

**Islamic Heritage and Morisco Identity:
Women and Property in Rural Granada at the Dawn of the Sixteenth Century**

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Abstract

Through an assessment of the data recorded in two books of *habices* (Span., *libros de habices* – inventories of goods from Islamic pious endowments) dated 1527 and 1530, this study examines the situation of Morisco women in the Alpujarra, a rural area of Granada, just three decades after the forced conversion of the Muslim population to Christianity. Various aspects of the economic and social position of these women are explored, paying particular attention to their participation in the legal framework related to property ownership and the transfer of their possessions in the form of bequests. Although the study focuses primarily on the Morisco period, its most immediate precedent, Islamic and Mudéjar Granada, is not forgotten.

Keywords

Morisco women; Nasrid; society; economy; property system; kingdom of Granada; Alpujarra

Introduction

This article aims to add to the body of historical knowledge regarding the lives of Morisco women of the kingdom of Granada.¹ For the most part, research on the Moriscos has not considered the question of gender; furthermore, most studies carried out to date have focused on urban settings. In this article, I centre my analysis on the Morisco female population of the Alpujarra, a rural area located south of the city of Granada,² in the period prior to the rebellion of 1568.³ Although the subject has been addressed in several previous studies, most of them explore mainly the period after the rebellion, when, inevitably, the historical situation was quite different,⁴ so we need to go back in time in order to situate ourselves in the precise context.

The culmination of the Christian conquest of al-Andalus in January 1492 put an end to the Nasrid kingdom of Granada, the last Islamic stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula.⁵ After the conquest, the Mudéjar period began, during which the capitulations signed by Castilians and Nasrids in November 1491 respected the religion and customs of the Muslims, as well as their institutions and administrative practices, and to a large extent allowed the Mudéjars to continue their way of life. Within a few years, however, the abuses of the old Christians and the increasing fiscal obligations imposed by the Crown created a great deal of unrest in the Mudéjar community, culminating in the uprising of 1499-1500. After this rebellion had been put down in April 1501, the harsh terms of the new capitulations ended the atmosphere of relative permissiveness that had characterised the immediate post-conquest period, and the Mudéjars

¹ This study was carried out as part of the research project “La Granada nazarí en el siglo XV: Microhistoria de una entidad islámica en Occidente” [“Nasrid Granada in the fifteenth century: microhistory of an Islamic entity in the West”] (ref. FFI2016-79252-P), funded by AEI/FEDER, EU.

² The region of the Alpujarra is located on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, covering parts of the modern-day provinces of Granada and Almería. This large territory is limited by the mountain range of the same name and the Mediterranean Sea.

³ The revolt of the Moriscos of the Alpujarra represents a significant moment in Spanish history: it entailed the expulsion of the Moriscos from the kingdom of Granada and their dispersion towards other areas of the Crown of Castile; see, for example, Valeriano Sánchez Ramos, “La Guerra de las Alpujarras,” in *Historia del Reino de Granada*, ed. Manuel Barrios Aguilera and Rafael G. Peinado Santaella, vol. 2, *La época morisca y la repoblación (1502-1630)*, ed. Manuel Barrios Aguilera (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000), 507-42.

⁴ Some studies on this topic will be cited throughout this work.

⁵ The Nasrid kingdom included the present-day provinces of Granada, Almería and Málaga, and parts of Jaén, Murcia and Cádiz.

faced the stark choice of conversion or exile. The baptism of the majority of the Muslim population marked the beginning of the Morisco period.⁶

In the process of conversion, a large number of mosques were transformed into Christian churches, which now received the abundant pious endowments (Span., *habices*)⁷ confiscated from the Islamic places of worship.⁸ In this new context, the Islamic system of *habices* was no longer operative. What is more, the change from Islamic to Christian administration created many opportunities for fraud. The *habices* were not immune to this trend, and indeed they suffered great losses; the Castilian authorities, worried by the resulting decrease in revenues, sought to bring the situation under control by commissioning a system that would provide a reliable record of all these assets and put their administration in order. The result was the production of what were known as the books of *habices*.⁹

⁶ Manuel Barrios Aguilera, *Granada morisca: La convivencia negada* (Granada: Comares, 2002), 67-82; Ángel Galán Sánchez, *Los mudéjares del Reino de Granada* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1991); Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *Granada después de la conquista: Repobladores y mudéjares* (Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1988), 291-306; Rafael G. Peinado Santaella, *Como disfrutaban los vencedores cuando se reparten el botín: El reino de Granada tras la conquista castellana (1483-1526)* (Granada: La Vela, 2011), 152-67.

⁷ From the Arabic *ḥubs* (pl. *aḥbās*), the use of this form is attested in the Islamic West, while the term *waqf* and its plural *awqāf* were commonly used in the East. In general, the Islamic *habices* consisted of donations made for the immediate or future benefit of a pious work through the granting in perpetuity of the right to use a property. This system of donations had spread widely throughout the Islamic world. Specifically in al-Andalus, these pious legacies were assigned to a variety of purposes: support of institutions or buildings with a clear religious vocation (e.g., mosques or cemeteries), the funding of charity (aid to the poor and the sick, ransoms for captives, money for the freeing of slaves) and the maintenance of public infrastructure (fortresses, walls, roads, bridges, springs and wells). See Ana María Carballeira Debasa, *Legados píos y fundaciones familiares en al-Andalus (siglos IV/X-VI/XII)* (Madrid: CSIC, 2002), 67-202; Alejandro García Sanjuán, *Hasta que Dios herede la Tierra: Los bienes habices en al-Andalus, siglos X al XV* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002), 169-254; Alejandro García Sanjuán, *Till God inherits the Earth: Pious endowments in al-Andalus (9-15th centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 184-292.

