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SETTLEMENT CHANGE ACROSS MEDIEVAL EUROPE

OLD PARADIGMS AND NEW VISTAS

edited by NIALL BRADY & CLAUDIA THEUNE

RURALIA XII

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One land, two peasantries

Moriscos and Old Christians in the upper Genal Valley, Málaga (16th – 18th centuries)

Esteban López-García, Ignacio Díaz and Félix Retamero*

Abstract

We present the results of research undertaken in the Genal Valley (Málaga, Spain), where Morisco and Castilian peasants coexisted for most of the 16th century. Our analysis of the written record, which was combined with fieldwork, enabled us to identify the agricultural areas used by both communities. Our examination of the distribution of land ownership has revealed that Morisco and Castilian fields formed separate compact blocks, and that the larger and flatter plots of land were owned by Castilians. We have also noted that the property of Moriscos tended to be fragmented into small plots, which must have prevented any single Morisco landowner from amassing large, compact blocks of land. The expulsion of the Moriscos in 1570 triggered a tendency towards the concentration of land in fewer hands.

Keywords: Castilian settlers, Morisco peasants, agriculture, Genal Valley, 16th century.

Résumé

Une terre, deux paysanneries: morisques et « vieux » chrétiens dans la vallée de l'Alto Genal, Málaga (XVIe-XVIIIe s.)

Cet article présente les résultats de la recherche menée dans deux villes de la vallée de l'Alto Genal (Málaga, Espagne) où cohabitaient des paysans morisques et castillans pendant la majeure partie du XVIe siècle. L'analyse des sources écrites en combinaison avec le travail sur le terrain a permis d'identifier les espaces agraires utilisées par les deux communautés. La répartition des différents biens fonciers montre deux types de possession bien distincts entre les champs des morisques et ceux des castillans. Il paraît que les champs vastes de la plaine appartiennent plutôt aux castillans, tandis que les petits champs fragmentés étaient en mains des morisques. La distribution fragmentée des possessions des morisques a – sans aucun doute – freiné la formation de propriétés étendues et compactes entre les mains d'un seul propriétaire et l'expulsion des morisques, en 1570, a certainement accéléré ce processus de concentration.

Mots-clés: Colons castillans, paysans morisques, agriculture, Vallée de l'Alto Genal, XVIe siècle.

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Zusammenfassung

Ein Land, zwei Bauernhöfe: Morisken und Christen im Oberen Genal-Tal, Málaga (16.-18. Jh.)

Dieser Beitrag stellt die Ergebnisse der Forschungen vor, die in zwei Städten im Genaltal (Málaga, Spanien) durchgeführt wurden, in denen moriske und kastilische Bauern während eines Großteils des 16. Jahrhunderts koexistiert haben. Die agrarisch genutzten Felder beider Gemeinschaften konnten durch schriftliche Dokumentation und Feldarbeit identifiziert werden. Darüber hinaus hat unsere Untersuchung der Landverteilung ergeben, dass die Felder von Morisken

und Kastilien getrennte kompakte Blöcke bildeten und dass die größeren und flacheren Grundstücke im Besitz der Kastiler waren. Wir haben zudem festgestellt, dass das Eigentum der Morisken tendenziell in kleine Parzellen zersplittert war, was die einzelnen Grundbesitzer daran gehindert haben muss, große, kompakte Landbesitze zu erwerben. Die Vertreibung der Morisken im Jahre 1570 löste eine Tendenz zur Konzentration von Land in weniger Händen aus.

Schlagwörter: Kastilische Siedler, moriske Bauern, Agrikultur, Genaltal, frühe Neuzeit.

Introduction

The conquest of the Nasrid emirate of Granada by Castile (1482-1492) was followed by the arrival of thousands of Castilian settlers. For nearly a century, the indigenous Muslim community and the new colonists inhabited the same villages and worked adjacent fields. The indigenous people had experienced forced conversion in the early 16th century, but it was still politically subjugated and had its own, heavier, tax regime. This period of coexistence came to an end with the expulsion of the former Andalusi population – known as Moriscos – from the Kingdom of Granada in 1570.

Our research aims to define the agricultural areas at the time of the expulsion of the Moriscos, to analyse the distribution and use of these areas, and to outline how they were managed according to the different agricultural traditions of Castilians and Moriscos. The examples presented in this paper are in the region of Alto Genal, near the city of Ronda, in the westernmost expanses of the former Nasrid emirate. The region, which was known at the time of the Christian conquest as Havaral, is a mountainous area between the cities of Ronda and Marbella, measuring approximately 260 km², and is traversed by the upper course of the Genal River, which is a tributary of the Guadiaro (Fig. 1).

