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Contributions of Book Treasuries in Al-Andalus through the Role of Libraries in Establishing Islamic Civilizational Awareness

اسهامات خزائن الكتب في الأندلس من خلال دور المكتبات في ترسيخ الوعي
الحضاري الإسلامي

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Abstract:

The Islamic civilization is rich with numerous aspects that have served as a beacon guiding historians to explore the marvels of this civilization. In its cultural dimension, it produced institutions that played a significant role in disseminating sciences, knowledge, and literature to its people and neighboring nations. Among these institutions were libraries and book treasuries. This study aims to shed light on these institutions, understand their functions, and examine their impact on the revival of Arab civilization. It also seeks to address areas that previous studies may have overlooked. The research concludes that the emergence of book treasuries was a response to circumstances linked to the advent and spread of Islam and that rulers played a prominent role in enriching the world of books through their growing interest. Accordingly, the focus is placed on the historical aspects of the subject.

Keywords: Al-Andalus, Library, History, Book Treasuries, Islamic Civilization

ملخص :

الحضارة الإسلامية ثرية بالكثير من المظاهر التي كانت شعاعاً قاد المؤرخين إلى البحث للتعرف على اعجاز هذه الحضارة وقد افرزت في جانبها الثقافي مؤسسات لعبت دور في نشر العلوم والمعارف والآداب ومن جاورهم من الامم، ومن ذلك نجد دور وخزائن الكتب، وعليه جاءت دراستنا هذه بهدف القاء الضوء على هذه المؤسسات ومعرفة عملها والتأثير الذي أحدثته في بعث الحضارة العربية ومحاولة البحث في ما اغفلت عنه بعض الدراسات وقد خلص البحث إلى أن ظهور خزائن الكتب كان استجابة لظروف مرتبطة بظهور وانتشار الإسلام، وأنه كان للحكام دور بارز في إثراء عالم الكتب واهتمامهم المتزايد وعليه كان تركيزنا على الجوانب التاريخية للموضوع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأندلس، مكتبة، تاريخ، خزائن الكتب، الحضارة الإسلامية.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of Andalusia holds great importance in the intellectual production movement of the medieval era due to its illustrious features and significant, dazzling events. The Islamic conquest of Spain imparted a unique character from the moment Arab and Berber conquerors set foot on Spanish soil. This era witnessed the blending of previous civilizations with the new Islamic civilization. The Umayyad period, in particular, was an attractive element for historical study, especially in the field of book care and the establishment of libraries. However, this interest declined in the era following the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate, specifically during the period of the Taifa Kings. Historical sources agree that the periods of the Umayyad Caliphate and the Taifa Kingdoms were the most fertile in terms of cultural development. This led to the emergence of the scientific image that Andalusia experienced from the 3rd century AH (10th century AD) until the 5th century AH (11th century AD).

The acquisition of books became a mark of pride among the Andalusians, to the extent

that it was considered one of the instruments of distinction and leadership. A prominent person who lacked knowledge would make it a point to have a library in their home, selecting books solely so it could be said, "So-and-so has a library, and this specific book is in their collection, and no one else has it. They have acquired and obtained a book written by a certain author." Many libraries, in general, and endowment libraries, in particular, were among the most important pillars of civilization. They preserved and maintained treasures of knowledge, organized them, and made them accessible to everyone. They also provided a truthful depiction of the Andalusian people's interest in thought, science, and scholars. These libraries played an active role in facilitating communication among scholars, providing Andalusian authors with sources of information that influenced their later works. They also made rare books from the East available, whether these books were in private, semi-public, or public libraries. This accessibility allowed authors, even if they did not travel outside of Andalusia, to obtain the information they needed from within

these libraries.

2. Importance of the Study

Researching the history of books serves as an incentive to draw inspiration from the civilizational identity and scientific stature of the Arab and Islamic nations through the continuity of generations via these enlightening centers. Books, throughout the ages, have been and will continue to be intellectual fortresses in the process of building.

Our exploration of the history of books and libraries across the Islamic world, and particularly in Andalusia, highlights how they served as platforms for enlightenment, educational institutions, and sources for spreading knowledge. If culture is the intellectual content of any civilization, then its intellectual aspect is represented by books and libraries, which are tools and sources for culture and the dissemination of science and knowledge. This underscores the utmost importance of studying the movement of books and libraries and their origins in Andalusia. We examine how this movement began, the factors that led to its flourishing, the results of scholars' efforts, the understanding of the development of human sciences and knowledge, the education of society, the spread of awareness, and the preservation of knowledge through Andalusian works.

3. Study Objective:

The study aims to uncover a facet of the brilliance of the past in Andalusian civilization, particularly in its intellectual realm represented by books and libraries.

1. Understanding the trends of authorship in Andalusian Arab heritage through studying the scientific and cultural movement in Andalusia.
2. Understanding the emergence of books, methods of their composition, production, and distribution.
3. Understanding the fate of the cultural heritage from libraries in Andalusia, and the adversities and setbacks they faced.

