The Moriscos' Artistic Domestic Devotions Viewed through Christian Eyes in Early Modern Iberia

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After* the fall of Granada in 1492, an acculturation of Muslims took place throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The purpose was to erase their Islamic traditions and to convert them to Christianity. The policies used by various archbishops ranged from a peaceful approach to violence and mass forced baptisms. In many cases, the reaction was the opposite of the intended one: a significant Muslim population remained, practicing their own forms of piety and refusing what Iberian prelates tried to teach them, so that while they were 'officially' Christians, they developed a strong crypto-Islamic faith.

The Spanish authorities were at pains to 'correct' and change the customs of this population. One of the consequences of this was the attitude developed by this minority towards religious images: a complex issue that has been the subject of very little academic attention to date. How were images used and perceived by Moriscos (Muslim *conversos*) in Spain? Despite several studies by Felipe Pereda and Borja Franco,¹ there are as yet no studies of the material culture of this religious minority, nor any studies of the distinct artistic customs – whether Christian or otherwise – that developed during the period of interreligious cohabitation. This article attempts to develop a methodological framework for addressing this question, analysing some case studies of the art objects used by Moriscos for private devotion.

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1 Pereda F., *Las imágenes de la discordia* (Madrid: 2007); Id., "La conversión por la imagen y la imagen de la conversión: notas sobre la cultura figurativa castellana en el umbral de la Edad Moderna", in Sureda J. (ed.), *Cartografías visuales y arquitectónicas de la modernidad* (Barcelona: 2011) 228–241. Franco B., "Consideraciones sobre el uso y abuso de la imagen en la Península Ibérica en el siglo XVI a través de los procesos inquisitoriales. Una visión multicultural del arte: moriscos, protestantes y cristianos viejos", *Sharq al Andalus* 20 (2011–13) 143–66; Id., "Nuevas tendencias historiográficas en torno al uso del arte en los procesos de asimilación de la minoría morisca", *eHumanista. Journal of Iberian Studies* 1 (2013) 63–75.

One of the main difficulties of this analysis, in addition to the scarcity of contemporary sources, is their reliability. Some texts, such as the records from Inquisitorial trials, describe the use of images by Moriscos in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, as has been pointed out by Francisco Márquez Villanueva, among others, these are 'poisonous' sources.² Following the ideas of Carlo Ginzburg regarding the subjectivity of texts, Márquez Villanueva poses the question of how to use the trials as a useful tool for understanding the Moriscos' way of life.³ The Inquisitorial accusations, in which there was no presumption of innocence, created several clichés, many of which still persist.⁴ These sources present only two aspects of the relation between Moriscos and images: rejection and destruction or profanation. The cliché of the iconoclastic Morisco, or the disrespectful attitude towards paintings or sculptures, was legendary, circulating rapidly throughout Iberia, despite the fact that some of these cases were invented or taken out of context.⁵ Most scholars have analysed these Inquisitorial trials by comparing them to several treatises that advocated the expulsion of Moriscos in order to justify political and religious decisions. But we should note that, if Moriscos destroyed altars or paintings, it was not only because their true religion (i.e., Islam) was opposed to idolatry (the argument put forward by some of the texts mentioned above); in most cases, they attacked images as a rejection of the imposed religion and as a manifestation of their rebelliousness.⁶ Because of that, we should compare these sources with others that might be considered less biased, in order to reconstruct the relationship of this minority with devotional (Christian or

2 Márquez Villanueva F., "El problema historiográfico de los moriscos", *Bulletin Hispanique* 86, 1–2 (1984) 61–135, here 114. This metaphor was also used by García-Arenal in: "Dissensió religiosa i minories. Moriscos i judeoconversos, qüestions d'identitat", *Afers* 62–63 (2009) 15–40. There is a relevant discussion about how the Inquisitorial processes should be studied. Other scholars, like Bernard Vincent, think they are not so subjective as Márquez Villanueva argues them to be. Vincent's point of view is described in detail in a compelling article in which he upholds multidisciplinary works, cautions historians and re-thinks the objectivity of this source. See Vincent B., "Convivencia difícil", in Castillo S. – Oliver P. (eds.), *Las figuras del desorden* (Madrid: 2006) 57–69.

3 Ginzburg C., "Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian", *Critical Enquiry* 18, 1 (1991) 79–92.

4 The Inquisition was only a part of this creation of stereotypes because Western society enjoyed being an 'image-maker' of the 'other' for multiple and varied consumers. See Prögler J.A., "The utility of Islamic Imagery in the West. An American Case Study", *Al-Tawhid* 15, 4 (1997) 1–29.

5 See Carrasco R., *Deportados en nombre de Dios* (Barcelona: 2009) 137–142.

6 Franco B., "En defensa de una identidad perdida: los procesos de destrucción de imágenes en la diócesis de Valencia", *Goya* 335 (2011) 116–125.

Islamic) images and thereby understand how they were really perceived and understood in multicultural Iberia.⁷

We should also remember that everyday life is much more complicated than this reductionist interpretation of radical rejection would suggest. Such an interpretation might be supported by the absence of images in Morisco inventories or testaments, or even the scarce references found in the records from the Inquisitorial trials. To understand why we should be aware of the problem of simplification, it is necessary to consider that all cultures impose certain corrections on reality, simplifying the relations between human beings and everything around them into categories of knowledge that remain stagnant and unchanged for years. This is especially true of the Catholic kingdoms in the late Medieval and early modern period.⁸ The main problem is not this simplification – it is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the confrontation with the unknown – but rather that, as historians, sometimes we are not able to de-materialize these generalizations and we tend to re-objectify the behaviours and actions of our objects of study. The key to understanding this simplifications is to analyse the different ideological tendencies that created some transformations of the perceptions about the ideas exposed in the historical sources.

