Introduction

The most common misconception about the history of Andalusī mysticism is that it is popular and therefore well-studied. While the extraordinary impact of this tradition upon Islamic thought as a whole is widely acknowledged, only its prominent fourth-/tenth- and seventh-/thirteenth-century representatives have received some of the attention they deserve. Broadly speaking, modern scholarship has accounted for Muḥammad b. Masarra al-Jabalī's (d. 319/931) surviving mystico-philosophical treatises, as well as the central corpus of writings penned by "The Greatest Master" (*al-shaykh al-akbar*) Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī (d. 637/1240). However, much of the formative early sixth-/twelfth-century period remains *terra incognita*. We are a long way from a nuanced appreciation of the ways in which figures such as Ibn Barrajān (d. 536/1141), Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 536/1141) and Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151) contributed to Andalusī mystical thought and provided a link between the early Masarrī tradition and later elaborations of Ibn ʿArabī. These middle-term scholars played a formative role in developing the Andalusī mystical tradition, but are largely forgotten, eclipsed, and assessed through Ibn ʿArabī's interpretive lens in both medieval and modern sources. What doctrines did they espouse? In what ways did the teachings of Andalusīs like Ibn Masarra, as well as Eastern scholars like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) bear upon them? To what extent did they impact Ibn ʿArabī and his contemporaries? How did they perceive their own place within the Islamic scholarly tradition? And how did they self-identify vis-à-vis the broader Arabic Sufi tradition in

the Eastern heartlands of Islam? Such questions have rarely been posed, and even less have been answered.[1]

This study of the formative sixth-/twelfth-century period of Andalusī mysticism, which focuses in particular on Ibn Barrajān's writings, is intended as a contribution to the ongoing reassessment of the intellectual developments of the late al-Murābiṭūn period in al-Andalus. It also affords a reevaluation and corrective of certain uncharted and misunderstood religious tendencies during this period. First, this study corrects the assertion by some that the formative Andalusī mystical tradition was a backward version of the classical Sufism of the East. It also corrects the notion that this tradition was a passive fertile soil into which Ghazālī's encyclopedic "Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*) and Sufism were implanted. Eastern Sufi and renunciant literature written by figures like Ghazālī, Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Tustarī (d. 283/896), and Makkī (d. 386/996), as well as Ashʿarī theology and certain elements of philosophy, did inform the writings of Andalusī mystics during the formative period, but to a much lesser degree than has been assumed. Rather, champions of Andalusī mysticism espoused a symbiosis of Qurʾānic teachings and Sunnī Ḥadīth with the Neoplatonizing treatises of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*), the writings of Ibn Masarra, and, through indirect contact, Fāṭimī Ismāʿīlī cosmological doctrines circulating in the intellectual milieu of al-Andalus. As such, exponents of this symbiotic mystical discourse were more interested in cosmology, the science of letters, cyclical notions of time, and the principle of associative correspondence between heaven and earth than in Sufi wayfaring, ethics, and the psychology of the soul.

Al-Andalus was home to an indigenous mysticophilosophical tradition that was distinct from the Arabic Sufi tradition that developed in the central and eastern lands of Islam. This typological distinctiveness is confirmed by the *self-image* that Ibn Barrajān, Ibn Qasī, and to a certain extent Ibn al-ʿArīf had of their own place within the Islamic tradition, as well as their near-total neglect of Ghazālī and the broader body of Sufi writings. They tended to keep Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) at arm's length, and rarely employed the term. As a case in point, Ibn Barrajān spoke of Eastern Sufism only in the third person. That is, he described them as a distinct group of pietists who developed *their own* set of terminology. He admired

[1] Ebstein's analysis of the influence of Ismāʿīlī and Brethren thought on Ibn Masarra and Ibn ʿArabī in *Philosophy and Mysticism in al-Andalus* is a welcome addition to the subject. See also his article "Was Ibn Qasī a Sufi?"

Sufis for codifying the ethical teachings and spiritual states and stations of the renunciants (*zuhhād*), but saw Sufis as being less mystically and philosophically inclined than the Andalusī tradition to which he belonged. He considered Sufism to be an intensely pious, behaviorally and ethically oriented, individualistic pursuit of self-purification. Their divisions and subdivisions of the virtues, states (sing. *ḥāl*), and stations (sing. *maqām*) were of little interest to him, for he preferred to focus on the crossing or penetration (*ʿibra*) into the unseen world (*ghayb*) through signs of God in physical existence.