4. Study Methodology:

The researcher adopted several methodological approaches to systematically

present the study, including relying on the historical method to scrutinize historical events of the cultural heritage left by the Andalusian lineage. Additionally, we utilized the method of analytical description by referencing a collection of heritage books on Andalusian history, researching texts, exploring the relationships between books and libraries, and subsequently examining and interpreting them.

5. Study Scope and Limitations:

This study covers an important aspect of libraries and books, including various types such as manuscripts, using the terms "book treasuries" and "books" interchangeably to refer to places of book preservation. Geographically and politically, the study focuses on Andalusia within its known boundaries. Chronologically, it spans from the arrival of Arabs during the Islamic conquest until their departure, a period marked by significant changes affecting the role of libraries and book treasuries.

2. The Concept of a Library

2.1 Linguistic Definition:

A place for books or writing, where books are gathered together to form a library.

2.2 Terminological Definition:

A designated location for storing information and books for the purpose of benefiting from them, whether it is a physical building or an online site. The concept of a library has always been associated with a place where books are collected, preserved, and circulated. It is, therefore, a place dedicated to books, and while the names for a library may vary, the meaning remains the same.

Al-Khalouki said that a library is "a place for selling books and writing tools, where they are gathered and preserved"¹. Library is a place where books are placed in the home or elsewhere². It is defined as: "An educational, cultural, social, and educational institution aimed at collecting, developing, cleaning, retrieving, and presenting information sources to beneficiaries." The term "library" in Arabic refers to a collection and enclosure, as defined in the

Oxford Dictionary: "A room or group of rooms containing a collection of books and other materials for use by the general public, a specific group thereof, or an entity such as an association or society." UNESCO has defined a library as "any organized collection of printed books, in addition to services provided by staff tasked with facilitating the use of these documents."³

3. The Emergence of Libraries in the Islamic World

Historians attribute the emergence of the first libraries to the earliest civilizations in Mesopotamia and the land of the Nile, where written documents on clay tablets were found in places such as Babylon and Nineveh in Iraq. The most famous of these is the library of Ashurbanipal⁴, which served as a repository for records and archives. Additionally, the ancient Egyptians established numerous libraries, including the Library of Ramses and the Library of Edfu.

In the Islamic era, due to the religious movement brought by Islam, which encouraged knowledge and reading, and the subsequent preservation of the Quran and Hadith in manuscripts and books, writing became widespread, leading to the proliferation of libraries⁵.

Among the most famous libraries was the library of the revered companion Abdullah ibn Abbas, some of which required significant effort to construct. Similarly, the library of Urwah ibn Zubayr was notable⁶, "the art of transcription flourished, and scholarly writing became active in a sophisticated and systematic manner. Consequently, libraries proliferated and expanded. Some of these libraries became legendary in historical accounts. One of the most famous libraries of all time is "Dar al-Hikmah" or "Bayt al-Hikmah", which was the first academic and public library established in the Islamic world. Historians attribute its foundation to the caliph Harun al-Rashid⁷, libraries diversified, such as Abu al-Hasan al-Halabi, Al-Azhar Mosque, and the Great Mosque Library in Kairouan, making libraries in all their forms a fundamental pillar in the Islamic world.

4. The emergence of libraries in Andalusia

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4. The emergence of libraries in Andalusia:

The emergence of libraries in Andalusia was closely tied to its intellectual production, characterized by its abundance and diversity. This intellectual movement was intricately linked to the intellectual and cultural life of the region. Arab civilization in Andalusia was distinguished by its strong emphasis on literature, sciences, and arts. They established schools and libraries in every district, translated various books, and studied disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, natural sciences, and chemistry⁸.

There was scientific activity that gave rise to a broad educational movement across various spectra of Andalusian society. The scientific and educational movement in Andalusia began from mosques and places of worship, where it was concentrated. Initially, libraries did not have separate buildings of their own but were part of the institution within which they were established. The libraries in mosques were allocated a known place, typically a large shelf or more within the mosque's walls, visible to all⁹.

The Arabs in Andalusia established kuttabs to teach young boys Arabic language, literature, and the principles of Islamic religion, similar to the system of libraries in the Arab East. They appointed educators to teach Arabic language and Islamic principles to children from

vulnerable and poor backgrounds. This made the library a house and a center for education and enlightenment for various segments of society.

The civilization of Andalusia flourished greatly during the Umayyad rule of the region. The Umayyad dynasty became known for their love of knowledge and respect for scholars, evident from the moment they set foot in Andalusia. Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil (138 AH / 756 CE) was renowned for his broad culture and knowledge, and he prioritized the spread of education. He established schools and educational institutes, making Cordoba a center of refined life and a source of knowledge and civilization¹⁰.

The hobby of collecting and acquiring books was not limited to princes and caliphs, but encompassed the entire Andalusian population. Competition became serious between these enthusiasts and book collectors, becoming a distinctive symbol of prestige. A man could not do without establishing a library in his home, even if his level of knowledge was not substantial, simply because it was said that so-and-so had a book collection that no one else possessed¹¹.

