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Works on Christian-Muslim relations
1500-1600
Spain
Disputa con los cristianos

Unknown author; possibly ʿAlī l-Gharīb

**DATE OF BIRTH**  Unknown; probably late 13th century or later

**PLACE OF BIRTH**  Unknown; possibly Crown of Aragón

**DATE OF DEATH**  Unknown; probably mid-14th century or later

**PLACE OF DEATH**  Unknown

**BIOGRAPHY**

The identity of ʿAlī l-Gharīb is uncertain. In addition to being mentioned in *Disputa con los cristianos*, the name is also found in the first folio of a Muslim anti-Jewish treatise entitled *Disputación con los judíos* (‘Controversy with the Jews’) (MS BNE 4944, fols 1r-36r). In all probability, this is the Aljamiado (Spanish in Arabic letters) adaptation by ʿAlī l-Gharīb of an Arabic anti-Jewish polemic entitled *Taʾyīd al-milla* (‘Fortification of the faith’) (Wiegers, ‘Biographical elements’, pp. 505, 512). Al-Gharīb’s Aljamiado adaptation of this work can also be found in MS Zaragoza, Fondo Documental Histórico de las Cortes de Aragón – 8 Calanda, and in MSS Madrid, Library of the CSIC – J8 and J9. Wiegers (‘Biographical elements’, p. 510 n. 36) notes that in MS J8 (17th century), al-Gharīb is called ‘faqīh steeped in the Qur’an of the Muslims, and in the Torah and Gospels of the Jews and the Christians’ ( alfāqī sabidor del al-Qurʾān de los Muçlimes i en la Tawra i en los Avanjelios de Judios i los Cristiànos). MS J9 (15th and 17th centuries) is an almost exact copy of J8 and has the same beginning.

Gharīb may be interpreted according to van Koningsveld and Wiegers as a synonym for ‘Mudéjar’ (someone living in the gharba, or outside Dār al-Islām) (Wiegers, ‘Biographical elements’, pp. 510-11; van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, p. 192 n. 104). Another possibility is that the gentilic name *al-Gharbī* (‘from the Algarve’) has been transformed by metathesis into *al-Gharib*. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that among the Mudéjars living in 1409 in the alquería of Maurar (Valencia) is found a certain Ali Abualfaqui Algarbi (ʿAlī Abū l-Faqīh al-Gharbi) (Mateu Llopis, ‘Nómina de los musulmanes’, pp. 328-29).

Al-Gharib may have been a contemporary of the 14th-century author Muḥammad al-Qaysī, and could have helped him in recording his anti-Christian polemic *Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn* (‘The key of religion’) (van
Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, p. 179). According to BNE 4944 (fols 59r-v), al-Qaysi was a captive in Lerida, Catalonia. This information does not appear in *Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn* (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, p. 190), and suggests that the contact between the two – if there was any – must have taken place during al-Qaysi’s captivity. Moreover, al-Gharīb apparently had direct access to information about one of the sources of *Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn*, ‘Abdallāh al-Asīr. This information is not contained in the work of al-Qaysi, and al-Gharīb included it in his adaptation of *Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn* (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, pp. 191-92). All this situates the person and work of al-Gharīb in the first half of the 14th century, if not at the very beginning. The copy of the adaptation of al-Gharīb in MS BNE 4944, *Disputa con los cristianos*, can probably be dated to the first half of the 16th century.

**MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

*Primary*
Nothing is known about ʿAlī l-Gharīb other than the references to him in:
MS Madrid, BNE – 4944
MS Madrid, Library of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas – J8
MS Madrid, Library of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas – J9

*Secondary*
Works on Christian-Muslim Relations

Disputa con los cristianos, ‘Dispute with the Christians’

La disputa de los muçlimes con los cristianos sobre la unidad de Allah, ‘The dispute of the Muslims with the Christians on the unity of God’

Date  Most probably early 14th century (Aljamiado MS 16th century)

Original Language  Spanish in Arabic letters (Aljamiado)

Description

Disputa con los cristianos is an Aljamiado adaptation of the Arabic Muslim anti-Christian work of Muḥammad al-Qaysī, Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn wa-l-mujādala bayna l-Naṣārā wa-l-Muslimīn min qawl al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mursalīn wa-l-ʿulamāʾ al-rāshidīn alladhīn qara⁠ʾū-l-Anājīl (‘The key of religion or the disputation between the Christians and Muslims from the sayings of the prophets, the messengers and the rightly-guided scholars who have read the Gospels’) (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, p. 184). The adaptation was written by ‘Alī al-Gharīb, who most likely finished his work in the first half of the 14th century (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, p. 192). Al-Gharīb is also associated with the adaptation of several other Arabic polemics into Aljamiado. Wiegers notes that in some of these Aljamiado manuscripts ‘Alī al-Gharīb (or Gharībo) tends to be introduced as the author (Wiegers, ‘Biographical elements’, p. 512). Disputa con los cristianos seems to have been very popular among the Mudéjars and the Moriscos, and it exists in four other Aljamiado manuscripts dated from the end of the 14th to the 16th century (Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, pp. 186-7).