The Andalusī mystics of the formative early sixth/twelfth century, and especially Ibn Barrajān, self-identified as "Muʿtabirūn," or "Contemplatives" (lit. practitioners of *iʿtibār*, or the Masarran *ʿibra* "crossing" into the unseen). Although the term Muʿtabir is rooted in the Qurʾān (Q. 3:13, 12:111, 16:66, 59:2) and is not the exclusive property of Ibn Masarra and his followers, it is a designation that they most often identified with and that captured their shared mystical orientation. The Muʿtabirūn, moreover, proclaimed theirs to be an Abrahamic approach, since Abraham (Q. 6:74–79) arrived at knowledge of divine unity by contemplating God's signs in creation, thereby embodying Ibn Masarra's mysticophilosophical quest for certainty (*yaqīn*). Ibn Masarra proclaimed the intellect's (*ʿaql*) ability to ascend to the highest divine mysteries without taking recourse to revelatory knowledge, and his writings served as an important source of inspiration for the Muʿtabirūn. Although Ibn Masarra was persecuted and accused of heresy, his resilient ideas continued to resurface and evolve through the teachings of various Andalusī mystics over the next 200 years, only to receive their fullest elaborations in the early sixth/twelfth century. After the collapse of the al-Murābiṭūn dynasty in the mid-sixth/twelfth century and the rise of the pro-Ghazālian al-Muwaḥḥidūn regime, the teachings of the Muʿtabirūn were absorbed into the broader nascent Sufi tradition across the Muslim West. These teachings were resynthesized in the voluminous works of seventh-/thirteenth-century philosophical mystics such as Ibn ʿArabī, Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1241), Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 668/1270), Shushtarī (d. 667/1269), and Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291). Notably, these figures all settled and died in the East, and their teachings left an indelible mark on Islamic thought. With the rise of Sufi biographical compilations in the Maghrib around the same period, the representatives of the Muʿtabirūn tradition were subsumed under the generic category of "Sufi" and lost their group identity. Given that the Muʿtabirūn self-identified with a different epistemological category, I refrain from describing them as

"Sufi," and instead I employ the term mystic (i.e., one who is interested in the mysteries of the unseen world) or simply Muʿtabir (singular of Muʿtabirūn).

Thus, the full-fledged "Sufi tradition" of the Muslim West, which arose as a distinct and institutionalized movement in the seventh/thirteenth century, was neither imported from the East nor grew steadily out of the renunciant tradition. Instead, "Sufism" comprised two major branches that hark back, in the case of al-Andalus, to the early third-/ninth-century Andalusī Umayyad period. The first is the praxis-oriented, intensely devotional, renunciantory quest for the divine embodied by the renunciant tradition of Seville, as well as later figures such as Abū Madyan (d. 593/1197), Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), Jazūlī (d. 869/1465), Zarrūq (d. 898/1493), and others. This tradition of "juridical Sufism" represents a continuation of the early renunciant tradition of al-Andalus, with an added layer of inspiration drawn from Ghazālī's teachings in particular, and the Eastern Arabic Sufi tradition at large.

The second branch of the Western Sufi tradition was more philosophically inclined and controversial. This trend was – and saw itself as – a distinctive mystical tradition which evolved parallel to the first and drew comparatively little inspiration from Ghazālī and the Eastern Arabic Sufi tradition. It harks back to the teachings of Ibn Masarra, which were forced underground periodically between the fourth/tenth to the fifth/eleventh centuries, then reemerged as a fully developed mystical philosophy with Ibn Barrajān and his peers in the formative early sixth/twelfth century, and finally reached their pinnacle with the much more elaborate writings of Ibn ʿArabī and his likeminded peers in the seventh/thirteenth century.

In the broadest terms, therefore, appreciating the nuance and complexity of the formative Andalusī period inevitably complicates the historiography of medieval Islam, which posits a division between periphery and center: the "Marginal Muslim West" (the Maghrib) and the "Middle" Eastern heartlands (the Mashriq). Building on previous theoretical studies,[2] my suggestion is that medieval Islam was polycentric. Al-Andalus, at least as far as the history of mysticism is concerned, was its own productive "center" and the flow of mystical teachings between East and West was thoroughly bidirectional. In other words, Andalusī mysticism was not provincial but rather a world unto itself. Its luminaries drew

[2] Bulliet, *Islam*. P. Nwyia and M. Asín Palacios maintained this position in their writings as well.

just as much from their own local traditions as they did from the works of Easterners. Far from being an intellectually peripheral site of learning that passively adopted Eastern influences, the Andalusī mystical tradition both gave and received. Its intellectual distinctiveness and, one might even venture to say intellectual autonomy during the sixth/twelfth century vis-à-vis parallel trends in the Arab East is evidenced by a close reading of its written output.

