

Medieval andalusia and its ideological climate



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Abstract. The article analyzes the spiritual infrastructure on the basis of which the intellectual life of the Muslim Spain in the Middle Ages developed. The ideological influence of Malikism in the Muslim West, which was determined by the very nature of this law school and the method of solving legal and moral issues from the lawyers represented by it, is considered.

Key words: *Medieval Andalusia, the traditions of the Muslim East, Muslim Spain, the ideological in the Muslim West.*

Problem statement

In 756, Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mu'awiyah, who survived in the slaughter perpetrated by the Abbasids, the heir to the Umayyad throne, routed the troops of the last caliphal governor in Andalusia (Al-Andalus) Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Fihri on the bank of the Guadalquivir River and seized power in Córdoba. The independence of the Emirate of Córdoba (that became an independent caliphate in the 10th century) he declared marked the secession of that prosperous and, unfortunately for the Abbasids, uttermost province from the powerful Muslim state.

Analysis of recent publications on issues. Works by Hispano-Muslim scholars give a large body of data on the close ties of Andalusia with the broader Muslim world.

The purpose of the article. The purpose of the study is to analyze the spiritual development and intellectual life of Muslim Spain in the Middle Ages.

The statement of basic materials. Achievement of political independence by the Spanish Arabs did not mean a break with the traditions of the Muslim East. Despite the anti-Abbasid orientation of policies of the Umayyad Spain, emirs Hisham I (788-796) and Al-Hakam I (796-822) looked calmly at the influence of the Iraqi culture in their domain. The years of the rule of emir Abd ar-Rahman II (822-852) were marked by an increasing impact of the Abbasid caliphate on Andalusia. By the mid-9th

century, there arose in Córdoba an influential colony of migrants from North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Mecca and Medina also played a significant role in strengthening of cultural ties of the Muslim West with the Muslim East, since many Andalusians regularly performed the Hajj pilgrimage to the holy places of Islam. In the 11th century, after the dissipation of the Emirate of Córdoba, those contacts continued.

One of the constant factors maintaining contact of the Spanish Arabs with their eastern fellow tribesmen was that they constituted in Al-Andalus although governing but a minority: prestigious reasons compelled them to preserve the cultural traditions imported from the East and develop them both on their own and by assimilating the latest advances of civilization in the broader Muslim world.

Muslim Spain was one of the economically most developed countries of Europe, as well as of the Muslim world. In addition to the excellent natural conditions, high-end agricultural techniques and practices and irrigation systems built or modernized along eastern lines favored a rise in agricultural production and its early inclusion into the sphere of market relations here. The high level of agricultural equipment enabled Andalusians to master new crops and plants -- cotton, rice, saffron, sugarcane, lemon, orange, pomegranate, and mulberry trees. However, unlike the other parts of Europe, the economy of Al-Andalus was not of a so strongly pronounced agrarian nature – crafts and trade thrived there. Andalusian craftspeople, often united in guilds, produced paper, parchment, textiles, furs, metal ware, glassware, leather ware, ceramic ware and jewelry; architects and constructors erected structures amazing till the present day by their exquisite beauty and craftsmanship: mosques, palaces, bath-houses, aqueducts, and fountains. Towns specialized in individual branches of craft industry. "Toledo and Córdoba were weapons production centers, Xàtiva/Játiva -- that of paper, Málaga and Calatayud – that of ceramic ware, Abbas ben Firnas produced glassware, Zaragoza manufactured furs, Córdoba and Sevilla – jewelry items and luxury goods, Almería and Córdoba – silk goods, Zaragoza – flax linen. All these commodities partly became articles of exportation to Middle Eastern countries and North Spain" [2, p.35].

One can assess the extent of urbanization by the number of town dwellers: Córdoba numbered under the Umayyads 113 thousand houses, 21 suburbs, and 250,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants, Toledo - 37 thousand, and Almería 27 thousand (the largest west-European trade centers of the time comprised 8-10 thousand people). The development of Andalusian towns as centers of handicraft production and trade was stimulated by "shifts occurring in the economic relations in the country (growth of the class of small landowners and small land holders liberated from heavy forms of personal dependence)" and "inclusion of Spain into the sphere of economic relations of the Muslim world (with its relatively high level of

development of trade and commodity-money relations)" [2, p.34-35].

