The History of the Crusades Podcast presents
Reconquista: The Rise of Al-Andalus and the Reconquest of Spain
Episode 143
Schism

Hello again. Last time we waved goodbye to two kings, King Enrique II of Castile and King Carlos the Bad of Navarre. While Enrique's reign had been successful, Carlos the Bad had left his kingdom in a perilous state. It is now being effectively jointly ruled by Castile and is an economic basket case. The death of Enrique and Carlos means that we are welcoming two new kings to the narrative, King Juan I of Castile and King Carlos II of Navarre, but before we turn to them, we should check in to see how the Reconquista is going.

In a nutshell, the Reconquista isn't going anywhere. It's been placed on hold indefinitely while the Christian kings in the Iberian peninsula concentrate on fighting amongst themselves and become embroiled in the Hundred Years' War between England and France.

While the Christians weren't conquering Muslim territory, the Muslims were making some gains of their own. You might recall that, way back in Episode 129, King Alfonso XI of Castile had conquered Algeciras, taking it from the Muslims following a lengthy siege. We mentioned at the end of that episode, though, that Algeciras had struggled to thrive under Christian rule, mainly due to the fact that not many Christian residents could be convinced to relocate to the city because everyone sort of knew that it would be just a matter of time until Granada attempted to take it back. That day came in the year 1369, shortly after King Enrique rose to power in Castile. Realising that the new King of Castile would be spending most of his time attempting to consolidate his hold on power, Muhammad V of Granada began plotting to retake Algeciras. A joint Marinid and Granadan siege of the city commenced on the 29th of July in the year 1369, and just three days later it capitulated.

According to Joseph O'Callaghan in his book "The Last Crusade in the West", King Enrique of Castile was pretty upset about the loss of Algeciras, and likely placed retaking the city back from the Muslims onto his lengthy to-do list. Probably because he realised that Castile would one day attempt to reconquer the city, Muhammad V took the extraordinary step of completely destroying Algeciras. It took around a decade for the work to be carried out, but by the year 1388 there was nothing left of the city. In the words of a chronicler, it was, and I quote, "as if the town had never been inhabited."

Back in the year 1370, after Algeciras had fallen back into Muslim hands and before its destruction had begun, Pope Urban V had reached out to King Enrique, urging him to settle the differences between himself and his Christian neighbours, so he could once again focus on the Reconquista. This prompted Enrique to declare in April of 1370 that he would be taking time out from his battles in the Christian north to spend the summer in the south fighting the Muslims. However, just when Enrique was about to mobilise out from Seville to commence his campaign, the masters of the two largest military orders in Spain, the Orders of Santiago and Calatrava, negotiated an eight-year-long truce between themselves, the Marinids and Granada, which pretty much spelled the end of any political attack by the Castilians against the Muslims. By this stage, Aragon and Portugal had already come to terms with Granada so, despite the odd hiccup, an extended period of peace descended over the southern part of the peninsula.

The conquest of Granada, though, did remain firmly on Enrique's to-do list. In the year 1375 Enrique informed the Pope, who at that time was Pope Gregory XI, that as soon as peace was achieved between the Christian kings of the peninsula, he would switch focus to fighting the Muslims of Granada. After Enrique died four years later in 1379, this sentiment was repeated with a chronicler, after lamenting Enrique's early death, stating that King Enrique had intended, and I quote "if he lived, to arm a great fleet to take the sea of the Strait of Granada." It was generally thought that this naval blockade, which was designed to prevent the Marinids from coming to Granada's aid, would have been the precursor to a major military campaign which Castile was planning to launch against Granada.

But Enrique died before the plan could be put into action, and his young successor, his son Juan, didn't possess the confidence or the ambition to adopt his father's strategy, So apart from some border skirmishes the extended period of peace between the Christian north and the Muslim south continued after Enrique's death. In fact, spooked by rumours that the Marinids were intending to land a significant force at Malaga, King Juan negotiated a fresh truce between himself and Muhammad V of Granada. The truce ran for four years, was renewed for another four years, and ended up running until the end of the reigns of both Juan and Muhammad, so to cut a long story short the Reconquista will continue in a sort of holding pattern for the foreseeable future, with no noticeable aggression between the Christians and the Muslims on the peninsula.

Which left King Juan free to pursue other goals. Perhaps strangely, Juan decided that the primary objective at the commencement of his reign ought to be the defeat of Portugal and the annexation of Portugal to the Kingdom of Castile. This was an ambitious and rather surprising policy, which went further than that which had been pursued by his father. You might remember that King Enrique invaded Portugal and occupied parts of it, but then, instead of defeating it, sued for peace. His son Juan has decided to take things one step further, though. He was intending to invade, then conquer and annex the kingdom. But fortunately for the Portuguese, other events will intervene.

The first crisis to hit Juan came a year into his rule, in 1380. One of the many horrors to visit humanity during the 14th century was the Black Death, outbreaks of which repeatedly took vast numbers of lives throughout the century. At a time when scientific and medical studies were in their infancy, no one really knew what had caused the Black Death or how it spread. To fill this vacuum of knowledge, rumours and conspiracies circulated, and some of them gained widespread traction. One of the more persistent theories about the plague was that it was somehow caused by Europe's Jewish citizens, perhaps by poisoning wells with some sort of contaminant. This rumour took hold in Castile and resulted in a dangerous rise in anti-Semitism. In an attempt to control the civil unrest that these rumours were causing, King Juan enacted an ordinance which disbanded the independent Jewish legal tribunals which had been set up by members of the Jewish community inside Castile to try Jewish people who had been accused of crimes. Then he went further, enacting a law which restricted Jews who lived inside cities to living in ghettos. This unfortunately did nothing to curb the rise of anti-Semitism inside Castile.

