum iam in arte medicine studerem, librosque facultatis huius in eloquio Latino audirem, magistri illic regentes et scolares, quibus iam notum erat me linguam novisse Arabicam, et litteras atque Galieni aliorumque doctorum in eadem perlegisse doctrinam, diligenter instabant exorantes, ut inter numerosam codicum multitudinem eligerem quos de Grecorum fonte Arabes derivantes in Arabicam transtulere linguam, nonnullos intuitu Dei et commodo scholarium in latinum transferrem sermonem', d'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', pp. 259-260; and for her updated transcription of this passage, see d'Alverny, 'Marc de Tolède', in *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo, vol. 3 (Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes, Toledo 20-26 de Mayo 1985)*, Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigótico-Mozárabes de Toledo, 1989, pp. 25-59, pp. 38-40.

¹⁸ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, pp. 122-123. I would suggest that Salerno is unlikely, due to what Mark describes as the apparent inaccessibility of Arabic learning to the other students. Paris and or Montpellier seem far the most likely options to me.

thirteenth century.¹⁹ Whether the term was in use elsewhere, such as in Montpellier, in the late twelfth century remains an open question.²⁰ Reference to a 'Magister Marchus' in the obituary of Toledo cathedral may refer to the same man, a title which would certainly tally with a prestigious foreign education, although it is strange that there is no instance of Mark either referring to himself by the title *magister* or signing his name thus (not least as there were others who did use the same title) in the documentation of the cathedral.²¹ In addition to his medical learning, Mark was well-versed in other ways too, and was at least familiar with the writings of Priscian and Virgil.

Consequently, Mark was a relatively experienced translator of medical texts when, in 1209, he was required to diversify his activities and translate the Qur'an, at the request of Archbishop Rodrigo and archdeacon Maurice. In contrast to his description of the 'welcome request' of his fellow students, and his willingness to return to the 'bookcases of the Arabs' in Toledo to find suitable medical texts to translate, Mark does not seem to have been particularly enthusiastic about undertaking the Qur'an translation.²² He informs the reader of the prologue that 'both my lord archbishop...and the archdeacon, prelate of the same church, by beneficial reminders pushed me using all kinds of persuasions, in order that I should not at once refuse the work of this translation'.²³ He reiterates that the Qur'an was not his choice of text:

¹⁹ See O. Weijers, *Terminologie des universités au XIII siècle*, Rome: Ed. dell'Ateneo, 1987, p. 134; and I. Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, c.1100–1330*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 95 and 119.

²⁰ Regulations refer to a presiding Master of medicine at Montpellier for the first time in 1220, but whether this figure would be referred to as a 'regent master' is not clear. See R. French, *Medicine before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 88-89; V. Bullough, 'The Development of the Medical University at Montpellier to the end of the fourteenth century', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 30:6 (1956), pp. 508-523; and *idem*, 'The Medieval Medical University at Paris', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 31:3 (1957), pp. 197-211.

²¹ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 284, n. 6.

²² He refers to it as a 'favorabili petitione', and also commented on how useful his medical translations would be to his peers; see d'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', pp. 259-260.

²³ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 268: 'Uterque igitur, tam dominus meus Toletane sedis archiepiscopus Yspaniarum primas, quam prelatu eiusdem

Therefore, I, Mark, humble canon of this same [see], seeking to obey the legitimate wishes and desires of both, devoted my labour to the chosen work as soon as possible, and in order that I might effect their wishes and desires, at their request and for the benefit of the true faith, I translated the book of Mohammed from Arabic into Latin.²⁴

Of course, the trope of authorial reluctance or incapacity is well known, and Mark seems to have been aware of this, referring to himself as *ego...humilis...canonicus*. And yet, this is the only one of Mark's translations where he deploys such rhetoric. His prologue to the *Libellus de Unione Dei* of Ibn Tūmart, another Islamic text that he would translate in 1213, displays no such reticence.²⁵

Mark does not refer to any assistant in the process of translation, and as we see above, appears to have translated directly from Arabic to Latin, without an intermediary stage in Romance. However, at least some assistance is very likely to have come from a Muslim (or former Muslim), since, as Thomas Burman has pointed out, there must have been the involvement of someone well versed in Islamic law and tafsir in order to elucidate contemporary Islamic understandings of certain Qur'anic passages.²⁶ Robert of Ketton mentioned the role of 'a certain Muhammad' in the production of the *Lex muhameti pseudopropheta*, and Mark is very likely to have the collaboration of a similar figure.

