

THE ROLE OF CALIPH AL-HAKAM AL-MUSTANŞIR IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN CORDOVA, ANDALUSIA

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Caliph Al-Hakam II in advancing Islamic education in Cordova, Andalusia, during the golden age of Islamic civilization. Using a library research method and a qualitative approach, the findings indicate that Al-Hakam II made a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge through the establishment of the University of Cordova as a global intellectual center, the construction of a major library containing approximately 400,000 books, and the encouragement of translations of Greek and Latin works into Arabic. He also invited scholars from various regions to teach and engage in scholarly discussions, as well as provided free education for the community. His visionary policies transformed Cordova into the largest center of knowledge and culture in Europe in the tenth century CE, while simultaneously exerting a major effect on the rise of Western civilization. The leadership of Al-Hakam II demonstrates that education is the primary foundation for building an advanced Islamic civilization.

Keywords: Al-Hakam II, Islamic Education, Cordova, Andalusia, Islamic Civilization.

INTRODUCTION

Historians have comprehensively documented the dynamics of the development of Islamic civilization, particularly during the period from the mid-eighth century CE to the early thirteenth century CE. This period is known as the Islamic Golden Age, characterized by significant progress in various strategic fields such as science, politics, economics, and technology. These achievements did not originate solely from the eastern center of Islamic power, namely the Abbasid Caliphate based in Baghdad, but also from the western region through the Umayyad Caliphate centered in Cordova. Both powers made major contributions to shaping the foundations of global civilization and expanding Islamic intellectual influence in the Western world.

The rapid development of Islamic civilization in Spain, particularly in Andalusia,

was closely related to supportive geographical and economic factors. Fertile land, abundant natural resources, and high economic stability formed an important foundation for societal progress. These conditions also encouraged the emergence of Muslim thinkers and scholars who contributed to various fields of knowledge.

By the end of the tenth century, Cordova had emerged as one of the leading intellectual centers in Europe, attracting seekers of knowledge from various parts of the world. Scholarly activities in Andalusia reached their peak during the reign of Caliph 'Abd al-Rahman al-Nashir and his son, al-Hakam al-Mustansir. These two rulers, particularly al-Hakam, were known for providing extraordinary support for the advancement of education and the development of knowledge. All levels of education experienced significant development under the leadership of al-Hakam, who was recognized for his visionary thinking. Public literacy increased dramatically, with nearly the entire population able to read and write. This condition stood in stark contrast to Christian Europe at the same time, where even elites and nobility were often illiterate, except for those from clerical circles.

With the support of intellectually minded leaders, Andalusia was able to produce original ideas from Muslim scholars. Cities such as Cordova, Seville, Granada, and others developed into leading centers of science and culture in Europe. The higher educational institutions established in these cities represented the strong commitment of the Islamic world to education and made a significant contribution to the advancement of European civilization during the Middle Ages. Islamic civilization in Andalusia was proven to have formed an extraordinary cultural order that played a crucial role as a bridge in transmitting the Greek-Arab intellectual heritage to the Western world.

Previously, in a journal entitled *The Development of Islamic Education in Andalusia*, Nurul Hidayah argued that Islam once recorded a glorious chapter in the history of world civilization, particularly through its contribution to education. Islamic civilization in Andalusia became an important medium for transmitting knowledge from the Greek-Arab tradition to Europe, especially in the twelfth century. Interest in education and philosophy began to grow as early as the eighth century CE, specifically during the reign of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman of the Umayyad dynasty (832–886). The development of Islamic education during this period encompassed institutional aspects as well as the development of educational materials and curricula. Many educational institutions were established, reflecting a strong commitment to the development of knowledge. Islam successfully transcended the geographical boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula and emerged as a global civilization that was not only advanced but also highly superior in various aspects of life. Based on these phenomena, the author intends to conduct an in-depth study on the role of Caliph al-Hakam II al-Mustansir bi-Allah in Islamic education in Cordova, Andalusia.

