

MORISCOS, GENDER, AND THE POLITICS OF RELIGION IN 16TH AND 17TH-CENTURY SPAIN

Moriscos, género y la política religiosa de la España de
los siglos XVI y XVII

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RESUMEN

Los moriscos experimentaron una política religiosa en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII que a la vez les empoderaba y les desempoderaba. Mientras las autoridades cristianas usaron de manera creciente la ortodoxia religiosa para definir el nuevo estado emergente, los moriscos se volvieron hacia sus hogares donde preservaron muchas prácticas de su identidad hispano-musulmana. La documentación de archivo y la literatura del periodo revelan el liderazgo de muchas mujeres moriscas en esta resistencia doméstica.

Palabras clave: España. Religión. Moriscas. Conflicto étnico. Siglo XVI. Siglo XVII

ABSTRACT

Moriscos experienced a politics of religion in 16th and 17th-century Spain that both empowered and disempowered them. As Christian authorities increasingly used religious orthodoxy to define their newly emerging state, Moriscos withdrew into their homes where they preserved many practices of their Hispano-Muslim identity. Archival documents and writings of the period reveal the leading roles that many morisco women played in this domestic resistance.

Key words: Spain. Religion, Moriscas. Ethnic conflict. 16th Century. 17th Century

Moriscos, those Muslims who had to convert to Christianity or leave their Iberian homes in the early 16th century, knew firsthand the impact of a politics of religion. Not only did they have to replace their own Muslim culture with that of Spanish Christians; they also had to survive oppression under increasingly suspicious Christian authorities who used religious orthodoxy as a pillar of their newly emerging state. Yet Moriscos also used religion to empower themselves. Their homes became a primary forum for resistance as Morisco women, in particular, played a leading role in preserving Hispano-Muslim identity.

For both Christians and Muslims in early modern Spain, the ideal was that the home should be a shelter and a place of protection, especially for women. "Homes are shelters in which souls, spirits, and bodies take refuge," the medieval Arabic writer Ibn 'Abdun pointed out in his treatise on municipal government. They should be "protected and watched," he continued, "since goods are deposited in them and lives are guarded"¹.

1. El tratado de Ibn 'Abdun, published about 1100 C.E., quoted in BOSCH VILA, Jacinto, "La Sevilla islámica, 712-1248," no. 92 of *Historia de Sevilla*, editor MORALES PADRÓN, Francisco,

A fusion of spiritual, physical, and material concerns, the Muslim home also safeguarded a gender order which prescribed enclosure for women in households where men would make decisions and carry out necessary interactions with outsiders.

Christians, too, idealized the home as a place to protect both women and a gender order. Fray Luis de León, who wrote *La perfecta casada* in the 16th century, argued that just as the fish, which swims in peace and security in water, cannot live outside it, neither can the good woman live outside the peace and security of her home.² Another writer urged parents to keep their daughters enclosed in the home where “parents as dragons” could guard their daughters’ purity.³ Biblical verses and traditional proverbs emphasized a “natural” order of the sexes that required enclosure for females, either in home, convent, or brothel. This order had to be protected in particular from women who left the security of their enclosure to wander about the dangerous spaces outside.⁴

During the sixteenth century, however, domesticity itself became dangerous, not merely to the established order, but also to those attempting to resist that order.⁵ After expelling Jews in 1492 and Muslims in 1502, Christian authorities used religious orthodoxy to strengthen their ability to impose and preserve order. They sought to prohibit any expression of Muslim or Jewish culture and religion, and many Judeo-conversos and Moriscos transformed their homes into

Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 1984, p. 242. Many of the issues raised in this essay are developed more completely in my recent book, *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain*, Princeton, Princeton U. P., 2005. I want to express my gratitude to Margarita Birriel Salcedo, whose work on women in Granada has been so important to my research and writing. I would also like to thank members of the Occidental College Writing Network, who have helped me critique my writings on Moriscos.

2. LEÓN, Fray Luis de, *La perfecta casada (1583)*, in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1855, vol. 37, pp.211-46.

3. CERDA, Juan de la, *Vida política de todos los estados de mugeres; en el qual se dan muy provechosos y Christianos documentos y avisos, para criarse y conservarse devidamente las mugeres en sus estados*, Alcalá de Henares, Juan Gracian, 1599, f. 242r.

4. See, for example, ESPINOSA, Juan de, *Diálogo en laude de las mujeres*, (1580), Edición de Ángela GONZÁLEZ SIMÓN, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1946, p. 258. For more on gender ideology in early modern Spain, see PERRY, Mary Elizabeth, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1990.

5. This, of course, was true for Judeo-conversos, as well. For recent work on Judeo-conversas, see MELAMMED, Renée Levine, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel: The crypto-Jewish Women of Castile*, New York, Oxford U P, 1999; and three essays by the same author: “Sephardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods”, in BASKIN, Judith (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, Detroit, Wayne State U.P., 1991, pp. 115-134; “Sixteenth-Century Justice in Action: The Case of Isabel López”, *Revue des études juives*, 145:1-2, (1986), pp. 51-73; and “Women in (Post-1492) Spanish Crypto-Jewish Society”, *Judaism*, 41:2, (Spring, 1992), pp. 156-168. Also, see ELLIS, Deborah S., “Domesticating the Spanish Inquisition,” in ROBERTS, Anna (ed.), *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, Gainesville, U. P. of Florida, 1998, pp. 195-209.

