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The Influence of Andalusian Industry in Algeria

تأثير الصناعة الأندلسية في الجزائر

Boumedien ALi

Assistant Professor, Category "A," Dr. Yahia Fares University of Médéa
Laboratory of Intellectual Studies in the Humanities in Western Algeria and Sub-Saharan Africa,
University Center Salhi Ahmed Naama

بومدين علي

أستاذ مساعد قسم "أ" جامعة الدكتور يحيى فارس المدية

مخبر الدراسات الفكرية في العلوم الإنسانية بغرب الجزائر و إفريقيا جنوب الصحراء، المركز الجامعي صالحى أحمد
النعامة

البريد الإلكتروني المني:

boumediene.ali@cuniv-naama.dz

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Abstract

The fall of Granada in 1492 marked the beginning of a large Andalusian migration to Algeria, bringing skilled artisans, scientists, and military experts. These migrants significantly influenced Algerian society, particularly in the industrial sector, where they introduced advanced craftsmanship and manufacturing techniques. The study examines how the Andalusian exiles integrated into Algerian society and whether their migration had a positive or negative impact. While some scholars argue that their arrival caused social tensions, others highlight their contributions to cultural and economic development. This research emphasizes the need for modern historical methodologies, including the study of tangible cultural heritage, to better understand the Andalusian industrial legacy in Algeria. Additionally, recognizing and preserving these historical influences can promote cultural tourism and national identity. The study also revisits the contributions of prominent historians who have explored this subject, underscoring the importance of local historical research in preserving Algeria's Andalusian heritage.

Keywords: Andalusian migration, Algerian industry, historical influence, cultural heritage, economic development.

الملخص

شكل سقوط غرناطة عام 1492 بداية هجرة واسعة للأندلسيين إلى الجزائر، حيث جلبوا معهم مهارات صناعية وعلمية وعسكرية متقدمة. وقد أثرت هذه الهجرة بشكل كبير على المجتمع الجزائري، خاصة في القطاع الصناعي، حيث أدخل الأندلسيون تقنيات متطورة في الحرف والصناعات. يدرس البحث كيفية اندماج هؤلاء المهاجرين في الجزائر، وما إذا كان تأثيرهم إيجابياً أم سلبياً. وبينما يرى بعض الباحثين أن هجرتهم سببت توترات اجتماعية، يشير آخرون إلى دورهم في التنمية الثقافية والاقتصادية. يسلط البحث الضوء على أهمية المناهج التاريخية الحديثة، ومنها دراسة التراث الثقافي المادي، لفهم الإرث الصناعي الأندلسي في الجزائر. كما أن توثيق هذه التأثيرات يساهم في تعزيز السياحة الثقافية والهوية الوطنية. ويعيد البحث النظر في مساهمات المؤرخين البارزين الذين تناولوا هذا الموضوع، مؤكداً على ضرورة البحث التاريخي المحلي للحفاظ على الإرث الأندلسي في الجزائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهجرة الأندلسية، الصناعة الجزائرية، التأثير التاريخي، التراث الثقافي، التنمية الاقتصادية.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fall of Granada had a profound impact on the political landscape of Spain and the remaining Islamic emirates. The year 1492 marked the beginning of the gradual disappearance of Islamic presence in the region, accompanied by the persecution of the Andalusians, which forced them to migrate to various areas, most notably Algeria—historically known as the Central Maghreb. This migration represented a fundamental shift for the exiled communities, who faced an uncertain future in their new homeland. With the loss of hope in their native land due to harsh policies such as the Inquisition, ruling dynasties in the Maghreb welcomed these immigrants, integrating them into political courts and benefiting from their expertise, particularly in military and industrial fields. Scientific elites were also embraced by the rulers, who sought to utilize their knowledge and skills.

Regardless of whether this migration was forced or voluntary, a key question arises: was the Andalusian migration to Algeria ultimately positive or negative? Furthermore, how did their presence influence various aspects of life in their new environment?

The topic of migration remains a crucial subject of study due to its significant social impact, particularly concerning human communities, their ethnic integration, and their adaptation to new environments. A critical aspect of this study is whether the Andalusian migration to Algeria resulted in disorder and violence—either from the migrants themselves or from their new

hosts. Research in this field continues to this day, as scholars seek to understand the social changes brought about by migration, particularly in light of contemporary cases where certain states forcibly displace minority populations to other regions.

