

The Legacy of the Nasrid Kingdom's (1238-1492 A.D.) Good Governance in Granada

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Abstract: This article analyses the political scenario in Andalus of the early 13th century which brought into the formation of the Nasrid Kingdom. The study aims at identifying the factors that influenced the long duration of its power and it can be divided into three stages. These involve the strengthening and consolidation era, the progressive and glorious era and the declining era, which eventually caused to its fall. In today's context, the uncertain political situation in a region may affect the formation of any new government, especially when its formation is regarded as a means to solve to political conflicts of the time. The Nasrid Kingdom (1238-1492 A.D.) served as an example of the one and only Muslim power that was able to sustain and maintain its ruling power for nearly two and a half centuries. It implies that today's and the subsequent governments need to take heed of the example to ensure the survival of their power. A further research, especially one that focuses on the consolidation factors, the progressive era and the declining era of the Nasrid Kingdom, will be useful to understand and further implement them into today's administration of government for political stability purposes.

Key words: Nasrid Kingdom • Granada • Politics • Andalus • 13th-15th century A.D.

INTRODUCTION

The Nasrid Kingdom, also known as the Banu Nasr or the Banu al-Ahmar Kingdom, the last of the Muslim kingdoms, ruled Andalus from the year 1238 until 1492 A.D. (635- 897H). During its reign andalus had reached its peak of glory in the arts of the Islamic civilization with the building of the Alhambra Palace (*al-Hamra'*) on the peak of the Sierra Nevada Range (*Jabal Shalir/al-Thalj*) in Granada which permanently stands as the artistic genius of Muslim Spain [1]. This kingdom, known as *Kerajaan Nasriyyah* in Malay, emerged while Muslim rule was on the decline in Spain. Kingdom after kingdom and city after city fell into the hands of the Christians who launched a movement to recapture territories under Muslim rule.

Besides, the Nasrid Kingdom had also lived through the bitter pains of developing a humane civilization, aside

from attempting to ascertain its own identity as a nation. The glory of the Islamic civilization then had touched on various aspects of human living such as political management and administration, the development of intellectualism and education, the mastery of Arabic language and literature, the vigour of economic activity and commerce, urban planning and agriculture as well as the stability of religious adherence and local culture. In spite of an environment full of critical situations, the Nasrid Kingdom had succeeded in sustaining its own sovereignty. The Christian rulers (Castile, Aragon, Navarre, Leon and Portugal) were relentlessly raiding this kingdom and this phenomenon had made a negative impact on the Muslim rule and administration in Granada. They frequently attacked - through the efforts of *La Reconquista* - territories under Muslim rule with the aim of destroying Islam and regaining territories already

under Muslim dominion. This campaign was fully supported by the highest Christian authority, the Pope in Rome, who launched the Crusades on the Muslim world. With astuteness and skill, the leaders of the Nasrid Kingdom used political wiles and wisdom to interact with the Christian rulers surrounding them, thus enabling the kingdom to endure for as long as two and a half centuries and to uphold the sovereignty of the Islamic religion in Europe.

This study aims at identifying the factors that influenced the long duration of its power and it can be divided into three stages. They involve the strengthening and consolidation era, the progressive and glorious era and the declining era, which eventually caused to its fall. In today's context, the uncertain political situation in a region may affect the formation of any new government, especially when its formation is regarded as a means to solve to political conflicts of the time.

Geographical Background of Granada: The Nasrid Kingdom centred in Granada or *Gharnatah* in Arabic, which is situated in the south-east of the Iberian Peninsular. Granada, was also known as *Ighranatah* or *Aghranatah* [2, 3]. The word Granada is believed to have originated from the Latin word *granata*, which bears the meaning pomegranate fruit. This is in view of the fact that Granada had an abundance of pomegranate orchards, the fruit tree described as beautifully laden with fruit. The view that states the beauty of Granada city is supported by many Arab geographers such as al-Hamawi [4] who depicts the area as lovely and laced with rivers and streams.

However, a Spanish orientalist by the name of Francisco Simonet [5] is of the opinion that Granada refers to the era of Gothic rule and originates as a combination of two words, *ghar* and *natah*. *Ghar* refers to an old village in Elvira province during Roman rule, whilst *natah* is an expression added onto the name of the village by the Arabs. The outcome of joining the words is *Gharnatah*. Disagreements among historians over the name of a city stem from differences over the reasons for and the variety of assumptions in its naming [6].

In the early stages of the arrival of Islam in Andalus, Granada was only a small township in the Elvira province but later developed rapidly into a city which played a prominent role in the turbulence of the Muslim Ummah in Andalus [7]. Granada developed from a small township into a province replacing the name of Elvira. Granada is situated in the most beautiful part of south-eastern Iberian Peninsula. In the east, it faces the Mediterranean Sea and

in the south, it spreads to the edge of Gibraltar. Whilst in the west, it extends to the Sierra Morena. The terrain of Granada is not flat but mountainous and is filled with steep hills on ground more elevated than the Guadalquivir River. Among the cities situated near the river are Jaen, Baeza and Ubeda. These cities remained as battlefields for skirmishes and power struggles between Muslims and Christians [8]. Among the cities under Nasrid rule were Loja, Priego, Guadix, Juliana, Almunecar, Baza, Malaga and Ronda [9, 3].