Material progress of Andalusian towns went hand-in-hand with the development of their spiritual life. In Al-Andalus, free schools for children of needy parents and special educational establishments for girls were set up. Young people graduated from their schools in Córdoba, Sevilla, Granada or Toledo oftentimes went to Mecca, Medina, Cairo or Bagdad to continue education; in their homeland, they had such a first-rate top-type training center as a kind of "university" under the Great Mosque of Córdoba, which could be matched perhaps the similar educational institutions Al-Azhar in Cairo and Nizamia in Bagdad. Students of that "university" learnt mathematics, astronomy and medicine in addition to theology and jurisprudence.

Accordingly, the thirst for books in Andalusians was great. Caliph Al-Hakam II (961-976) is considered an outstanding bibliophile in the history of Al-Andalus. This caliph ordered to bring fundamental works concerning ancient and modern sciences from Bagdad, Egypt and other places in the East. The library collected by Al-Hakam II comprised at least 400 thousand volumes, and its catalog containing only titles of the books and names of the authors comprised no less than 44 lists 50 sheets each. That Spanish monarch maintained a whole network of agents, brokers and copyists who carried out bibliographic searches throughout the Muslim world. In Córdoba itself, a numerous staff of scribes, binders and illustrators worked on enriching that excellent library containing rare manuscripts. Soon, all aristocracy of the capital came to imitate the sovereign forming well-stocked private libraries.

Such was the spiritual infrastructure on whose basis intellectual life of Muslim Spain developed. One would think that it was sufficiently prepared to ensure that Andalusians could promptly assimilate and enrich with their works the achievements of the Muslim East in the area of philosophical activities in the same way as they did in other fields of spiritual production. But in fact, everything was different. Philosophy and related science disciplines urged their way overcoming vehement opposition of the "theologized" society in the persons of faqihs-legal experts.

Zealots of al-huda (orthodoxy) of this category in the Muslim world generally were in bad repute as people of constricted intellectual outlook plus prone to self-advancement and intrigues. Al-Jahiz wrote with his natural sarcasm on account of the distinction between faqihs and ulemas: "We learn by experience that if someone studies hadiths and is engaged in interpretation of the Quran for fifty years, then he may not nonetheless be numbered among lawyers and cannot obtain a judicial appointment. He may achieve it only if he studied the works by Abu Hanifa and his ilk, learnt by heart practical judicial formulas, and he can do it in one-two years. Soon thereafter, such a man may be appointed a judge of a town or even of a whole province" [3, pp.144-145].

In Al-Andalus, official jurisprudence was represented by Malikis – the followers of Malik ibn Anas (died in 795), Medinian expert in law, author of "Al-Muwatta'" – one of the earliest writings on Mohammedan law. Malik ibn Anas recognized the Quran, Sunna and in some instances common law of Medina too as jurisprudence sources. He also acknowledged the principle of *istislah* (i.e., the possibility to modify hadiths in case they conflict with the interests of the community) and the principle of *ijma'*.

The originality of the ideological influence of Malikism in the Muslim West was determined by the very nature of this law school and the method of solving legal and moral issues by the lawyers who represented it. According to G. F. Hourani, Andalusian and Maghrebian faqihs-malikis "did not feel the need for any system of theological dogmas, more clear than the one that should be sought in the Holy Writings themselves. The range of their interests is summarily outlined in the statement ascribed to their teacher Malik: "Knowledge is threefold: the clear Book of God, Traditions (Sunna) and "I am not knowledgeable"" [6, pp. 6-7].

Perhaps, the clearest illustration of intolerance of Andalusian Malikis to any form of independent thought – not only philosophical but also theological – can be found in one remarkable fact dated to the age of the rule of Almoravid caliph Ali ibn Yusuf (1106-1143): once, the inhabitants of Córdoba were notified of the forthcoming public burning of the treatise by Abu Hamid

Al-Ghazali "The Revival of Religious Sciences"; everyone who dared keep at home at least fragments of his works faced a death penalty with confiscation of property.