⁸ The Crown reserved for itself a share of the *habices* destined for charity. See Pedro Hernández Benito, *La Vega de Granada a fines de la Edad Media según las rentas de los habices* (Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1990), 45-52.

⁹ Camilo Álvarez de Morales, "Romanced documents, bilingual documents and books of *habices*," in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the medieval Muslim world*, ed. Petra M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 10; Ana María Carballeira Debasa and Camilo Álvarez de Morales, "Some remarks on the books of *habices* and Islamic Granada," in *Islam and globalisation: Historical and contemporary*

The books of *habices* from Granada are part of a group of Castilian documentary sources that can provide us with a snapshot of the Morisco period in which they were written, with the particular feature that they also shed light on the situation inherited from the period immediately preceding the conquest, the Nasrid kingdom of Granada; such is the case with the status of the female population. Given that the Morisco society of the kingdom of Granada was reminiscent in some ways of the pre-conquest days, it is no surprise that the heritage of Nasrid women lived on to some extent among their successors. From this perspective, the study of the Nasrid women offers some important clues that can help us to understand the Mudéjar and Morisco females. For all these reasons, although this study focuses on Morisco women, we do not forget their most immediate predecessors.

The sources for my analysis are the books of *habices* of a religious nature in the Alpujarra written in the years 1527 and 1530.¹⁰ These two books contain detailed lists of this type of property associated in some way with the Catholic Church in the villages and jurisdictions of five administrative areas or *tahas* (from Ar., *tā'a*)¹¹ which occupied the north-western half of the Alpujarra lands: on the one hand, the *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira and Jubiles (in the inventory of 1527) and, on the other, the areas of Ugíjar and Andarax (in the book of 1530).¹²

perspectives (Proceedings of the 25th Congress of l'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants), ed. Agostino Cilardo (Louvain: Peeters, 2013), 157.

¹⁰ Lorenzo L. Padilla Mellado, *Libro del apeamiento de los habices del Alpujarra: Tahas de Ferreyra, Poqueyra y Juviles, que los apeó Benito de Carrión, año 1527* (Granada: n.p., 2019); Ana María Carballeira Debasa, *Libro de los habices de la Alpujarra de 1530: Edición, estudio e índices de un manuscrito del Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Granada* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2018). Both documents belong to a collection of books of *habices* that is kept in the Cathedral Archive and in the Diocesan Historical Archive of Granada; see the catalogue compiled by Carmen Villanueva and Andrés Soria, "Fuentes toponímicas granadinas: Los libros de bienes *habices*," *Al-Andalus* 19 (1954), 460-61.

¹¹ The Alpujarra had a special administrative structure that differed from that of the rest of the kingdom. From the mid-fourteenth to the sixteenth century, this area was divided into *tā'as*; see María del Carmen Jiménez Mata, "La división administrativa," in *Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*, ed. José María Jover Zamora, vol. 8/3, *El reino Nazarí de Granada (1232-1492): Política. Instituciones. Espacio y economía*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molins (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2000), 255-315.

¹² In a recent study, I made a preliminary appraisal of this subject by focusing on two *tahas*, Ugíjar and Andarax, in my analysis of the book of *habices* of 1530; see Ana María Carballeira Debasa, "De nazaríes a moriscos: El mundo alpujarreño en clave femenina," in *De Nación Morisca*, ed. Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo and Raúl Ruiz Álvarez (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2020), 287-302. Taking that study as my starting

The large volume of data that these books of *habices* contain provides us with a vision of a part of that micro-society in the first third (and even perhaps the first half) of the sixteenth century and can shed light on the organisation and operation of the rural world of the Alpujarra. In particular, the study of these manuscripts provides some valuable (albeit scarce) insights into the lives of the Morisco women of the *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira, Jubiles, Ugíjar and Andarax. In all likelihood, what we see there is representative of other parts of the region.

As suggested above, these sources may well provide a fairly accurate reflection of the social and economic situation of the Alpujarran women of the Nasrid period as well. Unlike their peers in other areas of the kingdom of Granada, in the Alpujarra the Nasrids lived on, first as Mudéjars and later as Moriscos. As the region had not been conquered by force of arms, but surrendered through a negotiated capitulation, the native population continued to live as it had done before the conquest due to the limited presence of Christian settlers, so the Morisco community was able to endure until its definitive expulsion after the war of 1568.

In spite of the undoubted importance of these two inventories for a reconstruction of the socio-economic history of the *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira, Jubiles, Ugíjar and Andarax, they have certain limitations that should not be ignored. The first is the fact that the *habices* referred to only a part of the populated area and the cultivated land; thus, these inventories offer only a partial vision of the situation, as the women who feature in these records represent only a segment of the female population of these five *tahas*. Second, the information on the females documented is incomplete, because they only appear in reference to legal matters regarding the ownership of real estate in records that, as we will see later, aim solely to reflect the geographical location of the *habices* assigned to the Church. Nevertheless, the scarcity of data on women contained in the books of *habices* should not discourage us from studying them;¹³ in fact, they are practically the only sources available for the time and the place that concern us here.¹⁴ Similarly, the geographical variable reinforces the interest of a microhistorical study

point, for the present article I also consulted the book of 1527, and I expanded the geographical framework of the research to include three other *tahas* (Poqueira, Ferreira and Jubiles). This approach allows the data to be compared and contrasted in order to trace the differences and similarities between the different *tahas* and to offer a more complete vision of the subject.

¹³ Other scholars have suggested that the use of a comparative perspective can help to overcome the difficulties facing the study of women in this period (e.g., the lack of documentation). See Ofelia Rey Castelao, "El trabajo de las mujeres rurales en la España Moderna: Un balance historiográfico, 1994/2013," *Revista de Historiografía* 22 (2015), 183-210.