Granada was also known as *Sham al-Andalus* or *Dimashq al-Andalus* by virtue of its fame for beautiful gardens and orchards. This atmosphere had a great influence on the minds of the inhabitants so much so that the beauty was likened to the beauty of the lands of the East. This comparison is explained by al-Maqqari [9] in his book, *Nafh al-Tib min Ghushn al-Andalus al-Ratib*.

The beauty of Granada, as described by Ibn al-Khatib [3, 2] was amazing. Granada was better known as a fertile land abundant with various crops and vegetation. As many as 36 streams irrigated Granada from the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Among the well-known rivers are River Genil (*Nahr Shanil*) which became a source of inspiration for Andalusian poets and litterateurs. Besides Genil River, there is River Eldarro (*Nahr Hiddaruh*) which flows in eastern Andalus [6, 5]. A similar description is made by Navagiero [10] by his statement:

Outside the city, in the Vega, there are large orchards and plantations irrigated with the water of canals led off the two rivers referred to [the Darro and the Genil], which also operate many flour mills; so that everywhere Granada abounds in water from rivers or from springs.

Andalus in the Early 13th Century A.D.: In the year 1224 A.D., subsequent to the demise of Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf II *al-Mustansir bi Allah*, the Almohad (al-Muwahhidun) Caliphate as the Muslim ruler of Andalus then, began its era of decline and fall. Andalusian soil then became the object of a power struggle between the Muslims and Christians for absolute control over it. This placed Andalus in a fragmented and unpeaceful situation. Andalus was also the object of a power struggle amongst Muslim rulers themselves.

Among those who strove to be the prime leader of Andalus was Abu Jamil Zayyan b. Mardanish. In the year 1229 A.D., he made Valencia and its surrounding lands as the centre for his movement. However, he failed in his effort and was forced to release Valencia on 27th Safar 635H/9th October 1238 A.D. to the Aragon Christian. This happened when his plea for aid from Amir Abu Zakariyya,

the ruler of Hafsids Kingdom in Tunisia, was intercepted by the Christian military. Later, James I of Aragon captured Denia, Alicante, Cartagena and Oriuela between the years 641-644H/1244-1246 A.D. This opportunity was capitalised by Castile to enter Murcia in the year 1243A.D. when the leader of Murcia agreed to be under Castile's control. Ferdinand III of Castile had delegated this duty to his son, Alfonso X and this event marked the whole of eastern Andalus as under Christian control [5].

Additionally, Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Yusuf b. Hud al-Judhami strove to lead the Andalus reign by making Murcia as its centre of government. After the Banu Hud had lost Saragosa in the year 1118 A.D., the family had come under Christian rule for several decades. The character of Ibn Hud was very much influenced by his life as an Arab elite, that is, he had the qualities of firmness, courage, generosity and skill in diplomacy as well as warfare [11].

Later, in the year 1228 A.D., Ibn Hud who was also known as *Amir al-Mu'minin Sayf al-Dawlah al-Mutawakkil 'ala Allah*, had captured Murcia from the Almohad governor, al-Sayyid Abu al-'Abbas. From Murcia, Ibn Hud had expanded his control to Cordova, Seville, Granada, Almeria, Ceuta, Algeciras, Jaen, Merida and Badajoz. He proclaimed to liberate Andalus from the rule of Almohad and the cruel grip of the Christian. In addition to that, Ibn Hud was determined to implement the Islamic Syariah extensively. He made known to the 'Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, al-Mustansir regarding his control over these cities and the Caliph duly responded in a lengthy letter to affirm as such [1, 5].

In the year 1229 A.D., the Almohad lost in battle to Ibn Hud. This caused the city of Seville to be seized under Ibn Hud's control. However, Ibn Hud was not sufficiently strong to face the Christian might. This was evident when King of Leon, Alfonso IX, had attacked western Andalus by entering the city of Merida and besieged it. Ibn Hud tried to defend Merida but lost to Leon. Leon then proceeded to capture the city of Badajoz (1230 A.D.). Ferdinand III, who was also the son of Alfonso IX of Leon, took advantage of the instability of Ibn Hud's power by capturing several provinces of Andalus. He was of the view that Ibn Hud had to be eliminated as he was deemed the prime leader of the Muslim Ummah in Andalus then. Nevertheless, Ibn Hud succeeded in extending his influence to the coast of Andalus including Almeria and Granada (1231 A.D). He then restored his military strength in Jerez and fought with the Christians there. But he lost a second time and Ferdinand III took the opportunity to capture the city of Ubeda (1234 A.D.).

At this time, the Christians were looking for a way to capture the metropolitan city of Cordova. Though under Ibn Hud's control, there was not a single leader in Cordova who could gather enough strength to repel the Christians. In that unstable situation full of crises, the Cordovans pleaded for help from Ibn Hud and promised allegiance in exchange. The Christians were aware of the problems faced by the Cordovans. They thus prepared to organize their military strength to attack the Muslim metropolitan city of Cordova. The plan was executed by attacking the eastern part of the city known as *al-Sharqiyyah*. The attack launched at night time proved fruitful for the Christians. They captured part of the tower and the palace which was situated at the edge of the city. In preparation for the defence of their city against being seized by the Christians, the Cordovans had taken the initiative to send word to Ibn Hud pleading for help. Ibn Hud had directed his army to head for Ecija near Cordova but on arrival there, he did not take any action to attack the Christians [5].

