

The Impact of Geography and Economics on Andalusia

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Abstract

The current study aimed at manifesting the geographical and economic influences encountered by the Ummayyad state in Andalusia, identifying the reasons behind them, the role of the state to handle them and whether these crises affected this state. The study showed that in spite of the distinguished strategic location of Andalusia geographically and economically but it did not prevent the crises and posed a great danger led to demographic changes in the social composition of the people and economic crises that had a serious consequences. The research concluded that the geographical and economic effects created frequent crises in Andalusia in addition to the effect on the society and this was a strong influence compared to other man-made causes because this factor –the geographical factor – is natural. Also, the study concluded that the actions taken were not sufficient as they lack plans and schemes and all what they represented are merely individual efforts that don't meet the crisis solution level.

Introduction

Andalusia, as all other states, faced economic crises, which resulted from unintentional reasons and some are man-made. Although Andalusia enjoyed a rich geography including a fertile agricultural lands and an important economic resources, but it encountered considerable crises that had a direct effect on the social aspect.

Importance of the study

The importance of the this study is embodied by dealing with an important historical era that is related to the Andalusian society geographically, economically and socially and tries to identify the causes of the problem and thus the crises in addition to determine the impact resulting from that problem and the capability of the state to present the appropriate solution.

Hypothesis of the study

The hypothesis of the study pivots on that the regime in Andalusia, which suffer the social and economic crises did not put deliberate immediate emergency plans to deal with those crises and restricting their future consequences.

Section one: Geographical factors that Affected Andalusia

First: The location

Andalusia is known as an important link between two directions; the first is Europe – Andalusia – Morocco and to the east and the other was Andalusia the centerpiece with the ocean, therefore its coasts were very important especially at the time of crises¹.

Therefore, it became – including its cities – one of the greatest cities of the Islamic world due to its distinguished location², so in the southern and south eastern sides of Andalusia along with the Mediterranean coasts the trade was very active as these coasts were of great importance to Andalusia³. Due to this distinguished location the trade was very active and were one of the best in the world⁴. Gibraltar and its strait are considered of the priorities of Tariq Ibn Zeyad when he first entered Andalusia for their maximum importance so entering and controlling it completely is considered as taking control of Andalusia. After that the Andalusian succeeded in attaching the Islamic Morocco to Andalusia politically and by doing this, Andalusian and Umayyads dominated over a location that is considered with economic and political gains, and the great traveler Ibn Hawqal praised this location by saying: " Andalusia in one of the precious islands, and its people are blissed with the grace of properties for the ordinary and distinguished persons⁵. In short, it is noticed that the strategic location of Andalusia in general and its climate in particular contributed effectively in the economic prosperity later in addition to the location, which is an important factor that enables to repel any external aggression due to the hard terrains, vales and water buffers. The geographical locale played a vital role in the stability of populations as the factors of stability are available in most of the spots, to the contrary with other countries whose geographical location is inconvenient economically and socially, which led to, people centralization in good areas on the account of other areas. Finally, another reasons can be added, which made Andalusia and its location of great importance because of its closeness to Morocco that were dominated by the Arabs whose top priority was the dmination over Andalusia.

Second: Rain and flows

Andalusia is surrounded by a big group of mountains, which represnted an important resource of the torrential floods that afflicted Andalusia. The most important mountain is AlAroos or Gordova mountain⁶, which is a great mountain chain around many important cities as Gordova and there is also a mountain called Shuqair, its chain begins from AlBeera city and ends to the west of the green island⁷. There is also AlSharat mountain with a chain that ends at Ashbona city that seperates Andalusia from the south. These mountains, due to the accumulation of snow, were a main resource of torrents that damage agricultural crops, houses and orchards and they resulted in catastrophes that hit various cities and negatively affected the social life of the Andalusians. Due to the lack of regulating dams for the purpose of protection, frequent flows became a phenomenon in Andalusia⁸, and rain also had a considerable role in impacting the state economy and the people. In 138 A.H./755 A.D. a violent wave of rain invaded Andalusia after years of aridity that the historians recorded that event in their books⁹. Andalusia was hit by sever rain that was the main reason behind the flood of Gordova river, which ruined houses and killed animals¹⁰, and it is likely that these flows carried rocks and alluvium because they came from the high mountains and devastates the properties. In 161 A.H./777 A.D., parts of Gordova vault were destroyed due to the sever rain and the flows that followed¹¹. Historical

