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POWER AND RURAL COMMUNITIES
IN AL-ANDALUS

Ideological and Material Representations

Edited by

Adela Fàbregas and Flocel Sabaté

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AGENTS OF LOCAL POWER IN THE NASRID KINGDOM: THEIR INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS AND LEADERSHIP

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In this volume a new approach to research is presented which the University of Granada intends to develop over the coming years.¹ This new research avenue explores the development of ideologies and the exercise of power in Nasrid society, while also observing their impact on the social structure at large. This topic has previously received insufficient attention within the field of Nasrid studies because, despite occasional and very valuable contributions on specific aspects, no comprehensive approach to the Nasrid state's methods of exercising power has been attempted. The general characterization of the power exercised by the kings of Granada, which has only been outlined in the most general terms, remains the weakest link in Nasrid studies.

¹ Already embodied in the R+D Research Group funded by the Ministry of Education and Science: 'Los agentes locales del poder en el reino nazari: impacto en la red social y capacidad de liderazgo' (Ref. HAR2011-24125).

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore how state power can be defined in Islamic societies and examines the features of its interaction with society in Granada. This topic will be analysed considering the Nasrid kingdom of Granada as a case of evident social evolution towards new patterns. The traditional balance between the two main 'powers' that constituted classical Islamic society (peasant society and the tribal structure of the state) was deeply affected as a consequence of the state takeover. The paper attempts to understand the extensions of state control within Nasrid society as a whole, but mainly in the countryside, where local communities were stronger and more independent. In fact, internal cohesion was stronger there and possibly favoured by residual tribal tradition.

In fact, this shortcoming is the reflection of a deeper problem: Nasrid history remains inadequately integrated within the general historiographical framework of medieval Islam. Historiography has achieved splendid results with regard to other medieval Islamic contexts, including Islam in the Iberian Peninsula. Nasrid studies, by contrast, despite being extraordinarily innovative from a methodological point of view and offering highly suggestive results, are considered in most cases a mere annex to the general historiography of al-Andalus. Hence, Nasrid society has not, to date, been fully delineated against the general Islamic background and the evolution of its major components remains unexplored. The situation is more serious still if this examination is defined in terms of the Iberian Peninsula. The analysis of the interaction between Islamic and Christian areas here, and the deep implications which such interaction had for both societies, has almost systematically ignored the Nasrid kingdom, even though this kingdom showed some specific features — the developing study of which is the aim of this project — which made it particularly sensitive to feudal and western influences, down to its very structure as an Islamic state. Accordingly, it would be particularly useful to define the role played by this small state within the wider medieval Islamic world and its development.

Recent historiography has progressively realized the full complexity of Andalus society, where the two key agents, the state and kinship-based peasant groups, underwent a far-reaching transformation over time, both in their definition and in their relationship. General or inaccurate definitions are thus becoming progressively less common and Nasrid society is finally taking its rightful place within the wider framework of medieval Islam. It seems most likely that the political and ideological structures underlying Nasrid power were aimed at strengthening the authority of the state in unprecedented ways for al-Andalus, with the ultimate purpose of profoundly transforming and opening this society towards more modern dynamics. Spectacular advances achieved by Nasrid historiography in recent years have created a solid empirical base from which to draw the necessary links to the wider Andalus question, as will be shown presently.

* * *

Despite increasing evidence, the historiographical image of the Andalus and, most particularly, Nasrid worlds has remained static until recent years. The preferential attention paid to the role of centrifugal forces posed by autonomous peasant groups, further reinforced by strong kinship links, has relegated the analysis of the state's influence to a marginal position. Nonetheless, even the louder advocates of the key role played by peasant groups and their autono-

mous organs have for some time been stressing certain features which point towards a reinforcement of the state. For example, Pierre Guichard, arguing in favour of the persistent influence of kinship-based peasant communities, also recognized the existence of certain elements suggesting their 'recruitment' by political lobbies.² From their perspective, Miquel Barceló and his team, who support the idea of irrigation systems as the foundations for the autonomy and strength of these peasant groups, have no qualms in accepting their transformation once constituted.³ By claiming the historical significance of hydraulic systems, it was assumed that the social identity of labour was open to evolution. Indeed, the 'recruitment' of these spaces by power groups, whatever their nature, is a reality which cannot be rejected.