According to 'Inan [5], several accounts stated that Ibn Hud was aware of the superiority and strength of the enemy forces causing him to retreat rather than attack. Another account however stated that when he was approaching Cordova, he had received a plea for help from Abu Jamil Zayyan b. Mardanish in Valencia. This had caused him to change direction to Valencia because he saw a better chance of victory in Valencia than in Cordova. As a result, Cordova was besieged by the Christians for several months and the Cordovans had put up their best fight to defend the city for the honour of their faith, race and kingdom.

Unfortunately, they were forced to surrender Cordova city to the Christians for the siege lasted too long and their plea for help had failed. This unfortunate event took place on 23rd Shawwal 633H/29th June 1236 A.D. The defeat of the Muslim Ummah in Cordova was a great blow to Muslim rule in Andalus as prior to this, Cordova city had been the centre of Muslim rule ever since *'asr al-Wulat* (the early era of governors representative of the Caliph in Dimashq) [5].

The Formation of the Nasrid Kingdom in Granada: At the time when the Muslim Ummah was facing defeat in Cordova, Ibn Hud was confronting Ibn al-Ahmar's power in Arjona. The emergence of Ibn al-Ahmar's power did not really begin in Granada but in Arjona on 26th Ramadan 629H/18th April 1232 A.D. This remote town situated in the north-west of Jaen district and south of Andujar district [12], was actually the defence fort of the eastern side of

Cordova [13]. In this very town, Muhammad b. Yusuf b. Nasr al-Khazraji, or better known as Ibn al-Ahmar, became the leader of his own hometown. From this town, he succeeded in expanding his control to areas of southern Andalus such as the cities of Jaen, Guadix and Baeza due to their proximity with Arjona and distance from the attacks of the Christian enemy [14].

In the early stage, Ibn al-Ahmar felt it necessary to seek protection and patronage from a stronger ruler, regardless of whether it was a Muslim power or Christian enemy. Some accounts relate that Ibn al-Ahmar had followed the example of Ibn Hud in pledging allegiance to the 'Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad and petitioning for recognition as to his status in Andalus. The effect of this action was to expand Ibn al-Ahmar's governance over the provinces of Carmona, Cordova and Seville in the year 629H/1231 A.D. and obtain the allegiance of their inhabitants. Even so, it was for only a very short duration. This was due to the switch of allegiance to Ibn Hud. At that point in time, a rebellion broke out in Seville led by *al-Qadi* Abu Marwan al-Bajji. This opportunity was capitalised by Ibn al-Ahmar to join forces with al-Bajji and oppose Ibn Hud. Both of them defeated Ibn Hud in several battles. Ibn al-Ahmar's political cunning was plain when he beguiled al-Bajji with his political wiles so that al-Bajji was ousted and killed as secretly planned. During this period, the leadership and administrative matters were in the hands of the local chiefs, some of whom shortly pledged allegiance to Ibn al-Ahmar and sought his protection. This allowed Ibn al-Ahmar to form a superior military force comprising of cavalry and infantry [3].

An interesting point was that in some of the events, Ibn al-Ahmar had taken the approach of placating Ibn Hud, in fact, expressing loyalty and allegiance to him. This occurred in the year 631H/1234A.D. due to Ibn al-Ahmar's assumption that Ibn Hud's rule was increasing and impressive with control over as far as western and southern Andalus. Unfortunately, in the year 1238 A.D., Ibn Hud died and the power of his inherited kingdom decreased and weakened. Ibn al-Ahmar exploited this opportunity to build his own power base in Andalus. It was then that the Granadians led by Ibn Khalid rose up to rebel against Ibn Hud's governor by the name of 'Utbah b. Yahya al-Mughili. The rebellion opposed his administrative policy and governance which were burdensome and his unpleasant and cruel personality. They besieged his palace and killed him. After the successful rebellion, they pledged allegiance to Ibn al-Ahmar and invited him to Granada. He promptly welcomed the invitation and arrived at sunset at the end of Ramadan in 635H/April 1238A.D. On this same date, Ibn

al-Ahmar began direct involvement in the administrative affairs and rule over Granada. Not long after his success in Granada, Ibn al-Ahmar went on to capture the city of Almeria by defeating an attack by the governor of Ibn Hud, Ibn al-Ramimi through besieging the city. Ibn al-Ramimi fled to Tunisia by sea to seek protection from the ruler there [5, 3].

Sadly, the turmoil of the 13th and 14th Centuries in Andalus caused Muslim rule to begin decreasing and the Christian regaining extensive control. The lethargy of Muslim unity was an important factor in the emergence of small Muslim kingdoms and such a situation was rife with a fragmented spirit solely in pursuit of a particular leader's greed for power. This occurred primarily in the Murcia and eastern Andalus. In the year 640H/1243 A.D., Murcia was delivered to Ferdinand III of Castile. He then delegated to his son, Alfonso X, to seal several treaties with the Governor of Murcia, Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Hud, together with the representatives of the leaders of Alicante, Cartagena and Oriuela to consent to the recognition of Christian Castile's control over the said provinces, in addition to the payment of a tribute. This was the reality in Andalus; the Muslim Ummah faced various pressures particularly from the Christian powers to surrender their homeland solely to secure limited powers on European soil.