Then not only Castile, but all of Western Christendom was hit by a curve ball. The issue arose in Rome with the death of Pope Gregory XI in the year 1378. One of the achievements of Pope Gregory's rule was that he had overseen the relocation of the seat of the papacy from Avignon in France, where it had been shifted in the year 1309, back to Rome. Not surprisingly, this delighted the people of Rome and Italy while sidelining the French. An entire clerical bureaucracy had developed during the nearly seven decades in

which the papacy had been based in France. Magnificent buildings had been constructed in Avignon, including an extensive library, and when Pope Gregory pulled the pin on the Avignon residency, six cardinals, hundreds of French clerks, scribes, accountants, and secretaries found themselves left behind in Avignon.

Pope Gregory probably knew he had a lot of work ahead of him to consolidate the papacy's seat back in Rome, but unfortunately, he became very ill only a year later. Aware that he was dying, Pope Gregory decided to put in place mechanisms to ensure that the seat of the papacy would remain in Rome after his passing, and not revert back to Avignon, so he made it clear to everyone that after his death the cardinals must elect an Italian to be the next pope, with the idea that the new Italian pope would appoint Italian cardinals and Italian staff, and that gradually the French hold over the papacy would diminish. The man elected to be the next pope was an Italian. He was a man from humble origins in Naples who had worked his way up through the papal chancery and was seen as being a solid administrator. Once elected, he took the name Pope Urban VI.

Something which only became clear after Pope Urban was appointed was the fact that he absolutely loathed the French. Apparently, he had been picked on by lofty French cardinals while working in Avignon and had suffered for years in silence while being bullied, patronised and belittled for his humble Italian background. Upon becoming pope, Urban decided to unleash his inner bad guy and seek revenge upon all the French people who had wronged him. Basically, while the cardinals who had chosen Pope Urban believed they were getting a mild-mannered, efficient bureaucrat, what they actually got was an increasingly erratic tyrannical man who was clearly finding it harder and harder, as time went by, to restrain his hatred of the French cardinals. He frequently verbally abused them and then began actually physically attacking the thirteen French cardinals who had the unfortunate fate of serving in Rome under him.

In the end, it all became too much for those French cardinals. They made their way to Naples and were given refuge there by Queen Joanna. Then they issued a statement declaring that the election of Pope Urban had been invalid because it had taken place under the threat of mob violence. The response to their statement was nothing. There was no response, just crickets, so they then took the extraordinary step of declaring Pope Urban to be deposed. Then they held their own election and chose a new pope, a man called Robert of Geneva, who took the name Pope Clement VII.

So there were two popes, Pope Urban in Rome and Pope Clement, who ruled from Avignon. Both popes declared the other to be a fraud, and both popes excommunicated the other pope and placed the supporters of the other pope under an interdict. This crisis became known as the Great Schism of the West, and it will last for nearly four decades.

The schism had far-reaching political implications, and will end up splitting the Christian kings on the peninsula. Why? Well, because almost as soon as the schism commenced, countries were forced to take sides. The two kingdoms fighting the Hundred Years' War, England and France, unsurprisingly, chose opposing popes, with France supporting the Avignon pope Clement and England supporting Pope Urban in Rome. King Charles V of France then began to lobby the kings of the Iberian peninsula, urging them to also support Pope Clement. King Juan of Castile, despite having been counselled by his father on his deathbed to always be a friend to France, preferred to remain neutral until he had explored more fully the ramifications of supporting Pope Clement. Likewise, King Pedro IV of Aragon made it clear that he didn't wish to publicly declare for either pope.

In his book “A History of Medieval Spain”, Joseph O'Callaghan asserts that Pedro's attitude was influenced by his ambitions in Sicily and Sardinia. King Pedro's daughter had been married to King Frederico IV of Sicily, but when King Frederico died in the year 1377, leaving Pedro's daughter Maria to inherit the throne, Pedro had stepped in and claimed it for himself, asserting that women were precluded from ruling in Sicily. Unfortunately for King Pedro, the feudal overlord of Sicily was the Roman pope, who declared that King Pedro was incorrect and who refused to crown him as king. Likewise in Sardinia, Pope Urban opposed moves by King Pedro to rule there, and instead encouraged a rebellion inside Sardinia backed by Genoa. In order to encourage Pope Urban to change his stance on these issues, King Pedro made it clear to everyone that Aragon would remain neutral so far as the schism was concerned, but also let it quietly be known to Pope Urban that Aragon may change its mind and back his papacy if Pope Urban crowned King Pedro as the King of Sicily and supported his government in Sardinia.

So these were the types of scenarios at play for leaders attempting to navigate the schism.

The new king of Navarre, Carlos II, also declared that his kingdom would be following a policy of neutrality. Portugal, though, took a different approach. King Fernando of Portugal laid his cards on the table and declared that Portugal would be supporting Pope Clement in Avignon. This prompted King Juan of Castile to review Castile's neutrality policy, and in autumn of the year 1380, he convened an assembly of clerics to hear arguments for and against both popes. After much discussion and debate, Castile decided also to declare for Pope Clement.

However, Portugal hasn't been honest about its dealings and allegiances. While publicly declaring for Pope Clement, and by association for France, Portugal has been hiding a hand of cards under the table, because the King of Portugal has been secretly negotiating with John of Gaunt and is about to form an alliance with him against Castile.

Join me next time as Portugal reveals its true intentions. Until next time, bye for now.

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