In fact, it seems clear that the classic Islamic society, defined by the strength of kinship-based peasant communities before the state, experienced a decisive transformation during the Nasrid period (although the process was probably begun earlier) when the power of the state over the peasantry increased considerably. The latest historiographical developments also suggest an increasing power of the state over other social agents. All societies naturally and inherently tend towards evolution, and Andalus society is no exception, as shown most markedly by Nasrid Granada, where the state broadened its influence over ever wider areas of society. The Nasrid kingdom of Granada experienced two apparently contradictory phenomena, which can be summarized in the dissolution of the social dynamics typical of an Islamic society, and political power.

1.

On the one hand there is the progressive weakening of the kinship principles which hitherto stood as the basis of social cohesion and the economic agricultural system. This dissolution also affected the autonomy previously maintained before the state or other external agents. Evidence showing this progression includes a considerable decrease in the number of kinship-based toponyms,

² Pierre Guichard, 'Les Rapports entre les villes et campagnes', in *États, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval. 3: problèmes et perspectives*, ed. by Jean Claude Garcin and others (Paris: Les Éditions G. Crès et Cie, 2000), pp. 70–91; Pierre Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana: los musulmanes de Valencia (siglos XI–XIII)* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2001).

³ Miquel Barceló, 'Saber lo que es un espacio hidráulico y lo que no lo es, o al-Andalus y los feudales', in *El agua, mitos, ritos y realidades*, ed. by Jose Antonio González Alcantrán and Antonio Malpica Cuello (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1995), pp. 240–54.

the atomization of traditional clans into smaller units, the commoditization of agricultural lands and — consequently — the emergence of new owners, outside the original kinship group.⁴ Perhaps the clearest example of this dynamic is that offered by Apeo de Turillas,⁵ a small hamlet in the district of Almuñécar where, as shown by documents from immediately after the Castilian conquest, almost all properties were already owned by outsiders and where social relationships were therefore no longer determined by kinship. In short, the once prevalent kinship-based homogeneity in land ownership was in the process of vanishing, also weakening the communities' economic, political and social standing, which no longer sufficed to fence the group off against state or other external influence.

2.

On the other hand, we find an Islamic state — and the figure and institutions at its head — with a higher profile than ever before. Political power was gaining very much greater access to the mechanisms of direct authority with which to control important social sectors. In reality this process had begun much earlier: after, and with relation to, the weakening of what Pierre Guichard called the 'universalist' caliphates. This occurred from the eleventh century in the whole of the Mediterranean region and was of particular intensity in al-Andalus, which stands as a paradigm of this process.⁶ The urgent need to overcome illegitimacy problems drove these new dynasties — seen in some ways as responsible for the division of Islam — towards the adoption of active legitimization policies. This phenomenon gained pace particularly during the Nasrid period.⁷

⁴ Manuel Acien Almansa, *Ronda y su serranía en tiempos de los Reyes Católicos* (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 1979); Antonio Malpica Cuello, 'De la Granada nazari al reino de Granada', in *De al-Andalus a la sociedad feudal: los repartimientos bajomedievales* (Barcelona: CSIC, 1990).

⁵ Antonio Malpica Cuello, *Turillas, alquería del alfoz sevitano* (Edición del Apeo de Turillas de 1505) (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1984).

⁶ María Isabel Fierro, 'La legitimidad del poder en el Islam', *Aurora*, 15 (1994), 147–84. A phenomenon as significant as the adoption of the sovereigns of *laqab*'s alluding to a personal relationship with God may be indicative of this process. Pierre Guichard, 'El arabismo de los Estados raifas', in *Actas del VII Coloquio de Historia de Andalucía. Qué es Andalucía? Una revisión histórica desde el Medievo* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2009).

⁷ Emilio Molina López, 'La dinámica política y los fundamentos del poder', in *Historia del Reino de Granada. I: de los orígenes a la época mudéjar*, ed. by Rafael G. Peinado Sarracela, Manuel Barrios Aguilera, and Francisco Andujar Castillo (Granada: Universidad de Granada,

very probably as a result of other processes that had been taking place in the West since the thirteenth and (most significantly) the fourteenth centuries, the most blatant symptom of which was an increase in the pressure exercised by the Christians. It must not be forgotten how these policies contributed to the weakening of the social and economic principles on which Islam had previously rested.⁸

It is in any case beyond doubt that the growing relative weight of the state changed the traditional power balance between the two main agents in classic Islamic societies: the state itself and the kinship-based peasant groups.