From the Christian viewpoint, namely, Ferdinand III of Castile, Ibn al-Ahmar's movement needed monitoring and had to be curtailed at once. This was because Ibn al-Ahmar was the sole Muslim ruler still in power since the demise of Ibn Hud and who was constantly opposing the Christian powers, causing Castile to step up its attacks. Ferdinand acted to attack and to destroy the forts of Jaen city. Ibn al-Ahmar retaliated by besieging Martos which was under Castile's control with a big army. Castile would not admit defeat and advanced to aid Martos causing Ibn al-Ahmar to step up the siege. Finally, a fierce battle was fought with victory for Ibn al-Ahmar. The defeat did not break the spirit of the Christians. Ferdinand III sent his son, Alfonso X to reattack the province Jaen and managed to capture fort Arjona and the surrounding areas as well as besiege Granada in the year 642H/1244A.D. The following year they attacked and captured Jaen. The strength of the Christian military in capturing Jaen and southern Andalus areas troubled Ibn al-Ahmar, all the more so with Granada under siege. This made him decide to take steps to placate and make peace with Ferdinand III. He agreed to pledge allegiance to Castile [5]. Ibn al-Ahmar had reduced Granada to become an enduring political entity and a tributary kingdom [14].

This matter was sealed in the Jaen Treaty in the year 1246 A.D. between the two parties obliging Ibn al-Ahmar to give military aid if Castile was in need of it and the payment of a tribute of 150,000 *maravedis* annually to Ferdinand III. Ibn al-Ahmar also had to pledge his allegiance to Ferdinand III [1, 5]. Ibn al-Ahmar had also agreed to surrender Jaen, Arjona, Porcuna, Priego, Higuera and La Frontera as collateral to Castile.

With the surrender of these territories as collateral in the year 643H/1245 A.D., Ferdinand III agreed to make peace with Ibn al-Ahmar for a period of 20 years. Although this timeframe is disputed, Harvey [12] stressed that the Nasrid ruler really needed this period to restore the situation. During this period, the era of Ibn al-Ahmar's rule was in a state of peace and quiet [5]. Burns [15] assumed that the all of Ibn al-Ahmar's actions to save his status as the sole ruler of Granada were reasonable for implementation by an astute and cunning politician. It was done solely to secure the permanent survival of the Nasrid Kingdom in Andalus.

The Reign of Nasrid Kingdom: The Nasrid Kingdom had been ruled by as many as 22 sultans, beginning from the year 1238 A.D. until 1492 A.D. In the early stages, the sultans strove to stabilise the political status and state administration. Having secured peace and stability for the kingdom's status and administration, efforts were made to strengthen and consolidate the kingdom so that it would be strong and intact. This was the time that the Nasrid Kingdom achieved its glory in the world civilization with positive implications on the change for later European civilization, primarily in the development of Western arts and architecture. Nevertheless, there were several negative elements which affected the sultans, state leaders, administrators, military and external factors such as the aggression of Christian powers which contributed to the decline and fall of the Nasrid Kingdom in Andalus as the last sovereign Muslim kingdom.

Strengthening and Consolidation: During this era, the Nasrid Kingdom was under the rule of sultans who greatly contributed to create a pattern of ruling full of strategies with the aim of strengthening their integrity in Andalus. This era showed the conscientiousness and authoritativeness possessed by the rulers of Nasrid Kingdom, especially Ibn al-Ahmar. He was successful in formally establishing the kingdom in Andalus in the year 635H/1238A.D. which continued in existence despite the surrounding Christian powers until its fall in the year 1492 A.D.

The ensuing problem faced by the second sultan of Nasrid Kingdom, Muhammad II b. Muhammad b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1273-1302 A.D.) or better known as Muhammad *al-Faqih*, was to face the Christian aggression towards Nasrid Kingdom. He felt uneasy with the intervention of the Marinid ruler, Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub b. 'Abd al-Haqq, who had an ulterior motive of gaining Granada (Andalus) underlying his military aid to Granada. In fact, the rebellion of Banu Ashqilulah (Escayola) ensuing from the perpetual opposition during his father's time, also had disrupted the smoothness of his reign.

With his astuteness, Muhammad *al-Faqih* managed to resolve all these issues. The problem with the Marinids was closely linked to the Banu Ashqilulah rebellion. It is necessary to know that the political game during Muhammad *al-Faqih's* time was full of cunning. At one time Muhammad *al-Faqih* joined forces with Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub to oppose Banu Ashqilulah. At other times, he allied with Alfonso X of Castile to attack the Marinids and Banu Ashqilulah [2, 12]. The matter was resolved when Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub passed away and authority passed to his son, Sultan Abu Ya'qub Yusuf. The new sultan adopted a policy of peaceful relations with Nasrid Kingdom. Besides, the Marinids was facing an internal problem after the demise of Sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub, causing them to relinquish control over the cities of Tarifa and Algeciras, whereas the Ashqilulah family had left Guadix and fled to Maghrib when the Christian Castile did not avail them any aid [16]. Latham [14] likened the problems and turmoil of the Nasrid Kingdom to a game of four players (Nasrid Kingdom, the Marinids, Banu Ashqilulah and Christian Castile) with each party constantly breaching the rules and laws they made.

As regards relations with the Christians, Muhammad *al-Faqih* was able to seal several peace treaties and ceasefire agreements with Christian Castile which at that time was beset by internal problems. These agreements were made after the death of Alfonso X (1252-1284A.D.), that is, when the throne was vested in his son, Sanco IV (1284-1295 A.D.) and his grandson, Ferdinand IV (1295-1312 A.D.).

