Charity and Giving
in Monotheistic Religions

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AI Annales Islamologiques
BEO Bulletin d’Études Orientales
BSOAS Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CIA Max Van Berchem’s Arabianum
E.I.1 Encyclopedia of Islam
E.I.2 Encyclopedia of Islam
EQ Encyclopedia of the Qur'an
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JESHO Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JQR Jewish Quarterly Review
JSAI Jerusalem Studies in International Affairs
JSS Journal of Semitic Studies
MSR Mamluk Studies Review
RCEA Études Combes, J. Sauvaget d’Épigraphie Arabe
SI Studia Islamica
Forms and Functions of Charity in Al-Andalus

Ana María Carballeda Debasa

1. Introduction

The Islamic religion’s call to practice personal piety has encouraged many Muslims to dispose of part of their fortune through different forms of donation so as to make the prophetic vision a social reality. The constitution of a donation, motivated by benevolent intentions, represented an attempt by devout Muslims to place themselves in a proper relationship with God by means of the application of ethical norms revealed by Him in their day to day lives.¹

In this presentation I plan to focus my attention on two types of donation: alms-giving (ṣadaqā)² and pious endowments (ḥāds ḵhayrī; pl.

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"abbas khayriyya). The sadaqa is the free transfer of material property; the intention inspiring the act must consist of pleasing God in the hope of compensation in the future life and not with a worldly purpose, as in the case of an ordinary donation (hiba). In both sadaqa and hib the donor’s intention is to do something pleasing in the eyes of God through donations made with a charitable or religious purpose; the difference between the two concepts lies in the fact that in the sadaqa the donor transfers ownership of the object donated, whilst in the hib only its use or usufruct is relinquished. Consequently, both sadaqa and hib khayri perfectly embodied the Islamic ideal of personal piety and voluntary donation, since they entailed benevolent and altruistic actions. It is necessary to understand both concepts within the context of Islamic notions of equality and social justice.

Like the rest of their co-religionists, Andalusis made these kinds of donations within the framework of the prescriptions contained in the Koran, which encouraged them to engage in supportive charitable practices to help those who found themselves in situations of obvious social disadvantage.

Owing to the archival impoverishment concerning the Islamic West in the Middle Ages, one must turn to narrative-type Arab sources for an analysis of the social and economic life in al-Andalus. The sources consulted in the preparation of this work vary in their nature. Arabic legal texts certainly prove to be the most explicit in terms of all that concerns the institution of hib. They are mainly hagiographies (tawazzu') issued to clarify observance in new cases; collections of judicial practices (wathaba; shura') that spell out old documents. The deficiencies of these must not be ignored, as they tend to remove them from their broader context of relevance to the legal matter that is historical, biographical and literary.

3 From this point onwards I shall use the term hib and its plural hibs to refer to the pious foundations in al-Andalus, since it is the term that is most frequently employed in the documentary base I have used. In fact, use of this form is supported in the Islamic West, as against common employment of the term waqf and its plural waqif in the East. The following works cited are the only monographs that exist on the subject under study in al-Andalus: Carballo, A.M., Legados píos y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus (siglos IV-VII), Madrid, 2002; García Sanjuán, A., Hasta que Dios herede la tierra. Los bienes habibles en al-Andalus (siglos X-XV), Huelva, 2002; idem, Till God Inherits the Earth. Islamic Pious Endowments in al-Andalus (9–15th Centuries). Leiden-Boston, 2007.

4 Some aspects of hib have stirred up controversy among Muslim jurists. What has caused the most polemic concerns the ownership of hib. The crux of the matter resides in how to determine who owns the property rights over this type of goods. According to Maliki law, someone who establishes a hib retains bare ownership of the objects donated, ceding only their use or usufruct. However, this solution is not accepted outside of this juridical doctrine. See Carballo, Legados píos y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus, 17–18. One must highlight the fact that, of the four juridical doctrines of orthodox Islam, the Andalusis followed overwhelmingly the legal principles of the Maliki school.


