

Among Christians and Muslims: An Approach to the Captivity in the Frontier between the Kingdom of Castile and the Emirate of Granada (XIV- XV Centuries)

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Abstract

The proposition of this paper is to analyze the various facets of the captivity phenomenon in the frontier between Granada and Castile. In this context, the captivity was a very usual manifestation of the frontier violence and insecurity lived for the Andalusian society. For this reason, it begins referring to key issues such as the context, the importance of the captivity and the measures that occurred around the release of these captives in this geographical area. Subsequently, specific mentions are also added to the living conditions of these captives and their possible forms of redemption. Consequently, the captivity is here shown as a strong social problem through which to observe the main characters of the border society of the Iberian Peninsula during the end of the Middle Ages.

Keywords

Captivity, Kingdom of Castile, Emirate Nasrid of Granada, Andalusia, Late Middle Ages.

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Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar las diversas facetas del fenómeno del cautiverio en la frontera entre Granada y Castilla. En este contexto, el cautiverio fue una manifestación muy habitual de la violencia e inseguridad fronteriza vivida por la sociedad andaluza. Por este motivo, se comienza haciendo referencia a cuestiones clave como el contexto, la importancia del cautiverio y las medidas que se han producido en torno a la liberación de estos cautivos en esta zona geográfica. Con posterioridad, también se incorporan menciones concretas a las condiciones de vida de esos cautivos y sus posibles formas de redención. En consecuencia, el cautiverio se muestra aquí como un fuerte problema social a través del cual observar los principales personajes de la sociedad fronteriza de la Península Ibérica durante el final de la Edad Media.

Palabras clave:

cautiverio, reino de Castilla, emirato nazarí de Granada, Andalucía, Baja Edad Media.

1. Introduction. The violent context in the frontier between Castile and Granada

The special relationship of the Castilian kingdom and the Emirate of Granada was marked by the particular connection between the two States. In 1246, the Muslim Emir and the king Fernando III the Saint had signed the Pact of Jaén, in which Granada became recognized as a sovereign territory under Castilian vassalage. However, this agreement and the subsequent truces did not ensure peace, and war between both sides continued. Until the mid-thirteenth century, the Nasrid warriors, supported by troops from North Africa, and Castilians combatants maintained a continuous struggle of conquests and defeats. With the victory of Castile in the battle of El Salado, during the year 1340, the called War of the Estrecho finished, and the frontier between the two kingdoms stabilized. From that moment, the war operations on a large-scale were mitigated. Beyond the occasional campaigns intended to strengthen the image of the Castilian king as champion of the Reconquista, the war against the Muslim ceased to be a real priority for this monarchy. On the other hand, the Islamic side was more concerned with surviving than to show a belligerent attitude towards Castile. Because of this situation, truces agreed between both sides prevailed during the late medieval period. However, the violence at the frontier between the two countries

did not disappear. In this geographical area predominated a climate of smouldering conflict, which caused that violence and warfare became the centre of the frontier life¹.

The *cabalgadas* and *razzias* –raids– of the Christians and Muslims nobles marked the economy, the society and even the culture of those people who lived in the frontier. Castilian terms of *guerra guerreada* or *guerra menuda* defined these continuous surprise attacks, losses and recoveries of places and castles by both sides, whose purposes varied from the purest predation and pillage, to a mere retaliation for an earlier hit or a way of damaging the moral and resistance of the enemy². The resulting context between the two kingdoms gave rise to the genesis of a geographical context with its own rules on the margins of crowns policy, where war, understood as a result from the free personal determination, became the standard complement of economic activity. Amid all the singular features of that society, the captivity was a very usual manifestation of this violence and insecurity. The proposition of this paper is to make a general approach of this topic as the greatest expression of violence relations between Christians and Muslims in this historical context. In this way, the research will make reference to key issues such as the context, the importance of captivity and the measures that were taken around the lives of those captives and their possible ways of redemption.

2. Principal facets of captivity during the frontier stage

The fear of falling in captivity was not a remote possibility on both sides in the frontier between Castilian and Granadian people. The small raids, like skirmishes or located attacks, became an important economic occupation for the nobles that resided in this frontier. Those conflicts could happen between the two sides, or in actions of opposing nobles

1 About the relationship between Granada and Castile during the XIIIth-XIVth centuries, Juan de Mata CARRIAZO ARROQUIA, *En la frontera de Granada*, Universidad de Granada, Granada, 2002; Miguel Ángel LADERO QUESADA, *Granada. Historia de un país islámico*, Gredos, Madrid, 1989, pp. 125-146; Manuel GONZÁLEZ JIMÉNEZ, “La Frontera entre Andalucía y Granada: realidades bélicas, socioeconómicas y culturales”, *La incorporación de Granada a la Corona de Castilla*, Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada (coord.), Diputación Provincial de Granada, Granada, 1993, pp. 87-147.

