

# Peter of Toledo

Petrus Toletanus

DATE OF BIRTH End of 11<sup>th</sup> or beginning of 12<sup>th</sup> century  
PLACE OF BIRTH Spain, perhaps Toledo  
DATE OF DEATH After 1142  
PLACE OF DEATH Unknown

## BIOGRAPHY

In 1142, Peter of Toledo, in collaboration with Peter of Poitiers, the secretary of Peter of Cluny (q.v.), made the Latin translation of the epistles attributed to ‘Abdallāh ibn Ismā‘il al-Hāshimī and ‘Abd al-Masīh ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (9<sup>th</sup> century). This translation is part of the *Collectio Toletana*, a corpus of texts on Islam written between the years 1142 and 1143 in the Iberian Peninsula, on the initiative of Peter of Cluny. In the view of some scholars, Peter of Toledo may have been responsible for the design and supervision of this entire editorial project, as well as for writing one part of the Latin glosses that appear in some manuscripts.

Peter of Cluny refers to Peter of Toledo as a *magister* (‘expert’) in Arabic and Latin, though less fluent in Latin than in Arabic. His relationship with Toledo and his great knowledge of the Arabic language suggest a possible Mozarab origin, though he could have been a convert from Islam or Judaism. Van Koningsveld and others propose identifying him with Petrus Alfonsi (q.v.), though their arguments are not convincing. Van Koningsveld has found several references to *magistri* with the name Pedro in 12<sup>th</sup>-century Toledan documentation from between 1115 and 1157.

## MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### *Primary*

*Peter of Cluny, Epistula ad Bernardum*, in R. Glei (ed. and [German] trans.), *Schriften zum Islam*, Alternberg, 1985  
*Capitula Petri Pictauensis*, in *PL* 189, col. 661C

*Secondary*

- F. González Muñoz, *Exposición y refutación del Islam. La versión latina de las epístolas de Hasimi y al-Kindi*, A Coruña, 2005, pp. lvii-lxvi
- P.S. van Koningsveld, 'La apología de al-Kindi en la España del siglo XII. Huellas toledanas de un animal disputax', in *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la Reconquista de Toledo, Actas del II Congreso internacional de estudios mozárabes (Toledo, 20-26 de Mayo 1985)*, 4 vols, Toledo, 1987-89, iii, 107-29
- J. Kritzcek, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*. Princeton NJ, 1964, pp. 56-61
- C.J. Bishko, 'Peter the Venerable's journey to Spain', in G. Constable and J. Kritzcek (eds), *Petrus Venerabilis, 1156-1956. Studies and texts commemorating the eighth centenary of his death*, Rome, 1956, 163-74
- J. Muñoz Sendino, 'Al-Kindi, Apología del cristianismo', *Miscellanea Comillas* 11-12 (1949) 337-460
- M.T. d'Alverny, 'Deux traductions latines du Coran au moyen âge', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 16 (1948) 69-131

## WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

*Epistula Saraceni [et] Rescriptum Christiani*,  
 'The letter of a Saracen [and] the reply of a  
 Christian'; *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani*,  
 'Disputation of a Saracen and a Christian';  
 'The Apology of al-Kindī'

DATE 1142

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Latin

## DESCRIPTION

Peter of Toledo's Latin translation of the Arabic *Risālat al-Kindī* (q.v.) appears to derive from a version close, though not identical, to that in MS Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek – Ar. 2884 (copied in 1656 from a version dated 1173) and its duplicate, MS Paris BNF – Syr. 204. In general, it is quite faithful to the original, though the translation contains particular mistakes of interpretation, and tends to use more aggressive language.

An epigraph in some manuscripts states that the translation was completed in the year of the conquest of Coria by King Alfonso VII, thus 1142.

## SIGNIFICANCE

This work influenced a great number of European authors who wrote on Islam up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Most of them only knew the text through Peter's translation, though some, particularly Spaniards, seem to have used the original Arabic. Other polemicists made use of summaries of the Latin translation, particularly the one included by Vincent de Beauvais in his *Speculum historiale* (Book 23, chs 39-67). Among the authors who knew Peter's translation, were Peter the Venerable (q.v.), William of Auvergne (q.v.), Jacobus of Varagine (q.v.), Humbert of Romans (q.v.), Fidentius of Padua (q.v.), Martinus Polonus (q.v.), Riccoldo of Montecroce (q.v.), Nicolas of Cusa (q.v.), Dionysius the Carthusian (q.v.) and Jean Germain (q.v.). However, most of these writers follow their source in a very selective way, since they usually preserve only the information related to the biography of Muḥammad, in particular, the teaching that the Nestorian monk Sergius gave him, and the errors supposedly introduced into the Qur'an by Jews. They also preserve the arguments against the accusation of *tahrif* and the teaching about jihad. Other equally interesting passages are rarely used, such as the phases of the history of the compilation of the Qur'an, the considerations about the origins of the various Muslim rites and observances, and the arguments for the Trinity.