cent the institution of hubs. They comprise collections of juridical opinions (fatawa), issued to clarify obscure points in law or to provide guidance for new cases; of collections of legal dicta (akbak) adopted by cadis in the development of judicial processes, as well as of model documents (watha'il; shurut) that spell out criteria to guide notaries in the writing of documents. The deficiencies displayed in these kinds of documents must not be ignored, as they tend to reflect a very concrete situation, removing it from its broader context and omitting information that is not of relevance to the legal matter that is under consideration. Works of a historical, biographical and literary nature, meanwhile, not only pro-


vide additional information regarding the institution of *hubs*, but are also informative in relation to alms-giving. Nevertheless, in this case there are some limitations too; in general, information about charity in such sources is somewhat scattered, the references being very concise without providing detailed information on the matter. This circumstance is connected with the reticence of the sources regarding the most destitute groups of the population, especially where the rural sphere is concerned.

All these factors do not, however, diminish the importance of the documentary base of this work. By turning to different kinds of narrative sources one can, to a certain degree, obtain a more specific panoptic view of diverse aspects associated with charity in al-Andalus, with particular reference to most of the Umayyad period (IX-XI centuries). My aim in this presentation is to deal with the forms characteristic of charitable practices in al-Andalus, as well as the different functions that were associated with charity. It is widely known that the most disadvantaged members of society did not always have to cope with their problems alone in the face of difficulties. Charity was a means of attempting to improve

the situation of the most destitute, take on a markedly institutional character and took responsibility for it. Never not remain impassive to the suffering, these must, therefore, trace the way in which the Andalusian population.

2. Charity dispensed in al-Andalus

In a normal context one may observe as well as of the incomes generated from those in need. These charitable activities, especially in the Umayyad period, capital, Cordoba, were the main source of the provinces also of alms. The

Similarly, there is evidence that alms were available through the different situations of need. The medieval chronicles contain relevant information on vicissitudes that ravaged al-Andalus, catastrophes that affected the Andalusian population. Unquestionably, the most noticeable disaster was the continual droughts which, like those of al-Andalus, led to scarcity. Such phenomena were at the base of the least protected groups in society due to the high mortality rate and plunging many into periods of shortage, poor diet, and epidemics that decimated the

11 Those affected resorted to a variety of behaviours in order to react to their state of poverty, amongst which was the controversial practice of begging. With regard to this, and to other measures adopted by the destitute, see Cartellier, A.M., "Caracterización de los pobres en la literatura panenológica andalusí", *Al-Andalus*, 37 (2006), 125 – 127 and 133; *idem*, "Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", in A. García Sanjuán (ed.), Saber y sociedad en al-Andalus. Actas de las IV-V Jornadas de Cultura Islámica de Almonaster la Real, Huelva, 2006, 68-69; *idem*, "Pobreza y caridad en al-Andalus", in C. de la Puente (ed.), *Estudios Onomástico-Biográfico de al-Andalus* (*Identidades marginales*), vol. XIII, Madrid, 2003, 66-70.

12 For this type of endowments, see in

13 Concerning official alms of an order of al-Andalus* en al-Andalus* 69; 70-71.

14 Andalusian sources are also instructive in this sense, e.g. from circumstances such as mill of patrimonial property or the execution about situations liable to redress and sallie, *Caracterización de los pob*.
the situation of the most destitute. As we shall see below, charity could take on a markedly institutional flavour, when the political authorities took responsibility for it. Nevertheless, the rest of the population did not remain impassive to the sufferings of their co-religionists. One must, therefore, trace the way in which charity affected the dynamics of the Andalusi population.

2. Charity dispensed by the political authorities

In a normal context one may observe the distribution of ordinary alms, as well as of the incomes generated from pious foundations (abhas)\(^\text{12}\) for those in need. These charitable acts constitute a relatively common practice, especially in the Umayyad period. Although the inhabitants of the capital, Cordoba, were the main beneficiaries of these donations, some governors in the provinces also adopted the practice of distributing alms.\(^\text{13}\)

Similarly, there is evidence that in extraordinary circumstances official alms were available through the distribution of food and money, as a way of alleviating situations of need brought on by natural disasters. The chronicles contain relevant information giving evidence of the existence of vicissitudes that ravaged al-Andalus throughout its history. The natural catastrophes that affected the Andalusi population occupy a prominent position. Unquestionably, the most fearsome effects were produced by continual droughts which, like the havoc wreaked by plagues of locusts, led to scarcity. Such phenomena were conducive to famine, which would hit the least protected groups in society, causing a sharp rise in the mortality rate and plunging many into an urgent state of need. Likewise, in periods of shortage, poor diet, and lack of hygiene brought on plagues and epidemics that decimated the population.\(^\text{14}\) Once again the Cordo-