It is noteworthy that libraries played a significant role in the educational and cultural development throughout Andalusia. Libraries and book collections were not exclusive to the Umayyad rulers or later to the Almoravids, Almohads, the Taifa kings, or during the Nasrid dynasty in Granada¹².

5. The spread of libraries in Andalusia

The dawn of Islamic libraries began to flourish from an early stage, driven by Muslims' strong passion for books and collecting them, leading to the spread of libraries throughout Andalusia far and wide. "Libraries were one of the outcomes of the distinguished Islamic civilization in Andalusia, reflecting the Andalusians' genuine interest in thought and knowledge, making them one of the most important measures of the progress and refinement of Islamic civilization in Andalusia. The Andalusians established libraries of all types

(public and private, mosque libraries)¹³ for their benefit and interest, spreading across the regions and territories of Andalusia.

"Al-Mustansir Billah (350-366 AH / 961-976 CE) established a magnificent library, as he was deeply devoted to knowledge, reading, and acquiring rare books from Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo. He founded a library containing more than 400,000 volumes on various sciences, fields, and arts. Additionally, he established a center for copying books and deposited them in the city of Zahra."¹⁴

Libraries multiplied and spread among the cities of Andalusia. Seville, in addition to the great royal library of the Banu 'Abbad, contained a number of private libraries as well¹⁵. During the Almoravid era, there were many libraries, including the scientific treasury¹⁶.

In an attempt to understand these aspects, we present a collection of texts drawn from several sources for analysis and to derive conclusions from them:

- The twentieth-century encyclopedia indicates "that there were 80 public libraries and many private libraries in Andalusia"¹⁷.
- Muhammad Aman mentions "that during the great flourishing of Islamic culture in Andalusia, there were approximately seventy public libraries"¹⁸.
- The German orientalist, Wigrig Hunkhe, indicates that in Cordoba alone there were twenty libraries¹⁹.
- As for Muhammad Ajjaj al-Khatib, he states "libraries multiplied in Andalusia and reached around seventy libraries during the caliphate, not including private libraries"²⁰.
- The magazine "Al-Muqtaf" mentions "that there were seventy public libraries in Andalusia, not including the private libraries, some of which were very large"²¹. As we discuss libraries in Andalusia, It is essential to mention one of the most important libraries still standing today, which is the Escorial Library. It houses a unique collection of Andalusian

heritage. Located in the Escorial Palace, approximately 49 km west of Madrid, the library was established by King Philip II in 1558 and is considered one of the specialized libraries.

The number of libraries in Andalusia exceeded seventy public libraries, meaning they were accessible to the general public for use and benefit from their collections. Some sources used terms like "approximately" or "about" which indicate uncertainty about the actual or exact number of these libraries in Andalusia.

The most populous public libraries were located in Cordoba, the heart of the region's civilization, where this number reached 20 libraries. Cordoba was the capital and the center of scientific gravity and cultural activity, leading to an increase in both the number and size of libraries as a direct result of its scientific and cultural aspects. It can be said that various sources did not delve deeply into statistical analysis of libraries in Andalusia.

6. Types of Andalusian Libraries

6.1. Mosque Libraries

Library of the Mosque of Toledo, where it was among the famous mosques, hosting study circles that attracted both Muslim and Christian students alike²², and the library of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, established by the Umayyad caliph Al-Hakam II in the year 350 AH (961 CE). He appointed dedicated staff to manage its affairs, collected manuscripts, and endowed it with a large number of volumes. It remained a focal point for scholars and students of knowledge in Andalusia, along with the library of the Mosque of Az-Zahra²³. "In addition to that, there is the library of the Mosque of Malaga, supported by scholars with what they deemed appropriate in terms of books. Among them was Muhammad ibn Lub al-Kanani, who donated a significant portion of his private library to the Grand Mosque of Malaga.

However, it can be said that mosque libraries emerged with the Muslims making mosques places of study, as study cannot happen without books. Therefore, libraries

of this kind were abundant to the extent that we cannot document all the mosques that housed significant libraries. Nevertheless, it can be said that hardly any mosque in Andalusia was without a library containing a collection of books that scholars and readers referred to.

6.2. Private libraries (home libraries)

Private libraries in Andalusia refer to libraries that were established by individuals using their own funds, for their personal benefit and interest. People in Andalusia had a strong passion for books and took pride in collecting them, leading to the establishment of private libraries, also known as personal libraries²⁴. Indeed, The number of private libraries in Islamic eras cannot be accurately counted, as there are insufficient sources available.

- **Library of Minister Ibn Abbas 427 AH:** He had a keen interest in literature and sciences and collected books, with his library reportedly reaching four hundred thousand volumes²⁵.
- **Library of Ibn al-Khayr al-Ishbili 575 AH:** he collected a massive library known for its accuracy and meticulousness²⁶. His library serves as an exemplary model, encompassing a collection that included 1,124 books. Among these were 108 books on Qur'anic readings, 112 books on Hadith, 50 books on grammar, 133 books on language, 87 books on prose, and 162 books on poetry.
- **The library of the Persian family:** this family created a valuable library and the library of Salamah bin Saeed, the library of Ibn Hassan Al-Ashbili, the library of Ibn Al-Ashab, and the library of Al-Wazir Ibn Al-Hakim Al-Lakhmi²⁷.

