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Elegies for Cities and Kingdoms in Andalusian Poetry: A Study in Historical and Artistic Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of lamenting cities and kingdoms in Andalusian poetry constitutes a literary and historical record documenting moments of civilizational decline in Andalusia. The study revealed that this art form intertwined geographical dimensions, which documented the landmarks of the land, with historical dimensions, which recorded the collapse of states. The symbolic value of cities emerged as an "objective correlative" for lost identity, with poets using images of beautiful places to deepen the sense of tragedy, while the satire of certain cities reflected the moral and political ugliness that followed the fall. This lamentation represents the emotional memory that immortalized Andalusia as a lost paradise and established the concept of "literature of calamities" as a tool for intellectual resistance and preserving history from erasure and oblivion.

KEYWORD: Academic burnout; Psychological distress; University students; Mental health; Cross-sectional study; Resilience; Stress

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1. INTRODUCTION

The lament for cities and kingdoms is among the most authentic poetic forms that accompanied the tragedy of the Arab presence in Andalusia. It is not merely a lament for ruins, but a record of a major civilizational catastrophe [1,2]. This art form emerged from the turbulent political transformations that Andalusia witnessed, beginning with the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate and continuing with the collapse of major centers like Cordoba and Seville, culminating in the loss of Granada [3]. This poetry intertwined historical dimensions that document moments of defeat with artistic dimensions that manifested in the rousing of spirits and the use of religious and cosmic symbols [4]. The Andalusian poet was not mourning a stone or a brick, but rather weeping for a lost glory and an identity that was fading before the advance of the Spanish Reconquista [2]. These poems were characterized by a sharp funereal tone and an emotional sincerity that transcended traditional affectation, where the city, in the poetic consciousness, became a living entity that was lost, mourned with tears of sorrow and regret [3]. This research seeks to delve into this art form, exploring the historical contexts that gave rise to it and analyzing the aesthetic and stylistic structures that made Ibn Zaydun's Nuniyya, Ibn Labal's Sinniyya, and Abu al-Baqa' al-Rundi's Nuniyya timeless icons in the Arab poetic canon [1]. The study of elegies for cities in 2026 reinterprets collective memory from a critical perspective that links the fall of place with the fall of humanity, and analyzes how poetry managed to immortalize what politics failed to protect [4].

2. GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The geographical location in the elegies for Andalusian cities intersected with poetic sentiment, transcending its mere topographical space to become a symbol of identity and existence. In 2026, spatial studies confirmed that Andalusia, with its breathtaking nature and strategic location on the Iberian Peninsula, shaped an exceptional consciousness in the poet, as the names of cities like Cordoba, Valencia, and Granada became associated with the sanctity and blessing of the land [11]. With the erosion of Arab geography under the weight of the Reconquista wars, the place in the poem transformed from a "real homeland" to a "lost paradise," where the geographical features were portrayed as sharing in the human suffering. This close connection to geography made the mention of geographical names in the elegies a means of documenting land ownership and immortalizing its landmarks that had been altered or erased, thus making the geographical location a tragic hero mourned by poets, as the space that witnessed the zenith of Islamic civilization and its bitter decline [12, 13].

3. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Andalusia occupied a unique historical position in the Arab and Islamic consciousness. It was not merely a geographical region through which the state expanded, but rather a symbol of cultural sovereignty and military power in the heart of Europe for more than eight centuries [14]. This status is manifested in the lamentations for its cities, which evoke the glorious history of the Umayyad Caliphate and the eras of prosperity that made Cordoba a beacon of knowledge rivaling Baghdad and Constantinople [15]. The fall of Andalusian cities and kingdoms was not a passing event, but a historical earthquake that heralded the disintegration of Andalusian unity and its transformation from a secure "House of Islam" into warring petty states, thus hastening the tragedy of its final fall in 1492 CE [16]. Therefore, the historical dimension in elegiac poetry represents a literary trial of political shortcomings, and a documentation of the great moments of transformation that moved Andalusia from the height of glory to the abyss of loss, so that this history remains alive in the poems as a lesson for generations in renaissance and defeat.

