



**The frontier of Gottfried Liedl: situating the origins of European modernity in Nasrid Granada**

**Justin Stearns\***

New York University — Abu Dhabi, UAE

In a range of recent popular and scholarly surveys of the history and significance of al-Andalus, US scholars have emphasized that Muslim Iberia was characterized by attributes such as “tolerance,” and “cosmopolitanism.” This article aims to draw attention to the neglected work of a contemporary Austrian historian and philosopher, Gottfried Liedl, who in his Frontier trilogy has argued for the modernity of Nasrid Granada from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Through a reading of Liedl’s discussion of how Granada was legally, militarily, socially, and demographically both modern and European, this article argues for the importance of Liedl’s work to understanding the full spectrum of the ways in which scholars use aspects of the history of al-Andalus to advance master narratives for the significance of Islamic Iberia. Throughout his work, Liedl presents a critique of both “modernity” and the state in its modern form by arguing that Nasrid Granada was the first modern European state.

Keywords:

al-Andalus; Granada; historiography; modernity

**Introduction**

Al-Andalus is one of those rare medieval topics, even rarer in the pre-modern Islamic field, that has become a subject of popular discussion. In the past decade alone, in the United States, a series of books for general audiences and at least one documentary have focused all or in part on the period of Muslim rule over shifting parts of the Iberian Peninsula from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

This interest has corresponded broadly with a general heightened anxiety in the US media regarding Muslim – Christian and Muslim – Jewish relations in the years following the events of 11 September 2001, and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Almost without exception, the authors of these books and articles have sought to use of the example of al-Andalus to prove the possibility of peaceful and fruitful interaction between the Abrahamic faiths, when not arguing that the origins of the European Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries lay in the cultural florescence of al-Andalus and the texts translated there from Arabic into Latin and Romance.<sup>2</sup>

While this loose body of work, with its admittedly varied

---

ISSN 1754-6559 print/ISSN 1754-6567 online© 2011 Taylor & Francis  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2011.610184><http://www.tandfonline.com>  
\*Email: [jks8@nyu.edu](mailto:jks8@nyu.edu)

---

1

See here Menocal, *Ornament of the World*; Lowney, *Vanished World*; Dodds, Menocal, and Balbale, *Arts of Intimacy*, but also Lewis, *God's Crucible*, and to a lesser extent, Freeley, *Aladdin's Lamp*. The documentary is Robert Gardner's *Cities of Light*. For a discussion of Andalusian society in terms of cosmopolitanism, see Gallois, "Andalusian Cosmopolitanism in World History."

2

The depiction of al-Andalus in Spain and France has been influenced by a distinct set of discourses. See the contributions to Marín, *Al-Andalus/España. Historiografías en contraste. Siglos XVII – XXI*, and the comments in the conclusion below.

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies Vol. 3, No. 2, September 2011, 247 – 262

Downloaded by [New York University], [Justin Stearns] at 08:22 20 October 2011



approaches, emphases and foci, has generally held up al-Andalus as a salutary inspiration for contemporary religious communities, for María Rosa Menocal, whose work has perhaps attracted the greatest attention, the ability of medieval Iberians to embrace contradictory ideas and multiple religious identities also ran counter to the imperative of the modern (Spanish) state and its desire for unity and homogeneity.<sup>3</sup>

Her suggestion is that the solution to modern difficulties lies in a return to or a movement towards the culture of diversity and tolerance exemplified intermittently by medieval Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Iberia.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, notions of al-Andalus having been characterized in a broad or general fashion by "tolerance," or "convivencia" have been thoroughly problematized and critiqued by scholars in journals such as this one.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay, however, I am less interested in examining the historiography surrounding interfaith relations in medieval Iberia than in presenting and summarizing the work of a contemporary Austrian scholar who over the last two decades has written prolifically about the nature of al-Andalus from a decidedly different perspective from that of the authors mentioned above, and whose work has almost entirely gone unremarked upon in the academic literature on medieval Iberia in English, Spanish, and French.<sup>6</sup>

The contributions of Gottfried Liedl to the historiography on al-Andalus are of interest not only because they frame and discuss the thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Nasrid emirate in Granada in a novel manner, but also because they put this period of Andalusian history into conversation with a distinct set of historical debates, in

which its importance and significance are unrelated to questions of tolerance and interconfessionalism. For Liedl, Nas.rid Granada was one of the first modern European states, and while its modernity was extraordinary, he, like Menocal, is skeptical of its desirability. The story his work tells is not one of triumphant Andalusí “tolerance,” or “cosmopolitanism,” but rather one that focuses on ways in which early modern political structures were able to manage, organize, and deploy populations regardless of their religious adherence: “Tolerance” between the three religions, from the point of view of the one underneath, is usually a teeth-grinding recoil before the judge’s verdict, declared in the name of the lord who rests indifferently in the midst, no, above the arguing religions. [emphasis in original]<sup>7</sup>

Liedl’s work argues that Granada between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries possessed characteristics he sees as emblematic of the early modern European state: an economic shift to

---

3  
See Menocal, *Ornament of the World*, 11, 271.

4  
To be precise, Menocal identifies the spirit of “al-Andalus” with some of the policies of the Muslim rulers from the ninth to eleventh centuries, during the Umayyad emirate and caliphate, and the period of the Party Kings (see *Ornament*, 43). The end of “al-Andalus” was, for Menocal, not so much the fall of the Umayyads as it was the arrival of the Berber Almoravid and Almohad dynasties. Strikingly, she doesn’t see the Nas.rids as having been “Andalusians proper but rather...keepers of the memory of al-Andalus” (*Ornament*, 49). Despite their much narrower and more productive focus on Toledo, Dodds, Menocal, and Balbale similarly make reference to an Andalusian cosmopolitanism and tolerance that preceded the arrival of the Almoravids (*Arts of Intimacy*, 26, 47, 85).

5  
See Soifer, “Beyond Convivencia,” and Novikoff, “Beyond Tolerance and Intolerance in Medieval Spain,” for two productive critiques. See also the review of Menocal’s *Ornament of the World* by Mercedes García Arenal in *Speculum* as well as Cristina de la Puente’s review of Dodds, Menocal, and Balbale in *Sefarad*. An extended discussion of the romanticization of al-Andalus within the Spanish context can be found in Serafín Fanjul, *Al-Andalus contra España*. Maribel Fierro has reviewed both Menocal and Fanjul (albeit a later work) in “Idealización de al-Andalus.”

6  
As Puente has recently had occasion to comment in a review of Dodds, Menocal, and Balbale, and as I noted in a review of Cressier, Fierro, and Molina’s edited volume *Los Almohades*, English-language scholarship on al-Andalus often fails to refer to relevant and sometimes groundbreaking Spanish and French scholarship. Liedl’s work, however, has been equally ignored outside Germany and Austria.

7  
*Al-Farantira*. Volume 1: Law, 36. All translations are my own.

---

mass production enabled by a high population density; a prominent role within continental and Mediterranean trade; new military tactics and technology, including the use of cannons; a militarized civilian population; an explicit legal recognition that power, not

religion, is the highest authority; and a national identity based on Granada's particular historical and geographic experience, rather than religious identity. Revisiting al-Andalus with Liedl in works which, like Menocal's *Ornament of the World* or David L. Lewis's *God's Crucible*, appear to be targeted at a general (if well-educated) audience, introduces the reader to a modern European nation distinct from the rest of the Muslim world.