2 About this perspective of the Castilian and Granada frontier, Manuel ROJAS GABRIEL, *La frontera entre los reinos de Sevilla y Granada en el siglo XV (1390-1481): Un ensayo sobre la violencia y sus manifestaciones*, Servicio de Publicaciones, Cádiz, 1995.

allied with Nasrid leaders, regardless of their creed. However, if war became a gainful occupation, although risky, for the frontier nobles, for the rest of society it meant a manifest threat that did not depend on the size of the dispute. In this sense, the case of prisoners from small raids was predominant at this advanced stage. The number of captives which could be taken as a part of the loot was quite high, sometimes at around two or three hundred people. On the other hand, in the case of sieges, the captives could triple this mentioned figure. Prisoners could come from the battlefield or be part of the besieger's side in the case of a failed attempt. However, these kinds of war initiatives were most unusual and sporadic until the beginning of the War of Granada (1482-1492)³. In all of these cases, the sudden change in the legal status of captives was considered legitimate, as long as their capture was part of the booty of the winning side⁴. Nevertheless, the enemies captured in those kinds of operations had a different fate according to their personal attitude. The prisoners, who had not fought with their captors, were automatically considered captives. In opposite cases, if the attacker survived the failed siege or assault, his destiny was linked to the decision of his captors. In the Muslim case, the *iman* could have them captives, execute them, or give them the opportunity of conversion. In the Castilian side, the decision depended on the royal authority or the verdict of the leader in charge of the host.

Beyond the reasons for each individual's captivity, captives could be from any social group of people spectrum who live in the frontier⁵. Broadly speaking, therefore, it can say that they could proceed from a high social background or be a common person. In the first case,

3 About the number of captives in these acts of war and some significant examples, consult Emilio CABRERA MUÑOZ, "Cautivos cristianos en el reino de Granada durante la segunda mitad del siglo XV", *Relaciones exteriores del Reino de Granada: IV Coloquio de Historia Medieval Andaluza*, Cristina Segura Graiño (coord.), Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, Almería, 1988, pp. 227-236, 228 ff.

4 In this sense, it is interesting to note the difference among the definition of captive and slave, which was consolidated in Castile during the fifteenth century. The essential difference was the possibility of obtaining redemption of captives; Enrique DEL PINO, *Esclavos y cautivos en Málaga*, Algazara, Málaga, 2001, pp. 71-74; Ellen G. FRIEDMAN, *Spanish captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1983.

5 About the general trail of captives in the chronicles, Abdelgahaffar BEN DRIS, "Los cautivos entre Granada y Castilla en el siglo XV según las fuentes árabes", *Actas del Congreso la Frontera oriental Nazarí como Sujeto Histórico (S. XIII-XVI): Lorca-Vera, 22 a 24 de noviembre de 1994*, Pedro Segura Artero (coord.), Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, Almería, 1994, pp. 297-306.

we have more detailed information about the period of captivity of nobles, whom were treated with great respect for their potential economic value of rescue. In contrast, “*the captivity and the rescue of the anonymous captives has been attempted to reconstruct from the texts about the most famous prisoners*”⁶. The concrete information about the life of these common captives is scarce. Research on this aspect of the frontier society becomes somewhat diffuse by the dispersed state of information that not reflected on the official documentation until very late date. However, the latest research about this topic has managed to portray this reality in a cursory way through other sources of different nature. Elements such as municipal regulations, notarial fees, testaments, inventories of properties, letters, or even references in secondary chronicles have helped to have a better knowledge about captivity in the reality border. Thanks to these secondary sources, it can be asserted that private captives had a more equitable treatment than the public ones.

On the Christian side, the captives established in the Emirate of Granada that belonged to the Muslim crown were scattered around the major cities of the Nasrid kingdom, like Malaga, Ronda, Almeria or Granada. They worked very hard in the field and as masons. Women and children attended domestic service. At night, they were locked in deep dungeons or makeshift prisons like abandoned cisterns or silos. In this sense, the so-called “*corral de Granada*” became especially popular among Christians sources. On the other hand, in many occasions they were also mistreated and tied with various elements, such as stocks, irons and chains on hands and feet. In the worst cases, there was a constant risk of being transported for sale to Africa where the option of release was reduced. As regards Muslim captives, we have even less evidence of their captivity because the Nasrid sources of this period are very scarce. Those limited available evidences prove a similar fate to that of their Christian counterparts. In both of cases, generally speaking

6 José Antonio MARTÍNEZ TORRES, *Prisioneros de los Infieles: vida y rescate de los cautivos cristianos en el Mediterráneo musulmán*, Bellaterra, Barcelona, 2004, p. 21. Perhaps the captivity of a nobleman who was better documented, was the case of the Emir of Granada Muhammad XII Boabdil (1482-1483/1486-1492), captured during the Battle of Lucena. His period of captivity was recorded in Anonymoys, “*Relación circunstanciada de lo acaecido en la prisión del Rey Chico de Granada*”, *Relaciones de algunos sucesos de los últimos tiempos del reino de Granada*, Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1868, pp. 47-67.

it was noted that all prisoners were poorly fed and forced to work hard to hasten their redemption. The duration of this stage of captivity may oscillate significantly from a few months to even decades⁷.

