

The Cultural Impact of Andalusian Cities (92-478 AH): A Case Study of Alcalá de Guadaíra, Madrid, Murcia, and Granada

Maisoon Najm Obeid^{1*}

¹Assistant Lecturer, College of Islamic Sciences / Department of Islamic Civilization and Archaeology / University of Baghdad

***Corresponding Author:** Maisoon Najm Obeid

Assistant Lecturer, College of Islamic Sciences / Department of Islamic Civilization and Archaeology / University of Baghdad

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Abstract: This study focuses on the urban cultural influences of Al-Andalus spanning 92-478 AH / 711-1085 CE. Addressing the understudied topic of non-core cities in existing historical research, it selects four sample cities: Alcalá de Guadaíra, Madrid (Majrīt), Murcia, and Granada. The study aims to clarify the constructive role of these cities, which operated outside the core capital system in the civilization of Al-Andalus. This study adopts historical analysis to trace the origins, administrative evolution, and developmental trajectories of the four cities, and analyzes their contributions to the fields of agriculture, industry, trade, and science and culture. The study finds that all sample cities supported regional political stability and integration, and served as core economic nodes for irrigated agriculture and handicraft industries. Meanwhile, the four cities exhibit clear functional differentiation: Murcia and Granada developed into core scientific and cultural centers, while Madrid (Majrīt) and Alcalá de Guadaíra undertook military and administrative functions including border defense and urban governance. This study ultimately concludes that small and medium-sized cities in Al-Andalus were a core element of the civilization's construction, and the omission of these cities in traditional research must be remedied through a comprehensive reexamination of historical sources.

Keywords: Al-Andalus, Small Cities, Islamic Civilization, Murcia, Granada, Madrid (Majrīt), Alcalá De Guadaíra, Cultural History.

INTRODUCTION

The cities of Andalusia are prominent manifestations of Islamic civilisation in al-Andalus. Far from serving only a residential function, they act as core sites for scientific, economic, and social activities. Most previous studies have focused on large core cities, while the civilizational contributions of non-core cities have not received due attention. This study selects four case cities, including Alcalá de Guadaíra, and sets its research timeframe from 92 AH to 478 AH, to demonstrate the civilizational roles of these cities and fill this research gap.

This study focuses on urban samples that have not been adequately covered in prior research, fills a gap in relevant regional studies, and reveals their core roles across the scientific, economic, and social dimensions of al-Andalus's development process.

This study has three core objectives: to identify the intrinsic attributes of specific cities linked to Andalusian civilisation, to demonstrate the role of these cities in the construction of that civilization, and to clarify their contributions to development across all fields.

To clarify the roles and functions of the sample cities, this study adopted the historical analysis method. After consulting original historical materials to extract and integrate relevant information, it carried out analysis and deduction.

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This study was structured by the author of this paper to include two core parts. The first part completes the work of sorting out the definition of the study's target city and tracing its origin, while the second part analyzes its multi-dimensional cultural impacts. Finally, the core research findings are presented in the concluding section.

First Section: The Importance of Andalusian Cities and Their Civilizational Functions

First: A Historical and Civilizational Overview of Andalusian Cities

The Andalusian civilisation described in this paper not only encompasses the three core capitals of Cordoba, Seville, and Granada, but also extends to the numerous small cities and local settlements that supported the political, economic, and cultural development of Al-Andalus.

This study cites academic literature to note that although small cities in Andalusia are limited in scale, they fulfil the functions of linking urban and rural areas and sustaining the country's urban and administrative balance, and serve as a core pillar of daily life in local society (Al-Idrisi, 1989, p. 152).

The core claim of Arab geographers states that settlements capable of maintaining an urban-rural balance are the central pillar of urbanism in Al-Andalus. In the 9th century CE, the Umayyad Dynasty built Alcalá de Guadaíra in the region near Seville. This city had an integrated three-part function combining administration, commerce, and agriculture. The grain, dates, and olives it produced were exported to Córdoba and Seville, and it developed into a dynamic economic center of Al-Andalus. All core historical facts are sourced from pages 112 and 114 of the 1995 published work *Al-Muqtabas min Akhbār Ahl al-Andalus* by medieval Arab historian Ibn Hayyan.

Arab agronomist Ibn al-'Awwam records in his work *Kitab al-Filaha* that this ancient city optimized production by relying on advanced irrigation technologies such as waterwheels and wells, and promoted the development of the regional agricultural economy (Ibn al-'Awwam, 1995, pp. 78-88).

According to records by Arab scholars Ibn Hayyan (1995, p. 118) and Ibn al-Awam (1995, p. 95), Alcalá de Guadaíra produced wheat, beans, fruits and vegetables, and hosted oil-pressing and silk-weaving industries, making it a major local industrial center.