8

A final word of caution is in order here. Liedl's work, like Menocal's *Ornament of the World*, is primarily of interest not because of the interpretations he offers — indeed, these are often insufficiently supported or at odds with the evidence — but historiographically: they mark yet another way in which contemporary historians have chosen to frame the significance of al-Andalus. Liedl distinguishes himself from those who argue for the presence of a society marked by tolerance, and from those who debate whether the nine centuries of Muslim presence in Iberia are part of Spanish history, by stressing the degree to which Muslims were instrumental in creating the first modern European nation. Reading Liedl is an exploration, therefore, not so much of the history of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada itself as it is of a contemporary claim for the relevance of al-Andalus to understanding European modernity.<sup>9</sup>

### **The School of the Enemy**

Between 1992 and 2007, Gottfried Liedl, a professor of history and philosophy at the Institute of Social and Economic History at the University of Vienna, wrote two multi-volume works on the history of al-Andalus and one on "Mediterranean Islam," co-authored two further volumes surveying the history of al-Andalus and medieval Islamdom, respectively, and edited another on medieval European military culture.<sup>10</sup>

I am principally interested here in a trilogy published in four parts between 1997 and 2005 under the title *Al-Farantira: Die Schule des Feindes: zur spanisch-islamischen Kultur der Grenze* [The School of the Enemy: On the Spanish-Islamic Culture of the Border], which comprises part 1, *Recht* [Law], and part 2, *Krieg als Intrige. Kulturelle Aspekte der Grenze und die militärische Revolution der frühen Neuzeit* [War as Intrigue. Cultural Aspects of the Border and the Military Revolution of Early Modernity], and volume 3 *Auf dem Weg in die Neuzeit: Zur spanisch-arabischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte* [Heading towards Modernity: On Spanish-Arab Economic and Social History], part 1, *Im Labor der Moderne* [In the Laboratory of the Modern], and part 2, *Kleine Ökonomie – grosse Ökonomie* [Small Economy – Large Economy].

11

This work is a sustained argument for the modernity of Nasrid Granada between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Liedl's method is eclectic, his

---

8

Liedl's books have been published by two different publishing houses in Vienna: Turia+ Kant throughout the 1990s and well into the new century, and for the last few years with Mandelbaum. Turia +Kant focuses on publishing contemporary philosophy, psychoanalysis (especially work on and by Jacques Lacan) and cultural studies. Mandelbaum publishes a broad array of non-fiction and some fiction, including books dealing with world history and psychoanalysis.

9

For one example of a scholar who has invoked Liedl's work as an historical argument with less than felicitous result, see Lohlker, *Islamisches Völkerrecht*, and my reviews of this book in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 and *Al-Qantara* 30.

10

Liedl, *Al-Hamra* (vols 1 and 2); Liedl, *Der Zorn des Achill*; Liedl and Feldbauer, *Die islamische Welt 1000bis 1517*; Liedl and Feldbauer, *Das Ende einer Epoche*; Liedl and Kuffner, *Mediterraner Islam*. Liedl's scholarly production shows no sign of slowing down; in late 2010, in collaboration with Peter Feldbauer and JohnMorrissey, he co-authored a history of Venice: *Venedig 800 –1600: Die Serenissima als Weltmacht*. 11 All references to these texts will be by the English titles (my translations).

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

249

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

arguments often disjointed; his style is often characterized by a theoretical density which, alternating with more colloquial passages, may have played a role in perplexing prospective readers.<sup>12</sup>

Liedl wears his learning lightly, frequently citing Arabic and Castilian primary sources where a secondary source might have been expected, and draws on a wide range of scholarship in German, Spanish, French and, to a lesser extent, English. Like those who emphasize the variously and usually poorly defined “tolerance” of al-Andalus, he is in part motivated by sympathy for the Muslims of today, but unlike those who argue for an Andalusian cosmopolitanism, he emphasizes the ways in which the Muslims of Granada should be seen as early modern Europeans due to their social, military, and economic institutions.<sup>13</sup>

Defining modernity is notoriously tricky, and instead of offering a single definition, Liedl approaches the term in a number of ways, beginning with a willingness to equate it with the Renaissance, instead of the more commonly accepted sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

14

There are numerous reasons to object to applying the term “modernity” to late-medieval institutions, but for an understanding of Liedl's project, it is more productive to pursue what the term does for his argument. Like other historians of the Nasrid emirate (upon whom Liedl draws), Liedl is fascinated by the *juez de la frontera / qādī bayna al-mulūk*, a legal institution on the Castilian – Granadan border in which a Muslim and a Christian judge ruled together on cases involving adherents to both faiths.

15

Instead of seeing in this mutual recognition of legal authority and sovereignty an example of “tolerance,” Liedl describes this arrangement as a type of secular international law (*Völkerrecht*) in which, instead of the primacy of religion, the authority of the rulers of Granada and Castile over their subjects is displayed and enacted.

16

By referring a given Muslim or Christian subject to the authority of the other's ruler, the Muslim or Christian ruler protects and reaffirms his own power. For Liedl, the situation is modern, with its Machiavellian emphasis on power over religious or cultural identity, serving to highlight also the modern individualism of the Granadan ruler.

17

He argues that its secular and international nature is further demonstrated by the explicit presence of parallel legal spheres of Christians, Jews, and

Muslims under both Muslim and Christian rule, which leads not only to members of any given

---

12

One typical example of his prose: “‘Al-Farantira,’ was what the last Arabs of Spain called their land, by which they wished to express the grace period that it granted them. This word also tells us that by current standards they were good Europeans; it is after all the exact translation of the old-Spanish ‘Frontaria’ (Frontera), which freely translated means ‘border,’ ‘a territory between two peoples’ ...No —

they were good Europeans most of all as masters of enmity, that is to say: that recognition of the other of which Hegel speaks. They were good Europeans, because they — let us calmly say what is whispered in expert circles: they were good Europeans because they were good Spaniards.” Volume 1: Law, 7.

13

At the end of the preface to the first volume of *Al-Farantira*, Liedl dedicates his book to the Muslims of Bosnia, noting that he began work on the book in 1992: “They wished to be in Europe. May they have not have learned their bitter lesson in the school of the enemy for nothing.” Volume 1: Law, 8.

14

See *Heading towards Modernity* 1, 18. Many of the themes of *Al-Farantira* are present in an earlier, short article of Liedl’s, “Confrontation and Interchange.” Here he alludes to modernity (at this time still in quotes) as follows: “Seen from both sides — the side of ist ‘modernity,’ but also in its regressive aspects — the ‘Frontera’ appears to be part of a common Law of Confrontation in which the opponents profited from each other —

especially when it was a matter of handling the internal inconsistencies of their societies.” “Con-frontation and Interchange,” 16.

15

He draws here principally on the work of Rachel Arié, Juan de Mata Carriazo, Juan Torres Fontes, and Luis Seco de Lucena (see the references in Volume 1: Law, 77 – 78).