¹⁴ See below, n. 33.

like this one.¹⁵ There is no doubt that the Morisco women of the Alpujarra had a characteristic way of life, so a fuller understanding of this microcosm will contribute to broaden our knowledge of Granada's Morisco society.

Taking all these factors into account, here I will explore the books of *habices* of 1527 and 1530 to try, as far as possible, to reconstruct the socio-economic status of the Morisco women of Granada in the Alpujarran *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira, Jubiles, Ugíjar and Andarax in the first third of the sixteenth century, only three decades after the forced conversion of the Mudéjars to Christianity.

The Onomastics of Morisco Women and Its Socio-Economic Implications

The books of *habices* offer a great deal of onomastic information, recording as they do the personal names in use among the Morisco community of the Alpujarra in the first third of the sixteenth century. The 305 pages of the book of *habices* of 1527 record approximately 2,700 names, of which only some 50 refer to women. As for the book of *habices* of 1530, its 356 pages contain about 4,000 names, among which female names account for no more than a hundred. Overall, then, the female presence barely reaches 150 references, slightly below 4.5% of the total. This circumstance has a series of socio-economic implications, as we will see below.

In general, few women are mentioned exclusively by their own name, without any allusion to the bond that unites them to a male relative. The figure falls from 37% of the females recorded in 1527 to 19% in 1530. In most cases the personal name is omitted and, instead, some information on the woman's parentage is provided, though always defined through an agnatic link – that is, through the male line. Thus, a woman's identity is totally subordinated to that of a male relative; they are usually recorded as the wife (on rare occasions, the widow) through the expression “the wife of” and, less frequently, as mother, daughter, sister, aunt, niece, grandmother or mother-in-law. In the book of *habices* of 1530, 60% of women are referred to in this way, an increase from the figure of 46% recorded in 1527. On other occasions, a mixed formula is used, in which the female personal name is accompanied by its

¹⁵ A firm believer in applying microhistory to the study of women is Anna Bellavitis; she argues that, although grand models are always stimulating, they do not always provide an accurate view of a particular context, because they do not take into account geographical variability; see *Il lavoro delle donne nelle città dell'Europa moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2016), 7-13.

agnatic filiation. This procedure presents similar proportions in the two sources, rising slightly from 17% in 1527 to 21% in 1530.

Therefore, the fact that most references to Morisco women are expressed through an agnatic link gives an idea of their degree of dependence on their male relatives. Although in the *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira and Jubiles this dependence of females on a male relative is less marked than in Ugíjar or Andarax, there is no doubt that the Morisco family model was patrilineal. Previously, Nasrid families had also been patrilineal and prone to endogamy, but pressure from the Castilians weakened clan ties and dispersed family groups, eventually breaking down the cohesion that the rural Morisco communities had initially enjoyed.¹⁶ Perhaps because of the weakening of clan ties, there would have been no record of the filiation of some women, and for this reason it does not appear in the inventories; or perhaps certain females would have enjoyed sufficient social prominence in their community, so that the expression of the kinship tie was unnecessary.

The documentation consulted contains a single case in which the identity of a male is accompanied by a cognate link, specifically through filiation with his spouse: “Martín García Ahaxir [...], que está casado con María, hija de Arrendayarya” (Bubión, in the *taha* of Poqueira). Interestingly, this man’s link to his wife also mentions his relation to his father-in-law.¹⁷

Turning now to the composition of female names, in the books of *habices* of 1527 and 1530 the Morisco women of the Alpujarra only have Christian first names,¹⁸ but many have

¹⁶ The book of *habices* of 1530 contains some indications of exogamy, as in the case of “la hija de Hernando Abenharon, vecino del Laujar, que está casada en Yniça [*taha* of Andarax]” (fol. 322v). By that date it was already common for people to move to villages other than their own. On the Nasrid and Morisco families, see Ana Echevarría Arsuaga and Adela Fábregas García, eds., *De la alquería a la aljama* (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2016), 10; Antonio Malpica Cuello, “De la Granada nazarí al reino de Granada,” in *De al-Andalus a la sociedad feudal: Los repartimientos bajomedievales*, ed. Manuel Sánchez Martínez (Barcelona: Editorial CSIC, 1990), 122; Carmen Trillo San José, “La familia en el reino nazarí de Granada (siglos XIII-XV),” in *La familia en la historia: XVII Jornadas de Estudios Históricos organizadas por el Departamento de Historia Medieval, Moderna y Contemporánea*, ed. Francisco J. Lorenzo Pinar (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2009), 41-62.

¹⁷ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fol. 25r.

¹⁸ In both books of *habices*, María is the most common first name; other female names that appear include Isabel, Catalina, Leonor and Blanca.

Arabic surnames that recall their ties to the previous culture.¹⁹ This hybrid structure (Christian first name + Arabic surname) appears in around 80% of the cases recorded in both inventories, a very high proportion that reflects the dual Christian and Islamic character of the Morisco community. However, there are certain exceptions: in 8.5% of cases, the Arabic surname is replaced by a Christian surname, producing a combination of a Christian first name + Christian surname.²⁰ In other cases (11.5%), the names comprise a combination of three elements, as follows: Christian first name + Christian surname + Arabic surname,²¹ giving rise to a syncretism that was also characteristic of male Morisco names.

In theory, Morisco names would have been expected to evolve in line with the process of forced religious conversion and the group's sociocultural assimilation. However, these sources show that the Christian authorities were interested in prolonging this syncretism by preserving Arab surnames; that is why, in 1527 and 1530, many Morisco women from Alpujarra still bore the Arab surnames of their lineages. The juxtaposition of components of the Arab and Romance systems had the advantage of preserving the signs of Arab lineage that identified women from the Morisco community and avoided confusion between new and old Christians.²²

Thus, the inventories of the *habices* show an overwhelming prevalence of male names. This circumstance also has certain important economic implications, since it reflects that real estate in the Morisco community in the Alpujarran *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira, Jubiles, Ugíjar and Andarax was concentrated in the hands of men, and that the presence of women in the property system was limited.

