

The Fall of Granada

1491 is the date for the Castilian and Aragonese seizure of Granada, on the 2nd of January, ten months before Christopher Columbus "discovered" America (or was it the Bahamas, and the Caribbean coast) certainly not the United States as we know them today). Much water has flowed under our bridges since then and into the broad Atlantic that Columbus and his three ships crossed that same year.

The city and kingdom of Granada in south-eastern Spain represented Islam's last stronghold on the Iberian peninsula. Washington Irving (no kin of mine, but an excellent writer) during his service of the United States legation in Madrid, interested himself in this period of Spanish history, and rescued the Alhambra from the horde of gypsies he found encamped there. Then in Lindaraja, the beautiful two-windowed room overlooking the courtyard and city, he wrote his *Tales from the Alhambra* and went on to chronicle that fascinating period in Spanish history. He also wrote an excellent biography or *Sirah of the Prophet* that we should rescue today from the strange spellings of that early age of Orientalism.

The Treaty of Granada, which had been drawn up in the previous year, 1491, between representatives of the crowns of Castile, Aragon and Granada, conceded this last city and its kingdom to Castile. In this treaty, the Granadines were guaranteed their religious liberty. The Philadelphia Quaker Henry Lea has written on the subsequent history when that solemn treaty was broken by a Catholic churchman, Cardinal Francisco Xhnenez de Cisneros.

At the end of the 15th century, the five kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula, or what we now call Spain and Portugal, were: Castile, Aragon, Granada, Navarre and Portugal. Aragon actually had three capital cities, two of which, Valencia, and Zaragoza, were known for their active Muslim citizenry. Barcelona in Catalonia, was not so famous, although it is named after Hannibal's uncle Hamilcar Barca and his family, another Semitic influence that left this place name on the Peninsula. Navarre, south of the Pyrenees, was taken by Ferdinand of Aragon in 1512.

1610 and not 1492 should be our cut-off date for Muslim power in Spain, even though that last century and a quarter saw Islam in clear decline, fighting a losing, rearguard action. We need rather to follow the fate of the remaining Spanish Muslims, not only in the defeated kingdom of Granada, but also in Castile, Aragon and Valencia, where talented and industrious Mudejar artisans were active.

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