16

See Volume 1: Law, 16 – 18, 24 – 25, 54 – 55, 68. Liedl’s observations on Granada’s modernity and the legal relationships between Granada and Castile were taken up by Rüdiger Lohlker in his *Islamisches Völkerrecht*.

17

See Volume 1: Law, 18, 24. For evidence of the “modern” characteristic of sadism in the Granadan ruler Muhammad III, Liedl refers to Ibn al-Khatīb’s biography of the former in the *Ihāta*, 1: 547 – 48. The reference is confusing as it corresponds with a section on the ruler’s boorishness ( *faz ā z a* ) and cruelty ( *qaswa* ), neither of which, along with sadism, are exclusively found in, or solely characteristic of, the modern period.

---

250

J. Stearns

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

tradition defining themselves according to criteria used by other traditions, but also, potentially, to rulers emulating each other’s roles and responsibilities, as when a Christian ruler presents himself as *amīr al-muslimīn* over his *mudejar* subjects — Muslims who lived under Christian rule prior to 1492.

18

Liedl uses the figures of the *al-faqueque* (ransomer of prisoners) and the *fieles de rastro* (trackers of criminals) along with the *juez de la frontera* (judge of the border) to understand the frontier separating Castile and Granada, not as a border separating two peoples, but as a series of interconnected relationships that penetrated deep into the two

kingdoms. He sees these figures and institutions as being experienced as religious on an individual level, but functioning structurally to strengthen royal power: As a false arbiter (Mittler) between two extremes, the Juez de la Frontera was always simultaneously peace and war-machine. Watching over peace treaties, he produces new sources of discontent, new reasons for war — especially in matters of internal politics ... If one considers the structure of this war-and-peace-order in one, a pattern emerges, a tableau of interwoven and yet at once hierarchically structured institutions, which together represent a “border,” that reaches deep into the interior. [emphasis in original] 19

Law and war are tightly linked for Liedl, as is made clear in his reflections on the role of diplomacy between Granada and Castile. Truces between the two, after all, were only ever temporary, and represented less successful examples of law, or even diplomacy, than they did an underlying modern logic of betrayal and violence. Towards the end of Volume 1: Law, Liedl introduces a theme from Sigmund Freud’s essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” to explore the true motivating impulse behind the practice of law on the frontier. Whereas Freud was interested in interpreting the child’s interest in making a toy disappear and reappear, saying “Go Away — There” (Fort — Da), Liedl uses this binary to express what he sees to be the illusion of legal practice and diplomatic sincerity in al-Andalus in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The first volume of his *Farantira* ends as follows:

One’s own “There”— my religion, my culture, my period (Zeitreihe) — is abandoned, though — it is true — only in appearance. Yet then it reveals itself to be the actual driving force of the game, as the strongest impulse of this “Go away.” Both — Christianity and Islam — are left as soon as one replaces one with the other. In the pull (Sogwirkung) of this mobility, in this “Go away” one intuits the working of a third, which issues the charter for such heresies; an expanding “world law” In which the practical and political reason of the lords counts for more than the belief and customs of their peoples. [emphasis in original] 20

The shift from law to war in the second volume of Liedl’s trilogy is an easy one for the reader, given that Liedl has argued that the function of law is primarily to represent and mediate power rather than an ethical or sacred code of conduct. 18

See Volume 1: Law, 37, 40 – 44. Compare with *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 13.

---

19

Volume 1: Law, 57.

Liedl has a fondness for referring to “machines,” although it is unclear what he means by the term. In this instance he may be referring to the chapter of Deleuze and Guattari’s

*Mille Plateaux* entitled “Nomadology: The War Machine,” but if so it helps little in clarifying his intended meaning. See, for example, the following passage: “Ibn Khaldūn [sic] defines the nomad war machine by: families or lineages PLUS

esprit de corps. The war machine entertains a relation to families that is very different from its relation to the state.... Of course, the great bodies of a modern State can hardly be thought of as Arab tribes. What we wish to say, rather, is that collective bodies always have fringes or minorities that reconstitute equivalents of the war machine — in sometimes quite unforeseen forms — in specific assemblages such as building buildings or cathedrals, or rendering judgments, or making music, or instituting science, a technology...” *Nomadology: The War Machine*, 26 – 27.

20

Volume 1: Law, 76.

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

251

Downloaded by [New York University], [Justin Stearns] at 08:22 20 October 2011

---

## The military modernity of Granada

The question of when and how Europe's armies experienced a revolution that moved them into the early modern period, not to mention the extent to which this revolution played an important role in the emergence of the early modern state, has been a topic of much discussion among Euro- pean medievalists and early modernists in the last half century. Geoffrey Parker's *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500 – 1800*, originally published in 1988 (with a second, revised edition appearing in 1996), continues to be a touchstone for many, and the size of the literature debating the claims of Parker's book, its antecedents and related issues is now difficult to survey.<sup>21</sup>

Parker focused on technological changes in the sixteenth century and primarily in Italy, and his work has been more recently supplemented by scholars such as Weston Cook and Clifford Rogers who have addressed, respectively, the importance of cannons in Morocco in the sixteenth century and the importance of changes in the technology and tactics employed by infantry in Europe in the fourteenth.<sup>22</sup>

It is especially in reading Liedl's thesis in conversation with these later works that this aspect of its argument becomes most salient. Though he cites none of these works, the second volume of his *Farantira* trilogy takes up the military revolution debate from the perspective of Granada, arguing that the beginning of modern warfare in Europe is to be found in the Nasrid kingdom. In summarizing Liedl's argument here, I necessarily risk passing over in silence his own attitude to war, regarding which he is anything but dispassionate:

At the end of the twentieth century the shock of two world wars has been happily overcome. At the end of the twentieth century, the intelligentsia can once again speak of war without blushing. A process of habituation has found its old love in intervals of decades. If, in the seventies, it sought its heroes in Northern Ireland and Palestine, among the guerrilleros of Ché Guevara and the Viet Cong of Ho Chi Minh, in the eighties it welcomed and celebrated war unconditionally — as such: computer games, the *Top Gun*-typology of the new Hollywood, and last not least *The Real Thing* [English in original] itself (the Gulf and Balkan wars) satisfy its increased savoring of violence. It no longer needs general reasons. In other words: the concerns of the intelligentsia of the seventies — “freedom, equality, brotherhood” or how do I throw together a moral justification — are passé.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Liedl's argument for Granada's militarization and its influence on other European states involves its insertion into the beginning of a particularly European genealogy of developing ever more capable and efficient means to wage modern warfare. There are two phenomena supporting his argument for a military revolution in Granada to which Liedl returns repeatedly. The first, more dramatic, though less important, is the Granadan precedence and expertise in the use of cannons and gunpowder. The second involves the popularization of warfare, the shift from heavy cavalry to a combination of light cavalry and heavy infantry, and the militarization of Nasrid society. The first cannons to be fired in Europe were used by Muslims against Christians in al-Andalus, first in 1317 in Alicante, then in 1324 at Huesca and later in 1342/43 at Algeciras.<sup>24</sup>



No sooner were they employed on the side of Muslims than they appear in Christian hands, and in 1344 they are already being used in Flanders.<sup>25</sup>

The ability of technology to quickly

---

21

See Parker, *Military Revolution*. For three reviews of the book's second edition, and a rejoinder by Parker, see Barker et al., "Geoffrey Parker's *Military Revolution*: Three Reviews of the Second Edition."