METHOD

This study is a library research using the historical method, as the primary sources are derived from literature such as articles, books, and journals relevant to the role of Caliph al-Hakam II. The approach employed is a qualitative approach, in accordance with the characteristics of the data examined. The subject of this study is Caliph al-Hakam al-Mustansir, while the object of the study is the role of Caliph al-Hakam II in the development of Islamic education in Andalusia. The main research instrument is the researcher, who determines the focus of the study, selects and evaluates data sources, analyzes and interprets the data, and formulates conclusions. Data collection was carried out through documentation, while data validity was tested using source triangulation techniques. The data analysis technique applied is historical analysis, which includes four stages: source collection, source criticism, historical analysis, and historical writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Al-Hakam II

Al-Hakam II, whose full name was Abu al-‘Ash al-Muntashir bi-Allah al-Hakam, was the second caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty in Cordova, Andalusia. He ruled for fifteen years, from 961 to 976 CE. Al-Hakam was the son of ‘Abd al-Rahman III, the first Umayyad caliph in Spain. Al-Hakam II, the only son of ‘Abd al-Rahman III and Mujran, was born on 13 January 915. He ascended the caliphate in the month of Ramadan 350 AH, corresponding to November 961 CE, following the death of his father in the same year. His accession to power occurred when Islamic civilization in Spain was at the peak of its glory and prosperity. Al-Hakam II married Subh, a woman from Cordova of Basque origin who held the status of a concubine. From this marriage, they had two sons: ‘Abd al-Rahman, who died at a young age, and Hisham II, who later succeeded his father as caliph.

Al-Hakam II became caliph in the month of Ramadan at the age of 45, after being directly appointed by his father, ‘Abd al-Rahman III, as his successor. He was known as a peace-loving figure and earned the title “the Scholar Caliph” due to his deep love of knowledge. Al-Hakam II ruled from 961 to 976 CE and passed away on 1 October 976 CE. He was recognized as a just, wise, and compassionate leader. In governing his state, Al-Hakam II implemented Islamic teachings in a disciplined manner and encouraged the application of the Sunnah throughout his territories. As a form of social concern, he regularly gave alms to the poor after every Friday prayer. His reign was marked by domestic stability and a tolerant attitude toward followers of other religions, allowing society to enjoy full religious freedom.

The Establishment of the University of Cordova

The University of Cordova was founded by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nashir and was

located within the main mosque, which had been equipped with various supporting facilities such as dormitories for students and teachers, access to clean water, and other amenities. The construction of this institution required a cost of 261,537 dinars, equivalent to approximately 2.4 trillion rupiah in present value. As a form of commitment to the development of knowledge, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nashir provided scholarships not only for Muslim students but also for non-Muslims who wished to pursue education. Since its establishment, the University of Cordova became a center of intellectual advancement, with various disciplines developing rapidly, including astronomy, geography, chemistry, natural history, mathematics, medicine, and law. Graduates of this institution obtained diplomas and academic degrees that held a high reputation among scholars, particularly in the region of Andalusia.

Each year, the University of Cordova admitted thousands of students, and the diplomas issued by this institution provided significant opportunities for graduates to occupy honorable positions within the governmental structure. Universities in Cordova also functioned as centers of scholarly interaction, serving as gathering places for intellectuals and academics. In public reading halls, original poetry readings and speeches delivered by faculty members were frequently held. The University of Cordova offered several major fields of study, such as astronomy, mathematics, medicine, theology, and law. According to the records of ‘Ubadah, the number of enrolled students at that time reached approximately one thousand. The curriculum included disciplines such as theology, Islamic law, medicine, chemistry, philosophy, and astronomy. At the main gate of the university, there was an inscription containing a philosophical motto: “The world is sustained by four things: the teaching of wisdom, the justice of rulers, the worship of the righteous, and unwavering courage.”