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12 For this type of endowments, see infra paragraph 3.
13 Concerning official alms of an ordinary nature, see Carballera, “Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus”, 69; idem, “Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus”, 70–71.
14 Andalusi sources are also instructive concerning the pernicious consequences arising from circumstances such as military conflicts, tax burden, the expropriation of patrimonial property or the exercise of certain trades. For more detailed information about situations liable to reduce people to a state of destitution, see Carballera, “Caracterización de los pobres”, 119–123 and 133; idem, “Indigencia y
bans stand out as the greatest beneficiaries of official charity during these crises. By way of guidance, there exist figures that reveal the dimensions such crises could take on within the territory of al-Andalus. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that information regarding the pious attitude of the authories is hardly overwhelming. Only al-Hakam I (r. 796–822), 'Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912–961), al-Hakam II (r. 961–976) and Almanzor (r. 981–1002) managed to rise to the occasion, a fact particularly remarkable in the case of caliph al-Hakam II. At the time of the famine that struck in 968, this monarch gave the order that 12,000 loaves of bread should be distributed each day to the needy of Cordoba.16 There also exists figures for the dreadful famine of 989, as a result of which Almanzor ordered that 22,000 loaves of bread a day be made available for distribution among those in need.17 The profusion of data concerning the Umayyad period contrasts with the silence of the sources about the distribution of alms during other stages of Andalusian history, as in the case of the Almoravid period. Perhaps this circumstance is merely due to the fact that the Umayyad age is the best documented one. Nevertheless, this generosity has its counterpart in the posture adopted by other monarchs of this dynasty, who were not notably lavish when it came to acts of beneficence. The intransigent attitude of emir Muhammad I (r. 852–886) during the bad harvests of 874 proves particularly eloquent in his refusal to exempt those affected from payment of the tithe, thus setting off social unease and catapulting many of his subjects into a state of ruin.18

However, one can not get away from the fact that sometimes, behind acts of charity, the donor harboured a second intention. Official alm–giving could, for example, be a means of political manipulation. The distribution of donations often represented an attempt to legitimize a new sovereign or consolidate the power of the existing political authorities, there–


16 See Dhîr biyd al–Andalus, ed. 173 and trans. 183.


by winning the favour of the population of loyalty between the monarch and various Umayyad sovereigns, such as 'Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822–852), al-Hakam II. Aspirants to power and their political ventures.19 In other cases, they were simply religious practices on feast days, especially in Ramadan, a gesture testimony of gratitude to God. Al-Hakam II donated alms as that the condition of comfort and healing had been cured of small plagues.20 Likewise, evidence exists of sovereigns to alleviate the hardship and the acts cannot be classified as part of a system of charity.

3. Charity dispensation by the religious authorities

Sometimes institutional power exercised a delay in the distribution of charity by religious authorities urged the people to combine the concept of alms–giving with religious responsibility. From this viewpoint, the pressure of personal piety. Similarly, the pillars of Islam, it contributed to

19 See Carballeira, “Indigencia y marginalidad en al–Andalus”, 74–75.


21 See Carballeira, “Indigencia y marginalidad en al–Andalus”, 75–77. In some cases, the sovereign of Andalus had to be the one to give alms to the needy in order to prevent exactions or war and keep peace in a society split into two hundred states and private individuals.
by winning the favour of the population and thus reinforcing the bonds of loyalty between the monarch and his subjects. This was the practice of various Umayyad sovereigns, such as 'Abd al-Rahman I (r. 756–788), 'Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822–852), al-Mundhir (r. 886–888) and al-Hakam II. Aspirants to power also offered alms to gain supporters for their political venture.19 In other cases, donations by the authorities were simply religious practices on the occasion of certain Islamic religious feast days, especially in Ramadan. Accordingly, alms-giving could constitute testimony of gratitude to God for favours granted, as when, in 974, al-Hakam II donated alms as thanksgiving to God because his heir Hisham had been cured of smallpox, this fulfilling the vow he had taken.20 Likewise, evidence exists of gifts personally bestowed by Andalusi sovereigns to alleviate the hardships of their people, but such charitable acts cannot be classified as part of their official policy.21