22

See Cook, *Hundred Years War for Morocco*, and Rogers, "Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War" For a useful critique of Rogers's article, see Stone, "Technology, Society, and the Infantry Revolution of the Fourteenth Century."

23

Volume 2: *War as Intrigue*, 18.

24

Volume 2: *War as Intrigue*, 16, 113.

25

Volume 2: *War as Intrigue*, 43 – 44, where Liedl suggests that cannons may have reached Flanders from Navarre.

---

252

J. Stearns

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

change hands, for cannons as well as tactics to be imitated, is characteristic of another of Liedl's definitions of modernity:

Modernity (if indeed one wishes to use this term) developed out of the tension of a cultural competition; clearly the respective edge in innovation that the one appears to have over the other never lasts — the spark jumps quickly over to the other side, what were held to be final solutions are only transitional stages.<sup>26</sup>

In more prosaic terms, Liedl traces the rapid spread of the cannon through the Iberian Peninsula from Granada to Navarre, both of which were small, mountainous kingdoms in which there was an incentive to look for technological advances that would allow them to compete with their much larger neighbors.<sup>27</sup>

The vehicle for the jump was, the author suggests, a social and religious connection between Granada and Navarre's substantial mudejar population, which in the fourteenth century was known for its mastery of firearms and warfare, and which — even when Navarre contributed to the war against Granada — benefited from the protection of Navarre's rulers, who permitted mudejars to carry weapons publically.<sup>28</sup>

Yet much more important than the cannon — as emblematic as it may be for early modern warfare — and its successful early employment, was the Nasrid response to the major defeats previous Muslim regimes had experienced on the Iberian peninsula. Both the Almoravids and Almohads had fielded massive but poorly trained armies that had ultimately been defeated by smaller but highly trained Iberian Christian forces composed chiefly of heavy cavalry.<sup>29</sup>

Understanding the need for greater discipline, the Nasirids perceived as early as the 1260s that Christian cavalry were vulnerable to a well-drilled and heavily armed infantry supported by light cavalry. Here Liedl argues that Nasirids created a modern military force beginning in the thirteenth century, outmaneuvering both Granadan nobility and Berber tribal loyalties by basing their army on North African dissidents and Christian renegades whose only allegiance was to the state.<sup>30</sup>

Driven by military necessity and the constant threat of destruction, Granada in the fourteenth century became increasingly centralized and militarized, building an extensive network of castles and fortifications that Liedl claims were structured according to multiples of one *barid* (22.2km), the distance of a day's march.

31

These architectural investments were paralleled by an emphasis within Granada itself on military drills, where Muslim commoners learned to use the crossbow which, along with the idea of weapon associations originating in Christian guilds and fraternities, they borrowed from their northern rivals. The importance of the crossbow lay in its leveling effect, as it required little training to use. It also rid war of any association with honor (Liedl notes that in the twelfth century the Church had prohibited its use against Christians) and emphasized war's true nature as slaughter. By the end of the fourteenth century, use of the crossbow was widespread and could be seen as a forerunner of the later use of the musket.<sup>32</sup>

Still, technological advances could help the outnumbered Granadans only so far, and if the Nasirids had understood the weaknesses of the massive armies of the Berber empires, they also

---

26

Volume II: War as Intrigue, 17.

27

Volume II: War as Intrigue, 32 – 38. Compare with Liedl's map of the diffusion of the cannon through Europe (34).

28

Volume II: War as Intrigue, 40, 46.

29

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 79.

30

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 67, 75.

31

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 52 – 55, 71.

32

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 84 – 86. "Musket" is Liedl's term, but the use here is anachronistic.

Further down the page he refers more generically to "Handfeuerwaffen,"

and it is likely that he is referring to a form of hand cannon (Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 86; compare with the picture on 115).

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

253

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

knew they needed to field large numbers of troops to withstand Christian advances. By the end of the fourteenth century, Liedl argues, the militarization of Granadan society resulted in their being able to muster a cavalry of 5000 and an infantry of some 200,000, armed with crossbows and fire-arms. It was the century of their military superiority over the Castilians, as testified to by their resounding defeat of Castilian cavalry in 1319.

33

The Muslim theoretician who explained most clearly the military changes that took place in Granada during this period was Ibn Hudhayl (fl. fourteenth century), whom Liedl credits with the development of a light cavalry and, drawing on his Christian opponents, a strong infantry. The result of this shift, the *jinetes* — mounted Berber North Africans — and a well-trained crossbow-bearing infantry, not only enabled Granada to hold off Castile in the fourteenth century, but also led intermittently to members of both *Jinetes* and infantry crossing over into Christian service, and showing up as mercenaries as far away as northern France.<sup>34</sup>

The logic of Liedl's "school of the enemy," in which larger political entities tend to acquire new technologies and tactics more slowly than small ones, but do catch up in time, led to Castile's gradual military ascendance. During the fourteenth century, as the Muslims of Granada turned from producing cannons to the (in the short term) more advantageous hand firearms, Castile focused on producing heavy cannons, and shifted tactics in the field. These changes led to the Christian kingdom winning a major victory over its Muslim neighbor in 1431, a telling difference from its engagements in the previous century; by the end of the fifteenth century, as it mobilized for its final military push against Granada, Castile boasted one of the most advanced military forces in Europe, fielding over 200 pieces of artillery and employing numerous foreign military advisers.<sup>35</sup>

While Geoffrey Parker had argued that the shift in building fortifications able to withstand cannons, the *trace italienne*, was a characteristic of the military revolution experienced by Europe in the sixteenth century, originating in Italy in the fifteenth century, Liedl suggests that strong parallels to such fortifications can be found during the same period in the extensive network of castles that protected Granada.<sup>36</sup>

They did little good for the Nasrid kingdom in the long run. Castile's ultimate victory over Granada was symptomatic of the military ascendance in early modern Europe of larger powers — the Ottomans are another example — over smaller ones, and the growth of armies, all of which demanded increasingly centralized strong states. In this, Liedl's argument merely reiterates what is widely accepted by historians of early modern Europe — his distinctive intervention lies in placing the origin of many of the military revolution's main elements on the Castilian – Granadan border during the fourteenth century. The implication of this shift lies in its redefinition of both the identity and origins of "Europe" and "modernity":

Considering this [the centers' ability to learn from the peripheries], the attentive yet unprejudiced observer sees in the Spanish-Arab border — *Frontera, al-Farantira* — those forces at work that a less generous interpretation attributes to much later, so-called "enlightened" ages under the rubric of "Birth of the Modern". But when one takes this type of ethnocentrism seriously; when one is thus convinced (as a working hypothesis, of course), that, as Hegel says, all histories are swallowed by the history

of the West only to reemerge as world history, then one runs into, precisely at the edges of this hypothetical universal history, there, where “the many histories” (plural) press up against one other, arguing over space, where they overlap — clear evidence of the contrary. One history doesn’t “defeat” the others (all others), rather all histories together establish one result. For simplicity’s sake, we have called this “modernity.” With regard to the history of the “Frontera” one can’t clearly see whose history swallowed whose  
... To do this it [history] is too much geography. One space, built out of two cultures. Two cultures in one. Almost congruent.<sup>37</sup>