The University of Cordova gradually achieved a distinguished reputation and became a source of pride for the Muslim community, standing alongside two other renowned educational institutions: Al-Azhar in Cairo and the Nizamiyah in Baghdad. Its academic excellence successfully attracted seekers of knowledge from various regions, including both Muslim and non-Muslim students from different European countries.

It is undeniable that the presence of Islam in Andalusia became an important milestone in the history of civilization, culture, and education between the eighth century and the late thirteenth century. Amid the grandeur of that era, the University of Cordova stood as a symbol of Andalusian intellectual glory, making it famous throughout Europe. This institution of higher education grew alongside the Mosque of ‘Abd al-Rahman III and developed into a leading university comparable to Al-Azhar University in Cairo and the Nizamiyah University in Baghdad. The University of Cordova became a primary destination for young generations devoted to knowledge from various parts of the world, including Asia, Europe, and Africa.

The Role of Al-Hakam in Islamic Education in Cordova

Al-Hakam II played a major role in advancing Islamic education in Andalusia.

He initiated the establishment of various educational institutions as places of learning for young generations. He also enriched knowledge by constructing a very large library, which became one of the largest in the Islamic world at that time. In addition, Al-Hakam II opened the way for the entry of knowledge from various nations by supporting the translation of foreign books into Arabic. He also invited scholars from different regions to come to Cordova to engage in discussions, write, and teach. Through all these efforts, Cordova became a renowned center of knowledge and Islamic civilization.

The Development and Expansion of Educational Institutions

During the reign of Al-Hakam II, the Great Mosque of Cordova developed into an educational center known as the University of Science (al-Jami'ah al-'Ilmiyyah), a place of learning open to both Muslims and non-Muslims from various parts of the world. Al-Hakam II enhanced the quality of this university, transforming it into the most renowned educational institution in the Islamic world, even surpassing Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Nizamiyyah in Baghdad. The University of Cordova became the largest center of knowledge in Europe, where various branches of learning such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, and law were taught by prominent scholars. Through this university, Arabic sciences spread to Europe and gave rise to many renowned scholars such as Al-Zahrawi, Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl, Muhammad al-Ghafiqi, Ibn Rushd, al-Idrisi, and others, who made significant contributions to the development of world knowledge.

The University of Cordova made the mosque the center of learning activities, complete with dormitory facilities for students and teachers, access to clean water, and other amenities. The construction of these facilities required approximately 261,567 dinars, equivalent to around 2.6 trillion rupiah in present value. Students from various parts of Europe came to study under leading physicians and scholars who taught there. Due to its major role in disseminating knowledge and culture, the University of Cordova was recognized as a cultural center of Europe in its time.

Al-Hakam II was known as a scholar who strongly supported the development of knowledge. He provided numerous gifts to scholars and established 27 free schools in the capital as a manifestation of his commitment to education. Under his leadership, the University of Cordova developed rapidly and became one of the most outstanding educational institutions in the world during its time.

The Development of the Great Library of Cordova

The reign of Caliph Al-Hakam II (961–976 CE) marked a golden age for Arabic literature in Spain. He had a profound passion for collecting books and succeeded in establishing the largest library in Europe for several centuries. As printing technology was not yet available at that time, Al-Hakam II dispatched his representatives to various cities such as Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, and Alexandria to purchase or manually copy books. He managed to collect approximately 400,000 books, and the catalog containing only the titles and authors reached forty four volumes, each

consisting of around fifty pages. He was also known as an active reader who frequently wrote personal notes in the books he read. Even centuries later, these books remained in demand because the notes were considered to have come from a true scholar.

Under the leadership of Caliph Al-Hakam II, the Library of Cordova developed rapidly and became the largest center of Islamic culture in the world at that time. He opened access to scholars and teachers from within and outside Spain to enrich the available collection of knowledge. One of the main objectives of establishing this library was to demonstrate the superiority of Islamic civilization and to encourage interest, and even conversion, among non Muslims through the strength of knowledge and culture.