a space of resistance. Within this domestic space, the women in particular taught their children the prohibited Arabic and Hebrew languages as well as Jewish and Muslim prayers. They supervised their households to observe Jewish or Muslim sabbaths, their holy days and fasts, circumcision of male infants, dietary restrictions, and ritual washing of the body. Even when they were arrested, interrogated, and penanced by the Inquisition, these minority women continued to devise several strategies of resistance.⁶

The political significance of gender, domestic space and everyday acts becomes apparent as we examine the transformation of Moriscos homes into sites of resistance. Not all Moriscos and Christians engaged in this conflict, of course. Moriscos varied widely in their assimilation or resistance, with some consciously attempting to assimilate into the dominant Christian culture.⁷ Nevertheless, evidence of Morisco resistance in their homes appears not only in Inquisition records —where it would be expected— but also in secular and ecclesiastical documents and in writings of both Christians and Moriscos. These sources show that Morisco women and homes became politicized as Christian officials transformed Muslim difference into Morisco difference, as some Moriscas chose to use their power to resist the obliteration of their culture, and as Moriscos suffered punishment and finally expulsion from the kingdoms of Spain.

6. See, for example, BIRRIEL SALCEDO, Margarita María, “Notas sobre el matrimonio de los moriscos granadinos,” in TEMIMI, Abdeljelil (ed.), *Mélanges Louis Cardaillac*, vol. I, pp.97-107, Zaghouan, Fondation Temimi Pour la Recherche Scientifique det l’Information, 1995; HASENFELD, Galia, “Women Between Islam and Christianity: The Moriscos According to Inquisition Trial Records from Cuenca,” *Dissertation*, Tel-Aviv University, 2002. For recent work on Judeo-conversas, see MELAMMED, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel*, *op.cit*; and three essays by the same author: “Sephardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods”; “Sixteenth-Century Justice in Action: The Case of Isabel López”; and “Women in (Post-1492) Spanish Crypto-Jewish Society”, *op. cit*.

7. For example, see the Moriscos who became Christian prelates and attempted to Christianize other Moriscos, in MEDINA, Francisco de Borja de, S. J., “La Compañía de Jesús y la minoría morisca (1545-1614),” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 57 (1988), pp. 3-136. See important studies of Muslims and Moriscos integrated into Christian society, such as MEYERSON, Mark D., *The Muslims of Valencia in the Age of Fernando and Isabel: Between Coexistence and Crusade*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1991; TAPIA SÁNCHEZ Serafín de, *La comunidad morisca de Avila*, Avila, Diputación Provincial de Avila, 1991; the recent work on Moriscos of Aragon by Mary HALAVAIS, *Like Wheat to the Miller: Community, Convivencia, and the Construction of Morisco Identity in Sixteenth-Century Aragon*, New York, Columbia U P, 2002; TUELLER, James, *Good and Faithful Christians: Moriscos and Catholicism in Early Modern Spain*, New Orleans, U P of the South, 2002; and TUELLER, James, “The Assimilating Morisco: Four Families in Valladolid Prior to the Expulsion of 1610”, *Mediterranean Studies*, 7 (1997), pp. 167-177.

FROM DIFFERENCE TO DEVIANCE

Although this essay focuses on the politics of religion that developed in Morisco-Christian conflict, it is important to note that Christian authorities had already used religion to disempower Jews and Judeo-conversos. In fact, Moriscos and Judeo-conversos shared some similar experiences of oppression and domestic resistance. However, they differed in significant respects.⁸ First, Judeo-conversos often enjoyed a higher socio-economic status than Moriscos. Frequently Judeo-conversos engaged in commerce or professions that brought in some wealth, but it was more likely that Moriscos would be agricultural laborers, artisans, itinerant merchants, or silk weavers. Judeo-conversos tended to have fluency in more languages and to be more highly educated, although this advantage declined with the purity of blood statutes prohibiting their entry to universities.

In addition, Christians could regard Moriscos as a greater military threat than Judeo-conversos. Moriscos had the historical memory of a Muslim tradition of armed opposition to Christian forces, from their eighth-century entry into Iberia through countless battles of the centuries-long "Reconquest" and their 1499-1501 rebellion in Granada. In contrast, Judeo-conversos had a longer tradition of living peacefully within, or even assimilating into Christian societies. Finally, Judeo-conversos had no particular groups of their own people from other parts of the world who were eager to come to assist them against Hispanic Christian rulers; but Moriscos had the presence of Muslims in nearby North Africa and the Ottoman Empire who held out the promise of armed assistance for them. Morisco responses to Christians, then, would become a counterpoint of domestic resistance along with plans for more overt military actions. Frequently overlooked in studies that focus on the history of men and battles, covert resistance from the home actually played a very significant role in Morisco-Christian relations.

When Granada, the last Muslim stronghold in Iberia, fell to Christian forces in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabel promised their new Muslim subjects that they would be free to keep their own religion.⁹ Within a decade, however, promises of peaceful coexistence collapsed. Isabel and Cardinal Archbishop Francisco

8. An important discussion of differences between the histories of Moriscos and Jews in Iberia is in RUIZ, Teófilo F., *Spanish Society, 1400-1600*, Harlow, UK, and New York, Longman, 2001, pp. 101-103.

9. The terms of the Capitulations granted by Ferdinand and Isabel to the Muslim leaders of Granada in 1492 are recorded in MÁRMOL CARVAJAL, Luis del, *Historia del rebelión y castigo de los moriscos del reino de Granada*, (1600), *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, vol. 21, Madrid, Atlas, 1946, pp. 148-150. See also the discussion of these capitulations in HARVEY, L. P., *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500*, Chicago, U. of Chicago Press, 1990, pp.314-323; and in JANER, Florencio, *Condición social de los moriscos de España, Causas de su expulsión, y consecuencias que ésta produjo en el orden económico y político*, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 1857, pp. 18-19.

