

those interested in comparative studies of colonialism. It might be used in undergraduate and graduate courses on the Americas.

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The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barraĵān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century. Yousef Casewit.

Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xvi + 356 pp. \$125.

For a long time, intellectual life in al-Andalus enjoyed a peculiar existence in modern scholarship. As much as it was celebrated as rich, vibrant, and varied, academic studies mostly focused on a few luminaries, Ibn Rushd (1126–98) representing philosophy, Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240) mysticism, and Maimonides (1135–1204) Jewish thought. Other authors were regularly mentioned, but often confined to one specific context. With the expanding interest in Islamic intellectual history and in the history of al-Andalus, this situation has changed. There are hundreds, indeed thousands, of premodern scholars who await and increasingly enjoy exploration. We owe knowledge of their names, careers, writings, and impact to the rich genre of bio-bibliographical Arabic literature. These who’s who determined a scholar’s reputation, and they certainly did so for Ibn Barraĵān (d. 1141), who went down in history as a Sufi.

Ibn Barraĵān is one of those figures whose name appeared regularly, but who lacked detailed academic study. Casewit offers such a study in the present monograph. The book presents the reader with a survey of Ibn Barraĵān’s life, main works, thought, and assessment of his afterlife. It is comprehensive and clears up several misunderstandings and confusions about the Sevillian scholar who is known for commentaries on the Qur’an and mystical treatises. The book is mostly geared toward Islamicists, but the author explains even complex doctrines in clear terms, which should make the study accessible to readers outside the field as well.

One of Casewit’s main arguments is that while Ibn Barraĵān could be easily claimed by later generations as a Sufi, in his own environment and thought a distinction needs to be made between Sufism as the mystically inflected ethical piety of renunciants in the Muslim East and the intellectual mysticism of al-Andalus. Despite his intensely personal spirituality, Ibn Barraĵān granted some room to rationalism and philosophy. Like some of his compatriots, he appropriated Neoplatonic elements of Fatimid Ismailism while rejecting its esoteric elitism. For example, his cosmology bears resemblance to Neoplatonic models with the Universal Servant as an intermediary between God and the created world. Michael Ebstein has recently made a similar case for the Andalusī Ibn

Masarra (d. 931) in his *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus* (2013). Both provide a larger context for Ibn ‘Arabī as well.

Cosmology is one side of the coin, epistemology the other. Like others who upheld similar worldviews, Ibn Barraĵān believed that this divine presence in the world allowed humans intellectual and spiritual ascent. He described this as “crossing” (“i‘tibār”), which was achieved through contemplation. God had provided humans with the book of nature as well as with the Qur’an to that end. Ibn Barraĵān considered these all encompassing and perfectly arranged, which had repercussions for his Qur’anic hermeneutics. Unlike most other scholars, he rejected the principle that later surahs abrogate earlier ones in cases of conflict. And yet, he developed strategies of hierarchy and harmonization within the Qur’an and between the Qur’an and reports about Muhammad’s sayings and deeds (*hadīth*), the second important normative source in the Islamic tradition. Remarkably, the Bible, too, served Ibn Barraĵān as an authoritative source rather than a target for religious polemics.

Unlike many other Muslim scholars, Ibn Barraĵān did not regard the hereafter as wholly transcendent. (In his *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* [2015], Christian Lange made a similar case for a larger group of Muslim scholars, challenging the conventional impression of predominant transcendence.) He considered this world an outgrowth of the hereafter and believed that recognizing connections allowed for future predictions. Ibn Barraĵān famously predicted the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187. Ibn Barraĵān’s epistemology had political implications. He disagreed with scholars of the Maliki legal school who had formed an entente with the Almoravid state. The powers that be also feared that any assumptions of divine immanence might entail claims of authority. In 1141, Ibn Barraĵān was deported to Marrakech where he died in jail.

The Mystics of al-Andalus offers a thorough, wide-ranging, well-written, and amply documented study of a prolific, influential, and original mystical author. It contributes to a picture of a distinctive and creative Andalusī intellectual tradition.

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The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment.

Alexander Bevilacqua.

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In this time of Islamophobic rhetoric and policy, it is salutary to come across an academic study showing how much some early modern scholars of Arabic and Oriental languages came to appreciate Muslims, “not just for their religious piety and military prowess, but also for their music and architecture, their social customs, the heroism