3. Charity dispensed by private individuals

Sometimes institutional power exhorted people to give alms to the poor, laying emphasis on their mandatory nature. The fact that the Andalusi authorities urged the people to perform charitable acts indicates that the concept of alms-giving was understood to be, above all, an individual responsibility. From this viewpoint, charity was conceived to be an expression of personal piety. Similarly, since alms-giving is one of the five pillars of Islam, it contributed towards stimulating virtuous works

19 See Carballeira, "Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", 70; idem, "Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus", 74–75.
among the Andalusi population, who were indeed not completely insensitive to the sufferings of their co-religionists. 22

Since Andalusi biographical dictionaries detail the virtues with which the people referred to were blessed, there is naturally a great deal of information pertinent to the generosity of many of these individuals. In some cases, these were people belonging to an important socio-economic groups (jurists and rich traders, for instance) who attended to the most helpless in their hardship, performing all sorts of acts of mercy. In other cases, they were people of humble condition who gave up the scarce material goods that were in their possession, placing them at the disposal of the neighbour in need. The desire of the donors could reach the extreme of neglecting their family obligations, which meant that the excessive generosity of an individual might stir up complaint among the people closest to him. 23

Nevertheless, as was the case with beneficence dispensed by the authorities, such generosity sometimes sprang from no altruistic intention on the part of the donor performing these acts, which divested the reputedly charitable gesture of its substance. 24 The giving of alms might, for example, be a way of expiating a misdemeanour or a broken oath; such is the case of the cadi 'Antara b. Fallah (d. 755), who, after receiving a reprimand from a common man in Cordoba, made a promise to himself that he would give all his savings in alms to the poor. 25 In other cases, charity was a recourse employed to settle a score; this is demonstrated by the fact that the cadi al-Nadr b. Salama (d. 914) gave some goods as charity in order to please a man who had accused the cadi of being unfair to him. 26 Similarly, a longing to part with particular objects could lead owners to perform charitable acts with this aim in mind; an illustrative anecdote in this regard concerns the idema Ahmad b. Mutarrij (d. 963 or

967), who got rid of some of his properties to give the price he got for them in alms.

Together with alms-giving, resources from pious legacies to the khabayr was an institution endowed from foundations established not only by dignitaries, but also by wealthy public institutions benefited from (notably jihad), as well as groups such as captives and slaves. 28 The author of the institution of the hubs khabayr some pious institution and that was

With regard to collections of pious material that is the basis of our information on the institution of pious endowments, orphaned were recipients of alms in al-Andalusi, thus benefactors of pious endowments were in the Nasrid period (especially

27 See 'Iyad b. Misa, Tarhib al-mad hy, 2.562
28 Regarding the beneficiaries of pious endowments, see Carballeira, "Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", 71; idem, "Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus", 77–78. Besides the chronicles, the Andalusian collections of proverbs also contain constant exhortations to practice charity towards one’s peers; see Carballeira, "Caracterización de los pobres", 130–131.
29 See Carballeira, "Caracterización de los pobres", 130; idem, "Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", 71; idem, "Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus", 78–81.
30 See Carballeira, "Caracterización de los pobres", 130; idem, "Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", 71; idem, "Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus", 78–81.
31 See Ibrahim al-Khusahi, Qudat Qurubah, ed. 26 and trans. 36.
32 See Ibrahim al-Khusahi, Qudat Qurubah, ed. 159 and trans. 197.
967), who got rid of some of his clothes that a woman had diried and
gave the price he got for them in the form of alms.27

Together with alms-giving, many Andalusiis assigned some of the re-
sources from pious legacies to the weak and needy. In al-Andalus the
hubsh
khayri
was an institution endowed with significant sums of money taken
from foundations established not only by rulers and powerful high-rank-
ing dignitaries, but also by wealthy individuals, which buildings and pub-
lic institutions benefited from (mosques, cemeteries, walls, fortresses and
jjihad), as well as groups such as the poor, lepers, pious women, ascetics,
captives and slaves.28 The authentic and most significant dimension of
the institution of the hubsh
khayri
, however, is that it is designated for
some pious endeavour and that is what I shall now refer to.

