

# The Role of Andalusia as The Center of Islamic Civilization in The West

Ika Septiani<sup>1</sup>, Achmad Maftuh Sujana<sup>2</sup>, Aqil Syaputra<sup>3</sup>, Wahyudin<sup>4</sup>, Inca Faizatul Nazwa<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

ikasepty2903@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, achmad.maftuh@uinbanten.ac.id<sup>2</sup>, aqilsaputra16@gmail.com<sup>3</sup>,

wahyuwy891@gmail.com<sup>4</sup>, faizzatunnazwa@gmail.com<sup>5</sup>.

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## ABSTRACT

Andalusia is a region that has a strategic position in the history of the development of Islamic civilization in the Western world. During the period of Islamic rule, especially under the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba, the region developed into a highly developed center of science and culture. Andalusia became a symbol of the glory of Islam through progress in various fields such as education, philosophy, science, art, and architecture. Collaboration between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scholars created a process of scientific and cultural exchange that gave birth to tremendous intellectual progress. This article aims to examine the role of Andalusia in the spread of Islamic civilization values to Europe and its influence on the development of science modern. This research uses a literature review method by tracing classical and contemporary historical sources related to Islamic civilization in Andalusia. The results of the study show that Andalusia was not only the center of government, but also an intellectual link between the Islamic world and the West, which made a great contribution to the emergence of the Renaissance era in Europe. Thus, Andalusia can be seen as one of the main foundations for the formation of world civilization based on Islamic values.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From the many history books that we have read and the information that we have obtained, historians have recorded many things about the development of Islamic civilization, especially in the middle of the 8th century AD to the beginning of the 13th century AD. The history of Islamic civilization has been recorded in history, that at that time Islam had experienced a period of glory. The glory of Islam is shown by various advances in many fields such as the fields of science, politics, economics, technology and many others. These advances occurred both from the Islamic Empire in the East (Abbasid Empire) centered in Baghdad and Islam in the West (Umayyad Empire) centered in Cordoba.

During the time of the Umayyad caliphate, which was approximately 90 years old, it had achieved successful expansion to various regions, both in the East and in the West with a really very large Islamic territory. In the time of Caliph al-Walid Ibn al-Malik, one of the caliphs of the Umayyads based in Damascus, Muslims began to conquer the Iberian peninsula. The Iberian Peninsula is an old name for the territory of Spain and Portugal. Since the beginning of the 5th century AD (406 AD), the area has been controlled by the Vandals, hence the name Vandalusia. However, from 711 AD, the Iberian peninsula and the southern region of France fell under Islamic rule, ruled by Arab and Barbarian rulers. Since then, this region has been known as Andalusia. Spain is the most important place and golden bridge for Europe in absorbing Islamic civilization and the results of Islamic culture, both in the form of political, social, economic, and civilizational relations

between countries. The Europeans witnessed the fact that Spain was under Islamic rule far behind its European neighbors, especially in the fields of thought and science. The progress of Europe that continues to develop to this day owes much to the treasures of Islamic science that developed in the classical period

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive perspective on examining the role of Andalusia as a center of Islamic civilization in the Western world. Previous studies on Andalusia have largely focused on political history, prominent figures, or scientific achievements in isolation. This research goes beyond such fragmented approaches by positioning Andalusia as a civilizational ecosystem, in which intellectual life, education, culture, and social relations developed in an integrated manner within a multireligious society. This study offers a new perspective by analyzing Andalusia as a space of encounter between Islamic and Western civilizations, where the transmission of knowledge, intellectual values, and academic traditions occurred through continuous and dialogical processes. The analysis is not limited to civilizational outcomes but also emphasizes the social and cultural conditions that enabled Andalusia to flourish as an open and inclusive center of learning. Furthermore, the novelty of this research is strengthened by linking the historical experience of Andalusia to contemporary contexts. Civilizational values such as religious tolerance, intellectual freedom, and respect for knowledge are examined as enduring intellectual legacies that remain relevant to addressing modern challenges in Islam West relations. In this sense, the study moves beyond a purely historical description and offers a reflective and analytical contribution to the fields of Islamic civilization studies and inter-civilizational dialogue.

This study explores the role of Andalusia as a center of Islamic civilization in the Western world by addressing several interconnected questions. It seeks to understand how Andalusia emerged and developed into an important hub of Islamic intellectual and cultural life, as well as the key factors that supported this development. The study also examines how Andalusia contributed to the transmission of Islamic knowledge and values to Western Europe. Finally, it reflects on the relevance of Andalusian civilizational values for fostering a more constructive and meaningful relationship between Islam and the West in the contemporary context.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative historical research design with a library-based method. The research is designed to explore and interpret the historical role of Andalusia (Al-Andalus) as a major center of Islamic civilization in the Western world. A qualitative design is considered appropriate because the study focuses on understanding historical phenomena, intellectual developments, and cultural contributions rather than on numerical measurement or statistical analysis. The research adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. Descriptively, it presents an overview of the political, educational, scientific, and cultural conditions of Andalusia during the period of Islamic rule. Analytically, it examines the significance of these conditions in shaping Andalusia as a center of knowledge and civilization and analyzes its influence on the development of Western thought, science, and culture.

