



Educational Institutions in Al-Andalus Through Historical Sources: An Analysis of Material Structure and Civilizational Function



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Abstract

The Andalusian society, newly formed, could not overcome the barrier of tribal thinking passed down through generations and subsequently passed on to the rising generation. The only way to break through this was by establishing an educational system and method of teaching that responded to the immediate needs of the society at that time, pushing it continuously forward toward reaching the threshold of civilization. If there was anything that could respond to this challenge and achieve this goal, it was likely the school, which was the greatest and most significant step Andalusian society took toward civilization. To understand this, we need only examine the texts provided by Andalusian historical sources and others, which present a conceptual scene of what schools were like. Regardless of the physical structure of the schools and the manner in which they operated, they performed their civilizational function in a way that allowed individuals to develop their knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Moreover, they introduced women into the field of education and teaching alongside men. Wherever we direct our attention, we find the effects of the educational system manifesting clearly before us.

Keywords

Andalus;
Civilization;
Education;
School;
Mosques.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الأندلس؛
الحضارة؛
التعليم؛
المدرسة؛
المسجد.

المؤسسات التعليمية في الأندلس من خلال المصادر الإخبارية -قراءة في الهيكلة المادية والوظيفة الحضارية -

ملخص

لم يكن بوسع المجتمع الأندلسي حديث التركيب أن يتجاوز حاجز الفكر القبلي الذي توارثه جيلا عن جيل، وورثه هو الآخر للجيل الصاعد، فلم يكن لذلك سبيل إلا من خلال استحداث أسلوب تربوي ونظام تعليمي يستجيب للمتطلبات الأنبية التي كان يحياها المجتمع آنذاك، ويدفعه دفعا مستمرا والمضي قدما لبلوغ عتبة الحضارة، وإن كان ثمة ما يمكنه أن يستجيب لهذا التحدي ويحقق هذه الغاية، فلربما يكون أسماها وأقدرها هي "المدرسة"، فقد كانت أعظم مثير وأجل خطوة خطاها المجتمع في الأندلس نحو الحضارة، وإن شئنا أن نتبين ذلك فحسبنا أن نتفحص النصوص التي زودتنا بها المصادر التاريخية الأندلسية وغيرها، فهي تُشكل لنا مشهدا تصوريا لما كانت عليه المدرسة، فبغض النظر عن الهيكلة المادية التي كانت تظهر بها والطريقة أو الكيفية التي كانت تعمل بها، فإنها بالمقابل أدت وظيفتها الحضارية بشكل سمح لها بإعداد الأفراد وإنماء معارفهم ومهاراتهم ومكتسباتهم، وإدخال النساء مجال التعليم والتدريس جنبا إلى جنب مع الرجال، فأينما وجهنا عنايتنا لمطابقة منحى من منحى الحياة وجدنا آثار النظام التعليمي باديا متجليا أمامنا.

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Doi:

1. Introduction :

Islamic civilization in Al-Andalus marks a new era in the timeline of civilizational prosperity and intellectual progress, from which modern civilization benefits today. We must be certain that the source of this influence may have stemmed from the school and the educational system that accompanied the early Islamic presence in Al-Andalus. A strong bond was formed between the "philosophy of Islamic civilization" and the "school" in its contemporary sense. Regardless of the extent of that influence, which Western Europe absorbed as it emerged from the Dark Ages and the authority of the Church, the most profound and significant impact was the educational system that characterized the courts of Andalusian rulers. These schools provided vast spaces for various sciences and knowledge to be explored, understood, and interpreted further.

At a time when churches and monasteries in Europe were criminalizing the study of scientific books and denying and forbidding scientific theories in physics and astronomy that contradicted the beliefs of monks and priests, the rulers of Al-Andalus were spending vast amounts of money to establish schools and bring in numerous scholars and jurists to teach there. This unprecedented step surpassed the classical educational systems prevalent in the Islamic East, creating a more qualitative and efficient educational model. The level of attention corresponded to the intellectual contribution that the school began to offer to Andalusian society. However, given the vast number of historical texts documenting the role and contribution of the school and educational system in the rise of Arab Islamic civilization in Al-Andalus, we find ourselves compelled to address a central issue: How did the institution of the school dominate various aspects of social life in Al-Andalus? Was this dominance truly a driving force toward achieving civilization?