As a starting point, we must consider that the image of self and the image of the other cannot be perceived in the same way. This facet becomes more complicated when focusing on the contact between Christianity and Islam, which resulted in the constant creation of stereotypes about the other religion and even led to the creation of starker identities in order to resist the identity imposed by the enemy. Thus, we have an image of self that is at times the result of a reaction against its opposite, the imposed image, rather than being the result of its own essence, resulting in deformations and exaggerations that should be studied closely today. So, if we are to analyse how Christians perceived Muslims and Moriscos and compare these perceptions to reality, we should be aware of these issue. In addition, we should consider that the faith of an Aragonese Morisco was quite different from that of a Valencian, Granadino or Castilian Morisco.⁹ Each had a different degree of familiarity with Islamic

7 We follow the recommendations of Císcar about the necessity of comparing the ideas of the polemist treatises or Inquisition trials with other official and local sources closer to the life of Moriscos. Císcar E., "La vida cotidiana entre cristianos viejos y moriscos en Valencia", in Belenguer E. (coord.), *Felipe I y el Mediterráneo* (Madrid: 1999) 569–592.

8 See Tolan J., *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: 2002).

9 In Castile, the difference was remarkable between the Moriscos who were voluntarily converted at the beginning of the sixteenth century (old *mudéjares*) and the Granadinos, scattered throughout the territory after the War of the Alpujarras. For a comparison of the

culture, and the assimilation policy of the Spanish crown had dissimilar effects in different parts of the kingdom.¹⁰ Furthermore, as García-Arenal has argued,¹¹ being a Morisco depended entirely on the choice to be one, to feel oneself as and be perceived by others as a Morisco. They were 'playing' a game. They wanted to be recognised as Moriscos by other Moriscos, but they continued to hide their behaviour because it was condemned by the Catholic monarchy. The difficulty in studying this 'game of perceptions', as we mentioned above, is that images or ideas about the 'other' tend to become stable and resist change, which presents a serious challenge for historiography, liable to be seduced by these stable perceptions, whereas real life was very different.¹² This is related to the tendency of human beings to seek cognitive consistency, to avoid discrepancies and disparities between images and the way they are perceived, on the one hand, and new information that might produce cognitive dissonance, on the other.¹³

As we pointed out before, there were different 'Moriscos' depending on the geographical area and the time period in question. This needs to be taken into consideration as we analyse not only the historical sources but also how historiography re-constructed Morisco identities through these texts. As Fuchs has argued,¹⁴ the Moriscos were a minority that was neutralized and largely destroyed by Spanish culture. The expulsion decrees of 1609 and subsequent years attempted nothing less than to cleanse Spain finally and completely of the Moorish taint. This neutralization and the use that historiography has made of the phenomenon of religious cohabitation should be the key to a new approach to the Morisco problem. Considering these observations, we will

reactions of the old *mudéjares* with those of the Granadinos from 1570 onwards and the differences between both groups, see Moreno F.J., *Los moriscos de La Mancha* (Madrid: 2009).

10 In fact, Ignacio de las Casas defined four kinds of Moriscos depending on their birthplace and knowledge of the Islamic faith. See El Alaoui Y., *Jésuites, Morisques et Indiens. Étude comparative des méthodes d'évangélisation de la Compagnie de Jésus d'après les traités de José de Acosta (1588) et d'Ignacio de las Casas (1605–1607)* (Paris: 2006) 126–129.

11 García-Arenal M., "El problema morisco: propuestas de discusión", *Al-Qantara* 13 (1992) 496.

12 See Bernabé Pons L., "¿Es el otro uno mismo? Algunas reflexiones sobre la identidad de los moriscos", in Franco B. – Pomara B. (eds.), *Identidades cuestionadas. Coexistencia y conflictos interreligiosos en el Mediterráneo (ss. XIV–XVIII)* (Valencia: 2016) 205–224.

13 Barkai R., *Cristianos y musulmanes en la España Medieval. El enemigo en el espejo* (Madrid: 1984) 23. See also Tieszen C.L., *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Leiden – Boston: 2013). On 'religious identity', see Bauman G., *The Multicultural Riddle. Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities* (New York: 1999).

14 Fuchs B., *Mimesis and Empire* (Cambridge: 2001) 100.

attempt to focus on a particular case and to understand the 'image' created by Christianity of the Moriscos' private devotion.

The obligation imposed by the political authorities on Moriscos to keep images in their homes was intended to promote piety, since devotional works were considered effective educational tools. Hernando de Talavera (1428–1507), archbishop of Granada,¹⁵ Feliciano Figueroa (1541–1609), bishop of Segorbe,¹⁶ and the preacher Jerónimo Corella (d. 1575)¹⁷ stated in their writings that this should be the recommended practice for the recently converted Muslim.¹⁸ These images, visual representations of the divine, should be kept with 'veneration and decency'. This detail is essential because the records of several trials against Moriscos show that Moriscos were accused of setting the images on the floor, hanging them upside down or failing to keep them clean. Some authors, such as Clément, stated that possessing images could be considered a sign that Moriscos were abandoning their Muslim faith,¹⁹ although we actually believe that Moriscos kept the images mainly (but not only) to avoid accusations of heresy. It is true that in several areas, like Aragon or even in some parts of Castile, there were some cases of true conversions, and we find several examples of Christian images in these homes.²⁰ However this was not common behaviour, as is shown by ample evidence that suggests that in general Moriscos rebelled against the imposition of Christianity, and, moreover,

15 Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Diversos de Castilla, *Memorial de Hernando de Talavera a los moradores del Albaicín*, book 8: 114. This was also explained in his book *Católica impugnación* (1480). See Ianuzzi I., *El poder de la palabra en el siglo XV: fray Hernando de Talavera* (Salamanca: 2009).

