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The Hole and Causes of Political Instability in the Fall of Muslim Granada 1461-1492

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THE ROLE AND CAUSES OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE FALL OF MUSLIM GRANADA 1461-1492

by

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict between Islam and Christianity punctuated the entire Middle Ages. The West was alternately marching on crusades into the stronghold of Islam and struggling to maintain its borders against various attacking tribes from the East. But, West and East lived in closest quarters in Spain where sultans, caliphs and emirs ruled for almost eight centuries (711-1492). During those eight hundred years Muslim Spain produced a culture more brilliant than anything known to early medieval Europe. Poetry was its most exalted means of communication. Its culture reached its heights in medicine and astrology. Less emphasis was placed on philosophy and theology because their speculations appeared heretical in the eyes of the highly orthodox, sometimes fanatical population. Nonetheless, the civilization produced Avicenna, Averroës and Khaldūn. It gave Europe much of what it knew of Greek philosophy. But, despite its glittering culture, this great society was not matched by a political system stable enough to avoid the eventual destruction of Islam in the Iberian peninsula. The last gasp of this empire was the small state of Granada in the southeast corner of the peninsula. Between 1461 and 1492, its fall, the state was plagued with almost incessant political instability. However, such instability was no stranger to Muslims in Spain. The history of Islam's presence there demonstrated over and over again instability in its political system.
Even as early as the invasion of Spain in 711, the Muslim empire was plagued by internal discord which resulted from the Sunnite-Shiite religious controversy over the rightful heir to Mohammed. The Shiite sect held the Ali Husayn, grandson of the Prophet, should have held the title of caliph rather than the Umayyads. The Berbers, an African tribe, had fought and defeated the Arabs as the Arabs swept west through North Africa. But, later the Berbers converted to Islam as a matter of conscience and joined the Arabs in the invasion of the Iberian peninsula. However, the two groups fought among each other and this was another source of discord in Spain. The Muslim defeat at the Battle of Tours (732) was decisive, at least in part, because of a rebellion of Berbers against their Arab rulers in Spain and Africa which commanded the attention of the Muslim army. The Berbers were disturbed by the religious laxity of the Arabs and the lack of orthodoxy and obedience to the Koran that they saw in Spain. This belief sent them to battle often.

The Berbers and the mass of the people generally were very enthusiastic Mohammedans, so that it was unsafe to express one’s opinions contrary to the faith or even to engage openly in certain philosophical studies, for they were regarded as heretical.¹

This civil war was followed by an eleven year religious war between Sunnite and Shiite factions.

Stability was reestablished in Spain only under Abd-er-

Rahman I (755-788) who, having fled there after the fall of the Umayyad dynasty of which he was an heir, quelled many rebellions before he insured his hegenomy in most of the Iberian peninsula. Hakem I, lacking the degree of piety desired by his subjects, was plagued by religious uprisings and a push for independence in Toledo. Abd-er-Rahman III (912-961) pursued an eight year was against that separatist movement and a seven year campaign against various Christian citizens in his empire. Hisham III was dethroned in 1031 and the empire disintegrated into small tribal states. It was during this factionalized period that Muslim culture reached an height at Cordova which boasted paved streets and a luxurious mosque.

The Spanish Muslim tribes, numbering at one time twenty-three, fought among themselves but none could gain dominance. The Christians began pressing the factionalized Muslims who requested aid from their coreligionists in Africa in 1090.

Responding to the plea of their brothers-in-faith, the Almoravides (religious men), a part of the Berber people who controlled northwest Africa, attacked and pushed the Christians back to Leon; a less threatening position. The Almoravides were hardy tribal men but they were soon to succumb to the succulent pleasures of the more fertile peninsula as well as the beauty of its literature and architecture. Their dominance in Muslim Spain was only about forty years (1091-1125), but, in its early, more
radical phase, upsetting to the cultured society of Andalus, as the Muslims called their Spanish empire. But, soon political matters were back to normal, namely, tribal states and internecine war. Once more, in 1146, Berbers from the south invaded Andalus. The Almohades, another branch of the Berber people represented a combination of political and religious elements which were far from those in Spain. They were uncultured puritans believing in the strict unity of God and the uselessness of all knowledge but the Koran. They gave their brethren in Andalus a strong dose of orthodoxy.2

It is little wonder that Muslim Spain seems to present so many attitudes toward religious and social organization given its history of pressure from Christian Spain and cathartic invasions from Berber Africa.

After the defeat at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, Muslim dominance of any kind was at a low. Only a small state in the south remained. It was all that was left of Andalus.

Banu-Nasr, who negotiated with the Christians, received the state of Granada. He began the Nasrid dynasty which reigned in Granada from 1232-1492. However, the history of the Nasrids was no more stable than other Muslim political experience in Spain. Six rulers held power at least twice (see Appendix I) and Mohammed VIII actually sat on the sultan's throne three times.

2For further information see Edward Salmon, Imperial Spain (New York: Henry Holt., 1931), pp. 21-32.
With the accession of Abu-l-hasan, the first ruler studied here, the last epoch of Muslim presence in the Iberian peninsula began. When he took the throne he inherited a tradition of political instability which began with the tribes of the Arabian deserts. The culture of Islam did little to mitigate those factors.

Thus, the entire history of Islam in Spain was the story of political instability. This was true also of the last epoch of Muslim control in the peninsula. It is this instability and its causes that I shall examine here.

The story of the last years of Granada is one of decay and destruction. It involves inevitable forces and foolish men. But, there is much that can be learned from such a subject. It may be within man's power to arrest decline and cure decay. While birth of ideas, concepts or habits are interesting topics, they are no more illustrative to human action than the history of decline. And yet, history often slights this story of decay in favor of a more optimistic inquiry into birth and growth.

History has always been far more engrossed by the problems of origins than by those of decline and fall. When studying any period, we are always looking for the promise of what the next is to bring....The questions imposing themselves upon the mind have been concerned with the rise of families, nations, kingdoms, social forms or ideas.  

The mistakes the Nasrids made and an analysis of the problems they faced can be instructive as long as comparison to the present does not become too strict.

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Beyond this, the events of 1461-1492 are dramatic. They involve interesting people with various motivations facing cataclysmic circumstances. The story of death is more dramatic than that of birth because it has the tragedy of all ends. There is a tragic element in this story that sets the fatalism of Islamic historians in dark relief.

The history of Granada is complicated less because of the intricacies of the actual events than because of the men who wrote it. The final stage of Muslim Granada is inextricably bound in two cosmologies. Its history is written generally by Spanish historians to whom it is a great conquest by a superior Spain with God on its side, or Islamic historians to whom Granada is a sigh and a tear in the story of fate's capricious destruction, or by various antiquarians and experts in other fields of history who are drawn to it because of its poetic potentialities. Each see Granada in a different manner, but somehow none seem to see it objectively. To the Spaniard, Granada was, quite simply, defeated by the superiority of a united Spain. To the Muslim, Granada lost the favor of God who only used Spain to fulfill His will.

To further complicate matters, the whole epoch is surrounded by tales of doubtful truth; sometimes these tales are contradictory. This is so not only because it involves a Spanish national experience and is therefore romanticized, but also because Islamic sources are essentially chronicles which are more interested in a good story
than the facts. For example, H. E. Watts\(^4\) places the size of Granada's army at fifty thousand well-armed, well-trained men, while a resident of the city in those thirty years describes the army in this way:

The armies of Abu-l-hasan having greatly increased in number, he decided to review them. To this effect he caused his architects to erect him a platform out of the Alhambra, or the castle of Granada. The review began on March 24, A.D. 1478, and the troops ceased not passing daily before him till April 24, A.D. 1478, when the review was completed.\(^5\)

This is undoubtably a more enjoyable image but it is of little use to historical investigation.

Further difficulties are presented by the destruction of masses of Islamic sources by the Christians after their victory. This has led many an historian astray on matters even of chronology. In numerous volumes\(^6\) dealing with the last stage of the Reconquista it is stated that Abu-l-hasan attacked and took a Christian fortress called Zahara. In retribution the Marquess of Cadiz captured the important Moorish city of Alhama. This was a crucial exchange of warlike blows because it marked the opening of the Granadine wars. However, Charlotte Yonge\(^7\) says that the city of Alhama was


taken before Zahara which would change the whole complexion of the war since it would make Spain the aggressor. The author may be mistaken since her's seems to be the only work that makes such a contention. The point is not that one author was mistaken, but that such mistakes are easy in this field, given the sources with which an historian can work.