Historians have long been drawn to this subject, leading to significant academic discussions on Andalusian migration to Algeria. Among the most notable scholars who have explored this topic are the distinguished Algerian historian Dr. Nacereddine Saidouni, in his book *Andalusian Studies: Aspects of Iberian Influence and Andalusian Presence in Algeria* (Al-Basaer Publishing, 2nd edition, 2013), and Dr. Hanifi Helaïli, in his study *The Moriscos in Algeria: New Approaches in Light of Historical Documents* (Noor Publishing). Additionally, Mohamed Saadani's doctoral dissertation, *The Andalusians and Their Civilizational Influence in the Central Maghreb from the 7th to the 9th Hijri Centuries (13th to 15th Century CE)*, supervised by Mohamed Ben Maamar at the University of Oran (Ahmed Ben Bella University) in 2016.

This topic requires breaking away from the conventional and often repetitive approaches to historical research. Modern historical studies demand new methodological perspectives, such as exploring popular heritage and tangible cultural artifacts. Research has already confirmed the Andalusian influence on Algeria's industrial sector, with some aspects even being recognized as part of the country's historical heritage.

In other words, placing such topics within their proper historical context and reviving the image of traditional Andalusian industries in Algeria could encourage investment in cultural tourism. Additionally, the Andalusian presence in Algeria represents an important chapter in our nation's glorious history. As Algerians, we have a greater responsibility to study our history than foreign researchers do. This message has been emphasized by many esteemed historians across various Algerian universities, notably the late Abu al-Qasim Saadallah and Mohammed Al-Saghir Ghanem, may they rest in peace.

2. Preface

Throughout history, our scholars have consistently emphasized the significance of this topic, whether from an economic or cultural perspective. In fact, some authors and writers have dedicated entire works to this field, particularly the domain of industries. Among the most notable figures is the Islamic thinker Ali bin Muhammad bin Saud al-Khuza'i¹, whose book is titled: *Takhreej al-Dalalat al-Sam'iyyah 'ala ma Kan fi 'Ahd Rasul Allah ﷺ min al-Hiraf wa al-Sanai' wa al-'Amalat al-Shar'iyyah (Extracting the Textual Indications on the Crafts, Industries, and Legal Professions during the Time of the Prophet ﷺ)*.

Additionally, we cannot overlook Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*, in which he dedicated a special section discussing crafts and industries. Both terms—industry (*sina'ah*) and craft (*hirfah*)—are mentioned in this context. But what is their linguistic significance within the framework of Islamic thought? What are the distinctions between them? Moreover, do the definitions of these terms carry specific historical contexts? In other words, are they shaped by

historical circumstances, or are they simply passed down through historical texts and interpretations?

Industry and Andalusian Migration to Algeria:

Definition of Industry:

The previously mentioned scholar, Ali bin Saud al-Khuza'i, serves as an excellent model for shaping the terminological concept of industry. He hailed from an Andalusian family known for its scholarship and knowledge. Additionally, he held judicial positions in the city of Adlah in Al-Andalus during the early Nasrid dynasty. Later, he migrated to Tlemcen, where he settled and gained political favor, particularly among the Zayyanid rulers.

In his work, Al-Khuza'i employs three related terms: craft (*hirfah*), industry (*sina'ah*), and labor (*'amal*). The first term (*hirfah*) derives from the verb *harafa*, meaning to earn, seek, or strive for livelihood. The second term (*sina'ah*) refers to one's work or profession. The last term, (*'amal*), denotes governance, administration, or official duties. However, for our study, we are primarily concerned with the first two terms: craft and industry, and their respective semantic fields.

According to Ibn Saud al-Khuza'i, the term *sina'ah* encompasses both craftsmanship and skillfulness in work. Meanwhile, *hirfah* also refers to craftsmanship but implies financial dealings with specific merchants, distinguishing certain traders from others².

It seems that the concept in this regard is related to the practical aspect of industry, which is associated with the commercial side, specifically in terms of transactions

and the processes of buying and selling. A "man of craftsmanship" is a professional, a person with a trade, meaning he possesses skill and expertise in marketing his goods, selling them, and always maintaining his commercial dealings with the same individuals who consistently purchase his products³.

3. Ibn Khaldun's Definition of Industry:

Our aim in addressing this aspect is not to introduce Ibn Khaldun, as he is well known, but rather to highlight the difference between the period in which he lived and that of his predecessor, Ibn Saud Al-Khuza'i. This is intended to understand the factors influencing the evolution of the term. Ibn Khaldun defines industry as a mastery of a practical intellectual matter acquired directly without observation. Accordingly, it depends on the proficiency of both the teacher and the learner. He classifies industries into two categories:

- **Simple industries:** Those specialized in the necessities of human livelihood.
- **Complex industries:** Those learned for human luxuries and are more widespread in cities rather than rural areas⁴.

