

sudden appearance of philosophy in the twelfth century. At the same time, as Ibn Šā'id's report also reveals, Jewish scholars seem to have served as an important link in the line of transmission of philosophy and science to their Muslim neighbors.²⁶

The exceedingly uneven application of state censorship to these two communities had immense implications for the history of philosophy in al-Andalus. Before discussing this, however, we shall turn to the other component of the story: not the books, but their readers.

Scholars and Thinkers

IBN MASARRA AND HIS BOOKS

We know little about the early infiltration of philosophy, and of speculative thought in general, into al-Andalus. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Najīḥ Ibn Masarra (269/883–319/931) is commonly considered to have been the first independent Andalusi Muslim thinker of local extraction. There is much speculation concerning Ibn Masarra's philosophical affinity. He has been variously described as a Mu'tazilī theologian, a mystic, a Neoplatonist follower of the *Bāṭiniyya*, a follower of the so-called Pseudo-Empedocles, and a combination of all of these. Most of these suggestions, however, were first made before one could examine his writings, and they lacked an appraisal of his probable intellectual environment.

Born in Cordoba, Ibn Masarra was educated by his own father, 'Abd Allāh, as well as by Muḥammad Ibn Waḍḍāḥ (d. 287/900) and al-Khushanī (whose date of death is recorded as 371/981 or 361/971).²⁷ Like his father before him, he traveled to the East before returning to al-Andalus. These journeys, like those of many others, were likely to have been intellectually and religiously motivated; there is no reason to think that at that point he was actively persecuted.²⁸ He studied Mālikī law, and some of our sources add to his name the epithet "the jurist" (*al-faqīh*). He spent some time in Kairouan and in Mecca.²⁹ In Mecca he may have been associated with the

26. Martínez Lorca, introduction to *Ensayos*, 42–52. See also Blachère (in his introduction to his translation of Ibn Šā'id, *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, 20), for whom "until the eleventh century, philosophy was not cultivated seriously in al-Andalus, except by Jews." On the continued philosophical activity in the *ṭā'ifa* period, see also Marín, "Teología y filosofía," 530.

27. Ibn al-Faraḍī, *Ta'riḥ*, 2:4; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'riḥ*, 590; Addas, "Andalusi Mysticism," 913–14; Vahid Brown, "Muḥammad b. Masarra," 51.

28. Only one "later (and dubious source)" reports that he fled al-Andalus; see Morris, "Ibn Masarra," 14; and cf. Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus*, 3.

29. Khushanī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 159–60.

circle of Abū Sa'īd b. al-A'rābī, an erstwhile disciple of the Baghdādī mystic al-Junayd, and perhaps with the circle of Aḥmad b. Sālim al-Tustarī, the so-called *Sālimiyya*.³⁰ That the only Šūfī author quoted by name in his *Book of Letters* is Sahl al-Tustarī further points to Ibn Masarra's association with these circles. Although the *Epistle on Letters* attributed to Sahl from which he quotes was shown to be a pseudepigraph, it does indicate Ibn Masarra's participation in the emerging Andalusi Tustarian tradition.³¹ He returned to al-Andalus during the reign of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, and withdrew, together with some disciples, to the Cordoban Sierra (hence his appellation *al-jabalī*), where he remained until his death.³²

Ibn Masarra's writings were considered lost until 1972, when Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja'far discovered two of his works in manuscript no. 3168 of the Chester Beatty Collection.³³ These treatises, which were subsequently published and analyzed by Ja'far and then by others, laid to rest much of the scholarly speculation regarding the nature of Ibn Masarra's thought. Ibn Masarra, they decisively demonstrate, was neither a Mu'tazilite nor an Aristotelian philosopher, but rather a Neoplatonic one.³⁴

Ibn Masarra was apparently a gifted speaker, albeit not a fiery orator. Our sources describe him as a highly effective conversationalist, one who had "a way with words" (*ṭarīqa fī'l-balāgha*) and whose charismatic

30. Morris, "Ibn Masarra," 14–15; Marín, "Abū Sa'īd Ibn al-A'rābī"; Ebstein and Sviri, "The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*," 219–20.

31. See Ebstein and Sviri, "The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*."

32. For Ibn Masarra's biography, see Asín Palacios, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra*; Morris, "Ibn Masarra," 8–19; Vahid Brown, "Muḥammad b. Masarra," 39–92; Arnaldez, "Ibn Masarra" (who weaves the scant information in our sources into a smooth, but not necessarily accurate, narrative); Ramón Guerrero and Garrido Clemente, "Ibn Masarra," 144–46. I wish to thank James Morris and Vahid Brown for generously allowing me to use their unpublished work, which remains indispensable for the study of Ibn Masarra.

33. See Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library*, 1:68–69. The manuscript is a compendium of mystical and magical works, copied in Egypt in the late thirteenth century. I wish to express my thanks to the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin for the permission to use the manuscript and to David Wasserstein for his help in procuring this permission.

34. For scholarly evaluations of Ibn Masarra's thought, see Asín Palacios, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra*; Morris, "Ibn Masarra"; Cruz Hernández, *Historia del pensamiento*, 344–52; Tornero, "Noticia"; Addas, "Andalusi Mysticism," 913–19; Stroumsa, "Ibn Masarra"; Stroumsa and Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy," 210 and 214. On Ibn Masarra's Neoplatonism, and in particular on his so-called Pseudo-Empedoclean teachings, see further chapter 4, pages 103–17; on his *bāṭinism*, and in particular his close affinity to the thought of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'*, see Tornero, "Noticia," 63; Stroumsa and Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy," 210; de Callatay, "Philosophy and Bāṭinism in al-Andalus"; idem, "Who Were the Readers," 288.

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