Andalusian women participated alongside men in the hobby of book collecting. Women were found to have libraries such as the library of Radhiyya in 423 AH, the library of Khadijah bint Ja'far in 394 AH, and the library of Aisha al-Qurtubiyya in 400 AH²⁸.

It is certain that the number of private libraries owned by individuals exceeded

enumeration. Evidence for this is that no source mentioned this number or even an approximate estimate, due to their attachment to knowledge. Ibn Khaldun confirms that 'no teacher was found in the Maghreb capable of teaching the book of Sibawayh with the same proficiency as the Andalusians'²⁹

6.3. Public libraries

There were many public libraries crowded with numerous works in various branches of human knowledge. During the Almohad period, Andalusia was endowed with many public libraries, foremost among them this type - the royal library - or as it was called, the scientific treasury. This library was established by the Almohad caliphs, who appointed a custodian for it and supplied it with various books and references³⁰.

Moreover, the orientalist Sigrid Hunke mentions that the rulers established a book house in every neighborhood, stocking them with hundreds of thousands of books and making them accessible to everyone in various fields of knowledge. Their collections ranged from ten thousand to one hundred thousand volumes³¹ like the public library of Seville during the time of Al-Radi bin Al-Mu'tamid³², leading to the proliferation of public libraries across Andalusia.

6.4. School Libraries

Another type of library also existed, which were school libraries. "When these mosques became crowded with students, schools with their own buildings were established and spread widely in Andalusian cities, especially in Cordoba. All of them included valuable libraries that provided good services to students and scholars at the time. A room in the school, known to students and teachers, was designated for these libraries"³³.

The role of school libraries at that time emerged in "providing practical support to the educational process and reinforcing the curricula in these schools"³⁴.

6.5. Academic Libraries

These are libraries designated for research and study by postgraduate students. They were established by caliphs, cared for by princes, and their number increased significantly. According to Al-Qalqashandi, the greatest of these libraries were three: the library of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, the Fatimid library in Egypt, and the Umayyad library in Andalusia³⁵.

7. Library Sections and Its Main Structural and Functional Components

7.1. Main Sections of the Library

Libraries in Andalusia, especially the larger ones, included a variety of departments that facilitated their management and operation, as well as achieving their intended objectives. Despite variations in the number of departments among libraries, they typically shared a minimum set of sections. There was a department responsible for reading and library services, another focused on the technical preparation and shelving of books, a third for activities related to book production such as writing, translation, copying, and their derivatives, and a fourth dedicated to authoring and translating books on behalf of the library³⁶.

In the following paragraphs, a simplified presentation of the main sections of the library is provided to understand how books are prepared, both in terms of production and organization:

7.2. Authoring Department

This section indexes, classifies, and organizes books stored in the library so they are easily accessible and usable. Major libraries were organized by subject, with each subject having its own index. This type of indexing is known for its simplicity and speed in cataloging library contents, documented in volumes similar to books for easy reference. Therefore, anyone who felt capable, whether through scientific expertise or academic studies, could work in this department. The authoring department was perhaps considered the most important section of the library, responsible for writing books in various fields on behalf of the library, as well as supplying it with all

publications, whether locally (within Andalusia) or externally³⁷.

As for authorship, some scholars in Andalusia were tasked with writing books in specific fields. For example, Muhammad ibn al-Harath al-Khashani was commissioned to write some books. The department corresponded with its representatives to keep them updated with everything new or directly contacted the authors themselves, especially from the Islamic East, through some dispatched messengers³⁸.

7.3. Translation Section

Translation is somewhat akin to authorship and has been a significant source for providing the library with works from foreign civilizations and global thought. Therefore, the section focused on translating major works from other languages into Arabic. This section employed an excellent group of translators proficient in foreign languages, particularly Greek and Latin, including Abdullah al-Siqilli, Muhammad al-Nabati, Abu Uthman al-Jazzar, Muhammad ibn Sa'id, and Abdul Rahman ibn Ishaq ibn al-Haytham³⁹. These groups worked on translating the most important foreign works into Arabic, especially in scientific fields such as medicine, engineering, and astronomy.

7.4. Proofreading and Review Section

The responsibility of this section is to review, correct, and refine both authored and translated books to ensure they are free from scientific deficiencies or material flaws. Therefore, the proofreading and review section employed a select group of renowned scholars, recognized for their extensive knowledge and excellence in their respective fields. Among the esteemed scholars who worked in this section was Ibn Muammar al-Jayyani⁴⁰.