sources mention that the utmost flow Andalusia witnessed was in 177 A.H./793 A.D. where the rain was intense and continuous¹². Ibn Athari mentions that a heavy rain inflicted Gordova in 183 A.H./799 A.D. as the southern outskirts of Gordova were all ruined except for one house only which belonged to Awn the perfumer¹³ and the vault of Saragoza was devastated in 212 A.H./827 A.D. with many parts of the main cities walls due to the heavy rain and the subsequent flows. Andalusia called the year 222 A.H./849 A.D. the year of the (Great flow) due to the heavy rain and the subsequent torrential floods¹⁴.

In 235 A.H./849 A.D. the level of AlWadi AlKabeer river rose because of heavy rain, which led to great floods that had a negative effect on the cities and villages near the river. So, crops and houses near Seville were damaged as well as the villages around Gordova and many bridges and vaults on the rivers and the branches connected to AlWadi AlKabeer river. This caused economic damages to the Andalusian cities and the evidence about this is what Ibn Hayyan mentioned that the flood remained the talk of the people for several years¹⁵. The Umayyad government in Andalusia took a set of entrenchments to limit the devastation caused by floods but they were not sufficient due to the heavy rain and floods Andalusia encountered¹⁶. Prince Abdulrahman AlAwsat constructed pavements on the riversides to prevent water from entering to the cities in the rain season¹⁷. But in spite of these precautions taken by Umayyads, rain and floods ruined and destroyed many vaults and this made the government take more actions especially at the main vaults by fortifying them with iron and rocks because these vaults have a great importance and because they are indispensable¹⁸. Historians cite that the effect of rain is not confined to the cities only but this effect extended to agriculture, which was the backbone and the only resource for the public and the state. Therefore, in many occasions the farmers were prevented from cultivating their lands due to the heavy rain and sometimes goods trading process with other regions and states was halted¹⁹.

Third: Storms and Cyclones

The geographical location of Andalusia that overlooks seas is characterized with mostly continuous winds for eight or six months in the year. These winds directly affect the natural life of the people²⁰. Severe winds blew Andalusia and were accompanied with thunder and lightning as well as heavy rain in 360 A.H./970 A.D.²¹. Moreover, winds blew on Andalusia in A.H.361/971 A.D. which were described as disastrous²². In Jumada alAkhira month in 363 A.H./973 A.D., Ibn Hayyan described the intense storms Andalusia inflicted with as " heavy rain, followed after few days with torrent rain accompanied with lightnings that lasted most of the day"²³. In 363 A.H./973 A.D. Gordova was afflicted with fierce winds that damaged the olive trees and this wind continued for Monday and Tuesday²⁴. Also, powerful hurricanes hit Andalusia in 383 A.H./993 A.D. and many people killed, trees plucked out and the strong wind kept blowing for about three months²⁵, damaging the crops, entangled the political process and even impacted the animals. These fierce tempests repeated in 385 A.H./995 A.D. but this time were more acute and again damaged houses, crops

and trees and an unknown author, who wrote the book entitled "Andalusia", that the animal during this tempest were carried to high in the sky²⁶, though the researcher considers this as an exaggeration about this description. Ibn Athari only mentioned that in 399 A.H./1008 A.D., Gordova was blown with strong winds with stormy rain²⁷, without mentioning more details. Finally, it can be said that storms and hurricanes were very active in Andalusia due to its geographical location and this resulted in a huge effect on life in general and the personal interests of the people, but resources only mentioned a little information about the actions taken by the government at that time in terms of reimbursing the losses of people after the disasters they were through or not?