With regard to collectives of pious women and ascetics, the documental
material that is the basis of our study shows the existence of places of
retreat set aside for devout persons29, although such references are quite
sparse and contrast notably with the abundant information available con-
cerning the poor and the sick. Nor can one ignore the absence of informa-
tion on the institution of pious legacies for the benefit of widows and
orphans who lacked sufficient economic resources to subsist on. The An-
dalusian proverb collections do, however, provide evidence that both groups
were recipients of alms in al-Andalus in the period under study.30 In the
same way, in al-Andalus students and travellers were allocated alms and,
in the Nasrid period (especially in the 14th and 15th centuries), were the
beneficiaries of pious endowments.31

27 See Ṣayd b. Musa, Tarbiḥ al-modalik, VI, ed. 136.
28 Regarding the beneficiaries of pious endowments in al-Andalus, see Carballeira,
Legados pios y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus, 67–202; idem, "Pauvrete et
fondations pieuses dans la Grenade nafride: aspects sociaux et juridiques", Arab.
ica, 52 (2005), 391–416; idem, "The Role of Endowments in the Framework of
Andalusian society", in M. Borgehe (ed.), Stiftungen in Christentum, Judentum
und Islam vor der Moderne. Auf der Suche nach ihren Gemeinsamkeiten und Un-
terschieden in religiøsen Grundlagen, praktischen Zwecken und historischen Transfor-
mationen, Berlin, 2005, 109–121; García Sanjuán, Hasta que Dios herede la ti-
erra, 169–254; idem, Till God Inherits the Earth, 184–292.
29 See Carballeira, Legados pios y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus, 189–190.
30 See Carballeira, "Caracterización de los pobres", 129 and 134.
31 See Carballeira, "Caracterización de los pobres", 123; idem, "Pauvrete et fonda-
tions pieuses dans la Grenade nafride", 396–398 and 410–414; idem, "Pobres y
caridad en al-Andalus", 133.
Through the establishment of pious foundations, the consequences of poverty\(^{32}\) and disease (leprosy, blindness...)\(^{33}\) in al-Andalus were, in part, relieved and mitigated. Sources reveal that the poor and sick in urban areas, specifically in the Umayyad capital, particularly benefited from these types of foundations. There is evidence that the existence of pious endowments for Cordoba's sick led to an influx of sufferers from other areas of al-Andalus hoping to receive income from these sources. Yet it was not only a matter of assuring the subsistence of the most vulnerable; pious legacies also had other purposes. The sources inform us of material means established with such aims in mind, including not just real estate properties, but also specifying certain objects, such as jewellery, clothes and books. Regarding real estate properties, the income obtained from their leasing went to pious objectives. Jewellery, luxury clothing and books, though, were objects that individuals with scant resources could not afford. The aim of such foundations was to provide items available to the lower social classes, limited to the most powerful social groups, with valuable fabrics were lent or, if they could wear them at all, they could sell them for the money they generated. The importance attached to the institution of pious foundations and the numerous items made available via them, suggests that they were to be returned, so that others could benefit from this custom that was in encouraging the social integration and cultural integration. This soliciting for donations founded by caliph and pious men were designated to instruct the children and the poor, improving the chances of many of them and also have a good example of pious legacies.

While the poor were the beneficiaries of these foundations, it is also documented that the profit from the establishment of pious foundations was used to support captives. Kharita of captives was the political and religious term for captives, and it was a custom to designate some individuals to be freed as pious men. These fortunate brothers were established in the real estates, allowing them to live as free men, the release from captivity being the greatest gift they could receive. The province of al-Andalus was characterized by its intense military activity between the 10th and 12th centuries, and the vast network of pious endowments was vital to support the population and to provide a steady income for institutions that supported the poor.