¹⁹ For instance, names such as María Abduzarrica, Isabel Abuyahi and María Alverjia. On some occasions in which the woman's identity is expressed by full name and filiation, the surname assigned to her is that of the husband, but given a feminine form, i.e., with the Castilian feminine ending "-a"; for example, "María Abençalima, mujer de Alonso Abençalín", "María Façala, mujer de Façal", etc.; this practice is only documented in the *tahas* of Ugíjar and Andarax.

²⁰ Examples are María García, María de Córdoba and María de Narváez.

²¹ Examples are Catalina del Campo Doracayna, Isabel de Alhama Ponil, Isabel Damedraño Romany and Isabel de Sevilla Homayra.

²² Gonzalo Carrasco García, "La onomástica de la conversión: Señas de identidad y transformación antroponímica de los moriscos de Granada (1500-1569)," *Sharq al-Andalus* 19 (2008-10), 139-204; Bernard Vincent, "L'anthroponymie et les minorités: Le cas morisque," in *L'Islam d'Espagne au XVIIe siècle: Résistances identitaires des morisques* (Saint-Denis: Bouchène, 2017), 111-34.

The Property Rights of the Moriscas

The books of *habices* of 1527 and 1530 provide information on the socio-economic status of the Morisco women of the Alpujarra, especially in relation to their participation in the property system as either owners or tenants.²³ The analysis of these sources reveals that certain females held assets and managed them, although the records also indicate that they were to a large extent excluded from possessing real estate.²⁴ These pages shed light on the different types of property that these women owned, as well as some of the procedures through which they might acquire and transfer their possessions.

In the inventories, the Morisco women of the Alpujarra appear mainly in three contexts: (1) most frequently, in the lists of properties adjacent to the *habices* of the Catholic Church, which record the identity of their owners or tenants, some of whom were women; (2) on occasions, as owners of plots of land containing trees associated with ecclesiastical *habices*

²³ In the Andalusi period, prior to the conquest, women had also enjoyed ownership rights. See Manuela Marín, *Mujeres en al-Ándalus* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 313-94; Youness M'hir El Koubaa, "Las últimas mujeres andalúsies: Matrimonio y propiedad en la Granada nazarí de finales del siglo XV (1481)," in *Actas del V Congreso Virtual sobre Historia de las Mujeres (del 15 al 31 de octubre del 2013)*, ed. Manuel Cabrera Espinosa and Juan Antonio López Cordero (Jaén: Archivo Histórico Diocesano, 2013), 507-32; María Dolores Rodríguez Gómez, "Mujeres granadinas en el fondo árabe del Archivo de la Catedral de Granada (s. XV): Avance de la investigación," *Códice* 21 (2008), 40-47; Maya Shatzmiller, *Her day in court: Women's property rights in fifteenth-century Granada* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Law School, 2007), 19-76; Maya Shatzmiller, "Women and property rights in al-Andalus and the Maghrib: Social patterns and legal discourse," *Islamic Law and Society* 2 (1995), 219-57; Amalia Zomeño, "Donaciones matrimoniales y transmisión de propiedades inmuebles: Estudio del contenido de la *siyāqa* y la *niḥla* en al-Andalus," in *L'urbanisme dans l'Occident musulman au Moyen Âge: Aspects juridiques*, ed. Patrice Cressier, María Isabel Fierro, and Jean-Pierre van Staëvel (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2000), 75-100; Amalia Zomeño, *Dote y matrimonio en al-Andalus y el Norte de África: Estudio sobre la jurisprudencia islámica medieval* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000).

²⁴ The data for Morisco women from the Alpujarra are similar to those provided by other sources from other areas of the kingdom of Granada; see Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo, *La tierra de Almuñécar en tiempo de Felipe II: Expulsión de moriscos y repoblación* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1989), 150-54; Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo, "Las moriscas del reino de Granada: Repensando el conflicto étnico religioso desde el género," in *Una vida dedicada a la Universidad: Estudios en homenaje al profesor José Manuel de Bernardo Ares*, ed. Carlos Martínez Shaw (Córdoba: UcoPress, 2019), 164-66. In general, we do not know how much of the land was owned by Morisco women; a systematic study of the notarial archives would be required to establish this. See Birriel Salcedo, "Las moriscas del reino de Granada," 163, 166.

(since these plots often contain trees that did not belong to the owner); and (3) as legatees of trees in bequests destined to the Catholic Church.

Women and Property

What kinds of property did the Morisco women of the Alpujarra possess? The books of *habices* contain references only to real estate – that is, land, trees and dwellings; obviously, these women would have possessed chattels as well.

The sources tell us that the female population often owned houses located in villages. There is a reference to a Morisca who shared ownership of half of a mill with another individual in Válor (in the *taha* of Jubiles); the other half belonged to the *habices* of the Church.²⁵ But in most cases women were the sole owners of the properties.

As regards the ownership of farmland, the Morisco women mainly appear as owners of plots of land or trees. The Alpujarran economy was heavily dependent on agriculture; due to the high productivity of irrigated lands and the low yields of dryland farming,²⁶ it is no surprise that Moriscas often appear holding the property rights to vegetable patches, orchards and irrigated land but only rarely as owners of plots for dryland farming. In fact, the only records of dryland farming comprise some land with vines in the village of Picena (in the *taha* of Ugíjar)²⁷ and a plot in Bérchules (in the *taha* of Jubiles).²⁸

As for the types of tree, in two of the *tahas*, Ugíjar and Andarax, mulberry trees are the only ones assigned to Morisco women. They were important in the production of silk, a key industry in the Alpujarra from the times of the Nasrid emirate onwards.²⁹ Surprisingly, no mulberry trees are assigned to females from Poqueira, Ferreira and Jubiles; here, the only record is the ownership of three-quarters of a chestnut tree corresponding to a Morisca from

²⁵ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fol. 289r.