3. Conversion of Captives. Apostates and renegades

To combat their harsh situation, the common captives had the possibility of religious conversion. Religion in this frontier area was an important landmark in the relationship between Castilians and Granadians, although both creeds survived in relative harmony and even generated a syncretic doctrinal system with features of both beliefs. However, faith was always an ideological handicap, despite this development of similarities among the customs of both societies. Because of this, religious conversion really had relevance in the legal field beyond personal beliefs might entail⁸. In a general framework, this personal decision to apostatize was aimed at obtaining freedom or, at least, improving their social status. In this way, Christian converses were called *helches*. Contrary to Castilian sources expressed, prisoners were not under pressure to be converted as the Christians exaggerated. If Muslims had tried to force to a large part of the Christian captives to convert them, the economic gains from captivity would have been minimal. The Muslim law required facilitating the release of converts to their religion, and the owner could not sell the converse captives to the Christian side⁹. For that reason, in general we can say that the Christian conversions were produced by despair or inability of Castilians to regain freedom. In other few cases, it also could happen due to personal conviction. The protection of these converts to Islam was linked to canon law, which was im-

7 Francisco VIDAL CASTRO, “El cautivo en el mundo islámico; visión y vivencia desde el otro lado de la frontera”, *II Estudios de Frontera. Actividad y vida en la Frontera (Alcalá la Real, 1997)*, Francisco José Ceballos, José Rodríguez Molina (coords.), Diputación Provincial, Jaén, 1998, pp. 771-823. A collection of testimonies are in Manuel ROJAS GABRIEL, *La frontera entre...*, pp. 214 ff.; José María de COSSÍO, “Cautivos de moros en el siglo XIII: el texto de Pedro Marín”, *Al Andalus*, VII, 1942, pp. 42-112.

8 About the religion perspective in this frontier area, James W. BRODMAN, “Captives or Prisoners: Society and Obligations in Medieval Iberia” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, XX, Universidad de Navarra, Navarra, 2011, pp. 201-219; Angus MACKAY, *La España de la Edad Media. Desde la frontera hasta el imperio (1000-1500)*, Cátedra, Madrid, 1981, pp. 214-222.

9 Manuel GONZÁLEZ JIMÉNEZ, “La Frontera entre...”, pp. 134-135. The whole conversion process was governed by its own rules. In this sense, it is worth stressing that special cases of apostasy, like conversions of minors, had their own rules in the common law; Emilio CABRERA MUÑOZ, “Cautivos cristianos en...”, pp. 232 ff.

mutable and inviolable. Moreover, the condition of the Muslims under Christian rule was regulated by treaties whose content and duration often depended on political expediency of the moment, regardless of their faith. In this case, the *tornadizos* were the Muslims who converted to Christianity, fact that did not imply an improvement of their situation as significant as in the previous case. For the nobility, the conversion did not usually occur on the Christian side because the Castilian nobles knew that their liberation was a matter of money and time. In contrast, between the Muslim nobility the issue evolved differently as the final period of the relationship between the kingdoms progressed. The conversions of some Muslim noble lineages during the War of Granada, for instance, served to maintain their high political and social profiles within the new social order established¹⁰.

Among the different cases of common people's apostasy, it is worth stressing the issue of common fighters' conversion, because this situation generated a great danger to their former coreligionists. Regardless their creed, the habit of using renegades was a constant in the frontier warfare because they perfectly knew how to take by surprise a strongpoint of the side to which they had belonged. For this reason, their judgments defined the main objective of a raid on more than one occasion. For this reason, strong rewards were given for their heads. But this risk was worth for the benefits that this behaviour entailed, among them the mere fact of preserving life for those who were threatened or condemned. In the Muslim case, for example, occasionally some Muslims crossed the border with the intention of converting to Christianity, bringing Christian captives as evidence of good faith. Likewise, many of these converts changed again their faith on more than one occasion, according their immediate interests¹¹. But beyond these interested conversions, renegades could also become part of the

10 This is the case of the descendants of the Moorish royal family after the final defeat of the Emirate in 1492. Maybe the great example of this type of conversion was Cidi Hiaya, renamed Pedro de Granada after the conquest of Baza (1489); Manuel ESPINAR MORENO, Juan GRIMA CERVANTES, "Un personaje almeriense en las crónicas musulmanas y cristianas. El infante Cidi Yahya Alnayar (1435?-1505)", *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Almerienses*, VII, 1987, pp. 57-83.

11 About the representation of these renegades in the border, Manuel ROJAS GABRIEL, *La frontera entre...*, pp. 217 ff. José Enrique LÓPEZ DE COCA CASTAÑER, "La liberación de cautivos en la frontera de Granada (siglos XIII-XV)", *La España Medieval*, XXXVI, 2013, pp. 79-114; Juan de Mata CARRIAZO ARROQUIA, "Relaciones fronterizas entre Jaén y Granada el año 1479", *Revista de Archivo, Bibliotecas y Museos*, LXI-1, 1955, pp. 23-51, 32 ff.

rival armies in various and singular legally recognized ways, especially on the Muslim side. That was the case of the process of assimilation of *helches* of Christian origin in the Nasrid court for instance, which was very similar to what happened in the Mamluk Egypt or the Ottoman Turkey but in a smaller scale¹².

