

## 10. Moriscos and Nuevos Convertidos

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Although I have used the word "Morisco" within this work to refer to those who converted from Islam to Christianity in the sixteenth century, the term Morisco is rarely seen in the local documents. Both parish registers [1](#) and documents from the notarial protocols use the term *nuevo convertido* or *nuevo cristiano* throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The inquisitors in Saragossa did use the term, and most historians of the period have adopted both the word [2](#) and the Inquisition's definition of it. But constructed identities have their limitations. This chapter will examine the fit between the Inquisition's Moriscos, all of whom were expelled from Spain in the early seventeenth century, and the *nuevos convertidos* of the villages and towns of southern Aragon. Let us return for a moment to the Inquisitorial "survey" of Aragon discussed previously.

### Counting Moriscos

We pointed out previously that the Inquisition's earlier counting and mapping of the Morisco population of Aragon seemed to have been done, in part, to demonstrate the need for an increased presence at the local level; it presumed, moreover, that all Moriscos were in need of monitoring. This may tell us why the Inquisition estimated the Morisco population, but it does not tell us *how* the Inquisition was able to accomplish this.

In Part II, we provided a preliminary estimate of the populations of both Baguena and Burbaguena, based upon information contained in the parish registers. Because the parish priest was mandated to record the Easter duty of old Christians and Moriscos separately, the parish register in Burbaguena also yields a list of the Morisco families resident in Burbaguena in 1581—or at least some of them (see [Appendix 2](#)). In fact, identifying and counting the Moriscos of Aragon using the documents of the time is a formidable task. While some parts of the parochial record, as well as some of the secular documents—for example, the notarial protocols—may identify an individual as Morisco, they do not do so consistently. In the case of parish registers, the *nuevo convertido* label, as we remarked earlier, appears most often in baptismal and death registers; these sacraments may be thought of as entrances to and exits from the communities we are considering. Marriage registers rarely indicate whether the two individuals being wed were old Christian or *nuevo convertido*, and it is only when the parish priest was required to do so that he recorded the Easter duty of his Morisco parishioners in a separate list. In the entries of the 1590s and the early 1600s, the parish priest rarely bothered to identify an individual as Morisco, and even in the death register, where such an identification occurs throughout the period being studied, some *nuevos convertidos* were not

identified as such for the record. The parish priest's failure to diligently identify new converts in the parish records is significant, since we can presume that he did know who the new converts of Burbaguena were.

The parish priest's ability to identify the Morisco members of the community rested upon two factors. First, he lived in a small village, among his parishioners, and so, we may assume, was in day-to-day-contact with them. He would have known each member of his community. Secondly, parish records, by their very nature, provide information about one's parentage, and one way to tell whether an individual was Morisco was to see who his or her parents and grandparents were. But the term "Morisco" is itself problematic. The Inquisition in Aragon, over the course of the sixteenth century, created one image of the Moriscos, but this certainly was not an image that accurately described the Moriscos of Burbaguena. Ricardo Garcia Carcel, writing about the expulsion of the Moriscos, addresses the issue of how one ought to define the term, [3](#) but Bernard Vincent is more explicit:

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A question of no little significance, remains as to what the precise definition is. What is understood under the category of Moriscos in this count? How were they defined by the authorities and by the Christian community? It is an important question, and one that, curiously, has been forgotten by historians. Should one apply ethnic, or religious, or cultural criteria? The problem is quite complex above all because of the fact that all Moriscos were officially Christian. [4](#)

Morisco history has been, in part, a history of counting and mapping the Morisco population of Spain. Lapeyre's work dominates here, but his counting necessarily relies upon the records of the time. We know that a number of noble Aragonese refused to participate in mid-sixteenth century surveys ordered by the Crown—they were, after all, protectors of their vassals. Lapeyre, in his discussion of the Moriscos of Aragon, mentions three counts: the 1495 census; the count taken at the time of the first disarmament of the Moriscos in Aragon, in 1575; and the 1609 count ordered by the viceroy, the Marques de Aytona. Lapeyre does not address the problems with the first two censuses mentioned. He also accepts the accuracy of the final count, saying only that the number of individual Moriscos may be a bit high. [5](#) In fact, Lapeyre claims that the sole fault of the 1609 census is its failure to distinguish between villages that were only Morisco and villages in which Moriscos lived along with old-Christians. Like the Aragonese Inquisition, Lapeyre was concerned with constructing a picture of where Moriscos lived within Aragon. Lapeyre's mapping of the Morisco population is invaluable; his image of "Morisco places" is reproduced again and again by historians who study Morisco history. But Lapeyre's attitude toward population counts is oddly uncritical. He remarks in passing that the expulsion in Aragon was, for practical purposes, total. But it seems clear that, without an accurate count

of the Moriscos present in Aragon, however we choose to define the term "Morisco," it is difficult to evaluate the efficacy of the expulsion.