Addressing a topic of this scope necessitates a nuanced methodological framework that integrates diverse scientific approaches to construct an objective and well-rounded historical analysis. Central to this paper is the historical method, which serves as the cornerstone for examining and interpreting historical texts and evidence. This approach involves meticulous research within primary sources such as chronicles, biographies, and historical accounts, enabling the compilation of data that substantively enriches the scholarly narrative.

In navigating the complexities of this subject, we are often compelled to employ both inductive and analytical methods. These methodologies prove indispensable when confronted with discrepancies among Arab historians and Orientalist scholars concerning the prevalence and structure of educational institutions in Al-Andalus. Such conflicting narratives necessitate a systematic inductive examination of the texts, accompanied by critical analysis to uncover, corroborate, and interpret historical facts with precision.

2. Madrasas in Al-Andalus: Between Religious Obligations and a Revivalist Mission:

Our understanding of the proliferation of schools in Al-Andalus gains credibility from an array of historical manuscripts and tangible inscriptions on the walls of schools and *katātīb*. Whether these institutions align with our contemporary notion of schools, with their structured facilities and pedagogical frameworks, or diverge to some extent, their paramount role as bastions of education and culture is unmistakable. They nurtured a generation of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, playing a pivotal role in translating, transferring, and advancing various sciences that Europe subsequently embraced across different historical periods. Given the historical evidence we shall present, engaging in the often-unending scholarly disputes to counter certain Orientalist narratives (Muhammad Abdul Hamid, 1982, pp. 370-422) might be rendered superfluous.

Ibn Idhari documents that "Caliph Al-Hakam II al-Mustansir bi-llah Ibn Abd ar-Rahman" founded twenty-seven schools offering free education to impoverished children, assuming responsibility for educators' remuneration (Ibn Idhari, 1983, p. 240). These institutions, known as compulsory free schools, were financed by revenues from properties, shops, and lands (Ibn Hayyan, 1965, p. 207; Ibn Idhari, 1983, p. 249; Al-Tahiri, 1993, pp. 114-115), and were also sustained, in part, by charitable donations offered by private benefactors committed to supporting learning and the public good (Ahmed Maki, 1977, p. 53). Under Umayyad rule, a notable drive to establish schools emerged across major cities—including Cordoba, Toledo, Granada, and even Barcelona. This movement toward institutionalizing education was not confined to the Muslim majority. The same period saw the founding of Jewish educational institutions as well, most prominently the Talmudic school in Cordoba. This school flourished under the protection of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir and the leadership of the distinguished scholar Moshe ben Hanokh, exemplifying the cultural pluralism that characterized al-Andalus (Lindo, 1817, pp. 40-47). This historical reality points to the presence of a dual educational system: alongside publicly funded institutions, there were also 'private free schools' functioning on a tuition-based model.

The existence of a formal educational system in Al-Andalus is incontrovertible, and the skepticism of some, possibly stemming from their unfamiliarity with or intentional overlooking of historical texts, is baseless. One particularly compelling piece of evidence for the institutional strength of education in this period comes from the city of Zaragoza. A compilation of study notes by Abdullah ibn Shabbatun, completed on 12 Dhu al-Hijjah 236 AH / 19 June 851 CE in a school located in the city's Muslim quarter, suggests that this was no marginal institution. On the contrary, it appears to

have attracted a broad and diverse body of learners (Ribera, 1994, pp. 135-136). This case provides concrete support for Gustave Le Bon's broader claim that the foundations of schools, libraries, and proto-laboratories in al-Andalus can be traced back as far as the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman I, around 139 AH / 756 CE (Le Bon, 1884, pp. 280-281). Furthermore, an essential historical document exists—a pedagogic compact between two educators aimed at founding a scholastic institution. The text stipulates: "Hereby acknowledged by so-and-so, descendant of so-and-so, and so-and-so, descendant of so-and-so, is their joint commitment to the dissemination of the Quran and scholarly texts, under the condition that they coalesce in a singular class without separation. Whatever sustenance the Divine bestows and whatever largesse He directs their way shall be equitably divided between them. Furthermore, any expenses incurred in the course of their teaching duties are to be equally distributed." (Al-Marrakushi, 1997, p. 597; Ribera, 1994, p. 141). The contract, however, lacks temporal markers and fails to disclose the identities of the founders, factors that might attenuate its historical veracity. Nonetheless, it serves as a significant testament and an illustrative relic of the pervasive establishment of academic foundations in Al-Andalus, highlighting the societal esteem afforded to these educational entities.