4. Release of captives

4.1. Flight of captives

Regardless of the decision to forsake their faith, the captives had the option to try to flee from their captors. Over the course of the Late Middle Ages, the flight had become a form of release as effective as direct. This form of liberation was recognized within the own rules of captivity if the escape took place on the land frontier. Nevertheless, if it was produced across the sea, the freeing was not recognized. That same common law that recognized the right to release for flight, also legislated that fled captives should return the properties of their owner. In general, this phenomenon of escape was sometimes hardly avoidable, both its singular facet as in the case of mass escapes. Taking advantage of the oversight of captors, stealing a horse, cutting the irons of the stocks with limes or knives, scaling the dungeons, taking down the ramparts, or even killing the guards were some of the diverse forms of escape that the sources collect. However, not all initiatives had the same result. The success of the escape was directly proportional to the proximity of the town of captivity to trade circuits and the own area of origin. For this reason, the incidence of this type of release in the Christian side, much more widespread, was located in the central sector of the frontier between the Nasrid territories, the closest part to the capital of the Emirate. To encourage this type of efforts, during the reign of Juan I (1379-1390) the Castilian crown installed a great lighthouse in the Homage Tower of the fortress of Alcalá la Real, at 300 meters from the border with Granada and its surrounding areas, to guide the captives at night. The importance of this structure became so significant that, after its destruction in the first

12 In that sense, it is note that in certain specific cases, some converts lineages were able to reach high-profile political and social positions in the Nasrid Emirate. That was the case of the Benegas family. On the other hand, it stressed the appearance of a formed formed by elite guard young converts to Islam. They were called *ma'lügün*, o *mamālik*; Miguel Ángel LADERO QUESADA, *Granada. Historia de...*, p. 53.

years of the fifteenth century, the Earl of Tendilla built it again during the War of Granada as a psychology symbol of the future Castilian victory against the Muslim forces¹³.

The experiences of the Christian runaways were reported as moral victories over Muslim forces. The success of these initiatives usually was associated with divine miracles which promoted the necessary conditions for their freeing. In fact, for some contemporary chronicles the stories of some escapes are so incredible that they can only be explained by this divine help. That is why one of the most important traces of these captive's lives for the historians was in the stories of miracles that were composed in this period. Traditionally, a high number of saints were associated with miraculous escapes from captivity. In this payroll of the Hispanic hagiography highlighted the Virgin of Guadalupe, Santo Domingo, San Isidoro of Seville, San Antonio de Padua, Santo Domingo de la Calzada or more specifically Santo Domingo de Silos. In that sense, since the thirteenth century the so-called *Miráculos Romançados de Santo Domingo de Silos* and the works of Gonzalo de Berceo represented the main sources to build the adventures of these Castilian runaways. For the fifteenth century we can see highlighted the stories collected in *Los Milagros de cautivos segun los códices del Monasterio de Guadalupe*. In this tale was incorporated some personal details of various captives, an account of their captivity, and the personal invocation to the Virgin with their promises in exchange for his freedom¹⁴. On the other hand, captives who managed to escape made votive offerings to various centres of devotion and pilgrimage of Castile. These physical traces are also considered a source of first hand to rebuild captivity at the Andalusian frontier¹⁵.

13 About this topic, José Enrique LÓPEZ DE COCA CASTAÑER, "La liberación de...", pp. 80-83.

14 José María DE COSSÍO, "Cautivos de moros..."; María DE LOS LLANOS MARTÍNEZ CARRILLO, "Historicidad de los Miráculos romançados de Pedro Marin (1232-1293). El territorio y la esclavitud", *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, XXI, 1991, pp. 69-97; Pilar GONZÁLEZ MODINO, "La Virgen de Guadalupe como Redentora de Cautivos", *La religiosidad popular: Vida y Muerte. La imaginación religiosa*, Carlos Álvarez de Santaló, María José Rodríguez Becerra (coord.), Antrophos, Barcelona, 1989, II, pp. 461-471.

15 Prime examples can still be seen on the facades of the Monastery of San Juan de los Reyes (Toledo), and the Real Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe (Cáceres).

4.2. Official release of captives

Apart from these initiatives, the captive had various channels for obtaining his release officially. In the first case, when Castile managed to impose its military power, the negotiations between the two states allowed to increase the hopes of redemption with the release of isolated captives. After the conquest of Antequera by the Regent Fernando of Trastámara (1410), the tradition of granting truce to the Emir of Granada in exchange for the delivery of Christian captives was opened. From that moment, the posterior signatures of a cease-fire between the two states sealed the moment in which both parties pledged to hand over several hundred individuals captured immediately and the annual delivery of captives from Granada until the truce was concluded¹⁶.