7.5. The Copying Section

The copying and all that is related to it, as we hinted earlier, served as the equivalent of publishing and related processes in our modern days. During a time when printing was not yet established, copying was the sole source of book production. Therefore, all libraries in that

distant era relied on the output of the scribes' movement in the markets for their collections' construction and expansion across various fields. The emergence and spread of paper aided in book composition and facilitated their circulation. Andalusia, especially renowned for paper manufacturing, had its center in the city of Shatiba, which exported paper to Europe. The first paper mill in Andalusia was established in 950 CE. The inclusion of the copying section in Islamic libraries ensured timely provision of works⁴¹.

As evidence of this, six scribes worked continuously in the library of Ibn Futeis, receiving a fixed salary regardless of the amount they copied, to prevent haste from leading to writing errors⁴².

It is considered one of the most sophisticated systems achieved by libraries in the modern era, where modern libraries, especially the larger ones, attached a printing press responsible for publishing books that specialized committees verified. This system also helped in its widespread growth among people in Andalusia through the use and affordability of paper, resulting in lower book prices. Additionally, the prevailing intellectual and political climate at that time, along with the rulers' encouragement of knowledge and its expansion, further contributed to this phenomenon⁴³.

Some used female calligraphers in libraries and public archives, as some were renowned for their skill in this craft. For example, the Andalusian calligrapher Lubna was famous. She served as a scribe for the Caliph al-Mustansir (d. 366 AH). Ibn Bashkuwal described her as follows: She was adept in writing, skilled in poetry, proficient in arithmetic, and knowledgeable in science. There was none nobler than her in their palace. She was eloquent, and an extremely skilled calligrapher. She died in the year three hundred and seventy-four AH⁴⁴. In addition to that, there is Moznah: 'The scribe of Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah. She was skilled in women's scripts. She died in the year three hundred and fifty-eight⁴⁵.

Moreover, there is Fatimah bint Zakariya ibn Abdullah, known as al-Shablari, she was a scribe, daughter of a scribe, Ibn Bashkuwal said about her: "She was an accomplished scribe; she lived a long life and completed ninety-four years. She wrote in those lengthy books, excelling in calligraphy and precision of expression"⁴⁶.

8. Employees and workers in the library

It is noticeable that most sources that discuss libraries have neglected to talk about the library workers and their men, who were engaged in the library services in general, "Ibn Hazm pointed out to one of these workers, Talleed the teenager, who held the position of treasurer, who worked at the library of the second judge".

Furthermore, large or frequented libraries did not suffice with appointing just one treasurer; rather, they would appoint two or assign an assistant or more to the treasurer, so they all could collaborate in serving the readers and facilitating their access⁴⁷. This system is still practiced in major offices today, especially in university and national libraries, where the library director is assisted by two or more deputies—one for technical operations and the other for library services, and sometimes a third handles administrative and financial affairs⁴⁸. Many examples of the treasurer's position in Andalusian libraries can be found, such as "Thabit ibn Aslam ibn Abdulwahab, who was the treasurer of the Hamdani Library"⁴⁹.

In this context, it refers to the categories of workers, their hierarchical progression, and their placement in library departments according to their roles. These departments included a variety of categories that can be outlined as follows:

- The category of book authors, including specialized scholars in various branches of knowledge and translators.
- The category of book producers, encompassing scribes and that equivalent to them such as reviewers, binders, and decorators.

- The category of library affairs specialists, such as those responsible for technical operations and library services.
- The category of workers and attendants who handle security, surveillance, and the organization of library beds and furniture⁵⁰.

Individuals in each category worked under the supervision of a manager responsible for organizing their tasks and providing them with necessary supplies such as paper, pens, and ink. "The treasurer oversaw all the library workers, both from an academic and administrative standpoint"⁵¹. His role was comparable to that of the head librarian or library director in our current era, and it was one of the major positions in the palace.

The treasurer's responsibilities were clearly defined: direct supervision of library operations, ensuring the preparation and accuracy of indexes, maintaining well-organized book shelves, preserving records, and providing superior library services to patrons. They also worked to enhance the performance of library staff⁵² and contribute to the library's overall policy, planning for the acquisition of new publications.

Therefore, the treasurer's position was often held by a pillar of scholars or a renowned literary figure, whose work, culture, and experience allowed them to fulfill these substantial responsibilities in the best possible manner. The role of the treasurer was not merely administrative but primarily intellectual. By virtue of their position, they received new books and could read whatever interested them, enabling them to grasp their subjects' themes and contents thoroughly. Consequently, they could guide those interested in a particular topic towards books, studies, and research that addressed it.

8.1. Library groups

The library of Al-Hakam II, considered a model for libraries in Andalusia, housed a vast number of volumes. Sources vary in estimating its size; some claim it contained 400,000 volumes, while others suggest it exceeded that

number. It is said that in the library of the Caliph Al-Hakam II in Cordoba, there were six hundred thousand books⁵³.

The topics of sciences that prevailed during that time revolved around transmitted sciences such as Islamic religious sciences, philosophy, logic, mathematics, engineering, astronomy, medicine, pharmacology, chemistry, and related fields⁵⁴. Most of these libraries owned a large collection of books, including the library of Ibn Futeis, who built a dedicated building for his library according to the latest designs. This design allowed all books to be visible from one place, a system adopted by most libraries. The enormity of their book collections is indicated by the time it took to sell their collections and the prices fetched. For example, the people of Cordoba gathered to sell their books over the course of a whole year in a mosque. They sold them for a total of forty thousand dinars⁵⁵.

