



## Nasrids of Granada

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### Introduction

The Nasrid Emirate of Granada was the last medieval Islamicate polity in the Iberian Peninsula. Chronologically, it spans the last two and a half centuries of the history of al-Andalus. (635/1238–897/1492). This small Islamicate state occupied the southern tip of Iberia—the modern provinces of Almería, Granada, Málaga, and part of Cádiz. Like other Western Islamicate states, such as the Ḥafṣids of Tunisia (1128–1526), the Zayyāni state of Tlemcen (1235–1518), and the Marinids of Morocco (1258–1465), the Nasrid state was a product of the decomposition of the Almohad Empire (See the separate Oxford Bibliographies article “Almohads”). It was the only Islamicate polity to survive the progressive deterioration of the Islamic power in al-Andalus and the increasing Christian military pressure. The history of this emirate, and of al-Andalus, finally came to an end in 1492, when it fell to the Crown of Castile. The historiography is relatively young. For too long, the geographical and chronological significance of this state in the medieval history of the Iberian Peninsula has not been adequately represented by Spanish medievalism. Even today, the history of the Nasrids is relatively unknown, and few scholars have undertaken the task to redress this situation. This may be related to the negative perception with which it has been traditionally associated. Generally, the idea of the Nasrids has gone hand-in-hand with that of the decline of al-Andalus, and most scholarly interest has focused on the emirate’s final period and the Christian conquest, rather than on Nasrid history more broadly. It is true that the integration of the two and a half centuries of Nasrid history into the social and political framework of Andalusī Spain seemed a difficult task. The Nasrids’ peculiar features made it an awkward fit for the closed social model within which Andalusī history has too often been pigeonholed, and this always led to the emirate being regarded as a historical exception in medieval Iberia. In a way, it was seen as a hybrid, contaminated society, more characterized by exception to Islamic or feudal norms than by clear compliance with any of them. Exceptionality soon turned into marginality, and this into historiographical inconsequence. Only the inescapable brilliance of its artistic achievements, with the palatine city of the Alhambra as the main example (see the separate Oxford Bibliographies article “Alhambra”), justified some attention being paid to the society that created them. Fortunately, interest in Nasrid history has grown substantially in recent decades. Little by little, a dynamic Islamicate society is taking shape, marked by its classic Islamic heritage but also a player of its own time, the European-wide transition to modernity, and intense interaction with the Latin Mediterranean world. The Nasrid Emirate is emerging as an interesting observatory to analyze the processes of change, tension, and adaptation typical of all societies in transition.

### General Overviews

One long-lasting, and still relevant, feature of Nasrid historiography is that most works take the form of articles and chapters in collective volumes that aim to address broader issues, such as the Islamic West or al-Andalus, as in Vidal 2012. We must not forget early monographs, such as Arié 1973 and Ladero Quesada 2024, as well as works included in broader overviews of Andalusī history, such as López de Coca 1987. The general features of the Nasrid world have also been examined as part of wider narratives, for instance in Harvey 1990 and Catlos 2018, and from innovative historiographical perspectives, as in Malpica Cuello 2014. However, most attempts to characterize the Nasrid world have been presented as collective volumes, such as Viguera 2000, to which various specialists submitted pieces about their respective fields of expertise. The most recent contributions to this category are a volume specifically dedicated to the Nasrid Kingdom, Fábregas 2020, and another one that pays considerable attention to the period as part of the historical biography of medieval Granada, Boloix 2022.

Arié, Michel. *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232–1492)*. Paris: Bocard, 1973.

Early monograph based on Arabic and Christian documentary sources (archive documents and Christian chronicles). Although largely focused on political events and political-institutional features, it does not neglect other socioeconomic, artistic, and cultural

factors. An updated edition was published in 1990. It remains a key bibliographic reference.

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**Boloix, Bárbara, ed. *A Companion to Islamic Granada*. Brill's Companions to European History. Leiden, The Netherlands, and Boston: Brill, 2022.**

Presents the medieval history of Islamic Granada, from its foundation to the Christian conquest. Many of the contributions focus on the period. In combination with Fábregas 2020, it presents the most up-to-date and comprehensive perspective on Nasrid studies.

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**Catlos, Brian A. *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain*. New York: Basic Books, 2018.**

This book transits the social and political history of al-Andalus, marked by relations between religious, ethnic, and cultural identities, which were defined by convenience rather than coexistence. Blocks V and VI deal with the Nasrid Emirate from this perspective.

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**Fábregas, Adela, ed. *The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada between East and West (Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)*. Handbook Oriental Series. Leiden, The Netherlands, and Boston: Brill, 2020.**

In twenty-three chapters, this volume compiles the most recent advances in research on the Nasrid Emirate from a variety of methodological perspectives. The volume, which is characterized by multidisciplinary, presents contributions from leading historians, archaeologists, Arabists, and art historians to offer a lateral perspective on studies.

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**Harvey, Leonard P. *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990.**

Analyzes the presence of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, which involves examining Muslim communities both in the Christian kingdoms and in an Islamicate state—i.e., the Nasrid Emirate. The latter is characterized chiefly in political terms, based on Castilian and, to a lesser extent, Andalusí chronicles, with particular emphasis on the political and military relations with the Crown of Castile.

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**Ladero Quesada, Miguel Ángel. *Granada, historia de un país islámico*. 4th ed. Granada: EUG, 2024.**

First monograph on the Nasrid Emirate, published in 1969 and revised and extended in the third edition, published in 1989. According to the author, it is a book of historical initiation. For the first time, the study of al-Andalus reached beyond 1492, when the emirate disappeared as a political entity, with the analysis of the profound transformations undergone by the Morisco population after the conquest.

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**López de Coca, José Enrique. "El periodo nazarí (siglos XIII–XV)." In *Historia de Granada*. Edited by Rafael G. Peinado Santaella and José Enrique López de Coca, 243–372. Granada, Spain: Editorial Don Quijote, 1987.**

Solid synthesis of Nasrid history, based on Castilian sources and published material. Useful as a first general approximation.

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**Malpica Cuello, Antonio. *Las últimas tierras de al-Andalus: Paisaje y poblamiento del reino nazarí de Granada*. Granada, Spain: Universidad de Granada, 2014.**

This work is included here as a tool of reference to understand the Nasrid territory. The author divides the emirate in three distinct regions: the northern band, a frontier territory; the coastline, open to the Mediterranean; and the central area, occupied by large cities and fertile plains. Includes landscape analysis in which environmental factors play a central role in the understanding of settlement patterns over time.

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**Vidal, Francisco. "Al-Andalus nazarí y su historia: Síntesis y balance." In *711–1616: De árabes a moriscos: Una parte de la historia de España*. Edited by M. Fierro, J. Martos, P. Monferrer, and M. J. Viguera, 53–66. Córdoba, Spain: Al-Batbain F, 2012.**

Brief and sharp approach to current perceptions of the Nasrid Emirate within Andalusí history. It presents a useful geographical and chronological contextualization of the period.

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**Viguera, María Jesús, ed. *El reino nazarí de Granada (1232–1492)*. 2 vols. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2000.**

Collective work on the emirate, in two volumes (Vol. VIII–III, *Política. Instituciones. Espacio y economía*; Vol. VIII–IV, *Sociedad, vida y cultura*). The input of the editor, as author of several chapters, is complemented by contributions from other specialists. In fifteen chapters, the work presents a comprehensive overview of Nasrid history, especially concerning political and institutional factors.

[back to top](#)

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