This study, through textual research relying on first-hand Arabic historical sources, verifies that Alcalá de Guadaíra in Al-Andalus was a core agricultural and commercial center that drove the local economy via advanced irrigation and diverse business operations.

Madrid (Mayrit) of the Andalusian period is a model city with dual origins centered on military defense and agricultural production. It was built by the Umayyad Dynasty in the 2nd century of the Islamic calendar, with the core original purpose of guarding the borderlands of Toledo. Records written by Arab scholar Al-Himyari on page 275 of his work *Al-Rawd al-Mi'tar* corroborate the city's nature as a fortress, its access to water sources and arable land, and the characteristic of its residents engaging in both farming and border garrison duties.

Through sorting and deductive analysis of verifiable textual records, it is concluded that after a site's defensive functions became integrated with its agricultural settlement, that location ultimately developed into a social core with dual civilian and military attributes.

Murcia, a small city on the medieval Iberian Peninsula, is located in the Segura River Valley near the coast, and served as a hub connecting the inland and coastal territories of Al-Andalus, fulfilling both commercial and agricultural functions. The medieval geographer al-Idrisi recorded, on page 210 of the first volume of his work *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq*, that this area had fertile land, abundant produce, and drew merchants from all regions year-round.

Located in Spain, Murcia is a regional transit and commercial center that receives goods from coastal ports and distributes them to inland Andalusia.

During the Nasrid dynasty, Guadix was a small defensive city subordinate to Granada. Arab scholar Ibn Hawqal recorded the city's geographical features, water sources, orchards, and defensive fortress characteristics on page 110 of his work *Surat al-Ard*.

Historian Ibn Bashkuwal, drawing on historical facts related to scholars' activities in that region, stated on page 28 of the first volume of *Al-Silah* that the region served a dual function of defense as well as scientific and educational work.

This border hub within the Kingdom of Granada not only provided instruction in jurisprudence and the Quran for youth from local mountain villages, but also served as the staging ground to launch defensive operations along the eastern frontier.

According to records on page 221 of Volume 3 of *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, written by Arab scholar al-Maqqari, three categories of handicrafts—spinning, silk production, and textile manufacturing—were distributed across the small villages surrounding the famous core city of al-Andalus.

This study focuses on the small cities of al-Andalus, which sustained the prosperity of local trade and handicraft industries. Contrary to the stereotypical perception that these sites only acted as mere population aggregation zones, they formed an integrated urban system, where Madrid, Minor Murcia, Guadix, Minor Valencia, and Peripheral Granada each had its own dedicated core functional orientation.

All relevant factors collated in the preceding sections of this study have fostered the dual balance between national defense and production, as well as between rural and urban areas, which sustained the long-term growth of Andalusian civilization and allowed it to persist into later generations.

This study proposes that the functions of these medieval cities differentiated according to their geographical location, and their economic and military importance; Mayrit, founded by the Umayyad dynasty of al-Andalus, was a mixed military-agricultural settlement that guarded Toledo's border and developed the surrounding lands, a point corroborated by records on page 275 of Al-Himyari's 1980 work.

Murcia (Mursiya), a small city in Andalusia, serves as a core commercial transit hub linking coastal and inland areas, collecting and distributing all types of agricultural products and handicrafts. According to the 1989 edition of al-Idrisi's historical records (p. 210), this locale is livable and highly productive, and draws merchants from across multiple regions.

This study confirms that Guadix, an outpost of the Kingdom of Granada, is a subordinate center serving both defensive and educational functions: the 1938 published edition of Ibn Hawqal's work records the site's fortress and its favorable natural conditions, while the 1992 published edition of Ibn Bashkuwal's work documents the group of judges and scholars that gathered locally.

The small city of Valencia rose to fame for its textile and silk industries. Records on page 221 of the third volume of Al-Maqqari's work, published in 1968, corroborate this industrial feature of medieval Andalusia.

The old perception that small cities in Andalusia on the Iberian Peninsula merely belonged to peripheral clusters is no longer valid. These cities are integrated civilization centers that combine agriculture, defense, education, and production. According to research from Al-Maqqarī (1968), Volume 3, Page 57, these cities underpinned the Islamic urban system until the late period of Islamic rule.

Second: The Origin of Cities in Islamic Civilization

First: Alcalá de Guadaíra: An Agricultural Center near Seville in al-Andalus

As a city in the Andalusia region that holds outstanding historical and civilizational value, Alcalá de Guadaíra is administered under Seville Province of the Andalusia Autonomous Community in southern Spain. Situated along the banks of the Guadaíra River, roughly 17 kilometres southeast of Seville, the city bears witness to multiple stages of the Islamic history of the Iberian Peninsula. Its basic information is drawn from the research of Al-Himyari (1984, 1989) and Al-Idrisi.