Therefore, it can be concluded that the damages caused by those rain, floods and hurricanes were direct to people and the famines were associated with them such as the famine in 330 A.H./A.D. in which prices were very high and people suffered a lot to survive and due to these famines epidemics and diseases spread widely that dead people were not buried²⁸. In addition to that, Andalusia suffered from several waves of aridity and drought, which had impacts on agriculture, which was the only source of living to the people. Some sources mention that people began to pray to God for rain²⁹. Also, earthquakes played a considerable role in destroying Andalusia such as the earthquake that hit Gordova severely³⁰ and the earthquake in the year 364 A.H./A.D. that was about in all the regions around Gordova³¹, and these earthquakes caused substantial damages represented by destroying the houses and mosques but on a very narrow level³².

Section two: Economic factors that influenced Andalusia

Andalusia is an agricultural country and the main source of the state and people was agriculture and it improved due to the attention paid by the state with this important resource through a set of procedures for the benefit of the farmers including raising the taxes and enhancing the conditions of the farmers. Therefore, agriculture and industry flourished as industry was paid a good attention by the rulers especially in the big cities and many professions emerged and known as classes and professions branches and so each profession had a head named as the "secretary" and the princes granted vast freedom to laborers in terms of practicing their work except for some industries that need a special approval such as the construction of public bathrooms, weapons manufacturing, coins minting and medicines and other professions that might affect the security of the state or the citizens. In addition to what has been mentioned, Andalusia was very prosperous economically in terms of the internal or external trade and there is no doubt that Andalusia underwent very unusual circumstances including the natural and human-made.

A. Natural factors

Talking about the climate again, its effect was very enormous on economy and the plagues that hit Andalusia through many years contributed to paralyze its economy including the floods, which precluded the transport of goods and commodities to and from Andalusia and the agricultural products were at the banks of

the rivers, so floods always threatened those farms with long years followed by famines)³³(. Another plague was tightly related to Andalusia, which is locust that used to destroy the crops which were the daily food of people.

The year 207 A.H./822 A.D. was the most famous years in which was invasions of locust waves especially in Gordova and the neighboring regions and this made people devote themselves to praying for rain)³⁴(. The Andalusian economy encountered another problem, which hit its domestic resources: the fires, as some of the markets in various occasions suffered from fire causing problems to the craftsmen like the one occurred in Gordova in 305 A.H./917 A.D.)³⁵(, resulting in economic problem between the merchant and the customers as the latter lost their goods when the market was on fire and this made the government interfere and religious men was asked for their opinion to settle the dispute)³⁶(. In books in general only heavy rain, snow, strong wind and floods were mentioned except what was mentioned about Granada, which is located on Sheleer, on which snow prevails even in summer and this causes the frequent blow of wind called (the interior) and this winds causes damage to the agricultural crops in this city as it is very cold)³⁷(.

B. Poverty and migration

There is no doubt that factor accompanying the economic crises and the cause is poverty and this is considered a prevailing phenomenon in all the ages. Poverty hit the Andalusian society and this phenomenon varies from area to another and this was mentioned by the sources such as the famine in 199 A.H./814 A.D. in which a considerable number of people died)³⁸(. In some occasions, and due to the severity of famine and the large number of dead people, it was not possible to bury them)³⁹(and this created a new economic crisis as a twin of famine, which is migration in search of stability. So, many people migrated to Morocco in 197 A.H./812 A.D. following the fierce famine that hit Andalusia and the inhabitants of city of Jeyan 297A.H./909 A.D. were called (the famine of Jeyan), who, consequently, migrated to Morocco)⁴⁰(. Andalusia was known of the internal stability from which political migrations resulted as what took place when "AlRabdh" revolution in Gordova broke out in 202 A.H./817 A.D. due to imposing taxes on people and the mistreatment of prince AlHakam Ibn Hisham, who, in turn, oppressed the revolution in the most brutal manner and this motivated the people to migrate seeking security)⁴¹(, after this country was once the desired destination for people. Moreover, the turbulences that hit Andalusia in various periods impelled many scientists, religious scholars and merchants to leave the country in search of a safer cities and places)⁴²(. Hence, we confirm that the Andalusian historical sources highlighted the most important scientists, literary men and religious scholars who were killed)⁴³(and migrated to places other than Andalusia and it is certain that hundreds of people migrated due to the conflicts and turbulences. In fact, the political topic, turbulence that hit Andalusia in not the core of our study but what we are interested in is the economic crisis in it after these migrations because thousands of agricultural lands were abandoned and thousands of laborers quit their