The library truly became the capital of knowledge in books and research, and this informational surge profoundly impacted its inhabitants. The Andalusians were even dubbed "people of the books." Ibn Sa'id, the historian, spoke eloquently of the Cordobans' passion for books, saying, "Andalusia has the most books, and its people care most about their book collections. This became a hallmark of their distinction and leadership, to the extent that even a leader among them who lacked knowledge would take pride in having a library in his house and would be elected based on it⁵⁶."

8.2. Library services

The office services provided by Andalusian libraries revolved around traditional services known to us today, whether direct or indirect. Among these services were internal browsing, reference guidance, reader orientation, external borrowing, and facilitating researchers' tasks, meeting research requirements by providing required books, papers, pens, and ink free of charge. Visiting libraries for reading and research was permitted and facilitated without any routine procedures

hindering the reader's access to their sources⁵⁷.

The borrowing of books by libraries was not limited to individuals but extended to include inter-library loans among these libraries. This formed the basis of internal lending between libraries. There was also lending among scholars or writers to each other, and they were generous in lending books, especially to students of knowledge⁵⁸.

We can conclude the following:

- Borrowing among scholars was a common practice or customary norm.
- Original copies of books were generally not allowed to be lent externally because they were often unique copies.

9. The role of libraries in Andalusia and their scientific impact

The objectives of libraries in Andalusia were mutually shared, and this creativity would not have emerged and spread, leaving its impact on the children of Andalusian civilization, without supportive factors. These factors ignited enthusiasm, disseminated knowledge and sciences, and presented cultural heritage in an accessible form for those who sought to continue the educational, cultural, and civilizational journey of Islam in general.

9.2. The educational role

Libraries have been and continue to be centers of education and learning, especially in educational institutions where their role materializes in supporting and reinforcing curricula. They work to deepen and achieve the educational and pedagogical objectives set by these institutions to such an extent that the quality of libraries is often measured by their effectiveness in achieving educational goals⁵⁹.

9.3. The religious role

Islamic libraries emerged alongside mosques and subsequently evolved within their sphere. They worked to achieve their religious objectives, which included nurturing Islamic personalities, teaching people their religious obligations, educating them in religious culture, and building an Islamic society based on ethics, piety,

righteousness, and knowledge. This is natural given that Islam advocates for knowledge and values scholars. Islamic libraries played a mature role in fulfilling this aspect through the provision of informational resources across various fields of knowledge, particularly religious and legal sciences, which were instrumental in shaping individuals according to Islamic law.

9.4. The scientific role

Islamic libraries were frequented by leading scholars and researchers for organizing scientific seminars, preparing research studies, and disseminating them among a wide audience. They also maintained scientific connections with research centers and other libraries⁶⁰. From this, we discover that the role of Islamic libraries was not limited to teaching religious matters alone but also served as centers for research and education.

9.5. The social role

The libraries were a social forum where people gathered to engage in a sophisticated social life, leading libraries to truly become a gathering place for the educated, scholars, and those seeking knowledge. They served as a meeting point for absentees and visitors, a hub for scholars, and a destination for reformers. Moreover, they were integral to the communication system of the beneficiary community⁶¹. Thus, the library was a place where people of knowledge and their companions gathered, serving as a vital link between them.

10. The establishment and evolution of the library

The establishment of the library dates back to the era of Muhammad I (238-273 AH). The Umayyad dynasty showed keen interest in education, and they valued books as a means of learning. Historians have noted that during Muhammad's era, the Royal Library in Cordoba was praised as one of the finest in the city⁶².

During the reign of Abd al-Rahman I in 138 AH (756 CE), he was the first Umayyad Emir known for his broad cultural

interests, poetic talent, and close relations with scholars. He established his emirate in Cordoba, where the city flourished culturally, attracting scholars and writers from across various lands. Following in his footsteps, subsequent Umayyad princes maintained a similar focus on nurturing knowledge. Ibn al-Sa'id noted that a great library was established in Cordoba during the reign of Abd al-Rahman II in 206 AH (821 CE), and he stocked it with numerous books purchased from the Islamic East⁶³. It appears that this library was the initial nucleus for the Great Umayyad Library of Cordoba, which flourished in the fourth century AH. The Umayyad library shone brightly during this historical period, highlighting its significant cultural role.

When the Umayyad caliphate fell and their rule ended, and Andalusia fragmented into several taifas (small kingdoms), the library was sold off, and its books were dispersed among the taifas of Andalusia that emerged during that period⁶⁴. Thus, this library eventually fell into the hands of book enthusiasts, and its books found their way into collections in Seville, Almería, Badajoz, Toledo, Zaragoza, Valencia, and others. Despite the bitterness of these events that led to the dispersion of the Umayyad library in Cordoba, the passion for collecting books and the scientific and literary revival fostered by Caliph al-Nasir and his son al-Hakam continued unabated among Andalusian society, especially in the city of Cordoba.