Varying interpretations are to be expected in any historical discussion. However, the question of the order of succession presents a more basic difficulty which underscores the problems posed by Granada's muddled history. Some works³ contend that Abu-l hasan returned to the throne of Granada after his deposition because his son had been captured by Ferdinand and a power vacuum existed in the state. He is said to have ruled for two years under these circumstances (see Appendix I). However, al-Maqqari argues that Abu-l hasan retired in favor of his brother Az-zaghal who assumed the throne. It is possible that Abu-l hasan did rule for two years of this interim (1483-1485) and Az-zaghal, his brother, served the remaining year (1485-1486) until the reassertion of Abu 'Abdillah. However, al-Maqqari does not acknowledge such a fact. Thus, the question of succession in those troubled times is at least partially in doubt. To pick through such contradictions and choose what is good history and what is good literature is the basic problem of any work dealing with this topic.

In general, I have turned to Philip K. Hitti’s History of the Arabs when such problems arise. I have also tried to keep a jaundiced eye on the more literary dealings in this subject. Much was written on this topic around the turn of the century that takes a more literary approach; although generally reliable, they are confused on some important specifics. Poetry and tales have been used, but I have always attempted to authenticate their content from more historical sources. In general I have given more credence to Arab scholars, e.g., Hitti and von Grunebaum, than western sources since I wish to see the event in terms of Muslim inadequacies. This, then, is the method by which I have tried to extract the true series of events that led to the downfall of Muslim Granada.

A note on variant spelling will be helpful to those who wish to pursue the subject further. Each Muslim figure can be found under his Arabic name or various Spanish spellings, e.g., Abū-l-hasan in Spanish texts is Muley Hacen. Also, it is necessary to beware of distinction between Az-zaghal and his nephew Abu ʿAbdillah, also known as Boabdil, since both have the nephew’s name in Arabic. I have attempted to use Arabic names whenever possible. In the case of the similarly named uncle and nephew, I have chosen to use the nickname of the uncle, Az-zaghal, which is also used in some contemporary Muslim texts. Accent marks used here correspond to those used in al-Maqqari’s Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain.

For example, Roger B. Merriman’s Rise of the Spanish Empire.
CAUSES OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY
IN MUSLIM GRANADA

The story of the fall of Andalus will amply demonstrate the role played by political instability in the demise of Islam's last stronghold in the West. The factors that led to this instability are less obvious. The history of Andalus involves inevitable forces that created instability, but they are difficult to separate and analyze because they worked together to produce the tragic fall of such a glittering society. These factors fall into two broad categories: first, those institutions of government that so often determine the quality of a political system; second, the myriad of attitudes, habits and economics that makes a culture. However, these two categories must not be seen as mutually exclusive since they work on each other. A culture, the attitudes of those to be ruled, will not for long accept a government which does not meet its standards. On the other hand, institutional government can, through force or persuasion, change those attitudes.

The sultan's throne embodied all the legitimate power of the realm. Although plagued by foreign enemies and ambitious nobles, once a ruler had been chosen he held all power. There was no concept of separation of powers, even to the point that the sultan represented both the state and the faith. Islam never struggled with the problem of the "two swords" as the West did. The ruler was quite literally a despot as long as he could hold his throne.
This total power created two important attitudes in Islam's rulers. These sultans looked upon their countries as personal estates so they gave full vent to their personal ambitions without concern for the welfare of the state. They also demanded subjugation of the most demeaning sort. However, there were those citizens, members of ancient tribes, who found it difficult to sacrifice pride to the power of the ruler.

But with all their greatness, their clemency, their generosity, the... (rulers)... were universally hated. The obsequious submission exacted by their office was extremely repugnant to the native independence of the Arab. Among the aristocracy the spirit of insubordination was always strong and intensified by the vigilance and severity with which it was surpressed, by the memory of past renown, and by the hope of future revolution that might open a new avenue to the throne.  

The result was frequent and destructive tribal revolution. Even in times of domestic peace, the tribes were only partially reconciled to the government.

Tribal warfare had long been a problem to the internal security of Muslim Spain. When these tribes constituted almost the entire army, they presented an even greater threat to domestic peace. The able vizier under Abd-er-Rahman III (912-961) attempted to solve the problem by reorganizing the army.

So, for instance, the general of an army would have under his orders a portion of each tribe, and a captain would seldom command soldiers of his own tribe, by these means the wound was cauterized, civil dissensions were somewhat allayed, and peace, if not friendship, was established between the Arabian tribes inhabiting the western district, although they not

infrequently broke out in other parts of Andalus where the same precautions had not been taken.\textsuperscript{11} This plan was reasonably successful. However, when the Nasrids faced the problem of tribal factionalism it was no longer useful because members of the tribes avoided military service and established themselves in various quarters of the capital.\textsuperscript{12} The tribes composed an active and disruptive element in the politics of the state. They did, in fact, depose Mohammed IX in 1429 because he persecuted the tribes and restored Mohammed VIII. The Abencerrages, one of the three major tribes in Granada, had supported Mohammed VIII, so when his brother deposed him, the tribe fell out of favor. Mohammed IX, fearing this potentially rebellious tribe, carried on a systematic policy of persecution bordering on elimination of the tribe. Mohammed IX's fears were justified because in 1429, after only two years in power, the Abencerrages deposed him and restored their supporter Mohammed VIII. Thus, the tribal factions were a political fact of life for the sultan. The manner in which he handled these elements was one of the factors that determined the length of his reign.

The ruler refused to share his power either as secular or religious leader. Islam's political system was always weak because it owed its potency to the quality of the ruler who was given


\textsuperscript{12}Scott, \textit{Moorish Empire in Europe}, II, p. 525.
absolute control. In such a system, if the ruler is incompetent, the fate of the state is misrule and disaster. If such a system also fails to provide for an orderly transfer of power, its fate is chronic instability.

Muslim Spain, and more generally all of Islam, never settled the question of rightful succession. When Mohammed began his preaching, he did so among the tribes of the Arabian desert whose process of succession was seniority. Thus, power passed from brother to brother. After the death of the Prophet, the question of the leadership of Islam was of immediate importance. Islam never made any distinction between religion and the state so that the problem was further complicated when Muslims suddenly found themselves with an empire to govern. If only Mohammed had made some pronouncement concerning succession this problem would have been solved, since in Islam his word is law. However, he did not, and soon after his death Islam broke into factions, each supporting some pretender to Mohammed's position. The bitterest and most permanent division on the question of rightful succession exists even today in the Sunnite-Shiite controversy. This inability to create a consensus concerning succession was the cause of bitter, factious wars which continually weakened Islamic power, especially when external pressures demanded internal cohesion as, for example, in Granada. "Never was there an Islamic issue which brought about more bloodshed than the.

Islam inherited the seniority system of succession from the Arabian tribes, but it was not generally accepted and soon the hereditary system came into use. It is almost natural that a father wishes to see his son rule in his place and very soon this became another source of tension in the political world of Islam. Each caliph sought to put his son on the throne, but the tribal seniority system intervened. Of the fourteen Umayyad caliphs, only four were followed by their sons.15

In Spain, however, the pattern of succession became generally hereditary. This would have gone a long way to stabilize Spain’s political system by insuring peaceful succession, but the theory had been revised and weakened.

...Since the advent of Abd-er-Rahman I a son — not always the eldest, for each emir had claimed the right to choose the one most fitted to govern — had regularly succeeded to his father. It was not, as time would prove, the perfect solution to the problem since a son so passed over became inevitably a focus of discontent and knew strong temptation to fight for the inheritance....16

Thus, seniority had fallen into disuse, although it remained a legitimate theory available to ambitious men, and hereditary succession was complicated by not necessarily passing to the eldest son.

The sultanate was totally powerful which made the men who

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14 Al-Shahrastâni, a twelfth century historian of religions as cited in Hitti, Arabs, p. 139.

15 Ibid., pp. 281-82.

served in it capricious and demanding. This tremendous power was not handled with the delicacy it deserved. After the death of a ruler, sons and brothers and tribes bickered until someone proved most powerful. All these inadequacies were never checked by the cultural milieu in which, and for which, it functioned.

The cultural factors that allowed such an institutional structure were particularly Islamic. Most alien to the West was the harem system. It added emotion to political considerations. The harem had disruptive tendencies in the Arab system. It was close to government and it was the source of bitterness since it involved the jealousies of wives. At times in the political annals of Islam, dominant wives actually ruled their husbands' kingdom. It also meant there were numerous sons, all of whom had a legitimate claim to the throne. Fears of mothers that their sons would be passed over prompted them to interfere in politics and send their children to war to win the sultan's power. There was no social law to prevent these potential jealousies from flaring into war. There was little injunction in Arabic culture against familial combat. "Our business is to make raids on our neighbor and our own brother, in case we find none to raid but a brother." Thus, there was little in either the Islamic power structure or

17Bhargava, Islamic Culture and Institutions, p. 103.
18Al-Ghāfa, a poet of the early Umayyad dynasty as cited in Hitti, Arabs, p. 25.
culture to prevent such political fragmentation.

