The scenario of most of al-Maqrūzat al-Luzūmiya by the Andalusi author al-Saraqūstī (d. 538/1143) is set geographically in the Middle East. A few maqāmāt take place in areas stretching from India and China in the Orient, to Qayrawān and Tangiers in the Maghreb, but they are in the distinct minority. Even fewer are the pieces that refer to al-Saraqūstī’s Andalusi homeland. This suggests that the author was aiming at a reader-reception...
located in the heartlands of Islam, rather than one narrowly restricted to the Iberian Peninsula, and that his message was pan-Islamic rather than local. Such an assumption fits well with the extremely learned classical form and diction he adopted as his literary vehicle of expression, insofar as it stands in sharp contrast to the art of his contemporary, Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160) who, with rare genius, poetized the familiar and the pedestrian, doing so in a popular and local poetic form (the zajal) and a colloquial diction (Andalusi Arabic). Nevertheless, al-Saraquṣṭī’s condition as a twelfth-century Andalusi writer could hardly have helped but color his experiences; it may shed some light on the perspective from which he wrote and, ultimately, on what he had to say. Therefore, in this article, I shall examine the only four maqâmät by al-Saraquṣṭī that, in one way or another, involve the author’s geographic homeland. Let us begin by considering “Maqâma No. 19.” Although this piece exhibits a veiled reference to Zaragoza there is little else in it that is specifically Andalusi, at least on the surface of a work, the author nonetheless advises us to interpret allegorically.⁷

Al-Saraquṣṭī’s “Maqâma No. 19” begins with the narrator, al-Sā’ib ibn Tammām, transmitting the information that when he had reached old age he determined to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. In doing so, he declares: “I bade farewell to passion and youth, faced the blowing of the south and east winds, and came from the white-laned [baydā’ al-darb] city to the confines of the west.”⁸ According to the Moroccan editor of the text, a marginal note in one of the manuscripts identifies the “white-laned city” as “Zaragoza on the frontier.”⁹ This identification may be supported on the basis of evidence provided by several medieval geographers, who state that Zaragoza was called “the white city” [al-madīna al-baydā’].¹⁰ Let us also

---

³² AL-SARAQUṢṬĪ, IBN AL-ÂSTARKÛĪ

---

⁷ “We pray God—may He be exalted—that whosoever considers and takes note of these words of ours, and strives and aspires to [understand] them with a critical glance, will judiciously apply allegorical interpretation [ta’wil] in his examination [of them] . . . .” W, p. 277. See, too, the commentary on this passage in James T. Monroe, “Al-Saraquṣṭī, ibn al-Âstarkûwi: Andalusi Lexicographer, Poet, and Author of al-Maqâmât al-Luzûmiya,” at p. 16. Here and below, all translations from the Arabic, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

⁸ W, p. 182.

⁹ W, p. 182, n. 4.