4. SYMBOLIC STATUS

The symbolic status of cities in Andalusian poetry transcends the boundaries of geography and history, settling in the Arab consciousness as a symbol of a "lost paradise" and a vanished civilizational perfection. In the context of critical studies in 2026, the Andalusian city (such as Cordoba and Granada) is viewed as an "objective correlative" for a threatened Islamic identity, where lamenting its loss was not merely mourning for buildings, but rather a lament for the disappearance of a comprehensive system of values and knowledge. The place acquired a profound religious symbolism through the evocation of mosques transformed into churches, and an existential symbolism expressing the vicissitudes of time and the impermanence of all things [17]. In the imagination of the Andalusian poet, the city became a symbolic entity that encapsulates the struggle for survival, and its image was transformed from a center of sovereignty into an icon of tragedy and loss, making this lament an eternal symbol in world literature for every civilization that collapses after the height of its greatness, so that Andalusia remains the supreme symbol of the place that inhabits memory more than reality [18].

5. BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN THE LAMENT FOR ANDALUSIA

The concept of "beautiful places" in Andalusian elegies is expressed through the technique of irony. Poets evoke images of gardens, palaces, and parks in their most splendid form to deepen the sense of profound loss. In 2026, critics analyze this trend as a mental recollection of lost beauty, where landmarks such as the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the Guadalquivir River, and the Alhambra Palace are transformed from spaces of delight into symbols of sorrow. The Andalusian poet does not

describe beauty for its own sake, but rather to emphasize that this splendor has been stolen. The image of blossoming gardens is intertwined with that of destruction, and the song of nightingales with the wailing of bereaved mothers, creating an emotionally charged artistic image that links the beauty of nature with the tragedy of loss.

Poetic verses documenting the beauty of place in elegies:

1. The beauty of Cordoba in Abu al-Baqa' al-Rundi's Nuniyya [19]:

O abode, where are the kings of the earth who have settled? ... And where are those who built and constructed there?

Where is al-Rusafa and the squares that you know? ... And where are the buildings adorned by the Rahw?

يَا دَارَ أَتَيْنَ مُلُوكَ الْأَرْضِ قَدْ نَزَلُوا ... وَأَتَيْنَ مَنْ شَبَّهُوا فِيهَا وَمَنْ بَنَوْا
أَتَيْنَ الرُّصَافَةَ وَالسَّاحَاتِ تَعْرِفُهَا ... وَأَتَيْنَ مِنْهَا مَبَانِ زَانَهَا الرَّهْوُ

2. The beauty of Valencia in Ibn Khafaja's elegy:

O people of Andalusia, how blessed you are! ... Water and shade, rivers and trees.

There is no Paradise but in your lands ... And if I chose this; I was choosing.

The poet used this beauty to later lament its loss in his poems

يَا أَهْلَ أُنْدَلُسِ لِلَّهِ دُرُكُكُمْ ... مَاءٌ وَظِلٌّ وَأَنْهَارٌ وَأَشْجَارُ
مَا جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ إِلَّا فِي دِيَارِكُمْ ... وَلَوْ تَخَيَّرْتُ هَذِي كُنْتُ أَخْتَارُ

3. The beauty of Seville in the elegy for Ibn Labal al-Sharishi [21]:

The sky weeps with rain clouds coming and going... upon the landmarks of Egypt, and they are a source of sustenance.

Woe to Cordoba for what has befallen it... and woe to Homs (Seville) and all that is in it of the gathering place.