Speculative theology of *mutakallimūn* and the teaching of Al-Ghazali became the object of particularly fierce attacks on the part of Malikis during the period of the rise of the Almohad movement, the thought leader and organizer of which was the newly appeared mahdi – Ibn Tumart. It is just the activities of Ibn Tumart and the rise of the Almohads that led to certain liberalization of intellectual life in Al-Andalus and thereby contributed to the advent of a short period of intense work of philosophical thought of Spanish Arabs. But even under those circumstances Andalusian philosophers, to legalize their activities, had to seek support from enlightened rulers. Such support was, however, feeble, since given the absolute power of Maliki lawyers the position of the rulers themselves was highly unstable. The Andalusian rulers, who fell under the influence of secular urban literature, imbued with an appropriate value system, favored themselves its even greater blossom, but "having seen that the development of that literature went beyond the prescribed limits, at times took measures aimed at suppressing further diffusion of freethinking. At the same time, they were not in the least confused that such measures could run counter to their own convictions or destroy a philosopher they treated kindly" [5, p. 33]. There were times, Al-Maqqari writes, "when the sultan himself too, in order to win affection of the people, ordered to kill the poor fellow or issued a decree to burn philosophical books everywhere. That was one of the means used by Al-Mansur during the first years after seizure of the throne to gain popularity among the lower orders, although he did not deprive himself of a pleasure to pursue forbidden sciences in secret" [4, vol. 8, p.31].

In the same way that it was the case in the east of the Muslim world, spread of natural-science knowledge in Al-Andalus did not just precede but prepared and logically anticipated the emergence in enlightened people of a craving for philosophy as their worldview and methodological foundation. Philosophy in Al-Andalus developed based on efflorescence of medicine and astronomy, since caliphs catered to both. Some of

Andalusian scholars who won renown in either of the above-mentioned sciences were simultaneously brokers of philosophical culture; this regards, in particular, such physicians as Al-Kirmani, Abu Ja'far Ahmed ibn Khamis, and such astronomers as Ibn as-Samina, Maslama al-Majriti and Az-Zahrawi.

Contemporary researchers of Arab culture in Spain confirm the profound observation stated by Ibn Tufayl in the preliminary pages of his allegoric work according to which "gifted people who grew in Andalusia, before science of logic and philosophy spread there had devoted their lives to mathematical sciences and achieved in them a high degree of knowledge but could not do more than that. Afterwards, they were followed by another generation who somewhat surpassed them in knowledge of logic. Those people studied it but it did not lead them to true perfection... Then, one more generation superseded them, more skilled in research, closer to the truth" [1, p.333]. That generation also included our philosopher, whose creative work was immediately very highly appraised by the author of "Hayy ibn Yaqzan" noting that in his time there was "nobody else with a more inquisitive mind, a more sound view, and a more just opinion" [1, p.333].

Natural-science and philosophical knowledge reached Andalusia both through supplies of books and "brain exodus" from the Muslim East, and due to trips there of Andalusians themselves. It is known, for example, that "The Thought of the Brethren of Purity/Ikhwan as-Safa'" was brought to Spain by mentioned above Abu al-Hakam al-Kirmani (died in 1063), who made a trip to Middle Eastern countries and studied medicine and mathematics in Kharan. The trip to the East of Yahya ibn Yahya Ibn Taymiyyah well-versed in various branches of knowledge dates back to the time of Al-Farabi. Celebrated in Al-Andalus as an unrivalled physician, Muhammad ibn Abdun al-Jabali in 952-965 wandered Middle Eastern towns and studied logic under Abu Sulayman as-Sijistani. Sons of Yunus al-Harani Ahmad and Umar, having arrived in Bagdad in 935, studied sciences under the supervision of Thabit ibn Sinan (died in 975) – the grandson of famous scholar Thabit ibn Qurra.