16 This was developed in the *Constituciones* of the Segorbe Diocese. See Saborit P., "El obispo Figueroa y la evangelización de los moriscos", *Anales Valencinos* 44 (1996) 429–445.

17 Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE). Mss. 11262/11: Corella Jerónimo, *Advertimientos sobre la conversión de los moriscos de Valencia* (1542) 277.

18 Redondo A., "El primer plan sistemático de asimilación de los moriscos granadinos: El del doctor Carvajal", in *Les Morisques et leur temps* (Paris: 1983) 113–123.

19 Clément J.F., "L'image dans le monde arabe: interdit et possibilités", in Baugé G. – Clément J.F. (eds.), *L'image dans le monde arabe* (Paris: 1995) 11.

20 Documents that mention Moriscos publicly and voluntarily praying outside of their homes are not very common, other than in testimonies from Inquisitorial trials. In Castile, such cases were more common after the Rebellion of the Alpujarras and normally involved children and young women. One of them was Lucía de Guevara, who was a child during the war. After 1571 she appeared in the Ciudad Real census, where she lived as a good Christian, praying for the souls in Purgatory, buying bulls and visiting altars. In 1574 she confessed all her children's sins to the parish priest but she still had to wait some time for definitive absolution by the Inquisition. Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN). Inquisición, leg. 2105, exp. 12. We found another case in Almagro, where a Morisco family gave some money to promote devotion to Our Lady of the Snows. See Almagro, 14.11.1612, fol. 7v.

we have no objective evidence to support the idea that there was genuine de-Islamization in those areas.

The easiest way for Moriscos to meet the political and theological obligations to display their piety through the possession of artworks was to purchase images of the Virgin Mary or to accept gifts bearing her image from priests, who made these gifts in order to indoctrinate the new converts. Hernando de Talavera commissioned a remarkable series of representations of the Virgin by a Flemish sculptor as part of his attempts to convert the *alfaquis* of Granada.²¹ For Muslims, the Virgin Mary was a model of virtue, and there are documents proving the existence of brotherhoods dedicated to the Virgin made up almost entirely of converted Muslims.²² This explains the chronicles of travellers, such as that of Münzer,²³ which point out that Moriscos kept images of the Holy Virgin and showed great devotion to them. According to Márquez Villanueva,²⁴ Morisco women had a particular affinity for Christianity out of a sentimental connection with the devotion to Mary that was partially shared with Islam.

We also find these ideas in other literary excerpts about the Morisco expulsion. In these texts the prayers dedicated to the images are collated, and in one of them we can read:

May she be our shelter. / Such is her feeling / that the children in her arms /
raised by her breasts / for milk gave cries. / The insignias they bore /
causing great devotion, / all white covers / arranged in the Christian
fashion. / Everyone knows their accounts, / they are devout rosaries.²⁵

While these prayers to the Virgin might simply have been a strategy for avoiding expulsion,²⁶ these are not the only accounts we have of Moriscos possessing such images (without any intention of destroying or ridiculing them).

21 See Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia*, especially 276–306.

22 El Alaoui, *Jésuites, Morisques et Indiens* 343.

23 Münzer H., *Viaje por España y Portugal*, transcription by J. López (Madrid: 1991) 163. See also Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia* 344; Magnier Heney G., “The Veneration of Images and Other Religious Polemics between Morisco and Cristiano Viejo as Reflected in Golden-Age Drama”, in Temimi A. (ed.), *Actes du VI Symposium d’Études Morisques* (Tunis: 1995) 173–198, here 175.

24 Márquez Villanueva F., *El problema morisco (desde otras laderas)* (Madrid: 1998) 132–133.

25 Cfr. Perceval J.M., *Todos son uno. Arquetipos, xenofobia y racismo* (Almería: 1997) 116.

26 The strategies followed by Moriscos in order to avoid expulsion were diverse and allow us to talk about individual and collective forms of resistance. Although it is not a religious but a legal example, we can mention the unusual case of Isabel Enriquez, who lived in Quintanar de la Orden, near Toledo. Her peculiar plan consisted of offering herself and her children as slaves to the brotherhood of the Virgin of Piety. In fact, in October 1610

Cervantes, in *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, described a Morisco holding a cross as a symbol of conversion.²⁷ Moreover, as we know from Francisco de Borja de Medina's work analysing Jesuit documents,²⁸ many converts requested, on several occasions, Christian images on 'metal plates' as a helpful aid to devotion.²⁹ Maybe some intended to conceal their true religion, but nevertheless it is worth noting that they requested images 'on metal', a traditional material for religious objects in the Islamic world. Such portable images on metal were not common in Christian Iberia; however, the making and possession of amulets and talismans from this material was the most visible form of Muslim religious practice. Indeed, most Moriscos were brought to trial precisely because they wore *herces*,³⁰ small objects which could be worn around the neck or sewn onto clothing and which contained papers with fragments of the Qur'an, religious invocations or magical symbols.³¹ Another thing to keep in mind and that has been studied elsewhere is that Moriscos may have been using these representations not out of any true conversion in line with Jesuit teachings, but in keeping with the Islamic concept of *taqiyya* in order to escape the Inquisition.³²

In the context of discussing the meaning of devotional imagery to converts, it is important to note that many Moriscos worked in trades related to the fine arts. In the *Catecheses mystagogicae* (1586) we find a list of jobs often

(after the decree of expulsion) they went to a notary in order to regularize this arrangement. AHP To. Prot., leg. 13167: fols. 239r–240v/ 6/10/1610.