This process which sees the strengthening of the state has been well (although incompletely) addressed in the historiography. It can be divided into several differentiated aspects, each deserving of special scrutiny. For example, the creation of a state ideology,⁹ its visual manifestations, and the propagandistic programmes with which it was carried out.¹⁰ A similar case is presented by 2000), pp. 211–48; Virgilio Martínez Enamorado, 'Lema de príncipes: sobre la galbá y algunas evidencias epigráficas de su uso fuera del ámbito nazari', *Al-Qantara*, 27 (2006), 520–50.

⁸ In this regard, the ever growing influence imposed on Granada by the feudal west, which had been engaged in an unprecedented episode of economic growth since the twelfth century, seems increasingly significant. This economic growth is shown, among other things, by the broadening of international trade networks. Sometimes this process included areas outside direct feudal control which were incorporated as a result into the feudal area of influence. In the case of Granada, this incorporation into commercial networks was to lead to the reorientation of productive strategies towards the market. Antonio Malpica Cuello, 'Del Mediterráneo islámico al Mediterráneo cristiano: el dominio del bacino occidental en el Mediterráneo central', in *Una citha nel Mediterraneo: Iapuletia Salernum*, ed. by Valdo d'Arizzeno (Salerno: Edizioni del Paguro, 2001), pp. 31–66; Adela Fábregas, 'La vida económica del Sultanato nazari en su vertiente comercial', in *Actas del VII Coloquio de Historia Medieval de Andalucía*, ed. by Antonio Malpica, Rafael G. Peinado, and Adela Fábregas (Granada: Universidad de Granada 2009), pp. 81–101.

⁹ Emilio de Santiago Simon, *El polígrafo granadino Ibn al-Jatib y el sufismo: aportaciones para su estudio* (Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1983); Lucien Golvin, 'Quelques réflexions sur la fondation d'une madrasa à Grenade en 750 = 1349', in *Actas del XII Congreso de la U.F.A.I. (Málaga, 1984)* (Madrid: Huertas, 1986), pp. 305–13; *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam. Actas del Simposio Internacional (Granada 15–18 octubre 1991)* (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994); Virgilio Martínez Enamorado, 'Saber, poder y madrasas en tiempos de Ibn Jaldun', in *Ibn Jaldun: el Mediterráneo en el siglo XIV. Auge y declive de los Imperios*, ed. by María Jesús Viguera Molins (Madrid: El Legado andalusí, 2006), pp. 342–47.

¹⁰ Darío Cabanellas Rodríguez, *El techo del Salón de Comares en la Alhambra: decoración, policromía, simbolismo y etimología* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra, 1988); Miquel Barceló, 'El Califá parente: el ceremonial omeya de Córdoba o la escenificación del poder', in *Estructuras y formas del poder en la Historia. II Jornadas de Estudios Históricos (1990)* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1991), 51–72; Jose Miguel Puerta Vilchez, 'La cultura

the process of domination exercised over social spaces hitherto immune to the state's influence. The first of these spaces to be regained was the city, where the strength of urban elites had previously contributed significantly to the spread of royal power. Henceforth, the city became an instrument for the transmission and the consolidation of this same royal power, influencing political cohesion and ideological identification. In cities like Málaga, or indeed Granada, the imposition of the king's mandates and his influence over the social, economic, and religious elites contributed to the reduction, and in a way neutralization, of the traditional social polymorphism of urban populations, also restricting their traditional autonomy from royal power. The king assumed the leadership of a new nucleus of political power, embracing all the key elements of the state — religious, ideological, and economic — which would remain thereafter under the *regis* of the royal, 'legitimate' power, ultimately identifying the crown and the state more closely than ever before. The external signs of this new strategy are easy to find. Cities underwent a deep process of transformation aimed at the unification of power symbols in well-defined and easily identifiable locations, such as the area around the *aljama* mosque in Granada, and Gibralfaro in Málaga.¹¹ The far-reaching urban transformation programmes promoted by prominent rulers, such as Yūsuf I or Muhammad V aimed at highlighting the monarch's presence mainly in the centre of cities. This was not merely a presumed presence, but a very real, tangible one, manifested in well-defined

y la creación artística, in *Historia del Reino de Granada. I: de los orígenes a la época mudéjar*, ed. by Rafael G. Peinado Sanrrella, Manuel Barrios Aguilera, and Francisco Andujar Castillo (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000), pp. 349–413; Félix Recamero, 'La formalización del poder en las monedas de los muluk de Denia (siglo V.H./XI D.C.): *Al-Qanara*, 27 (2006), 417–45; Martínez Enamorado, "Lema de príncipes."

