
The aim of this project is to write the, as of yet unwritten, history of the reception of the populations forcibly displaced across the Christian-Muslim frontier in Iberia and North Africa, between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. Instead of proceeding through a blow-by-blow account, a potentially endless task, I propose telling this history through the analysis and description of representative instances that illustrate how the reception of these displaced populations changed throughout these eventful centuries of reconquista, persecutions, rebellions, and expulsions. Two clusters of events bracket the rather long period I have chosen for consideration. Opening the period we have the initial southward expansion of the Christian kingdoms of northern Iberia (Castile-Leon and Aragon) in the last quarter of the eleventh century. The fall of Toledo to Alfonso VI in 1085 provides a convenient date for the beginning of a period I like to think of as the long twelfth century of the territorial retrogression of al-Andalus (1085-1248), a period during which most of the major urban Islamic centers of the peninsula passed into Christian hands.

The beginning of this long century was characterized by the intensification of the flow of people, ideas, and goods between al-Andalus and the Maghrib, where, and as a result of which, Andalusiis increasingly began to leave their mark. This was visible in the make-up of Maghribi cities, in the administration of Maghribi empires, and in the character of the textual and artistic traditions of the Maghrib as a whole. Closing the five-and-a-half-century period of the proposed study is the (1609-1614) expulsion of the Moriscos, a largely hispanized but politically unintegrated rural population of Muslims converted to Christianity. This was a population of Iberians expelled to countries whose languages they did not speak and whose religious practices were likely alien, even when grounds for expulsion were construed as based on ethno-religious identity.

The evolution of this reception is the object of this study. “Reception” is conceived of here, at least at this stage, as a combination of image, self-presentation, and legal status. The bulk of the information for this will be gleaned from Maghribi Arabic sources (legal texts, biographical dictionaries, geographical works, historical chronicles). The story I hope to tell will describe how these populations settled in their new lands, how they contributed to these places (the Andalusí quarters of Fes and Tetouan come to mind), what challenges they faced, and how they argued for the legitimacy of their presence, whether culturally or religiously. At this stage I understand this to have been a
process that was profoundly influenced by the advance and militarization of the Christian-Muslim frontier in the western Mediterranean as well as, later in the period, by the formation of Mediterranean empires who claimed guardianship of individuals and communities based on their religious identity, even when located outside of the empire’s territorial borders.

This history of the reception of displaced populations in North Africa is one that, to my knowledge, has not been written and, in my opinion, is begging to be. The project is easily justifiable on this level, and my experience at the institute helped me a great deal to see how I can complement the Arabic sources with Iberian (Catalan, Latin, and Castilian) ones, such as those found and produced by studies of materials from the Archive of the Crown of Aragon. A cursory search of the archive’s digitized material, the ongoing exhibition of Arabic diplomatic texts "The Perfume of Friendship", and discussion with institute participants has pointed to a variety of textual sources and studies of those sources directly involving displaced religious communities and the involvement of royal and amiral authorities.

The most intellectually enriching dimension of participating in the Cultural Hybridities Institute, for my project, was being given the freedom to think of the project in the broadest possible conceptual framework and having conversations about that framework with supporting readings and lectures of an equally broad scope.

At the moment I am thinking of structuring the project as a series of chapters on the history described above couched within a strong comparative conceptual framework, with an introduction that lays out this framework and at least one chapter that develops this comparative angle, touching on population displacements in other parts of the medieval and early modern Mediterranean.

I do not claim to have this conceptual framework figured out, even remotely, but I am beginning to have a sense of the elements that I want it to account for. These include the following:

1.) The framework has to bring together what I believe are the interrelated concepts of captivity, *jiha¯d*, and crusade, and an understanding of how the militarization of the frontier affected all sides of the conflict, in profoundly similar ways. That is, that while a crystallization of “ecumenian” identities (to use Brian Catlos's term) accompanied the waging of *jiha¯d* or crusade, (with attendant militarization, advancement or regression of the frontier, and the displacement of populations), the ideologies (increasingly forcefully
articulated) reflected each other in ways more than those of stridency and dogmatism and extended to social practices and organization.

Certain individuals of the competing communities of the western Mediterranean shared, I believe, a set of expectations regarding the obligations of their families and rulers in case of their being captured. This accounts for the description of the society of the Crown of Aragon as one organized for ransom, one in which a military leader could, for example, capture much of the population of an Island (such as Minorca in 1287) and expect to make a considerable profit. Alternately, it was one in which an individual could settle on the frontier and expect to be ransomed in case of capture (as Jarbel Rodriguez pointed out to me in a conversation).

Maliki law (as Josie Hendrickson can tell you in detail) – and which I like to think of as a complex ethical legal system that touched on religious identity, political legitimacy, and the relationship of individuals to power – stipulates broad individual obligations to live under Muslim rule and to defend the community of Muslims. The flip side of these obligations, it would seem implicit, is the Muslim ruler’s obligation to receive and provide refuge to displaced Muslims.

2.) Within this set of expectations between "corporate" parties (to use Brian Catlos’s term again) invoking "ecumenian" identities, there also arose a sustained competition between imperial powers in the early modern period, to assert their prerogative of being guardians of the rights and interests of extraterritorial religious communities. This will become a long-term “Mediterranean” trend as Christian empires, such as France, successfully asserted their claims within the Ottoman empire. This competition for rights of guardianship to correligionists (and non-correligionist) was a complex facet of the interaction between Habsburgs and Ottomans, French and Sa’adians.

3.) A dimension I consider key, one which is also significant in the long term, and perhaps incorporates the individual experience, is the strategies employed by the refugees themselves in arguing for their value to their host societies. I believe several of these strategies were formative in the long-run in Maghribi society, examples of the effects of which include the canonization of Andalusi culture (music, poetry, cuisine) as the high or classical culture of the Maghrib and the military ethos of Andalusi refugee cities such as Tetouan.

4.) And lastly, the conceptual framework of this study should deconstruct or break apart our modern understanding of the fraught term “refugee” and place it in relation to the medieval and early modern Mediterranean experience of
population displacement and the invocation of the obligations to Mediterranean powers to provide refuge. It should find the continuities out of which the modern concept arose.