show every mildness towards all men. Be a torch for those who walk in darkness, a joy for the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a shelter for the distressed, a support and a defender of the victim of oppression. Do so, so that integrity and honesty characterize all your actions. Be an asylum for the stranger, a balsam for the miserable, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be the eyes of the blind, and a beacon for the wanderer. Be an ornament for the face of truth, a crown for the forehead of fidelity, a column in the temple of uprightness, a breath of life for the corpse of humanity, a banner for the legions of justice, a star on the horizon of virtue, dew on the ground of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the sky of munificence, a gem of the diadem of wisdom, a light glittering in the firmament of your generation, a fruit on the tree of humility."

Karachi

VITO SALIERNO

S. M. Imámuddín, A POLITICAL HISTORY OF MUSLIM SPAIN, Najmah and Sons, Ltd., Dacca 1961, 268 pp., price Rs. 14.00 (22 sh.).

Muslim historiography, so brilliantly pursued in classical times, unfortunately declined and became sterile during the past few centuries, and, although the present century has seen a general revival among Muslims, it appears to be so far sheerly political rather than intellectual. Yet, the need for a critical study and assessment of our past was never greater. In all our history, Spain seems to be one of the most neglected areas and although recently some interest has been evinced by Muslims in this direction, this activity has not been at a high academic level.

The aim of this book is to provide a political history of Muslim Spain in a concise yet comprehensive form covering the period from the conquest of Spain by Muslims in 711 to their final expulsion in 1613 A.C.," (Preface). This aim is remarkably fulfilled in the short canvas of 223 pages (the remaining 45 pages consist of appendices, bibliography and index), in which the author has packed the eventful history of eight long centuries. But it is a mere catalogue of historical data devoid of any interpretative sequence or order, a collection of class-notes rather than a book. Despite the fact, however, that this book is too concise and contained, it includes a great detail of information and can serve as a good ready-reference for college and university students. In this the author has modelled his study after the history-series of the Dar al-Mu'annifin, A'zamgarh.

This book suffers from a number of shortcomings. In the first place it appears that according to Mr. Imámuddín, political history means only a record of wars and battles and the routine facts of administration (appointments, dismissals, maintenance of law and order, a general account of income and expenditure etc.)—a pattern followed by Muslim chroniclers in Medieval times. Accordingly, the present work has assiduously avoided any cultural or intellectual evaluation of the Muslims of Spain. The author did manage to give a few remarks of this nature here and there but no systematic study.

Secondly, although the author gives an impressive bibliography at the end, his material is mostly derived from Western sources, references to original Arabic

Thirdly, there are a number of inaccuracies in his attempted explanations of historical facts. A few examples will suffice. Discussing the general condition of Spain on the eve of Muslim invasion he observes that the country had been reduced to despair by the selfishness and debauchery of the aristocracy and the clergy, the political mismanagement and opportunism of princes and adventurers and the economic dislocation of national life. This is alleged to be the reason why Spain fell an easy prey to the Muslim conquerors. Obviously, this is a familiar Orientalist claim, corroborated by neither Muslim nor Spanish sources. The truth is that the Spanish monarchy was well-organized by Roderic the Usurper and the country was not on the brink of ruin. The Spanish military was, however, no match for the Muslim armies which were fired by a missionary zeal. The original expanding momentum of the Muslim peoples was still too strong for Christian Spain to withstand. Further, there is no historical evidence for the author’s claim that the general body of Spaniards welcomed and even actively helped the Muslim invaders and the author has produced none to show that the Spanish masses joined hands with the invaders. Also, the myth of Mūsā’s plan to conquer southern Europe and unite Spain with Syria by the overland route has apparently impressed Mr. Imāmuddin, while the true import of the Battle of Tours has not. For Mr. Imāmuddin contends that Muslim attacks did not abate even after their misfortunes in the Battle of Tours and that, therefore, its importance has been exaggerated. But the fact remains that if the Arabs had won that battle, they could have overrun the whole of Western Europe.

He gives generous praise to al-Manṣūr, “more able and diplomatic than any Muslim ruler produced by Spain” (p. 123), and further “al-Manṣūr saved the Muslim empire of Spain from ruin” (p. 121), forgetting that it was al-Manṣūr who failed to set up an alternative institution to the Umayyad monarchy which he had destroyed. Mr. Imāmuddin has failed to take due cognizance of the fact that al-Manṣūr had brought so much disintegration to Muslim power in Spain that the Spanish Caliphate fell to pieces and disappeared in A.C. 1031, a mere 29 years after his death. The history of the Petty Dynasties, the rise of the Murābitūn and Muwāḥḥidūn and their intervention in Spain have been very cursorily glanced at. But the most astonishing thing in the book is the complete absence of any discussion of the establishment and growth of Christian power in Spain without which the collapse of the Muslim power cannot be adequately understood.

In the end a few lapses of detail may be noted. One is that the author does not give a uniform system of dating. Sometimes only the Hijrah era is mentioned, sometimes only the Christian era, and sometimes both are mentioned together. Another is that on p. 17 where in note 2 he says: “Four dirhams=about £1 in present value,” which it is impossible to confirm. Then on the same page he observes that Ḥarāj was one-tenth of the land-produce, which is not true. Ḥarāj was not uniform throughout the Muslim world but depended on the nature
of the conquered land; that is, whether it was acquired by force or by treaty; and hence varied from place to place.

After reading this book the enigma still remains as to how and why the Muslims were expelled from the country after eight centuries of rule and administration. The problem can never be solved until a thorough and candid study of the main causes of the downfall has been made. The Muslims converted the whole of North Africa to Islam but made no such effort in Spain. There, they remained a minority and as foreigners even after eight hundred years of stay in the land. ‘Abd al-Rahmān III destroyed the Arab aristocracy without ever filling the resultant vacuum with anything which could have sustained the monarchy against Christian and Berber inroads. Al-Manṣūr’s military reorganisation completed the process of decay and put the country at the mercy of a chaotic Berber administration after his death.

Compared with the work of his predecessors in the field, Condé, Dozy, Scott, Lea, Palencia, Albornoz and Levi-Provençal, the attempt of the present author pales into insignificance. Nonetheless, it is a good introduction to the study of the subject, and another reminder to Muslim scholarship that the history of Muslim Spain still awaits to be written.

Karachi.  

QAMARUDDIN KHAN.