

Joseph R. Strayer and Dana C. Munro,
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THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTIAN EUROPE—SPAIN

The crusades were only one form of the reaction of Europe against the non-Christian peoples who ringed it. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Moslems lost most of their possessions in the Spanish peninsula, most of the heathen peoples in Europe proper were converted or exterminated, and Christian missionaries penetrated the Middle and Far East. The number of Christian kingdoms was increased and the political system of Europe was correspondingly complicated.

Spanish Moslems, and they were so moved by its loss in 1055 that they decided to call to their aid their fellows in Africa.

There a fanatical sect controlled by Berbers from the Sahara had set up a new dynasty, generally known as the Almoravides. Their leader, Yusuf, landed in Spain in 1086 and routed the Castilians in a single battle. He was hailed as "Emir of Andalous"—ruler of Moslem Spain. Fortunately for the Christian cause, he was soon engaged in strife with other Moslem rulers, who considered Yusuf and his followers half-savage religious bigots. The Spanish Moslems had never allowed the precepts of the Prophet to interfere with their enjoyment of life, and they were shocked by the puritanical zeal of the Almoravides. The Christians profited by these divisions among their enemies to make further conquests, including Lisbon, but their success was only temporary. Yusuf succeeded in overcoming his Moslem opponents and then won back many of the strongholds which the Christians had taken. He secured the support of the common people by remitting most of the taxes. Moslem power in Spain seemed fully restored during his reign.

After Yusuf's death in 1106 his followers became demoralized. They oppressed the people in order to obtain money for luxurious living and lost much of their fighting ability. They retained enough of their religious zeal to anger their Christian subjects by their intolerance, but they were not sufficiently puritanical to retain the support of the Berbers of Africa. A new reforming sect, led by mountaineers from the Atlas, threatened their possessions across the straits and cut off their supply of troops from Africa. Under these conditions the Christians found it easy to resume their raids. They penetrated far into Moslem territories, destroying crops and fruit trees, burning villages, and carrying the people away to be sold as slaves. The lands (Castile and Andalusia) over which they fought for generations became impoverished and much of Spain never recovered from these raids.

The most noted of all the Christian warriors was a Castilian noble, Rodrigo Diaz of Bivar. By his exploits while still a youth he won the title of *campeador* or challenger; that is, one who at the beginning of a battle challenges an opponent to single combat. Exiled, he became the leader of a band of freebooters, fighting indiscriminately in the service of Christian or infidel, and plundering mosques or churches with equal indifference in order to obtain booty to satisfy his mixed band of Christian and Moslem warriors. The name by which he is best known, the Cid or master, is one which his Moorish followers gave him. The Spaniards have made him their national hero, and some have suggested his canonization as a saint. He has been represented as the champion of the Christian faith and as an exemplar of all the Christian virtues. The real Cid was a brave, ruthless leader, who fought for his own advantage and only incidentally aided the Christians to acquire new territory. His



greatest exploit was the capture of Valencia, which was accompanied by much brutality. His lady was a worthy mate for such a warrior. She defended Valencia for two years after the death of the Cid in 1099, and departed in triumph with the body of her lord. Their deeds are told in the *Chronicle of the Cid*, which was translated into English by Southey.

It has been said that the Spaniards lived in a perpetual crusade. This is true in a certain sense, but the career of the Cid shows that it should not be taken too literally. Christian nobles and even Christian kings made alliances with the Moslems and fought each other as cheerfully as they did the infidel. However, when there was a war with the Moors, it had all the prestige of a crusade, and many foreigners, especially Frenchmen, came to fight in Spain. The frontier county of Portugal, which became a kingdom in 1143, profited especially from the aid of crusaders. Many northerners stopped there on the way to the Holy Land, and Lisbon was reconquered with the aid of the English in 1147. The other Christian kingdoms received less help from crusaders during the twelfth century.

A new threat from the Moslems came when the sect of the Almohades began to gain power. These hardy mountaineers from the Atlas conquered the Almoravides, first in Africa, and then, in the middle of the twelfth century, in Spain. They defeated the Christians and checked their advance. For sixty years they ruled Moslem Spain from their headquarters in Africa. Then Innocent III succeeded in uniting all the Christian monarchs of Spain, with the exception of the king of Leon. He also induced many crusaders from other lands to join the Spaniards. In 1212 the united Christian forces met the Almohades at Las Navas de Tolosa and won a victory that decided the fate of the Moors. "After that fatal day the empire of the Saracens in Spain weakened constantly, and they no longer had any success." The Christians pushed on, and a half-century later the Moors held only the little kingdom of Granada in the extreme South.

Granada became very thickly populated, wealthy, and prosperous, as the Moors flocked thither from lands conquered by the Christians. The king of Castile forced the ruler of Granada to pay tribute, but the Christians were too busy at home to attempt to conquer the last Moorish stronghold. The great tracts of lands seized from the Moors had to be settled, governments had to be reorganized to deal with the problems of larger territories, and the civilization of the rest of Europe had to be absorbed. Gothic cathedrals were built, universities were founded, and a vernacular literature was developed. Barcelona became a great Mediterranean port, rivaling the Italian cities, and the growth of trade had

its usual upsetting influence on old traditions.

The most difficult problem was that of creating strong governments. The nobles were proud and independent, holding allegiance to their kings very lightly. They could disown a king at any time by a simple notice and transfer their services to a rival monarch. The clergy were probably more powerful than in any other country. During the reconquest they had received enormous estates and many privileges. Many cities had been founded as military colonies on the frontier and had been given extensive privileges, or *fueros*, which conferred an unusual degree of independence. The growth of trade made the towns even more powerful, and they formed leagues, or *hermandadas*, which defended their rights against all aggressors, even their kings. The growth of royal power in each realm was slow and was not completed in the thirteenth century. It was hindered by the ambition of some of the monarchs to play a rôle in European politics. As we have seen, Alfonso X of Castile, called the "Wise," had himself elected emperor of the Holy Roman Empire during the Great Interregnum. The rulers of Aragon had inherited the county of Barcelona, and this led them to seek territories to the eastward, along the routes of trade. They conquered the Balearic Islands, and Peter III of Aragon married the daughter of Manfred of Sicily, thus securing a claim to his realm. When the inhabitants of the island revolted against the stern rule of Charles of Anjou in 1282, they turned for aid to Aragon, and an Aragonese prince eventually became ruler of Sicily. These diversions, however, were not as fatal to the Spanish kingdoms as interest in Italy had been to the German realm. Royal power increased, in spite of temporary set-backs, and by 1300 the position of a king of Aragon or Castile was not greatly inferior to that of a king of France.