The only collaborators of any sort about whom we are informed are Mark's two patrons, the commissioners of this translation, to whom Mark refers with the strangely archaic titles of 'antistes' (high priest) for Rodrigo, and 'archilevita'

archilevita, salubri me pulsarunt a[d]monitione, omnimodo persuadentes, ut huius translationis subite laborem non recusarem'.

²⁴ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 268: 'Ego autem Marchus humilis eiusdem canonicus iustis utriusque votis et desideriis obedire satagens, in favorabili opere quantocius operam dedi, et ut votum et desiderium eorum effectui manciparem, librum Mafometi ad petitionem eorum et comodum orthodoxe fidei de arabica lingua in latinum transtuli sermonem'.

²⁵ As D. d'Avray has warned, such claims were 'the sort of commonplace that may have a basis in fact'. David D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 109.

²⁶ T. Burman, 'Tafsīr and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo', *Speculum*, 73 (1998), pp. 703-732.

(archdeacon), for Maurice. Mark refers to Maurice having 'laboured' in order that the text should be translated²⁷ —although it is far from clear what he means by this. It would seem self evident that Mark was paid for his work (although there is no explicit evidence of this), but this comment nonetheless raises the interesting question of what, precisely, the role of the patron was in the commissioning of such a translation.

Indeed, the prologue rather highlights Maurice's role as patron of the *Liber Alchorani*. After telling the reader about Rodrigo's horror at the pollution of the churches of southern Spain by Muslim worship, Mark goes on to say:

Also, in this concern, set on fire by zeal for the Christian faith, the reverend Maurice, archdeacon of the same [the see of Toledo], is no less distinguished; commendable in learning, outstanding in virtue, brilliant in character, and distinguished in integrity, but has laboured with equal desire and equal passion so that this book should be translated into Latin words, so that, confounded by Christians, some Muslims may be drawn from the detested customs of Muhammed into the Catholic faith.²⁸

Why should Mark have taken the highly unusual step of naming a second patron in this translation, especially when that patron was not even of episcopal rank? The language is worth noting. The translation was made 'by the salubrious petition (*petitio*) of Rodrigo, and at the persuasion (*persuasio*) of Master Maurice.'²⁹ Mark referred back to the commissioning of the *Liber Alchorani* some years later, commenting on 'the order (*preceptum*) of Rodrigo...and the insistence (*instantia*) of Master Maurice'. The language of 'insistence' and 'persuasion' ascribed to Maurice is notable in comparison with the more formal language of command

²⁷ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 267: 'Pari voto perique affectu laboravit ut liber iste in latinum transferretur sermonem'.

²⁸ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 267: 'In hac quoque sollicitudine zelo succensus fidei christiane non [minus] extitit reuerendus Mauricius archidiaconus eiusdem, litteratura commendabilis, uirtutibus insignis, moribus perspicuus, honestate preclarus, sed pari uoto parique affectu laborauit, ut liber iste in latinum transfferretur sermonem, quatinus ex institutis detestandis Mafometi a Christianis confusi, sarraceni ad fidem nonnulli traherentur catholicam'.

²⁹ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 268: 'Transtulit autem Marchus Tholetane Ecclesie canonicus librum Alchorani ad petitionem Roderici venerabilis archiepiscopi Tholetani salubrem, et persuasionem magistri Mauricii Tholetane sedis archidiaconi, meritis et sanctitate commendabilium virorum'.

used to describe Rodrigo's role, and seems to underscore his personal commitment to the project. Moreover, the archdeacon's role in this project is by far the more unexpected of the two. Although there are cases of other intellectuals holding the post of archdeacon in Toledo, I know of no other contemporary translation that was patronised or sponsored by anyone below episcopal rank, nor indeed any other where two patrons are mentioned.³⁰ There does not seem to be any reason for Mark to have emphasised Maurice's involvement in the project unless this did indeed reflect the passage of events within which Mark undertook his work. A translation such as the Qur'an must surely have been carried out with nothing less than the highest ecclesiastical agreement and support, and from that perspective, we would expect to see the archbishop as patron of this text, but the addition of the archdeacon is unprecedented, and thus all the more significant. It is no coincidence that, three years later, Maurice commissioned another translation of an Islamic text, this time as the sole patron. This was the doctrine of the Almohad *mahdi* Ibn Tūmart, the translation of which was completed in June 1213. Maurice became bishop of Burgos sometime towards the start of that same year, so his patronage of the translation must have been one of the very first acts of his episcopal career.