Havaral was conquered in 1485, when the inhabitants of the fourteen Andalusi hamlets that constituted the district surrendered to the Castilians, in exchange for being allowed to remain in their homes (*Acién 1979*, 147-148; *Becerra – Siles 2013*, 21-25). In 1500, the indigenous population revolted in protest against the discriminatory measures being implemented by the colonial administration, and this led to the emigration of a substantial proportion of the inhabitants of Havaral and the forced conversion of those who remained (*López de Coca 2007*). At this point, the Crown began settling Castilian colonists to replace the Andalusis who had died or fled. The most reliable demographic data available to

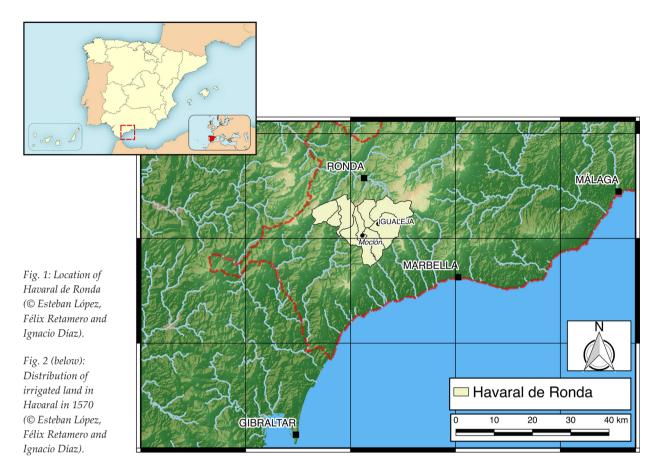
us are dated to the 1560s, when Havaral was inhabited by 318 Morisco and 214 Castilian heads of household (*López-García 2015*, 208).

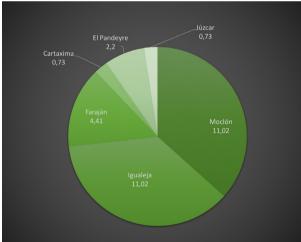
To date, 2 of the 14 hamlets of Havaral – Moclón and Igualeja – have been studied. These were the settlements with the largest overall area of irrigated land in the mid-16th century. By undertaking a study of the written record and fieldwork, we have been able to identify the distribution of Morisco and Castilian agricultural fields at the time of the expulsion in 1570 (Fig. 2).

Methodology

In the present work, we have applied the methodology that has been used for decades elsewhere on the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands by those studying Andalusi agricultural areas and the transformations introduced by the Christian conquerors (see, for example, Barceló et al. 1996; Kirchner 2009; Kirchner – Navarro 1994; Guinot – Esquilache 2012). Essentially, this methodology involves:

- Analysing the written record, especially
 documents generated during the process of
 conquest and colonisation (often the only
 documents available). In this context, the apeo
 and repartimiento books are particularly useful, as
 they contain detailed inventories of the properties
 confiscated by the Crown following the expulsion
 of the Moriscos.
- Identifying, drawing, and measuring cultivated lands, the structures related to them (*i.e.* channels, dams, cisterns, watermills, roads, etc.), and also those sectors that remained uncultivated or were only broken up sporadically. During this phase of study, the spaces recorded in the written record and their distribution were identified on the ground. Although





some place names have changed, many of the toponyms used in the record remain in use. This phase of study also involved undertaking an ethnographic survey, which was especially useful for identifying microtoponyms, which are only alive in the form of oral memory, and for understanding local agricultural practices. The use of aerial photographs and historical maps was also essential.

Moclón: The segregation of fields

The former hamlet of Moclón is uninhabited today, and since the 19th century it has been part of the municipality of Júzcar. As is the case for the rest of the region, our evidence for Moclón prior to the expulsion of the Moriscos is very limited. In 1492 the hamlet was inhabited by 35 male adult Muslims (*Acién 1979*, 61), but the revolt in 1500 and the forced conversion that followed led to important changes in the demography of the settlement. Before the expulsion in 1570, Moclón was the smallest hamlet of Havaral, in terms of population. In 1560, it was inhabited by 12 families, of which 5 were Castilian and 7 Morisco (*López-García 2015*, 208).

After the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1570, the Castilian authorities contemplated the possibility of leaving Moclón uninhabited, and allowing the land to be worked by the residents of nearby Pujerra, which had been inhabited by Castilian settlers since the early 16th century. However, in 1572 7 new Castilian families were settled in the hamlet (in addition to the other 5 Castilian families who already lived there) and granted the property of the previous Morisco inhabitants (*Becerra – Siles 2013*, 171-176).