1. Geographical Location and Strategic Importance

Alcalá de Guadaíra is located on the fertile plain within the territory of Seville. Many medieval Arab geographers generally agree that Seville and its surrounding areas rank among the most fertile and most densely populated regions of Al-Andalus. This record is also documented by the authoritative scholar Al-Idrisi, with the citation marked as Al-Idrisi, 1989, p.234.

According to records from the medieval Arab scholar Al-Himyari, documented in his geographical work *Al-Rawḍ al-Mi'tar fī Khabar al-Aqtar*, he offered a highly positive assessment of the areas surrounding Seville. The case focused on in this study, Alcalá de Guadaíra, a fortified city under the jurisdiction of Seville, gained unique and favorable irrigation advantages thanks to the Guadaíra River that flows through its territory.

2. The Islamic History of the City: The Islamic Conquest of al-Andalus

Muslims entered the Iberian Peninsula in 92 AH / 712 CE led by Tariq ibn Ziyad and Musa ibn Nusayr and annexed it to the Umayyad Caliphate. Ibn 'Idhari al-Marrakushi (d. after 712 AH) mentioned in "Al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib": "Tariq ibn Ziyad conquered al-Andalus in the year ninety-two AH, and Musa ibn Nusayr completed its conquest" (Ibn 'Idhari al-Marrakushi, 1983, Vol. 2, p. 11). The Seville region was among the important areas that Muslims entered early (94 AH / 713 CE).

Ibn al-Qūṭīyya (d. 367 AH) narrated in his "Tarikh Iftitah al-Andalus" details of the conquest of Seville and its surroundings: "Musa ibn Nusayr marched to Seville and conquered it, and conquered the fortresses and villages around it" (Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, 1989, p. 37).

Muslims conquered Seville and the surrounding cities and villages, including Alcalá de Guadaíra, which became an integral part of the Andalusian civilizational fabric (Al-Himyari, 1984).

Alcalá de Guadaíra witnessed a period of prosperity during the era of the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus (316-422 AH / 929-1031 CE), as it was part of the district of Seville. Ibn Hawqal (d. after 367 AH) mentioned in "Surat al-Ard" that "the district of Seville is among the greatest districts of al-Andalus and the most abundant in goodness and prosperity" (Ibn Hawqal, 1938, p. 110).

After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate and the emergence of the Taifa kingdoms, Alcalá de Guadaíra became subordinate to the Banu 'Abbad state in Seville, which was one of the strongest Andalusian states at that time. Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH) described the Banu 'Abbad state in "Al-Ibar" saying: "The kingdom of Banu 'Abbad in Seville was among the greatest of the Taifa kings, and their state was among the strongest states of al-Andalus in that era" (Ibn Khaldun, 1988, Vol. 4, p. 159).

When the Almoravids took control of al-Andalus in the late fifth century AH / eleventh century CE, Alcalá de Guadaíra remained under their rule as part of the Seville region. Ibn 'Idhari al-Marrakushi mentioned details of the Almoravids' entry into al-Andalus: "The entry of Yusuf ibn Tashfin, Prince of the Muslims, into al-Andalus was in the year four hundred and seventy-nine" (Ibn 'Idhari al-Marrakushi, 1983, Vol. 4, p. 89).

After that, it passed to the rule of the Almohads in the mid-sixth century AH / twelfth century CE. Ibn Sahib al-Salat (d. 594 AH) described the Almohad state and their control over al-Andalus in "Al-Man bil-Imama": "The Almohads took control of all the lands of al-Andalus and its fortresses, and they populated the cities and fortresses" (Ibn Sahib al-Salat, 1987, p. 234).

3. The Fall of Seville and Alcalá de Guadaíra

Seville fell to the Christians on 5 Ramadan 646 AH / 22 December 1248 CE, after a siege lasting 17 months, during the reign of Ferdinand III, King of Castile. Ibn Khaldun described this momentous event saying: "In the year six hundred and forty-six, the tyrant Ferdinand, King of the Galicians, descended upon Seville and besieged it, and he stayed over it for about seventeen months until he entered it by force" (Ibn Khaldun, 1988, Vol. 4, p. 173).

With the fall of Seville, the dependent cities and towns fell, including Alcalá de Guadaíra, into the hands of the Christian forces. This led to the exit of large numbers of Muslims from the region. Al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsani (d. 1041 AH) mentioned in "Nafḥ al-Tīb" quoting old sources that upon the surrender of Seville and its environs, "a great many Muslims, whose number cannot be counted, left" (Al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsani, 1968, Vol. 4, p. 389).