Indeed, the more we know about Maurice, the more interesting his involvement in the *Liber Alchorani* becomes. Later in his career, he would be better known as the bishop who founded the Gothic cathedral of Burgos in 1221, who wrote his *Concordia*, a Neoplatonic blueprint for ecclesiastical reform, in 1230, and who escorted King Fernando III's German bride Beatriz to Castile. However, even early in his clerical career, whilst still a canon in Toledo, he was an influential member of the cathedral chapter. As archdeacon of the city, he was second-in-command to the archbishop, and held at least two other clerical offices too during these years. He was close to King Alfonso VIII himself, being personally attendant on him in 1212, and also to the Castilian nobility, acting on behalf of the de Haro family, of which he was probably a member.³¹ Maurice had wealth behind him, as demonstrated in his grant of 1,000 gold pieces to the cathedral in 1211, and his 'insistence' (once again, *instantia*) with regard to other matters is remarked upon by the archbishop during these same years.³² More

³⁰ As Charles Burnett has pointed out, both Domingo Gundissalinus and Robert of Ketton held the office of archdeacon.

³¹ See T. Witcombe, *Between Paris and Al-Andalus: Bishop Maurice of Burgos and his World 1208-1238*, PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2019, pp. 39-44.

³² Witcombe, *Between Paris and Al-Andalus*, p. 38.

importantly for our present purposes, Maurice was also well-connected with the Toledan *élite*. It has been widely considered that Maurice was brought to Toledo and to his archdeaconate by Rodrigo, perhaps having met at the University of Paris. However, the most recent research has shown this not to be the case. Whilst there is good reason to suspect that Maurice *did* study in Paris, his connections and position in Toledo cannot be attributed to Rodrigo. In fact, he was already archdeacon in Toledo in November 1208 (Rodrigo was appointed to the archbishopate in February 1209), and may have been in the chapter some time before this point.³³ He was almost certainly promoted to the post by the previous archbishop, Archbishop Martín López de Pisuerga (d.1208), who Maurice remembered fondly in his own will, two decades later, as 'Lord Martín, my lord the archbishop of Toledo'.³⁴ It is most likely that Maurice was his nephew, a pattern of promotion that he would repeat himself.

As such, Maurice was established in Toledo, and would have been familiar with its intellectual milieu, before Rodrigo's arrival. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that, although we know much less about him, Archbishop Martín seems to have supported Arabic-speaking scholars too, following his appointment to Toledo in 1191. Whether the translator and philosopher Domingo Gundissalinus lived long enough to overlap with Martín's archbishopate is uncertain, but his collaborator Juan Hispanus, who assisted in the translations of al-Ghazali and Ibn Gabirol, can be identified as a canon under Martín's direction, and indeed being promoted by the archbishop, as was the Palencian scholar Julian of Cuenca, who was made bishop of Cuenca by Martín in 1196.³⁵ Indeed, it is significant to note that it was under Martín that Mark of Toledo himself began his work of translating medical treatises, as we have discussed

³³ Witcombe, *Between Paris and Al-Andalus*, and also see T. Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter: A Cross-Cultural Transaction in Thirteenth-Century Toledo', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10:2 (2018), pp. 234-256, p. 242.

³⁴ Witcombe, *Between Paris and Al-Andalus*, p. 65 and Appendix 4.