Muslim society was warlike outside the family too. Andalus had, because of the continued influence of the Umayyad dynasty, retained much more of the Arabic element in its culture than in the East. The Umayyad dynasty fell in the East in 750, but it continued in Spain until the Berber invasions in the eleventh century as a result of Abd-er-Rahman's government in Spain after fleeing from the East. This left a definite Arabic stamp on Andalusian society which meant a glorification of war and a predilection toward prideful audacity. For example, the poet Sa'id in the ninth century defined the Arabic idea of warfare. "...Sprung from a race of champions, whose blood had never mixed with that of a foreign race, he attacks his enemies impetuously, as befits an Arab...."19

This Arabic element also aided the relaxed attitude Andalus had toward orthodoxy.

Now the Umayyad caliphate in the heartlands was characterized by the dominance of Arab elements rather than of the distinctively Islamic. The Umayyads were practising Muslims, but they did not show the same deference as the Abbasids did to the self-appointed exponents of Islamic religion and religious law.20 Suspicion concerning the orthodoxy of Muslim Spain had much to do with the two invasions of fanatically religious elements from Africa. Arabic predominance in Andalusian culture, then, meant a more warlike and prideful society in which religion was less


20 Watt and Cachia, Islamic Spain, p. 166.
emphasized. After the doses of orthodoxy from the two Berber invasions, Muslims in Spain developed a culture in which the two elements existed side by side.

Culture, then, gave the political system many potential heirs with the will and social sanction to fight for power which only added to the institutional difficulties Islam's politics faced. There is one element that is at once an institution and molder of culture: the population. When many men all claim a right to the throne, there must be a final arbitrator. With this political confusion it seems obvious that an important claim to legitimacy was public opinion, but not in the modern sense. Since these circumstances often resulted in warfare, the number of followers a pretender could muster was often the difference between victory and defeat. Thus, the only real claim to the throne was through the allegiance of the citizenry in strategic cities throughout the state. It is almost paradoxical that the Islamic system, so absolute and repressive in most cases, should, in Spain, find itself at the mercy of those it was to govern.

Since the citizenry meant so much to the stability of the state, it is important to understand why it did not accomplish solidarity. If the people had wanted peaceful transfer of power, they could have demanded it and insured it by allying themselves with one man. However, they fought the suicidal wars of pretenders to the throne and their allegiance was sold to the highest bidder. Why, then, did citizens of Andalus not provide the social cement that could have meant stability to its political system?
Cultural elements were intensified by the high concentration of Muslims in Granada. The Reconquista had forced them into this corner of Spain. It was crowded, some estimates say by three or four millions, and very consciously Arabic-Islamic in tenor. Granada was filled with bitter men who had lost their homes. They had been pushed from central Spain by a religious crusade and in rebellion they emphasized all those characteristics that had made them anathema to the Christians. Thus, the culture of Granada was consciously Muslim.

The population was capricious and fickle in nature; willing to give their allegiance to those who would give them the most and ask the least. "Life was with them one long carnival, and the season of revelry was prolonged until the enemy was at the gate." But, this only defines the nature of the citizenry; it does not explain it. Why were they so?

Granada had fertile valleys and thriving industry to occupy its people. However, the years of the Reconquista swelled the population with exiles and disinherited nobles. For these people there was no place in the economy of Granada. This left many idle and eventually poor. There was a vast gulf between the rich, who revelled in the luxury their wealth purchased, and the poor who

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21 Chapman, History of Spain, p. 200.
had only diversions to keep their minds from their poverty.\textsuperscript{23} This division resulted in two things. First, it produced a large dis-
satisfied element whose allegiance could be bought with a promise and whose ability to anticipate the consequences of their actions only reached to the next festival. Second, concentration of wealth at one pole generally disrupts industry, even in the articles that Granada produced, e.g., silk.

When wealth is concentrated at one pole, luxury breaks up the equilibrium by diminishing the manufacture of articles of use and increasing that of articles of luxury...The more wealth is divided, the more consumption and consequently production increase.\textsuperscript{24} This only increased the poverty of the masses and made them more volatile.

The alienation of the poor extended beyond economics. If there is a social cement between classes, even poverty can be endured without rancor. But the aristocracy, through its fascination with intellectual pursuits, soon lost all understanding and sympathy for the values of their less fortunate fellow citizens.\textsuperscript{25} The masses often took the reflections and actions of their rulers as un-
orthodox. For example, Haken I (796-822), lost the loyalty of his subjects because he lacked the necessary degree of religious piety.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{23} Chapman, History of Spain, pp. 200-01.


\footnotesize\textsuperscript{25} Armand Abel, "Spain: Internal Division," in Unity and Variety, ed. by von Grunebaum, p. 222.
Because of the nature of Islamic society, belief in the orthodoxy of the ruling elite was vital to loyalty.

Mohammed...[arose]...in a society without a state....Consequently, the social law was an integral part of the religious law, and respect for the social law an integral part of submission to Allah....It was to have the consequence that the Muslim would require of his political organization a certain perfection; if this was lost, the principle of obedience which he owed to it was also lost.26

This economic, social and intellectual alienation combined to make the masses in Granada an enemy of political stability. It was their allegiance that was the ultimate source of legitimacy for any ruler. Their vacillation sacrificed domestic tranquility.

Thus it was that in Muslim Spain politics and culture combined to create instability. The ruler demanded obedience which noble refused to give. A tradition of succession was never established so that many could legitimately claim the throne. Meanwhile, the harem system produced many aspirants and Arabic cultural elements urged them to war. In this factuous system the last claim to authority was the loyalty of the citizenry, but it too engaged in internecine battles rather than wielding its power for domestic peace.

These, then, are the factors that caused instability. In the chapters that follow they will reappear and play their role in the fall of a Muslim state.

SUCCESSION BY SENIORITY AND TRIBAL JEALOUSIES

For the greater part of Abu-l-hasan's reign (1461-1482) he faced a complex of difficulties inherent in Muslim politics. Even as he declared himself ruler of the state of Granada, he found the question of succession made him sultan only of the capital city which he occupied. A Muslim chronicler in the capital explains the circumstances:

When it came to the reign of Abu-l-hasan, one of the Sultans of that family, public opinion declared against him, especially when a brother of his named Az-zaghal, received the oath of allegiance and was proclaimed at Malaga.²⁷

Az-zaghal had some claim to the throne because hereditary succession in Andalus did not provide that the eldest son necessarily ascended to the throne. This attempt to become sultan was not as illegitimate as it would have been in a system demanding the rule of the eldest son. The legitimacy of his claim may have aided his decision to rebel and it certainly increased the popular support for his cause. Az-zaghal's decision plainly demonstrates the kind of political confusion caused by Islam's failure to develop a solid tradition of succession.

At Malaga, the second city of the state, Az-zaghal was proclaimed sultan due, chiefly, to the political maneuverings of the

Christian. Their motivations are unclear but the outcome of their action appeared obvious. Once more, it seemed, power would not be transferred smoothly and peacefully. Granada divided into two armed camps and prepared for a civil war.

However, suddenly, Az-zaghal left Malaga and journeyed to Granada to make peace with Abu-l-hasan. Az-zaghal's motivations for such an act are not clear. It seems obvious that he had the greatest number of citizens bound to him by oath and could have won his claim if he had been willing to risk a long civil war. Some sources attribute to him the greatest foresight to see the coming of a powerful Reconquista and a magnanimous nature which valued the security of the state more than power. Perhaps this is a little too charitable. There is no doubt that Az-zaghal lived up to his name which means "the Valiant" but to say that he could anticipate coming events and that he had a modern concept of the state and its welfare is to argue from the present into the past. Certainly a civil war at that time would have further weakened Granada when faced with Christian pressure, but there is a great deal of doubt that Az-zaghal considered such an eventuality in making his decision, since the newly-united Spain had made no new military advances and did not pose too great a threat to the existence of Granada. It is possible

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28Ibid.

he merely wished to avoid the bloodshed of what probably would have been a long civil war.