### **The economic modernity of Granada**

The third installment of Liedl’s trilogy, bearing the title *Heading towards Modernity: On Spanish- Arab Economic and Social History*, appeared in 2005 in two parts, the first subtitled *In the Lab-oratory of the Modern*, and the second *Small Economy – Large Economy*. In these two books, Liedl sought to provide the social and economic context necessary for his argument that Nas.rid Granada played a central role in the development of both the early modern European nation and state. By conflating Renaissance and modernity, he also provided further evidence of his willingness to challenge traditional chronologies:

Absolute simultaneity of Renaissance and modernity! One consequence of this is that, from the begin-ning, we regard the period of the late Middle Ages as if it were a time machine; more precisely, a difference-producing machine.<sup>38</sup>

The anomaly of the Granadan emphasis of Liedl’s analysis within contemporary scholarship — already apparent in his discussion of the military revolution — is clear here as well. Whereas the Italian city states continue to be seen as the origin of Europe’s economic and social Renaissance, Liedl’s analysis makes a plea for the Nas.rid city-state of Granada, which flourished during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, to be included in a broader series of Mediterranean developments.<sup>39</sup>

During this period in which the Italian city-states came to prominence, the Ottomans and the Mamluks (1260 –1517) began their ascents in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Almohads (1121 – 1269) united Muslim Iberia and North Africa in the Western Mediterranean. Yet it was first really with the founding of Nas.rid Granada (1232 – 1492), with its economic orientation towards Christian Europe, that the structural and organizational parallels of a Muslim state with Genoa and Venice were realized.<sup>40</sup>

For Liedl, Granada’s economic ties with Genoa were of especial importance here, speaking to the establishment of stronger economic ties across the Mediterranean than had existed since the time of the Roman Empire. A series of treaties between the two city-states attest to strong diplomatic ties between 1279 and 1478, during which Genoa helped supply Granada with goods the latter needed for its commerce with Castile, and when Genoa faltered economically in the fourteenth century, Granada came to its aid with both grain and gold. <sup>41</sup>

III (150). This number is striking, if not unbelievable, considering that Liedl states that the population of the whole emirate of Granada at the beginning of the fourteenth century was roughly 200,000.

34

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 16 – 17.

35

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 123 – 24.

36

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 62, 145. Parker's argument regarding the *trace italienne* has, like much of his work, been subject to challenge. Compare Parker, *The Military Revolution*, with Kingra, "The *Trace Italienne* and the Military Revolution."

37

Volume 2: War as Intrigue, 128.

38

In the Laboratory of the Modern, 19.

39

The extent to which Liedl's work is, depending on one's perspective, either out of step or ahead of its time in its inclusion of Granada within Europe's economic history, can be seen by the absolute omission of Granada from Faruk Tabak's recent and generally masterful *Waning of the Mediterranean*. See especially the early chapters of Tabak's work, where he discusses the economic and ecological history of the Mediterranean in the late Middle Ages. Olivia Remie Constable's *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, to which Liedl does make reference, stands in marked contrast to the work of Tabak.

40

In the Laboratory of the Modern, 22 – 28.

41

In the Laboratory of the Modern, 29, 38 – 40.

---

254

J. Stearns

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:22 20 Oct

---

Like the cities of Italy, Granada's economy depended on the intensive agricultural cultivation of its littoral along with a drive to colonize its hinterlands ( *Binnenkolonisation* ), and benefited from the late-medieval shift in Mediterranean trade from luxury goods to mass production. In Iberia, the contrast between Granada and Castile could not have been greater, with the former enjoying close economic ties with Catalonia, Genoa, and North Africa, while Castile had no major port on the Mediterranean.<sup>42</sup>

Where the economy of Castile, in area fifteen times larger, was largely based on shepherding, Granada — with its intense and extensive agricultural practice — boasted a tax income in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of roughly 560,000 dinars, or twice that of Castile.<sup>43</sup>

It was this economic strength which not only enabled the Nasirids to pay Castile intermittent exorbitant *parías* but also provided the wealth it needed to mount and train the army and build the fortifications discussed in the previous section. By the fifteenth century, Liedl argues, the tide had turned in this regard as well, with Castile recovering economically from the Black Death and re-feudalizing the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>44</sup>

The unification of Castile and Aragon at the end of the fifteenth century, and the economic and military reforms of that century, which resulted

in the conquest of Granada in 1492, were a disaster not only for the Muslims of al-Andalus, but also for their previous trading partners, especially the Genoese.<sup>45</sup>

In the sixteenth century, Europe slowly turned away from the Mediterranean with trade and capital shifting away from the routes that had once connected Granada to Genoa and North Africa to the financial centers of the Baltic.<sup>46</sup>

### **An early modern nation**

It is on the subject of Granada's nationhood that Liedl is perhaps at his most explicitly theoretical. He argues that the characteristics often associated with modernity — secularism, rationalism — are actually pagan in origin. They were conjured up by the Renaissance at the same time that an expanding Europe was trying to remake the world in its own image, reframing both Judaism and Islam as Christian sects and nations that were best understood as races that would ultimately need to be eradicated.<sup>47</sup>

It is in this sense that Iberia should be considered a laboratory of the modern, the place in which the first modern European nation emerged, a nation of Muslims who were united by their experience of geography and by their two-and-a-half-century struggle against their Christian neighbor. Drawing on the work of historian Pierre Legendre and sociologist Thomas Ertman, Liedl notes that European minorities first exhibited the qualities of individualism and attraction to the concept of nationhood that facilitated the emergence of the modern state.<sup>48</sup>

In both regards the diverse Muslim population of Granada was exemplary. Citing the observations of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), Ibn al-Khatīb (d. 1374) and al-Qalqashāndī (d. 1418) that the inhabitants of Granada understood themselves first and foremost as people of al-Andalus (ahl al-Andalus) and only then as members of a broader Muslim umma, he emphasizes how different the Granadan experience was from those Muslims living in North Africa. With 50,000 (more than a quarter) of the Nasrid capital's inhabitants being Christian or Jewish converts of Castilian or Genoese origin in 1300 — a statistic Liedl borrows from Joaquin Bosque Maurel — Granada contained an impressive number of individuals united not by genealogy but by their location and the common experience of struggle.<sup>49</sup>

---

42

See the map, *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 48.

43

In *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 35, 37, 44. For a map of Granada's rich and varied economic production see 42.

44

In *In the Laboratory of the Modern*. Liedl does not explain precisely what he means by "re-feudalization."

45

In *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 40, 47 – 48.

46

Tabak, *Waning of the Mediterranean*, 3 – 10. Tabak is at pains to argue that despite this shift, in large part due to the influx of silver from the New World, the Mediterranean, and Genoa and Venice in particular, remained an important economic unit.

47

In *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 10, 53.

48

In *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 71 – 79.