³⁵ On the identity of this figure, see C. Burnett, 'Magister Iohannes Hispanus: Towards the Identity of a Toledan Translator', in *Comprendre et maîtriser la nature au Moyen Âge: Mélanges d'histoire des sciences offerts à Guy Beaujouan*, Geneva : Droz, 1994, pp. 425-436; M. Robinson, 'The Heritage of Medieval Errors in the Latin Manuscripts of Johannes Hispalensis (John of Seville)', *Al-Qantara*, 28:1 (2007), pp. 41-71; C. Burnett, 'John of Seville and John of Spain: a mise au point', *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*, 44 (2002,) pp. 59-78; re-printed in Charles Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages. The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context*, Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2009, vi.

above. It is tempting to speculate whether Mark and Maurice might already have considered a Qur'an translation before 1209, thus providing a possible explanation for what must otherwise have been an extremely quick translation of a long and complex text: however, Mark's prologue implies that he did not begin his translation before being urged to undertake the work by both Maurice and the new archbishop Rodrigo: 'Therefore, I, Mark, humble canon of this same, seeking to obey the legitimate wishes and desires of both, devoted my labour to the chosen work as soon as possible'.³⁶

The involvement of Maurice also prompts us to reconsider the linguistic context within which the *Liber Alchorani* would have been received. Whilst it is well known that Rodrigo was a newcomer to Toledo in 1209, a Navarrese 'outsider' who, at least in these early years, could not speak or read Arabic, Maurice's own background was far more closely linked to Toledo. Indeed, Maurice was no stranger to the culture of the Mozarabs, the Arabic-speaking community that still formed the majority of the city's population by the early thirteenth century. There is some evidence to indicate that he may have spoken Arabic himself. Maurice appears in one of the so-called 'Mozarabic charters' of Toledo, a collection of over 1000 documents written in Arabic by local notaries and under the jurisdiction of the city's Mozarabic *alcalde*.³⁷ In 1209, he directed a transaction on behalf of the cathedral, reclaiming a sum of money lent by Archbishop Martín to a prominent Jewish man, Abi Harún al-Shahath al-Israeli. This transaction, recorded in Arabic, reveals Maurice doing business according to Mozarabic law and alongside a number of others who can be identified as Arabic-speaking Christians.³⁸ Whether he would have to have understood Arabic himself in order to fulfil this role cannot be known for sure. And yet language does not seem to have been incidental to the choice of representative in these

³⁶ D'Alverny and Vajda, 'Marc de Tolède', p. 268: 'Ego autem Marchus humilis eiusdem canonicus iustis utriusque votis et desiderii obedire satagens, in favorabili opere quantocius operam dedi.'

³⁷ These charters have been partially transcribed and published by A. González Palencia, *Los Mozárabes de Toledo en los siglos XII y XIII*, 4 vols, Madrid: Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, 1926-30. On the Mozarabic culture of Toledo see F. Hernández, 'Language and Cultural Identity: The Mozarabs of Toledo', *Boletín Burriel*, I (1989), 29-48, and for a useful overview, C. Aillet, *Les Mozarabes: Christianisme, Islamisation et Arabisation en Péninsule Ibérique IX-XII siècles*, Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2010.

³⁸ For my analysis of this document, see Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter.'

documents; almost all of the other canons that Rodrigo appointed to represent the cathedral in these Arabic documents are more clearly identifiable as Arabophone, such as Maurice's colleague canon Juan de Setfila —apparently an émigré from Al-Andalus— who occupied the same role in these years.³⁹

There are other clues too. In 1213, Maurice instigated liturgical reform in the cathedral that reintroduced the feast day of St Ildefonsus within the roster of feasts that would be celebrated with highest honours.⁴⁰ St Ildefonsus, the great Visigothic archbishop of Toledo from the seventh century, was the principal patriarch for the Mozarabs of Toledo, equated with the primacy of Toledo (according to legend, as a result of Ildefonsus's beatific receipt of a chasuble from the Virgin Mary). During the twelfth century, the cult of Ildefonsus had been suppressed by the French clerics who governed Toledo cathedral since the city's conquest, and who had instead promoted a new patron, St Eugene. Relics of St Eugene had been brought from Paris to Toledo in 1157, and his feast would become a flashpoint for inter-cultural tensions in the city, to the extent that in 1236, protesting Mozarabic clerics and laypeople refused to process with the relic, complaining that Rodrigo had introduced too many 'foreigners' (whether French or men from his own homeland of Navarre). Maurice's instruction that the feast of St Ildefonsus should be celebrated with equal pomp thus reveals an awareness to Mozarabic culture that Rodrigo himself lacked.