The third sultan of Nasrid Kingdom, Muhammad III b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1302-1309 A.D.) or better known as Muhammad *al-Makhlū'* was deposed for his administrative incompetency [1]. He was an academic and poet, who on ascension to the throne, was already suffering from an eye disease caused by habitually staying up at night. It was said that the pressure from

this disease had caused him to be harsh in attitude (*al-fazazah* dan *al-qaswah*). The state nobles were of the opinion that he no longer qualified to lead Nasrid Kingdom, all the more so that real power then was with the *wazir*, Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. al-Hakim. This caused them to oust and kill Ibn al-Hakim and to proceed to raid the palace to depose Muhammad *al-Makhlū’*. He was later exiled to Almunecar and later died from heart attack [3, 2].

The fourth sultan of Nasrid Kingdom, Nasr b. Muhammad II b. Muhammad b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1309-1314 A.D.) was of a noble character and loved to do charity. During his rule, he had to face opposition from Castile-Aragon and Castile-Marinids. The cities of Algeciras and Gibraltar were captured by Christian Castile in the year 1309 A.D. and this had forced Nasr to agree to pay taxes and pledge allegiance to Ferdinand IV of Castile. This situation made Nasr turn to peaceful relations with the Marinids and request for military aid in exchange for returning Ceuta city as well as marrying his sister to Sultan Abu al-Rabi‘ al-Marini. The outcome of the attack was a heavy loss for Castile who relinquished Algeciras in the year 1310 A.D. A treaty was sealed between Nasr and Castile to claim compensation for war losses from Christian Castile to Nasrid Kingdom [3, 1].

Not long after Nasr resolved the external problems and regained peace in Granada, he was faced with internal ‘fitnah’, that is, a declaration by his nephew, Isma‘il b. Faraj, as ruler in Malaga. Isma‘il I b. Faraj b. Isma‘il b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1314-1325 A.D.) became the fifth *Amir al-Muslimin* of Nasrid Kingdom by capturing his uncle Nasr, pardoning him and appointing him as Governor of Guadix. A war broke out between Nasrid Kingdom aided by the Marinid’s commander, Abu Sa‘id ‘Uthman b. al-‘Ula and the Christian Castile led by two of its commanders, Don Pedro and Don Juan. This occurred in the year 716H/1316 A.D. in Guadix where the Christians were defeated. Both of their commanders were killed in the war. What was astonishing was that the number of Muslim martyrs was very small, about 13 out of a total cavalry of 1500 horsemen [9]. Isma‘il’s reign won and recaptured several districts from the Christians, such as Baeza (1324 A.D.), Orce, Huecar, Galera and Martos (1325 A.D.). However in the final year, he was killed by his own cousin who was also Governor of Algeciras, Muhammad b. Isma‘il b. Muhammad [14].

The Nasrid Kingdom subsequently came under the rule of Muhammad IV b. Isma‘il b. Faraj b. Isma‘il b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1325-1333 A.D.) who was only

nine years of age on ascension to the throne. In view of his tender age, power was entrusted to his counselor and *wazir*, Ibn al-Mahruq. However, three years after being coronated as ruler of Nasrid Kingdom, he sentenced Ibn al-Mahruq to death. Harvey [12] explained that during Muhammad IV’s rule, the Christians had planned to attack Granada through an international crusade agreed to by Castile, Aragon, Navarre, France, England and Bohemia. However, this international pact was abandoned due to differences amongst them leaving Castile alone to launch an attack on Nasrid Kingdom (1330 A.D.). Castile was able to capture Teba in western Antequera. Muhammad IV appealed for help from the Marinids which was facing internal rebellion at the same time. In spite of this, the ruler of the Marinid, Sultan Abu al-Hassan ‘Ali b. ‘Uthman (731-752H/1331-1351 A.D.), who was the most powerful sultan in the history of the Marinid’s rule in Maghrib had availed help to Nasrid Kingdom. The siege imposed by the Marinid military on Castile in Gibraltar had forced Christian Castile to sign a peace treaty with the Nasrid kingdom. After this, Granada enjoyed peace for as long as 15 years. During this time, Muhammad IV recaptured the cities of Cabra, Priego, Ronda and Marbella.

However, this war had exposed the skirmish between Muhammad IV and the *shaykh al-ghuzah*, ‘Uthman b. Abi al-‘Ula [17]. Harvey [12] questions in puzzlement as to why Granada appealed for help from the Marinids when it should have been done by the *shaykh al-ghuzah*, but instead was done by Sultan Muhammad IV himself. The disagreement between the two leaders gave rise to a conspiracy to depose Muhammad IV leading to his death. According to Harvey again, the Christian Chronicle clearly stated that the pact to kill Muhammad IV was carried out by two of ‘Uthman’s sons, Abotebe (Abu Thabit) and Ibrahim, who disapproved of the Sultan’s act of dining with the king of Castile and wearing clothes which were the king’s gift for peace negotiations. At that moment, hajib Abu Nu‘aym Ridwan hastened to the palace and nominated as well as declared the youngest brother of Muhammad IV, Yusuf I as the next ruler of Nasrid Kingdom [18].

Progress and Glory: At this stage, the Nasrid Kingdom had achieved political stability and a balanced government due to the wisdom of the sultans. Despite the repeated attacks by the Christians, the Nasrid Kingdom stood firmly and was able to reach the height of glory in Islamic arts and develop greatness in the intellectualism of the Granadians through a human civilization beyond compare.