- 27 See Infante C., "Los moriscos y la imagen religiosa: la cruz de Rafala en el Persiles rebatiendo a los apologistas de la expulsión", *eHumanista/Cervantes* 1 (2012).
- 28 Medina F.B., "La Compañía de Jesús y la minoría morisca. (1545–1614)", *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* 57 (1988) 3–136.
- 29 These documents have been analysed in several articles studying Jesuit documentations. See Franco, "Nuevas tendencias" 63–75 and Franco, "Arte y misión. San Francisco de Borja y la difusión de la doctrina católica en las Indias interiores", in García-Hernán E. – del Pilar Ryan M. (eds.), *Francisco de Borja y su tiempo. Política, religión y cultura en la Edad Moderna* (Rome: 2011) 695–710.
- 30 Bernabé Pons L., *Los moriscos. Conflicto, expulsión y diáspora* (Madrid: 2009) 36; García Cárcel R., *Herejía y sociedad en el siglo XVI: La Inquisición en Valencia. 1530–1609* (Barcelona: 1980) 235.
- 31 These kinds of metallic objects were forbidden in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in an effort to expunge Islamic traditions from Christian society. There are several examples of these prohibitions in the *Ordenanzas de la Real Audiencia y Chancillería de Granada*.
- 32 The concept of *taqiyya*, or dissimulation, is one of the best-known practices of Spanish Moriscos. It allowed them to continue to observe their true faith in secret in order to avoid condemnation by the Christians, and consisted of praying to Christian images but keeping in mind Islamic concepts. On *taqiyya*, we recommend the 34th volume of the journal *Al Qantara* (2013), in which various researchers theorize this concept.

performed by converts and, therefore, included in the *Ordenanças*. These were silk thread makers, candle makers, silver workers, painters, etc.³³ Not only can we deduce from this that Moriscos were involved in the production of Christian art and liturgical objects such as candles, some Jesuits, such as Ignacio de las Casas, indicated that Moriscos volunteered to build and decorate their own churches.³⁴ From all of this we know that Moriscos had first-hand knowledge of Christian imagery and even produced such imagery, which allowed them to make better use of it, either to conceal their true faith or, in the case of true converts, to enhance their piety as new Christians.

On the other hand, the best way to establish if there really were images in Moriscos' homes is to study household inventories or to look for the descriptions of their goods as declared in official documents prior to their expulsion. We should remember here that the other sources mentioned previously were literary excerpts, subjective chronicles or Jesuit texts. We should also take into account the fact that some of the references in these texts helped to create false rumours, and that other references, such as those contained in Jesuit reports, reflect the need to claim that Moriscos really were being converted, given that some other congregations, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans, had abandoned their indoctrination programme in the belief that this battle had been lost.

We should also compare the Moriscos' inventories with those of Old Christians. Over recent years, there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in analysing the latter inventories in an attempt to show how local private religiosity developed in Europe.³⁵

33 See Cantarino v., *Entre monjes y musulmanes. El conflicto que fue España* (Madrid: 1978) 234–235. Authors like Caro Baroja have proved how one of the main trades of the Moriscos of Granada was jewellery; in fact, when they were deported to Castile they brought all their knowledge of their job to the new land. Caro Baroja J., *Los moriscos del Reino de Granada* (Madrid: 2000) 137. For Castile, see Fernández-Chaves M.F. – Pérez García R.M., “Las dotes de las moriscas granadinas y sevillanas. Cambios y adaptaciones de una cultura material”, in Lobo de Araujo M.M. – Esteves A. (eds.), *Tomar estado: dotes e casamentos (séculos XVI–XIX)* (Braga: 2010) 137–138; Moreno F.J., “El hogar morisco: familia, transmisión patrimonial y cauce de asimilación”, *Al-Kurra* 1, 1 (2015) 97–119, here 112.

34 British Library (London), Ms. Add. 10238, Casas I. de las, *De los moriscos de España (1605–1607)* fols. 109r–110r.

35 See especially, in connection with Italy, Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: 2006); Thornton P., *The Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400–1600* (New York: 1991). For England, Kowaleski M. – Goldberg P.J.P. (eds.), *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England* (Cambridge: 2008). Finally, for Iberia, the most useful works are Christian W.A., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: 1981) and García Marsilla J.V., “Imatges a la llar. Cultura material i cultura visual a la València dels segles XIV i XV”, *Recerques* 12 (2001) 163–194.

Manuel Lomas³⁶ was one of the first historians to make use of sources testifying to Castilian Moriscos' possession of multiple devotional artworks in their homes, mainly small pieces such as *Agnus Dei* in silver or coral. These pieces were very common in the Hispanic tradition, especially among women. Furthermore, the materials themselves, and the fact that they were owned by wealthy families, can be interpreted in two ways. First, as is well known, educated Muslims were the first to be converted because of the strategy followed by Hernando de Talavera in his evangelizing campaign.³⁷ This fact might go some way towards explaining why we have not found artworks of this kind in other areas, such as Valencia, where most of the Moriscos were peasants and tended to retain their Islamic faith, relative to Moriscos in other areas.³⁸ Moreover, the possession of *Agnus Dei* could be interpreted by the Inquisition as visual evidence that the owners were true Christians and that, therefore, they should not be condemned.

The second interpretation relates to the materials. As we noted above, several sources describe how Moriscos asked for metal pieces with devotional representations. Perhaps these inventories including *Agnus Dei* are proof of Moriscos' requests for images from the Jesuits and, therefore, confirm that they truly ordered small portable Christian images, and that the extant testimonies of the Society of Jesus are a reflection of reality and not merely evidence of the Jesuits' strategy for justifying their continued preaching in Iberia.