Caliph Al-Hakam also established public libraries in various regions as part of his effort to disseminate knowledge. These libraries became the forerunners of mosque libraries, as almost every mosque at that time possessed diverse book collections, ranging from religious texts to works on culture and general knowledge. Scholars competed to endow their works to mosque libraries so that they could be preserved and utilized by seekers of knowledge. Among all existing libraries, the Library of Cordova was known as the largest and the finest. Because Andalusian society did not have specific venues for political or entertainment activities as in Greek and Roman traditions, books became the primary means of broadening intellectual horizons. This condition encouraged the growth of a strong literacy culture and the widespread establishment of libraries. In Cordova itself, there were approximately seventy public libraries that were open and accessible to all levels of society.

The development of the Library of Cordova cannot be separated from the significant role of Caliph Al-Hakam II as a leader who deeply loved knowledge. During his reign, Cordova became the leading city in Andalusia in terms of book production, distribution, and consumption, as its society had a strong enthusiasm for reading and learning. This love for books reflected a high intellectual spirit shared by both the people and their leader, which led Cordova to be widely recognized as a center of knowledge development. In line with this spirit, Al-Hakam II sought to complete the library collection by sending envoys to cities such as Damascus, Alexandria, and Baghdad to search for, purchase, and copy important books, even at very high costs. One notable example was the purchase of Kitab al-Aghani by Abi al-Faraj al-Isfahani, a work containing history and songs, for a price of one thousand dinars, equivalent to approximately forty eight million rupiah. This illustrates that Al-Hakam II did not hesitate to invest substantial funds to enrich the library and support the development of knowledge.

The Translation of Books

The tradition of translation had begun in the early period of the Umayyad Dynasty I in Damascus, Syria. According to Franz Rosenthal, as cited in Anis (2015:152),

the first translation was carried out by Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Muawiyah, the grandson of Muawiyah, around 683 CE. He conducted translations on his own initiative rather than under an official order from the caliph. The earliest works he translated were texts on chemistry from Hebrew into Arabic, as well as books on medicine and astrology. In Europe, the cities of Toledo and Palermo became major centers of translation, collecting numerous Arabic sources with the assistance of Jewish translators and through close relations between Christian and Islamic communities. To support these activities, the Toledo School of Translation was established under the leadership of Raymond, with the purpose of translating Arabic books into Latin. Several prominent translators emerged from this institution, such as Ibn Daud from the Jewish community, known as Avendath, who translated works on astronomy and astrology into Latin.

During the reign of Al-Hakam II, the city of Cordova became a gathering place for scholars, translators, philosophers, and scientists from various fields of knowledge, making it a leading intellectual center in Europe. Prominent figures such as Abu al-Qasim al-Zahrawi, a renowned physician and surgeon, were actively involved in the intellectual environment of the court. One of Al-Hakam II's most important measures in advancing knowledge was his encouragement of large scale translations of books from Latin and Greek into Arabic. To realize this effort, he formed translation teams consisting of Muslims, Mozarab Christians, and Jews, who worked collaboratively in copying, translating, and rewriting important works. This effort aimed to preserve the cultural and intellectual heritage of humanity so that it could be transmitted to future generations.

Inviting Scholars

Caliph Al-Hakam II actively invited scholars to teach at the University of Cordova, including Ibn al-Qutaybah, a renowned historian known for his work *Tarikh Iftitah al-Andalus*. The excellence and reputation of this university attracted many seekers of knowledge from various parts of the world. Not only Muslim students, but also Christian students came to study there. They came from Andalusia, Africa, Asia, and Europe, demonstrating that the University of Cordova had become an open, inclusive, and globally influential center of education.

Caliph al-Hakam al-Mustansir was known as a leader who highly valued and honored the profession of scholars. This was reflected in his willingness to purchase scholarly works at very high prices as a form of appreciation for intellectuals. He also demonstrated social concern by inviting teachers to teach the Qur'an to underprivileged children around the Jami' Mosque and the Cordova Library. These teachers were not only provided with fixed salaries but also received a bequest from the caliph to continue teaching knowledge with dedication and sincerity, solely seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT.