IBN BARRAJĀN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE MUʿTABIRŪN TRADITION

By far the most preeminent, influential, and prolific mystic of the formative period was Ibn Barrajān of Seville, whose full name was Abū al-Ḥakam ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī al-Rijāl Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Lakhmī al-Ifrīqī al-Ishbīlī (d. 536/1141). He stood at the forefront of the Muʿtabirūn tradition, and marked the culmination of the sixth-/twelfth-century nexus of a broad range of intellectual undercurrents. He was, by admission of his own contemporaries, the most prominent, prolific, and senior Andalusī mystic of his day. He even earned the honorific title "The Ghazālī of al-Andalus" in his own lifetime. This honorific has often been misread by scholars as a sign of Ibn Barrajān's intellectual indebtedness to Ghazālī. In reality, this title simply denotes that, like his great Persian counterpart, Ibn Barrajān was regarded by his peers in al-Andalus as the supreme embodiment of the Islamic mystical ideal combined with law-abiding orthodoxy.

The astounding breadth and depth of Ibn Barrajān's knowledge shines through every page of his works. One of the most remarkable features of his oeuvre as a whole is his ability to seamlessly assimilate and draw from various fields of learning to enrich his own teachings. He crafted his vision of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth with a broad array of unnamed sources that formed part and parcel of his inherited worldview. In venturing into other fields of learning, Ibn Barrajān displayed a high degree of intellectual independence (that of a "*mujtahid*," or independent legal thinker, to use a juridical term) and was not merely synthesizing other authors' works. Notwithstanding differences in emphasis and scholarly approach among early sixth-/twelfth-century Andalusī mystics, Ibn Barrajān's influence and the breadth of his scholarly achievements afford a unique window into the religious and mystical tendencies of this formative period as a whole. The bulk of this study will thus be devoted to analyzing and contextualizing his teachings in relation to his peers and the broader Andalusī context.

It would be no exaggeration to state that Ibn Barrajān's entire scholarly pursuit was driven by a singular purpose: a desire to attain absolute certainty (*yaqīn*) of the realities of the hereafter. Ibn Barrajān sought to realize the supreme goal and essence of all revealed religion, which he sometimes called the "Paradise of Certainty" (*jannat al-yaqīn*) wherein the realities of the hereafter are concretely experienced in this world. He taught that the key to reaching this sublime state is to undertake "the crossing from the visible into the unseen" (*al-ʿibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghāʾib*). That is, the human being can experience a concrete foretaste of celestial realities of the hereafter by training the intellect, soul, and body to traverse from the visible dimension of existence to the unseen world. Ibn Barrajān praised those who acquired this empirical knowledge of the self as Muʿtabirūn, literally, "Undertakers of the Crossing," or simply "Contemplators."

Ibn Barrajān's epistemology of certainty occupies the bulk of his writings. He promoted *iʿtibār* as a means of both undercutting and broadening the religious polemics of his day. For him, this contemplative ascent was a way of out the endless legalistic particularisms of Mālikī jurists; the "chains of transmission" or *isnād*-centered epistemology of Ḥadīth scholars; the anti-intellectualism promoted by al-Murābiṭūn theological literalists; the excessive transcendentalism of Ashʿarī theologians; the far-fetched abstractions of the Aristotelian philosophers; as well as perceived esoterist (*bāṭinī*) deviations of Fāṭimī Ismāʿīlīs who trumped the divine law.

However, while Ibn Barrajān was hailed as the "Ghazālī of al-Andalus," he and his namesake differ tremendously in approach and output. In sharp contrast to Ghazālī, who mastered philosophy (*falsafa*), theology (*kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and other Islamic sciences with an eye to engaging each discipline at its own level and buttressing his spiritualizing vision of Islam, Ibn Barrajān had little interest in proving his mastery of the formal intellectual and religious sciences. While he wielded a certain command of these fields of learning, Ibn Barrajān never sought to directly confront nor engage in what he perceived as futile juridical, theological, or philosophical arguments. Characteristically, he perceived all branches of learning, including the transmitted (*naqlī*) and intellectual (*ʿaqlī*) sciences of Islam, as well as other bodies of knowledge such as medicine, and speculations about cycles of time and determination (*dawāʾir al-taqdīr*), as points of ascension into the unseen. In his last work, he summarized his epistemology of certainty in statements such as:

The path is one, the way straight, the calling one. Those who are called upon are many: some are called from nearby (Q. 50:41), others from afar. And God prevails over His affair![3]