Maurice's linguistic profile has a bearing on the patronage of the *Liber Alchorani*, if we remind ourselves of the conclusions reached by Thomas Burman and Ulisse Cecini: namely, that the translation technique used by Mark of Toledo was one that permitted extremely close philological reading of the text itself, and facilitated a comparison between the Latin and Arabic (one which would require a reading knowledge of both languages).⁴¹ As I have already mentioned, analysis of the manuscripts of the *Liber Alchorani* has revealed that, on at least one

³⁹ During the early years of Rodrigo's archiepiscopate, he seems generally, although not exclusively, to have appointed Mozarabs to these roles (see Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter'). Later in his life, Rodrigo would become infamous amongst Toledan clergy for employing members of the Jewish community to negotiate for the cathedral —and these would certainly have been Arabic speakers, all in all, indicating that the linguistic identity of these negotiators was significant. See L. K. Pick, 'Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and the Jews: Pragmatism and Patronage in Thirteenth-Century Toledo', *Viator*, 28 (1997), pp. 203-222.

⁴⁰ See Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter', pp. 249-250.

⁴¹ See above, especially n. 3.

occasion in the early fifteenth century, it was used as a ‘reading aid’ alongside an Arabic Qur’an. Yet since Rodrigo was unable to read Arabic, at least in the early years of his career, there has been little discussion of whether Mark set out to translate the Qur’an with this function in mind. However, if Maurice, the other patron of this work, *could* potentially have read Arabic, the suggestion that the *Liber Alchorani* may have been designed with a comparative Arabic-Latin reading in mind becomes much more likely. Was he the audience for whom this ‘reading aid’ was intended? Was a philological reading precisely the function for which the *Liber Alchorani* was created, for the use not of Rodrigo but of Maurice, the patron for whom Arabic culture and language was much more familiar?

Indeed, whether Maurice himself was able to appreciate the full opportunities provided by a Latin reading aid to the Arabic Qur’an, there were certainly many others in Toledo, and in his immediate milieu, who would have done. The extent to which Arabic was spoken and written in Toledan society—including elite society—is well known amongst social historians but tends to be rather overlooked by scholars of the translation movement. Up until the middle of the thirteenth century, Arabic continued to be the working language of the majority in the city.⁴² In 1213, at the conclusion of his translation of the *Little Book of Ibn Tūmart on the Unity of God*, Mark of Toledo commented on the various ‘wise and prudent men,’ seemingly Christians, who had already discussed the work in Arabic amongst themselves and had compared it favourably to the confused words of the Qur’an that Mark had already translated.⁴³ We cannot be sure to whom Mark was referring, but it is worth pointing out that there were a number of other Arabophone canons within the higher echelons of Toledo cathedral during these same years. I have already mentioned the scholar and translator Master Juan Hispanus, who was a member of the cathedral chapter alongside Maurice and Mark. Michael Scot, who seems to have acquired Arabic by the time he was working in Toledo, was also part of the Toledan chapter by 1215.⁴⁴ Arabic would have been a maternal tongue for the cathedral treasurer in these years, García Estebani, whom we find extensively in Arabic and Latin documentation,

⁴² See Hernández, ‘Language and Cultural Identity: The Mozarabs of Toledo’.

⁴³ D’Alverny and Vajda, ‘Marc de Tolède’, p. 269: ‘maioris [ponderis] sunt apud discretos viros et prudentes argumenta et persuasiones quas Habentometus induxit in libello Unionis quam verba Mafameti in Alchorano...’. See Witcombe, ‘Between Paris and Al-Andalus’, p. 96.