Peace was not assured, however, by this agreement between Abu-l-hasan, the new ruler of Granada, and his brother. The Christians who had elevated Az-zaghal at Malaga continued to refuse recognition of Abu-l-hasan as sultan. This stalemate continued until the people of Malaga rose in arms and proclaimed also Abu-l-hasan, whereby the civil war was concluded, and that Sultan became the supreme master of all the Mohammedan dominions in Andalus.30

This kind of political factionalism was, more than any other, the single cause of instability in Granadine society.

So, Abu-l-hasan began his reign. He bolstered the army and prepared for war, his favorite sport. Although historical treatment of him31 concerns his role as a military leader, he faced some difficulty in domestic matters. Following a long tradition of Islamic politics, his reign was essentially repressive. He, like most Islamic rulers, demanded much in money and obedience from his citizens.

The people of Granada, moreover, complained to the Sultan of his Wizir and civil officers, who, they said, oppressed them with unwonted tyranny and injustice. This increased the discontent still more, and things went so far that the inhabitants of Granada loudly demanded the removal of the obnoxious Wizir and the other public functionaries; and as their petitions were disregarded by Abu-l-hasan, new scenes of trouble...ensued.32

31 Scott, Moorish Empire in Europe, II, 541.
This repression would have meant little to the stability of the state but the Berber invasions and nobles exiled by the Reconquista combined to make the society volatile. There was a legacy in the form of prideful tribes who dislike the Sultan and his power which further complicated an explosive situation.

These tribes were an element in Granada's political system that threatened the Sultan's power and the stability of the state. It was, therefore, necessary that he deal with them. The method Abu-l-hasan used to stop the agitation of the tribes was, as time would prove, no solution.

Granada had three major tribes: the Gomeres, the Zegris and the Abencerrages. Many had fled to Granada after defeat at the hands of the Reconquista, for example, the Zegris migrated from Cordova. They all chafed under their sultan, cursed their poverty and mourned their lost land. But, the Abencerrages had long been in Granada and was experienced in the ways of civil disorder and usurpation, for example, they deposed Mohammed IX in 1429. Because of their revolutionary activity, they became the focal point of resistance and the tribe with which Abu-l-hasan had to deal.

Why Abu-l-hasan chose the method he did is not clear. What is clear is that it solved the problem only temporarily.

He called the leaders of the Abencerrages into the large hall of the Alhambra which still bears the tribe's name, and there:

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33 Scott, Moorish Empire in Europe, II, 525.
"By thee were slain, in evil hour/The Abencerrages, Granada's flower...." The extent of the murders in also a matter of question. Poets speak of it in bloody terms, but one source says the massacre only involved the death of four members of the tribe. But, whatever the extent of the murders, the event incurred for Abu-l-hasan the bitter hatred of the Abencerrages tribe. Later this tribe allied itself with any who opposed him. Abu-l-hasan had decided to solve the whole problem though violence which only deepened tribal hatred for him.

The Sultan was no more diplomatic with Christian Spain than he had been with the tribes. Mohammed X had been forced to pay twelve thousand ducats in 1453 by the peace terms with Castile. These terms also included an annual tribute that was paid by Saad, Abu-l-hasan's father, faithfully. However, Abu-l-hasan was not his father's son in diplomacy. He refused to make delivery of the sum. Delay in such payments prompted Isabella, in 1476, to send an ambassador in the name of the Spanish kingdom united by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella. When confronted by this emissary, Abu-l-hasan is said to have replied, "Tell your sovereigns that the kings of Granada who paid tribute are dead: our mint now coins nothing but sword-blades." Such a response is indicative of the

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34 Contemporary poem concerning the fall of Alhama as cited in Yonge, Christians and Moors in Spain, p. 260.

35 Ibid., p. 249.

personality of this man. He was a man of reckless pride and violent nature. Even before he ascended to the throne he had a reputation for spreading terror through border Christian towns. He had a hatred for the "infidels" and found tribute demeaning. Thus, this response from the Sultan opened the diplomatic hostilities. He was soon to open real warfare.

Abu-l-hasan's early reign demonstrates clearly the role of two factors of instability in Granada's political system. Perhaps the single most destructive weakness, inability to transfer the sultan's power without civil war is shown in Az-zaghal's attempt to usurp the throne. Although there was not was, the principle that a younger son had a right to his father's throne created some domestic disruptions. Adding continuous agitation for any sultan, the tribes in Granada were also a force creating instability. Abu-l-hasan made himself an enemy of the tribes. In times of domestic strife, he would regret having incurred their hatred.

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37Scott, Moorish Empire in Europe, II, 541.
ARABIC-ISLAMIC CULTURE

It seems likely that united Spain would have desired the destruction of Muslim sovereignty in the Iberian peninsula, perhaps during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, even without the aggressive acts of Granada. However, it must be remembered that Christian and Muslim had lived together peacefully during the long periods that interrupted the Reconquista. True, there was new unity for the Spanish nation with the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella and unity had been the limiting factor in the successful conclusion of the crusade. But, their marriage had only just taken place in 1479, and there was no assurance that this method of union would produce more than a personal combination of the two kingdoms which would not last beyond the lives of the royal husband and wife. Both monarchs were so busy with their domestic problems that they seemed unaware of Granada, even to the extent that Abu-l-hasan received no retribution for his failure to pay tribute. When, in 1481, Abu-l-hasan provided the new sovereigns with a perfect focal point to confirm Spanish unity, the Muslim kingdom's fate was sealed. Without Abu-l-hasan's aggressive action, Granada may have remained in the sphere of Islam for some time but the outcome would probably have only been postponed.

In 1481, the Sultan of Granada attacked and took the fortress of Zahara east of the capital and in Christian territory (see
Appendix II). In retrospect it appears a foolish act because it forced the resumption of the Reconquista and the defeat of Muslim Granada. It seems obvious to the historian that there was no advantage for Granada in such a policy. After all, Granada was only a small corner of Spain. She was religiously anathema to her larger neighbor who recently had been strengthened by the union of Castile and Aragon. It must have been patently clear that there was nothing to be gained and much lost in violating Christian territory. Even an alfakı (intellectual) of the city of Granada realized the implications of such an act: "Woe is me! The ruins of Zahara will fall on our heads; the days of the Moslem empire in Spain are numbered." 38

Perhaps it was not so obvious that Granada would come to grief from the attack on Zahara. Abu-l-hasan could have made his decision to attack from some rational basis which does not occur to the historian who often demands great perception and pure reason from men in history. It is more likely that Abu-l-hasan's action was the result of a combination of his perception of the political situation in Spain and psychological factors which impelled him toward an aggressive policy.

The apparent inevitability of the defeat of Granada which seems so obvious with the benefit of time, the great advantage of the historian, was not so obvious to Abu-l-hasan who had no such

38 Prescott, Ferdinand and Isabella, I, 414.
sight and the political world looked somewhat different to him. Granada was, after all, the richest city in Spain and she sported a strong army which the Sultan had recently improved. This army had, for some time, been repulsing Christian raids into Granadine territory. Abu-l-hasan had no way of knowing that Christian strategy was merely to harass the state and avoid direct confrontation. These sallies against the "infidels" must have convinced the Sultan of the superiority of his army as well as the cowardice of his enemy. Also, he never received any retribution for the audacious act of refusing to pay tribute. He must have come to feel that the Christian monarchs were unwilling to clash with him and he would encounter no resistance in his campaign. Only to the historian is it so obvious that the royal marriage in 1479 would bring lasting unity. To the Sultan, it must have appeared to be just an attempt at unity in Spain which would be doomed to failure.

However, it is too much a distortion to argue that Abu-l-hasan's decision was purely rational and resulted merely from a mistaken perception of political trends. If the Sultan had been a different type of man, he may, like the alfaki, have been able to see the long-term disadvantages of such a policy. Historians tend to believe that the actors of history are purely rational.

There is a mania for crediting great men of the past with deep laid political schemes the idea of which perhaps never occurred to them....The motives which they obeyed...may be... of so special a kind that every psychological sense is bound to come to grief.39

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39Lot, Ancient World and Middle Ages, p. 30.
Historical figures are no more or less rational than any individual. Much of the reason for the Sultan's decision can only be understood in terms of his personality.

Abu-l-hasan was warlike and fierce. He savagely attacked border towns even before he became sultan. Much of his interest in the early years of his reign was with improvements in the army. He was haughty and prideful, as his reply to the Christians concerning tribute demonstrated.40

...His neighbors had had frequent occasion to acknowledge the boldness of his undertakings, the rapidity of his movements, and the unrelenting cruelty of his character. The hatred he bore to the infidels had not been diminished by their gratuitous interventions in behalf of revels in arms against his authority. His personal inclinations were towards unremitting hostility.41

Given this personality, he may have attacked Zahara even if he had realized the reality of Spain's political development.