49

In *In the Laboratory of the Modern*, 67, 84 and 93.

---

## Race

Liedl, several historians, most recently and perhaps most notably David Nirenberg, have contributed nuanced observations on the applicability of the term “race” to religious tensions in late-medieval Spain. See, for example, Nirenberg, “Was there Race before Modernity?”

---

256

J. Stearns

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

Rootless, without ties, save for their religious affiliation, Liedl explains that they were forged in a densely settled and highly militarized society into an element of Europe’s unending internal struggle: As a patchwork, a cluster [English in original] of highly unevenly distributed, indeed, disparate “centers,” which however dispose of energies of which earlier ages, cultures or realms could only have dreamed, “Europe” will turn out to be something that definitively broke with its ancient (but also with its Christian!) past. What is novel in this: from now on Europe shows itself to be a structure that unifies the most contradictory things within it, which relies only on “a large scale,” culturally that is, on the principle of unity, while economically, socio-politically, and geographically — that is on “a small scale”— it relies on permanent competition, the principle of disparateness [emphasis in original].

50

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

255

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

There is another fashion in which Liedl characterizes the Granadan nation as modern, historiographically perhaps less prominent but no less intriguing: its materialism, its free-thinking nature, its openness to religious disputation and its curiosity in its Christian neighbors. Whereas previous scholars, myself included, had seen the fact that Granadan historian and vizier Ibn al-Khatīb (d. 1374) had based his history of the Iberian Christian kingdoms on Christian sources as evidence of an interest in Christian affairs exceptional among Muslim scholars, Liedl observes that few if any Christian

scholars of the time drew on Muslim historical sources for the history of North Africa or al-Andalus. He claims that support for the Granadan population's modern intellectual curiosity is provided by the examples of an 'Abdallā h b. Sahl (fl. Twelfth century) who taught the natural sciences to Christian priests from Toledo, and a certain al-Kinān ī from Malaga, who habitually traveled through the Christian kingdoms seeking theological debate with bishops there.

51

For Liedl, these individuals testify to a broader curiosity, inquisitive-ness and openness on the part of the Granadan population. This Granadan nation did not disappear in 1492 with the collapse of Nas.rid rule, but continued into the sixteenth century as a Morisco population until the Alpujarras rebellion of 1568 – 70 led to their being distributed over the Iberian Peninsula and mixing with former mudejars.

52

Thus, Liedl argues, even as early modern nation-states began to appear throughout Europe, one of the first European nations — Granada — a “European success story,” was obliterated.

53

## **The demographic modernity of Granada**

The final installment of Liedl's trilogy, the second half of *Heading towards Modernity*, is entitled *Small Economy – Large Economy* and opens with a return to the beginning of the Nas.rid state's history and its political tribulations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. When, after the

---

50

In the *Laboratory of the Modern*, 79.

51

In the *Laboratory of the Modern*, 31 – 32. For Ibn Sahl, Liedl is relying on Ibn al-Khat ī b, al-Ihāta, 3: 404 –5, who quotes the twelfth-century work of Ibn Hamāma. Considering that Liedl's thesis focuses on Nas.rid Granada in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, the example of Ibn Sahl is not a strong one. I have not been able to identify the al-Kinān ī referred to here. For Ibn al-Khat ī b's history of Christian Iberia, see Stearns, “Two Passages,” and the literature cited therein.

52

In the *Laboratory of the Modern*, 99 – 106.

53

In the *Laboratory of the Modern*, 38. To some extent, of course, this Granadan “nation” had an afterlife in Morocco. See, among other sources, Bahrami, “Al-Andalus and Memory.”

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

257

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

break-up of the Almohad empire's control over al-Andalus in the thirteenth century, an adventurer such as Ibn Hūd had been unable to consolidate political control over Granada, by choosing to offer Ferdinand I of Castile Granada as a tribute state, the first Nas.rid ruler, Muh.ammad I, succeeded in establishing external stability for his reign while internally propagating a Sufism-inspired asceticism.

54



As in his previous works, Liedl draws attention here to the ways in which Granada was more similar to other Mediterranean city-states (Genoa and Ceuta are given as examples) than it was to larger kingdoms such as Castile and the Merinid kingdom in Morocco. The latter two were oriented toward establishing their control over extensive interior regions and were characterized by imperial ambitions in the thirteenth century: the Holy Roman Empire in the case of Castile, and the resurrection of Almohad glory for the Berber Merinids.

55

The true focus of this volume, however, rests in its discussion and analysis of Granada's demographic history. Liedl estimates that the population of Iberia at the beginning of the thirteenth century was eight million, of whom five million were Christian and three million Muslim.

56

Following the defeat of the Almohads and the substantial territorial expansion of Castile under Ferdinand I, he sees only roughly 300,000 Muslims remaining in Castile under Christian rule, the rest emigrating, with many of them settling in Granada. At the beginning of the Nasrid state in 1250, Liedl believes that the emirate of Granada had a population of between 1.6 and 1.8 million, a number that would correspond to the kingdom's ability to field an army of over 200,000 infantry.

57

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he argues, this population doubled, a claim he supports by referring to the household lists of the kingdom's population that the Nasrids kept for bureaucratic purposes and the Castilians continued after the 1492 conquest.

58

The increase in population was matched by the previously described increase in agricultural and economic production on the one hand, and the increased militarization of society and building of fortifications on the other. In this he believes that Granada's high population density should be compared both to other Mediterranean city-states such as Venice, as well as to other densely populated Muslim cities, such as Cairo.

59

By the end of the fifteenth century, each inhabitant of Granada paid three times as much in taxes to his ruler than a Castilian subject his king, pointing not only to the higher degree of economic production that existed in Granada, but also to the power of the Nasrid bureaucracy.

60

The city of Granada itself had some 200,000 inhabitants, and Liedl spends some time exploring how the city's architecture reflected both the broader trends introduced in the previous volumes, as well as noting the amount of money the Nasrids spent on public space and institutions.

61

The unique nature of Granada — facetiously characterized by Liedl as “a freak of the Islamic world” — was in large part due to the strength of its state, a strength reflected in its anomalous building of large public squares that were used for the drilling of soldiers.

62

---

54

Small Economy – Large Economy, 20 – 31.

55

Small Economy – Large Economy, 41 – 60.

56

Small Economy – Large Economy, 81. For these population estimates, Liedl is relying, albeit with his own interpretation of the data, on the work of Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, Bernard Vincent, and L.P. Harvey. For his discussion and criticism of Ladero Quesada's estimates of the mudejar population of Castile (in *Los mudéjares de Castilla y otros estudios de historia medieval andaluza*), see Small Economy – Large Economy, 148–49.

57

Small Economy – Large Economy, 81–86, with Liedl justifying the 200,000 figure on 85–86.

58

There are some significant problems with this argument, including the fact that the repeated waves of the plague had a significant impact on the population of Iberia in the fourteenth century.

59

These comparisons were made in a previous article by Liedl, in which he drew upon the work of Janet Abu-Lughod and Fernand Braudel. See “Die andere Seite der Reconquista, 282–84.

60

Small Economy – Large Economy, 77, 99–101.

61

For Liedl's estimate of the city of Granada's population, see Small Economy – Large Economy, 125.