For Ibn Barrajān, undertaking the *ʿibra* was an all-consuming quest for the divine in everything. It was an act that surpassed conventional faith in the hereafter. He reminded his readers that the Arabic word for faith (*īmān*) itself entails a conviction and certainty (*amn*) that goes beyond abstract belief. That is, the supreme goal of religion is a concrete realization of the presence of higher realities in this world, as seen through God's signs (*āyāt Allāh*) in the cosmos, the Qurʾān, and in the human being. For the true Muʿtabir, realities of the hereafter are concretely experienced in this life. For instance, Ibn Barrajān insisted that the idea of traversing the thin bridge over hell (*ṣirāṭ*) on Judgment Day should be experienced here and now, for the believer builds his bridge by his actions and spiritual states. Or again, quenching one's thirst at the Prophet's Pond (*ḥawḍ*) can be done in the herebelow by clinging to the guidance of revelation, and the sweetness of the beatific vision (*al-ruʾya al-karīma*) is anticipated by God's exclusive signs in the world, like sun and moon. Thus, Ibn Barrajān saw God's associative signs in the universe, revelation, and man as open passageways into the next world which are accessible to every believer, provided he or she has mastered the art of deciphering the grace (*baraka*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*) behind them.

Ibn Barrajān's writings, which have been largely passed over in silence by modern scholars, or even dismissed as the derivative and preliminary thoughts of a secondary figure, deserve to be studied closely. At first glance, his oeuvre appears to be a work-in-progress, a loosely drafted stream of reflections, lacking the richness of Ibn ʿArabī's expositions and the clarity of Ghazālī's "Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*). Indeed, many scholars have made this point. A closer look at his ideas, however, reveal an outstanding, internally coherent, and original thinker who challenged the predominant religious discourse of his day, and whose unique hermeneutics and cosmological vision were absorbed by later codifiers of the Philosophical-Sufi tradition. But the richness, eclecticism, and subtlety of Ibn Barrajān's teachings are easily overlooked by the hasty reader for two reasons. First, he usually dictated his works orally and quite unsystematically. Second, he never cited his sources or named his intellectual opponents. Ibn Barrajān perhaps felt compelled by the intellectually rigid sixth-/twelfth-century Mālikī milieu to write with

[3] Ibn Barrajān, *Īḍāḥ al-ḥikma*, eds. Böwering and Casewit, ¶910.

cautionary discretion and to conceal his intellectual affiliations and agenda. Moreover, he wanted his writings to appeal to a broad readership. Thus, names of his teachers and sources are deliberately omitted; his criticisms of other figures and groups are usually expressed in the third person; and he avoided terminological markers from works of Sufism, theology *(kalām)*, the Brethren of Purity, and Ismāʿīlī writings. Rather than locating himself within a particular school of thought, he found reference for his ideas in Qurʾānic verses, Ḥadīth, Biblical passages, and sayings of the Companions, and expressed them in ad hoc fashion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars of Islamic thought of the Iberian Peninsula have yet to develop a clear understanding of Ibn Barrajān's worldview for the simple reason that his works have up to recent years remained scattered in manuscript libraries.[4] Fortunately, a number of Arabic text editions of Ibn Barrajān's works began to appear just as this current study was being prepared. The main thrust of secondary literature on Ibn Barrajān remains biographical. These newer scholarly inquiries, most recently by Bellver and Küçük, have refined our understanding of the important status which Ibn Barrajān enjoyed among his contemporaries in sixth-/twelfth-century al-Andalus, as well as his role in shaping and disseminating mysticism in the region. However, such scholarly inquiries are noticeably dependent upon the patchy and often-conflicting data furnished by the medieval biographical sources. Ibn Barrajān's own works have yet to be analyzed as a whole. The over-dependence on biographical literature is problematic because the image of mysticism portrayed by biographers such as Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183) and Ibn al-Abbār (d. 638/1260) during the fifth to seventh-/eleventh to thirteenth-centuries in which Ibn Barrajān lived do not accurately reflect the actual unfolding of this tradition at the time.[5] That is, the biographers distorted Ibn Barrajān's self-understanding of his own place within the Islamic tradition.[6]

Aside from biographical studies, many researchers who have dealt with Ibn Barrajān's thought have tendered largely unsubstantiated conjectures based on a very brief perusal of his works, or on contextual inferences

[4] See the bibliography of this book for an overview of the excellent extant manuscript tradition of Ibn Barrajān.
[5] *Urvoy, Le monde des ulémas Andalous*, pp. 60, 63, 69, 73, 76, 79, 107,108, 119, et seq.
[6] See Chapters 2 and 3.

from studies of his contemporaries, Ibn al-ʿArīf and Ibn Qasī, and the history of the al-Murābiṭūn persecutions of mystics and theologians during the sixth/twelfth century. Asín Palacios, who first intuited that Ibn Barrajān was influenced by the doctrines of Ibn Masarra, was remarkably accurate in his assessment but was unable to substantiate his claim textually. In the wake of Asín Palacios, scholars like Gharmīnī, Faure, Bell, and most recently Küçük echoed Goldziher's narrative, which portrays Ibn Barrajān as a receiver and propagator of Ghazālī's ideas in al-Andalus.[7] Others, in particular Gril and Bellver, have advanced our understanding of our author on his own grounds, but they have yet to take Ibn Barrajān's works and teachings into account as a whole.