The contractual agreements between teachers and the legal guardians of students, as detailed in historical sources, provide substantial evidence of the schooling system in Al-Andalus. These contracts were formally executed, specifying a mutually agreed upon fee (Al Abdali, 2019, p. 109). Interestingly, the payment to the teacher was not always in money, as one might expect, but often in differing goods, such as measures of wheat, barley, oil, or other commodities equivalent to the agreed value. The contracts also stipulated the duration of teaching, be it monthly or yearly. A document cited by Abdul Wahid al-Marrakushi illustrates this: "So-and-so hired teacher so-and-so to teach his son or daughter or sons the Quran, reading, writing, and spelling... paying him every month with quality milled wheat flour, amounts of oil, etc., and the teacher is to start the specified education and work diligently" (Al-Marrakushi, 1997, p. 504; Ribera, 1994, pp. 138-141). Another contract details the hiring of a teacher for instruction in writing, spelling, and the Quran, emphasizing the teacher's commitment to diligent guidance (Al-Jaziri, 2001, p. 332). According to the books of Hisba, these schools were under the supervision of the Muhtasib (the inquisitor), suggesting that the state authority did not oppose these schools as long as their functions were limited to education and upbringing.

The extent of women's participation in arts and literature, as presented in the Andalusian official records, unequivocally demonstrates that education was not exclusive to males. "Girls went to schools just like boys" (Durant, n.d., p. 306), acquiring knowledge in various educational circles. However, they particularly excelled in artistic domains such as singing, music, dancing, and poetry. Historical excerpts reveal that female singers frequented the music school established by Ziryab in Cordoba—figures like Aleya and Hamduna, daughters of Ziryab (Abdul Aziz Salem, 1985, p. 152), as well as Qalam, Fadl, Ilm, Mut'ah, and Nazhun of Granada (Al-Maqqari, 1988, pp. 130-131; Ibn Said Andalusi, 1955, p. 121; Qajjah, 1985, pp. 149-152). Other notable figures include al-'Abbadiyah, a slave of al-Mu'tadid Ibn 'Abbād, and Ishrāq al-Su'aydā', known as al-'Arūḍiyah, a protégée of Abu al-Mutarriif 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Ghalbun of Cordoba, who excelled in language, literature, and prosody (Ibn al-Abbar, 2011, pp. 232-233; Mezeraï, 2017-2018, p. 267).

Ibn al-Kattānī, a 5th-century AH (11th-century CE) scholar, offers a compelling account of women's intellectual transformation. He writes: "Currently I am in possession of four Roman women who have progressed from being uneducated to being knowledgeable in various disciplines, including philosophy, mathematics, music, astrophysics, and literary arts" (Al-Shantarīnī, 1997, p. 320). Similarly, Ibn Fayyād reports that in the eastern quarter of Cordoba alone, there were 170 women skilled in writing manuscripts in Kufic script (Al-Marrākushī, 1963, pp. 456-457). These examples highlight not only the spread of literacy among women but their active participation in scholarly life. A particularly illuminating case is that of the school founded by Ibn Hazm's family in Cordoba, where education was dispensed across gender lines: the father taught boys, the son taught adolescents, and the daughter taught girls (Ribera, 1994, p. 131; Muhammad 'Abd al-Laṭīf, 2008, pp. 370-371).

Such arrangements exemplify the integrated and familial nature of education in al-Andalus. In light of the intellectual flourishing that marked al-Andalus, it was hardly surprising that women pursued roles in pedagogy with growing determination. This ambition became, for many, a powerful force shaping their intellectual identities. For many women, the pursuit of knowledge required perseverance. Social and structural barriers were real, but not insurmountable—especially when learning took place within supportive scholarly environments. Reyhana offers a case in point: she studied with Shaykh 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd ibn 'Uthmān, known as Ibn al-Sīrāfī. She attended his lessons discreetly, behind a screen, following his instruction as he guided her with a pointer. Under his mentorship, she mastered the seven canonical Qur'anic readings and their transmitted variants, and was eventually granted formal authorization (Al-Dhabbi, 1989, p. 160; Ibn Bashkuwāl, 1989, pp. 592-593).