But these are not the only sources available for analysing the private Christian devotion of Moriscos. A set of unpublished probatory records in the Archivo Histórico Provincial of Ciudad Real (AHP CR) that document the assets of former residents of Granada who arrived in Ciudad Real after 1570 tell us much about the Christian images found among their property. The iconography of these objects, made mainly of precious metals, is very significant. We

36 Lomas M., "El conde de Salazar y la expulsión de los moriscos de La Mancha", *eHumanista/ Conversos* 3 (2015) 64–86; Id., "Aixovar, diners i contraband. L'equipatge dels moriscs expulsats segons els registres de béns de Castella", *Recerques* 61 (2010), 5–24.

37 Hernando de Talavera began his evangelizing mission by meeting with *alfaquis* and members of the Muslim upper class in Granada, in the hope that, through dialogue, he could bring about the true conversion of their community.

38 The majority of scholars who have worked on Moriscos have shown that Valencia was one of the last bastions of Islam, where converts from all over the Iberian Peninsula went to learn the rudiments of the Islamic faith and even to consult books in Arabic that were there relatively accessible. Domínguez Ortiz A. – Vincent B., *Historia de los moriscos* (Madrid: 1978) 121; Ardit M., "Els moriscos valencians", in *L'expulsió dels moriscos del Regne de València* (Valencia: 1997) 6–33.

found, in the records, three small Immaculate Conceptions,³⁹ two canvases of Saint Alexius,⁴⁰ one of Saint Casilda,⁴¹ one golden crucifix⁴² and another golden angel.⁴³ These images do not immediately seem out of the ordinary, but if we study their iconography in the light of the Islamic faith developed by Moriscos in Iberia, we are led to some interesting conclusions.

To start with, the Immaculate Conception was a particularly common devotional image among *conversos*. Christians and Muslims shared the idea that Mary was conceived without sin.⁴⁴ We mentioned above that devotion to the Virgin fostered a pro-Catholic sentiment in Muslim communities, not only in Iberia but also in other areas. Some years ago, Norman Daniel showed how some Protestants criticized the Catholic Church for exporting this devotion to the Islamic world.⁴⁵ So, it is understandable that when Moriscos tried to show they were good believers, they used these visual representations to do so, because they could use them to practise *taqīyya*. In saying this we are not disputing that some Morisco women were genuinely converted and that they prayed to the Virgin Mary. However, such cases are far removed in time from the period when Talavera advocated using the Virgin in the indoctrination of the Morisco minority, and after his campaign, few preachers employed the same non-violent method. Taking into account this background, we can think that Moriscos were using these representations as visual evidence of their inner *converso* faith, and at the same time, we can ask whether real conversion can be dismissed, since the majority of contemporary sources speak of greater

39 AHP CR, Prot., leg. 54: fols. 147r–149v. 23/06/1594. Dowry of Ana López, Jerónimo de Montemayor's wife, and in two places in leg. 58bis: fols. 375r–379r. 22/11/1607. Dowry of Ana López, Alonso de Najera's wife.

40 AHP CR, Prot., leg. 54: fols. 263r–267r. 07/10/1594. Dowry of Elvira Enríquez, Jerónimo de Carmona's wife; and leg. 79–1: fols. 335r–337v. 26/03/1607. Dowry of María de la Cruz, Gabriel de Rojas' wife.

41 AHP CR, Prot., leg. 78/1: fols. 326r–329r. 31/12/1605. Dowry of Felipa de la Cruz, Alonso de Soria's wife.

42 AHP CR, Prot., leg. 72/3: fols. 174r–177r. 04/12/1605. Dowry of Isabel Hernández, Martín de la Fuente's wife.

43 AHP CR: Prot., leg. 47–3, fols. 88r–92v. 08/05/1609.

44 Authors like Abd-El-Jalil summarized several Islamic texts about this fact: Abd-El-Jalil J.M., *Cristianismo e Islam* (Madrid: 1954) 5–10.

45 The Qur'an inspires a devotion to Mary of which Muslims might have made more, if they had not needed to differentiate their attitude sharply from that of Catholics. Modernist Muslims do not like the ambiguous proclamation of her perpetual virginity. Protestants have sometimes liked to say that the Catholic Church acquired the dogma of the Immaculate Conception from Islam, Daniel N., *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: 1960) 175.

progress in the Christianization of the Moriscos in Castile, mainly among those who were born after the Rebellion of the Alpujarras.

The same doubts and questions arise when we analyse the images of angels found in inventories. Both New and Old Christians venerated these special figures,⁴⁶ known in Islamic theology as *al-Malā'ika*, making it impossible for us to see this physical evidence as an indication of real Christianization.

The case of Saint Alexius' image is also important. In other Christian asset records from Castile, there do not seem to be any representations of this figure.⁴⁷ His veneration originated in the Byzantine Empire.⁴⁸ After an arranged marriage, he left his old life and his wife and set off on a pilgrimage to Rome. Alexius means 'follower of the word of God'. Like this saint, Moriscos also left their houses in Granada and travelled to other places (both within Iberia and elsewhere) following the word of (their) God. There is, thus, a parallel between the saint's life and the Moriscos' diaspora. It was probably not coincidental, then, that devotion to this Eastern saint was part of the Moriscos' faith. Perhaps they were using an ostensibly Christian object of devotion to reflect their own situation, and that is why, as indicated previously, these images appear only in Castilian *converso* inventories.