Lapeyre points out that the expulsion in Aragon proceeded without difficulty in 1610; 6 still, the crown sent Felipe de Porres to Aragon in the following year to "rid Aragon of its last Moriscos." Porres discovered another hundred or so Moriscos who had escaped expulsion: 22 were sent to the galleys, and the rest were sent through France, in very small groups so as not to provoke a diplomatic incident. Porres, significantly, complained that the Aragonese were not cooperative. 7 Although Lapeyre tells us that "the kingdom of Aragon was, of all the lands of Spain, the one which was the most completely rid of its Morisco population," 8 in fact, of those who *had* been identified as Moriscos, there were still 126 residing legally in the area around Saragossa, having been granted license to do so. Another group of Aragonese Moriscos was able to escape deportation by voluntarily confessing to the Inquisition. In Saragossa, 226 Moriscos were condemned between 1610, the year of the expulsion, and 1620, and "the majority of those convicted were spontaneous penitents who were able to remain in Spain owing to the zeal of the Inquisition." 9 The Inquisition, which had had no part in the deportation order (it came directly from the Crown), imprisoned these Moriscos within Spain. Thus, at least 352 identified Moriscos remained *legally* in the area administered by the Saragossa Inquisition after expulsion, some with license to continue to reside there, others under the control of the Inquisition. 10

This leaves aside the larger question of the completeness of the surveys of the Morisco population. In part, this question touches upon the accuracy of *any* population count in sixteenth-century Aragon, and it also has to do in part with the larger problem of Morisco identity. The 1609 count ordered by Aytona described Burbaguena as having 40 Morisco households, or 200 Moriscos, resident in the village. 11 Lapeyre provides the statistics for the Moriscos expelled from Burbaguena : some 264 men, women, and children boarded the ship. 12 Among the 62 households of Burbaguena listed in section 21 of the "Relacion del numero de Moriscos que se an embarcado de todas hedades en este puerto de los Alfaques de Tortossa . . . lugar por lugar, casa por casa," there were 78 men, 70 women, 66 young boys ( *mochachos* ) and 50 young girls, as well as 23 infants. The presence of infants, who were counted separately because they did not pay for passage, merits our attention. Although Philip III had made the decision to expel the Moriscos from Spain on April 17, 1610, and the tribunal in Saragossa was notified immediately, the edict was not made public until May 29. This delay, Lapeyre tells us, was undoubtedly the result of a debate over the fate of Morisco infants. After consulting in Valladolid, a group of theologians gave each tribunal the right to make their own decision on this point. In Valencia, as we have seen previously, colleges were established for the children of Moriscos ; these continued to operate after the expulsion. In Aragon, there were no schools for Morisco children, in part, I am certain,

because these children were receiving a religious and secular education together with the old Christian children in the villages (see [Chapter 8](#)). The tribunal in Saragossa did grant Morisco parents permission to leave children under four years of age in Aragon, but the documentary evidence indicates that, at least for those Moriscos who left Spain from Tortosa, parents took their very young children with them.

Lapeyre is as accepting of the numbers in the *relacion* as he was of the censuses of the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. To date, other figures for Aragon have not been available. We are, however, in a position to estimate the Morisco population of Burbaguena, using the information provided in the parish registers. Beginning with the 1581 Easter list of Moriscos resident in Burbaguena, through consultation of baptism, marriage, and death registers, working forward in time, even a very conservative estimate of the Morisco population based on the parish registers tells us that the 264 expelled in September 1610 did *not* include all of the new Christians of Burbaguena (see [Appendix 3](#)). <sup>13</sup> It seems reasonable that the count of Moriscos made prior to the expulsion would have been every bit as inaccurate as other population counts of the period; in fact, we have only to compare the figures for Burbaguena in Aytona's census with the numbers of those who boarded at Tortosa to demonstrate this fact, but this is a possibility Lapeyre and other historians seem to have overlooked.