Jiménez Cisneros insisted that Christians must try to convert Muslims in Granada, exasperating many with their heavy-handed attempts. Cisneros, in particular, angered Muslims of Granada as he insisted that those Muslims of Christian descent must return to the Church.¹⁰ When they refused, Christian authorities imprisoned them, sparking long smoldering resentments that flamed into open rebellion on Christmas Eve in 1499. Quickly spreading from the Albaicín, a Muslim quarter of the city of Granada, to the Alpujarra mountains, Ronda, and the port of Almería, the rebellion lasted for nearly two years.¹¹

After Christian forces had finally subdued the rebels, Ferdinand and Isabel decreed that all Muslims of Castile would have to convert to Christianity or leave Iberia. Mass baptisms of 50,000-70,000 Muslims created a new group of converts which Christian authorities had good reason to believe were mostly Christian in name only.¹² At first the Church and monarchy sought to catechize these new converts, and they granted them six years in which they would be expected to gradually abandon their Muslim customs and Arabic language. Although royal decrees extended this dispensation for another twenty years, authorities required that Moriscos hand in for inspection all writings in Arabic or *aljamía*, a Castilian dialect written in Arabic script. Authorities then destroyed in public bonfires those writings relating to Islam.

The forcible baptism of thousands of additional Muslims during the Comunero and Germanía revolts of 1520-1521 multiplied Christian suspicions of false converts. A junta of church leaders formalized these baptisms, deciding that these new converts must be considered Christians and forbidding all Morisco “particularism,” including songs, dances, bathing, and the slaughter of animals.¹³ All expressions of Muslim culture now became evidence of Islam, although Moriscos were still able to buy some time from prosecution by the Inquisition. An edict of grace issued by the Inquisition in Seville in July of 1548 assured Moriscos that they would not be prosecuted for past errors nor have their goods confiscated nor taken from their heirs. Nevertheless, the edict prohibited more than one Morisco family from living together, required Moriscos to live among Old Christians and

10. Cisneros, according to one historian, especially disliked “elches,” as Christians who had converted to Islam under Muslim rule were known; see CABRILLANA CIÉZAR, Nicolás, *Almería morisca*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1982, p. 16. HARVEY, *Islamic Spain, op. cit.*, pp. 330-331, also discusses the elches.

11. MÁRMOL CARVAJAL, *Historia del rebelión*, pp.154-157.

12. For an account of these baptisms, see DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, Antonio and VINCENT, Bernard, *Historia de los moriscos: Vida y tragedia de una minoría*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1978, pp. 17-19; and NYKEL, A. R. A., *A Compendium of Aljamiado Literature*, New York and Paris: Macon, Protat Frères. 1929, p. 27. Note that efforts to catechise Moriscos continued almost up to their expulsion in 1609.

13. DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ and VINCENT, *Historia de los moriscos*, p. 22.

to marry their sons and daughters to Old Christians. It stipulated that Moriscos must follow burial practices of Old Christians, live faithfully as Catholics, and send their children to be instructed in the Catholic faith.¹⁴

From the late fifteenth century, Christian efforts to convert Muslims had targeted their children, who they hoped would not only grow up to become a new generation of loyal Christian subjects, but would also invert the usual generational order by teaching the basics of Christian doctrine--and a love for it--to their parents. Clerics especially sought young Muslim children whom they saw as least resistant to Christian proselytizing, presumably because they had not yet learned Muslim beliefs nor the abhorrence with which Muslim adults regarded Christians. Moreover, officials could treat young children as potential hostages, whom they could take away from parents who resisted conversion. Such action was justified, both secular and ecclesiastical officials argued, to protect the souls of the newly converted children; they did not add that the threat of taking their small children also worked to discourage expressions of resistance by Muslim parents.

In the later sixteenth century, Jesuits established schools for Morisco children in Granada and Valencia. A report from the Jesuit school in the Morisco quarter of Albaicín in Granada tells of young children going with their older brothers and sisters into the church each morning to take holy water, make the sign of the cross, and say the basic prayers.¹⁵ In the school, which was held outside in good weather in the cemetery next to the church, a youth that the Jesuits had assigned to the pre-reading group would recite and drill the young children in basic articles of faith such as the Lord's Prayer, rosary, and creed. Girls, who had a section in the church for daily prayers separate from the boys, did not stay to attend school with the boys.¹⁶ Instead, they learned needlework, a typical household craft that reinforced their domesticity. In addition, they learned Christian doctrine and reading and writing the Spanish language, which they scarcely knew.¹⁷ Once a week a priest would visit to talk with the girls.

Jesuits took a more active role in teaching boys in this gender-specific school system, dividing the boys into three groups based on age and ability. They taught the older boys to read, write, and count; and they provided them paper, quills, and primers free of charge. Boys showing the most aptitude and receptivity were trained to accompany Jesuits and translate their Spanish words into Arabic

14. Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), Inquisición, libro 1254. Undoubtedly, Old Christians varied in their responses to this edict. Some would oppose marrying their sons and daughters to those of Moriscos, recognizing that their grandchildren would then be barred from many privileges by purity of blood statutes.