The Migration of Andalusians to Algeria:

Like other regions with diverse geographical and natural potentials, Algeria experienced significant migration movements, including the Andalusian migration, which increased in parallel with the Christian Reconquista and the fall of major Islamic cities in Al-Andalus, such as Córdoba⁵, Valencia, and Seville. The geographical distribution of Andalusian communities varied according to their

scientific and craft activities. For instance, Béjaïa attracted more Andalusians than Algiers and other cities⁶.

Naturally, every migration process involves elements of influence and adaptation. The Andalusian communities left their mark on Algeria's economic, social, and architectural life over the long term, which gave them strong incentives to settle in the region. Thanks to their skills and expertise, they managed to dominate the industrial and commercial sectors, eventually acquiring large tracts of land and securing numerous financial and investment privileges⁷.

In addition to preserving their inherited traditions from Al-Andalus in their new settlements, this cultural continuity allowed for direct interaction between the local population and the newcomers over several centuries. This interaction was particularly evident in customs and traditions, including clothing styles, ways of living, and home decoration and furnishing⁸.

Andalusian Influence on Industry in Algeria

Impact of Andalusians on the Industrial Sector in Algeria

The settlement of Andalusians in Algeria had several positive effects, particularly in expanding industrial activities. They engaged in and mastered various crafts, leading to the spread of their shops across major cities and the establishment of numerous artisan workshops teeming with craftsmen. Historical records attest to this widespread presence, noting that Algiers alone housed approximately 1,200 tailors, 600 silk farmers, 80 blacksmiths, and 180 cutlers.

This extensive industrial involvement contributed to the emergence and spread of professional surnames such as **Al-Hawki** (weaver) and **Al-Haddad** (blacksmith)⁹.

Clothing Industry

The practitioners of this craft were known as tailors, who held a distinguished position in society. Their workshops were so significant that an entire section of the city was designated as "Manyat al-Khayyatin" (the quarter of the tailors). Due to the increasing demand for their services, they were organized under a guild system led by a chief called Arif al-Khayyatin (Master Tailor). Historical sources mention notable figures in this profession, such as Ibrahim Al-Zahid Al-Andalusi and Abu Al-Abbas Al-Ishbili.

Jewelry Industry

Jewelry-making was one of the most renowned Andalusian and Jewish metalworking crafts. They specialized in crafting silver and gold rings encrusted with precious stones, as well as bracelets, anklets, and crescent-shaped earrings. A distinctive type of jewelry, known as Al-Mushirfa, was highly sought after for its exquisite design and superior craftsmanship¹⁰.

Leather Industry

Leatherwork flourished in both urban and rural areas, with products including saddles, bags, and various types of footwear such as babouche and sandals, as well as belts and sword sheaths. This craft was particularly renowned in cities like Tlemcen, Algiers, and Constantine. The Andalusians played a significant role in advancing this industry by establishing specialized tanning facilities outside cities such as Algiers and Blida, where raw hides were processed

before being sent to industrial workshops for manufacturing¹¹.

3. Metal and Textile Industries:

Gold Industry: Gold is one of the richest and most precious metals in Algeria and holds significant social importance. It is seen as a symbol of pride and wealth, often used to showcase social status, particularly during celebrations and weddings. Moreover, it plays an economic role and is crucial in building social relationships, as it is passed down from parents to children¹².

Those who practice this craft are known as goldsmiths, and they belong to legal communities that are organized under strict social systems. These communities are present in cities like Algiers, Constantine, Oran, and Tlemcen. The goldsmiths are protected by these systems, which are regulated by the Goldsmiths Association, and they operate within a marketplace known as the "Goldsmith Market." The Jews of Andalusia were the leading figures in this industry, dominating its production and trade revenues. Their jewelry was renowned for its artistic and technical diversity, which enabled Andalusian goldsmiths to gain political influence and control over domestic affairs, as well as relations with European countries¹³.

Shipbuilding Industry: The shipbuilding industry is closely linked to the maritime activity of Andalusia, preserved in numerous archival documents that cover a significant number of ports in the western Mediterranean. Given Algeria's need for Andalusian immigrants, particularly for building armies and fleets, Algeria benefitted from their expertise in constructing warships to defend against enemy attacks, especially from Spain. The

changing dynamics of the Mediterranean and the decline of maritime powers in favor of Ferdinand of Spain¹⁴ elevated shipbuilding to the top of the industrial list. Kings and sultans directly oversaw the industry, bringing the most skilled technicians and craftsmen from Andalusian prisoners of war, rewarding them with generous financial incentives. The shipbuilding industry in Algeria relied heavily on local materials such as pine and oak wood, which were abundant in the areas of Cherchell, Bejaia, and Jijel¹⁵.