⁴⁴ See L. K. Pick, ‘Michael Scot in Toledo: *Natura naturans* and the Hierarchy of Being’, *Traditio*, 53 (1998), pp. 93-116.

including six times in the company of Maurice. He was the son of the Mozarabic grandee Esteban Julianis (or Illán), who held the offices of Mozarabic *alguacil* and *alcalde*, and was a figure significant enough for his death to be recorded in the *Anales Toledanos* in 1208.⁴⁵ Two other Illáns were also listed as members of the chapter in 1211 and 1213.⁴⁶ Another of Maurice's colleagues was the canon Domingo Abbas, who acted alongside Maurice in his transaction of 1209 (see above). Domingo, son of Andres bin Abdelkarim, belonged to a large Mozarabic family with close connections to the cathedral.⁴⁷ He signed his name in Latin on a number of documents, but is also recorded as being the notary of an Arabic charter in 1208.⁴⁸ Many others occur in the documentation about whom we know even less: Juan de Setphila, a figure whose toponym suggests an Andalusí origin; Maurice's deputy, the subdeacon Juan Alpolichení, who was from the long-established Mozarabic dynasty of that name; canon Alfonsus Melendi, the son of Melendo bin Lampader, another family of long-standing Mozarabic lineage who features in both the Arabic and Latin documents of these years.⁴⁹ Clearly, the cathedral chapter in 1210 was a milieu in which a philological comparison of the Qur'an text in Arabic and Latin was eminently achievable, and a potential target audience for Mark of Toledo's *Liber Alchorani*.

The value of such an approach within a polemical interreligious context is made clearer when we consider that, over this same period, Archbishop Rodrigo was engaged in writing a polemical text aimed in another direction: namely, his anti-Jewish treatise, the *Dialogus Libri Vite*. This text, analysed in depth by Lucy Pick, consisted largely of an imagined exchange between a Christian and a Jewish interlocutor, rooted in a detailed and highly literal reading of the Hebrew

⁴⁵ Julio Porres has identified the Illáns as having lived in Toledo since before the city's conquest in 1085, and having held the position of *alcalde* for successive generations throughout the twelfth century; see J. Porres Martín-Cleto, 'El linaje de D. Esteban Illán,' in *Genealogías mozárabes*, ed. J. Dávila García-Miranda, Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigótico-Mozárabe, 1981, pp. 65–79; and also Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter', pp. 247-248.

⁴⁶ Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter', pp. 247-248.

⁴⁷ Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter', p. 241.

⁴⁸ Witcombe, 'Maurice and the Mozarabic Charter', p. 241, and González Palencia, *Los Mozárabes*, Doc. 362.

⁴⁹ Witcombe, 'Between Paris and Al-Andalus', pp. 49-59.

Scriptures in order to assert the superiority of Christianity.⁵⁰ The text has been internally dated to 1197, 1214, and 1218, and so this would have been an ongoing project for the archbishop at the very same moment as he and Maurice were collaborating on the *Liber Alchorani*. Pick highlights Rodrigo's extremely literal interpretation of Hebrew scriptures in the *Dialogus*, in which he engaged with the text of the Talmud and the Midrash on a philological level, as texts the literal interpretation of which would highlight errors or discrepancies against which the truth of Christianity could be proven.⁵¹ There is some uncertainty over whether Rodrigo was able to read Hebrew or whether he relied on Jewish scholars, to which he would certainly have had access in Toledo, but either way, the *Dialogus* represents an early and important deployment of Hebrew philology for Christian polemical ends. In so doing, Rodrigo was in line with the growing interest in the Talmud itself and a literalist approach to anti-Jewish polemic that would come to fruition in Paris in the 1230s and 1240s with the so-called 'trial' of the Talmud, and reappear later on in the Peninsula in the work of figures such as Ramon Martí.⁵²

⁵⁰ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, pp. 147-165 and *idem*, 'Michael Scot in Toledo', p. 96. Alex Novikoff has suggested that ideas of 'disputation' became increasingly popular in Spain, as they were disseminated from French *studia*, and that they increasingly determined the nature of hypothetical polemical debates, of which the purpose was to arrive at a Christian truth. See A. Novikoff, 'From Dialogue to Disputation in the Age of Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 4 (2012), pp. 95-100.

⁵¹ Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence*, pp. 147-165, and L. K. Pick, *Christians and Jews in thirteenth-century Castile: The Career and Writings of Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, Archbishop of Toledo (1209-1247)*, unpublished PhD thesis: University of Toronto, 1995, p. 211.