Many aspects of Abu-l-hasan's personality can be understood in terms of the Arabic-Islamic culture in which he lived. The Arab glorification of war and impetuosity demonstrated in Chapter I is best shown here. The pride found among the tribes was not exclusively theirs. Abu-l-hasan had his share of vanity. There is little doubt that Abu-l-hasan's own personality accentuated these cultural aspects. Others had lived peacefully with the Christians. Others had paid tribute, but to him it was unbearable.

40See above p. 16.

41Scott, Moorish Empire in Europe, II, 541.
To him no Arab would accept the humiliation of tribute and all Arabs should seek the glory of war.42

With the twin invasions from Africa, religious orthodoxy, and the consequent Islamic element, had become a second characteristic of Andalusian society. Abu-l-hasan’s implacable hatred for the Christians may have found some root in this cultural element. Nevertheless, others had lived in such a culture without harboring his great hatred. His own personality once more accentuated these characteristics. He had personal reasons for his hate. It was, after all, "infidel" Christians who aided Az-zaghal in his revolution against Abu-l-hasan. Thus, his life experience and personality, as well as the cultural atmosphere taught him to hate Christians. Thus, Islamic cultural elements may have contributed to the personality of Abu-l-hasan just as the Arabic element had. It was this kind of cultural atmosphere in which the Sultan grew and lived.

It was, then, both Abu-l-hasan’s personality, reinforced by the Arabic-Islamic culture in which he lived, and his perception of political reality, invalid as it may have been, that led him to decide to attack Christian Zahara and open the last of the Granadine wars.

In February 1482, Ponce de Leon, Lord of Cadiz, surprised the city of Alhama in the night and took it with little difficulty.

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42Lane-Poole, Moors in Spain, p. 232.
This was an important city of Granada and its loss was a great shock.

But on my soul Alhama weighs,
And on my inmost spirit preys;
And if the King his land hath lost,
Yet others may have lost the most.

Woe is me Alhama! 43

Alhama was a well-fortified city just north of the capital (see Appendix II). It had a rich silk trade which until the loss of the city to the Christians, fed the coffers of Granada. It also overlooked the fertile valley of the Vega below the capital, so that the Christians from this fortress could disrupt normal agricultural activity with impunity. Most important to Abu-l-hasan was the humiliation this seizure brought to him. He immediately sent his army to retake the city but they were unable to do so. The soldiers, stung by their defeat grumbled against their officers.

It soon became evident, however, that Alhama could not be taken by force, upon which the soldiers gave license to their tongues, and began to pour abuse and ridicule upon their own officers and upon the Wizir who went in command of the army. 44

Finally, the attempt to dislodge the Lord of Cadiz had to be abandoned because a relief army from Seville came to aid the newly-conquered fortress. Later, the Muslims returned and actually breached the walls of Alhama. Many soldiers died in stubborn hand-to-hand fighting but the Christian forces were numerically

43 Contemporary poem as cited in Yonge, Christians and Moors in Spain, p. 261.
superior and Granada suffered a second defeat at Alhama. The city's loss was seen as a disaster. The mortal enemy was only twenty-five miles from the capital.

It was such a catastrophe that Abu-l-hasan is said to have declared capital punishment for anyone who mentioned the fall of Alhama. This was not merely an attempt to avoid the humiliation the Sultan must have felt. There was sound political reasoning behind this declaration. It has already been established that the population was the ultimate source of power for any governor. Abu-l-hasan feared that loose talk would cause discontent and threaten his throne. Alhama was a diplomatic as well as strategic loss since the population's pride as well as his own had been bruised. So, Abu-l-hasan wished to avoid revolution against his rule and hoped that control of public opinion, at least overt and inflammatory discussion, would help.

Part of the Sultan's motivation to begin a campaign into Gibraltar was to placate his citizens with glory and booty for Granada. The Sultan's fiery spirit had not been dampened by the Spanish success. When faced with an ambush during this campaign, he was advised to forego his booty of livestock and return to Granada by another route. He is said to have replied to this warning: "...No true soldier gives up his booty without a blow. Follow me;"

\(^{45}\) Yonge, *Christians and Moors in Spain*, pp. 292-93.
we will have a brush with these dogs of Christians." He sent his men into a disastrous battle but he saved his booty.

Several practical, psychological and cultural factors combined to produce the decision to take the offensive in the tension between the two cultures. Then retaliation came in the form of the seizure of the vital city of Alhama. Seeing the jeopardy in which his regime had been placed by his actions, Abu-l-Hasan did what he could to bolster his government. It was too great a task. The Sultan was soon to find that his past mistakes would haunt him in the form of his own son. But, now he was satisfied that he had avenged Alhama.

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Thus far, the important events in the life of Abu-l-hasan have demonstrated his actions as a general, diplomat, and a domestic politician as well as some inquiry into his personality in terms of the culture in which he lived. Now the narrative naturally comes to a point that the Sultan appears as a man; a man whose life is determined as much by how well he slept and the palatability of his morning meal as by reason. Some of the institutions of his private and public life, especially the harem, created further complications.

Abu-l-hasan now had reason to feel secure. The Christians had suffered a sound defeat east of the capital at Loja (see Appendix II). It seemed that the "infidels" had been stopped. On July, 1482, the Christians began besieging Loja in an obvious attempt to gain another foothold in the vega as well as encirclement of the capital. It was a pitched battle with a great slaughter. The Christian losses were especially heavy but they attacked again despite the heavy artillery and reinforcements the Sultan hurried to the aid of the city. Loja was not as strong a fortress as Alhama but it was not surprised when it was attacked and the Sultan was quick to relieve it.47

47Sidi Hasan as cited in al-Maqqari, Mohammedan Dynasties, II, 372
Just as Abu-l-hasan was returning to his capital, flushed with victory, two of his sons, Abu 'Abdillah, the eldest, and Abu'l-hejaj Yusuf, fled to the northwest and established themselves in Guadix (see Appendix II) which submitted to them. Once more, then, the political tranquility of the Muslim state was disturbed.

What had motivated the sons of the Sultan to break with their father? The question of succession had returned to plague the state, as Abu 'Abdillah and his mother suspected he would be passed over when the Sultan chose his successor. Whether he would have been so denied is unknown because the jealousy a harem system breeds caused a break between father and son before any decision had been made.

Abu-l-hasan had, according to Arab social custom, acquired a harem. The first wife, the sultana, was named Ayesha and her eldest son was the Abu 'Abdillah who broke with his father and declared himself at Guadix. However, the Sultan had become greatly infatuated with Zoraya. It is not clear whether she was one of his wives or a slave but she obviously, almost notoriously, was his favorite.\(^{48}\)

Now the effect of this relationship on the political situation is not certain. Whether it was merely the jealousy of Ayesha or concrete evidence that her son would be passed over is not clear. It is likely that it was a combination of both, and an explosive combination it was.

\(^{48}\)Chapman, History of Spain, p. 204.
This problem would never have presented itself if the succession of the eldest son had been an established tradition in Andalusia or if the harem system had not allowed such bitter jealousies. Abu ' Abdillah would then have had no doubts about his eventual accession to the throne and Ayesha would at least have been secure in her legal status as mother of the successor. In a monogamous society a king may have mistresses, but the children resulting from such an arrangement are not legitimate heirs and the wife still has some standing. This was not so in Granada. All the children of all the wives were legitimate heirs in this system. One wife only gained power by being the favorite. Thus, jealousy and bickering, perhaps even more destructive and bitter among women, was rampant in the harem.

Thus it was that Abu-l-hasan's private conduct, for example, his passion for Zoraya, contributed to his downfall as ruler of Muslim Granada. He was no longer the only ruler of the state. There were, now, and for the rest of Muslim Granada's history, two sultans. This is perhaps the most concrete and dangerous manifestation of the political instability of the region.

The sultan wished to stay in Granada because he knew his son was busy undermining the loyalty of the capital's citizenry. In fact, from Guadix, Abu ' Abdillah had already brought Baza and Almeria, both in the north (see Appendix II), under his control. Street disorder in Granada in Abu ' Abdillah's favor was general. This violence was intensified by the entrance of the tribes into
the dispute. The Abencerrages, anxious to avenge the massacre of their leaders at the hand of the old Sultan, Abu-l-hasan, joined his son's cause. It was that old political mistake that returned to plague the Sultan. Also, the crowded nature of the small state meant that disorder in the capital immediately affected the provinces. Only the extreme southern provinces were immune and they were the ones that did not come under the young Sultan's control.