²⁶ On agriculture in the Alpujarra, see Carmen Trillo San José, *La Alpujarra antes y después de la conquista castellana* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1994), 173-264.

²⁷ *Libro de habices de 1530*, fol. 85r.

²⁸ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fol. 234v.

²⁹ José Enrique López de Coca, "La seda en el Reino de Granada (siglos XV y XVI)," in *España y Portugal en las rutas de la seda: Diez siglos de producción y comercio entre Oriente y Occidente* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona Publicacions, 1996), 33-57; Carmen Trillo San José, "La sericultura en el reino nazarí de Granada," in *La formación del reino nazarí y el nacimiento de la nueva Andalucía: Historia de Andalucía, V*, ed. Manuel González Jiménez and José Enrique López de Coca (Barcelona: Planeta, 2006), 236-43.

the village of Trevélez in the *taha* of Jubiles.³⁰ Perhaps the discrepancy is due to differences in the way the two inventories were compiled, a matter I will return to below.

The documentation available records the sizes of the *habices*, but not the sizes of the properties of the Morisco women. The rural area of the Alpujarra contained mainly smallholdings,³¹ in which the ownership of the land where a tree stood was separate from that of the tree itself; or, alternatively, the ownership of the tree might be shared between several individuals. This fragmentation of the farmland reflects the predominance of small and medium-sized holdings; thus, there is little doubt that the real estate owned by women would also have been governed on this basis.

Of course, it should be borne in mind that the aim of these inventories was to record the properties of individuals situated near ecclesiastical *habices*, so that the *habices* could be easily located; they were not designed to provide information on the rest of the territory. With such a limited documentary base, it is impossible to calculate the volume of the possessions of the Morisco women of the Alpujarra. However, the records do show that a woman might have more than one item of real estate (though usually not more than two): one Morisco woman, named María de Córdoba, in the village of Válor (*taha* of Jubiles), was attributed the ownership of at least ten plots of land.³²

Women as Recipients of Property

The books of *habices* tell us little about the ways in which the Morisco female population of the Alpujarra acquired their property. Recent research indicates that in the first half of the sixteenth century the routes of transmission of property among the Moriscos from Granada continued in the manner established by Islamic law, given that there would have been substantial resistance inside the Morisco community to adopting Castilian laws. Furthermore, as the control exerted by the new authorities was stronger in the city than in the countryside, resistance to the new laws would be more likely in rural areas; here, the occupation of the land, the structure of ownership and the alliances between lineages still reproduced to a large extent

³⁰ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fols. 125v-126r.

³¹ On smallholdings in the Alpujarra, see Trillo San José, *La Alpujarra antes y después de la conquista castellana*, 252-53.

³² *Libro de habices de 1527*, fols. 291r-301r.

the customs of the Islamic era, even though they were coming under increasing economic, political and religious pressure.³³

In this way, as in Nasrid Granada, the family estates belonging to the Morisco women of the Alpujarra might be passed down through the receipt of an inheritance, a donation or a dowry.³⁴ In the *tahas* of Ferreira and Jubiles, for example, two individuals are reported to have transferred ownership of farmland to their respective wives.³⁵ Although we have no data regarding the context, these assets might have been transferred between spouses by means of a dowry or simply through a donation. It is also conceivable that the wives received the land by hereditary means; the death of the spouses is not mentioned at any time, but it is possible that the scribe might just have omitted this information when drawing up the inventory.

Likewise, these sources include several cases of Morisco women identified by their filiation to their fathers rather than to their husbands (that is, as daughters rather than wives) who appear as the owners of various plots of land. This indicates that they were single women, perhaps young women, who may have received this property as inheritance or donation from their parents.³⁶

³³ The presence of dowry letters granted in the Alpujarra is significant, especially in the village of Mecina Bombarón (*taha* of Jubiles) in 1528, which present a wording similar to the Islamic marriage contract; see Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo, "Notas sobre el matrimonio de los moriscos granadinos (1563)," in *Mélanges Louis Cardaillac*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghuan: FTERSI, 1995), 104; Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo, "Entre una ley y otra: La transmisión del patrimonio entre los moriscos granadinos," in *Famille, pouvoirs, solidarités: Domaine méditerranéen et hispano-américain (XVe-XXe siècle)*, ed. Marie-Catherine Barebazza and Carlos Heusch (Montpellier: Université de Montpellier III, 2002), 229-32.

³⁴ According to Bernard Vincent, at this time the Morisco families of the Alpujarra observed the Islamic system of inheritance, since Castilian law had not become totally established in this area; see "La famille morisque," in *Les mentalités dans la Péninsule Ibérique et en Amérique Latine aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles. Histoire et problématique* (Tours: Publications de l'Université de Tours, 1978), 67-83; Rafael Carrasco and Bernard Vincent, "Amours et mariage chez les morisques au XVIe siècle," in *Amours légitimes et amours illégitimes en Espagne (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1985), 133-150. Likewise, there are those who believe that the Moriscos did not radically change their methods of transmitting family property after their conversion, due, among other things, to the similarity between the Islamic and Christian marriage systems; see María Isabel Mendiola Fernández, *Trayectoria y perfil de una minoría a través de las transmisiones patrimoniales por causa de matrimonio en Granada en el siglo XVI*, PhD thesis (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid, 2012).

³⁵ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fols. 112v, 226r.