Al-Hakam's support for knowledge attracted many professors and scholars from various disciplines to come to Cordova. Their presence fostered the

development of multiple fields of knowledge during that period, such as language and literature, philosophy, education and intellectual studies, religion, and the natural sciences. Cordova thus became a dynamic and inclusive intellectual center, reflecting Al-Hakam's commitment to building an Islamic civilization grounded in knowledge, justice, and humanity.

The Contribution of Islamic Education in Andalusia to Contemporary Islamic Education

Education plays a significant role in promoting the advancement of a nation. When the development of the education sector is carried out seriously and sustainably, in the long term the country and its government are projected to develop into a nation that excels in various aspects of life. Even leaders of the most advanced countries in the world emphasize that investment in education is a crucial factor in achieving national progress. The current underdevelopment experienced by the Muslim community is due to the lack of continuity between mastery of knowledge and its application in real life.

The development of Islamic education in Andalusia had a profound effect on Islamic civilization as a whole. One form of its contribution was the emergence of various innovative scholarly works across multiple fields of knowledge, including astronomy, mathematics, medicine, history, music, philosophy, religious studies, and others. The golden age of Islamic education during this period was marked by high intellectual productivity. In terms of physical development, magnificent architectural structures emerged, such as palaces, mosques, public bathhouses, hospitals, roads, irrigation systems, and educational institutions designed with remarkable Islamic architectural elements. Some monumental examples include the Great Mosque of Cordova, the Al-Zahra Palace, and other government buildings. In the political realm, the administration demonstrated openness by encouraging participation from all social groups in the development of the global education system and by implementing principles of equality between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The contributions of Islamic educational advancement in Andalusia to contemporary Islamic civilization include:

1. **Scholarly Achievements:** The production of phenomenal works across various fields of knowledge such as astronomy, mathematics, medicine, history, music, philosophy, and religious studies. These works enriched the high intellectual heritage of Islamic civilization at that time.
2. **Physical Development:** The construction of magnificent physical structures including palaces, impressive mosques, healthcare facilities in the form of hospitals, public bathhouses, road networks, irrigation systems, and educational institutions designed with extraordinary Islamic architectural beauty. These achievements are exemplified in iconic buildings such as the Great Mosque of Cordova, the Al-Zahra Palace, and others.

3. **Political Inclusion:** The government demonstrated an inclusive approach by involving all layers of society in the process of developing and advancing education, without distinguishing between Arabs and non-Arabs, or Muslims and non-Muslims. All groups were given equal opportunities to contribute collectively to building a better and more progressive society. In addition, the government guaranteed religious freedom and provided every citizen with the right to practice their faith according to their beliefs.
4. **Economic Expansion:** There was the expansion of trade concepts, including the implementation of export and import systems and the issuance of currency as a legitimate medium of exchange. Furthermore, a more modern agricultural system was introduced through the utilization of irrigation technology, accompanied by the development of various industries producing finished goods. These efforts led the Muslim community of that era to achieve a very high level of prosperity.

The Islamic education system in Andalusia, based on values of democracy, openness, and pluralism, had a significant effect on the advancement of European civilization. These principles encouraged European society to develop critical and rational thinking, to reject church dogma, and to be open to diverse sources of knowledge regardless of their origin. The contribution of Islamic education encompassed various dimensions of life, including knowledge, curriculum, and economics. In the scientific realm, European scholars translated the works of Muslim intellectuals, studied them in depth, and adapted them to their local contexts. The fields most widely adopted included astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, medicine, literature, philosophy, and others. Meanwhile, in terms of curriculum, they sought to integrate educational content from Islamic institutions into their national education systems at various levels.