The information concerning the size and location of the various agricultural areas described in the documents

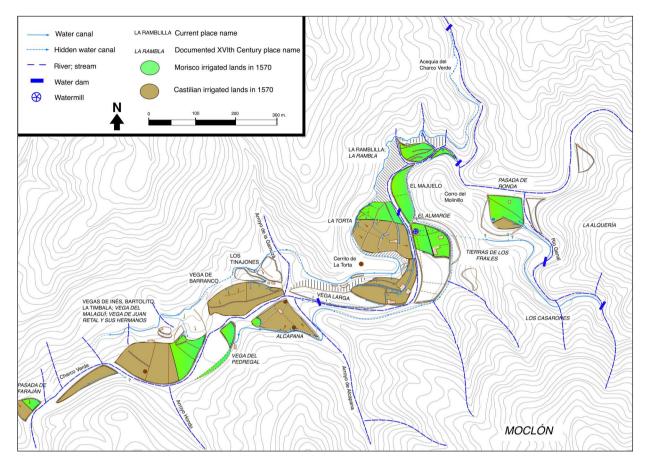


Fig. 3: Map of Moclón – irrigated land (© Esteban López, Félix Retamero and Ignacio Díaz).

generated during the inventory and allocation of properties in 1571 and 1572 (*Becerra – Siles 2013*; *López-García 2015*) has allowed us to identify these agricultural properties on the ground (*López – Retamero 2017*). Irrigated lands comprised approximately 11 ha, and were irrigated by means of *acequias* which, in most cases, led directly to the Genal River. Until 1570, Moriscos owned 3.7 ha of irrigated land, and the Castilians 7.3 ha – that is, two-thirds of the total (Fig. 3).

In general, the irrigated land owned by the Moriscos was divided into small terraced properties, which generally formed compact blocks at the start of the irrigation systems. Each farmer owned several terraces, but they were rarely located together, and were instead mixed with those owned by other Moriscos. Although the properties owned by each farmer were dispersed, the land of Moriscos tended to be grouped, and neatly separated from that of the Castilians. The property of the Castilian newcomers tended to be concentrated on the lower course of the irrigation systems, where the widest and flattest expanses of land (*vegas*) are located.

The land dedicated to *secano* (dry arable land), comprising approximately 30 ha in total, was distributed

in a similar way. The Morisco families possessed only one-third (10 ha), which was divided into small properties located around the settlement. The 20 ha owned by Castilians tended to form larger properties, and to be located further away from the houses.

It seems that the only exception to this pattern was the vineyard: it comprised 15 ha in several plots. In 1570, these properties were not only distributed equally among both communities, but were also mixed with one another, as opposed to forming separate blocks. Further research must be undertaken to explain this exception to the pattern detected elsewhere.

The distribution of agricultural land in Moclón (with the exception of the vineyards) indicates that both communities had different priorities and management criteria. Concerning irrigation and dry land agriculture, the position of the properties owned by the Moriscos suggests intensive cultivation strategies and risk avoidance through diversification. It remains to be determined whether the property-distribution pattern prior to 1570 was determined by the appropriation of the largest fields by the Castilian colonists, or whether this was, in fact, the preferred distribution pattern for



Fig. 4: View of present-day Igualeja (© Esteban López, Félix Retamero and Ignacio Díaz).

the Moriscos – two possibilities that are not mutually exclusive ($L\acute{o}pez - Retamero\ 2017$).

Igualeja: Transforming the land

The other hamlet that has been studied in Havaral is Igualeja, which is located near the source of the Genal River, in the vicinity of the old road that linked Ronda and the Mediterranean coast (Fig. 1). Like Moclón, Igualeja features in the earliest documents issued after the conquest of the region in 1485. The population comprised 80 male adult Muslims in 1489 and 1492 (Rodríguez 2005, 21; Acién 1979, 61); most of them fled after the rebellion in 1500 and by 1501 only 11 were left. This drop in native population was compensated for by the arrival of Castilian colonists in the early years of the 16th century. In 1560, Igualeja was inhabited by 54 heads of households, of whom only 17 were Moriscos (López-García 2015, 208).

By the date of the expulsion, most of the 11 ha of irrigated land in Igualeja was in the hands of Moriscos (7.3 ha). In general, this land was divided into small terraced properties (a few hundred square metres apiece), and tended to form clusters on the steepest slopes in the valley. In this case as well, each Morisco farmer possessed several

scattered pieces of land, which were intermingled with those owned by other Morisco farmers. The agricultural areas possessed by the Castilian colonists, who accounted for two-thirds of the population but only owned one-third of the irrigated land, tended to be located in the vicinity of the hamlet. These fields are alluded to in the record as *huertas* and *hazas*, and were the largest agricultural plots in the territory of Igualeja.