⁵² See A. Fidora, 'The Latin Talmud and its Place in Medieval Anti-Jewish Polemic' in U. Cecini and E. Vernet Pons (eds.), *Studies on the Latin Talmud*, Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Servei de Publicacions, 2017, pp. 13-22; P. Capelli, 'Nicholas Donin, the Talmud Trial of 1240, and the Struggles Between Church and State in Medieval Europe,' in E. Baumgarten, R. Mazo Karras, and K. Mesler (eds.), *Entangled Histories. Knowledge, Authority, and Jewish Culture in the Thirteenth Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017, pp. 159-180; A. Fidora, and U. Cecini, 'Nicholas Donin's Thirty-Five Articles Against the Talmud. A Case of Collaborative Translation in Jewish-Christian Polemic', in C. Burnett and P. Mantas (eds.), *Ex Oriente Lux. Translating Words, Scripts and Styles in Medieval Mediterranean Society*, Córdoba: Córdoba University Press, 2016, pp. 187-199.

Just as Rodrigo was using Hebrew Scripture to write literalist anti-Jewish polemic in early thirteenth-century Toledo, Mark's production of a precise and highly literal translation of the Qur'an would have facilitated the same approach to the Islamic holy text. This raises an inevitable parallel. Was the *Liber Alchorani* intended as a basis for a polemical text against Muslims that would mirror Rodrigo's *Dialogus Libri Vite* against Jews? This speculation becomes more compelling when we recall Maurice's role as a driving force behind the translation; as a scholar, and a man with strong connections to the Arabic side of Toledan culture, was Maurice himself hoping to use the *Liber Alchorani* as a reading aid to this end? Or indeed, any of his colleagues within Toledo cathedral, where Arabic was, to all appearances, a commonly used language?

Of course, these questions must remain unanswered. No such anti-Islamic polemic was written in the turbulent decades that followed Mark's translation of the Qur'an. Nevertheless, by examining the cultural, linguistic, and intellectual milieu within which Mark produced the *Liber Alchorani*, and in particular, by drawing attention to the involvement of archdeacon Maurice as patron of this work, I hope to have brought a new perspective to our understanding of Mark's translation of the Qur'an in 1210. The philological use of this text as a 'reading aid' or point of comparison with the Arabic original seems eminently plausible when we take into account the multilingual audience for which Mark was working within Toledo cathedral, especially when we consider the *Liber Alchorani* within the broader polemical trend towards literalism that we see elsewhere in the early thirteenth century. Mark's patrons were demonstrably aware of the value of this approach to polemic, and had access to the necessary linguistic expertise to be able to treat the Islamic Scriptures in this way. Whether the earliest readers of the *Liber Alchorani* ever used the text as such must remain an open question, not least because no contemporary manuscript exists.⁵³ Moreover, in the years immediately following Mark's translation, the geopolitical balance of power in the Iberian Peninsula shifted radically, from the spectacular Castilian victory at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, to the conquest of almost all of Islamic Al-Andalus by 1248.⁵⁴ When, towards the end of the 1240s, Archbishop Rodrigo came to write his *Historia Arabum*, a history of Muslim rule in Spain, he does not appear to have used the *Liber Alchorani* amongst his sources

⁵³ On the manuscript history, see d'Alverny, 'Marc de Tolède', pp. 49-59.

⁵⁴ For the events of these years, see E. Holt and T. Witcombe (eds.), *The Sword and the Cross: Castile-León in the Era of Fernando III*, Leiden: Brill, 2020.

for the life of Muhammad.⁵⁵ Instead the archbishop relied on Arabic texts, including Ibn Ishaq's *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, to portray the early history of the Muslims, a people whose power in the Peninsula had, he hoped, by this point effectively come to an end.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See Katarzyna Starczewska, 'Muhammad's Portrait in Jimenez de Rada's 'Historia Arabum' and in Marcos de Toledo's 'Prologus Alcorani'. Two different examples of the Islamic-Christian controversy literature' in J. Martínez Gázquez, O. Cruz Palma and C. Ferrero Hernández (eds.), *Estudios de latín medieval hispánico. Actas del V Congreso*, Florence: Millennio Medievale, 2011, pp. 455-481.

⁵⁶ Matthias Maser, *Die Historia Arabum des Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada. Arabische Traditionen und die Identität der Hispania im 13. Jahrhundert. Studie - Übersetzung - Kommentar*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 2006; also Lucy K Pick, 'What did Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada know about Islam?', *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 20 (2011), pp. 221-235.