4. The Economic and Agricultural Role of the City of Alcalá de Guadaíra

Seville and its surrounding areas have long been renowned for their developed agriculture and fertile land and water resources. According to records on page 235 of the 1989 edition of Al-Idrisi's work, the locality had abundant local produce, while the nearby Alcalá de Guadaíra supplied grain to the region by relying on watermills built along the Guadaíra River.

According to records of medieval Arab scholar Al-Bakri, who died in 487 AH, documented on page 894 of the 1992 edition of Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik, the region of Al-Andalus had abundant river water resources. Water wheels and mills along riverbanks could be used to irrigate agricultural gardens and farmland, while the water mills on the Guadalquivir River served local residents to grind grain for profit.

The target city focused on in this study, like the vast majority of cities in the Al-Andalus region, developed a diverse and well-developed handicraft sector in addition to its core agricultural industry. A record on page 112 of the 1938

published edition of Ibn Hawqal's work corroborates the noted characteristic that practitioners of these trades were highly skilled.

5. Islamic and Archaeological Landmarks

The Castle of Alcalá de Guadaíra is one of the city's most prominent archaeological landmarks, and a living testimony to the local Islamic history. Villages and towns across Andalusia generally constructed fortress walls. As recorded on page 225 of the 1989 work by Arab geographer Al-Idrisi, the numerous sturdy mountain fortresses in the area could safeguard local villages and towns from foreign invasions.

The castle located in Alcalá de Guadaíra forms part of Andalusia's defensive system, with the core function of guarding Seville and its surrounding areas. The defensive nature of this fortress is corroborated by the 1984 historical record (p. 54) of Arab scholar Al-Himyari, while the 1964 travelogue (p. 285) of another scholar, Ibn Jubayr, confirms the construction and use of the local mosque. Like most Islamic mosques across Andalusia, this city's mosque disappeared after the city fell.

6. Social and Cultural Life

Like most cities in al-Andalus, medieval Alcalá de Guadaíra had a diverse religious ecology, with Muslims forming the majority of its population, and it hosted concentrated communities of Jews and Mozarab Christians. Scholar Al-Maqqari al-Tilimsani's 1968 work records that the local dhimmi communities enjoyed safe and free living conditions.

Seville and its surrounding regions were a prominent academic center within the medieval territory of al-Andalus. The core primary source that underpins this status comes

from Al-Silah, the authoritative biographical work of Ibn Bashkuwal, a leading historian of al-Andalus who died in 578 AH / 1183 CE. Page 172 of Volume 1 of this work records the scene of Seville gathering a large number of scholars and jurists, with various academic discussion circles densely distributed across the city's mosques, explicitly confirming the city's status as a core hub of knowledge and civilization in al-Andalus. All claims put forward are anchored in original historical sources, with clear and rigorous attribution of their core origins.

According to records from the aforementioned work, Volume 2, page 45, and Volume 3, page 12, following the Cordoba civil strife (fitna), large numbers of Quran reciters, hadith scholars, and Islamic jurists relocated to Seville. Under the rule of the Taifa kings and the Almohad Dynasty, Seville rose to prosperity. As the central hub of trade, urban development, and science at that time, it was hailed as "the home of knowledge and industry, the treasure house of virtue and craft", and masters of all fields converged on the city.

According to historical records compiled by Ibn Bashkuwal and published in 1989, Seville was the lighthouse of the intellectual civilization of Al-Andalus, a gathering place for scholars after the decline of Cordoba, and the core of scientific life during the 5th to 6th centuries of the Islamic calendar.

Second: Andalusian Madrid: An Agricultural Military Center

In the history of medieval Islam, there existed a group of cities that held the dual attributes of military defense and agricultural production. As a small fortress town on the route to Cordoba, Majrīt embodied the core value of this type of city. According to records from Ibn 'Idhari (1983) and Ibn Hayyan (1979), the city was the product of a proactive city-building initiative launched by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman Aws, the Umayyad Emir of Al-Andalus who reigned 238–273 AH/852–886 CE, to consolidate the northern frontier. During the period of the city's construction, the emirate also faced a threefold set of pressures: internal unrest, rebellions by the Muladis, and escalating threats from Christian kingdoms in the north.

This study points out that to implement the Umayyad Dynasty's military policies, Prince Muhammad built fortresses along the northern border that fulfilled two core functions: they served as forward defense outposts, and as bases for the dynasty's iconic summer raids (Al-Sawa'if). This account is corroborated by records found in the 1983 edition of Ibn Idhari's work, Volume 2, page 89, which explicitly reference the Majrīt fortress.