## MANUSCRIPTS

- MS Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal – 1162, fols 140r-177v (12<sup>th</sup> century; this is the oldest and best manuscript of the *Collectio Tolentana*; for some scholars it is the original)
- MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College – 184, fols 272-353 (13<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Vat – lat 4072, fols 184r-240v (14<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Paris, BNF – Lat. 6064, fols 83r-104r (14<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Paris, BNF – Lat. 14503, fols 218r-244v (14<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Paris, BNF – Lat. 3649, fols 2r-65r (14<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Paris, BNF – Lat. 3393, fols 153v-195v (end of 14<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College – 335, fols 1r-44r (15<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana – C. 201, fols 164v-212v (15<sup>th</sup> century)
- MS Kues, Hospitalbibliothek – 108, fols 109r-132v (15<sup>th</sup> century; the Muslim letter is missing; this MS belonged to Nicholas of Cusa)
- MS Paris, BNF – Lat. 6225, fols 182r-234r (15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century; the Muslim letter is missing)

To this list can be added the extensive summary preserved in Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale* (Book 23, chs 39-67), which is extant in more than 1,000 manuscripts.

## EDITIONS &amp; TRANSLATIONS

- González Muñoz, *Exposición y refutación del Islam* (edition based on the 11 extant MSS, and Spanish trans.)
- Muñoz Sendino, 'Al-Kindi, Apología del cristianismo' (edition based on MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College – 184, and MS Paris, BNF – Lat. 6064)
- T. Bibliander, *Machumetis Saracenorum principis eiusque successorum uitae ac doctrina ipseque Alcoran*, 3 vols, Basel, 1543, ii, pp. 1-20 (edition of the summary in Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*)

## STUDIES

- S.K. Samir, 'La version latine de l'Apologie d'al Kindi (vers 830 ap. J.-C.) et son original arabe', in *¿Existe una identidad mozárabe? Historia, lengua y cultura de los cristianos de al-Andalus (siglos IX-XII)*, Madrid, 2008, 33-81
- B. Roggema, *The legend of Sergius Bahīrā. Eastern Christian apologetics and apocalyptic in response to Islam*, Leiden, 2009
- González Muñoz, *Exposición y refutación del Islam*
- Tolan, *Saracens*
- H. Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation. Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa*, Beirut-Stuttgart, 1995
- B. Landron, *Chrétiens et musulmans*, Paris, 1994
- O. Lieberknecht, 'Zur Rezeption der arabischen Apologie des Pseudo-Kindi in der lateinischen Mohammedliteratur des Mittelalters', in A. Schönberger and K. Zimmermann (eds), *De orbis Hispani linguis litteris historia moribus*, 2 vols, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, i, 523-38
- T. Burman, *Religious polemic and the intellectual history of the Mozarabs, 1050-1200*, Leiden, 1994
- N. Daniel, *Islam and the West. The making of an image*, Edinburgh, 1960
- T. Burman, 'The influence of the Apology of al Kindi and Contrarietas alfolica on Ramon Llull's late religious polemics, 1305-1313', *Mediaeval Studies* 53 (1991) 197-208

- M. Vandecasteele, 'Étude comparative de deux versions latines médiévales d'une apologie arabo-chrétienne. Pierre le Vénérable et le rapport grégorien', *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, klasse Letteren* 53 (1991) 81-134
- Van Koningsveld, 'La apología de al-Kindi en la España del siglo XII'
- R. Gleis, *Petrus Venerabilis. Schriften zum Islam*, Altenberge, 1985
- A. Abel, L'apologie d'Al-Kindi et sa place dans la polémique islamo-chrétienne, in *L'Oriente cristiano nella storia della civiltà*, Rome, 1964, 501-23
- Kritzcek, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*
- J. Kritzcek, 'Peter the Venerable and the Toledan Collection', in G. Constable and J. Kritzcek (eds), *Petrus Venerabilis, 1156-1956. Studies and texts commemorating the eighth centenary of his death*, Rome, 1956, 176-201
- M.T. d'Alverny, 'Quelques manuscrits de la Collectio Toletana', in Constable and Kritzcek, *Petrus Venerabilis*, 202-18
- Muñoz Sendino, 'Al-Kindi, Apología del Cristianismo'
- D'Alverny, 'Deux traductions latines du Coran au moyen âge'

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