

Tracing the footsteps of Tariq Ibn Ziyad

By: Nadia Shabir



In contemporary world, academic society has broadened its horizon by incorporating war literature into core curriculum at all learning levels. Young people have come to grasp the concept of war theories, gain familiarity with great battle of Waterloo and have come to acquire the knowledge of 19th century colonization of Greater Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Nowadays memorial and pilgrimage trips to battlefields, war graves, Nijmegen, Anzio, Great Escape, Auschwitz and last resting places of the WW1 & 11 heroes, have become an imperative part of European studies. Children as young as 78- are taking trips to World War trenches in Germany and France. Millions have visited Lenin's tomb in Red Square in Moscow and more have been fascinated by life and actions of founding father of Modern day Turkey, Kamal Mustafa Atatürk. These figures have contributed immensely to the tourism revenues of their countries.

Every year millions of visitors flock to Spain to access its unique heritage of cultural and language knowledge. The country not just ranks among the world's ten largest economies, but has also made a speedy progress in a quarter of century from backward isolated dictatorial country to modern twenty first century nation. It requires years to learn all about Spain but who can forget the year 711 when a mysterious unequivocal figure landed on straits of modern day Gibraltar with a handful of army and left a legacy behind. You

will be mesmerized by the inventiveness and enterprise of the early generations of Muslims within Spain. Alas those who started the conquest of Spain were almost forgotten by history therefore, in this article I would like to pay standing ovation to archaic heroes of Moorish Spain especially Tariq Ibn Ziyad. Many historians label Moorish Spain as a part of forgotten and lost history. So why not pay homage to Moorish Spain with your loved ones and acquaint yourself with knowledge on derivation of Moorish rule in

Tangier





Espanola. No doubt that tales of Moorish Spain are riveting and compel us to imagine the glorious era when poetry, science, mysticism and civilization reached its highest zenith. If you are keen to imbibe a slice of Moorish history then trace the footsteps of Great Tariq Ibn Ziyad and this trip will become a part of most memorable experience, something to cherish for lifetime.

When it comes to tracing the literature on Tariq Ibn Ziyad, much has been lost to past- but some

exists and tales of this great warrior have been passed down to children from their great grand fathers in Indonesia to Morocco to Afghanistan. A great mystery surrounds this gallant warrior who disappeared in the shadows of past and with passing time became a part of mythology and folk lore legend. But whenever a history of Spain is reviewed his name is there in Golden letters, a man of admirable traits renowned for burning sails of his ships to make his army's recede impossible. Tariq Ibn Ziyad born on 15

November 689 into a Berber family in Algeria, was a military commander in Ummayyad army of Musa Ibn Nasir. According to Historians such as Al-Maggari, he was named Tariq Ibn Zlyad after his conversion to religion of Islam. In Spanish history and legend, he is known as Taric el Tuerto (Taric the one-eyed) and is noted as one of the most legendary, and revolutionary military commanders in Iberian history. With red hair, broad forehead and fair complexion he was a man of geniuses and had a keen interest in horse riding and

outdoors. He soon caught eye of Musa Ibn Nasir and was immediately hired to work for him, with his outstanding abilities and hard work he was rapidly promoted and soon secured a dominant position of army commander in Musa's army.

During his voyage throughout North Africa, he became most renowned for leading a successful military contest across Iberian Peninsula. The whole of Iberian Peninsula (made up of present day Spain and Portugal) was then

Tangier Cape Spartel



Tangier the Mirage



called by the Ancient Roman name Hispania. Visigoths and its leading class of aristocrats had held sway over the Iberian Peninsula for almost 300 years. In 711 A.D. under the leadership of Tariq Ibn Ziyad, army of Berber Moors swept into the Visigoth kingdom of

Hispania, thus, forever changing the history of Western Europe. With the subjugation of Visigothic army and its prime leaders, Tariq's forces continued northward besieging and establishing garrisons in major cities & regions. After a streak of victories, Muslims

secured a dominant position in Southern Spain and Tariq Ibn Ziyad was made a governor of the state. Muslims maintained their sphere of influence through the formation of extensive alliances with Count Julian of Ceuta, Jewish lobby of Spain and the appointment of religious and educational leaders and family members to rule conquered areas of Spain.

Tariq Ibn Ziyad governed Hispania for 3 years; he was called back to Damascus by Ummayyad Caliph Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik 1, where he died in 720.

Tariq Ibn Ziyad route

This route runs from Tangier through the province of Gibraltar, and links Ecija, Cordoba, Toledo and Granada, the later three being main cities of earlier Moorish civilization. Tariq Ibn Ziyad route offers unforgettable ample insight into this region of Arab mysticism, architecture marvels and legends.

Tangier- City of Tariq Ibn Ziyad

What a great place to start then Tangier in Northern Morocco, a city of Tariq Ibn Ziyad. In 709 A.D.



