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## Further from Mecca: Morisco Emigration to the Spanish Americas

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escravo começasse no navio negreiro. De fácil leitura e compreensão, a obra restitui o humanismo e dá significado à vida de uma mulher esca-

vizada, comercializada, julgada e condenada por bigamia no século XVII. ■

**Max Deardorff**

## Further from Mecca: Morisco Emigration to the Spanish Americas\*

In *Musulmanes en Indias*, María Magdalena Martínez Almira, a specialist on law and late medieval Iberian Islam, seeks to help answer questions that mainstream Latin American historiography has long struggled to address. In the dominant historical narrative about Spanish settlement of the Americas, *moriscos* (converts to Christianity from Islam) play almost no role. *Musulmanes en Indias* is the first monograph-length study in Spanish to examine the trans-Atlantic emigration of members of Spain's former Islamic communities.<sup>1</sup> Martínez constructed her study using sources from royal archives in Spain (AGI, AHN, AGS) and colonial archives in Perú, México, and Chile, alongside the traditional range of royal *cédulas*, pragmatics, and provisions. Corraling sufficient source material to tell this story has long been a daunting challenge. One especially innovative and productive method Martínez employs is to read trans-Atlantic passenger lists against late 16th-century censuses of *morisco* neighborhoods.

The book is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a documentary appendix. The first chapter provides ample background on the political events that spelled the official end of Islam in al-Andalus, the Iberian territories at least some of which had been under Islamic rule since the eighth century. The Nasrid dynasty in Granada surrendered to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, but the erosion of Muslim communities' autonomy and

their members' forced integration into the Spanish Christian community began in earnest after 1499. The following decades witnessed the forced conversion to Christianity of the Muslims of Castile (by 1502) and Aragon (by 1526), the emergence of *morisco* as a social and legal category, and a period of persecution that constantly intensified after the 1560s, when earlier tolerance for continued observance of Islam in the private sphere of the home dissipated. Martínez argues that this period permanently reshaped relationships on the peninsula: the increasing criminalization of private Islamic worship expanded the jurisdiction of the Inquisition while undermining the jurisdiction of nobles, on whose estates many *moriscos* lived. *Moriscos* became habituated to displacement just as day-to-day life in Castile became insufferable, creating a push-factor that made emigration overseas increasingly attractive. This background is drawn from recent scholarship on the *moriscos*, most of which is well-known to specialists but virtually unknown to scholars of Latin America. Martínez provocatively suggests that the Spanish Crown's prohibition of emigration to North Africa or Turkey made the Indies the safest option for escaping persecution that at times seemed suffocating.

Chapters 2 and 3 detail the institutions and policies that controlled passage out of Castile's main ports toward the Indies and *morisco* engagement with those policies. The primary focus is

\* MARÍA MAGDALENA MARTÍNEZ ALMIRA, *Musulmanes en Indias: Itinerarios y nuevos horizontes para una comunidad bajo sospecha*, México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas 2018, 588 p., ISBN 978-607-30-1136-5

1 The first monograph in English came out shortly before the book reviewed here: KAROLINE P. COOK, *Forbidden Passages: Muslims and Moriscos in Colonial Spanish America*, Philadelphia 2016.

Seville, the monarchy's most populous cosmopolitan city and a pole of attraction for *moriscos*, who in the second half of the 16th century represented about a tenth of the city's population. This section of the book pays special attention to how the category of *prohibidos* emerged to describe a range of undesirable minorities whose emigration to the new colonies was perceived as a potential threat to the mission of Christianization that justified Spanish rule in the Americas. Martínez notes that royal policy wavered in the early decades, as the Crown balanced the need to consolidate conquest through expedited settlement against the responsibility of tending to the fragile Christianity in its overseas settlements. She argues there was little sincere effort to impede *morisco* emigration during the earliest years, and that many may have, in fact, accompanied Christopher Columbus on his third voyage. The need for farmers in the Caribbean colonies opened the doors again in 1518, as Crown decrees welcomed any and all who wished to settle in the Americas, despite royal provisions just a few years earlier decrying the great number of individuals punished by the Inquisition who were residing on Hispaniola. Martínez makes the point that though official royal policy for a good part of the 16th century prohibited the passage of children of either *unrepentant* heretics burned at the stake or first-generation converts, the children or grandchildren of converts with clean records were generally permitted. Not only that, but disqualified individuals who desired to emigrate could also overcome their limitations via purchase of *habilitaciones* (qualifying letters).

The 1540s seem to have been the period when policy definitively turned against *moriscos*. The Casa de Contratación would require prospective passengers to produce *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) references from multiple individuals who could attest to their Old Christian bloodlines. But false testimony was incredibly common and Martínez argues that the *limpieza* requirements often served merely to elevate the cost of passage, as *morisco* travelers were obliged to procure fictitious letters of reference. Finally, there is significant evidence that certain ship captains took unlicensed stowaways for a fee, while others smuggled unlicensed travelers by logging a voyage whose official terminus was the Canary Islands, only to continue onward across the ocean unregistered.