Moreover, the Sultan Abu-l-hasan had to defend his state from the Christians. The Christians attacked Velez and Malaga, important southern cities, with an estimated 8,000 men. So, with great trepidation, Abu-l-hasan left his capital to relieve them. He hoped he could defeat the Christians and return to Granada before his son could intrigue to win the most important city of the state. But, Malaga, too, was important. It guarded the pass that allowed supplies and, in more troubled times, men from Africa as they had come twice before. If the Christians pressed too hard perhaps aid could be sought from the Berbers. So, he marched to Malaga. He succeeded in his hope to defeat the "infidels" but his political world crumbled. Abu 'Abdillah was able to take Granada.

...The Sultan Abu 'Abdillah, son of Abu-l-hasan...saw his authority firmly established there, as well as at Almeria, and almost every other large city with the exception of Malaga and the western district, which remained faithful to his father....

49 Yongs, Christians and Moors in Spain, p. 291.
50 Sidi Hasan as cited in al-Maqqari, Mohammedan Dynasties, II, 373.
51 Ibid.
Abu-l-hasan was forced to remain in the south. His son proclaimed himself sultan and energetically began a campaign against his father at Malaga in order to extend his control to the whole state. Abu-l-hasan had been joined by his brother Az-zaghal who governed the province of Malaga and they met Abu 'Abdillah in the west. The latter was completely defeated and retreated to Granada.

The brothers, Abu-l-hasan and Az-zaghal, had been able to control the southwestern province because most of its leaders had been killed in an abortive attempt to invade Christian territory in April, 1483. Together, the brothers proceeded against those very Christians whose armed power had defeated the previous leaders. They were moderately successful and gathered a rich booty.

Abu 'Abdillah, realizing that such victories must be matched by him if he was to maintain the new-found loyalty of the citizenry, prepared his own expedition. At the head of his army Abu 'Abdillah put his father-in-law Ali Atat, a ninety year old man. They both left for the northern frontier with the intentions of violating Christian territory. They did so at Lucena. But, victory was denied the young Sultan.

...The Christians in the neighboring districts, having assembled under the Lord of Cabra, guarded all the mountain passes in the rear of the Moslems, and cut them off from their country. In this situation the Moslems were completely defeated, and almost the whole of the army were either made prisoners or slain. Among the former were the Sultan himself....

52Ibid., p. 374.
Abū ' Abdillah was now in the hands of his enemies. It proved to be a great prize for a politically astute leader. Ferdinand II was such a man. In the hands of the Christians Abū ' Abdillah was a willing pawn.

...Though he could show true Moorish courage in the battlefield, he was a weak and vacillating man, and was perpetually oppressed by the conviction that destiny was against him.... He was ever lamenting his evil star....

He made an agreement with Ferdinand so that with Christian aid he could pursue his right to the sultan's throne. Ferdinand, who is often characterized as "crafty" knew well the value of such a disruptive element in the camp of his enemies. Still he kept his captive for two years.

Meanwhile, Abū-l-hasan returned to Granada, having heard of his son's capture. There Abū-l-hasan ruled between 1483 and 1485, but his government was not stable for partisans of Abū ' Abdillah disrupted the peace. Eventually this disorder caused street battles. The war became so bitter that it caused this plea from Imam Macu.

Why do ye strike one another like deadly enemies? For whom do ye shed your brother's blood?... Ye for a headstrong old man, unable to wield a sword or lead you forth against the enemy; ye for a woman-like youth, without courage, virtue or luck.... Give up both and seek among the warriors of the royal race for one to whom you can safely entrust the safety of the kingdom.

53 Lane-Poole, Moors, p. 246.

54 For example, Prescott, Ferdinand and Isabella.

55 Imam Macu as cited in Yonge, Christians and Moors in Spain, p. 266.
The choice was Az-zaghal. Abu-l-hasan offered no resistance to his brother's accession since he was old and losing his eyesight. He retired to Almunecar until his death.

During this period pressure from Christian Spain was weak; then in 1485 the Christians invaded the territory of Malaga once more. Ferdinand enjoyed some successes. He also released Abu 'Abdillah who returned to bring disruption and rebellion to the Muslim state. Andalus needed political cohesion so badly in the face of the Spanish threat; but it was not to be.
CITIZENRY

In all these political maneuverings the citizens of the state played the arbitrators between pretenders to the throne. Their loyalty meant victory. If they had been consistent in that loyalty the politics of Granada would have been greatly simplified. But, they vacillated and therefore were accomplices to the pretender's dissensions. Many citizens in Granada had, for example, taken up the cause of Abu ' Abdillah against his father. They were fickle for numerous reasons. Their vacillations continued until Ferdinand encamped outside the gates of the capital, having defeated most of the fortresses of the state.

In 1485 Granada had its third ruler in four years. Az-zaghal, brother of Abu-l-hasan, had a legitimate claim to the throne through the tribal seniority system of succession. He was proclaimed sultan by the citizens of the capital and brought peace in the long civil war between government supporters and the partisans of Abu ' Abdillah, his nephew. Az-zaghal was perhaps the most far-sighted of a particularly myopic generation of political leaders. Relative peace was restored until Ferdinand launched his double campaign of armed force and subversion. Abu ' Abdillah was the tool of that sub-

56See above pp. 8-11.
57See above pp. 4-5.
version. Ferdinand used him and his supporters to undermine Granada's new-found unity.

Ferdinand II began his most concerted effort to win the state of Granada militarily. In May or June 1485, he enjoyed his first major success which set the pattern for the numerous victories that were to follow. The Christians besieged Ronda (see Appendix II) which lay at the border of the vital southern province. At the time of the attack, Ronda's forces were deployed to neighboring villages to defend them against the imminent peril of Christians. Ronda was weakened and Ferdinand hit her hard with artillery. Very soon she submitted. The pattern of Ronda's capture was repeated again and again.

After the surrender of Ronda, the whole of the neighboring districts of which that city was the capital submitted to the Christians, so that no place remained to the west of Malaga, which did not acknowledge the rule of the infidel king; who, after distributing his army among the fortresses recently conquered, in order that he might afterwards more effectually besiege Malaga, returned to his dominion.58

As each major city fell to the King so did the entire area around it; sometimes even a whole province came under his control. Also, as he gained one area, it gave him a base from which to attack other cities. The defeat of one major city was much more than the seizure of a fortress. His strategy to attack the southern edge of Granada was well-advised since it cut off any potential aid to the Moors from the Muslims in Africa who had twice in the

58 Sidi Hasan as cited in al-Maqqari, Mohammedan Dynasties, II, 375.
history of Spain saved Islamic territory.

Ronda was the first great Christian success in the 1485 campaign which opened the final push for recovery. It demonstrated the pattern of capitulation during the war. However, the Muslims were wise and fierce soldiers. They lost battles only tenaciously and won them courageously. Az-zaghal was no fool. He knew that his small state had to maintain its territory unviolated if it were to survive.

Because historians know the end of this story, and because they see that the situation of Muslim Granada was so precarious, some tend to deemphasize the victories the Muslims enjoyed and present the Reconquista as an unqualified success. Ferdinand often appears riding triumphantly from victory to victory. The engagement on the frontier at Moclin (see Appendix II) on September 3, 1485 was a different story.

Az-zaghal, concerned that his southern border had been violated, left the capital to inspect other fortresses in the area. He was notified while at one of these castles that a large body of Christian forces were near. He prepared to engage them. The resulting battle, although the advantage changed hands often, was a decisive victory for the Muslims. The Christians lost many men and much artillery.⁵⁹ So, the Muslims also enjoyed some victories. However, the inherent strength of the Christians was demonstrated;

⁵⁹Ibid.

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Az-zaghal could not pursue his victory because the king of Aragon began to move his major force in. So the Sultan had to content himself with the spoils of the battle. Nevertheless, Ferdinand found in the Sultan an intelligent and courageous adversary who could hurt him.

Ferdinand pressed the campaign hard and received its fruits in the successive capitulation of numerous cities in the south.

...The Christian king so pressed the territory of the Moslems on all sides, that he attacked no fortress which he did not take, and invaded no district which did not immediately surrender to his arms.60

Each time a city fell, it surrounding, unprotected area capitulated and many Muslims fled to the cities still in their coreligionist's hands. This not only meant a loss of territory but the increase of a rather tumultuous population in Muslim-occupied territory; this had much to do with the final gasp of the Muslim state.