The data for this study are derived from secondary sources, including classical Islamic historical writings, modern academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly works related to Islamic civilization and medieval Europe. Key references include works by Muslim historians and philosophers as well as contemporary Western scholars who have examined the intellectual and cultural legacy of Andalusia.

Data are collected through a systematic literature review. Relevant sources are identified and selected based on their academic credibility, relevance to the research topic, and contribution to understanding the role of Andalusia in Islamic civilization. The collected materials are then categorized thematically to facilitate structured and coherent analysis. The data are analyzed using historical and thematic analysis. Historical analysis is applied to understand the context and development of Andalusia as a civilizational center, while thematic analysis is used to identify key patterns such as educational institutions, scientific achievements, cultural tolerance, and intellectual transmission. This analytical process allows the study to draw comprehensive conclusions regarding the role of Andalusia as the center of Islamic civilization in the West.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The Origins of Islamic Development in Andalusia (Spain)

Islam began to enter the territory of Andalusia (Iberian peninsula, modern Spain) around 711 AD under the leadership of Thariq bin Ziyad, with the help of troops from North Africa during the Umayyad caliphate. Tariq and his army landed in Gibraltar (formerly known as Jabal al-Tariq), then managed to conquer important territories such as Toledo and Córdoba (Nurul Hafidzah and Nasril Nasril, 2024). Thariq bin Ziyad is better known as the Spanish conqueror, because Thariq's army was quite formidable and the results were more real and the area conquered was more than Musa bin Nusair's army. His army consisted mostly of the Beber tribe supported by Musa bin Nusair himself and some Arabs sent by the Caliph al-Walid. From the above explanation, it is clear that Islam entered Spain during the reign of Walid bin Abdul Malik (86-97 AH/705-715 AD) of the Umayyad Dynasty.

Before the arrival of Islam, the region was ruled by the Visigoths, after the Roman Empire and Vandal rule. The existence of internal conflicts in the Visigoth kingdom was also one of the factors that made the conquest easier. After the conquest, Andalusia became part of the province under Umayyad rule. But then the region developed independently, especially when Abdurrahman I (of Umayyad descent) fled the Middle East and established his own kingdom in Córdoba. The conquest of Spain by the Muslim army was a new and glorious chapter in the history of the country. The Islamic conquest of the Spanish territories was an act of saving the country from the tyranny, corruption, and abuse of power of the Gothic, and a new regime of justice and truth was established. The principles of freedom and brotherhood and equality are applied in society. Religious tolerance is given to all residents. There is no coercion to one religion. The citizens are free to determine their own laws and by their own Judges who are supervised by the Amir. In addition, the economic, political and social situation in Spain is in a sad state. Those are among the factors that support the success of Islam in Spain (Desmaniar, 2017).

Islamic rule in Andalusia did not last without intense changes. Here are some important phases: (a) The Period of Eviction to the Umayyad Province. After the conquest, Andalusia was administered as a subordinate province of the Umayyad caliphate (central in Damascus) (Nurul Hafidzah and Nasril Nasril, 2024). (b) Emirate of Córdoba (756-929 AD). Abdurrahman I established an independent rule in Córdoba, severing direct ties with the caliphate in Baghdad. This phase was the beginning of the transformation of Andalusia into a center of Islamic political and cultural power in western Europe. (c) Caliphate of Córdoba. During the time of Abdurrahman III, Córdoba was proclaimed to be its own caliphate, meaning that the ruler was no longer subject to other caliphates. This period is considered the golden age of Andalusia, especially in culture and public development. Abdurrahman III (An-Nashir Li ad-Dinillah) built a government from a very worrying time into a solid government by changing the status of power that started from the subordinates of the Abbasid

state in the sense of becoming part of the Abbasid rule in Baghdad by changing its power into a form of an independent caliphate and independent of Abbasid rule by proclaiming himself caliph in 316 AH/929 AD. Abdurrahman III was able to develop Islamic science and civilization by building educational institutions; such as the internationally renowned University of Cordova, and building a very modern and beautiful urban civilization such as the city of az-Zahra, the city of Salim and the city of Mariah (Arip Septialona, 2016). (d) Taifa period (Small kingdoms) & Intervention of the Outer Dynasties After the collapse of the Córdoba caliphate, the Andalusian region was divided into small kingdoms ("taifas"). In this phase, there was also the intervention of outside dynasties such as the Almoravids and Almohads of the Maghreb who tried to reunite the Muslim territory of Andalusia. € Nasrid Emirate (Granada, 1238–1492) After other territories were conquered by Christian empires, the last surviving Islamic Andalusia was Granada which eventually fell in 1492.