The fourth chapter focuses on how the justice system treated *moriscos* and other prohibited per-

sons on both sides of the Atlantic. Surprisingly, relatively few *moriscos* were hauled in by the Inquisition in the Americas. Martínez explains their absence by suggesting that the Inquisition in the Indies paid little attention to *moriscos* as potential heretics until the moment when they began to challenge the authority of local justice officials. Martínez also devotes significant space to exploring the typology of crimes specifically identified with *moriscos* (blasphemy, bigamy, and vagabondage) and the punishment associated with each.

The fifth and final chapter looks at the links between communities of origin, communities of settlement, and evidence of *morisco* assimilation within colonial society. After the Christian conquest of Granada in 1492 made travel throughout southern Spain possible, Martínez notes that many uprooted *moriscos* gravitated toward the Andalusian coast (especially Sanlúcar de Barrameda), from where it would be possible to stow away on trans-Atlantic voyages. A comparison of two midcentury censuses shows that between 1530 and 1550, Sanlúcar swelled with individuals with Inquisition records; *penitenciados* and *habilitados* in that time grew to represent 40% of the city's population. Following the failed rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568–1570), the Crown forcibly repatriated Granada's inhabitants inland into Castile. Martínez suggests that despite the Crown's surveillance intentions, new *morisco* neighborhoods in cities throughout Andalucía, Castilla la Nueva, and Extremadura functioned as »transit points« for individuals before they departed for the Indies.

Connecting names on census lists from *morisco* ghettos to bureaucratic paperwork created by »discoverers« and conquistadors in the Indies, Martínez argues that numerous *moriscos* became *encomenderos*, mariners, and priests. Once established overseas, she hypothesizes that these *morisco* settlers provided cover for the further emigration of family members and friends. Oftentimes, Martínez argues, *moriscos* succeeded in making their way to the Indies as *criados* of powerful allies, such as the archbishop of México, fray García Guerra, who brought multiple *morisco* servants with him in the early 1600s.

These findings reshape our concept of the prototypical Spanish settler in the Indies. Yet specialists will be skeptical of the breadth of at least some of the claims. Martínez succeeds in pairing names and cities of origin on passenger manifests or in *encomienda* grants that match those of censuses of

newly-baptized *moriscos*, but often after the passage of many years. Given that some of these names are rather common (e. g. Juan Ramírez, María García, Pedro de Huerta, Hernán López, Antón Sánchez, Alonso Hernández, Juan Calderón, Diego Holguín, Luis de Guzmán, etc.) it is hard to affirm with certitude the ethnic affiliation of the individual. Perhaps an Old Christian from that town had exactly the same name. Or, given the passage of time, it is entirely possible that an individual with the same name resettled in the city of origin and lived there a few years, before moving on to try his luck in the Americas. Thus, next to the many individuals cited in the book who certainly were *moriscos*, there are many who might have been – or might not.

That said, this monograph represents a tremendous amount of work in archival sources, censuses, and catalog lists. It introduces new, promising methodologies for analysis and suggestive pathways for future research. Even admitting the aforementioned skepticism, Martínez' book is successful in establishing that numerous *moriscos*, many more than we knew, were among the earlier Spanish settlers in the Americas. Their presence will lead us to reevaluate the sincerity and effectiveness of the many *cédulas* and provisions emitted by the Crown banning them from the Indies.



**Giovanni Pizzorusso**

## Ordini militari nell'Impero portoghese: una revisione\*

Alla base dell'espansione oceanica delle potenze iberiche tra XV e XVI secolo è normale ricordare la motivazione religiosa nella quale lo spirito di Crociata e la guerra all'infedele si collegano alla spinta missionaria di diffusione del Cristianesimo e della Chiesa. Sia in Spagna, sia in Portogallo esistevano ordini militari di antica tradizione medievale e di matrice monastico-cavalleresca che avrebbero potuto inserirsi come protagonisti di questa espansione cristiana. Tuttavia, negli ultimi anni del XV secolo, mentre in Spagna Ferdinando il Cattolico aveva sottoposto questi ordini (Santiago, Alcantara e Calatrava) alla corona, in Portogallo gli ordini di Cristo, Santiago e Aviz mantenevano ancora la loro autonomia. Pertanto essi sono stati considerati dalla storiografia internazionale come fortemente attivi nell'espansione lusitana in Nordafrica. Questa non è l'opinione dell'au-

trice del volume, Fernanda Olival, che esprime chiaramente il suo obiettivo: mostrare come l'importanza degli ordini nell'espansione sia un luogo comune, passivamente adottato fino ad oggi dalla maggioranza degli storici, che è necessario correggere attraverso la maggior contestualizzazione di tali istituzioni e, soprattutto, la miglior definizione di quegli elementi di fatto che hanno dato l'impressione dell'ampio coinvolgimento degli ordini, come la partecipazione di loro membri alle imprese di conquista oppure la destinazione all'ordine di Cristo delle bolle pontificie relative ai diritti di patronato.

Per perseguire il suo scopo l'autrice fa ricorso alle fonti portoghesi relative alla vita interna degli ordini (i *Regimentos*) così come alla storiografia su di essi. Inoltre, emerge l'importanza della documentazione pontificia per la responsabilità emi-

\* FERNANDA OLIVAL, *The Military Orders and the Portuguese Expansion (15th to 17th Centuries)* (Portuguese Studies Review, Monograph Series 3), Peterborough/ONT: Baywolf Press 2018, 195 p., ISBN 978-0-921437-54-3