
REVIEWS

Joseph F. O’Callaghan. *The Last Crusade in the West: Castile and the Conquest of Granada.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, 15.5×23.5 cm, 384 pp., 6 black-and-white figures and 2 maps. ISBN 9780812209358.

The recent decade was marked by the appearance of three volumes of the magisterial history by Joseph F. O’Callaghan, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at Fordham University. One cannot doubt that few scholars know the history of late-medieval Castile better than he does. His *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) were published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, as well as the volume of our review which represents the third part of his ambitious trilogy — *The Last Crusade in the West: Castile and the Conquest of Granada* (2014). This volume describes the ebb and flow of the Reconquest, the conflict which was going on from the middle of the 15th c. until the fall of Granada, the last Islamic state on the Iberian Peninsula, under the blow of the expanding Christian kingdoms in 1492.

The Naṣrids — the longest lasting Muslim dynasty in the Iberian Peninsula was established by Ibn al-Aḥmar in 1228, with the departure of the Almohad prince Idrīs, who left Iberia to take the Almohad leadership. The Naṣrids aligned themselves with Ferdinand III of Castile after the conquest of Cordoba in 1236 in order to preserve their autonomy, so the emirate of Granada officially came into being (1238). It was a powerful and self-sufficient kingdom in its own right. By the end of the fourteenth century, Christian control of the Iberian Peninsula reached the borders of the emirate of Granada, whose Muslim rulers acknowledged Castilian suzerainty. The kings of Castile weren’t threatened by Moroccan incursions and were diverted by civil war and conflicts with neighboring kings instead of completing the Reconquest. The situation changed only at the end of the 15th c. On January 2, 1492, after a decade-long effort to subjugate Granada, the last Muslim ruler in Iberia, the emir Muhammad XII was made to surrender complete control of the Emirate to Ferdinand II and Isabella I, *Los Reyes Católicos*, the Catholic Monarchs, that marked the completion of centuries of armed struggle between the peninsula’s Christian kingdoms and the Islamic states of al-Andalus.

The volume consists of introduction, nine chapters, and wide bibliography, notes and a special note on monetary system, a list of abbreviations, and genealogical tables that facilitate comprehensible perception of the crucial historical turning points.

The introduction traces the codependent relationship of the King of Castile with his Muslim client kingdom. The role of Granada at that time was not considerable. The “War of the Two Pedros” (*La Guerra de los Dos Pedros*) — the conflict between the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, between Pedro of Castile and Pedro IV of Aragon — was of paramount importance.

The first five chapters are devoted to the reigns of Pedro I (1350–1369), Enrique II (1369–1379), Juan I (1379–1390), Enrique III (1390–1406), Juan II (1406–1454), and Enrique IV (1454–1474), wherein the author traces the course of negotiations along the Castilian frontier and examines diplomatic and military exchanges between Christians and Muslims. In 1248, after the fall of Seville, the Castilian monarchs tried to consolidate their conquest and to dominate the Guadalquivir River valley to its mouth, trying to wrest control of Algeciras, Gibraltar, and Tarifa. Moroccan intervention was ended by the Alfonso XI’s victory in 1340. Four years later he conquered Algeciras and besieged Gibraltar, but died in 1350. The crusade was brought to a halt, since the Castilians felt no need to attack Muslims. Therefore, the Reconquest has been suspended. No longer worried about a possible Moroccan invasion, Pedro I focused on the war with Aragon and the opposition of Enrique of Trastámara. This time the Trastámara monarchs arranged a series of armistices with the Naşrids, prolonged till the early 15th c. Juan II later defeated the Naşrids at La Higuera in 1431, but the quarrels with the nobility disturbed his long reign and he failed to gain more territories. There were series of campaigns against the Muslim kingdom, but at the same time it was a period of increasing integration of the Naşrid and Trastámara realms through some treaties and truces. Later Enrique IV, son of Juan II, ravaged Granada, but didn’t manage to subjugate the emirate once more for the reason of increasing discord with the nobility and a dispute over the succession which thwarted his efforts. The Christian kingdom itself descended into a persistent state of civil war. To understand the steps of the Castilian conquest it’s crucial to follow these intermittent crusading efforts, so precisely and scrupulously drawn by O’Callaghan. He stressed that ever since the invasion of Muslims of the Peninsula the Christians had fought to expel them.

Chapters six and seven investigate the final stages of the warfare under Isabel I (1474–1504), Enrique IV’s half-sister, and Fernando II, then king of Sicily and later of Aragon, who made the conquest their priority. That time the prestige of the monarchy had been restored, the fractious nobility was consolidated, and the royal couple managed to provide the outlet for the war against the Muslims. The Naşrid dynasty, riven by internal conflict and led by a very young emir Abū ‘Abdallāh, did itself no favors in the struggle. The King and Queen had been persisting with their task for ten years, and after the capitulation of Granada in 1491, they entered the city in 1492. The Reconquest was over.