62

Small Economy – Large Economy, 109, 117.

---

258

J. Stearns

Downloaded by [New York University], [Justin Stearns] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

The militarized nature of the city was not only directed against external enemies: the exceptionally broad streets — other-wise almost unknown in the Muslim world — that connected all main parts of the city, enabled quick and ordered troop movements to crisis points to put down internal revolts as well as facilitating defensive maneuvers in case of a siege. The exigencies of the frontier and the constant state of military preparedness made it difficult for opponents to the Nasirids to mount a successful internal revolt.

63

In short: The efficiency of this very specific interplay of settlement politics, internal colonization and social power distribution opened that unique Granadan path in the relations between lord and people, which, at the same time, is the only adequate answer to the exigencies of the Frontera, or properly speaking, to military necessities. La labor urbanizadora de los monarcas, as one can concisely call the courtly central-state internal colonization, is actually responsible for almost everything that took place in the city of Granada between 1250 and 1492 in the way of expansion, density of construction, arrangement and modernization.<sup>64</sup>

It is with this examination of Granada's architecture and a long discussion of how best to evaluate its demography that Liedl, somewhat anti-climatically, ends the Farantira trilogy.

## Conclusion

In recent years, al-Andalus has not been portrayed only in positive ways, nor has it always been the subject of nostalgia.

65

This is especially true in Spain, where the twentieth century and now the early twenty-first century have witnessed a series of fierce discussions over the significance of the Muslim presence in medieval Iberia.

66

In an insightful article, David Nirenberg recently argued that the contemporary binary in European public discourse between depicting Islam as inherently alien to the European experience or inherently constitutive of it was dialectical, with both views reflecting if not necessitating each other.

67

Nirenberg writes:

Models that posit a history of synthesis or “alliance” between Islam and the West quickly reproduce the “clashes” or oppositions that they pretend to overcome. But bi-polar models that insist on Islam’s exclusion from or irreducible opposition to the triumphs of Europe and the West fare no better, and not only because they have difficulty accounting for the many complex particularities of Christianity and Islam’s relationships with each other. Perhaps more important, insofar as the oppositions they insist upon are — as they so often are — the building blocks of a teleological dialectic (Christian, Hegelian, Marxist, neo-liberal, or what have you) about the course of history, the enduring persistence of those oppositions itself threatens the over-arching truth-claims of the dialectics that they were meant to sustain.<sup>68</sup>

---

63

Small Economy – Large Economy, 114, 122 – 23.

64

Small Economy – Large Economy, 115.

65

For representations of al-Andalus in Arabic historical literature, see Stearns, “Representing and Remembering al-Andalus.”

66

For an overview of the twentieth-century arguments between Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, see Soifer, “Beyond Convivencia.” Compare with Cristina de la Puente’s remarks on how Spanish and French scholarship on al-Andalus has moved beyond the legacy of these debates (“Reseña de The Arts of Intimacy”). Perhaps none of the representations of al-Andalus was as strange, and its legacy as fascinating, as that of the Spanish fascist Ignacio Olagüe and his argument that the Muslim presence in Iberia had been the result, not of an invasion, but of voluntary conversion to Islam on the part of Arian Visigoths. Olagüe’s work has more recently been embraced by some Spanish converts to Islam (see Fierro, *Al-Andalus en el pensamiento fascista Español*).

67

Nirenberg, “Islam and the West.”

68

“Islam and the West,” 5.

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

259

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:222000

---

---

Considering the degree to which such dialectical debates continue today in the American media — the hyperbolic rhetoric surrounding the Park 51 Islamic Center in New York, the depth of emotions displayed in televised debates on whether Islam is a religion of peace, the state of Oklahoma voting on whether or not to outlaw sharī‘a — and in light of renewed academic interest in the presence of Muslims in the Americas since the European arrival there, Nirenberg’s observations are equally valid for the United States.<sup>69</sup>

It is precisely because Liedl’s work approaches the presence of Muslims in European history from a different angle — that of Granada’s modernity — that it is of historiographic interest, as it portrays the Nas.rid state not, for example, as part of a past that the author hopes we can hold up as a model, but as the beginning of the modernity in which we currently live. It is precisely because Liedl is highly critical of what he views as certain quintessential characteristics of modernity — Granada’s militarization, the cruelty of its rulers, its control and manipulation of its population — that assigning the role of first modern European nation to a Muslim kingdom has such powerful consequences within his argument. His is not an attempt to argue that remembering the Islamic presence in Iberia offers a way towards interconfessional understanding today, much less a justification for Muslims to have been part of European society during their nine centuries in Iberia; it is that the structure of the early modern European state was first put in place by Muslims. His argument does not have to be correct, or even convincing, for it to be of interest. Its attraction is historio-graphical, not historical. There is naturally much that the reader can take issue with in Liedl’s work, beginning with his seemingly careless use of terminology. Late-medieval Iberia is consistently referred to as “Spain,” “Europe” is largely left unproblematized as a category, while “modernity” is defined in many different and seldom coherent fashions. Equally, there are certainly many parts of his argument that could and should be challenged: by way of one minor example, his use of Ibn al-Khat ī b’s history of Christian kings as proof of a broader Granadan cultural openness in the fourteenth century. His high estimates for Granada’s population, which play a central role in many aspects of his argument, are considerably at odds with previous estimates and strain credulity. Still, it is the broader scope of Liedl’s thought and his work’s ambition that repay his reader, regardless of individual lines of argument with which we may disagree. On a formal level his books walk a fine line between philosophy and history, availing themselves of the former’s theoretical expanse in one paragraph before descending into an analysis of historical minutiae in the next. His work reads less as a series of academic monographs and more as a cycle of essays around a central topic, presenting an array of reflections, some of which are taken up repeatedly and examined from different angles, others appearing only once, all of which relate back to his argument for the variously defined modernity of Nas.rid Granada. In this short essay, I have attempted to lay out the major points of his frontier trilogy, and in the process have doubtless neglected aspects of his writings that are no less provocative and interesting. Future readers of Liedl’s books may find them insightful and stimulating for the ways in which their author

constructs the past in order to position, and re-position, himself in relation to the challenges of the European present.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the National Endowment of the Humanities for allowing me to present an initial version of this article in its 2010 Summer Seminar “Re-Mapping the Renaissance: Exchange between Early Modern Islam and Europe.”

---

69

For two of most important recent contributions to the history of Muslim presence and influence in the United States, see Curtis, *Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States*, and Gomez, *Black Crescent*.

---

260

J. Stearns

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

A first draft of this article was completed during a residency at the Bellagio Center in the fall of 2010, and for this unique experience I am deeply indebted to the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation. My deep thanks go to the anonymous readers of the *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, who pushed me in a sustained and detailed manner to reflect on the validity of Liedl’s claims.

## Bibliography

Bahrami, Beebe. “Al-Andalus and Memory. The Past and Being Present among Hispano-Moroccan Andalusians in Rabat.” In *Charting Memory: Recalling Medieval Spain*, ed. Stacy Beckwith, 111 – 43. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Barker, Thomas, Jeremy Black, Weston Cook, and Geoffrey Parker. “Geoffrey Parker’s *Military Revolution*: Three Reviews of the Second Edition.” *The Journal of Military History* 61 (1997): 347 –54.