The shipbuilding process goes through several key stages, the most important of which is the assembly of the base, which serves as the platform on which the ship is built. This base consists of multiple wooden pieces of uniform dimensions. Next comes the construction of the hull, followed by the preparation of the deck. It is worth noting that ships varied in type depending on the cost of production, ranging from simple vessels to luxurious ones. Despite these differences, they were predominantly locally made by Andalusian craftsmen in Algeria. These ships showcased diversity in naval engineering, cargo capacity, strength, and speed, reflecting a high level of technical expertise and extensive experience within the Algerian fleet¹⁶.

The Andalusian Badia Garment

The *Badia* or *Djeba* is one of the most significant traditional garments that form part of Algeria's tangible cultural heritage. It has deep historical roots, reflecting the rituals and traditions practiced by Algerian women, as well as the diversity of textile and weaving activities within the domestic environment. The *Badia* is a long tunic worn over the head, reaching either the ankle or the calf. Its elegant design allows for the

display of ankle bracelets known as *Khelkhal* or *Redif*¹⁷.

The Velvet Industry

Velvet production was a newly introduced craft closely linked to the presence of Andalusians in Algeria. It primarily involved the weaving of *Qatifah* (velvet fabric), a specialty of immigrants from Granada. This textile industry was concentrated in workshops within the markets of Algiers and became particularly renowned in major cities, especially Constantine. The people of Constantine inherited a strong appreciation for velvet garments, which became a symbol of luxury and prestige. With the arrival of the Andalusians, clothing styles evolved from simplicity to opulence, exemplified by the *Qatifah Djeba* (velvet robe), which became a prominent symbol of elegance.

Andalusian Influence on Cuisine, Medicine, and Pottery

Andalusian cuisine was diverse, catering to different social classes, from royal banquets to the tables of commoners and even the modest meals of the learned elite who embraced ascetic lifestyles. The variety of dishes also depended on the occasion, with specific foods prepared for events such as *Mawlid an-Nabawi* (the Prophet's birthday), weddings, and circumcision ceremonies. Notably, these culinary traditions were meticulously documented, as if a dedicated institution supervised by experienced chefs and culinary experts was responsible for overseeing food quality and monitoring the ingredients used in the kitchen.

Types of Bread

The *Muhtasibs* (market inspectors) emphasized the production of high-quality bread and strictly prohibited fraud in ingredients and weight. Andalusian bread was particularly known for its superior fermentation, well-kneaded dough, and balanced salt content. It was baked in a moderate oven using high-quality, intact wheat. This tradition was later transferred to Algeria¹⁸. Among the types of bread introduced were:

- **Fatir Bread** (*Khubz al-Fatir*): Made from semolina without yeast, kneaded with minimal water, and baked in the oven.
- **Banij Bread** (*Khubz al-Banij*): Well-kneaded dough, distinguished by sesame and *Jeljelan* (roasted sesame seeds) sprinkled on top.
- **Rogag Bread** (*Khubz al-Rogag*): Thinly rolled and baked into crisp layers¹⁹.

Dishes

Andalusian cuisine balanced nutritional value and health benefits. However, some dishes were exclusively prepared for seasonal celebrations and religious festivities, which became deeply embedded in Algerian heritage. Among the notable dishes brought by the Andalusians to Algeria were:

- **Tharid al-Fatir**: A dish made from unleavened bread and chicken.
- **Methouma**: A garlic-based dish.

The Andalusian influence was particularly evident in the field of confectionery, where sweets not only reflected culinary traditions but also symbolized a family's wealth and social standing. Examples include:

- **White Jeljelaniya**: Made from beaten eggs, honey, and peeled sesame seeds, cooked until firm.
- **Qatayef and other desserts**: Often featuring walnuts and almonds, ingredients commonly used in Andalusian sweets²⁰.

Andalusian Market Regulation on Food (Al-Hisbah System)

The *Hisbah* (market supervision) was one of the most significant religious and administrative institutions, positioned between the judiciary and the police. It combined Islamic legal oversight with political enforcement and was only entrusted to individuals with the necessary physical, intellectual, and moral qualifications to uphold market ethics, food quality, and fair trade practices.