We find the first manifestations of philosophical thought in Muslim Spain, however, in an earlier period preceding the bloom of the philosophical school of Middle-Eastern peripatetics. This is about the works by Ibn Masarra.

Muhammad ibn Masarra was born in Córdoba in 883, lived in North Africa and in the Muslim East where he studied the views and beliefs of Mu'tazilites and Sufis. Back in Córdoba during the rule of Abd ar-Rahman III, he began to popularize a philosophical system he developed; his audience consisted of a group of personally attached to him disciples with whom he had to hide from Malikis in one of the distant quarters of Sierra de Córdoba. There he died in 931. The ideas of the Pseudo-Empedocles going back mainly to the traditions of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism formed the basis for his teaching. We find in the doctrine attributed to the Pseudo-Empedocles, along with the Plotinus' concept of generated spiritual matter, the idea of two antagonistic cosmic principles -- love (friendship) and hate (enmity) of which the first is represented by a deity maintaining the unity of the world, while the second one serves a principle importing manifoldedness and fragmentation into the universe. Both principles reside in primal matter, the deity, as an absolutely simple essence, permeating the world like a pure light. The Pseudo-Empedocles was accredited with discrimination of five kinds of substances: primal matter, intellect, soul, nature and secondary matter.

Developing this doctrine, Ibn Masarra erected the following propositions. God is a single and simple principle, which can be apprehended only through intuition. All things stem from it via a series of emanations forming the five above-listed substances. The structure of the world order is described symbolically: five substances represent five pillars on which the world rests; the divine principle is the roof of the universe; its creations showing the divine essence of the Universe are walls; this very divine essence constitutes the privy chamber. God's throne symbolizes primal matter giving rise to spiritual and material essences, which have dual being – hidden and obvious. Prior to the creation of the world, God abode in a shapeless cloud – in primal matter stemming

from the deity due to the fullness of its being; receiving the divine light, this cloud gives birth to the universal intellect endowed with unlimited knowledge of everything that was, is and will be; the universal intellect gives rise to the universal soul from which pure nature originates – the last stage of emanation of the divine light. The fullness of God-emanated being is so great that through nature it begets darkness and thus secondary matter as well that forms the basis of the corporeal world.

The activities of Ibn Masarra were a unique phenomenon in intellectual life of Al-Andalus of the 10th century. The works by Ibn Hazm, who lived in the next century, are also marked by certain uniqueness; his theological studies were infused with passion for belles-letters and political struggle. Ibn Hazm became especially famous in the field of Zahiri jurisprudence as the author of the interpretation of the prophetic tradition meant to "remove" contradictions found in sacred texts. Together with other Zahiriyah and Hanbalites who preceded them, Ibn Hazm accepted only that form of *ijma'*, which limited itself to the concordant opinion of the Companions of the Prophet. Ibn Hazm attacked Malikis because they loosely interpreted sacred texts conforming to a given political situation but when the political climate changed they advanced new interpretations conflicting with the previous ones.

A consistent fideist, Ibn Hazm was the principled opponent of philosophy standing against, in particular, the method of allegorical interpretation of the Quran (Batiniyah) it used. He denied the possibility of coming to know the essence of God, motives for his actions, will, their comparability with something in the world of his creations and at the same time claimed that the Most High subordinated nature to human knowledge having endowed people with feelings, first intelligible principles and sacred texts. Relying upon them, man's reason is able to prove consubstantiality of God, creation of the world by him and man's absolute subjection to his power. Ibn Hazm developed those ideas arguing against Mutazilites, Asharites, Dahrites, dualists and representatives of other ideological schools whom he subjected to critical review in special sections of his treatise "Kitab al-Fisal".

This book, similar in content to the famous doxographic work by Ash-Shahrastani, is of interest as an indicator of the scope of knowledge by Andalusian Muslims of beliefs and doctrines different from the religion they practiced.