Although this requirement would continue to appear assiduously in such agreements thereafter, in some cases it was replaced or supplemented by the payment of a tribute. This clause was given in cases in which Christian captives could exceed the value of the agreed amount. Such cases were contemplated during the signed of the agreements among Castilians and Granadians after the brief campaigns of Juan II (1406-1454) and Enrique IV (1454-1474) to confront the Emirate in the middle of the fifteenth century. The Christian kingdom knew that this stipulation could also be reinterpreted in favour of its immediate interests too. Perhaps the most remarkable case of instrumentation of this clause occurred during 1429. In this year, the monarch Juan II requested to the emirate the delivery of the totality of Christian captives in the Muslim territory in exchange for a new renewal of truces between both kingdoms. The crown hoped to use the refusal of the emirate as reason to summon a new campaign against the Nasrid emirate, as it finally happened¹⁷. The subsequent truces followed the previous system, because for the Nasrid side these measures were a way to smooth the payment of *parias* which afflicted the economy of the kingdom of Granada.

16 About this topic, Cristóbal TORRES DELGADO, "Liberación de cautivos del reino de Granada. Siglo XV", *Estudios en memoria del Profesor D. Salvador de Moxó*, Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada (coord.), Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 1982, pp. 639-651.

17 Fernán PÉREZ DE GUZMÁN: *Crónica del señor rey don Juan II*, Valencia, 1779, pp. 256-257.

4.3. Liberation of captives in exchange for a remuneration. The trade of “*alfaqque*”

Beyond these royal initiatives, the captives were usually an object of sale or a barter item, because the real purpose of entries that promoted their captures was the economic benefit of their ransoms. That is why both sides preferred to capture enemies than to kill them. In regard to this matter of captivity, it should be done a terminological clarification, because the captives that found freedom in this way were not released technically, but were redeemed in exchange for a remuneration that conditioned the whole process. The duration of captivity depended on multiple factors among which it can highlight the availability of means to pay personal freedom. Similarly, the geographic component influenced the possibilities to pay the ransom because the level of integration of the town of captivity in the trade routes frequented by *alfaqques* increased that possibility. As mentioned previously, the intrinsic value of the captive, and therefore their life conditions, depended on his acquisitive power. Because of this, the capture side put special care in safeguard the health of the nobles that were captives because they were responsible for raising the money required for themselves ransoms, situation which diverged greatly from the case of the common people.

In the Castilian case, it can be said that the captivity of a nobleman could become a nightmare for his lineage. The payment of his ransom could rise to high figures for his own home. In fact, full inheritances were sold to pay certain ransoms during the Late Middle Ages. On the other hand, the absence of the head of a lineage, on who heavy economic responsibilities devolved upon, sometimes caused the impoverishment and the disintegration of his family. During this period, important Castilian celebrities of the frontier were captured and later released by paying large ransoms. Perhaps the most significant event was the captivity of Juan de Saavedra, the *alfaqque mayor* of the kingdom of Castile, in a ride against Malaga and Estepona lands during the year 1448. The Castilian noble was captured by the Nasrid forces for more than two years until king Juan II had to authorize to the council of Seville to dedicate 250.000 maravedies to help the pay for their rescue, which amounted to about 12.000 doblas¹⁸. This example was not unique because many Castilian knights

18 Everything about this singular case is in Juan TORRES FONTES, “Los alfaqques castellanos en la frontera de Granada”, *Homenaje a Don Agustín Millares Carlo*, Caja Insular de Ahorros, Gran Canarias, 1975, pp. 99-116, 106 ff.

were taken prisoners during his raids, as it happened to Diego Fernández de Zurita. In this latter case, the Castilian nobleman was forced to hand over members of their own home as hostages in exchange to time to obtain money to pay his ransom, something that happened regularly too¹⁹. Despite this risk of captivity, the frontier nobles could not stop practicing entries and raids, because these were the basis of their socioeconomic power²⁰. On the other hand, it can be highlight that these events not only affected the economy of the kingdom nobility, but also influenced the own general conditions of the war of the Castilian crown against the Muslims. For this reason, for instance, Queen Isabel I (1474-1504) prohibited such practices before the start of the War of Granada (1482-1492) to thereby undermine the general economic capacity of Muslim forces²¹.