When the status of the Nasrid Kingdom became more secure and stable, the rulers sought to establish the form of ruling which existed with their skill of diplomacy and stratagem in making use of opportunities available to them whether from the Marinid kingdom of North Africa or from the Christian kingdoms surrounding them. The demise of Muhammad IV was replaced by his younger brother, Sultan Abu al-Hajjaj Yusuf b. Isma'il b. Faraj b. Isma'il b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1333-1354 A.D.) [3]. The reign of Sultan Abu al-Hajjaj Yusuf I was described by Harvey [12] as the commencement of the age of glory for the Islamic civilization in Granada. Simultaneously, however, his reign was marked by the saddest event, that is, the worst defeat of the Muslim army in the whole history of the Nasrid Kingdom in Granada by the Christian Castile in the Battle of the Rio Salado in the year 1340 A.D.

According to Latham [14], the first steps taken by Sultan Yusuf I after coronation was to banish the whole of Banu Abi al-'Ula to Tunisia and to appoint Yahya b. Umar b. Rahhu from the Banu Rahhu b. 'Abd al-Haqq as the *shaykh al-ghuzah* replacing Abu Thabit. His next action was to sign peace treaties with the Christian Castile and the Marinids in Maghrib. It could be discerned at this stage that the position of Granada was like a collateral object in the power struggle between two parties involved. Castile was in need of such a treaty as it was facing an internal rebellion from amongst its elite whereas the Marinids had aspirations to spread its rule over Andalus. On this note, both of them had stepped up their naval strength to contend for their dream Straits of Gibraltar. In that situation, the naval force of Castile led by its admiral, Alfonso Jofre Tenorio, had attacked the combined naval forces of Granada and the Marinids, but were badly defeated with Jofre himself dead. The Marinid ruler, Abu al-Hasan, optimized on this opportunity to cross the Straits of Gibraltar with his whole clan and besieged the city of Tarifa in the year 740H/1340A.D. [12]. Sultan Yusuf I joined forces with Sultan Abu al-Hasan in Tarifa to recapture the city. Alfonso XI of Castile was sent quick reinforcement by his father-in-law, Alfonso IV of Portugal and so a fierce battle broke out on 7th Jumada al-Ula 740H/30th October 1340 A.D., known as the Battle of the Rio Salado or the Battle of Tarifa. In that battle, Granada and Fez were badly defeated in the hands of the Christian Castile. With the defeat of the Muslim forces in Tarifa, the Christian Castile through the military endeavour of Alfonso X and the help of other European kingdoms, besieged and raided Algeciras. This was done in view of its strategic position and importance as a port

of call in the Straits of Gibraltar. Finally, in the year 745H/1344 A.D., the city of Algeciras fell into the hands of Castile. This victory had fired the zeal of Castile to attempt recapturing the city of Gibraltar in the year 750H/1349 A.D. However, this effort was abandoned when Alfonso XI died in the year 1350 A.D. [17].

The terrible defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of the Rio Salado added to the pain of the condition of the Muslim Ummah in Granada. Ambrosio Huici Miranda [12] in his authoritative study explained the total head count of the Muslim force was 67,000, that is, 7,000 Granadians and the other 60,000 from the Marinids. The breakdown of the total Christian force was 12,000 infantry and 8,000 calvary. Even though they were far smaller in number as compared to the Muslim forces, the systematic attack by the Christian calvary caused the Muslim defeat. This form of attack was a style suited to the aristocratic society of Western Europe. Their calvary was superbly trained and equipped with a variety of heavy weaponry. The Muslim calvary were less equipped with lighter weapons, giving an advantage to the enemy. This defeat forced Sultan Abu al-Hasan to return to Maghrib and Sultan Yusuf I to Granada.

Even though the cities of Tarifa and Algeciras were in Christian control, the Muslim kingdom in Granada managed to restore its strength during the reign of Sultan Muhammad V b. Yusuf b. Isma'il b. Faraj b. Isma'il b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1354-1359 A.D., 1362-1391 A.D.), better known as Sultan Muhammad *al-Ghani bi Allah* [3, 17]. On taking over the throne of the Nasrid Kingdom, Sultan Muhammad V who possessed the wisdom and authoritativeness to administer the state had laid down a policy of peaceful relations with Christian Castile, which was ruled by Peter I the Cruel (1350-1369 A.D.). This was contrary to the practice of the previous ruler which constantly focused on a two-way international relations with Aragon. At the same time, Peter I of Castile was in confrontation with Peter IV of Aragon (1336-1387 A.D.). The policy adopted by this Nasrid ruler had saved the situation and secured the continuity of his rule in Andalus. The skill of Sultan Muhammad V in exploiting such situations enabled him to successfully intervene even in the internal affairs of the Christian kingdoms themselves. This policy was implemented by his distinguished *hajib*, Abu al-Nu'aym Ridwan b. 'Abd Allah al-Nasri and his eminent *wazir*, Lisan al-Din b. al-Khatib al-Salmani [12]. In fact, this opportunity was taken in the early stage of his reign to establish better diplomatic relations with the Marinids. This can be observed through the emissary of Ibn al-Khatib by Sultan

Muhammad V to meet up with Sultan Abu 'Inan in Fez in the year 755H/1354 A.D. [14].