works and professions, which created a real economic crisis that impacted the stability of the Andalusian society.

C. Internal conflicts

There's no doubt that the domestic production and its dependence on the materials consumed daily and the discontinuity in the interstate trading were due to the internal wars between the provinces, which resulted in sabotaging the roads and the spread of bandits and lack of security resulted in a deterioration in the Andalusian society and only the trade of certain materials was successful on the level of the city like leather, honey, fats and oil⁴⁴, in addition to wheat and barely. In that period, the slave trade was widely spread for its importance to the public especially after the economic depression that hit the state, though the slave trade was new to Andalusia, which was selling the needy people as slaves and sell them in the markets⁴⁵. The weakness of the state at that time led to the emergence of monopolist⁴⁶, and the religious men demanded leaving the market due to the prevalence of misdeeds in it⁴⁷. Within those economic hardships, the state imposed a tax on merchants in an attempt to finance the empty state treasury⁴⁸. The problem was exacerbated by non-secured external roads to import the goods and so Gangs became active and the killing of merchants became common. In an attempt from the state to secure those roads, forts and towers were constructed on the important trade roads and the Andalusian government could eliminate this phenomenon and so the inhabitants of some cities demand the caliph to construct forts for their cities⁴⁹. Long revolutions affected the economy badly such as Ibn Hafsoon's revolution that exhausted Andalusia economically⁵⁰. This security chaos that paralyzed the economy with the end of the third century and the end of the fourth century A.H., as follows⁵¹:

- Andalusia, in all the ages and regimes, encountered economic crises that almost led to the fall of the reign especially during the days of troubles and internal revolutions.
- The reasons behind the economic crises are characterized in that they have two aspects: the first is natural reasons that human couldn't handle or take precautions and they affected the state social and political entity directly. The second was an act and the will of the human due to mistaken administrative and political accumulations.
- As Andalusia depended mainly on agriculture, geographical crises, like rain, floods and aridity were all effective negative factors in this respect.
- The immigration aspect represented a real risk that had a direct effect on the state resources after Andalusia was the desired orientation for Arabs.
- The procedures taken by the state in Andalusia, in an attempt to confronting the economic collapse after the crises, were all feeble or individual attempts that failed in preventing subsequent crises.