The process of release the common captives in exchange for a payment were not less hard. Ailments and dangers that they suffered encouraged their families to obtain the means and economic supports which were necessary for their redemption as quickly as possible. Often the amount of money collected was insufficient, so the families were forced to get money through loan and charitable alms. In regard to this last matter, it is notable that both societies were aware of the problem represented by the high amount needed to the liberation of the common captives. Against this constraint, the influence of the charity aimed at rescuing captive in testamentary orders, and the performance of the Redemptorist Orders in the process of liberation were a clear example of kindness in the Castilian case. This kind of commitment also played a role of representation of the social status of an individual, because a high social position meant a commitment to help the most disadvantaged. In that sense, the participation in the release of Muslim prisoners was considered one of the most charitable actions that a Christian person could carry out. In the case of Christian religious orders who

19 José Enrique LÓPEZ DE COCA CASTAÑER, “De nuevo sobre el romance “Río Verde río Verde y su historicidad””, *Actas del I Coloquio de Historiad e Andalucía. Andalucía Medieval*, Universidad de Córdoba, Córdoba, 1982, pp. 11-19; Hipólito SANCHO DE SOPRANIS, “Diego Fernández de Zurita, Alcaide de Arcos, Embajador en Granada”, *Revista de Historia y de Genealogía Española*, III/16, 1929, pp. 228-326, 327 ff.; Cristóbal TORRES DELGADO, “Liberación de cautivos...”, pp. 644-647.

20 Manuel ROJAS GABRIEL, “La nobleza como élite militar en la frontera con Granada. Una reflexión” *Actas del Congreso la Frontera Oriental Nazarí como Sujeto Histórico (S.XIII-XVI): Lorca-Vera, 22 a 24 de noviembre de 1994*, Pedro Segura Artero (coord.), Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, Almería, 1997, pp. 181-191.

21 Elio Antonio DE NEBRIJA, *Cerco al reino de Granada*, ed. y trans. Matilde Conde Salazar, UNED, Madrid, 1992, p. 59.

were involved in this process, it can be said that expeditions to Muslim territories were organized annually. In these missions, religious tried to set the captives free by request of their families, using the rest of the alms collected to free many nameless others. Another variant to incite popular charity was the begging, an activity not widespread in the documentation but subject to strict controls to prevent frauds²².

On the Nasrid faction, the releasing of captives was also included within the charity that was expected from the Muslim society. The ransom of the captives was normally paid in silk or in kind to the Christian side, because their currency was devalued greatly. However, Granadians often preferred to release Christian prisoners by an exchange with a co-religionist inmate in Castile²³. The reason for this approach was both economic and religious because many fakirs preferred exchange the captives for not benefit in any way to Castile, despite the Koran did not prohibit categorically the pay of a ransom. This freeing system became so important that even Christian nobles carried out rides with the only purpose to capturing Muslims to be exchange for Christian captives. However, sometimes the number of captives was less important than the identity of a captive in particular, case in which a complex barter took place if the Christian side needed a specific Muslim captive to recover his important captive. To achieve this objective, relatives of Christian hostages were forced to seek and reach an agreement with the owner of the corresponding Granada captive. This situation opened the possibility of commit abuse by the owner who was trying to sell the specific captive to the desperate captive's family. To avoid this practice, from an early date were developed regulations that forced the owners of Moorish captives to provide them to people who needed them to exchange for Christians. The initiative culminated in the Castilian Cortes of 1462, when the process was institutionalized²⁴.

22 María Teresa RUIZ BARRERA, "Redención de cautivos. Una especial obra de misericordia de la Orden de la Merced", *Monjes y frailes. Religiosos y religiosas en Andalucía durante la Baja Edad Media. Actas del III coloquio de Historia Medieval andaluza*, José Sánchez Herrero (coord.), Diputación Provincial de Jaén, Jaén, 1984, pp. 410-411; James W. BROMAN, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain. The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 108-116.

23 Milouda CHAROUI HASNAOUI, "Esclavos y cautivos según la ley islámica: Condiciones y consecuencias", *De l'esclavitud a la llibertat. Esclaus i lliberts a l'Edat Mitjana*, María Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, Josefina Mutgé i Vives (eds.), CSIC, Barcelona, 2000, pp. 1-15.

24 José Enrique LÓPEZ DE COCA CASTAÑER, "La liberación de...", pp. 96 ff. About the process of captives exchanging, Manuel GONZALEZ JIMENEZ, "La frontera entre...", pp. 117-132.

In general, the figure in charge of all of these official negotiations, payments of ransoms and exchanges of captives was the *alfaqque*. This trade, from the arabic *al-faqqat* –redentorist, was well-known and respected in the frontier²⁵. In the Christian case, these individuals were appointed by the frontier councils to take over of the rescue of the captives and later driving them to a safe place. The codification of his functions and methods had been expressed in Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas*, which were coded in the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, these old laws were supplemented gradually by the “*general custom and usage*” of the frontier²⁶. That set of laws prescribed that *alfaqques* could move by the highways and not by open fields, displaying a banner and sounding a trumpet to identify themselves. As a rule, they had an *aman*, a safe-conduct which forced to respect Muslim beliefs in exchange for protection. Through this permission they got the power to travel and reside in Granada for a limited period of time. Those insurance letters could be granted by the emir or another delegated authority. These Christian *alfaqques* collected for their services between 10% and 12% of the surrender value in cash. At first it may seem the *alfaqques* were above the hostility among kingdoms and they enjoyed something akin to diplomatic immunity. However, their entity was not always respected along the frontier because this area had its own rhythm outside the formal agreements. For this reason, it can find other official institutions, coexisting or preceding the *alfaqquería* which promoted the coexistence between the two societies and influenced the work of these individuals. This is the case of the *juez de frontera* –frontier judge, the *alcalde entre moros y cristianos* –mayor between Moors and Christians– and the *fieles del rastro*. Although their jurisprudence was focused on treaties of truces or pacific resolution of problems, sometimes they were also involved in captivity lawsuits²⁷.