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\(^{32}\) On the establishment of pious legacies for the involuntary poor in al-Andalus, see Carballera, "Indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", 72–73; idem, *Legados pio y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus*, 169–177; idem, "Pauvrez et fondations pieuses dans la Grenade nasride", 391–416; idem, "Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus", 78; idem, "The Role of Endowments", 115–116; García Sanjuán, *Hasta que Dios herede la tierra*, 180–183; idem, *Till God Inherits the Earth*, 199–205. Similarly, the sinfulness attributed to the voluntary poor had a great influence on their being perceived as unworthy recipients of charity. It was believed that giving them alms would make it possible to participate in the *baraka* that they supposedly possessed. On charity dispensed to ascetics in al-Andalus, see Carballera, "Caracterización de los pobres", 113–114; idem, "indigencia y marginalidad en al-Andalus", 74–77; idem, "Pauvrez et fondations pieuses dans la Grenade nasride", 394–395; idem, "Pobres y caridad en al-Andalus", 62–66 and 86–87; García Sanjuán, *Hasta que Dios herede la tierra*, 202–211; idem, *Till God Inherits the Earth*, 228–238.


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not afford. The aim of such foundations was to make highly expensive items available to the lower social strata, so that their use would not be limited to the most powerful social groups. So jewels and dresses made with valuable fabrics were lent or hired out to those in need, so that they could wear them at wedding ceremonies, given the social significance attached to the institution of marriage in Islamic society. Pious donations of books, meanwhile, played a role in promoting science, culture and knowledge among the ‘ulama’ of humble background. These items were made available via a loan, at the end of which they had to be returned, so that others could likewise benefit from them. One can infer from this custom that there was not only some interest in al-Andalus in encouraging the social integration of the poor, but also concern about cultural integration. This solicitude seems strongly confirmed by a pious endowment founded by caliph al-Hakam II in aid of the teachers he had designated to instruct the children of the destitute of Cordoba. Here we have a good example of pious legacies established by the political authorities.

While the poor were the beneficiaries par excellence of the pious foundations, it is also documented that both prisoners and slaves could profit from the establishment of pious legacies in al-Andalus. The ransom of captives was the political responsibility of the government, as well as a praiseworthy deed for Muslims. Juridical documents show that it was customary for some individuals to demonstrate their solidarity with their less fortunate brothers by establishing pious foundations whose main aim was the release from captivity of their co-religionists who had fallen into Christian hands. Concern expressed for prisoners of war through the founding of pious endowments, either for their ransom or the relief of their physical condition, existed very early in al-Andalus, due to the intense military activity between Christians and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula.34

According to legal texts, the same solicitude was applied in al-Andalus in relation to the *manumissio* of slaves. In Islam the liberation of slaves is also a praiseworthy act, since it is deemed to be one of the most pious deeds in the eyes of God. A slave could be manumitted while his/her owner was alive or could obtain freedom after the latter’s death by means of a series of methods that existed for that purpose, including the establishing of pious legacies.  

4. Conclusions

As we have seen, the sources consulted do not sidestep Andalusi social reality where charitable measures undertaken to help the weak and needy are concerned, for they provide a considerable amount of information about initiatives adopted by the political authorities, as well as by private individuals, with particular reference to the urban milieus and, more specifically, the Umayyad capital of Cordoba.

Although the data available do not enable us to accurately determine the efficacy of these measures, the sources reveal that alms-giving constituted an important practice in al-Andalus. We have already seen that charity could turn into an instrument at the service of the political, social and religious convenience of the donor; but these less lofty motives do not preclude the fact that there was not sometimes a genuine will to alleviate the hardships of others. Nonetheless, it would seem that the measures adopted for this purpose proved insufficient, as they offered no real alternative to counteract situations of debility and neglect. With specific regard to the poor, it must be born in mind that a coherent part of the hierarchical structure of society, their presence was essential, and alms-giving could be put into practice so much to eradicate poverty and vulnerability.

In general, little is known of the Islamic economy and population. Only generosity manifested in ordinary devotion was recorded in the sources. Therefore, in order to show how, on the one hand, such pious deeds mitigated against social rights organisations and other public economic difficulties that existed, and on the other, to decrease in acts of individual charity.

In reality, only institutionalised charity was an alternative to the inadequacy of charitable measures. By dint of alms-giving, the Andalusi state was able to improve the social situation of the lower classes, and on this account, the authorities provided substantial support to charitable initiatives both to facilitate them and to meet their expenses. The Andalusi state had available several strategies to ensure that its charitable initiatives were effective. From this perspective, we have already referred to the existence of charitable foundations that were endowed with land and other resources with which to provide the poor with food, clothing, and shelter. And others (ransom of prisoners of war, etc.) and the poor within Andalusian society. 