¹¹ The idea was to stress the grandiosity of royal power through the development of thoroughly planned urban transformation programmes: for example, with the urban palace of the Alhambra; Antonio Malpica Cuello, 'La Alhambra, ciudad palatina: perspectivas desde la arqueología', *Arqueología y territorio medieval*, 8 (2001), 205–51; Antonio Malpica Cuello, *La Alhambra de Granada: un estudio arqueológico* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2002); Ibrahim Salameh, 'Estudio de los elementos decorativos de la Puerta del Vino de la Alhambra de Granada', *Arqueología y territorio medieval*, 5 (1998), 135–51. Also in other cities, such as Málaga; Isabel Calero Secall and Virgilio Martínez Enamorado, *Málaga, ciudad de al-Andalus* (Málaga: Agora-Universidad de Málaga, 1995); and more in Granada; Antonio Malpica Cuello, 'Granada, ciudad islámica: centro histórico y periferia urbana', *Arqueología y territorio medieval*, 1 (1994), 195–208; AA.VV., *Ciudad y Arqueología Medieval* (Granada: Alhulia, 2006); Alberto García Porras, 'Ocupación del espacio en la orilla izquierda del río Darro: el barrio de San Matías (Granada)', in *Ciudad y territorio en al-Andalus*, ed. by Lorenzo Cara (Granada: Athos-Pergamos, 1999), pp. 111–27.

topographical and physical points of reference. In Granada, it can almost look as though the Alhambra descends to the city, looming over its inhabitants. The palatial area known as Cuatro Real de Santo Domingo, on the other hand, occupies a very prominent position in the wealthy residential district of Nayd, stressing the role this area played for the royal family and its adherents, and imposing the royal presence on the population at large.¹²

Moreover, this effort was in no way limited to urban environments. The strengthening of the central power aimed to go much further, to allow the king to intervene more decisively in the orientation of economic strategies,¹³ and in Islamic society as a whole, including the strongly united peasant communities that had traditionally rested outside direct royal control. In a sense, we could claim that the state progressively penetrated the interstices left by a slowly waning kinship-based social structure with the aim of, at the least, discouraging the continuation of ancestral social principles. Naturally this was neither a linear nor a simple process. In fact, Nasrid society stands as a perfect example of the complexity of social evolution in critical contexts. Indeed, one of the most complex dimensions of this process — and one which has received little attention — is the local projection of the state and the instruments used to penetrate and subvert traditionally autonomous social constructs. Our target over the coming years is to focus on this specific topic as a first step towards a better understanding of the general evolution of Nasrid society.

The State and Nasrid Rural Society

For the moment the aim is to examine the projections of state power mainly into the rural world, where communities had previously enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy as a consequence of a solid internal social cohesion reinforced by ancestral tribal mechanisms. For this, the focus will be on local magistrates, such as *alcaldes*, *qadis*, *alguaciles*, and *alfayates*, in order to ascertain the

¹² Alberto García Porras and Eva Muñoz Wäissen, 'Un espacio singular de la ciudad nazari de Granada: el Cuatro Real de Santo Domingo', in *La ciudad nazari: nuevas aportaciones desde la Arqueología*, ed. by Antonio Malpica Cuello and Alberto García Porras (Granada: Alhulia, 2009), pp. 109–43.

¹³ Antonio Malpica Cuello, 'Sobre el mundo agrícola nazari: la alquería de Escóznar en el siglo XIV', in *Poder y sociedad en la Baja Edad Media hispánica*, ed. by Carlos Reglero de la Fuente (Valladolid: UNED, 2002), pp. 1007–24; José Enrique López de Coca, 'Granada y la ruta de poniente: el tráfico de frutos secos (siglos XIV–XV)', in *Navegación marítima del Mediterráneo al Atlántico*, ed. by Antonio Malpica Cuello (Granada: THARG, 2001), pp. 149–77.

level of interaction maintained with the peasant communities over which they had jurisdiction, the amount of responsibility they amassed, and their ability to regulate the social and economic organization of such communities; in short, to examine up to what point magistrates could effectively rule over these communities and which instruments they had to do so. By clarifying these matters, a better understanding of the degree of control exercised by the centre over the social body at large should be achieved.