25 About this figure, see the classic researches Juan de Mara CARRIAZO ARROQUIA, “Un alcalde entre los cristianos y los moros en la frontera de Granada”, *Al Andalus*, XIII/1, 1948, pp. 35-96; Juan TORRES FONTES, “Los alfaqques castellanos...”.

26 In these terms used to appear in the chronicles of this time, such as Alonso DE PALENCIA: *Crónica de Enrique IV*, trad. Antonio Paz y Meliá, BAE, Madrid, pp. 8 ff. About the codification of their functions, ALFONSO X: *Las Siete Partidas*, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, 1808, título XXX: *Segunda Partida*, “de los alfaqques, e de lo que estos han de fazer”, II, pp. 336-339.

27 About this topic, see Ann K. LAMBTON, “Institutions on the Castilian-Granadan Frontier, 1369-1482”, *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Robert Bartlett, Angus Mackay (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, pp. 113-131.

The people who occupied the position of *alfaqeque* showed great versatility because they could act as merchants, messengers and even spies. Likewise, their loyalty was relatively ambiguous in some cases. The need to eliminate abuses and malpractices in their performance generated an attempt to institutionalize the charge by the monarchy since the reign of Enrique II (1366-1379). The Castilian Crown had keen to control the contact with the Emirate and avoid compromise and associations between populations on either side of the frontier, accustomed to have a high degree of independence. In the Courts of Toro, in 1369, the royal trade of *alfaqeque de tierra de moros* –*alfaqeque* from Moorish lands– was mentioned for the first time. Soon after, in the *Ordenamiento de Toro –Regulation of Toro*, the office already appeared within the great charges of the administration of the kingdom. However, we will have to wait until the fifteenth century to verify the designation of the first incumbent *alfaqeque mayor* of the kingdom of Castile, which fall on Diego Fernández de Córdoba. Afterwards, the position became hereditary with the appointment of Juan de Saavedra until its abolition²⁸. To improve the performance of their duties, the monarch appointed the called *alqualdes de alfaqeques* –mayor of *alfaqeques*– under advice from the *alfaqeque mayor*. They had a wide jurisdiction, stressing their judicial activity on lawsuits and causes, civil and criminal, between Christians and Moors. At the same time, the *alqualdes de alfaqeques* appointed the *alfaqeques menores* –minor *alfaqeques*. Their jurisdiction was much smaller, acted under delegation in very specific areas, as dry ports and naval bases of the Andalusian coast²⁹.

In general, the implementation of these royal charges was a complete failure. Since the appearance of the *Alfaqequería mayor*, the crown lawsuits with various Andalusia towns multiplied. The councils of the frontier wanted to preserve their autonomy in a matter as beneficial as the exchange of captives. Alternatively, various researches have expressed that the real activity of these *alfaqeques* rarely appears in documents of the frontier as interrogatories or lawsuits, or even this role was also

28 Elvira M. MELIAN, “El rescate de cautivos en la cotidianidad de la frontera cristiano-musulmana durante la Baja Edad Media. Una interpretación desde la perspectiva de los Arias Saavedra, alfaqeques mayores de Castilla en la frontera”, *Trastámara*, VIII, 2011, pp. 33-53.

29 José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA, Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “La intervención de alfaqeques y exeas en el rescate de cautivos durante la Edad Media”, *Anales de la Facultad de Derecho*, XXVIII, 2011, pp. 139-165, pp. 157-159.

performed by other members of the community without official charge³⁰. On the other hand, the position of *alfaqque menor* began to be leased gradually. The officers, who had acceded in this way, acted unscrupulous, trying to recover their economic investment in the shortest possible time. The situation gave rise to all kinds of frauds and abuses³¹. In the Muslim world, the situation was very similar. The figure of *alfaqque* also had existed since the tenth century. However, the most abundant references appear in the Nasrid era. Although the activities of the Muslim *alfaqques* are not less well documented than the Castilian case, they seem to have been more numerous than their Christian counterparts. Apparently, the course of their work was very similar to Castilian case. It is worth pointing out that many of these Muslim *alfaqques* developed their work in both directions. They could rescue a captive of their side in the outward and another of the opposing side in the back³². In both cases, the trade of *alfaqque* began to be a nuisance by the lack of a real commitment to only one side when the hostilities among the two kingdoms intensified. Therefore some authors consider that the abolition of the trade took place during the War of Granada, although officially the position did not disappear until the reign of Felipe III (1598-1621). During this last period of time, its influence decreased considerably³³.