This intellectual hunger drove many women to push beyond feelings of hesitation or inferiority in their quest to teach. Though societal constraints remained, they actively sought recognition and space within scholarly communities. Biographical sources attest to a significant presence of Andalusian women engaged in teaching. While this study cannot enumerate every example, several notable cases stand out. Another prominent case is that of Umm al-'Alā' of Murcia (d. 647 AH / 1249 CE), whose teaching activities spanned multiple major cities such as Granada, Fez, and Tunis. Her daughters reportedly continued her instructional work after her passing, reflecting the familial transmission of pedagogical roles among learned women in al-Andalus (Ibn al-Abbar, 2011, pp. 246-247). Among the notable figures cited in the

sources, Hafsa bint al-Ḥājī al-Rakūniyya of Granada (d. 581 AH / 1185 CE) is said to have assumed responsibility for instructing women within the domestic sphere of Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub ibn Yusuf al-Mansur’s court in Marrakesh. Her association with such a prominent household suggests not only a high degree of scholarly recognition but also signals the extent to which female learning was accepted—if not encouraged—among the political elite of al-Andalus (Ibn al-Abbar, 2011, p. 241; Ibn al-Khatib, 1975, pp. 491-494; Al-Manuni, 1977, pp. 33-34).

Such examples, though sometimes presented as isolated biographical fragments, collectively point toward a recurring phenomenon rather than exceptional deviation. Across a variety of settings—whether within courtly environments, city-based educational networks, or household instruction—women appear to have played a role in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

The formative years of Ibn Hazm provide further insight into this dynamic. Raised within the confines of a refined household, he received his earliest education from women—both concubines and tutors—entrusted with shaping his intellect during childhood. Later in life, he would allude to the intimacy of that pedagogical environment, describing how these women introduced him to the Qur’an, poetry, and writing itself. According to his own recollections, this early instruction unfolded in a setting where male influence was largely absent, granting him access to a form of knowledge transmission seldom discussed in formal scholarship (Ibn Hazm, 1987, p. 166; Ibn Hazm, n.d., p. 69).

Even without attempting an exhaustive inventory, the extent of women’s scholarly contributions in al-Andalus is difficult to overlook. Biographical and historical sources abound with references that, taken together, offer a clear view of their intellectual presence. One such figure is Maryam bint Ya‘qūb al-Anṣārī, active in the 5th century AH, who is recorded as having visited women’s households in Seville, where she taught them religious sciences, poetry, and literary texts (‘Anqar, 2024, p. 440; Hamada, 2018, p. 97; Ibn Bashkuwāl, 2010, pp. 345-346; Jum‘a, 2001, pp. 365-366).

Umm al-Ḥasan bint Abī Liwā’ al-Qurṭubīyah also appears as a notable example. Known for her piety and pedagogical dedication, she organized teaching sessions in a small mosque adjacent to her home. Her lessons drew women and elderly members of the community and centered on religious doctrine as well as the exemplary lives of early moral figures. Accounts such as these, drawn from scattered historical sources, offer a vivid picture of the range of educational roles played by Andalusian women. Their activity extended far beyond the confines of formal institutions like madrasas. Many operated in domestic spaces, private libraries, and neighborhood mosques—settings that evolved into vibrant centers of learning. In these spaces, women did not limit themselves to religious instruction; they also transmitted skills in poetry, prosody, calligraphy, and various branches of literary knowledge (Ibn al-Abbār, 2011, pp. 225-226; al-Marrākushī, 1984, p. 481).

3. Educational System:

Interpreting the educational infrastructure of Al-Andalus presents certain challenges, particularly when examining accounts like that of al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsānī. Writing in the 10th–11th centuries AH / 16th–17th centuries CE, he asserted that “no schools existed in al-Andalus to aid in the pursuit of knowledge; rather, all sciences were studied in mosques for a fee” (Al-Maqqarī, 1988, p. 220). This claim appears contradictory, especially when placed alongside the very image he presents—one of intellectual vitality, reverence for scholarship, and widespread public interest in education. Moreover, his sources—primarily drawn from Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī, who lived three centuries earlier—raise questions about temporal accuracy and interpretative context.