Tangier Royal Golf Club

Tangier The Bay



Musa Ibn Nasir placed Tariq in command of the garrison of Tangier. Though no signs of Tariq Ibn Ziyad on the streets of present day Tangier, yet it is a good day trip, as you absorb and appreciate the city that was under his governance. Agnus Macnab 'Spain under crescent moon', "Tariq Ibn Ziyad was the commander of Tangier and lead army of 12,000 Berbers, Saracens and Arabs from Tangier to Gibraltar and then across to peninsula in 711." It was here in Tangier plans of offensive on Southern Spain were laid out.

Count Julian, military governor of Ceuta sent delegations to Tangier for military aid against Visigoth ruler of Hispania, King Roderick. Agnus Macnab in 'Spain under crescent moon' explains the reasons behind Julian's actions: "King Rodrigo pursued Florinda, daughter of Count Julian and forced his unwelcome suit on her. When the girl's chastity resisted all temptations, he eventually resorted to violence. Florinda managed to send a letter to her father, who came to Toledo feigning ignorance of the whole affair, and obtained the king's permission to

take her back home on the pretext that her mother was ill." Once back in Ceuta, Julian swore revenge on King Roderick. King Rodrigo had overthrown the former King of Hispania Witiza through unfair elections and revolution, thus earning the resentment of the family of Witiza and Jewish lobby of Hispania. Rodrigo was famed for his ruthlessness, lawlessness, and suppression of Jews. Within Hispania there was a strong, but covert uprising against the king. To overthrow Rodrigo, Count Julian formed alliance Witiza's sons and

chief Jews of Spain. Together they approached Musa Ibn Nasir, Saracen ruler of North Africa.

Washington Irving, in 'legends of the conquest of Spain' explains

"One of the most noted victims of his lawless passions was Florinda, who had been placed at Roderick's court as one of the attendants on his queen. Her father, Count Julian, held the post of military governor of Ceuta, in the Spanish dominions in Barbary; but having been high in favour under the

Tangiers Bay





administration of Witiza, he had never cherished much affection for the government of his successor. The intelligence of this outrage on his daughter roused in him the most strenuous determination of vengeance, for obtaining which the conjuncture of affairs presented ready facilities."

In response to Julian's appeal, diplomatic alliance and entente were formed between Ceuta and ruling dynasty of Ummayyad Empire. Musa Ibn Nasir, Saracen ruler of North Africa desired prestige and colonies in Southern Spain, and believed their association with Ceuta would

facilitate the realisation of these objectives.

In Tangeir

Tangier was an international zone, controlled by nine various states from 1923 to 1957. It is a popular city, especially amongst tourists from Western Europe. Experience the magic of Tangier by taking in a panoramic view of the city; enjoy a leisurely stroll through the Medina (old quarter) and various bazaars for some fabulous shopping. Walk through old American, Spanish

and French quarters. Have luncheon in a traditional Moroccan restaurant and experience many delicacies of sensual renowned cuisine.

Popular attractions of Tangier:

Caves of Hercules: The beautiful and archeological caves of Hercules are located 14km west of Tangier in the Cap Spartel area.

Kasbah: A scatter of castles on top of the hill overlooking the city.
Museum of Moroccan Art: Popular attraction, housing all sorts of popular local wares, from Berber



Tangier



carpets to famous ceramics and popular antiques.

Archaeological Museum: is famed for artifacts dating back to the Stone Age, and preserved Roman mosaics.

Forbes Museum: A museum of toy soldiers.

Cap Spartel: The cape to the west with a breathtaking view of sea, beaches, straits of Gibraltar and light house.

Grand Socco: Outer city Souk, popular for local goods.

Petit Socco: open space cafes, located in the heart of the medina.

The city is vibrant with colourful souks, artefacts, snake charmers and the beautiful beaches are only 10 minute away.

In the evening, depart Tangier for journey across the straits of Gibraltar. Take an early-evening ferry, daily departures are available through the ferry company, FRS Iberia and the crossing takes roughly 80 minutes. You'll enjoy dazzling skyline views of Gibraltar on the 80 minute ride and it's one of the best ways to enter Gibraltar in the same manner as Tariq Ibn Ziyad did in the year 711. Inayat

Ullah in 'In the dungeons of Damascus' writes that while sailing across the narrow straits of Gibraltar, Tariq had a profound dream, where Prophet Muhammad conveyed a news of upcoming feat to Tariq and said " take courage, O Tariq! and accomplish what you are destined to perform. On hearing this Tariq Ibn Ziyad knew victory was not far away.

As the minarets of Mosques disappear and the hustle bustle of Tangier becomes distant you see a complete opposite side of picture. A serene much orderly organized Gibraltar. One wonders did he really land here and conquered it?

Bask in the glow of the setting sun and glistening harbour lights. While listening to music of wind

The Atlantic coast to Tanger



The ancient Forbes's Museum Tangier





View of Spain from Tangier

and water, sip your favourite drink and watch the moon rise and Gibraltar light up for the night. From the Rock of Tariq to surrounding mountains to the famous landmarks are especially memorable when lit up at night. The ferry ride offers a great opportunity to take in the awe-

inspiring splendour of the Southern Spain skyline at night... To be continued

Join us next month to read second exhilarating part of the Journey in which Tariq Ibn Ziyad and his men land in Gibraltar.