³⁶ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fols. 71v-74v, 300v; *Libro de habices de 1530*, fols. 23r, 27r, 29r, 101v, 191r, 273v, 279v, 280r, 322v.

The inventories do not tell us whether the female population of the Alpujarra acquired property through sales and purchases, although these practices had been common in Nasrid and Mudéjar Granada³⁷ and are attested among Morisco women from other areas of the kingdom of Granada such as Guadix and Baza.³⁸ However, the sources do provide some evidence (albeit very scarce) of females as tenants of real estate – widows who inherited the perpetual leases (known as *censos perpetuos*) of the ecclesiastical *habices*, which had been contracted by their husbands during their lifetimes. As might be expected, these documents do not contain any record of women renting other types of property.

The Church did not cultivate its lands itself, but rather rented it out to peasant farmers. This was a widespread practice in the Alpujarra, where ecclesiastical holdings abounded. In the inventories consulted, there are very few records of properties being leased on a temporary basis; far more common is the practice of emphyteusis, in which the landlord (the *censalista*) reserved the ownership of a property and ceded its exploitation in perpetuity to the tenant (the *censatario*), who paid an annual rent in cash. Under this system, the Morisco tenants passed on the right to exploit the land to their heirs, including their wives, who received the land upon payment of the corresponding levy on transmissions.³⁹

The only documented instance of the participation of a Morisco woman in leases is found in the *taha* of Ugíjar. In this case, a widow, whose personal name we do not know, inherited various *habices* (some irrigated land, orchards and some vines) in emphyteusis from her late husband, Pedro de Montalván, who had contracted these leases *habices* in 1511 with the churches of the villages of Mairena, El Fex and Almagata. The widow received this inheritance as an undivided estate alongside the rest of the deceased's heirs.⁴⁰ As is well known,

³⁷ Rodríguez Gómez, "Mujeres granadinas," 42-44; Shatzmiller, *Her day in court*, 176-86; Amalia Zomeño, "Siete historias de mujeres: Sobre la transmisión de la propiedad en la Granada nazarí," in *Mujeres y sociedad islámica: Una visión plural*, ed. María Isabel Calero Secall (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 2006), 189-90.

³⁸ Maribel Díez Jiménez, "Actividades económicas de las mujeres en el norte del Reino de Granada entre 1500 y 1571," *Revista del Centro de Estudios Históricos de Granada y su Reino* 31 (2019), 33.

³⁹ On the leasing of ecclesiastical *habices* in the Alpujarra, see Carballeira Debasa, *Libro de los habices de la Alpujarra de 1530*, 71-72.

⁴⁰ *Libro de habices de 1530*, fols. 118r, 118v, 122r, 122v, 123r, 124v, 125r, 125v, 126r, 128v, 129r, 130v, 132r, 134r, 134v, 137r. See also Carballeira Debasa, "De nazaríes a moriscas."

if a property was passed on *pro indiviso*, each of the joint heirs was assigned a share;⁴¹ by holding the property in common, the co-owners avoided dividing the family estate. In the case of widows-mothers, their status as holders of the right to use the inheritance of their deceased husbands protected them financially and also probably granted them an important role in the administration of the estate; the inheritance remained intact, and its eventual division was postponed.⁴² Be this as it may, we know little about the position of Morisco women from the Alpujarra in the hereditary framework of the time.

In the case just mentioned, the widow was not a contracting party to the leases subscribed by her spouse; she appears only as a recipient of these leases by hereditary means. In the numerous instances of the leasing of ecclesiastical *habices* recorded in these sources, it was always the menfolk who managed relations with the Church and signed the contracts (known as *cartas de censo*). The lack of any documentary evidence of the involvement of married or single females in these leases suggests that the women in this area of the Alpujarra did not act as contracting parties in these transactions. Nevertheless, they may have had more access to leases involving other types of properties, either as tenants or as lessors; this was the case of their peers in other areas of the kingdom of Granada such as Guadix and Baza, although here, too, the notarial documentation is dominated by males.⁴³

Women as Transmitters of Property

The documentation referring to the *habices* reveals not just that the Morisco women of the Alpujarra possessed property of their own but also that they were able to transmit it in the form of legacies to the Church. Indeed, this is the only form of transmission of property attested

⁴¹ The *pro indiviso* system may have derived from practices dating back to the Islamic period. See Carmen Trillo San José, "Mujer y familia en el reino nazarí (siglos XIII-XV): Expresión en el espacio de una unidad social," in *Mujeres, familia y linaje en la Edad Media*, ed. Carmen Trillo San José (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2004), 255.

⁴² On the widows-mothers, see Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo, "Más allá del repartimiento: Género, familia y patrimonio," *Chronica Nova* 25 (1998), 89. This article provides more data that confirm the perspective we present here. In later times, the participation of women in the inheritance of their husbands in the Alpujarra remained strong; see James Casey, "Matrimonio y patrimonio en un pueblo Alpujarreño: Órgiva, 1600-1800," in *Sierra Nevada y su entorno* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1988), 183-200; Marie-Christine Delaigue, "Diez años de una taha de la Alpujarra en el siglo XVI," in *Actas del II Congreso de Historia de Andalucía: Historia Moderna I* (Córdoba: Cajasur, 1995), 414-21.