The same can be observed in the case of Saint Casilda of Burgos. She was the daughter of a Muslim king of Toledo, and was martyred because, after her conversion to Christianity, she fed the Christian prisoners in her father's jail.⁴⁹ Her

46 On the cult of the angels and this syncretism, see Sweetman J.W., *Islam and Christian Theology* (Cambridge: 2002).

47 Although it is necessary to consult additional sources, the [probatory records or inventories] analysed in Ciudad Real show that the only two places in which Saint Alexius is mentioned are documents relating to Morisco dowries, dated 1594 and 1607, near the time of the expulsion. In both cases, the objects are clearly identified as part of the domestic furniture and are not too expensive (four *ducados*). In documents that were studied listing Old Christian dowries from nearby areas, figures such as Saint Anton or Saint Francis are frequently mentioned, but never Saint Alexius. Perhaps it is too early to reach definitive conclusions given that we are dealing with a small data set that possibly does not reflect any general trends. However, we think it is plausible that Saint Alexius held a particular attraction for Moriscos.

48 Vorágine S. de la, *La leyenda dorada* (Madrid: 1982) 378–381; Réau L., *Iconografía del arte cristiano* (Barcelona: 1997) vol. 3, 56–59.

49 Reau, *Iconografía* 271. Her case is mentioned, in the sixteenth century, by Alonso de Villegas in his *Flos Sanctorum*, first published in Toledo in 1578 but expanded and reprinted in 1582. These cases of *converso* saints are common in Iberia. Other common icons were Saint Bernardo of Alzira and his sisters, who were venerated in the Valencian area. See Rucquoi A., "Hispania, Sefarad, al-Andalus. Unidad y alteridad. Hacia una idea de Hispanidad. Discurso de ingreso de la doctora Adeline Rucquoi", *Memorias de la Academia Mexicana de la Historia* 54 (2013) 141–166.

legend was very popular, and not only among the newly converted; in fact, we have many representations of this saint from the thirteenth century right up to the early modern period. The veneration of this image might be understood as evidence of conversion, but also as another case in which Moriscos chose as objects of devotion images of Christian figures whose stories somehow reflected their own experiences.

As for the possession of crosses, these, like *Agnus Dei*, did not have a meaning that resonated with the Islamic faith. They were tools to spread the faith and emblems of Catholic belief, so it is entirely understandable that Moriscos would use them if they were attempting to demonstrate their Christianity.

Although we have found several cases of possession of Christian images in Morisco houses, this practice was condemned by other members of their communities who were opposed to conversion. The sources mention some wealthy Moriscos, such as Alatar,⁵⁰ from Valencia, who punished his servant and her husband for buying a print with a cross. In her defence, the servant said that she hoped that the Crucified One would take her to Paradise in his open arms; her master, annoyed, replied that they were fools, that the cross was merely paper, and it had no power to take anyone to Paradise. On another occasion, the male servant bought a print of the Mary of the Rosary; in response, his master beat him, repeating that the servants were spending their money on useless pieces of paper.

In fact, this kind of attitude towards prints or devotional artworks crops up in several places in the records from Inquisitorial trials, where a Morisco is accused of referring to sacred works as pieces of metal, wood, stone or paper – an expression of contempt that echoes the accusations of idolatry made by Calvinists against Catholicism.⁵¹ Considering the Catholic theological principles, the Inquisition always used the same clichés and structures in order to condemn the newly converted; punishments and reasons for detention were standardized. As Pereda noted,⁵² images were more than mere instruments of this missionary strategy; the increasing importance of sacred images in private and public devotion was the subject of a polemic with the religious authorities, and the fact that they are mentioned in both Inquisitorial trials and the inventories studied is proof that images were an important

⁵⁰ See Contreras J. – Pulido I. – Benítez R., *Judíos y moriscos* (Barcelona: 2005) 180.

⁵¹ On this topic, see Franco B., “Consideraciones sobre el uso”.

⁵² Pereda F., “Through a Glass Darkly: Paths to Salvation in Spanish Painting at the Outset of the Inquisition”, in Kessler H.L. – Nirenberg D. (eds.), *Judaism and Christian Art. Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism* (Pennsylvania: 2011) 264.

marker of conversion, while their absence or an insufficient respect for them was a reason for condemnation.

One of the most frequent accusations levelled against Morisco piety by Old Christians was the lack of distinction between 'veneration' and 'adoration'.⁵³ As Tuller indicated,⁵⁴ the commandments of the Church were to be taught and then followed with detailed explanations from the twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus. Also, the use of images was explained to Moriscos so that they might venerate what was represented. Many priests saw the veneration of the saints as the last hurdle for a complete acceptance of Catholicism because this was anathema to Islam.

An exchange of accusations between Christians and Muslims had been taking place since the Middle Ages regarding the alleged idolatry of the other religion,⁵⁵ creating a situation known as 'the enemy in the mirror'. Moriscos inherited this criticism in the early modern period. According to Michael Uebel,⁵⁶ the need to represent Islam as an inferior copy of Christianity generated a whole range of parodic texts depicting Muslims as polytheistic idolaters. In Iberia, outside of the Inquisitorial trials, which will be analysed later, Moriscos were accused of this sin, not only in ecclesiastical or apologetic texts, like Pérez de Chinchón's *Antialcorano*,⁵⁷ but also in treatises on art, such as *Historia de la adoración y uso de las Santas Imágenes* (1597), a post-Tridentine treatise on images by Prades.⁵⁸

However, in these accusations of idolatry against Muslims and Moriscos, Old Christians neglected to mention the decoration of mosques or Moorish

53 Louis Cardaillac shows how several Moriscos made fun of this distinction, which they considered too subjective. See Cardaillac L., *Moriscos y cristianos. Un enfrentamiento polémico (1492–1640)* (Mexico: 1979) 216. Other researchers, such as Ana Echevarría, provide a more objective study on this topic. See Echevarría A., *The Fortress of Faith* (Leiden – Boston: 1999) 163. See also Barrucand M., "Les fonctions de l'image dans la société islamique du Moyen-âge", in Baugé – Clément, *L'image* 59–67.