Several plausible readings have been advanced to make sense of this contradiction. One suggests that al-Maqqarī was commenting on conditions during his own time, a late stage in the Andalusian experience, though further evidence would be required to substantiate such a claim. A second interpretation posits that al-Andalus never developed formal schools at all—though this view is difficult to reconcile with the cumulative weight of archaeological, documentary, and historiographic evidence. A third hypothesis suggests that “Al-Maqqari” implied that Al-Andalus did not have schools resembling the architectural styles and curricula of those in the Eastern Islamic world or the Western educational institutions known in Spain, Kingdom of the Franks (Regnum Francorum), Italian Kingdoms and Principalities, and other European countries (Mohamed Abd al-Hamid, 1982, pp. 378-379). This hypothesis appears more plausible, given the corroboration from ancient historical references.

Historical evidence suggests that the Christian schools that became prevalent during the early expansion of Christian influence in Andalusian cities at the outset of the Reconquista were originally pure Andalusian Arab schools. Christian rulers reopened and restructured them, although some biased historians attempt to obscure these historical truths. In contrast, the Spanish historian “Gallego Salvadores” acknowledges the existence of Christian schools in Valencia during Islamic rule (Muhammad Abd al-Hamid, 1982, p. 384). The establishment of such schools was not a novel occurrence in Andalusian cities; the founding of Christian and Jewish schools was common, as a consideration and fairness towards the dhimmi (non-Muslim residents) communities who lived there, enabling them to learn and pursue

their studies. For example, there was the Talmudic school, which we previously mentioned, established in Cordoba with the encouragement of Caliph Abd al-Rahman al-Nacer.

Further reinforcing the historical evidence of the widespread establishment of Andalusian schools, the city of Valencia witnessed the founding of several schools by the Almohad Caliph "Yaqub al-Mansur ibn Yusuf ibn Abd al-Mu'min ibn Ali" during his reign between 580-595 AH / 1184-1199 CE (Al-Fasi, 1972, p. 217; Al-Manuni, 1977, p. 21). However, following the expansion of the Christian Kingdom of Aragon in the eastern region of Al-Andalus under King "Jaime I" in 636 AH / 1238 CE (Muhammad Abd al-Hamid, 1982, p. 384), these schools were converted into Christian institutions, and the tolling of church bells echoed in their courtyards.

This transition was poetically depicted by "Ibn Al-Abbar Al-Quda'i", who eloquently captured the essence of this transformation in his verses:

*"My heart longs for schools, once gardens in bloom, now withered and stilled,
Where the cross's bells have silenced the calls once thrillingly trilled.
Enlightenment's dawn, now dimmed by the shadows of stray,
Seems, to the beholder's eye, like evening masquerading as day".*
(Ibn Al-Abbar Al-Quda'i Al-Balansi, 1999, p. 36; Al-Maqqari, 1988, p. 480)

He also writes:

*"Alas, for mosques that to foes as chapels turned,
And for the call to prayer, now as church bells spurned.
My heart yearns for their past, to reclaim what's lost,
Once founts of knowledge, now by new tides crossed."*
(Ibn Al-Abbar Al-Quda'i Al-Balansi, 1999, p. 409; Al-Maqqari, 1988, p. 457).

Drawing upon historical texts and archival documents that recorded these scientific missions and uncovered many long-hidden historical truths, one should examine the letter sent by Philip, King of Bavaria, headed by his Prime Minister, "William"—whom Arab historians referred to as "William the Trustworthy"—to Emir "Hisham I ibn Abd al-Rahman I", who ruled between 172-180 AH / 788-796 CE. This letter reveals a scientific mission consisting of two hundred and fifteen male and female students distributed across various schools and institutes in Andalusian cities (Danoun Taha, 2003, p. 60). The letter explicitly expressed the mission's desire to benefit from the region's scientific prosperity, explore its diverse fields of knowledge, and learn about the educational methods that distinguished Andalusian schools. By 312 AH / 924 CE, during the reign of Caliph "Abd al-Rahman III", the number of students arriving in Al-Andalus had reached around 700 (Al-Tikriti, 1968, p. 90; Al-Samarrai et al., 2000, p. 477).

A closer look at these scholarly journeys leads to the conclusion that Andalusian schools were a vital destination that captured the curiosity of both students and Christian rulers, who sought to address the cultural and intellectual decline that had plagued Europe for a period.