1.

First, it is necessary to explore the general characteristics of the agents sent by the state for the implementation of government policies at all territorial levels. Although this topic has been relatively well covered by Nasrid historiography,¹⁴ new approaches and developments are required in order to ascertain as accurately as possible how physically present the state appeared to all sectors of Nasrid society, what degree of administrative organization the state was capable of keeping, and how deeply this organization extended into the territory. All of these factors are essential for the determination of the real capabilities of the institutional framework to carry out its control function with efficiency.

This first step provides merely a preliminary, general approach to the issue, culminating with the drafting of a map/diagram to illustrate the network of state agents working at the local level. The evidence for this should be taken from published works on Nasrid bureaucracy and the jurisdiction and powers of each of these agents. Special attention should be paid to those officials who were in close contact with the relevant population groups. Higher magistrates, a few exceptional cases aside, fall outside this focus. In short, the scrutiny will be on *alcaldes*, *alguaciles*, *gadsis*, and *alfaqúes*.

¹⁴ Luis Seco de Lucena Paredes, 'La administración central de los nazaries', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra*, 10-11 (1974-75), 21-26; Rachel Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232-1492)* (Paris: Bocard, 1973); María Isabel Calero Secall, *Los castles del reino nazari de Granada (estudio histórico biográfico)* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1981); María Arcas Campoy, 'Castles y alcaldes de la frontera oriental nazari (s. xv)', *Al-Qantara: revista de Estudios Árabes*, 20, fasc. 2 (1999), 487-502; Carmen Tillo San José, 'Agentes del Estado y mezniquitas en el reino nazari', *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos*, 34 (2007), 279-91. Many other works, which mainly focus on other topics, also mention this matter, adding very valuable local examples to an issue which is in need of specific and detailed evidence.

2.

The main aim is to ascertain how the rule of these officials affected the population groups (in most cases peasant communities) over which they had jurisdiction, with the intention of examining the projection of central power in rural areas. This involves the consideration of up to what point their rule could be effective, up to what point they had the ability to influence the life of these communities, and which instruments they had to do so. This is the only way one can understand the real weight of the state in Nasrid society. Among the most significant figures with regard to the nature of power relationships within Nasrid society is the *alcaide*, the highest representative of the state at the local level. Because of the permanent direct contact maintained with local communities, the *alcaide* played a crucial role on behalf of the government.

The *alcaide* (qaid) played several roles in Nasrid civil and military administration and his jurisdiction may have included the governance of local fortresses. External commentators portray the *alcaide* as a powerful figure, responsible for the defence of the fortress and the surrounding territory and acting as a representative of the central government, on behalf of which he not only looked after the fortress but also collected taxes. At the same time, he has been presented as the official in closest contact with the local population. In some cases, as shown by known Valencian examples, *alcaldes* played an arbitrating role within the communities they ruled, in close cooperation with each hamlet, *sajūji* and the legal-religious authorities. Their position implied the explicit subordination of local communities to their authority. The point of contact between the central state and the peasant communities could thus be placed at this institution.¹⁵ Furthermore, *alcaldes* may be directly associated with the reorientation of certain sectors of the Nasrid economy towards the market, one of the most significant transformations of traditional peasant Islamic systems.

It must not, however, be forgotten that this institution presented very different faces, with regard to jurisdiction and other functions, depending on the specific needs of each territory. The actions of a magistrate ruling over a strategic, heavily exposed frontier district cannot be taken on an equal footing with that of another governing over more secure, economically active areas. Neither can the work carried out by an *alcaide* in the Alpujarras be equated with that of another operating in the Vega de Granada. Consequently, probably the first task should be to draft an accurate characterization of this figure, which also

¹⁵ Pierre Gutchard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana: los musulmanes de Valencia (siglos XI-XIII)* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2001).

reflects diversity of the magistracy itself, by establishing a number of defining variables: the family origin of the magistrates and the degree of integration, social and economic, which he or his family could claim in the territory over which they had jurisdiction; the nature of his appointment, reflecting the degree to which this is an imposition of the state over the criteria of the local communities, which may sometimes be inferred from the state's symbolic manifestations (for example, inscriptions set in local public spaces); the nature of his functions, or the balance between military and socio-economic powers. The understanding that this office can take a variety of forms as a reflection of different policies will give a less distorted and more helpful view of the complexity of the transformations undergone by Nasrid society.