15. MEDINA, "La Compañía de Jesús", pp. 69-73.

16. MEDINA, "La Compañía de Jesús", p. 69.

17. MEDINA, "La Compañía de Jesús", p. 72.

when they went to preach to Morisco adults. Some of these Morisco boys went on to enter the Jesuit order and carry on the tasks of converting other Moriscos, becoming in a sense “conquerors” of their own people. Not surprisingly, many Moriscos strongly opposed these schools as a usurpation of their parental role to teach their own children.¹⁸

As Moriscos could no longer freely visit a mosque or publicly observe Islam, many of their homes became sanctuaries for Muslim traditions and expressions of faith. For centuries Hispano-Muslims had built their houses with few windows, presenting to the street blank whitewashed walls that veiled their domestic activities from public view just as this culture veiled its women when they left the home. As a veil, these walls concealed from public view interior courtyards and hidden doors that led to adjoining houses. They also hid small nooks and crannies where religious and cultural objects that were later prohibited in the sixteenth century could be safe from view. Often situated with other Morisco homes on slopes and narrow winding streets, the location of these houses strengthened a sense of community even as it discouraged visits from outsiders.¹⁹

In their homes women played major roles in the cultural resistance of these people.²⁰ As Christian authorities determined to destroy the hated Muslim culture, however, they sent sheriffs into Morisco homes unannounced and especially at mealtimes when they could surprise a family eating food prepared in the Muslim manner, seated on the ground in traditional fashion. Rather than providing a protective distance and a female space safe from intrusion, the home became a primary focus for the cultural and religious conflicts between center and margins. Not all Morisco homes were the same, however, nor did all Moriscas play identical roles. They differed in where they lived in Iberia, especially in whether they lived in rural or urban settings. Some had only recently come to Iberia, whereas others belonged to families that had lived here for centuries. They varied in economic status, age, and how much they interacted with Old Christians, those Christians with no Jewish or Muslim ancestors.

Moriscas’ resistance to oppression, then, must be considered in its complexity. Historical evidence does not prove that all these women made a conscious choice to resist oppression. What it does suggest is that some Moriscas consciously chose to resist, some unconsciously resisted, and all of them probably

18. An account of the opposition of Moriscos, especially the opposition of the women, to these schools is in GARCÍA ARENAL, Mercedes, *Los moriscos*, Madrid, Editora Nacional, 1975, p. 122.

19. CARO BAROJA, Julio, *Los moriscos del Reino de Granada (Ensayo de Historia Social)*, Madrid, Artes Gráficas, 1957, pp. 264-265.

20. See, Mary Elizabeth, “Beyond the Veil: Moriscas and the Politics of Resistance and Survival,” in SÁNCHEZ, Magdalena S. and SAINT-SAËNS, Alain (eds.), *Spanish Women in the Golden Age: Images and Realities*, Westport and London, Greenwood Press, 1996, pp. 37-53.

resisted only because of the situation imposed on them. Some of their acts must be regarded as passive resistance rather than as active. And compounding all this are the interactive strategies that these women devised which combined active conscious resistance with active conscious accommodation.²¹ In my judgment, there is no question that Moriscas wanted above all to survive and to assure the survival of their families. Sometimes the imperatives of survival meant that they accommodated Christian regulations even though they might wish to resist them. In all cases, Christian regulations that transformed their difference into deviance stimulated a Morisco response—whether accommodation or resistance—which in turn escalated Christian determination to prohibit Morisco difference.

MORISCAS AND THE POWER TO RESIST

Moriscas, like so many other women, became politicized as they responded to threats to their homes and families. When Christians intensified their attempts to obliterate Morisco culture, both the women and men of this community had to become more aware of the context of power in which they sought to survive and to preserve their culture. Traditional Muslim ideals for women might prescribe enclosure for them in households where men would make decisions and carry out all interactions with outsiders. In sixteenth-century Spain, however, this ideal became impossible. Not only did Christian authorities enter Morisco homes to observe possible transgressions of their prohibitions, but they also arrested and questioned Moriscas about their roles in preserving Muslim culture. In the absence of male heads of households, Moriscas assumed traditionally male roles. Since all Muslim religious leaders had been expelled from Spain by the mid-sixteenth century, lay people and especially women, had taken on the task of teaching Islam.

Available evidence shows that these women were far more than passive victims powerless to help themselves or their families. In the first place, Moriscas worked. The domestic economy of most Morisco families required labor from all members except the very young or very old.²² Moriscas worked in fields and

21. SCOTT, James C., *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven and London, 1985, discusses many strategies of resistance and accommodation that people use who lack access to official power, passim. CORTEGUERA, Luis R., *For the Common Good: Popular Politics in Barcelona, 1580-1640*, Ithaca, Cornell U.P., 2002, xiii notes that we historians cannot fully claim to know the “minds and true intentions” of people who lived in the past.

22. VINCENT, Bernard, “Las mujeres moriscas”, in DUBY-PERROT, *Historia de las mujeres en occidente*, Madrid, Taurus, 1992, vol. 3, p. 598; and VINCENT, Bernard, “50,000 moriscos almerienses” in *Almería entre culturas siglos XIII al XVI*, Almería, Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, 1990, pp. 495-496.

gardens, in small factories that produced soap and tile and gunpowder. They provided unskilled labor in construction and in hauling. Essential to sericulture, these women picked mulberry leaves to feed silk worms, unwound the delicate filaments from cocoons, and spun and wove it into silk. They prepared food that they peddled in the streets or sold from their homes, and they earned some money from spinning cotton and wool. Some Moriscas worked as fishsellers, shopkeepers, spinners and housekeepers; while others, risking the unwanted attention of suspicious inquisitors, earned a meager living through healing and love magic.²³ For many Morisco families, women's work—both paid and unpaid—made the crucial difference between subsistence and destitution.

