

## PREFACE

Granada was the scene of one of the most spectacular and pivotal wars in history. Moorish Granada's fall was the culmination of broad struggle between two cultures, and its conclusion not only settled the cultural fate of a large portion of Europe, but established the basis for the discovery of the Americas. With the conquest in January 1492 of the last stronghold of Islamic Spain, the Spanish 'Catholic Sovereigns', Isabella and Ferdinand, were able to launch the momentous voyage of Columbus, and to pursue a world empire with a revitalized military force.

Accounts of the conquest of Granada have been written in many languages, but none has surpassed the English-language versions by two great American authors of the early nineteenth century. In the way of narrative storytelling, little can be added to Washington Irving's *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (published in 1829) or to the methodically researched *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* (first published in 1837) by the historian William H. Prescott. Both men made use of material available in the Spanish archives of their day. While neither Prescott nor Irving attempted to describe the war with an emphasis on military history, the former's work provides an excellent foundation for such a description. It is, therefore, the purpose of this present book to focus on the appropriate sections of Prescott's magnificent study and to add comments based upon observations and findings that have surfaced since Prescott's day.

Prescott's detailed study of the war, incidental to his broader topic, produced a valuable account that has well served English and American scholars of military history. Only a few French and Spanish scholars seem to have gone directly to the primary sources used by Prescott. Recently, some American scholars have shown renewed interest in the war, but the general public does not enjoy easy access to their works, which are ensconced in various professional journals and unpublished manuscripts. Furthermore, the popular military history surveys, which are the most readily available to the general reading public, tend to skip over the conquest of Granada as they leap from the Hundred Years' War (concluded in 1453) to the Italian Wars that began at the very end of the fifteenth century. In so doing, the survey histories create a gap of awareness, passing over facts that are critical to understanding the development of European warfare. This issue is addressed, with other military aspects of the conquest of Granada, in the Introduction.

Prescott's unabridged text, which provides the fundamental framework of this book, is taken from his *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*, Volume I, First Part, Chapters VIII to XV, inclusive. Excluding one short chapter on the Inquisition, these sections form Chapters One to Seven of this book.

All of Prescott's valuable notes are included in this work. Editor's additions are contained within square brackets, followed with the expression '—Ed'. Editorially added dates of battles and significant events, and alternative spellings, are presented within brackets, without the expression '—Ed'. Several other editorial conventions used in this book are noted in Appendix A, with expanded editorial comments on Prescott and on research subsequent to his time.

Added editorial sections to this book are: this Preface, the two-part Introduction, appendices, and various graphics. Appendix B provides a Glossary of that should assist a reader who is not familiar with many military expressions and medieval personages relevant to the themes addressed in this book. The objective is to provide an appreciation of the conquest of Granada as an important episode in the emergence of early modern warfare — specifically in the areas of developing standing armies, adopting gunpowder weapons, and planning logistical support for sustained year-long campaigns.

Part I of the Introduction places the War of Granada in context of the broader era of European warfare during the late fifteenth century. The need for such a section emerged in the course of researching the military aspects of the conquest, and as a consequence of many informal discussions with military historians as to the significant role the war had in the art of warfare in Europe. Part II of the Introduction summarizes *La Reconquista*, the Christian Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, and briefly reviews the struggle that established Ferdinand and Isabella as sovereigns. Both parts of

the Introduction provide background knowledge which is essential to an understanding of the military and historic significance the War of Granada.

In the first of Prescott's chapters, the civilization of the Spanish Muslims is described. This was necessary in the context of his broader work, *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*. Prescott describes the Spanish Umayyad dynasty up to the end of the tenth century and then passes to Nasrid Granada in the late thirteenth century. The risk of duplication in Part II of the Introduction and Chapter I is minor. Each part reviews the pre-Granadan War Iberian history from a different perspective. Prescott's chapter portrays the Spanish Muslim scene. The Introduction canvasses the continuous and fluctuating pattern of almost eight hundred years of the Reconquista, which is crucial in examining the War of Granada. The Introduction also provides a brief overview of the Castilian War of Succession (1474–79), a topic which occupied a considerable part of Prescott's original work, but is not included in this book.

The five-hundred-year anniversary, in 1992, of the surrender of Granada, inspired the editor's review of this extraordinary military enterprise. Many histories present the War for Granada as a distant, peripheral event to European warfare of the fifteenth century. In fact, Granada was the dramatic final curtain of the Reconquista, successfully reclaiming the first European Christian land conquered by the Muslims. The War of Granada concluded the nearly millennium-long struggle between two cultures for the control of the Iberian Peninsula.

In comparison with the many wars which receive more attention in popular literature, few can claim such portentous features as the War of Granada. The conquest of Granada ensured the solidification of the united rule of Castile and Aragón in Spain. This unification was on uncertain ground at the beginning and during half of the war; it is doubtful that the union would have survived and Spain have emerged to become the world-power that it did if there had not been a military victory over the Moors' Nasrid kingdom. The victory led to the direct sponsoring of Columbus' voyage, which had been repeatedly postponed during and due to the war. It was a war that had to be won before Columbus could sail to the New World.