3.

Characterization of the relationships drawn with rural social environments. Pierre Guichard stressed many years ago the importance of understanding the role played by *alcaldes* in Islam — as mediators between the central government by which they were appointed and the rural communities over which they ruled. He also emphasized the need to ascertain the degree to which their military attributions were used to assist other policies more akin to forms of feudal domination.¹⁶ This is no minor issue. Theoretical insights into the emergence of power structures often claim that these structures and the states that they support cannot reach stability without the development of an aristocratic class capable of giving the central power some territorial projection. Such an aristocracy must be able to impose property-based obligations over peasant communities. This territorial control is basic for the viability of the state; hence the need for close cooperation with the social bodies from which officials are drawn. Keeping in mind the nature of Islamic society, as a rule very reluctant to implement quasi-feudal systems of political control, the question arises almost naturally: is this also true for the Andalusi, or the Nasrid, case?

It is not easy to ascertain whether these offices were used to support the application of 'feudal' forms of domination. On the one hand, it would be necessary to define the personal landed wealth of the officials, its nature and location,

¹⁶ Pierre Guichard, 'El siglo XIII valenciano: del sistema socio-político "tributario-mercantil" musulmán al régimen señorial y feudal cristiano', in *Designalidad y Dependencia: la perforización del Mediterráneo occidental* (s. XII-XIX), ed. by María Teresa Pérez Picazo and others (Murcia: Consejería de Cultura y Educación, 1986), pp. 53-58.

determining whether some relationship can be drawn with the exercise of office. The available evidence does not seem to suggest a close relationship between the two elements, although more specific examples should be examined. The next step should involve an examination of the role played by certain influential families. In the Nasrid case only a few, very prominent examples are well known, so a study should also examine some of the less obviously relevant ones. Published studies focusing on families such as the Banū l-Qabṣānī and, most particularly, the Banū l-Aḥfār, stand as a good guide for future work in this area.¹⁷

Another approach to the development of different forms of authority is to study the relationships established between the *castrum* or *hysn* and the hamlets within its jurisdiction, as Pierre Guichard did with the Valencian case. Spatial organization and settlement patterns could facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between the state and rural communities. Several variables could be of use in this analysis: whether these fortifications are permanent aristocratic residences or not; whether they house a permanent garrison capable of imposing military and social control over the surrounding region, or are instead primarily conceived as defences (for example, whether they are built on a well-protected hilltop), perhaps even as refuges for large groups of inhabitants (large housing areas). All of these factors are important in order to infer the nature of the relationship between these officials and the local communities, and the evolution of this over time.

4.

Characterization of the relationship between alcaldes and the central government. Unless a good, segmented, administrative network is created, local officials will tend to increase their degree of autonomy from the central government over time. Centrifugal forces may develop, risking rupture with the centre.

This problem became manifest in the Nasrid kingdom, and it is behind some of the important crises suffered by the state,¹⁸ but it is particularly significant in the relationship between officials and local communities. Particularly

¹⁷ Miguel Jiménez Puertas, *Linajes y poder en la Loja islámica: de los Banu Jalila a los Alatares (siglos VIII-XV)* (Loja: Fundación Ibn al Jariḥ, 2009); Rafael G. Peinado Sanraella, 'Los Banu Al-Qabṣānī: un linaje de la aristocracia nazari', *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 20 (1993), 313-53; Rafael G. Peinado Sanraella, *Aristócratas nazaries y principales castellanos* (Málaga: Diputación Provincial, 2008).

¹⁸ Antonio Pelaez Rovira, *El emirato nazari de Granada en el siglo XV: dinámica política y fundamentos sociales de un estado andalusí* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2009).

revealing is their ability to influence taxes, with which they seem to overrule mandates from the central power they theoretically represent, presenting themselves as defenders of the local communities in the face of external interference. The central government used several political and military strategies to overcome this problem. The king's ability to involve important families in the state's agenda is a crucial factor for their 'loyalty'. In fact, and returning once again to the *alcaldes*, their powers do not seem to be limited to the military policies of the state. They recurrently appear as mercantile partners of the crown, in direct relation to the king's commercial concerns.¹⁹ The issue of whether this is a systematic practice or merely the reflection of occasional agreements must be settled: the answer is crucial. Finally, it is necessary to turn once again to the question of their personal wealth, and to what degree this could grow as a consequence of cooperation with state institutions.

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