Women made the crucial difference for cultural survival as well. Despite official prohibitions of the Arabic language, Islam, and Muslim cultural practices, all of these aspects of Moriscos' lives survived. We know this because the Inquisition continued to prosecute Moriscos for apostasy, or reverting to their original religion after baptism. Women played prominent roles in many of these cases, such as that of Leonor de Morales, whose husband had testified against her that she had persuaded him to follow Muslim practices.²⁴ Moreover, other witnesses said that she danced and sang as a Muslim at weddings and that she ate while sitting on the ground, cooked meat in oil, ate meat on Fridays, changed into clean clothing on Fridays, and communicated with "other Moors." Under torture she confessed to changing into clean clothing and fasting and praying as a Muslim; but she confessed to nothing more, even though she was subjected to six turns of the cord, nor did she give names of any accomplices.²⁵

23. See, for example, the case of Ynés Yzquierda who was prosecuted by the Inquisition for curing and using an Arabic medical book, AHN, Inquisición, legajo 2075, número 15. For more on Moriscas and healing, see GARCÍA BALLESTER, Luis, *Los moriscos y la medicina: Un capítulo de la medicina y la ciencia marginadas en la España del siglo XVI*, Barcelona, Editorial Labor, 1984; and PERRY, Mary Elizabeth, "Las mujeres y su trabajo curativo en Sevilla, siglos XVI y XVII," in MATILLA, M^a Jesús y ORTEGA, Margarita (eds.), *El Trabajo de las mujeres: siglos XVI-XX*, Madrid, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1987; pp. 40-50. For more on love magic, see SÁNCHEZ ORTEGA, "Woman as Source of 'Evil'", pp. 196-215. The work of Moriscas is reported in several sources, including the 1589 census in AGS, *Cámara de Castilla*, legajo 2196; CARO BARRAJA, *Los moriscos del Reino de Granada*, pp.136-137; and FOURNEL-GUÉRIN, Jacquelin, "La femme morisque en Aragon", *Les Morisques et leur temps*, Paris, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1983, pp. 525-528.

24. AHN, *Inquisición*, legajo 2075, número 11, dated 1601.

25. As in much of medieval and early modern Europe, the Inquisition used torture not for punishment, but to ascertain the "truth." In this case, it examined Leonor de Morales using the potro, a rack to which the body and limbs were bound, with the examiner tightening the cords by turning them. Six turns would have been very severe. For more on the Inquisition and torture, see KAMEN, Henry, *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Bloomington, Indiana U P, 1985, pp.174-177.

In another case, witnesses accused Lucía de la Cruz along with her husband and 15-year-old daughter of living according to Islam.²⁶ Under torture she confessed to all she had been accused of and added, whether out of pain or defiance, that she washed five times each day in the Muslim manner and taught Islam to others. Inquisitors reported that she had communicated with other Moors about their proceedings against them. In both these cases, and countless others like them, inquisitors found Moriscas guilty of preserving Muslim practices in their homes, influencing others to follow Islam, and communicating with other Moors. The women, as Bernard Vincent has pointed out, “were the guardians of Muslim culture.”²⁷

It should be noted here that some Moriscos, both men and women, made genuine conversions to Christianity; and some of them intermarried with Old Christians--yet all of them remained subject to suspicion.²⁸ Some Moriscos responded to Christian efforts to obliterate their culture by external conformity to the dominant Christian culture, while hiding their internal loyalty to Islam. This longtime Muslim tradition of *taqiyya*, or “precaution,” had developed earlier as Muslims tried to preserve Islam in situations where it was forbidden.²⁹ “God is not concerned with your exterior attitude, but with the intention of your hearts,”³⁰ the mufti of Oran had advised Moriscos of Spain in 1563. “And if they tell you to denounce Mohammed, denounce him by word and love him at the same time in your heart.” To such dissimulation, some Christian clerics responded harshly, seeing Moriscos not as obedient sheep of their flock whom they could lead, as one cleric noted, but “as flesh-eating wolves, and rabid dogs.”³¹ Decrying the

26. AHN, *Inquisición*, legajo 2075, número 11, dated 1601.

27. VINCENT, “Las mujeres moriscas”, *op. cit.*, p.592.

28. The 1589 census reports very few cases of intermarriage, but for a very interesting example of intermarriage raising issues of assimilation, see AHN, *Inquisición*, legajo 2075, número 31, “Relación de causas de fe,” discussed in Chapter Seven of PERRY, *The Handless Maiden*, *op. cit.*, in PERRY, “Contested Identities: The Morisca Visionary, Beatriz de Robles”, in GILES, Mary E., *Women and the Inquisition*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1998, pp. 171-188. For Moriscos who became Christian prelates and attempted to Christianize other Moriscos, see Medina, S. J., “La Compañía de Jesús y la minoría morisca (1545-1614)”, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-136. More recent work on assimilating Moriscos of Aragon is by HALAVASIS, *Like Wheat to the Miller*, TUELLER, *Good and Faithful Christians*, *op. cit.*, and TUELLER, “The Assimilating Morisco”, *op. cit.*, pp.167-177.