In these chapters the author examines military organization, camping financing, methods of military campaigns' operations, with emphasis on the crown's negotiations with the papacy under Sixtus IV (1471–1484) and Innocent VIII (1484–1492) over the Church's financial contributions to the war effort. The relations of the Holy See with the sovereigns and peoples of Europe were affected in no small degree by its fiscal policy, getting a great profit of crusade bulls and ecclesiastical revenues. Furthermore, O'Callaghan investigates thoroughly diplomatic and military back and forth of the Catholic Castilians and Muslims in Granada, the last bastion of Islamic rule in Spain.

With this the narration ends and the author turns to a number of related subjects. Two last chapters may be called analytical. In the eighth chapter the previous issues acquired an increased focus when the author describes a set of related questions. One of them is the incorporation of thousands and thousands of Muslims into the Crown of Castile that was a hard task, as a political entity of Islamic Spain existed no more. Furthermore, O'Callaghan thoroughly examines the military organization of Castile and Naşrid forces, the elements the army was composed of. He describes the course of pitched battles, the role of the naval forces and artillery, the siege warfare. At the end of the chapter we learn about substantial support derived from the Church — *tercias*, *decima*, *crusada* — in addition to loans from wealthy individuals and communities.

In the last chapter O'Callaghan examines the crusading ideology and religious conflict that, according to the author's point of view were the fundamental motivating force of warfare in Iberia, so to say "a conflict between two societies, one permeated by Christianity, the other by Islam." O'Callaghan provides a detailed overview of a crusading ideology, the one that gave an impulse and a genuine force in history. Acknowledging that the war against the Moors was of interest to Christendom, successive popes offered participants of the relevant events the crusading indulgence or remission of sins, and various personal and proprietary legal protections. The Religious motives extended, inspired, and sustained the development of crusading movement within the Iberian campaigns. What's more the author was extremely attentive to the language that reflects the religion dimension of the struggle.

In the work of O'Callaghan we look at the Reconquest in the light of the crusades' context in the Middle East, so the conquest of Granada is reframed as the "last great crusade in Western Europe". The drive for power, profit, and the territory was hidden under the cover of religious conviction. Sometimes it may seem that the controversy between Muslim and Christian societies might be somewhat exaggerated. One could not argue that Crusade is an important part of the history of Muslim-Christian relations, but the fact that religion is often used as a justification for conflict doesn't mean that it is the cause of conflicts. Sometimes even the war between Christians and Muslims was not a war between Christianity and Islam. Such an approach represents only one of many ways to analyze and understand the history of Castile and the kingdom's relations with its Muslim neighbors. However, the fundamentally religious character of this last stage of conflict can't be doubted.

Joseph O'Callaghan made use of much more sources for medieval Iberian history than any other contemporary scholar. Among them Christian, Muslim narrative sources (however, mostly in translation), documentary, rich corpus of historical ballads, since many episodes described in annals were retold in poetic form as ballads or romances. He carefully analyses Castilian and Portuguese chronicle accounts, papal and royal documents, fiscal records, diplomatic correspondence to provide his research with an impressive array of evidence.

Christian narrative and documentary sources are examined much fuller than previously. The chronicles and histories of individual monarchs by the laymen holding prominent positions in the royal court are of greater value. For example the chronicles by Pedro López de Ayala (1332–1406), a soldier, diplomat, and a statesman, of the reigns of Pedro I, Enrique II, Juan I, and Enrique III, whom he loyally served. The chief falconer Pedro Carrillo de Huete wrote the history of the reign of Juan II from 1420 to 1450, used many chancery documents. Historical works relating to Enrique IV vividly describe the political situation of that period. Alonso de Palencia, named the royal chronicler, spoke about the time from the end of Juan II's reign to 1481. Also he was the one of the few authors who recorded the reign of Fernando and Isabel ("*Guerra de Granada*").

Moreover, O'Callaghan uses not only narratives written by Christians and showing Christian opinions on the Moors, but also sources from the other side, although narratives by Muslim authors are scant. Their typical specimen is the work by Hernando de Baeza, Interpreter and Messenger, "*Las cosas que pasaron entre los reyes de Granada...*" (Events That Occurred Among the Kings of Granada) (1505) which represents a unique source of information concerning intrigue in the Naşrid court. De Baeza resided in Granada during the last years of the Naşrid rule, being on good terms with Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad XII, the last Naşrid monarch.

Two works in Arabic should be mentioned as well. "*Ŷannat al-riḡā fi'l-taslīm ilā mā qaddara-llāh wa-qaḡā*" (The Book of the Leafy Garden) by Ibn 'Āsim, related to the turbulent reign of Muḥammad IX, whom he served in various positions, and the anonymous "*Kitāb Nubḡat al-'aşr fi aḡbār mulūk Banī Naşr aw taslīm Ġarnāta wa-nuzūl al-Andalusiyyīn ilā-'l-Maġrib*" (Contemporary extract of Relations of the Age Containing News of the Naşrid Kings or the Capitulation), chronicle of the reigns of the last Naşrids.

To sum up we should say that *The Last Crusade in the West* is the book composed with skill and erudition, that traces the story of Castilian diplomacy, military operations, Crusade movement of the last centuries of the Reconquest. For people interested in the Iberian history of that epoch, Muslim-Christian relations in the Middle Ages, for students and researchers this judicious, balanced, thorough, and reasonably comprehensive study would be of considerable benefit.

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