However, in Ramadan 760H/August 1359 A.D., while Sultan Muhammad V was busy preparing to attack Aragon in aid of Castile whose naval force was docking at Malaga port, he was deposed by a palace revolutionary pact. The Nasrid Kingdom had been taken over by his stepson Isma'il II b. Yusuf b. Isma'il b. Faraj b. Isma'il b. Yusuf b. Nasr b. Qays al-Khazraji (1359-1360 A.D.). His rule lasted only a few months due to his very weak leadership. Besides that, Muhammad VI *el Bermejo*, who prior to this had abetted and planned the overthrow of Sultan Muhammad V, killed Isma'il and his younger brother, Qays on 8th Sha'ban 761H/24th June 1360 A.D. [3, 14, 12]. He, who was the son-in-law of Sultan Yusuf I (in-law and cousin to Isma'il), ascended the throne with the title Muhammad *al-Ghalib bi Allah* (1360-1362 A.D.). During his reign, he had allied with Christian Aragon. This made Peter I of Castile very uneasy so that he sent aid to Muhammad V, who was exiled to Fez, to restore him in Granada. Sultan Muhammad V ruled Granada for the second time on Jumada al-Thaniyah 763H/March 1362 A.D., that is after Muhammad VI *el Bermejo* surrendered himself to Peter I and was later executed in Tablada, near Seville city on April 1360 A.D. [14, 12].

The skirmish between Castile and Aragon was exploited wisely by Sultan Muhammad V. He had aided Peter I in his attack on Murcia in the year 763H/1362 A.D. In the year 767H/1366 A.D., a civil war broke out between Peter I and his younger brother, Enrique *de Trastamara* who laid claim to the Castile throne. This second opportunity was seized by Muhammad V by launching several attacks on the rebels opposed to Peter I and he also succeeded in attacking Utrera, Jaen and Ubeda as well as besieging Baeza and Cordova. In fact, he almost gained control of Cordova city (769H/1368 A.D.). Among his efforts most clearly to strengthen the Nasrid Kingdom was his success in regaining Algeciras in the year 770H/1369 A.D. [17]. At this time, the situation of the Marinid Kingdom in Fez was unstable from internal turmoil. This opportunity was also exploited by Muhammad V to intervene in the affairs of the Maghrib. He proved himself as arbitrator in the appointment of the Marinid Sultan. He also was able to occupy Gibraltar and eliminate the position of *shaykh al-ghuzah*. Thus, he was able to remove the military presence of the Marinids in Andalus. The peak of excellence in the reign of Sultan Muhammad *al-Ghani bi Allah* in Granada is depicted by Makki [17] as quoted below.

Thanks to the wise policy of Muhammad V, Granada enjoyed a lengthy peace it had never before experienced,

permitting the Nasrid sultan to undertake many building projects, including the construction of the greater part of the *Qasr al-Hamra'* - the Alhambra - and to give attention to culture and the sciences. During his reign the kingdom also enjoyed great economic prosperity with the strengthening of friendly relations between it and the Muslim kingdoms of the Maghrib and the east, the Zayyanid state in Tlemcen, the Hafids in Tunisia and the Mamluks in Egypt.

Decline and Fall: The glory of Nasrid Kingdom did not last long as the kingdom started to decline after the demise of Sultan Muhammad V on 16th January 1391 A.D. [12]. His successors were weak sultans who failed to equal his level of statesmanship which successfully combined political diplomacy with the deployment of military force when necessary. Nevertheless, Makki [17] explained that generally, the political situation in Granada then remained stable and did not change much enabling it to last until half a century later (793-820H/1391-1417 A.D.). During that period, the Nasrid Kingdom was ruled by three sultans, Yusuf II (1391-1392 A.D.), Muhammad VII (1392-1408 A.D.) and Yusuf III (1408-1417 A.D.). At the same time, the Castile kingdom was in a weak state with internal bickerings between themselves for the throne, whether from amongst the king's successors or from the aristocratic rebels.

However, when the strength of the Christian Castile kingdom began to be restored, they began to attack and capture the stronghold of Nasrid Kingdom, that is Antequerra, in the year 813H/1410 A.D. This was followed by the victory of Christian Castile's military force in the battle of *La Higuera*. The course of history for the Nasrid Kingdom in the period that followed was full of confusion, difficult and complex, that is, commencing from the year 820H/1417 A.D. until 897H/1492 A.D. Many contemporary historians such as Latham [14], Harvey [12], Makki [17], 'Inan [5] and Watt [19] have classified this period as the moment of fragmentation for the Nasrid Kingdom, which caused its system of government to decline and, in fact, to fall into the hands of the Catholic Christians in the year 1492 A.D. By almost the mid-15th century, Castile led by Henry IV (1454-1474 A.D.), son of John II, began to organize heavy attacks on the Nasrid Kingdom between the years 1455 until 1457 A.D. Whereas during this period itself, the Nasrid Kingdom was plagued with serious internal problems due to a power struggle for the throne amongst the Nasrid themselves, that is, between Abu Nasr Sa'd (1454-1464 A.D.) and Muhammad XI *el Chiquito* (1451-1452, 1453-1454 A.D.). During this period (1450's), the Nasrid Kingdom was split between

two rulers. Muhammad XI controlled the areas of Granada, Malaga and Almeria including the city of Alhambra. Whereas Sa'd had control over the area from Archidona to Ronda and commanded strong support from Banu Sarraj as well as Castile. In the year 1455 A.D., this conflict ended when Muhammad XI, who was not liked by the elite and inhabitants of Granada, was forced to flee the city. But he was trapped in a surprise attack by Sa'd's son, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali (1464-1482 A.D.) and sentenced to die. This created the opportunity for Sa'd to take control over the whole of Granada [12]. As a result of this conflict, Gibraltar which had served as the last base for the link between Granada and the Muslim rulers in North Africa was conquered by Christian Castile in the year 866H/1462 A.D. [20].