29. LAMMENS, H., *Islam, Beliefs and Institutions*, trans. Sir E. Denison Ross, London, Methuen & Co., 1968, pp. 168-175; GALMÉS DE FUENTES, Alvaro, *Los moriscos (desde su misma orilla)*, Madrid, Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos, 1993, pp. 108-113; and CARDAILLAC, Louis, “Un aspecto de las relaciones entre moriscos y cristianos: polémica y *taqiyya*”, *Actas del coloquio internacional sobre literatura aljamiada y morisca*, Madrid, CLEAM, 1978, vol. 3, pp.107-122.

30. “Respuesta que hizo el mufti de Oran a ciertas preguntas que le hicieron desde la Andalucía,” May 3, 1563, published in García-Arenal, *Los moriscos*, *op. cit.*, pp.44-45.

31. BLEDA, Jaime, *Crónica de los Moros de España*, Valencia, Felipe Mey, 1618, f. 882.

obstinacy of Moriscos who refused to become true Christians, some clerics asserted that the women were the most “obstinate.”³²

For years Moriscas had carried on this subversive but covert--and sometimes even unconscious--resistance to Christianization in the privacy of their homes where they determined cooking and eating practices and set the schedule for changing into clean clothing. They taught the Arabic language and Muslim prayers to their children, perhaps unconsciously falling back on traditional practices. But a conscious choice to resist seems clear in those cases of women who hid their children so they would not have to attend schools established to Christianize them. The Christian report that labeled Morisco women as the most “obstinate” in resisting attempts to Christianize them reflected more than a biased view against them.³³

Some Morisco households began to engage in domestic subversion as Christian officials moved to prohibit all writings in Arabic or aljamía, regardless of their subject matter. In hollow pillars and false floors, ceilings and walls in their homes Moriscos concealed prohibited writings.³⁴ Morisco women even hid these texts on their bodies when outsiders came to look for incriminating evidence.³⁵ Not all Moriscos had access to this aljamiado literature, nor do we know how many would risk hiding these writings in their homes. Nonetheless,

32. “Informe de Madrid a Valencia sobre instrucción de los moriscos,” in GARCÍA ARENAL, *Los moriscos*, pp. 116-125, esp. 122. Perhaps the women’s “obstinacy” was actually their traditionalism. It may also reflect the fact many Morisco women had had less interaction with Christians and had not learned as well as Morisco men how to blend into Christian society. Morisco women seemed to have preserved traditional dress longer than Morisco men, who were more likely to dress like Christian men did.

33. “Informe de Madrid a Valencia sobre instrucción de los moriscos,” included in GARCÍA ARENAL, *Los moriscos*, pp. 116-125, esp. 122. For more on the resistance of women, see GARCÍA CÁRCEL. Ricardo, *Herejía y sociedad en el siglo XVI: La inquisición en Valencia 1530-1609*, Barcelona, Ediciones Península, 1980, p. 229; MONTER, E. William, *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1990, pp. 226-227; and TEMIMI, Abdeljelil (ed.), *Las prácticas musulmanas de los moriscos andaluces (1492-1609)*, *Actas del III Simposio Internacional de Estudios Moriscos*, Zaghuan, Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Ottomanes, Morisques, de Documentation et d’Information, 1989, p. 175.

34. NYKEL, A., *Compendium of Aljamiado Literature*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30; LÓPEZ-BARALT, Luce, *Islam in Spanish Literature: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Andrew Hurley, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992, pp. 171-174; and RIBERA, Julián and ASIN, Miguel, *Manuscritos árabes y aljamiados de la biblioeca de la junta*, Madrid, Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas, 1912, v-xviii, p.138, pp. 156-157. The Aljamiado story of Carcayona, a Muslim handless maiden, provides a metaphor for the story of the Moriscos and is more fully discussed in my recent book, *The Handless Maiden*, Chapter One, especially.

35. For some cases of Moriscas hiding forbidden writings on their bodies, see SURTZ Ronald, E., “Morisco Women, Written Texts, and the Valencia Inquisition,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXXII, 2, (2001), pp. 421-433.

this forbidden literature may well have empowered the Morisco community that was struggling to survive under very difficult circumstances.³⁶ Reinforcing a belief that common people could invoke supernatural powers to protect themselves, aljamiado literature also gathered together many popular beliefs and legends of a centuries-long oral tradition that helped to unify Moriscos in resisting Christian domination.³⁷

Soon Morisco homes were no longer safe spaces of resistance, for by the mid-sixteenth century authorities had already determined that they would enter Morisco homes to look for evidences of Muslim practices.³⁸ They sent rectors and lay sheriffs to Morisco homes to find out if the children were attending the compulsory Christian schools that had been established for them.³⁹ Far from the refuge that the home had been idealized for Moriscos, their homes became the primary forum for the struggle over heresy. While inquisitors found the commonplace heretical, Moriscos made the ordinary subversive.

Despite this dangerous and hostile world in which the very stones seemed to be watching them, Moriscos continued their resistance. Even after inquisitors

36. For example, the legends of Joseph and of Job in this literature emphasized faith and endurance in the face of affliction, and the wife of Job presented a model for women of heroic patience and holy compassion. For the wife of Job, see GUILLÉN ROBLES, *Leyendas*, vol. 1, pp. 82-83; and VESPERTINO RODRÍGUEZ, Antonio (ed.), *Leyendas aljamiadas y moriscas sobre personajes bíblicos*, Madrid, Editorial Gredos, 1983, pp. 272-299. For the legend of Joseph, which includes a temptress that he ultimately forgives and finds true love with, see GUILLÉN ROBLES, *Leyendas*, 1, xvi-xix. Prophecies explained present suffering as just punishment for moral degradation and irreligiosity among Moriscos, but they promised that the just and merciful God would grant them ultimate political victory over their enemies, as in GARCÍA ARENAL, *Los moriscos*, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-62. Three of these legends were translated for the Inquisition in Granada and are included in MARMOL CARVAJAL, *Historia de rebelión*, pp.169-174. The Mancebo de Arévalo's Breve Compendio and chapter 58 of Iça de Segovia's Breviario Sunni contain strong apocalyptic messages discussed in WIEGERS, Gerard, *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado*, Leiden and N.Y., E. J. Brill, 1994, pp. 168 and 240-242, esp.