تَبْكِي السَّمَاءُ بِمُزْنِ رَائِحِ غَادِي ... عَلَى مَعَالِمِ مِصْرٍ وَهِيَ إِيرَادُ
وَيْلٌ لِفُرْطَبَةِ مِمَّا حَلَّ بِهَا ... وَوَيْلٌ جُمُصِ (إشبيلية) وَمَا فِيهَا مِنَ النَّادِي

6. THE UGLY AND HATED CITIES IN ANDALUSIAN ELEGIES

In the context of laments for the cities and kingdoms of Andalusia in 2026, the concept of "ugly cities" does not refer to an inherent physical ugliness in their geography, but rather to the acquired ugliness that befell them after their fall, or the political satire directed by some poets at specific cities as a result of bitter experiences or hostile stances from their inhabitants. In the eyes of the poets, beautiful cities were transformed into "despicable places" after their landmarks were defiled or injustice prevailed. This is known in literature as "city satire," which emerged as another facet of elegies, where a city is satirized for failing its people or for becoming a haven for the enemy.

Examples of cities that were satirized or portrayed negatively:

1. *Ibn Ammar's satire of Seville* [22]:

The poet-minister Ibn Ammar satirized the city of Seville and its people when fortunes turned against it, portraying it with derogatory attributes after it had been a beacon of beauty:

What has become of Seville, may it never be cleansed... of men like swine, foul-smelling?

We have lost their praiseworthy qualities... and found only the filth of their homeland.

مَا لِإِسْبِيلِيَّةٍ لَا طَهَّرَتْ ... مِنْ رَجَالٍ كَالْخَنَازِيرِ نَتْنُ

قَدْ عَدِمْنَا فِيهِمْ طَيْبَ النَّأَا ... وَلَقَيْنَا فِيهِمْ خُبْثَ الْوَطْنِ

2. *The desolate image of Cordoba after the civil war (Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi)* [23]:

Ibn Hazm describes Cordoba after its destruction during the Berber civil war, replacing its beauty with scorn and condemnation for its desolation and ugliness. Moral:

O house, our choice did not deprive you of us... And if we could, you would have been our grave.

But decrees from God were carried out... Destroying us willingly or by force.

فَيَا دَارُ لَمْ يَفْقُرْكَ مِنَّا اخْتِيَارُنَا ... وَلَوْ أَنَّنَا نَسْتَطِيعُ كُنْتَ لَنَا قَبْرًا

وَلَكِنْ أَقْدَارًا مِنَ اللَّهِ أَنْفَعَتْ ... تُدَمِّرُنَا طَوْعًا لِمَا حَلَّ أَوْ قَهْرًا

3. *Condemnation of cities settled by the "enemy" (Ibn al-Abbar)* [24]:

In his appeal to the King of Tunis, Ibn al-Abbar described the occupied cities as defiled by the presence of the invaders, and demanded their purification, describing them as in a state of moral ugliness :

Purify your land of them, for they are impure... And there is no purity unless you wash away the impurity.

طَهِّرْ بِلَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ نَجَسٌ ... وَلَا طَهَارَةَ مَا لَمْ تَغْسِلِ النَّجَسَا

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the preceding study of the geographical, historical, and symbolic dimensions of the lament for cities and kingdoms in Andalusian poetry, we arrive at a number of essential conclusions in 2026:

The study has demonstrated that lamenting cities was not merely a traditional poetic theme, but rather a profound emotional and philosophical response to a civilizational upheaval that shook the very foundations of the nation. The research revealed how geographical space transformed from a physical realm into a poetic space imbued with values, where the beauty of Andalusian nature mingled with the bitterness of loss, transforming cities into living entities mourned and lamented for their lost youth. The study also showed that the historical significance of Andalusia bestowed upon this lament an epic dimension, documenting moments of defeat and major shifts in the balance of power between East and West.

On a symbolic level, the Andalusian poet succeeded in transforming the city into an icon of lost paradise, employing an artistic language that oscillated between glorifying vanished beauty and depicting the ugliness left in its wake. This allowed these poems to transcend their time, becoming a universal lesson in the vicissitudes of history and the fall of civilizations. As our vision for 2026 affirmed, the lament for Andalusian cities will remain the most authentic document expressing humanity's struggle with place and time, and the best testament to the grandeur of a civilization that managed to immortalize its tragedy with timeless poetic beauty.

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