The Islamic Education System of the Islamic Dynasty in Andalusia

The Islamic education system implemented by the Islamic Dynasty in Andalusia was based on the ideology of al-Tawhid, derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Accordingly, the system adhered to the following principles:

1. **Universal and Comprehensive Principle:** There was no separation between religious knowledge and general knowledge.
2. **Balanced Principle:** Education aimed to maintain equilibrium between worldly and spiritual needs, between physical and intellectual development, and between individual and social requirements.
3. **Democracy and Openness Principle:** Knowledge from any source was accepted, and all individuals were welcome to study and teach in the available educational institutions.
4. **Justice Principle:** All layers of society had equal opportunities to study, whether rich or poor, aristocratic or common, Muslim or non-Muslim.
5. **Pluralism and Tolerance Principle:** Education was free from discrimination, promoting inclusive learning environments.

Educational Methods in Andalusia

The methods applied in the learning process can be classified into two types, the first being formal education. In this approach, instructors typically delivered material from a podium using manuscripts as the primary source, particularly in higher education contexts. After presenting the material, instructors provided explanations to deepen students' understanding. Students were then encouraged to engage in group discussions, express opinions, and even disagree with the instructor, provided their arguments were supported by evidence. The results of these discussions were documented, with emphasis on issues relevant to the studied literature. Teaching assistants helped convey material and ensured students comprehended the lessons. The structure of delivery generally consisted of three parts: an introduction, a concise main section, and a detailed conclusion. Instructors were willing to repeat explanations for students who had not yet understood. Subsequent learning stages included memorization, analysis, and, ultimately, practical application of knowledge.

Informal education strategies, practiced both inside and outside the palace environment, relied on the halaqah approach as the main teaching method. In this system, educators actively engaged among students, providing in-depth explanations after dictating large volumes of literature. This interactive model became a common practice in Islamic education in Andalusia. The method was flexible and democratic, reflecting a balance between the educator's role and responsibility. Freedom of opinion was highly valued as long as supported by rational argumentation. Learning was not constrained by time or place, creating a conducive and progressive educational climate. Islamic educational institutions in Andalusia achieved significant advancements. Students were not limited by socioeconomic status or age, and learning encompassed cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in an integrated manner. This unique approach distinguished Islamic education in Andalusia from previous models, with the primary goal of developing human potential comprehensively and holistically.

The science that has developed in Dalusia has implications in the present era

1. Astronomy
2. Mathematics
3. Philosophy
4. Medicine
5. Literature
6. History

These disciplines reflect the intellectual achievements of Andalusia. Al-Hakam II was known as a leader with exceptional intellectual aptitude, particularly in engaging with discussions and issues contained within his book collection. This is reflected in his habit of reading deeply and writing marginal notes, including responses, comments, and critiques on the content of the works. Abul Mutrif, a prominent judge in Cordova, also maintained a renowned library containing rare manuscripts and

works by notable calligraphers, employing six scribes. After his death in 1101, this library was auctioned publicly and sold for 40,000 dinars. Islamic education in Andalusia implemented a holistic curriculum with a global orientation in the dissemination of knowledge. The provision of educational resources, both religious and general, was an integral part of the education system across all levels, especially higher education. However, limitations in curriculum adaptability and flexibility affected the scope and depth of the material delivered.

CONCLUSION

Khalifah Al-Hakam II is recognized as a visionary leader who played a major role in advancing Islamic education in Andalusia, particularly in Cordova. During his reign (961–976 M), Cordova became a leading center of Islamic knowledge and culture. He established the University of Cordova, open to both Muslims and non-Muslims, and produced great scholars such as Al-Zahrawi, Ibn Rushd, and Al-Idrisi. In addition, he built a magnificent library housing approximately 400,000 books, making it the largest in Europe at the time, and actively sent envoys to major cities to acquire important works.

Al-Hakam II also initiated a movement for translating scientific works from Greek and Latin into Arabic, enriching the Islamic scientific heritage and serving as a crucial link for the development of knowledge in the West. He was known for his openness to scholars across different religions and nations and provided free education for all social classes. Through these policies, Al-Hakam II made Andalusia a symbol of Islamic civilization's glory, contributed to the intellectual revival of Europe, and affirmed that education, tolerance, and humanity are core values in the Islamic tradition.

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