The most complete version of Disputa con los cristianos is that contained in MS BNE 4944, where it occupies about 45 folios (fols 36r-82v). The contents of Disputa con los cristianos largely correspond with those of Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn, although the contents of the latter are reduced to their minimal expression (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical
The sections dealing with the description of the historical events of the expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306, the suppression of the Templars in 1312 and the attacks against the Muslims of Algeciras, Almería and Granada are not included in MS BNE 4944. The same is true of a poem commemorating these events and the personal feelings of al-Qaysī about them (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, p. 191). Two passages in Disputa con los cristianos in MS BNE 4944 do not appear in Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn, MS Algiers, National Library – 1557 (fols 49-90; 1481). These are the passages on fols 50v.11-59r.9 and fols 67v.10-73v (van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’, pp. 197-98), which contain the only Arabic quotations of qur’anic verses in the whole polemic. Folios 50v.11-59r.9 are a refutation of the divinity of Jesus and refer to the Gospels of Matthew and John (Yuḥanna, fol. 51v; Yahyā, fol. 54r; san Juan ‘Saint John’, fols 51v and 54r). On fols 55r-56r we find the Muslim anti-Christian claim that the Paraclete (already mentioned on fols 50r-50v10) is no other than Muḥammad. The human nature of Jesus is discussed on fols 67v.10-73v, and explicit reference is made to the temptation of Christ by the devil in the desert (fols 70v-72v) and to the resurrection of Lazarus (73r-73v.1). Van Koningsveld and Wiegers do not commit themselves on whether these passages were authored by al-Gharīb, and further research is needed.

The text in BNE 4944 does not preserve the order of al-Qaysī’s Arabic work, and the folios are mixed up in several places. This might explain the fact that, before comparison with Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn was carried out, scholars believed that Disputa con los cristianos corresponded with the story that comes after the title of the work, the account of St Paul from Sayf ibn ʿUmar al-Tamīmī’s (8th century) Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ (‘The book of apostasy and conquest’), while the other parts of al-Gharīb’s adaptation of al-Qaysī’s work were seen as independent treatises. The fact that the other manuscripts containing Disputa con los cristianos are very short and fragmentary may have contributed to this confusion. As a result of this, the sections of al-Qaysī’s single polemic have been referred to separately, viz. Disputa de la unidad ‘Dispute on the unity’; Polémica de al-Qaysī ‘Polemic of al-Qaysī’ and Desconcordamiento de los cristianos ‘Disunity of the Christians’ (Cardaillac, ‘Tratados’, p. 168).

Only one version of al-Gharīb’s adaptation of al-Qaysī’s work has come down to us. This is not the case with respect to the adaptation of Ta⁠ʾyīd al-milla in MS BNE 4944, which was most probably made by al-Gharīb (Wiegers, ‘Biographical elements’, pp. 505, 512). The copies of
his adaptation included in MSS J8 and J9 (17th century) are not faithful renderings of MS BNE 4944. They present al-Gharib as the author (see above) and include references to the Talmud. They also refer to the evil nature of the Jews, explained from the fact that they were driven from the planet Saturn, where they were engendered at the beginning of time (MS Library of the CSIC, Madrid – J8, fol. 404r, and MS Library of the CSIC, Madrid – J9, fol. 210v). The introduction of new elements points to the use of al-Gharib’s Aljamiado adaptations of Arabic polemical works by Mudéjars and Moriscos for an extended period of time and to the increasing impact of Christian polemical discourse contained in them.

SINGIFICANCE
Disputa con los cristianos is a good example of a Mudéjar work that has long been seen as written by Moriscos. Al-Gharib’s adaptation was made almost directly after al-Qaysī’s composition of Kitāb miftāḥ al-dīn, and this points to the involvement of Mudéjars at a very early stage in the transmission and adaptation of Muslim Arabic anti-Christian polemics into Aljamiado. The fact that al-Gharib is the adaptor of the treatise against the Jews, Taʾyīd al-milla, which contains references to Christian anti-Jewish discourse, and that these two polemics are bound together in MS BNE 4944, suggests that Muslim anti-Christian and anti-Jewish polemics could have been closely related to each other. An example of this is the Aljamiado manuscript MS 8 Calanda, which contains a disputation against the Jews and the Christians that consists of a faithful summary of Taʾyīd al-milla to which four additional chapters of polemic against the Christians have been added. Unfortunately, we only have the titles of these chapters; the contents have been lost.

Disputa con los cristianos shows the impact of Christian missionary efforts upon the Muslims living in the Iberian Peninsula during the later Middle Ages, and Mudéjar efforts to acquire the knowledge necessary to engage successfully in disputes with Christians and Jews.

MANUSCRIPTS
MS Madrid, Royal Academy of History – XXXII (11/9416), 11 fols (fols 4r-4v probably belong to another work) (paper and letter from the 14th century)
MS Madrid, Royal Academy of History – XVII (11/9409), fols 36r-39r and 40r-41v (paper from the 14th to the 16th century)
MS Madrid, BNE – 4944, fols 36r-82v (first half of the 16th century)
MS Madrid, Royal Academy of History – XXXI (11/9416), fols 36r-40r
(second half of the 16th century)
MS Madrid, BNE – 5302, fols 79v-10 – end (16th century)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS
Cardaillac, ‘La polémique anti-chrétienne’

STUDIES
Wiegers, ‘Biographical elements’
van Koningsveld and Wiegers, ‘Polemical works’

Mònica Colominas Aparicio