Abū I-Tahir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Tamimi al-Māzini al-Muqadmat al-Luzūmiya. Ibn al-Ašturkūwi (d. 538/1143) was a distinguished Andalusi prose writer, poet, and scholar who, possibly by virtue of being a scholar, led a rather obscure life. So obscure was it, in fact, that it is usual to begin any account of his works by regretting how little is known about him, thereby implying that the paucity of our biographical information makes it impossible to appreciate or to interpret his writings adequately. Actually, I am aware of at least nine pre-modern Arab writers ranging from the sixth/twelfth to the tenth/seventeenth centuries who mention him in their writings.

1 A preliminary version of this article was presented at the conference on Aspects of Andalusi-Arabic Literature, held in Berkeley, on April 29, 1995. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor María Isabel Fierro Bello, who made available to me all the references to Ibn al-Ašturkūwi gathered by her and recorded in her forthcoming electronic database Historia de los Autores y Transmisores Andaluses (H.A.T.A.). I also wish to thank Professor Teresa Garulo for the many helpful suggestions she generously made during her stay in Berkeley during the academic year 1994-1995, without which this article would not have been possible. 2 Both forms of the name are documented. Since it derives from Ašturku (Estercuel), the second is probably the correct one. 3 The two most helpful biographies of our author available to me are: (1) That contained in the introduction to al-Saraqūsti, al-Muqadmat al-Luzūmiya, ed. Badr Ahmad Dayf (Alexandria: al-Hay’al-Miṣriya li-l-Kitāb, 1982), pp. 7-45. (2) The comments included in Ignacio Ferrando Frutos, “La Maqāma barbāriyya de al-Saraqūstī,” Anaquel de Estudios Arabes, 2 (1991), pp. 119-129. The latter corrects some basic mistakes made by previous scholars. I have relied on both of these studies in my own exposition, while adding some new material and approaching the figure of the author with a different focus from that of my predecessors. 4 The tenth writer, al-Baġdādī (d. 1339/1920), must be counted as modern, although he relies on medieval sources. The traditional Arabic sources that mention Ibn al-Ašturkūwi are: (1) Abū ʿAlī ibn Bāṣṣam al-Santarini, al-Dahira fi Malāsīn ahl al-Jazīra, ed. Iḥṣān ʿAbbas ( Baghdad: Maktabat al-Mutanni, 1982), Part 3, vol. 2, pp. 909-912. Ibn Bāṣṣam fled Santarem when it was taken by Alfonso VI of Castile, and went to Córdoba in 493/1100. Later, in Seville, he compiled his Daḥira. He died in 543/1147. He wrote largely about his contemporaries, but on many occasions, he goes as far back as the beginning of the eleventh century. See, Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2d ed. (hereafter E.I.2), vol. 3, p. 734. In the printed edition of Ibn Bāṣṣam’s Daḥira our author’s name appears in the distorted form Abū I-Tāhir Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Aṣkārī, while the editor notes that one manuscript even records the form al-Aṣkādī. See, however, source (6), below. (2) Abū Bakr ibn Ḥayr, Fāhrasa, ed. Francisco Codera and Julián Ribera (repr. Baghdad: Maktubat al-Muṭannā, 1982), pp. 27-36.

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According to a time-honored Arab scholarly tradition, some of these authors, especially the later ones, rely on earlier sources which they paraphrase or reproduce verbatim. This practice allows us to add six further

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