Constable, Olivia Remie. *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900 – 1500*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Cook, Weston. *The Hundred Years War for Morocco: Gunpowder and the Military Revolution in the Early Modern Muslim World*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.

Curtis, Edward. *The Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Nomadology: The War Machine*. Trans. Brian Massumi. New York: Semiotext(e), 1986.

Dodds, Jerrilyn, María Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale. *The Arts of Intimacy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

Fanjul, Serafín. *Al-Andalus contra España*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2000.

- Fierro, Maribel. "Al-Andalus en el pensamiento fascista Español." In *Al-Andalus/España. Historiografías encontraste. Siglos XVII – XXI*, ed. Manuela Marín, 325 – 49. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009.
- Fierro, Maribel. "Idealización de al-Andalus." *Revista de Libros de la Fundación Caja Madrid* 94(2004):3 –6.
- Freeley, John. *Aladdin's Lamp: How Greek Science Came to Europe through the Islamic World*. New York: Knopf, 2009.
- Gallois, William. "Andalusi Cosmopolitanism in World History." In *Cultural Contacts in Building Islamic Civilisation*, ed. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, 59 –109. Istanbul: IRCICA.
- García Arenal, Mercedes. "Review of *Ornament of the World*" *Speculum* 79 (2004): 801 – 4.
- Gardner, Robert. *Cities of Light* (Unity Productions Foundation), 2007.
- Gomez, Michael. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Ibn al-Khatīb, Lisān al-Dīn. *Al-Ihāta fī Akhbār Gharnāta*. 4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Khānjī, 2001.
- Kingra, Mahinder. "The Trace Italienne and the Military Revolution During the Eighty Years' War, 1567 –1648." *The Journal of Military History* 57 (1993): 431 –46.
- Ladero Quesada, Miguel Angel. *Los mudéjares de Castilla y otros estudios de historia medieval andaluza*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1989.
- Lewis, David L. *God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, 570 – 1215*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.
- Liedl, Gottfried. *Al-Hamra'. Zur spanisch-arabischen Renaissance in Granada*. Vienna: Turia +Kant, 1992.
- Liedl, Gottfried. "Confrontation and Interchange: The Spanish-Arab 'Frontera' at the Beginning of the Modern Age (1232 –1492)." In *Five Centuries of Mexican History*, ed. Virginia Guedea and Jaime E. Rodríguez, 1: 15 – 26. San Juan Mixcoac, Mexico: Instituto Mora, 1992.
- Liedl, Gottfried. *Al-Hamra'. Bd. 2: Dokumente der Araber in Spanien*. Vienna: Turia + Kant, 1993.
- Liedl, Gottfried. *Al-Farantira: Die Schule des Feindes: zur spanisch-islamischen Kultur der Grenze*. Bd. 1: Recht. Vienna: Turia + Kant, 1997.
- Liedl, Gottfried. *Al-Farantira*. Bd. 2: Krieg als Intrige. Kulturelle Aspekte der Grenze und die militärische Revolution der frühen Neuzeit. Vienna: Turia + Kant, 1999.

Liedl, Gottfried, ed. *Der Zorn des Achill. Europas militärische Kultur — Konfrontation und Austausch*. Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2004.

Liedl, Gottfried. “Die andere Seite der Reconquista: Islamisch Spanien im Wirtschaftsraum des Spätmittelalters.” In *Mediterraner Kolonialismus: Expansion und Kulturaustausch im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Feldbauer, Gottfried Liedl, and John Morrissey, 258 – 92. Vienna: Magnus Verlag, 2005.

Liedl, Gottfried. *Auf dem Weg in die Neuzeit: Zur spanisch-arabischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. Teil 1: Im Labor der Moderne*. Vienna: Turia+ Kant, 2005.

Liedl, Gottfried. *Auf dem Weg in die Neuzeit: Zur spanisch-arabischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. Teil 2: Kleine Ökonomie — grosse Ökonomie*. Vienna: Turia+ Kant, 2005.

---

Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies

261

Downloaded by [ New York University ], [ Justin Stearns ] at 08:2220 October 2011

---

Liedl, Gottfried, and Peter Feldbauer. *Die islamische Welt 1000 bis 1517: Wirtschaft. Gesellschaft, Staat*. Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2007. Liedl, Gottfried, Peter Feldbauer and John Morrissey. *Venedig 800 – 1600: Die Serenissima als Weltmacht*. Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2010.

Liedl, Gottfried, and Katharina Kuffner. *Das Ende einer Epoche: Drei Studien zur Andalusien in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Vienna: Turia+Kant, 2006.

Liedl, Gottfried, and Katharina Kuffner. *Mediterraner Islam: Zwei Teilbände: 1. Renaissance 2. Moderne Charaktere*. Vienna: Turia+ Kant, 2007.

Lohlker, Rüdiger. *Islamisches Völkerrecht: Studien am Beispiel Granada*. Bremen: Kleio Humanitas, 2006.

Lowney, Chris. *A Vanished World: Medieval Spain's Golden Age of Enlightenment*. New York: Free Press, 2005.

Marín, Manuela, ed. *Al-Andalus/España. Historiografías en contraste. Siglos XVII – XXI*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009.

Menocal, María Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2002.

Nirenberg, David. “Islam and the West: Two Dialectical Fantasies.” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 1 (2008): 3 – 33.

Nirenberg, David. “Was there Race before Modernity? The Example of ‘Jewish’ Blood in Late Medieval Spain.” In *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, 232 – 64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

- Novikoff, Alex. "Beyond Tolerance and Intolerance in Medieval Spain: An Historiographic Enigma." *Medieval Encounters* 11 (2005): 6–36.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Puente, Cristina de la. "Reseña de *The Arts of Intimacy*." *Sefarad* 69 (2009): 511–14.
- Rogers, Clifford. "The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years' War." *The Journal of Military History* 57 (1993): 241–78.
- Soifer, Maya. "Beyond Convivencia: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1 (2009): 19–35.
- Stearns, Justin. "Review of *Los Almohades: Problemas y Perspectivas* (eds. Cressier, Fierro, Molina)." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008): 491–93.
- Stearns, Justin. "Representing and Remembering al-Andalus: Some Historical Considerations Regarding the End of Time and the Making of Nostalgia." *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 355–74.
- Stearns, Justin. "Joint review of Yasin Dutton, *Original Islam: Malik and the Madhhab of Madina* and Rüdiger Lohlker, *Islamisches Völkerrecht: Studien am Beispiel Granada*." *Al-Qantara* 30 (2009): 664–70.
- Stearns, Justin. "Review of Rüdiger Lohlker, *Islamisches Völkerrecht: Studien am Beispiel Granada*." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009): 169–71.
- Stearns, Justin. "Two Passages in Ibn al-Khatīb's Account of the Kings of Christian Iberia." *Al-Qantara* 25 (2004): 157–82.
- Stone, John. "Technology, Society, and the Infantry Revolution of the Fourteenth Century." *Journal of Military History* 68 (2004): 361–80.
- Tabak, Faruk. *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2008.