

Part II. The Jiloca Valley

Introduction

1

When the story of Teruel's rebellion in the late 1400s is told, it is usually told as a struggle between forces of local autonomy and royal centralization. In this analysis, though, the story is a bit different: it becomes a case of local resistance to imposed identities. The Jewish conversos that the Inquisition sought to examine in Teruel were not seen as a separate group by the city; they were, instead, citizens of Teruel, like everyone else, and thus the city saw itself as under attack, and persisted in defending itself as a unified city.

In the face of the expulsion of the Moriscos from all of Spain, it is difficult to believe that the case of Teruel is anything but an isolated example of such community solidarity. But it is the historian's responsibility to question the past, no matter how unlikely such questions may seem at first. Part II of this work thus asks an unlikely question: Is it possible that Teruel was the norm instead of the exception? What if, in everyday life at the local level, religious identity made little or no difference to old Christians and new ones within the same town or village?

To investigate this question, we turn to the Jiloca valley, now within the province of Teruel. The Jiloca region of Aragon is a small valley of vineyards and fruit trees to the south of the walled town of Daroca. This cuenca de Jiloca includes four villages. From south to north, as the river flows, they are: Luco de Jiloca, Burbaguena, Baguena, and San Martin. The geography cannot have changed much from what it was four centuries ago. Heading north from Calamocha, the road suddenly bends down into an improbably green valley. The towns are old and elongated, built along a road which was once the only thoroughfare, and the churches, with their square Mudejar towers and brilliantly tiled domed roofs, are the first thing you see from the distance. North of San Martin, the road climbs and bends again, to the east, and you are on a high, rocky plateau, with the disorienting sense of having imagined the entire valley.

The Jiloca valley does not seem to be part of its surrounding geography, and indeed, the Jiloca region has never really belonged securely to any larger entity. Initially, it was attached (at least in the Church's thinking) to the Archdiocese of Saragossa. In the political reforms of the early 1700s, it became subordinate to the town of Calamocha, to the south. But even in the earlier period, when the Archbishop of Saragossa supervised the parishes of the Jiloca region, the towns maintained religious and social links to locations to the south like Teruel. By the late 1500s the bishop of Teruel was substituting for the Saragossa prelate regularly, visiting the Jiloca valley to confirm the children—and an occasional adult—in Luco, Burbaguena, and Baguena. In addition, family connections tied Jiloca valley residents to towns in the south. More than one resident of Baguena had family in Teruel, or

owned property within its terminos. Economically, the Jiloca valley also looked to the south; in the 1500s, it was more closely linked to the port of Valencia, with its market for fruit, than to the city of Saragossa.

5

The notarial protocols of the region date from the 1400s and are preserved in the municipal archive of Calamocha, under the direct control of the present town notary; the parochial records, which begin in the early 1500s, were collected by the diocese of Teruel in the 1980s. Taken together, these two sets of records provide a window into life in the Jiloca valley region in the sixteenth century, a window through which I propose to examine the sister cities of Baguena and Burbaguena. I will begin with birth, marriage, and death in these villages, and then go on to consider the issue of outsiders, and the business environment within the cities.

Perhaps such an attempt is doomed at the outset: as historians, we set out to study something we will never fully grasp. But it is my conviction that the records left by the good people of the Jiloca valley provide an alternative view of relations between old and new Christians in the sixteenth century. It is important—perhaps even imperative—to consider such a view.

[Like Wheat to the Miller: Community, Convivencia, and the Construction of Morisco Identity in Sixteenth-Century Aragon](#)