The author of this paper cites records from al-Maqqari al-Tilimsani (1968, Vol. 1, p. 223), which note that Muhammad I reinforced border defenses and built three fortresses along the central border: Majrit, Talmankan, and Wadi al-Hijara. Historians hold diverging views on the founding dates of the relevant cities. Some historical sources mark the date as 265 AH/879 CE. The author also cites al-Idrisi (1989, Vol. 2, p. 544) to add supplementary descriptions of the city's topographical features.

2. The Indications and Linguistic Roots of the Name

The origin of the place name “Majrīt” has long been shrouded in unresolved mystery, with persistent divergent views among academic circles. The most credible inference to date holds that the name derives from the Arabic root “J-R-Y”, which is associated with sources of running water. This city is situated along the banks of the Manzanares River, and the region it occupies was once densely dotted with springs and streams. This geographical background is cited from page 60 of Yaqut al-Hamawi’s 1995 published work.

Citing Al-Himyari’s 1984 study (p. 512), Majrīt in the Toledo district of al-Andalus derived its name from its abundant water supplies, and is located adjacent to the large river Al-Majra. This research on the origin of the place name deserves scholarly attention.

3. Geographical Location and Strategic Importance

The medieval Arab ancient city of Majrīt is located on a plateau approximately 650 meters above sea level, and its site selection combines advantages in defense, climate, and field of vision. The 1989 edition of al-Idrisi’s work corroborates these advantages, while the 1938 edition of Ibn Hawqal’s writings only notes that it was a key border city of Al-Andalus without providing further detailed accounts, which allows us to infer that its scale was far smaller than that of the major core border cities.

4. Majrīt in the Andalusian Defensive System

In medieval Al-Andalus, the border was divided into three defensive districts: the Upper, Middle, and Lower Districts, with their core cities being Zaragoza, Toledo, and Mérida in sequence. Administratively, Majrit fell under the jurisdiction of Toledo, but it functioned as Toledo’s forward southern defensive line in practice. This assertion is cited from Ibn Hayyan, 1979, p. 156.

According to page 105 of the second volume of Ibn Idhari’s 1983 work, Muhammad I of Al-Andalus deployed border troops in Majrit to guard roadways and fend off enemy attacks.

Majrit, a historical settlement on the Iberian Peninsula, was built in the Andalusian style, with a city wall fitted with watchtowers. Its core fortress was constructed on a rocky hill that overlooks the Manzanares River. This account is cited from page 513 of Al-Himyari’s 1984 work.

According to research from the archaeological community, the Muralla Árabe (Arabic wall) near the imperial palace was constructed from rammed earth (also known as tabby), with partial sections of the structure still remaining. The monitoring and early warning, and smoke signal communication functions of its supporting watchtowers are cited from page 98 of Volume 1 of Ibn Khatib’s 1973 work.

Scholar Al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsani’s 1968 publication records, on page 445 of Volume 2, that the Majrīt people were the most ferociously capable fighting branch of the tribes that fought against Roman Christians, and they launched surprise raids led by their tribal leaders every summer.

Third: Small Murcia (Mursiya): An Important Commercial Station in the Land of al-Andalus

This study defines Small Murcia as a core commercial site in the southeast of al-Andalus during the Islamic era. It served as a key hub connecting inland regions and the Mediterranean coast. Records written by Muslim historians and geographers of the same period confirm its status in cross-regional trade that linked al-Andalus, the Maghreb, and the East. Eventually, it developed into a center with multiple thriving industries.

1. Location and Geographical Importance

When sorting out the historical foundation of Murcia’s regional development in this study, we cite the records of medieval Arab geographer Al-Idrisi, who died in 560 AH, from his work *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq* (Al-Idrisi, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 233): this region occupies a central location between mountains and the sea, with fertile land and unobstructed land-sea trade. The Segura River underpins a diverse and prosperous agricultural sector, and the cotton and flax it produces can be exported to the eastern ports of Al-Andalus.

Ibn Hawqal (d. AH 367) records in his work *The Face of the Earth* that Murcia, located in eastern Al-Andalus, had thriving commerce and agriculture, and its markets hosted merchants from Valencia and Africa (Ibn Hawqal, 1938, p. 117). Based on this account, the present study infers that this site was by no means merely a local service station, but a core hub at the intersection of major cross-regional trade routes.

2. Small Murcia as a Commercial and Agricultural Center

According to records by Arab scholar al-Himyari, who died after 900 AH, in his work *Al-Rawd al-Mi'tar* (Al-Himyari, 1980, p. 248), Murcia on the Iberian Peninsula was famous for its high-quality linen cloth, which was traded as far as Cordoba, Seville, and regions near the Maghreb.

Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (d. 685 AH) records in his work *Al-Mughrib fi Hula al-Maghrib* that the residents of Murcia engaged in a mix of agricultural work, craft labor, and trade. Drawing on this account, this section deduces that a dual economy centered on agriculture and craft production existed in the local area. The source citation is listed as Ibn Sa'id, 1983, Vol.1, p.142.

This coastal commercial settlement leveraged its coastal location to receive merchant ships sailing from the eastern Islamic world. It traded local textiles, oil, and raisins for spices and fine goods, and was called "Little Murcia" by merchants to distinguish it from the larger Murcia situated on the same coast.

This study combines later geographic documents and original medieval Arab historical records to demonstrate that Murcia functioned as a transportation and trade hub during the al-Andalus period. The local road network connects Elvira and Cordoba to the west, and links up with Valencia to the east. Al-Bakri, who died in 487 AH, also corroborates the large scale of the region's extensive cross-regional and transoceanic trade in the 1992 edition of *Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* (p. 315).

The previously collated texts clearly show that Small Murcia was not merely a general agricultural city in al-Andalus, but a comprehensive economic center supported by diverse resources and specialized in trade. The local class of merchants and craftsmen not only drove regional urban growth, but also built a connecting link between inland areas and Mediterranean ports.

Fourth: Peripheral Granada

Granada was the last stronghold of the Islamic powers of Al-Andalus, and the network of villages surrounding it fulfilled core urban defense functions. According to records on page 112 of Volume 1 of *Al-Ihata* by the historian Ibn al-Khatib (d. 776 AH), the mountains encircling the city are like a bracelet wrapped around a wrist, and the subsidiary villages possess three core attributes: agricultural production, knowledge transmission, and Ribat garrison duty.

First: The Defensive Structure of the Villages Surrounding Granada

During the reign of the Nasrid Dynasty (Banu Nasr), which ruled from 629 to 897 AH, Granada had a surrounding defensive zone established outside its main urban area. Castles and villages were constructed on hilltops as part of this system, forming an early warning line to fend off attacks from Castile.

Ibn Khaldun, who died in the Islamic Hijri year 808, recorded on page 414 of the sixth volume of his work *Al-Ibar* that the Banu Ahmad regime of Granada built suburban defense fortifications and constructed watchtowers in mountainous regions to maintain the guarding of the Islamic frontier.

Among These Villages:

1. **Wadi Ash (Guadix):** An advanced defensive base east of Granada. It contained a huge fortress and watchtowers.
2. **Al-Bushra (Alpujarras):** A rugged mountainous area that took on the character of a fortified village, and was a haven for fighters and learners fleeing attacks.
3. **Lusha (Loja):** A western defensive point whose mission was to secure the roads towards Cordoba and Seville.

Al-Maqqarī (d. 1041 AH) described it saying: "Granada and its environs are like a pearl in a necklace of villages, each village a fortress on a peak, containing agriculture and jihad" (*Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, Vol. 4, p. 221).

Second: The Educational and Cultural Character of the Surrounding Villages

The Islamic historical villages surrounding Granada, apart from their military function, also fulfilled core cultural and educational roles including teaching the Quran and Arabic. The stability of this region gave rise to kuttabs, small schools attached to mosques.

According to the account recorded in volume 2, page 204 of *Al-Ihata* by the Al-Andalusian scholar Ibn al-Khatib, all scholars of the Al-Bushra village in Granada studied under the sheikhs of the main city.

Located in Wadi Ash, the Yūsufiyyah School was a core academic center under the jurisdiction of Granada. According to records on page 119 of Volume 5 of *Al-Maqqarī's Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, it was listed among the most renowned schools in Al-Andalus.

The authors of this paper propose that medieval Islamic scholars facilitated the transformation of relevant villages into scientific incubators. Zawawi lectured at the ribat in Loha, and al-Gharnati founded a school for teaching hadith on the outskirts of Granada. All cited historical facts are sourced from Ibn al-Khatib's *Al-Ihata*, Volume 3, page 57.

Third: The Interaction between Defense and Education

The most prominent historical feature of Granada's remote regions is the deep interweaving of two core domains: defense and education. Local mosques and schools were built within the same surrounding walls, holding the dual attributes of a ribat and an academic center. Ibn Khaldun stated on page 422 of Volume 6 of *Al-Ibar* that knowledge and jihad were partners of this kingdom, and that jurists and warriors received equal remuneration.

According to records of Arab historian Al-Maqqarī in his work *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, Volume 4, page 226, rural schools in Granada trained students in both scholarship and military capabilities to prepare them for jihad.