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- (4) Oliva Remi Collintable, Muslim merchants in the international trade of Andalusia, Translated by: Salma AlJayusi, (Beirut, AlWahda Studies Center, 1999 A.D.) 2/1064.
- (5) Abu Aqasim, Mohammed Ibn Hawqal AlNseebi, The image of the earth, (Beirut, Sadir House, 1965 A.D.), P. 108.
- (6) Unknown author, Andalusia History, Commentary by: Abdulqadir Bobaya, (Beirut, House of Scientific Books, 2007 A.D.), P. 45.
- (7) Unknown author, Andalusia History, P. 46.
- (8) Abu AlAbbas, Ahmed Ibn Mohammed Ibn Athari, AlBayan AlMughrib Fi Ekhtisar Akhbar Mulook AlMaghrib, Commentary by: Bashir Awwad,, (Tunisia, Islamic House of Arabs, 2013 A.D.), 2/38.
- (9) The same source.
- (10) Unknown, The Andalusia History, P. 166.
- (11) Unknown, The Andalusia History, P. 166.
- (12) Unknown, The Andalusia History, P. 172.
- (13) Ibn Athari, AlBayan AlMughrib, 2/70.
- (14) Abdullah Ibn Mohammed Ibn AlFaradhi, The History of Andalusia Scholars, Commentary by: Azza A;Attar, (Cairo, House of the Book, 1988 A.D.), 2/176; Khazaal Yaseen Mustafa, Catastrophes and Disasters in Andalusia, (published research in Arbid Scientific Journal, 2009 A.D.), P. 15.
- (15) Abu Marwan Ibn Khalaf Ibn Hussein Ibn Hayyan Ibn Wahab AlQurtubi, AlMuqtabas, Commentary by: Mahmood Makki, (Beirut, Sadir House, 1973 A.D.), P. 5.
- (16) Mustafa, Catastrophes and phenomena, P. 8.

- (17) Unknown Author, *Conquest of Andalusia*, p. 73; Mustafa, *Catastrophes and phenomena*, P. 8.
- (18) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 64; Mustafa, *Catastrophes and phenomena*, P. 9.
- (19) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 93; Mustafa, *Catastrophes and phenomena*, P. 9.
- (20) Mustafa, *Catastrophes and phenomena*, P. 10.
- (21) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 48.
- (22) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 48.
- (23) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 76.
- (24) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 117.
- (25) Unknown Author, *Mention of Andalusia*, ommentary by: Lewis Molina, (Madrid, Supreme Assembly for Researches, 1983), p. 184.
- (26) Unknown Author, *Mention of Andalusia*, 2258.
- (27) Ibn Athari, *AlBayan AlMughrib*, 3/48.
- (28) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 109.
- (29) Abu Bakr, Mohammed Ibn AlHasan, *Classes of Grammarians and Linguists*, Commentary by: Mohammed Bu AlFadhli, (Cairo, AlMaarif House, 1984 A.D.), p. 290.
- (30) Ibn Athari, *AlBayan AlMughrib*, 2/211; Mustafa, *Catasrophes and phenomena*, p. 14.
- (31) Ibn Hayyanm p. 202; Mustafa, *Catasrophes and phenomena*, p. 14.
- (32) Mustafa, *Catasrophes and phenomena*, p. 14.
- (33) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 109.
- (34) Ibn Athari, *AlBayan AlMughrib*, 2/81; Mustafa, *Catasrophes and phenomena*, p. 12.
- (35) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 142.
- (36) Ibn Athari, *AlBayan AlMughrib*, 2/91.
- (37) Abu Obaid Abdullah Ibn Abdulaziz Ibn mohammed Ibn Amr AlBakri, *The Geography of Andalusia*, (Beirut, AlErshad House, 1968 A.D.), p. 94.
- (38) Ibn Athari, *AlBayan AlMughrib*, 2/73.
- (39) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 109.
- (40) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 109.

- (41) Abu Bakr Ibn Omar Ibn AlQuteyyah, *The history of Andalusia Conquest*, (Beirut, Lebanese Book House, 1989 A.D.), p. 69.
- (42) Ahmed Ibn Yahya AlThubbi, *AlMultamas Fi Tareekh Rijal Ahlil Andalus*, Commentary by: Ruheyyah AlSuwaiqi, (Beirut, House of Scientific Books, 1997 A.D.), p.p. 134, 280, 226.
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- (47) AlWansharisi, *AlMe'yar AlMu'rib*, 6/181.
- (48) Mahmood Ismael, *Islamic Thought Sociology*, (Cairo, AlIntishar Institution, 1980 A.D.), 3/54.
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- (50) Ibn Hayyan, *AlMuqtabas*, p. 104.
- (51) Ramadhan, *The trade activity*, p. 45.

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