The activities of Ibn Hazm as a poet and prose-writer are associated with the beginning of the period of Arabic-Spanish literature's gaining a foothold, i.e., the period of independent creative work, which succeeded in the 11th century to the age of imitation of eastern models and patterns. Similar stages can be also noted in the development of philosophical thought of Al-Andalus, and although the period of its rise corresponding to the period of renovation in literature, comes some later, nevertheless, its coming was prepared as far back as by the time of Ibn Hazm.

The latter mentions the names of two philosophers – Said ibn Fathun and Al-Mazhiji (whom he called his teacher) -- in one of his treatises praising the merits and values of Andalusians.

The creative work of two more scholars engaged in philosophy dates back to the mid-to-late 11th and early-to-mid 12th centuries. Ibn as-Sid al-Batalyausi (1052-1129) was one of them. The underlying principles of his philosophical views come down to the following: God is an absolute timeless and spaceless essence, which can be characterized either negatively, through denying it all imperfections inherent in the created objects, or positively, by ascribing it all human perfections in the superlative; all things come from God through emanation, and he precedes his creations just as unity precedes all other numbers; in the course of emanation, nine cosmic minds flow from God (associated with angels), the last of which – an active intellect – rules the sublunary sphere and begets human souls endowing them with the ability to cognize their own essence and other objects detached from matter; man is a microcosm; human knowledge has as its objects first mathematical objects, next -- physical ones, then the active intellect and the other cosmic intellects and, finally, God as the necessarily existing being and the cause of all things. In a small treatise "Kitab al-Masail," Al-Batalyausi suggests that religion and philosophy do not differ from each other either

in their subject matter or in their purpose – they seek the same truth but in different ways and addressing different human capabilities.

The other of those scholars was Abu-s-Salt Umayya ibn Abi-s Salt (1067- 1151), a poet and man of letters, who was also engaged in medicine, astronomy, geometry, music and logic. In his book "Taqwim az-Zihn," Abu-s-Salt gives a brief abstract of science of logic as a means "straightening out" the intellect in order to prepare it to study other sciences. The order of presenting the material in this work corresponds to the content of the "Isagoge/Introduction" by Porphyry of Tyre, "Categories," the book "On Interpretation" and "Analytics" by Aristotle.

Aside from some minor details, Al-Batalyausi and Abu-s-Salt did not bring anything particularly new to the ideas of Middle eastern philosophers that inspired them, mainly those of the "Brethren of Purity", Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. However, those scholars, just as some of their Andalusian forerunners, went beyond simple acquisition of the philosophical tradition they inherited but tried to write independent works thereby anticipating creative development of philosophy, the initial stage of which they witnessed in their lifetime.

In Al-Andalus and North Africa, Sufism also received a significant development effort. At the beginning, it was represented by enthusiasts-ascetics having knowledge at best in the area of theology but by no means well-versed in philosophical issues. "Orthodox" Sufis, even if they were simply illiterate people (and possibly exactly due to this fact), were highly esteemed in theological circles.

In the late 11th century, a Sufi school emerged in Almería already with a certain theoretical platform. The ideas of that school spread from there all over Al-Andalus, especially in Sevilla, Granada and Algarve (Portugal). Abu al-Abbas Ibn al-Urruf (or Ibn al-Arif) was the most illustrious of the Almerian Sufis; Abu-l-Hakam Ibn Barrajan was that of the Sevillian ones, and Abu Bakr al-Mayurki – of the Cordovan ones. Ibn Barrajan and some other Sufis used the doctrine of Al-Ghazali to substantiate their views. With time, their speeches and statements raised suspicions of the Almoravid authorities: Ibn al-Urruf and Ibn Barrajan were summoned to Morocco and committed to prison where both of them died in 1141. Al-Mayurki took refuge in Bidjaya. The leader of Sufis in Algarve continued his activities until 1151.

Conclusion

The analysis of the spiritual infrastructure on the basis of which the intellectual life of Muslim Spain developed in the Middle Ages shows how the philosophy of the sciences that flourished in the Muslim East has taken root so late and in such a short period of time. It came there virtually in the last turn – later than natural-science disciplines before which local scholarship centered mainly on jurisprudence and philology.

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