37. NYKEL, A., *Compendium of Aljamiado Literature* 22, states that Arabic gradually became limited to an educated upper class; but he also overlooks the potential power of aljamía, seeing it as merely reflecting "the resignation of a subject people, trusting not to its strength, but seeking refuge in superstitions, charms, divinations, and a vague belief that Allah will send someone to deliver them from the evils and persecutions of which they are the victims." For more on the political significance of language, see GRAMSCI, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin HOARE and Geoffrey Nowell SMITH, New York, International Publishers, 1972, p. 21, esp.; and OJEDA RENTAS, Miriam, "Literatura de ficción como arma política de resistencia para los moriscos españoles del siglo XVI," in TEMIMI (ed.), *Las prácticas musulmanas*, *op. cit.*, pp.151-159.

38. See the "Instrucción" and "Informe" reprinted in GARCÍA ARENAL, *Los moriscos*, pp. 106-125.

39. S.J., "La Compañía de Jesús", *op. cit.*, pp. 69-73, for reports on schools established by Jesuits especially in Granada.

caught and condemned them, some found ways to communicate with other Moriscos in prison, and refused to name accomplices. Others ridiculed the sanbenito, the penitential garment meant to humiliate people condemned by the Inquisition. One outraged cleric reported that a Morisca sentenced to wear a sanbenito asked inquisitors for a second sanbenito for her young son “because he was cold.”⁴⁰ Another Morisca requested a new sanbenito because her old one was wearing out.⁴¹ Historical records do not tell us whether these women made their inquiries sincerely or in a conscious attempt to ridicule the power of the Inquisition.

PENANCE, PUNISHMENT, EXPULSION

Rituals of penance were meant to continue and become a permanent part of penitents' lives, permanently marking them and their families. In the face of the continuing power of penance, it is all the more remarkable that some Moriscas seemed to transform the sanbenito into a uniform of honor. Was it resistance or naivete that caused the Morisca to ask for a new sanbenito because her old one was wearing out? Was it desperate need or determination to resist that motivated another Morisca who asked for an extra sanbenito for her son to keep him warm?⁴² Inquisitors may not have sensed how such queries undercut the power of penance, nor did these queries destroy that power. Nevertheless, some four centuries later we might ask if the rituals of public penance truly discouraged acts of resistance.

The most cruel conflict between Moriscos and Christians invaded the Morisco family and kinship groups. When inquisitors interrogated Moriscos about their religious beliefs and cultural practices, they often pressured them to implicate other family members. Diego Martín, for example, had been denounced to inquisitors as a Moor who prayed the Qur'an. Under questioning, he tried to defend himself by saying that he had changed his shirt on Fridays only at the persuasion of his wife, Leonor de Morales, whom inquisitors the arrested, interrogated, and condemned.⁴³

In a case even more tragic, María Jérez, a fifteen-year-old girl, was denounced to inquisitors by her own parents, who had been accused of observing

40. FONSECA, Damián, *Justa expulsion de los moriscos de España: con la instrucción, apostasia, y traycion dellos: y respuesta á las dudas que se ofrecieron acerca desta materia*, Rome, Iacomo Mascardo, 1612, Biblioteca Nacional (hereafter BN) MS R11918, 126.

41. Memorial of Fr. Nicolás del Río to Philip III from Valencia, June 13, 1606, quoted in GARCÍA ARENAL, *Los moriscos*, p. 127; also, see BLEDA, pp. 883.

42. Memorial of Fr. Nicolás del Río to Philip III from Valencia, June 13, 1606, quoted in GARCÍA ARENAL, *Los moriscos*, p. 127; BLEDA, *Crónica de los moros*, p. 883; and FONSECA, *Justa expulsion*, p. 126.

43. AHN, Inquisición, legajo 2075, no. 11.

Islam.⁴⁴ Her father died in the prison of the Inquisition, but mother and daughter survived to be reconciled to the Church. It is doubtful that their family survived, however. Although María got the relatively light sentence of two years of instruction and seclusion in a monastery, her mother lost all her property to the Holy Office and was sentenced to perpetual prison. Under these circumstances, it would have been very difficult for them to be reunited or for Maía to have obtained a dowry so that she could later marry.

At a public auto de fe, the faithful gathered, unified against those found guilty by inquisitors, who would read aloud for all to hear their names, crimes, and punishments. Frequently penitents had to wear the sanbenito, marked with symbols of their offenses, which held their criminality up to public scorn. As ceremonies of degradation, the rituals presented themselves as “reconciling” the offenders to the Church, but they included no steps to re-integrate the penitent into society once the punishment had been completed.⁴⁵

Considering the devastating effect that these measures had on Morisco homes and families, some Moriscos concluded that they had exhausted all peaceful methods of resistance and opposition. A Christian pragmatic of 1566 confirmed their conclusion, for it condemned all expressions of Morisco culture and also declared null and void land agreements written in Arabic. Now those Moriscos who no longer had acceptable land titles had to pay large fines, and many Moriscos in Granada lost any claim to the land that they and their forebears had used for generations.⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, a Morisco rebellion erupted in Granada in 1568.