4.4. Freedom of captives after a victory in the battlefield

Finally, the release of a captive could occur after a military success. At the time in which a village or a fortress was taken, the captives of the winning side automatically had the right to regain their freedom. In a sense, it seems paradoxical that the efforts to capture new captives also signified the releasing of their own. However, this secondary perspect-

30 Emilio CABRERA MUÑOZ, "Cautivos cristianos en...", pp. 132 ff.

31 Manuel GARCÍA FERNÁNDEZ, "La alfaqquería mayor de Castilla a fines de la Edad Media. Los alfaqques reales", *Estudios sobre Málaga y el Reino de Granada en el V Centenario de la Conquista*, José Enrique López de Coca Castañer (ed.), Diputación Provincial de Málaga, Málaga, 1987, pp. 37-54.

32 Francisco VIDAL CASTRO, "El cautivo en el mundo islámico; visión y vivencia desde el otro lado de la frontera", *II Estudios de Frontera. Actividad y vida en la Frontera (Alcalá la Real, 1997)*, Francisco Toro Ceballos, José Rodríguez Molina (coords.), Diputación Provincial de Jaén, Jaén, 1998, pp. 767-778.

33 José Enrique LÓPEZ DE COCA CASTAÑER, "Esclavos, alfaqques y mercaderes en la frontera del Mar de Alborán (1490-1516)" *Hispania*, XXXVIII, 1978, pp. 275-300, pp. 290 ff. Raúl GONZÁLEZ ARÉVALO, *El cautiverio en Málaga a fines de la Edad Media*, Diputación Provincial de Málaga, Málaga, 2005, pp. 115 ff.

ive of border raids also had a great importance because it meant saving large economic amounts of ransoms. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the delivery of captives also was included in the surrender agreements as one of the main points of negotiations. As mentioned about the ways of falling in captivity, this was a reality very restricted. The released captives were very few because the operations performed by frontier nobles were very localized. Only the crown had the ability to unite the forces of the kingdom to perform remarkable victories in the battlefield. But the release of captives was not a priority for the kings of Castile but a side effect of the conquest. In that sense, the few initiatives undertaken by the kings and their troops were the moments where more captives were caught and released. Perhaps the most exemplary case of such releases was the War of Granada (1482-1492), the time when the crown decisively returned to lead the fight against the Nasrid Emirate.

During the Muslim siege of Zahara de la Sierra (1481), Muslim initiative perceived as the *casus belli* of this conflict, 160 Christians were captives. Similarly, 1000 Castilian warriors were captured in the defeat of Ajaria (1483). On the other hand, Castilian forces accomplished great feats like capturing 4.000 Muslims in the siege of Alhama (1482), or taking 700 followers of the emir Boabdil prisoners in the battle of Lucena (1483). Along the key years of this conflict between Granada and Castile, all Muslim towns and villages, that the Catholic Kings managed to subdue, liberated an important number of Christian captives. The freeing of these Castilians was depicted as an act of religious redemption dependent on the crown. The kings themselves were responsible for welcoming of those captured after the territory was recovered for Christianity. During this propaganda ceremony, the kings gave to the captives' new clothes and alms to return home. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that a great part of the Muslims defeated during this conflict became part of the Kingdom of Castile as vassals. However, in the case of sieges where negotiation failed, the habitants of that town were considered as prisoners of Castile. This was the case of the city of Malaga (1487). The payment for the release of these captives amounted to almost 10 million of *maravedis*³⁴.

34 Miguel Ángel LADERO QUESADA, "La esclavitud por guerra a fines del siglo XV; el caso de Málaga", *Hispania*, CX, 1967, pp. 63-88; Raúl GONZALES ARÉVALO, "El cautivo en los libros de repartimiento del reino de Granada a finales del siglo XV", *Baetica. Estudios de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, XXVI, 2004, pp. 241-255.

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it is noted that the captives of the frontier between Castile and Granada were the greatest expression of the violent relationship between Christians and Muslims on the frontier of both kingdoms. As in the past centuries, the rescue of the hostages was a central subject in the interventions and negotiations between both kingdoms. However, during the Late Middle Ages the captivity was revealed as an unconnected situation to the royal intervention, as was the war itself. The intention of the monarchs to impose an institutionalized system about this situation was always subject to the local rhythm of this geographical area. The royal legality demonstrated limited efficacy because the private and traditional interests prevailed in most cases. In contrast, the traditional uses and customs of this geographical area was imposed, reflecting that the frontier had an own idiosyncrasy; something that also had representation in the own consideration of religious customs. There is no doubt that the representation of the captivity collected the main cultural features of their own frontier society. Through the renegades, turncoats, *helches*, or the families of the captives, is possible to sketch a model of the common life in this area where violence remained latently. This situation continued until the end of the Middle Ages in the Iberian Peninsula, because the socio-political situation of this frontier area required it. In 1492, when the War of Granada culminated, the Nasrid Emirate disappeared but the concern about the captivity continued in this region. The situation now had a different geographical and social policy framework: the southern Mediterranean and North Africa. As happened before, this change of perspective created a new dynamic where its own models and institutions were based on the previous ones.

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