In a lengthy and insightful letter dated 419 AH / 1028 CE from "George II", King of Wales, to Caliph "Hisham III", he expressed his intention to send a scientific mission to Seville consisting of eighteen noblewomen under the supervision of the nobleman "Svilk", chief court official in Wales (Al-Bar, 1993, p. 13). If genuine, the letter not only reflects the high regard held by European courts for the intellectual stature of al-Andalus, but also affirms that its schools offered multidisciplinary instruction—unlike monastic centers in medieval Europe, which often confined their curricula to theology alone. Turning to the actual pedagogical structure, historical sources confirm the existence of organized curricula.

Concerning the educational methodologies and curricula in Al-Andalus, textual evidence from "Ibn al-Arabi" (Ibn al-Arabi, 1986, pp. 414-420; Ar'ab, 1987, pp. 186-193), as well as "Ibn Khaldun," indicates that Andalusians developed innovative instructional methods and curricula, significantly distinct from the classical approaches prevalent in the Eastern and Western Islamic worlds. Initially, a child's education began with reading and writing, progressing to grammar, language, and poetry to achieve proficiency in Arabic, the scholarly lingua franca of the era (Ibn Khaldun, 2000, p. 742). Subsequently, students advanced to arithmetic, followed by the study of natural sciences, historiography, metaphysics, and finally, Sharia (Bouhassoun, 2007-2008, p. 124).

At the level of higher education, instruction was often led by individual scholars who adhered to curricula developed within Andalusian intellectual traditions. Over time, these localized pedagogical practices exerted considerable influence on institutional frameworks, notably contributing to the educational structure of the University of Cordoba under Umayyad rule. The gradual spread of these models also facilitated the rise of formal colleges in cities such as Granada, Toledo, Seville, Almeria, Valencia, Murcia, and Cadiz (Durant, n.d., p. 306). The management and oversight of such institutions did not occur in a vacuum; sources from the period point to a direct involvement of the ruling authorities, whose administrative apparatus played a central role in regulating academic life, as detailed in the Hisba books. Al-Saqati benefited us important texts about the the muhtasib's role in regulating the educational system. He

highlights the muhtasib duties in ensuring academic gatherings and study circles were confined to appropriate venues rather than streets or public areas. Al-Saqati also sheds light on the approach to student discipline, endorsing a teacher's right to administer limited corporal punishment under specific circumstances, such as three or five light foot strikes, when deemed necessary. Additionally, the muhtasib played a role in managing the students' meal schedules (Al-Saqati, n.d., p. 68).

Nevertheless, Ibn Abdun offers a different perspective on the muhtasib educational inspection duties, focusing on the quality of teaching and learning. He suggests that teachers should maintain manageable class sizes in their study circles to ensure effective education. The curriculum taught in mosques, *katātīb*, and schools was subject to specific guidelines and licenses by the governing authorities (Ibn Abdun, 1955, p. 25; Al-Shayzarī, 1946, pp. 103-105). Given that certain factors may propel the demise and self-destruction of the educational profession, its survival is contingent upon the educator's ability to master and innovate within their craft. If matters proceeded according to the inclinations of traditional instructors, it is likely that the teaching profession would not have sustained itself. Reflecting upon these self-evident truths, "Ibn Abdun" elucidates his perspective on the "craft of teaching"—as he terms it—stating: "Teaching is a craft that necessitates knowledge, skill, and gentleness. It is akin to training a difficult colt, requiring strategy, patience, and gentleness until it becomes manageable and receptive to instruction. Most instructors are ignorant of the art of teaching, for memorizing the Quran is one thing, and teaching it is another, a task mastered only by those well-versed in it" (Ibn Abdun, 1955, p. 25).

Despite the conventional educational methods in Al-Andalus gaining their efficacy from the proliferation of schools, *katātīb*, and various educational institutions, it became imperative to incrementally mitigate their dominance. This was essential to distinguish the art of teaching from the mere vocational pursuit of earning a livelihood under the pretense of this art. Consequently, it became incumbent upon every educator to adopt the latest educational methods and curricula—a pursuit attainable only by those who devoted their formative years to scholarly circles and rigorous study. Thus, the "scientific authorization" (*Ijaza*) emerged as a fundamental cornerstone, evident wherever one turned their gaze. From the texts of "Ibn Abdun" and "Al-Shayzarī," we can discern that the Islamic state entrusted the muhtasib with the authority to confer scientific authorizations in accordance with the established regulations and conditions of the *hisba* (Ibn Abdun, 1955, pp. 25-26; Al-Shayzarī, 1946, pp. 98-99; Ahmed Ramadan, 1985, p. 21).