The library relied on various sources to build and expand its book collections, primarily through purchases. Al-Hakam II allocated significant funds for buying books. The new building housed several departments, including the Book Hall, which was the heart of the library, a center for research and authorship, a hub for translation and transfer, and a center for book auditing and manuscript review. Al-Hakam amassed an unparalleled collection of books, totaling around four hundred thousand volumes. The library's catalog included forty-four indexes just for poetry

collections, each index spanning twenty pages⁶⁵.

The Cordoba library was a true scholarly institution in every sense of the word. It wasn't merely a place for storing books and cataloging them as commonly understood today. Instead, it was organized meticulously to fulfill its intended purpose. This library was established within the Caliph's palace in Cordoba⁶⁶.

And perhaps in al-Maqqari's description of al-Hakam's library, though brief, there is reinforcement of our description: "He gathered in his palace experts in manuscript production, skilled in accuracy, and proficient in binding, overseeing all of these aspects meticulously"⁶⁷.

1. The Translation Section: This section housed a large number of proficient translators of Greek, Latin, Spanish, and other languages, most of whom were Christians, Sakalibian, and Jews, with few Muslims among them. Notable individuals include Abdullah al-Saqlabi, Muhammad al-Nabati, al-Basiassi, Abu Uthman al-Khazari, known as al-Yabisa, Muhammad ibn Said, and Abd al-Rahman ibn Ishaq ibn al-Haytham⁶⁸. This group contributed significantly to translating numerous books across various fields. The Umayyad caliphs particularly prioritized this section, generously supporting those working in it, which facilitated the translation of many Greek books in medicine, engineering, philosophy, astronomy, and different sciences⁶⁹.

2. Proofreading and Review Section :

In this department, a select group of renowned scholars work diligently, known for their extensive knowledge, precision in deduction, and proficiency in measurement. They excel in language, literature, religious sciences, and life sciences. The primary mission of this department is to review, correct, and annotates manuscripts after critical examination and refinement. Among them is Al-Rabaji, Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Abdul-Salam Al-Azdi, a distinguished scholar of grammar who was appointed by

Caliph Al-Nasir li-Din Allah. During his tenure, he pursued the profession of auditing and reviewing in his library, where the caliph generously provided him with support in stipends and grants⁷⁰ each according to his specialization and talents. Among the auditors was also Muhammad ibn Abi al-Husayn al-Fahri al-Qurtubi, who was an expert in grammar and linguistics. He was tasked by the ruler with auditing and refining what Abu Ali al-Qali had not refined in his book "Al-Bari' fi al-Lughah". The author corrected the chapters on "Al-Hamzah" and "Al-Ayn", and then the remaining parts were handled by the auditors for correction and refinement.

3. Scribes Section (Copying):

This section includes large groups of scribes who copy books, decorate them with pictures, bind them, and then display them in the library. Among them are the literary linguist Muhammad ibn Abi al-Husayn al-Fihri, and Abbas ibn Amr ibn Harun al-Siqilli, who was appointed as a scribe in his library by Al-Hakam, who found great comfort in his company. It was the pearl of its time and the beacon of knowledge in its era.

What helped the emergence of this scribe profession, which played a prominent role in the formation of the Umayyad library, was the introduction and spread of paper in Andalusia⁷¹, and a large number of skilled scribes worked in Al-Hakam's library in the copying section.

4. Indexing Section: Al-Hakam II's library was not a traditional library in the sense we understand today; rather, it was a center for research, study, writing, and translation, to the extent that we could rightly call it a scientific academy or a comprehensive scientific institute. Al-Maqqari's recounts: "Ibn Hazm says that the number of catalogs listing the books amounted to forty-four catalogs, and each catalog contained twenty pages filled only with the names of the works"⁷².

5. Authorship Section: The task of this section is to oversee the authorship of books for the Umayyad library. This

involves receiving works from outside Andalusia or commissioning prominent scholars in Andalusia to write books. Its work is focused in two directions. An example of the first direction is the correspondence with Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, the author of "Al-Aghani", to obtain the first copy of this book from him. Sometimes, they would correspond with the author himself and entice him to migrate to Andalusia, as happened with Abu Ali al-Qali, the author of "Al-Amali," who left Iraq and traveled to Al-Nasir al-Umayyad, receiving a warm welcome in Cordoba⁷³.

As for the sources for developing the library, there is a group of sources that the library relied on in building and expanding its collections. We have mentioned them earlier. The sources of the Cordoba library did not differ from other libraries in Andalusia in terms of:

- **Buying:** most sources have attested to the fact that Al-Hakam II spent large sums on purchasing books and rare manuscripts at high prices, in order to quickly collect valuable books. The Andalusians spent generously on buying books, exactly as the ruler did.