The *Muhtasibs* (market inspectors) were particularly strict with food vendors, especially bakers. The market overseer would record the names of bakers and the locations of their shops in his register. Bakers were required to ensure high-quality bread, avoiding excessive water in the dough. Additionally, hygiene was strictly enforced—bakers had to wear sleeveless garments and cover their mouths to prevent contamination of the dough²¹.

For confectioners, strict guidelines ensured proper cooking techniques. Sweets had to be fully baked, achieving a golden-yellow color without being raw or burnt. In making *zalabiya* (a traditional fried pastry), special care was taken to keep utensils clean, change frying pans regularly, and monitor the quality of oil used. Copper frying pans, specifically for *zalabiya*, had to be washed daily before use. The dough was prepared with a precise ratio—one-third fine flour,

one-third semolina—and required sufficient fermentation before frying.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Pharmaceuticals were a vital industry in both rural and urban areas, forming the foundation of public health. The Andalusians' interest in pharmacy began under the Umayyad Caliphate, with Emir *Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil* importing Eastern medical books on medicinal compounds, which were translated and studied. The pharmacist *Yunus al-Harrani* was among the pioneers in this field. Later, Caliphs *Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir* and his son *Al-Hakam al-Mustansir* expanded these efforts by supporting botanical research and the establishment of experimental gardens for medicinal plants, such as bitter orange (*naranj*).

Over time, pharmacy transitioned from an individual craft to a family profession, with entire dynasties specializing in medicinal preparations, such as the *Banu Ishaq* and *Banu Zuhri* families²².

When Andalusian pharmacists migrated to Algeria, they introduced advanced pharmaceutical techniques, including:

- **Decoction (cooking):** Used for preparing concentrated and potent medicines.
- **Grinding (safq):** Conducted with precision to maintain the medicinal value of ingredients, such as cumin-based remedies.
- **Absorption-based medications:** Designed for digestion in the stomach and liver.

- **Calcination (burning) and washing processes:** Applied to certain substances to enhance their medicinal properties.

These contributions helped shape the development of pharmaceutical practices in Algeria, influencing medical treatments and herbal medicine for generations.

Al-Andalus was a major source of pharmacists in Algeria, particularly in the scholarly center of Bejaia, due to its geographical proximity. Among those who contributed to the dissemination of pharmaceutical knowledge in Algeria were Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Ahmad, known as Ibn Andras (d. 643 AH), originally from the city of Murcia and later settled in Bejaia, as well as Musa ibn Samuel ibn Yahuda al-Israili, a native of Málaga who settled in Tlemcen.

Pottery Industry

This field is characterized by a strong tradition of artisanal specialization. However, historical sources provide limited information on the scientific knowledge exchanged among authors, especially regarding the Islamic period. Generally, this craft relies on molds made from durable stone materials, which bear signs of firing. These molds are typically horizontally oval and hollow, resting on an elevated base, and are devoid of any decoration or glaze²³.

Pottery production was particularly widespread in eastern Al-Andalus and was carried to Algeria by the Moriscos who migrated there. They introduced a variety of household pottery items with diverse shapes and functions. The Moriscos' continued engagement in pottery reflects their strong attachment to their historical identity and deep-rooted presence in Islamic art,

especially in regions beyond direct Algerian rule. Notably, some pottery items have been discovered bearing the signatures of persecuted migrants, many of whom opposed political authority and fled tax burdens.

Conclusion

Through our exploration of various historical texts and research references, it has become evident that the Andalusian migration to Algeria was forced, dictated by political circumstances, military pressures, and the Spanish Christians' policies, particularly the Inquisition Courts. Upon their arrival in Algeria, the Andalusians assimilated into the local population, primarily settling in coastal and maritime cities where craft industries were thriving. This explains why their artisanal activities flourished in cities such as Bejaia, Algiers, Mitidja, and Tlemcen.

Historical records reveal that the Andalusian migrants excelled in various industries, introducing new agricultural techniques and advancements in medicine. Even in the agricultural sector, they demonstrated sophistication in horticulture and contributed significantly to industrial activities, particularly in silk workshops, velvet production, and textile crafts.

The Morisco migrants played a crucial role in boosting Algeria's economy, not only through their craftsmanship, which enabled them to penetrate administrative positions, but also through their commercial dealings with Europeans and Italian cities. Ultimately, what we can conclude from this study is that the Andalusian migrants brought with them the characteristics of a highly civilized society, reaching an advanced level of intellectual and economic

prosperity, and in doing so, they left a distinct Andalusian imprint on Algeria.

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²² Hanaa Mohamed Abdelhamid Al-Fiqi, *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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