Arable lands amounted to a little under 15 ha in 1570 and were equitably divided among both communities. Vineyards were the most extensive crop, and by 1570 they took up a total of approximately 55 ha. The distribution of the land responded to demography: Castilians owned two-thirds of the vineyards, and Moriscos the remaining third. In contrast with Moclón, no notable differences existed in the distribution of secano land sown with cereal; as a rule, this land was divided into small plots, often no bigger than 0.3 ha, which were usually located near irrigation terraces or interspersed with vineyards. Only in rare instances were the plots owned by a single farmer grouped together. This situation changed with the expulsion. The small fields formerly owned by Moriscos were confiscated and allocated to 8 new colonists who arrived in the hamlet in 1572. The colonists who were

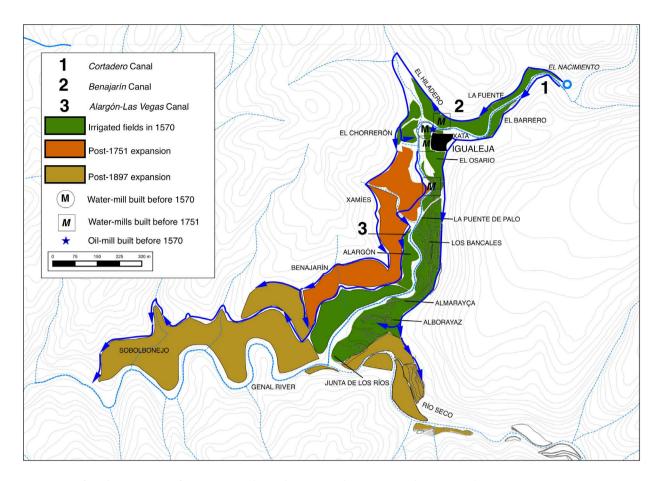


Fig. 5: Map of Igualeja: expansion of irrigation areas (© Esteban López, Félix Retamero and Ignacio Díaz).

there prior to the expulsion began exchanging land in order to unify their possessions (*Rodríguez 2005*; Díaz et al. forthcoming).

The arrival of new colonists in 1572 did not bring about immediate changes to the irrigated areas in Igualeja, as seen in some cases from the Balearic Islands (Barceló - Retamero 2005; Kirchner 2009). The overall size of irrigated areas remained unaltered until the late 18th century, when it was expanded by 6.2 ha; another 14.7 ha were added in the early 20th century (Fig. 5). Although the size of irrigated lands did not change after the expulsion, the new settlers soon introduced changes to the system, forcing new water-allocation rules to be implemented. Prior to the 18th century, the residents of Igualeja had built 3 new watermills, but only 1 had been built before 1571 (López-García 2015, 198; Díaz et al. 2018, 265). The new water-allocation rules prioritised the operation of the watermills over the irrigation needs of the farmers, who used the same acequias. In the early 18th century, water was allocated to the watermills 4 days a week, which caused some friction between the owners of these facilities and the farmers. It is likely that a very different water-allocation

regime was in place prior to the 1570s, when only 1 watermill existed and irrigators were probably given priority access to the water flow.

Conclusion

The analysis of written documents dated between the 15th and 20th centuries, as well as archaeological work and ethnographic surveys, has allowed us to outline the size and location of agricultural properties in the hamlets of Moclón and Igualeja prior to the expulsion of Moriscos in 1570. The results have highlighted various factors that should be taken into account in an analysis of the coexistence of Castilians and Moriscos throughout the 16th century. Specifically, we must emphasise the systematic separation of the land owned by both groups. In Moclón, Castilian and Morisco fields formed separate clusters. Within these clusters, Morisco properties generally were small and fragmented. In Igualeja, by contrast, no such compact concentrations of land existed, and the properties of Castilian and Moriscos appear to have been interspersed. Moriscos owned most of the irrigated land, despite being a smaller community in terms of population, but the fields

owned by Castilians tended to be bigger and located in flatter areas. This means that substantial differences exist, concerning the characteristics and locations of the plots owned by Moriscos and Castilians. Whilst Moriscos tended to own small and dispersed plots, the latter favoured larger, more-compact fields. In those cases, such as Igualeja, where it was impossible to satisfy this preference in the time when Moriscos were present, the Castilian settlers eagerly tended to concentrate their possessions after the expulsion of 1570. There is little doubt that such preferences were directly affected by the productive strategies followed by both groups. However, as previously noted, it still remains to be determined whether the distribution of Morisco land ownership that was recorded by Castilian officials in 1570 was a reflection of the survival of preconquest forms of organisation that endured until the expulsion of the indigenous population. New studies are needed to confirm the pattern that has been detected in our two examples and to explain the reasons behind the unequal distribution of land among the two communities.

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