- **Copying:** there were many copyists, illuminators, and calligraphers who worked to meet the library's needs. The Umayyad library had a large number of skilled individuals in the arts of copying, binding, and proofreading books, chosen from among the well-known practitioners in these crafts. Among them were Yusuf al-Baluti and Zafar al-Baghdadi, who were skilled scribes in the Umayyad library⁷⁴, Judge Iyad narrated from some of his informants that Al-Hakam had a special house for copyists and scribes called (the House of Comparison and Copying)⁷⁵. Among the scribes who worked for Al-Hakam was Abu Abdullah Muhammad.

- **Endowment:** Both rulers and subjects had a strong desire to endow books to various educational institutions and establish libraries in them, so they could earn reward and merit (as a continuous charity)⁷⁶. Endowment has many benefits,

such as aiding students, supporting the scholarly movement, and ensuring its continuity.

- **Gifts:** Some books were gifted to Al-Hakam II or the Umayyad princes by authors or from outside Andalusia by rulers and merchants to the Umayyad library in Cordoba. The library was organized in a scholarly manner.

From this, we can conclude that:

- There were stable financial resources allocated for salaries of those employed in the endowment, as well as for other expenses such as maintenance, restoration, and expanding library collections through purchases.

11. Contributions of the Library: Scientifically and Culturally

That library played an active role in facilitating communication among scholars, providing Andalusian authors with sources of information that influenced their later works. Additionally, it offered rare books available in the East, whether they were found in private, semi-public, or public libraries.

The wise and purposeful policy of tolerance followed by the Umayyads in Andalusia towards their Christian and Jewish subjects allowed them to hold public positions, including working in the caliph's palace and its grand library. Many sizable Christian and Jewish communities in the caliphate's capital lived freely, practicing their religious rituals without hindrance. They enjoyed security and prosperity under the protection of the Islamic state, participating alongside Muslims in public life, and adopting Islamic customs⁷⁷.

And perhaps this blessing bestowed upon these Spanish Christians under the Islamic civilization in Andalusia, as witnessed by Alvaro de Cordoba, where he wrote, "Who among our people today devotes themselves to the study of our holy books, or returns to the writings of any scholar among them who wrote in the Latin language? Who among them studies the Gospel, the Prophets, or the Apostles? We see none but Christian youths eagerly embracing the Arabic language,

searching for its books, acquiring them, studying them passionately, commenting on them, speaking fluently in it, writing beautifully and eloquently, and composing poetry in it with grace and elegance. Alas, Christians who were once ignorant⁷⁸.

And the Spanish orientalist Julian Ribera accurately described this active pursuit and care for books when he said, "The cultural movement had barely begun among the Spanish Muslims when books became objects of admiration and esteem. It suffices for any returnee from a journey to the East to bring back a new book, for it to become the subject of admiration and enthusiasm among his fellow citizens. Along with the book, its name finds its way into the annals of literature and history, fetching the highest prices and holding the greatest value—a rare book that a skilled merchant could bring from the East to Spain.

Muslims of Spanish origin or immigrants, Jews, Christians, and Elmalawian competed to have their own rich and private libraries. The Umayyads did not lag behind in this movement; from the beginning, they began to amass large collections of books, reaching their peak during the reign of Al-Hakam II, a book enthusiast. Many princes of the Umayyad dynasty also developed a deep passion for books. Cordoba thus became a city of intellect and the intellectual center for the entire Islamic West. 82

In this context, it is sufficient for us the testimony of Angel Ganivet de Palencia, the author of the history of Andalusian thought, as conveyed by Dr. Hussein Moenes in Spanish, who says, "The credit for the establishment of medical studies in Europe goes back to what the Arabs wrote, Arabs who sent ambassadors to acquire valuable books from Greek and Latin sources, established observatories for studying astronomy, embarked on journeys to increase their knowledge of natural history, and founded schools to teach various sciences."⁷⁹

Conclusion

The Muslims in Al-Andalus established a towering civilization, with one

of its key pillars being their dedication to books and libraries. They had a profound attachment to these institutions, often extravagantly spending on their acquisition and the development of their library collections. Their great passion for libraries was evident in how they encouraged authors to produce and compose works through generous funding and grants. This led to a proliferation of copying and authorship across various types of libraries throughout different regions of Al-Andalus, contributing significantly to enriching cultural and scientific life. Therefore, the study clarified that the Andalusians cared deeply about library buildings and their appropriate furnishings. They stocked them with valuable books and provided suitable budgets. They also realized that overseeing a library was not merely administrative but primarily a scholarly endeavor. Consequently, supervisors of libraries were chosen from renowned scholars and literary figures. Working in libraries was considered one of the major professions in Al-Andalus.

We can also discern a truthful depiction of the extent of interest among the Andalusian people in thought, science, and scholars by examining their dedication to libraries. This reflects Muslims' love for knowledge, their eagerness to disseminate it among people, and their profound respect for scholars and students. Thanks to this love instilled by Islam among its people, individuals embraced endowments for books, the establishment of both public and private libraries. The endowment of libraries and books stood as proud achievements of Islamic civilization, surpassing all other civilizations.

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