As the call to arms echoed throughout the Kingdom of Granada in late 1568, Moriscos seized arms long prohibited to them. Entire families went into the Alpujarra Mountains, many to return to openly observe Islam. Morisco resistance moved out of their homes to spread across much of southern Spain and defy the king’s armies for nearly two years. Women and children could not escape the warfare, for Christian soldiers killed or enslaved them when they could. A Christian eyewitness to a 1569 battle near Almería reported that Christians had killed between 1500 and 2000 of the enemy, “and among them some women because they fought as men although they had no weapons but stones and roasting spits.”⁴⁷ Other accounts tell of Morisco women and children who

44. AHN, *Inquisición*, legajo 2075, no. 11.

45. ERIKSON, Kai T., *Discusses reintegration and deviance in Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1966, pp. 16-17, esp.

46. The 1566 pragmatic appears in *La Nueva Recopilación*, libro 8; and it is published in BLEDA, *Crónica de los moros*, *op. cit.*, pp. 657-659.

47. *Relación muy verdadera sacada de una carta que vino al Illustre Cabildo y regimiento desta ciudad*, Seville, Alonso de la Barrera, 1569, BN Ms R 31.736.

joined the fight to save their besieged city of Galera. It was also at this battle that Christian soldiers saw Zarçamodonia, a Morisca who donned helmet and shield and took the sword of a dead Christian to kill many more.⁴⁸

When Christian forces finally defeated Morisco rebels, Philip II ordered that all Moriscos in Granada who were not already killed or enslaved should be taken from their homes to be scattered and relocated throughout his other kingdoms.⁴⁹ Spawning a sequel of yet more violence, as so many wars do, the War of the Alpujarras ended with the forcible uprooting of some 50,000 Moriscos from their homes in Granada and their relocation among Christians who did not welcome them. During this journey of exile, about one-quarter of the Moriscos would die from hardship and disease.⁵⁰

After a short-lived rebellion broke out among Moriscos in 1580 in the mountainous regions of Jérez de la Frontera, Christian officials increased their surveillance over the relocated Moriscos.⁵¹ They supervised yet another forcible relocation of the Moriscos from Granada. The question of what to do with the Moriscos prompted many competing solutions: increased Christianization attempts, more severe punishments for obstinacy, forcible relocation in supervised ghettos, wholesale enslavement, a huge marriage tax or castration of all males to reduce Morisco population, or simply expulsion. The Council of State finally chose to expel Moriscos from all the Spanish kingdoms.⁵²

Between 1609 and 1614, some 300,000 Moriscos had to leave their homes in the Spanish kingdoms. Christian officials tried to supervise this massive expulsion by keeping Moriscos in family units. In many cases, however, they required Morisco parents to leave behind their children younger than seven years who had been baptized.⁵³ Christian eyewitnesses to the actual embarkation of Moriscos left many accounts of their difficulties, but one account said that Moriscos gathered at the ports of embarkation “voluntarily” and “quickly,” as happily as Christians go to their churches. The women wore their best clothing,

48. PÉREZ DE HITA, Ginés, *Guerras civiles de Granada 1595-1597*, edición Paula BLANCHARD-DEMOUGE, 2 vols., Madrid, E. Bailly-Bailliére, 1913-1915, 2, p.253 for accounts of Zarçamodonia and other Morisco women and children.

49. Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Cámara de Castilla, legajo 2166.

50. HURTADO DE MENDOZA, Diego, *La guerra de Granada*, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Vol. 21, Madrid, Atlas, 1946, p. 92; DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ and VINCENT, *Historia de los moriscos*, p. 52.

51. LÓPEZ MARTÍNEZ, Celestino, *Mudéjares y moriscos sevillanos*, Seville, Rodríguez, Giménez y Compañía, 1935, pp.57-62.

52. BN, Cédula real sobre los moriscos, ms VE 195-19.

53. Declaración del bando que se a publicado de la exulsión de los moriscos, Seville, Alonso Rodríguez Gamarra, 1610; for more on the debate of what to do with young baptized Morisco children, see PERRY, *The Handless Maiden*, p.147-149.

this cleric reported; and one woman gave birth at the port, then said she was ready to leave and walked on board the boat.⁵⁴ Another Christian reported that the expelled Moriscos took much gold and silver with them, although this was forbidden. Women wore most of it sewn into their clothing, he wrote, particularly in the bands around their waists.⁵⁵ Yet in the port of Seville in 1610, some 300 Morisco children of seven years or younger were taken from their parents and placed under guard in warehouses along the river until Christian families were found to care for them.⁵⁶ We can only imagine the anguish that many Morisco families felt at leaving not only their homes but their younger children. Perhaps, as one Christian suggested, the women wore their best clothing and jewels to hide “something of the sorrow of their hearts.”⁵⁷ Perhaps, like Carcayona, the handless maiden in their *aljamiado* story, they found hope even in the midst of cruel wounds and forcible exile.

54. BLEDA, *Crónica de los moros*, p.1001.

55. FONSECA, *Justa expulsión*, *op. cit.*, p.273.

56. AGS, Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas, no. 60, pt. 2, legajo 415.

57. Aznar Cardona, quoted in GARCÍA ARENAL, Mercedes, *Los moriscos*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.