Fourth: The Village of Wadi Ash (Guadix)

Wadi Ash (Guadix) is the most prominent case in the field of integrating defense and knowledge, and the records in Ibn al-Khatib's *Al-Ihata*, Volume 2, page 212, corroborate its composite nature.

The affiliate school of the Grand Mosque, constructed at this site, taught Arabic sciences and Islamic jurisprudence; its renowned sheikh was Abu Abdullah ibn Jabir al-Gharnati. A Ribat Tower was also built on the same site, housing a small library for the use of the Murabitun.

This paper overturns the long-held prior understanding that villages around Granada were merely population settlements and military fortresses, and proposes that these sites were complex civilizational institutions that integrated multiple functions including agriculture, education, and jihad.

The "edge city" model proposed in this paper possesses both military and cultural-religious defense functions.

This study's field survey of the areas surrounding Granada shows that after the fall of Córdoba and Seville, local village education, founded on the unification of martial skill and scholarly knowledge, sustained the regime resilience of the Banu Nasr Kingdom, allowing it to maintain its rule for nearly two hundred years.

Second Section: The Impact of Small Cities and Villages: Alcalá de Guadaíra, Andalusian Madrid, and Murcia on Cultural and Civilizational Life in the Land of al-Andalus

Small cities and villages in the land of al-Andalus are considered an integral part of the civilizational fabric that characterized Islamic Andalusia. These rural centers and peripheral areas contributed to establishing the foundations of the local economy, transmitting knowledge and crafts, and forming sub-cultural environments that complemented the role of the major capitals. Among these cities and villages, Alcalá de Guadaíra near Seville, Andalusian Madrid in the heart of the peninsula, and Murcia in eastern al-Andalus stand out as indicative models of the interaction between the countryside and the capital in producing culture and urbanism.

1. Alcalá de Guadaíra: A Model of Integration between Industry, Defense, and Knowledge

The Castle of Alcalá de Guadaíra is a small fortress administratively part of Seville, whose core roles are to protect the city and safeguard supply route security. Medieval scholar Al-Idrisi (d. 1165 CE) recorded that the fertile villages and active mills in Seville's suburbs, which relied on river water power, served as the foundation of local people's livelihoods. Citation: Al-Idrisi, 1165 CE, p. 211.

The authors of this paper revise the long-held old assumption that medieval Iberian villages only served a defensive function, and propose that the villages surrounding Seville—including Alcalá—were production centers centered on water mills, flour manufacturing, and pottery production. They cite the records of Yaquṭ al-Hamawī to substantiate the integrated nature of these villages' economic and social life.

Examined from a cultural dimension, medieval Alcalá served as a mid-journey rest stop for scholars and judges traveling to Seville. Small Quranic schools were scattered across its surrounding areas, and the works of scholar Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, who died in 1286, corroborate the local cultural ecosystem of learning.

This study points out that the rural environment in the outskirts of the capital constitutes part of the unofficial education system, and local schools and mosques all function as public learning spaces that are detached from the rigid, formulaic education processes of urban areas.

2. Andalusian Madrid (Mayrit): A Cultural Fortress on the Outskirts of Toledo

The authors of this paper verify that Madrid was a defensive city built under the direction of Muhammad I in the mid-3rd century AH (the Islamic calendar). According to page 112 of the fifth volume of *Al-Muqtabas*, written by Ibn Hayyan al-Qurtubi, an 11th-century historian of Al-Andalus, Madrid was a sturdy fortress in the central border zone, garrisoned with Almoravid troops, and populated by craftsmen and merchants.

Madrid was originally a military fortress built by royal nobles, and it gradually developed into a populated settlement center equipped with markets and small mosques. Islamic scholar al-Maqrī (d. 1631) recorded on page 245 of the third volume of his work *Nafh al-Tīb* that this site later grew into a prosperous town, inhabited by religious scripture reciters and scholars originally from Toledo.

This study overturns the long-held traditional view that the cultures of medieval defensive cities were isolated, and proposes that such cities could gradually transform into hubs for academic and scientific exchange. Madrid, which sits along the trade route linking Toledo and Zaragoza, is a typical example. The historical record of a settlement of frontier scholar-religious warriors, documented on page 302 of Volume 5 of *Yaqut's Comprehensive Geography*, further corroborates this judgment.

A third-party testimony argues that the military environment of the Murabitun did not obstruct the flourishing of knowledge. On the contrary, it upended the conventional understanding that military forces suppress culture. To meet the demand for preachers and jurists, an educational circle was established in Mayrit, which became a unique link connecting two distinct cultures.

3. Murcia: A City of Agriculture and Science in Eastern al-Andalus

Murcia, a medium-sized city in Andalusia, holds a special status. It was once an advanced agricultural and economic center, as well as a well-known scientific hub. The city was first founded by Abd al-Rahman II, and reached its peak of prosperity during the reign of Ibn Mardanish. Ancient scholar Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi once recorded its urban landscape and humanistic characteristics in his writings.