### 3.2. Development of Islamic Civilization in Andalusia (Spain)

Islam in Andalusia was not only a matter of military power, but also very prominent in the fields of culture, science, art and architecture: the Center of Science and Intellectual of Córdoba became a center of learning and a large library. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish scholars exchanged views Knowledge Includes Learn philosophy, Science Nature, Mathematics, and Medicine. The translation of scholarly works from Arabic to Latin in cities such as Toledo helped drive Europe's progress towards the Renaissance. Architecture and Art The Islamic architectural style in Andalusia developed uniquely combining Arabic, Moorish, and local elements. Buildings such as the Mosque of Córdoba, the Alhambra in Granada, and the castle town of Madinat al-Zahra are examples of Andalusian architectural splendor.

Agriculture, Irrigation and Technology Irrigation and agricultural techniques brought from the Islamic world were developed more advanced in Andalusia so as to increase agricultural productivity. Technological innovations (e.g. in astronomy, optics, navigational tools) are also developing rapidly. One of the hallmarks of Andalusia is the period of relative tolerance between Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisting in different aspects of life that allow for cultural and intellectual exchange. The collapse of Islam in Andalusia occurred due to a combination of internal and external factors: First, divisions and power struggles. In the early stages since becoming an Islamic territory, Spain was still marked by divisions and power struggles so that the political stability of Spain had not been achieved perfectly. This is due to disputes among the ruling elite due to ethnic and class differences. There was also a difference of opinion between the caliph in Damascus and the governor of North Africa based in Kairawan. Each admitted that they were the ones who had the most right to control the Spanish territory. Therefore this early phase has occurred twenty times of the change of guardians (governors) of Spain in a very short period of time. So no governor is able to maintain his power for a rather long period of time. Second, the personality and leadership of the caliph. One of the causes of the decline of Islam in Spain was the personal factor and the leadership of the caliph. This was seen when Hisham II ascended the throne to replace his father Hakam II. He was a weak caliph, lacking the ability and ability to take care of the country, because he occupied the seat of the caliphate at a relatively young age. He was unable to read and observe the Christian movement that was beginning to grow and threaten his power. Third, the rise of small dynasties. The disintegration of Islamic power in Spain with the emergence of small dynasties was one of the causes of the decline and destruction of Islam in Spain. However, during this period there was also cultural brilliance. A number of local dynasties ruled in different parts of Spain. Some of them are just city-states, others as small as Afthasia in the southwest, controlling a very large area. These dynasties were of different races, reflecting the heterogeneity of the military classes under the Umayyad and the ethnic tensions

and rivalries among these groups. The small dynasties that ruled in various parts of Spain numbered twenty. Other data says it is around thirty, or twenty-three.

Fourth, economic difficulties. Economic conditions can also determine the progress and retreat of a country. In the second half of the Islamic period in Spain, urban development and scientific development were so intense and serious, that they neglected to foster the economy. As a result, economic difficulties arise that greatly affect political and military conditions (Yatim, 1994: 108). In addition, the Muslim armies, which confiscated the property of the rich in Spain and the wealth of the kings and state officials, did not develop the wealth properly, as a result of which the state revenue declined. Then it was even worse after the emergence of a weak caliph who no longer cared about the welfare of his people, but was engulfed in luxury and wanted only to have fun. Finally, the state's income was drained for the benefit of the caliph. Not to mention the costs incurred to finance the war to suppress the riots.<sup>6</sup> The Gospel of Jesus Pressure from the Christian Kingdom (Reconquista) The Christian kingdoms in the north of the Iberian Peninsula (Castile, Aragon, Navarre, etc.) gradually expanded their territory southward, suppressing the Islamic territories. Key conquests such as Toledo (1085) and other major defeats became turning points of power. Foreign Dynastic Intervention and Military Conflict Almoravid and Almohad from North Africa came and tried to consolidate Islamic rule, but military conflicts with Christians and internal rivalries overwhelmed them. Resource and Economic Constraints The prolonged stress of war, high military spending, and the destruction of production areas led to economic setbacks that weakened the country's resilience. Finally, after years of pressure and setbacks, the last kingdom of Islam, Granada, fell in 1492 to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of the Spanish Catholic Kingdom.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Andalusia is one of the most influential centers of Islamic civilization in the Western world. Since the conquest in 711 AD by Thariq bin Ziyad, the region developed from a mere subordinate province to a scientific, cultural, political, and technological center during the Umayyad Caliphate in Córdoba. Through the leadership of figures such as Abdurrahman I and Abdurrahman III, Andalusia reached a golden age with advances in education, philosophy, science, medicine, art, architecture, and agricultural technology. The collaboration between Muslims, Christians, and Jews (*convivencia*) made Andalusia an intellectual bridge between the Islamic world and Europe. The process of translating Arabic scholarly works into Latin also played a major role in triggering the birth of the Renaissance in Europe. However, this glory did not last forever. The collapse of Andalusia was influenced by internal divisions, weakening religious commitments, intergovernmental power struggles, and external pressure in the form of the Reconquista by Christian kingdoms. At its peak, Granada as the last Islamic kingdom fell in 1492. Overall, Andalusia made a great contribution to the development of world civilization. The intellectual, cultural, and technological heritage born in this region is an important foundation for the progress of modern Europe, as well as proof that Islamic civilization once played a central role in global history.

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