Aside from important and commendable editorial groundwork undertaken by Arab researchers, scholarship on Ibn Barrajān in Arabic secondary literature is generally poor and entangled in modern Atharī/Salafī versus Ashʿarī/Sufi polemics. Arab authors who have written about Ibn Barrajān and the spread of Ashʿarism in the Maghrib, such as al-Qārī, Iḥnāna, and Hosni, have provided very informative insights on the period in general, and on Ibn Barrajān's biography and Qurʾānic hermeneutics in particular. However, these studies are guided by a prescriptive analysis of the tradition and are hampered by an unrelenting anachronistic attempt at reassuring the reader that Ibn Barrajān was an orthodox Sunnī (*Ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*) however defined by the modern author.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 analyzes the complex and multilayered factors that set Andalusī mysticism in motion from the early third/ninth century to the sixth/twelfth century. These include the longstanding and popular Andalusī tradition of renunciation; the early mysticophilosophical school of Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) which had an enduring influence in later periods; the absorption of the broader body of Sunnī Ḥadīth and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) during the Umayyad and Ṭāʾifa period; polarizing epistemological rivalries over the miracles of saints (*karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*) and the legitimacy of mystics' claims to esoteric knowledge by means of inner purification; and the burning of Ghazālī's monumental "Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*).

[7] *EI*^{2}, "Ibn al-'Arīf," "Ibn Barradjān," and "Ibn Ḳasī" (A. Faure); Gharmīnī, *al-Madāris al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 193; Bel, "Le Sufisme."

Chapter 2 intervenes in the historiography of al-Andalus by challenging long-held assumptions about Ibn Barrajān and his peers' intellectual indebtedness to Ghazālī in the early sixth/twelfth century and by positing the existence of a self-consciously distinctive Muʿtabirūn mystical tradition with pronounced cosmological and occult leanings. This chapter demonstrates, based on the contents and chronology of Ibn Barrajān's works, that Ibn Barrajān was already an established author and a respected mystic before Ghazālī's writings were even introduced into al-Andalus. Ghazālī's influence on Ibn al-ʿArīf and Ibn Qasī is also negligible, as evidenced by a close analysis of their life and writings. I argue that the transition to institutionalized "Sufism" in al-Andalus and North Africa thus took place approximately fifty years after the death of Ibn Barrajān and his peers, that is, at the turn of the sixth/twelfth to seventh/thirteenth century. This transition from an indigenous Andalusī mystical tradition – the Muʿtabirūn – to an institutionalized pan-Sunnī *ṭarīqa* Sufism was cemented by the self-consciously Sufi *ṭarīqa* movement of Abū Madyan as well as the North African Sufi hagiographers like Tādilī's (d. 627/1230–1) *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl ahl al-taṣawwuf*.

Building on and supplementing previous biographical examinations of Ibn Barrajān, Chapter 3 analyzes Ibn Barrajān's life and works based upon not only the medieval biographies but also his own multivolume written corpus. Of special significance are Ibn Barrajān's early years, ancestral origins, formative education, the implications of his misunderstood epithet "Ghazālī of al-Andalus," his retreat from the city of Seville, and the scholarly output of his students. This chapter also features a discussion of Ibn Barrajān's political views on Muslim rulership, end-times, his summoning to Marrakesh for trial, and the obscure circumstances surrounding his incarceration and death.

For such a major figure in Islamic thought, it is surprising that the exact number, sequence, contents, and titles of Ibn Barrajān's works are a source of confusion in a large number of medieval and modern sources, which Chapter 4 explores. Ibn Barrajān articulated his teachings in four main works, of which only three have survived in full. The first, "The Guidebook to the Paths of Guidance" (*al-Irshād ilā subul al-rashād*), survives only partially in the Mamlūk scholar Zarkashī's *Burhān* and appears to be somewhat different in tone from his later works. The *Irshād* seeks to demonstrate the concordance or mutual overlap (*muʿāḍada*) between the Qurʾān and the Sunna by showing how each of the aḥādīth narrated by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* align in meaning with the Qurʾān. Ibn Barrajān's second work, "A Commentary on the Beautiful