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36 In theory, Maliki doctrine does not allow the institution of pious endowments for the purpose of *manumissio*, since if the slave lacked the means of subsistence after obtaining his/her freedom, s/he would be condemned to misery. See Carballeira, *Legados pías y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus*, 164–168; *idem*, “The Role of Endowments”, 116–117; Puente, C. de la, “Entre la esclavitud y la libertad: consecuencias legales de la manumisión según el derecho maliki”, *Al-Qantara*, 21 (2000), 358; *idem*, “Slaves in al-Andalus through Maliki *waṭṭaši‘* works (4th-6th centuries H./10th-12th centuries CE): marriage and slavery as factors of social categorisation”, *Annales Islamomologiques* (in press).
regard to the poor, it must be borne in mind that they constituted an inherent part of the hierarchical social order and, from a religious perspective, their presence was essential so that the Koranic precept of dispensing alms-giving could be put into practice. From this angle, the aim was not so much to eradicate poverty as to attenuate its pernicious consequences.

In general, little is known of charity as practiced by the Andalusi population. Only generosity manifested by people well-known for their extraordinary devotion was recorded in written form, as an exceptional form of behaviour, in order to show the goodness of the donors. On the one hand, such pious deeds might be concentrated during religious celebrations and other public commemorations. On the other hand, the economic difficulties that existed in periods of dearth were likely to cause a decrease in acts of individual charity.

In reality, only institutional power could be counted on for having the resources necessary to improve the quality of life of the population, since donations by authorities had greater repercussions than those made by people of modest means. On some occasions, Andalusi monarchs exercised charity out of a sense of responsibility, whilst through their exemplary conduct they became models to be emulated by their subjects. Nevertheless, there are various indicators that reveal the absence of a systematic official policy to offset the effects of poverty in al-Andalus: on the one hand, the numerous individual initiatives adopted by the destitute and by their peers; on the other, the fact that there were no serious efforts made to institutionalize the distribution of donations in a permanent fashion during the economic crises that ravaged the territory of al-Andalus; and, finally, the authorities' exhortations to individuals to give alms. From this perspective, we have already observed that the concept of charity would have to be understood as the duty of individuals and not of institutional power as such. This personal dimension reinforces the notion of community, that is to say, the internal cohesion of the Muslim community willing to make available resources to cover the basic necessities of all its members. One must, however, bear in mind that, while certain activities (poor relief) could scarcely rely on institutional support and mainly depended upon individual contributions, in the financing of other services (ransom of prisoners, manum issio of slaves...) such personal donations performed a secondary, more marginal role, as other alternatives existed to facilitate these tasks.

The adoption of measures concerning beneficence is a factor that must be taken into account when assessing the degree of integration of the poor within Andalusi society. In this sense, there was undeniably a
certain desire to counteract the marginalisation suffered by the poor. Such a goal may be inferred from the fact that a substantial amount of charity depended on personal initiatives. Regarding the role played by charity in integrating the poor within Islamic society, one must remember that alms-giving, on occasion, was not only conceived to be a religious imperative, but also a social responsibility. The belief was that the hierarchy in society corresponded to an established order and that the rich were obliged to help the less fortunate. In this structure of social solidarity the poor were not the only beneficiaries of the charity they received, since the wealthy also profited in the sense that, as benefactors of the most disadvantaged, their place in society was given justification. Furthermore, charitable acts contributed to reducing social tension. From this aspect, charity in al-Andalus constituted a stabilising element, exercised not so much with the aim of eliminating social differences as of maintaining an equilibrium between the different groups, to prevent the resentment at social inferiority from escalating into a threat to the established order.

When death came, she apparently demanded of her husband:

The blessed 'A'isha bint [...]. 1 makes a testament and expresses her wishes to be distributed for the poor Muslims, that the legacy be divided among the poor Muslims. This legacy was written in a will and distributed among the poor Muslims. The will stated that whoever is in charge of the execution of this will, should provide food for each of the girls, so that they are not left without help. 2

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1 Alkhârîsh is one of the quatre.

2 The document is preserved in the1 BHR (Bibliothèque historique de la République) of the University of Genoa.