4. Academic Authorizations:

The In Al-Andalus, the issuance of educational authorizations or licenses, though not as customary as inheriting livelihoods or educational traditions, became essential due to the influx of students into Andalusian schools. The degree of focus on these licenses correlated with the output of new graduates, whether they were destined for local teaching roles or for further studies in the Islamic East. Historical texts, biographies, and chronicles are replete with accounts of academic journeys undertaken by scholars and students.

A historical illustration of this practice is provided by "Ibn al-Faradi" in his biography of "Yusuf bin Muhammad bin Sulaiman al-Hamdani al-Shadhudi" (d. 383 AH/993 CE), who obtained an academic authorization (*ijaza*) from him in Al-Andalus after studying under his tutelage in the city of "Qalsana" (Ibn al-Faradi, 1988, pp. 206-207). Similarly, "Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib" recounts in the biography of "Muhammad bin Hakim bin Muhammad bin Ahmed bin Baq al-Judhami" (d. 533 AH/1238 CE) from Saragossa, that he studied under several sheikhs and received his academic authorization from "Abu al-Walid al-Baji" (Ibn al-Khatib, 1975, pp. 72-73). Ibn al-Khatib provides the text of one such academic authorization dated 6 Rabi' al-Thani 744 AH/27 August 1343 CE, granted to him and his son "Ahmed bin Ibrahim bin Ahmed, known as Ibn Safwan" (d. 763 AH/1361 CE) (Ibn al-Khatib, 1975, pp. 221-232). This authorization offers a clear example of the types of *ijazas* that were prevalent in Al-Andalus. The granting sheikh would write the authorization by hand, specifying the individual to whom it was granted and adhering to the established legal protocols and traditional criteria of such certifications. This authorization served as a scholarly certificate attesting to the academic proficiency of the recipient in specific sciences or arts, thus preventing forgery. It might also include the recipient's biography and some of their scholarly and artistic works, and it was dated with the exact day, month, and year (Ibn al-Khatib, 1975, pp. 228-229).

It appears that Al-Andalus adopted the system of academic authorizations from the Islamic East, as a strategy to undermine the traditional educational systems in the Islamic West and East, thereby fostering a learning model of superior quality and efficiency. Typically, the academic authorization in Al-Andalus was recorded either on a paper document or in the books that the student studied, inscribed by the mentor under whom they apprenticed (Dowidar, 1994, pp. 403-404). The duration required for a student to earn this certificate varied from one individual to another. According to Ibn Khaldun, the minimum period necessary to obtain the authorization ranged from five to sixteen years (Ibn Khaldun, 2000, p. 545). This duration was determined by the student's intellectual and cognitive abilities, their mental acumen, and their dedication (Ribera, 1994, p. 106).

5. Conclusion :

The challenges faced by the Islamic presence in Al-Andalus necessitated the creation of a new civilizational system that responded to the increasing complexity of society's structure and composition. This was due to the diverse cultural and intellectual heritage that was on the verge of creating a barely predictable or understandable social system. The rulers of Al-Andalus had to think of a way to allow the immense number of cultures to interact with one another, giving birth to a unique Andalusian civilizational philosophy. Their only solace was their focus on the educational system and the creation of the "school" according to Andalusian thought at the time.

Perhaps the "scientific circles" held in mosques and the courts of Andalusian rulers were a form of a "virtual school" that cannot be imagined as a formal school in the modern sense. However, it was these "scientific circles" that continuously pushed the educational system toward achieving its highest goals. Without these circles, Andalusian schools would not have come into existence. Despite the political and social pressures confronting them, Andalusian rulers remained committed to fostering a robust educational infrastructure. Drawing lessons from the pedagogical experiences of the Islamic East, they pursued the establishment of both publicly funded and private institutions of learning. These efforts gave rise to a distinct educational model grounded in foundational instruction—beginning with reading, writing, and grammar—and gradually expanding to include disciplines such as arithmetic, logic, the natural sciences, metaphysics, and the religious sciences: Qur'anic memorization, Hadith, and jurisprudence. As the institution of the school gained traction and expanded its reach, educational opportunities extended to women as well. This access allowed them not only to deepen their knowledge but also to contribute as educators, thus positioning them as vital participants in the intellectual and cultural life of al-Andalus.

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