Abu ' Abdillah returned to the capital early in 1486 to demand the sultanate and disturb the domestic political situation in Granada. This was disastrous. Here was a state already losing militarily with domestic peace; now there was the added weakness — the fatal weakness — of internal discord. Ferdinand sent Abu ' Abdillah into the fray east of Baza to create a type of second front. He equipped the aspiring Sultan well, having

...furnished him with men, money, and other requisites, and given him...dress of honor, Ferdinand sent him to the reconquest

60Ibid., p. 376.
of all his father's dominions. He also pledged his royal word that whoever among the Moslems would acknowledge the authority of his ally, Abu 'Abdillah, and swear allegiance to him, should be included in the treaty of peace existing between the two sovereigns, and enjoy all the security and advantages insured by the same.

So, loyalty to Abu 'Abdillah meant security from the sometimes savage attacks of the Christians. Very soon Velez submitted and a suburb of the capital, Albayzin, declared for him. This suburb began disruptions of the city's life with periodic attacks of stone-throwing against the Alhambra. This rebellion lasted from March to June, 1486.

During this period, Abu 'Abdillah took Loja, and surprisingly, sent feelers to his uncle concerning unity. If this unity had materialized there might have been some hope for the Muslim state, although it was already facing defeat on the battlefield, Abu 'Abdillah proposed that he be given as a fief the city of Loja and any other city of Az-zaghal's choice. In exchange for such a concession, Abu 'Abdillah offered to rejoin the Muslim cause in defense of Granada against the Reconquista. Before such negotiations had proceeded far toward agreement, Abu 'Abdillah's fortress of Loja came under heavy attack from his former captor. He put up a stubborn struggle but there was no aid from his fellow Muslims because of political jealousies and suspicions.

The people of Granada, however, and those of other places, fearing lest the siege of Loja should only be a stratagem of the enemy, never went to the relief of that city. The

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61 Ibid.
Christians in the meantime pressed the siege with increased vigor.\textsuperscript{62}

On May 23, 1486, the city fell and Abu 'Abdillah once more knew the undesired hospitality of the Christian enemy.

The price of his freedom the first time meant nothing too distasteful to him; merely the pursuit of what he considered his rightful political power even if it did mean discord which aided the enemy. This time, to escape Ferdinand cost expensive concessions. He agreed to turn the Alhambra over to the King when he gained control of it if Ferdinand defeated Az-zaghal. So, once more Abu 'Abdillah returned to Muslim Granada. Once more he offered those who would honor him with their loyalty security against the Christians since Ferdinand promised to avoid confrontation with cities under his protection. The suburb Albayzin declared for him again. No other city would do so because such promises of security had not saved Loja; Ferdinand attacked it because of the young Sultan's negotiations with Az-zaghal. So, Abu 'Abdillah entered the Albayzin on October 17, 1486. Inevitably, a civil war commenced that lasted until January 24, 1487. It was bloody. At that time the citizens of Granada fought in the streets with the citizens of the Albayzin but the battles were indecisive. Nevertheless, this in-fighting gave Ferdinand a decided advantage in his campaign by diverting Muslim attention from his progress in the field.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., p. 377.
Az-zaghal, no doubt realizing that the Muslim cause could ill-afford more divisiveness, convoked the major members of the provincial aristocracy to agree to a compact of unity. This was done and hope still glimmered that Muslim Granada might preserve some corner of Spain they could call Andalus. But unity was more easily found in the leadership than in the population. This show of unity understandably frightened Abu 'Abdillah whose fidelity to the Muslim cause was less than perfect. He realized his precarious position in the capital so near the newly-strengthened Sultan, so he hurried to the southern provinces where he could find a more strategically advantageous fortress. With tales of Christian vengeance, which were not totally untrue, and his agreement with Ferdinand, Abu 'Abdillah won the allegiance of all the major cities in the area except Velez. Very soon the Christians were besieging that city.

Az-zaghal, mindful of the importance of the Velez-Malaga area, which meant contact with potential African aid, hurried to the relief of the city even though he realized that leaving the capital unprotected was dangerous to his regime. The strategic importance of the area overcame other considerations; just as it had for Abu-l-hasan when he left the city and his son usurped the throne. This defense of the welfare of the state was uncommon in the later stages of Muslim Granada. Az-zaghal sent an advance force of cavalry to the area, but the fate of these troops demonstrates the most obvious damage that internal discord can bring to a state in war.
A body of cavalry, which El Zagal dispatched from Guadix to throw succors into the beleaguered city, was encountered and cut to pieces by a superior force of the young king Abdallah.

Here we see a race, a religion and a state in mortal struggle against a determined and recently successful enemy, plagued with leaders who fight each other rather than the common foe. Perhaps Abu Abdillah's act is understood when it is remembered that the sultans saw their states as personal estates to do with as they pleased. To the young Sultan there was very little difference between Ferdinand and Az-zaghal since both threatened his inheritance. He had little sense of the state outside of his personal ambitions. To him these disorders threatened only him, not Muslim presence in Spain or Muslim in Christian territory.

Nevertheless, Abu 'Abdillah's action, in fact his very presence, materially weakened the Muslim cause by splitting the state's unity. Az-zaghal now left the capital at the head of a large force to relieve Velez. He met with no success. His forces retreated before the Christian troops. He fled northward expecting to find security in the capital. His refuge did not remain open to him.

...The tidings of his disaster had preceded him. The fickle populace, with whom misfortune passes for misconduct...hastened to transfer their allegiance to his rival Abu 'Abdillah...}

The population, so important in the politics of Muslim

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63 Prescott, Ferdinand and Isabella, II, 24-25.
64 Ibid., p. 14.

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society, could have been the cement for a solid political structure. But, as they demonstrated on Az-zaghal's return to the capital, their loyalty was easily alienated and their allegiance cheaply bought. The population was pleased only by victories. They were impatient and unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices to achieve those victories. In Granada, now the last large city not under Christian control or in danger of falling, they were crowded and poor and thus discontent. They, therefore, allowed their allegiance to swing from one leader to another, thus prolonging and intensifying dynastic quarrels. The nature of these citizens is best demonstrated when they closed the gates of the city on the returning Az-zaghal, their most capable leader, and his army simply because he had been defeated in one battle. The citizens of the city now declared for Abu 'Abdillah.

Az-zaghal fell victim to this tumultuous population which denied him his throne. The people of Velez heard of the coup at Granada and knew there would be no aid; so they capitulated. The next point of contact was the vitally important city of Malaga. Az-zaghal, who had fled to the eastern cities, made some last desperate attempts by calling for aid from the African Muslims. Aid from them did not come; they were busy with their own warfare. But, Granada was too close to total defeat to be really helped by such an invasion. Perhaps if they had been asked sooner the Berbers might have helped. However, the previous invasions meant severe

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65 Hitti, Arabs, p. 554.
occupation forces especially in terms of religious orthodoxy, for
Andalus and the Moors felt themselves caught between two evils:
Christian and Berber. Az-zaghal had no resource to stop the violence
that broke over the second most important city of Granada.

Ferdinand first tried to bribe the governor of Malaga to
submit, but he found that all the courage and dignity of the Muslim
had not been destroyed in domestic dissension. The governor replied;
"My countrymen have shown by choosing me that they think me worthy.
Thou wouldst make me base." But, the city fell and many after it.

The next important city to fall was Baza, northeast of the
capital. In 1489, it was besieged. It held out valiantly but
Ferdinand had one more trick to spring on the Muslims. Baza
girded itself because it hoped that the coming winter would force
the Christians to retreat to Aragon. Rather than wintering in
Christian Spain as he had done so before, Ferdinand built a sub­
stantial city outside the walls of Baza. Such a strategy threw
the inhabitants of the city into consternation and they capitulated.
He was less generous than in other conquered cities, expelling all
the Muslims there. They fled to the capital.

Seeing that Granada was doomed, Az-zaghal made his submission
with typical Muslim fatalism.

What Allah wills, He brings to pass in His own way. Had He

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66 Yonge, Christians and Moors in Spain, p. 272.
not decreed the fall of Granada, this good sword might have saved it; but His will be done.°

The area surrounding Guadix in which he had established himself after being denied entrance to the capital, submitted with him. Ferdinand held the southern and eastern provinces and only the capital, its suburbs and the valley over which it looked, remained in Muslim hands. Az-zaghal was given a small fief southwest of Malaga. His ultimate fate is in question. One author claims that he eventually left for Africa where the Berbers dis inherited him and put his eyes out. However, other authors have not mentioned this and the fate of Az-zaghal is unclear. He was, no doubt, the most capable Muslim leader of the era, but he fell prey to the forces and men who created domestic havoc. He was basically a victim of an inconstant citizenry that failed to recognize his ability and its danger.