⁴³ Díez Jiménez, "Actividades económicas de las mujeres," 31.

among the female population in these sources. As might be expected, these inventories do not contain any references to women acting as transmitters of property in the family sphere, or as sellers of their goods. It can be assumed that the Morisco women of the Alpujarra would have engaged in both these activities, as did their counterparts in Guadix and Baza in the kingdom of Granada after the Christian conquest,⁴⁴ and their predecessors in the Nasrid and Mudéjar periods.⁴⁵

The book of *habices* of 1530 presents two different types of records of real estate given as endowments of a religious nature in the *tahas* of Ugíjar and Andarax: on the one hand, the *habices* constituted in Islamic times in favour of mosques and, on the other, the donations made by Moriscos as *bienes de fábrica* (lit., goods of the workshop of the Church). As these latter bequests were made after the conversion to Christianity, they were not considered in the same way as Islamic *habices* and were specifically assigned to the construction or upkeep of churches.⁴⁶ In contrast, the book of *habices* of 1527 does not contain any lists of *bienes de fábrica*, since it records only the goods donated in the Islamic period. Here one might wonder whether, in the *tahas* of Poqueira, Ferreira and Jubiles, the Moriscos made donations to the Church. The doubt is dispelled by the various marginal references to the donation of mulberry trees by Moriscos to the workshops of the churches in the villages of Notaes, Trevélez and Válor (in the *taha* of Jubiles).⁴⁷ These isolated references leave no doubt that, in Jubiles, the Morisco community also engaged in this type of pious legacy; perhaps the absence of *bienes de fábrica* in the book of *habices* of 1527 is merely due to the fact that the inventories were compiled in different ways.

It may well be that these pious legacies made by Moriscos in their wills responded to their desire to demonstrate their true conversion to Christianity. Although the Moriscos were formally Christians, many of them continued to practise their original religion in secret. The making of wills became a way to remove any doubts about the sincerity of a particular

⁴⁴ Díez Jiménez, "Actividades económicas de las mujeres," 31-33.

⁴⁵ Rodríguez Gómez, "Mujeres granadinas," 42-47; Shatzmiller, *Her day in court*, 176-95; Zomeño, "Siete historias de mujeres," 175-97.

⁴⁶ Great care was taken to keep items of different origin separate; hence the *bienes de fábrica* were managed autonomously, with their own administrator. See Carballeira Debasa, *Libro de los habices de la Alpujarra de 1530*, 24-25; Carballeira Debasa, "From *aḥbās* to *habices*: Continuity and transformation of pious endowments after the Castilian conquest of Nasrid Granada," in *Artistic and Cultural Dialogues in the Late Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. María Marcos Cobaleda (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021), 189-204.

⁴⁷ *Libro de habices de 1527*, fols. 130r, 122r, 286v.

individual's conversion.⁴⁸ Obviously, it is impossible to know whether these manifestations of faith were genuine, but in any case this was the context in which the Morisco female population of the Alpujarra made their pious legacies; on this regard, the book of *habices* of 1530 provides some fifty references.⁴⁹

The documentation gives no clues as at what stage in their lives the women made these legacies, but it can be assumed that it would have been during adulthood, at a time when they had themselves acquired the properties; nor do we know anything about the legal procedures used to make them. Regarding the typology of property endowed, in all cases, the bequests involved mulberry trees, as mentioned above; significantly, the women did not pass on plots of farmland, probably because these would have been worth more than the mulberry trees. And as for the number of trees bequeathed, most endowments included just one; sometimes, a part or fraction of the tree was donated, usually half, a branch, or parts of the base in a thicket. All the records indicate the amount of produce – that is, the leaves on which the silkworms could feed.⁵⁰ All the mulberry trees bequeathed by Morisco women were located on land that did not belong to them, almost always the property of a private individual from outside the family circle, but sometimes they were situated in plots belonging to a male relative (husband, son or brother) and, occasionally, on land corresponding to ecclesiastical *habices*.

Likewise, one might wonder whether the pious legacies constituted by Morisco women were part of a context of broader donations in the family sphere, in which other family members might also have taken part. In fact, the data reveal that only 20% of the female legatees had

⁴⁸ Regarding testamentary practice in Granada in the sixteenth century, see Amalia García Pedraza, *Actitudes ante la muerte en la Granada del siglo XVI: Los moriscos que quisieron salvarse* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2002), 259-337.

⁴⁹ Obviously, it is the *habices* assigned to the Church that are the main object of this inventory, which is why they constitute the majority of the information contained there. In contrast, the scarcity of *bienes de fábrica* is explained by the fact that at that time few properties were bequeathed by the Morisco community to the Church, as fewer than three decades had passed since the forced conversion of the Mudéjar population of the kingdom of Granada. In spite of this, most of the parish churches of the *tahas* of Ugíjar and Andarax already had this type of property among their possessions. See Carballeira Debasa, "De nazaríes a moriscas."

⁵⁰ The cultivation of mulberry trees was vital to the local economy; this explains why these trees might be divided in this way, and also why their produce was so exhaustively recorded; see Ana María Carballeira Debasa, "Nuevos datos sobre metrología morisca en el reino de Granada a partir de un manuscrito de habices alpujarreños," in *Ciencias de la naturaleza en al-Andalus: Textos y estudios X*, ed. Julia M. Carabaza Bravo and Montserrat Benítez Fernández (Madrid: Editorial CSIC, 2019), 227, 236.

relatives who also made endowments to churches: these were men, usually their husbands and less frequently fathers, brothers or in-laws. Perhaps some of these female legatees were able to engage in the practices established by their families, but the low numbers recorded in the sources means that we cannot speak of a generalised trend.