54 Tuller J.B., *Good and Faithful Christians: Moriscos and Catholicism in Early Modern Spain* (New York: 1997) 49. On the idolatry legend, see Flori J., "La caricature de l'Islam dans l'Occident Medieval. Origine et signification de quelques stéréotypes concernant l'Islam", *Aevum* 2 (1992) 245–256.

55 Tolan, J.V., "Muslims as Pagan Idolaters in Chronicles of the First Crusade", in Blanks D.R. – Frassetto M., *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: 1999) 97–118. He develops this argument in further detail in Tolan, *Saracens* 72–73, 99. See also Echevarría, *The Fortress of Faith* 86.

56 Uebel M., "Pathogenesis of Medieval History", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44 (2002) 47–65.

57 Pérez de Chinchón B., *Antialcorano* (Alicante: 2000) 78.

58 Prades Jaime, *Historia de la adoración y uso de las Santas Imágenes, y de la imagen de la fuente de la salud* (Valencia, Felipe May: 1597) 128.

palaces, where figurative elements do not have a prevalent role, or Islamic theology, which forbids representations of God, both of which argue against the notion of Islam as idolatrous. Moreover, certain Morisco legends which circulated in the period provided further proof of Islam's rejection of idols. One of the most popular was the tale of Carcayona,⁵⁹ a Muslim princess who reproaches her father for the possession of idols and for thus disobeying Qur'anic principles. The father, as a punishment, cuts off her hands. The moral of the tale, which often appears in *aljamiado* literature,⁶⁰ is that true Islam, and the Moriscos themselves, as crypto-Muslims, did not believe in the adoration of idols.

Now we must also look at Islamic figures venerated in Morisco homes. In several Inquisitorial trials in Valencia and Aragon this fact was mentioned, the main type of figure being metallic representations of Muhammad placed on altars.⁶¹ Again, we encounter evidence that Christian and Islamic images in Morisco houses were made of the same material. Analysing trial documents that mention the 'adoration of Muhammad sculptures',⁶² Franco understood them to be cases in which the Inquisition was merely promoting the image of Muslims as idolaters by inventing an accusation against Moriscos. Franco believed that this accusation was created out of thin air by the Inquisitorial court in order to condemn *conversos*,⁶³ because the way that the trial documents anthropomorphize the idols is reminiscent of a common feature in other sources from the Middle Ages, and the depiction of the prophet Muhammad included

59 This story is analysed, but not in relation to art, by Perry, M.E., *The Handless Maiden. Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain* (Princeton: 2005); Valero, M.P., *La leyenda de la Doncella Carcayona* (Alicante: 2000); Ruiz Bejarano, B., *Praxis islámica de los moriscos aragoneses a partir del corpus aljamiado-morisco y su confrontación con otras fuentes contemporáneas*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Alicante: 2015) 198–203. We use the edited version of this tale published in Guillén, F., *Leyendas moriscas sacadas de varios manuscritos existentes en las bibliotecas Nacional, Real y de P. De Gayangos* (Granada: 1994) 84–226.

60 According to the *Dictionary* of the Real Academia Española, the term *aljamía* comes from the Hispano-Arabic *al'aġamíyya*, which in turn comes from the Classical Arabic *aġmamíyyah*. In the sixteenth century, it was used in the Iberian Peninsula to refer to the particular form of writing employed by the Moriscos, which used Arabic characters to transcribe Romance texts. The use of *aljamía* was far more widespread among the Moriscos in Aragon and Valencia than in Castile.

61 AHN. Inquisición. Lib. 936, 1550–1580. AHN. Inquisición. Lib. 989, 1582–1596.

62 Franco Llopis B., "Los moriscos y la Inquisición. Cuestiones artísticas", *Manuscripts* 28 (2010), 87–101.

63 Magnier also thought that the existence of these idols was really impossible. She took into account the text of the *Moriscos of Hornachos*. See Magnier, "The veneration of images" 183.

the deceitful qualities attributed to Islam by medieval Christians.⁶⁴ However, we have discovered other accusations against Moriscos who possessed sculptures of the Prophet and, furthermore, an astonishing record in which a naturalistic image of Mecca was described in an Aragonese Morisco house. With these kinds of representations, Moriscos could pray to their sacred place while living in Christian territory.⁶⁵ The records from this Inquisitorial trial describe how:

Miguel de la Fuente, tejedor de lienços morisco vezino de la Belchite de edad de treyntayseis años que fue testificado por dos testigos christianos viejos de tener en un aposento de su cassa pintada cierta portalada que se entendia ser figura de la casa de meca, y que los moros lo suelen hazer en observancia de su secta.

Miguel de la Fuente, a Morisco weaver of cloth and a resident of Belchite, being thirty-six years old, was reported by two Old Christian witnesses as having in his house a particular painting, which is understood to be the House of Mecca, which Moors usually do as a practice of their sect.⁶⁶

García-Arenal⁶⁷ insisted that the best way to study Inquisitorial trials was to look for texts that do not contain formulaic writing or established clichés, as these are less likely to be cases based on trumped-up accusations but to reflect genuine Morisco practices. And while most of the trials in which Moriscos are accused of iconoclasm follow a repetitive structure, none of the examples we just mentioned show similar formulas but rather explain the sculptures and the way they were venerated in an uncharacteristic way. In light of this, we can assume that, in several Morisco homes, some Islamic icons coexisted with Christian representations, creating a hybrid space of private devotion.