Almost ten years after Spanish forces began a concentrated military effort to complete Christian hegemony in the Iberian peninsula, Ferdinand and his army encamped on the fertile Vega valley within the protecting Alpujarras mountains, to begin the siege of the capital and the last stronghold of the Moors. The campaign had not been continuous, as few wars were, especially the Reconquista. Except for the winter siege of 1489 that won Baza for the Christian forces, Ferdinand spent his winters in his own

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67 Prescott, Ferdinand and Isabella, II, 69.
kingdom. Christian military strategy was to surround and cut off the Alhambra and then starve it into submission. This plan was accomplished not without some stubborn resistance from many cities in Andalus.

However, there was a second and more damaging front to the Granadine wars. Ferdinand knew the value of quarreling in the camp of his enemy. The plan was born of his acute perception of the single, yet lethal, defect in the state of Granada. He handled the two incidents in which Abu 'Abdillah was his prisoner to increase such dissension. Ferdinand's political campaign was as successful as his military strategy. Ferdinand's policy played on the weakness in Muslim culture, especially Andalusian culture which lacked cohesion because of the myriad forces that bred political instability.

There was one last moment of victory for the Muslim cause which may explain the increased courage to defend the Alhambra in its last months. Ferdinand, returning from garrisoning newly-conquered cities around Granada in preparation for the siege of the capital, entered the Vega and demanded the submission of Abu 'Abdillah and control of the city. The citizens of the city did not submit. True to his threat, Ferdinand destroyed the crops and left Andalus for the winter. While the Christians were gone, Abu 'Abdillah took the opportunity to try to destroy some of the enemy fortresses that encircled the city of Granada. His army marched into the Alpuxarras mountains to demand the cities there return
to the Muslim fold, which they quickly did. If this had not happen-
ed the eventual siege of seven months at the Alhambra would have been shortened, since the Alpuxarras mountain range served as a supply route during that period. Abu ' Abdillah continued a successful campaign until spring when Ferdinand returned and the Sultan was forced to retreat to Granada while the Christians repaired what strategic positions they could. This was the last Muslim attempt to regain lost territory. Now Abu ' Abdillah concerned himself with the defense of a capital crowded with Muslim exiles.

On March 22, 1491, Ferdinand began a seven month siege which pressed the people of Granada hard, but they hoped the Christians would return to Christian Spain for the winter; supplies still came from the Alpuxarras so conditions were not as yet desperate. By November, large numbers of Muslims were fleeing the city and, for the most part, leaving Spain, but no definite decision on military strategy was made by Abu ' Abdillah and his advisors because they pinned their hopes on the departure of Christian forces for the winter. It was a false hope that the incident at Baza should have shown them would not materialize.

Soon it became obvious that Ferdinand had no intention of leaving until he could rule the city from the Alhambra. The Vizier, as the Sultan's advisor, explained the situation to him:

There are sufficient provisions for a few months' supply, independent of what might exist in the possession of merchants,
and other rich inhabitants. But of what avail...is a temporary provision against the sieges of the Christians, which are interminable? The number of men capable of bearing arms is great but what can be expected from mere citizen soldiers? They vaunt and menace in time of safety. None are so arrogant when the enemy is at a distance but when the din of war thunders at their gates, they hide themselves in terror.69

The general, Musa, spoke for a glorious defense that would befit an Arab and in defense of the citizen soldier the Vizier had maligned.

What reason have we...to despair? The blood of those illustrious Moors, the ancient conquerors of Spain, still flows in our veins. Let us be true to ourselves and fortune will again be with us. We have a veteran force, both horse and foot, the flower of our chivalry seasoned in war, and scarred in a thousand battles. As to the multitude of citizens, spoken of so slightly, why should we doubt their valor? There are 20,000 young men, in the fire of youth, for whom I will engage...in the defense of their homes....70

This debate within the council was also carried on among the citizenry who feared for their lives and sent a representative to the Sultan to plead for surrender:

The Christians are daily receiving reenforcements, while we have none to expect; we all thought and expected that, at the approach of winter, the Christians would have raised the siege and retired to their country, whereas our hopes have completely failed; they have built a town in front of our city and pressed the siege closer than before. We ought, therefore, to provide for our safety and that of our children.71

It was decided that capitulation should be made. The negotiations over terms began.

69Abul Casim Abdelmelic, Vizier of Granada as cited in, Bharagava, Islamic Culture and Institutions, p. 180.

70General Musa as cited in Ibid.

71Sidi Hasan as cited in al-Maqqari, Mohammedan Dynasties, II, 387.
Ferdinand had, in 1486, offered Abu 'Abdillah a large estate in Andalus if he would put the capital in his hands after the defeat of Az-zaghal. Because the Sultan did not do so, he lost the chance for a favorable peace for himself. Even now, though, the terms of the treaty were not harsh. It guaranteed the integrity of Islam and allowed no legal distinction between Moor and Spaniard. Promises were given by the Christians that no punishment for acts during the war would be meted out, for example, no Moor could be punished for the death of a Christian during the siege. Ferdinand was required to swear to uphold its provisions. Thus, on November 25, 1491 the capitulation was signed. There was much sorrow in Granada and only the stubborn general remained defiant.

Let us show ourselves as men, by shedding not tears, but blood to the last drop. I will lead you to find on the battlefield either independence or an honorable death....

It was not until January 3, 1492, that the city actually left Muslim hands. Abu 'Abdillah and his retinue rode out of the capital to the encampment of the Christians where he gave the keys of Granada to Ferdinand.

These keys...are the last relics of the Arabian empire in Spain. Thine, O king are our trophies, our kingdom, and our person. Such is the will of God! Receive them with the clemency thou


73 General Musa as cited in Yonge, Christians and Moors in Spain, pp. 290-91.
hast promised, and which we look for at thy hands. 74

He then rode away from the capital he defended so inadequately and out of the state his pride and greed had done so much to destroy. He paused at the highest point of the mountain which is called in Spanish tales "The Last Sigh of the Moors." Abu ' Abdillah is supposed to have cried at the sight of his lost city. His mother, who had begun the great dynastic struggle in her son's youth, had little sympathy for him. "You do well, to weep like a woman for what you could not defend like a man!" 75 Abu ' Abdillah stayed for some time in the Alpuxarras but eventually went to Africa where he died in battle serving an African relative. An Arab chronicler comments:

Wretched man who could lose his life in another's cause, though he did not dare to die in his own! Such was the immutable decree of destiny. Blessed be Allah, who exalteth and debaseth the kings of the earth, according to His divine will, in whose fulfillment consists that eternal justice which regulates all human affairs. 76

Thus was the end of Andalus and all its leaders. The terms of the treaty were not fairly met and soon forced conversions and book-burnings were common.

Granada was the last Islamic state in the Iberian peninsula. And yet, despite Muslim glorification of war and undoubted valor in

74 Abu ' Abdillah as cited in Morais, Historical Tales, pp. 146-47.
75 Ayesha as cited in Prescott, Ferdinand and Isabella, II, 98.
76 An Arab chronicler as cited in Ibid., pp. 98-99.
battle, it died with little more than a whimper. Intelligent military strategy and a strong army aided the foe. Something other than the military defeated Granada and it was largely political instability. Domestic division was a manifestation of Islamic political and cultural organization. The sultan, whose powers were absolute, knew no concept of the public welfare. The submission he demanded from his subjects was too demeaning for the proud tribes who warred among themselves and with the ruler. Two systems of succession complicated the transfer of power so that often the state had two rulers contending for power. Culturally, the harem fostered jealousies that flared into political division while Arabic culture sanctioned war as a means to solve the split. Subjects of this state became the final arbitrators between contenders, but they were fickle and capricious because of their economic, religious and social alienation from the ruling class. All these facets have been shown to cause the political instability which mortally weakened the state. They worked to make the wars between father and son and uncle and nephew possible and the pressure from Christian Spain lethal. A determined and loyal population could have saved political tranquility but the pattern of Islamic culture made that possibility remote. These people were the final and ultimate source of legitimacy for the sultans and their vacillations allowed domestic strife. As once they had fought each other while Ferdinand marched toward them, now they could only wait and hope
their Christian conquerors would be kind.

There was crying in Granada when the sun was going down;  
Some calling on the Trinity — some calling on Mahoun.  
Here passed away the Koran — there in the Cross was borne —  
And here was heard the Christian bell — and there the Moorish horn.  

77 Spanish ballad as cited in Lane-Poole, Moors in Spain, p. 267.


**SOURCES CONSULTED IN ISLAMIC HISTORY**


