

REVIEWS

Astrometeorología en al-Andalus y el Magrib entre los siglos VIII y XV: El Kitāb al-amtār wa l-as'ār ("Libro de las lluvias y de los precios") de Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Baqqār (fl. 1411–1418). Chedli Guesmi and Julio Samsó, eds.

De Diversis Artibus 103 (n.s. 66). Turnhout: Brepols, 2018. viii + 278 pp. €90.

This book on *Kitāb al-amtār wa l-as'ār* (The book on rains and prices), on which Chedli Guesmi collaborated with Julio Samsó, is much more than just the critical edition of that Arabic text. It situates the work of Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Baqqār against the backdrop of astrometeorology (astrology-based weather forecasting) practiced in al-Andalus and the Maghreb between the eighth and fifteenth centuries. The study is divided into three parts: an introduction dedicated to the author al-Baqqār and his work; an extended summary of the content; and the critical edition of the Arabic text of *Kitāb al-amtār wa l-as'ār*.

It is estimated that *Kitāb al-amtār wa l-as'ār* was written after 1418. It is currently preserved in only one manuscript, kept at the library of El Escorial (MS Escorial 916, fols. 187^v–236^r). The author, al-Baqqār, was a Maghrebi astronomer from the first half of the fifteenth century, who, apart from the *Kitāb al-amtār wa l-as'ār*, also wrote *Kitāb al-adwār fī tasyīr al-anwār* (The book on the cycles of the extension of the luminaries; ed. Montse Díaz Fajardo [2001]).

What had initially drawn scholarly attention to this text was the extensive use made of the so-called system of crosses, a method of forecasting that originated in the late Middle Ages. The fragments included in al-Baqqār's treatise constitute the oldest, most complete Arabic text known to date. Another version of the system of crosses is also found in the *Libro de las Cruzes* (Book of the crosses) compiled at the court of Alfonso X of Castile. Other important sources have also been identified, as al-Baqqār inserted excerpts from a vast array of treatises, and thus clearly indicated what astrological works were in circulation in the Maghreb at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It might be of interest to note the use of religious sources quoted in order to justify the astrological practices within the realm of Islamic orthodoxy.

Regarding the structure of *Kitāb al-amtār wa l-as'ār*, the work is divided into three parts: the first part is introductory, presenting the attitudes of various wise men toward astrology. Not surprisingly, it offers an apology for this realm of science and some long-term forecasts. The second part continues with forecasting, in this case based on observations of the planet Saturn moving through the twelve signs of the zodiac. This part is replete with Oriental sources narrating sophisticated astrological techniques. In addition to predicting the weather by watching Saturn's movements, al-Baqqār also argues in favor of forecasting by observing conjunctions of planets, such as Saturn and Mars or Jupiter and Venus. Furthermore, the author stresses the importance of Venus and the

Moon for rain predictions. The third part contains forecasts on fertility, draughts, prices, and rains, based on the horoscopes. This part is divided into three chapters: on meteorology and rains, on prices, and on predictions based on solar and lunar eclipses.

Without a doubt, this edition will interest scholars studying the history of astrology and astronomy, but it may also be useful to historians of economy. It discusses price fluctuations and enumerates the goods whose prices were of special importance in the fifteenth century (a reader might be surprised to find pigs among the livestock). It also underlines the importance of astrometeorology in societies that depended mainly on agriculture. Finally, the format of this publication is particularly engaging—not only was the Arabic text translated into Spanish, but it is also accompanied here by extensive commentary on and summary of the content. The commentary focuses on the sources and indirect influences of al-Baqqār's work, as well as on tracking internal contradictions.

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Antonio Latini's "The Modern Steward, or The Art of Preparing Banquets Well."
Tommaso Astarita, ed. and trans.

Foundations. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. x + 444 pp. €109.

The editor presents the first full English translation of Antonio Latini's *The Modern Steward*, after his previous partial translation in 2014. This is an important text in European cooking literature because it appeared at a time of transition from the elaborate standards and tastes of the Renaissance and Baroque periods to a new perspective, based on simplicity and natural flavors, strengthened by French culture in the second half of the seventeenth century. If Latini's recipes reflect the early modern Italian tradition, his interest in local ingredients and the practices of Naples, where Latini lived and worked as a steward in the 1680s and 1690s, reveal a new approach to cooking that previous Italian authors did not have.

In his introduction, Astarita gives the reader some essential keys of interpretation: where Latini worked (he was the steward of Don Stefano Carrillo y Salcedo, the dean of the Collateral Council in Naples); the context in which he wrote (a period of transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century); a few relevant medical and dietary concepts of the time (the ancient theory of the four humors and the idea of digestion as cooking in the stomach); the importance of protocol in banquets; and, finally, a couple of considerations on the translation. Concerning this last issue, Astarita declares that he tried to stay close, as much as possible, to Latini's content, tone of language, and words, even local terms (for instance *peparolo*, chili pepper, or