In fact, we have found some commentaries from fourteenth-century Muslim theologians testifying that, even before the conquest, some Islamic houses in al-Andalus contained pictorial decoration, following the example of those in Christian territories. It is therefore easy to imagine that in the early modern

64 Echevarría, *The Fortress of Faith* 222.

65 Ruiz Bejarano, *Praxis islámica* 272.

66 AHN. Inquisición. Libro 989, fol. 676r.

67 García-Arenal, "Dissensió religiosa" 31.

period this syncretic tradition continued,⁶⁸ as has been shown in several studies of Hispano-Islamic buildings.⁶⁹

There is additional evidence for the existence of Islamic representations in these spaces. Lomas found textual descriptions of Morisco swords with sculptures of Muhammad on the handles,⁷⁰ and García-Arenal foregrounded the important devotion to the Prophet shown by Iberian Moriscos.⁷¹ Additionally, in the Spanish National Library there is a Morisco manuscript containing some pictures that appear to depict a wise Muslim preacher and other images of animals and guardians, all of them related to the traditional Islamic figurative tradition.⁷² Although research into this previously unknown and unpublished manuscript is ongoing, we can deduce from its contents that, in the sixteenth century, *conversos* created their own visual culture mixing Christian and Islamic artistic traditions, which suggests the existence of religious syncretism.

Moreover, we should recall that in some territories, such as Iran, there are other examples of Islamic figurative art. Events from Muhammad's life, scenes from Paradise and Hell, battles, and scenes from daily life are depicted.⁷³ The prohibition against depicting the Prophet is stronger in Sunni communities, but in Shi'a Islam it is possible to find illustrations and miniatures of Muhammad, especially after the fifteenth century.⁷⁴ The Ottomans

68 'We come to the point that, when a nation is dominated by its neighbor, it manifests a vivid tendency to imitate the latter, and look like it. This is what happens in this period in al-Andalus regarding the Christian peoples of the north; Muslims try to imitate them, in their clothes, their ornaments, most of their customs and manners, to such an extent that they paint images on walls, public buildings and houses.' Ibn Jaldun, *Muqaddima* (Cordova: 2008) 253.

69 There are even extant texts dating from after the conversion of the Islamic population that contain comments about the decoration of mosques, such as the description, 'bien labrada y pintada' ('well made and painted [with images]'). See Villanueva O. – Araus, L., "La identidad musulmana de los mudéjares de la Cuenca de Duero a finales de la Edad Media. Aportaciones desde la aljama de Burgos", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, series 3, 27 (2014) 525–546, here 535.

70 Lomas, "El conde de Salazar" 67.

71 García-Arenal, "The converted Muslims of Spain" 48.

72 BNE, MSS/5373. *Libro de morisco sin identificar*. See <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000181156&page=1>.

73 See Gruber C. – Shalem A. (eds.), *The Image of the Prophet between Ideal and Ideology* (Berlin – Boston: 2014); Klein F., "La representación de Mahoma: lo prohibido y lo permitido", *Nómadas. Revista crítica de ciencias sociales y jurídicas* 20, 4 (2008) 127–142; Lombardo A., "Le immagini nel mondo musulmano: quale diritto?", *Diritto & Questioni pubbliche* 8 (2008) 65–88.

74 Gutman J., *The Image and the Word. Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Montana: 1977) 63.

(who were Sunni Muslims) also represented the Prophet in miniatures and illustrations. Moreover, the diaries of some medieval travelers who visited the Orient state that some mosques had gold and silver sculptures of Muhammad.⁷⁵ Lastly, Ignacio de las Casas has described Arabic inscriptions praising Allah in Christian paintings for one of the cloisters of the Cathedral of Segorbe,⁷⁶ which confirms the Moriscos' interest in art and in its meanings in the Iberian Peninsula.

All this leads us to consider the style of the Inquisitorial trials and insist that clichés are often an impediment rather than an aid when studying identities and their visual representations. Morisco houses were spaces of cohabitation where, in most cases, both religions coexisted.⁷⁷ Such houses might have some Islamic representations connected to the occupants' original religion but, at the same time and in accordance with the obligations imposed by the Church, might also have kept some Christian devotional images. These new documentary discoveries lead us to re-think private *converso* religious practices and open new avenues of study, as we attempt to understand when the Moriscos' use of images was a strategy to avoid expulsion and when such images were an indication of true conversion.

In these pages we have briefly analysed the Christian perspective on Moriscos' private religious practices and the clichés surrounding this topic that were constructed by the sources. If we consider the sacred texts of Christianity and Islam regarding art and images, we can reach conclusions different from those offered by 'official' sources or even the aforementioned inventories. Thus, there may be alternative ways of drawing borders between religious communities. It is true that when Christian authorities redoubled their attempts to prohibit any expression of Muslim culture and religion after the first expulsion of Muslims in 1502, many Moriscos, in response, transformed their homes into spaces of resistance.⁷⁸ Meanwhile other households accepted Christian art in order to avoid death or exile. It would be naïve to equate the presence of Christian art in Morisco homes with the success of the evangelization campaigns. As Belting argues: 'in this temporal piety the acquisition of a devotional image was an act of duty. In what we might describe as a domestic icon, owners acquired not only a tool for devotion but a certification of the pious disposition they were

75 See Flori, "La caricature" 251.

76 Casas, *De los moriscos* fols. 172r–v.

77 Benjamin Ehlers defines them as neither Christian nor Muslim. See Ehlers B., *Between Christians and Moriscos: Juan de Ribera and Religious Reform in Valencia* (Baltimore: 2006) 34.

78 Perry, *The Handless Maiden* 63.

to attain. Images became visible proof of an inner life.⁷⁹ But, at the same time, we must not forget that Moriscos were maintaining their own traditions, while adapting them to Christian requirements.

Only by re-thinking our past, taking into account the plurality of possibilities offered by newly discovered sources, may we come nearer to understanding the complex society in which Catholic power imposed one kind of visual policy and the minorities to be converted, assimilated and mixed with their own religion.

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