The information on legacies made by Morisco women in the Alpujarra is so scarce, and what there is so brief, that we cannot judge to what extent they needed the consent of a male family member to be able to transfer their property. Elsewhere in the kingdom of Granada, in Guadix and Baza, there is evidence that Morisco women participated in economic transactions, sometimes alone, but usually with their husbands, some other relative or a neighbour.⁵¹ Similarly, the right to property of their Nasrid predecessors in pre-conquest times had already been quite restricted, since in the transactions they undertook they were usually represented by a male relative under whose guardianship they spent most of their lives; only when they reached a certain advanced age, could they freely dispose of their possessions.⁵² Thus, although the books of *habices* do not provide information on the legal capacity of the Morisco women of the Alpujarra in property matters or on the sociocultural restrictions to which they were subjected, all the evidence suggests that their legal position was one of subordination, and that they had a limited capacity to dispose of their property, at least until they were widows.⁵³

Conclusions

The books of *habices* of 1527 and 1530 allow us to examine the lives of the Morisco women of the Alpujarra and also shed some retrospective light on the Islamic period, since certain features of the Morisco period clearly hark back to the immediately preceding times of the Nasrids and the Mudéjars. The consultation of these two inventories has broadened our understanding of this community, providing complementary and contrasting information from five districts in the Alpujarra: Poqueira, Ferreira, Jubiles, Ugíjar and Andarax. The comparison has helped to corroborate certain aspects and to highlight some differences between these *tahas*, although in fact these differences are little more than nuances; generally, practices varied little across the five districts.

Although, by their very nature, sources of this type cannot be expected to provide exhaustive information on the subject in question, the absence of contextual data can be

⁵¹ Díez Jiménez, "Actividades económicas de las mujeres," 24-39.

⁵² Marín, *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, 323-24, 393; Shatzmiller, *Her day in court*, 77-90.

⁵³ Birriel Salcedo, "Notas sobre el matrimonio de los moriscos granadinos," 103.

revealing; sometimes, silence can tell us a great deal. Likewise, the concentration of records in such a limited time frame and in such a specific geographical area is significant in itself. Their study can offer insights into the society in which both manuscripts were written and sketches a picture of the workings of a rural community in the Alpujarra shortly after the forced conversion of the Mudéjar population to Christianity. The analysis of these five districts can help us to piece together many social and economic aspects of the Morisco women who lived there.

With regard to the social dimension, the lack of demographic data in the documentary sources precludes any attempt to carry out a statistical study of the Morisco female population. However, although the texts tell us nothing about population figures, they allow us to follow the traces of certain families and certain individuals, and even provide some evidence of the practice of exogamy. They also inform us of the onomastics of a considerable number of women in the Morisco community, and show how the majority maintained the most representative Arabic component of their family names. But the names and surnames of the women are not always mentioned, and instances in which they are identified exclusively by their filiation with a male relative predominate; less commonly, data relating to their names and their parentage are provided simultaneously. The references to the degree of kinship allow us to gather information on family relationships and, therefore, on the women's social status, but, as the relations are recorded through the male line alone, we do not know whether there were any family bonds between the females mentioned.

The identification of women through agnatic ties reflects the patrilineal and patriarchal nature of the society of the Morisco Alpujarra. The data gathered in this work suggest that, in a world dominated by men, the female population were not the main protagonists of economic activity, but neither did they remain entirely outside it; the books of *habices* reveal that women in the Morisco community were not always passive subjects, but might be active agents. There are no records of the work they carried out, but, judging by the agrarian and commercial activities of the area, we can assume that many of them, apart from their work in the household, took part in agricultural tasks such as spinning silk, making raisins and dried figs, and so on.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Our understanding of female labour in Morisco communities remains limited; see Margarita M. Birriel Salcedo, "Datos sobre los oficios de los moriscos de la Costa de Granada (1561)," in *Métiers, vie religieuse et problématiques d'histoire morisque*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghouan: CEROMDI, 1990), 43-49; Bernard Vincent, "Las mujeres moriscas," in *Historia de las mujeres en Occidente*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Madrid: Taurus, 1991), 3:587.

What is more, these inventories reflect another form of participation of women in the economy of the Alpujarra through their access to the property system and the transfer of their possessions. Although this participation seems to have been quite low, the documentation shows that property ownership was not limited to the women living in the cities; well-to-do peasant women in rural areas might also own and transfer their possessions. The Morisco female population who appear in these inventories respond to this pattern, but obviously there were socio-economic differences in the Alpujarra, and not all females had the same standard of living.

These documentary sources reveal to us some of the types of property in the possession of the Morisco women of the Alpujarra. As the books are inventories of real estate, they do not include possessions of other kinds. In general, women almost always appear as owners of a property (or properties) in urban and rural areas, especially farmland and trees. As tenants, on the other hand, females are very rarely recorded, since the numerous leases in relation to *habices* associated with the Church do not mention women as contracting parties; however, there is some evidence that widows might inherit these leases together with the rest of the joint heirs.

This documentation does not reveal how the Morisco female population of the Alpujarra acquired the property they later passed on, although it can be assumed that, like their counterparts in other areas of the kingdom of Granada, they probably received it as the result of inheritances, donations, dowries or purchases. Nor do the books shed light on their role as sellers or transmitters of property inside the family circle, although it is highly likely that they would have engaged in these activities. In contrast, the records show that the Morisco women of Ugíjar and Andarax bequeathed a considerable number of properties to churches under the formula of pious legacies, so they were clearly able to transfer property in this way. As we noted above, this practice may be part of a general tendency of the Granada Morisco community to make bequests to the Catholic Church to dispel doubts about the sincerity of their conversion to the Christian faith.

The information available does not reflect how far the Morisco women of the Alpujarra had the capacity to make decisions regarding their possessions, or whether, on the contrary, their actions in all matters regarding their property were carried out under male supervision. Barely three decades after the forced conversion of the Mudéjars to Christianity, the long-standing customs regarding the management and transmission of property held by women in the Morisco community of Granada may well have generated a resistance to the adoption of Castilian law; thus, the practices established by Islamic law may well have endured. And

finally, in a territory like the Alpujarra, the changes may have been less evident than in other places in the kingdom of Granada, not just because of its rural nature but also because the status quo here was largely maintained after the conquest – the repopulation by Christian settlers was limited, and, to a large extent, Nasrid culture and practices lived on in a new form, in the Morisco community.

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