

Volume 11

Number 013

Muslim Conquest of Spain - I

Lead: The expansion of Islam in the centuries after the Prophet Muhammad's death flowed east to India and west to the Visigothic kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula. Spain had powerful Moorish rule for more than seven centuries.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: From 712 to 1492 some part of Spain was under Muslim control. At high tide, Arabs ruled almost all of Iberia. In the end, only Granada, dominated by the massive

Alhambra fortress, could resist the Reconquista, the re-conquest of the peninsula, led finally by Christian forces united under Ferdinand and Isabella. The city surrendered in the year Spain turned its attention outward and sent Christopher Columbus on his journey to a new world.

The Arab penetration of Spain followed the consolidation of power within Islam after the death of Muhammad in 632. Murder and intrigue attended this struggle, which resulted in the ascendancy of the Umayyads, the socially prominent family that had dominated Mecca prior to the Prophet's rise. They had initially resisted his teaching, not

converting until 627, but established connection to Muhammad through marriage and eventually assumed leadership of the Muslim world. They established their caliphate at Damascus and sent Islam's armies in all directions.

By 700 Umayyad control reached to the Atlantic, and in 711 an Army under Musa ibn Nasir and General Tiriq ibn Ziyad crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and invaded Spain. They were able to take advantage of conflict and dispute among the Visigothic Christians who had ruled the peninsula since Roman times. By 714 most of what is now Spain and Portugal was under Muslim rule. Next time: a new kind of society.

Research assistance by Sheri Jones, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Boase, Roger. “The Muslim Expulsion from Spain.” *History Today* 52 no. 4 (2002): 21-28.

Burman, Thomas. *Review of From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle, by Thomas Glick*, *Speculum*, 74 (1999):756-8.

Chejne, Anwar. *Muslim Spain*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press: 1974.

Fletcher, Richard. *The Quest for El Cid*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Fletcher, Richard. *Moorish Spain*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1992.

Linehan, Peter. “The Cid of History and the History of the Cid” *History Today* 37 September (1987):26-32.

Menocal, Maria. *The Ornament of the World*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company: 2002.