The kingdoms of Banu Marin (the Marinids) in Maghrib, Banu 'Abd al-Wad (the Zayyanids) in Tilimsan and Banu Hafsi (the Hafsiids) in Tunisia began to weaken with the fall of Granada, causing the Nasrid Kingdom to single-handedly deal with the advance of a greater Christian army [17]. At this point also, the king of Castile kingdom, Henry IV (1454-1474 A.D.) had recently passed away and was replaced by his sister, Isabella (1474-1504 A.D.). Whilst in Aragon, on the demise of John II (1458-1479 A.D.), the throne was inherited by his son, Ferdinand V (1479-1516 A.D.) who was also the spouse to Isabella of Castile. Hence, the two kingdoms were successfully united ending the enmity of several centuries between them. During the reign of Isabella and Ferdinand, who were given the title Catholic Monarchs, the attacks on the Nasrid Kingdom in Granada were increasingly intensified [14]. After having gone through repeated wars, on 29th Safar 897H/1st January 1492 A.D. Granada was finally surrendered to the Christian Castile by the last sultan of the Nasrid Kingdom, Sultan Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad IX (1482, 1486-1492 A.D.) or better known in the West as Boabdil. The fall of Granada significantly meant the end of Muslim rule in Spain forever after nearly eight centuries of existence in Europe. For the Christian kingdoms, particularly Castile, the fall was an absolute victory that they had desired, to complement the *Reconquista* campaign launched several centuries before.

In brief, the emergence of Ibn al-Ahmar or Muhammad I b. Yusuf b. Nasr al-Khazraji in Arjona on 18th April 1232 A.D. witnessed the starting point of Banu Nasr's rule amongst existent kingdoms then. He was undaunted by the surrounding turmoil in pursuit of his ambition to establish a Muslim kingdom on Andalusian soil. With the fall of the Almohad Caliphate in Andalus at the end of the 11th century, Ibn al-Ahmar together with other Muslim provincial leaders such as Ibn Hud

al-Judhami in Seville and Ibn Mardanish in Valencia were vying with each other to be the sole Muslim leader in Europe. The death of Ibn Hud in the year 1238 A.D. and the surrender of Valencia city by Ibn Mardanish to James I of Aragon in the same year, gave Ibn al-Ahmar a golden opportunity to be the sole leader of the Muslim society in Andalus. In addition, the fall of the metropolitan city of Cordova (1236 A.D.) and Seville (1248 A.D.) had made Granada the only safe province for the Muslims to inhabit [22].

By focusing on the pattern of governance of the Nasrid sultans during the era of strengthening and consolidation as well as the era of progress and glory, the writer finds that, during this period of about the first one hundred and fifty years, the Nasrid Kingdom succeeded in laying a firm foundation for its establishment. In addition, the kingdom succeeded in determining a wise policy of internal and international relations for its governance. By this explanation, the writer finds that the sultans of Granada during the era of strengthening and consolidation had determined the form of governance for the Nasrid Kingdom subsequent to them. Among the sultans who ruled during this era were Sultan Muhammad II *al-Faqih*, Sultan Muhammad III *al-Makhlul*, Sultan Abu al-Juyush Nasr, Sultan Isma'il I and Sultan Muhammad IV. Appreciation should be appropriately accorded to Sultan Muhammad II who was responsible for establishing and organizing an efficient and effective administrative institution for the Nasrid Kingdom. This can be seen from the formation of the *Diwan al-Insha'* institution. His good work was continued during the era of progress and glory of the Nasrid Kingdom. There were two renowned sultans deemed to belong to this era of progress and glory, namely Sultan Yusuf I *al-Mu'ayyad bi Allah* and Sultan Muhammad V *al-Ghani bi Allah*. During their reign, Granada became well known as the prime center of knowledge in Europe, in addition to the construction of a magnificent palace famous for its beauty in the whole world, that is, the Alhambra [21-25].

CONCLUSION

Political stability was the dream and wish of each kingdom, both Muslim and Christian, in Spain in the 13th and 14th centuries. Each party struggled to strengthen its position and influence over others in order to gain absolute power. The Nasrid Kingdom (1238-1492 A.D.) had put in great effort to sustain and maintain its ruling power as the one and only Muslim power to survive for nearly two and a half centuries. This period is perceived as the longest reign of Muslim rule in Granada since Islam

set foot in Spain in the year 711 A.D. In the two and a half century period, sultans had ruled the Nasrid Kingdom. The implementation of proper internal policies, the good relationship between the Nasrid Kingdom and foreign rulers, the wise ruling power and the role of *Diwan al-Insha* were among the factors that influenced the long duration of the Nasrid power. From the study, it implies that today's and the subsequent governments need to take heed of the example to ensure the survival of their power. A further research, especially one that focuses on the consolidation factors, the progressive era and the declining era of the Nasrid Kingdom, will be useful to understand and further implement them into today's administration of government for political stability purposes.

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