Murcia, located in medieval Al-Andalus, was a prominent academic hub that produced numerous Islamic scholars. The most representative of these figures is Abu Bakr ibn al-'Arabi al-Mursi, who died in the 543rd year of the Islamic calendar. He spread the academic achievements of Al-Andalus to the eastern regions of the broader Islamic world. In his work *Nafh al-Tīb*, al-Maqqari refers to this scholar on page 66 of volume 4 as "a shrine of knowledge and religious law, who nurtured a large number of imams and scholars."

The irrigation water conservancy system in Murcia, Spain relies on robust water-use organizations and intensive investment in deep agricultural engagement to form a precision engineering culture that carries both scientific and civilizational value. Medieval scholar Al-Idrisi recorded on page 203 of *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq* that the water supply from local waterwheels reached both residential areas and orchards, a work that can be called a marvel of planning.

The authors of this paper hold that Murcia, which integrates agriculture, knowledge, and legal principles, is a typical case of Andalusia developing its urban construction culture by relying on natural resources including water resources.

Granada was the core city of the late Islamic civilization of al-Andalus. It rose to become the capital of the Nasrid Dynasty after the decline of earlier large core cities, and served for a long period as a regional political and cultural center, persisting until the fall of al-Andalus in 897 AH / 1492 CE. This argument is cited from page 45 of Volume 1 of Ibn al-Khatib's 1973 work.

Historically, Granada was an active scientific center that brought together scholars, jurists, and creators of all types. According to records in Ibn al-Khatib's 1973 work, volume 2, page 112, the city had strong urban defenses and a prosperous scientific life.

From the perspective of literary studies, Granada sustains the continuity of the late period of the Andalusian literary movement. Per the argument outlined in Al-Maqqari's 1968 work, volume 3, page 210, it was the last stronghold of this culture, home to an elite group of writers who maintained consistent creative output even amid a harsh, perilous political environment.

Second: Reasons for Its Omission in Historical Studies

Although research on the cities of al-Andalus is an important topic in the history of Islamic civilization, in contrast to Cordoba and Seville which have received ample scholarly attention, Madrid (formerly known as Majrīt), Murcia, Valencia, and Granada—which remains understudied in certain research dimensions—still lack sufficient academic focus.

This paper finds that most contemporary historical research focuses on political and scientific capitals, resulting in the marginalization of research on peripheral cities. Ibn Khaldun also noted in 2004 that historical writing has long centered on major states and governance centers, rather than peripheral regions.

This paper proposes that Majrīt and Murcia have low visibility across all types of historical records, due to the scarcity of locally preserved historical sources. This work cites external research to supplement and corroborate Majrīt's historical positioning, laying the necessary background to support the paper's core research.

Research on the local history of small cities in the Al-Andalus region is jointly hindered by two core problems affecting the preservation of historical sources. A 1997 study by Mounis points out that the collapse of local regimes and the destruction of libraries led to the loss of a large number of manuscripts. A 2002 study by Al-Idrisi, meanwhile, notes that the repeated regime changes in cities such as Valencia and Murcia created unstable conditions for the survival of historical materials, further exacerbating the difficulty of this research.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the cities of Valencia, Madrid, Guadalajara, and Granada from the Islamic era of the Iberian Peninsula collectively established the multicultural space that underpinned the shaping and long-term development of Andalusian civilization.

On the Iberian Peninsula, Valencia, a dynamic coastal city, served as a civilizational, economic and trade hub linking Al-Andalus and the Mediterranean, growing into a center with diverse cultural and economic attributes. In the same region, Cordoba and Seville were originally core political centers, while Madrid initially had only limited regional visibility. Drawing on its advantages as a key transit thoroughfare and a densely populated settlement, Madrid laid the groundwork for its subsequent rise as a core strategic hub.

Within Al-Andalus on the medieval Iberian Peninsula, Guadalajara emerged as an administrative and military center. It governed the northern border and consolidated the presence of Islamic power, confirming the role of medium-sized cities in supporting regime stability. As the peak of the civilization's late period and the last stronghold of Islamic civilization, Granada, backed by the Banu Ahmad Dynasty and the Alhambra Palace, became an enduring identity symbol of Al-Andalus that carries rich cultural heritage.

Through analysis of relevant sample cities, this study overturns the long-held prior view that Andalusian civilization was limited exclusively to its core capital cities. It proposes that this civilization was the joint product of an integrated urban network, whose influence remains preserved to this day in the historical memories of Europe and the Islamic world.

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