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The question that occurs immediately is, What happened to these additional *nuevos convertidos*? There is no record of any new Christian in the parish register after 1610, and this is significant. The expulsion order, at least on its face, permitted Moriscos who could demonstrate that they were "good Christians" to remain in Aragon, <sup>14</sup> but the Moriscos of Burbaguena do not appear to have chosen this route. Certainly, both parish registers and notarial documents for Burbaguena provide us with a picture of Aragon prior to expulsion that is profoundly different from the one Lapeyre painted forty years ago. According to Lapeyre,

From autumn 1609, the Aragonese Moriscos awaited a departure like that of their coreligionists in Valencia; they were so certain of it that they no longer cultivated that land and they sold their possessions. <sup>15</sup>

Lapeyre had clearly read the report of Aragon's viceroy to the Crown. Aytona wrote:

The Moriscos of this kingdom are very fearful that what was done to those in the kingdom of Valencia will be done to them; they sell as

much as they are able and they don't want to cultivate the earth, since it appears that they will not enjoy the fruits of their labors. [16](#)

Aytona was writing from Saragossa. We know, however, that in Burbaguena there was no sudden rush to sell property, fixed or movable. Indeed, for an investigator unaware of the expulsion, there would be no signal of its imminence in either the parish records or the notarial documents for the region. In June, a group of Moriscos did name several old Christians in Burbaguena, and one Morisco in Daroca, as their [legal agents](#), so that their business affairs would be looked after. In the last Morisco "event" of my documentation, Ana de Aguen's twin girls were baptized on August 6, only a month before the departure. Each of the children had two old-Christian godparents: for Catalina, Felipe Monje and Maria Berbegal ; for Ana, Geronimo de Feurtes and Doña Inez Fuentes. [17](#)

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One comment, however, which Lapeyre records is telling: Felipe de Porres did not consider the Aragonese "helpful." The crown had anticipated difficulties in terms of old Christians hiding or protecting Moriscos ; in fact, it had delayed the expulsion decree while it debated the problem of how to punish such offenders. [18](#) It may be that, in addition, resistance to the expulsion came from other, unexpected sources. While the episcopal conference of Valencia, Aragon, and Granada had recommended expulsion in 1582, they had suggested that the expulsion be limited to Valencia. [19](#) Perhaps, then, we should consider the response of the Archbishop of Saragossa, who, when asked by the Crown in 1609 to provide a population count, replied quite simply with a copy of the census of 1495 and a statement that the population had increased by about 25 percent. [20](#) The archbishop could have provided the Crown with a remarkably accurate census, utilizing the registers of each parish in the Saragossa archdiocese; instead, and, we presume, knowing why the Crown required the information, he provided minimal assistance.

### **After the Expulsion**

It is not our task here to determine what happened to those Moriscos who were not expelled; it is, however, our intention to point out that there may have been a significant number who remained in Aragon or otherwise evaded expulsion. In 1621, for example, Pedro Alos wrote to Philip IV that there were a considerable number of Moriscos within the various kingdoms of Aragon. Some had simply remained, and others had returned to their own homes from North Africa. The Inquisition had insisted, in the second half of the sixteenth century, that "home" for the Morisco population was North Africa; but according to Alos, who was an agent of the Crown in Catalonia, Rosellon, and Cerdaña, those who returned after the expulsion claimed Aragon as their home. These Moriscos, claimed Alos, lived calmly and peacefully, protected

by influential people. Alos set the total value of the holdings of these Moriscos at twelve thousand ducats, [21](#) and suggested that the Crown might seize the property and, at the same time, supply their galleys with rowers. In their response, the Council of Aragon asserted: "We do not really believe what Pedro Alos is telling us, nor do we believe that, if there are Moriscos, they have the wealth he supposes, for the viceroys have said nothing about this." [22](#) In the same report, the Council added that the Archbishop of Valencia had found more than 2,000 Moriscos living in Valencia. The Council was aware that Moriscos continued to live in Spain and, if there were Moriscos within the kingdom of Aragon, well, the viceroys hadn't said anything about it. We begin to see why Crown officials might have regarded the Aragonese as uncooperative.

Morisco history has been written, in part, as a history of rebellion and resistance. The argument made throughout this work has been that this identity is a constructed one, imposed upon Moriscos by the Inquisition. If we examine the communities of southern Aragon at the local level, we can find no justification for this constructed identity. Perhaps historians interested in resistance and rebellion have been looking in the wrong places for evidence. It may be that Teruel's initial response to the Inquisition—a response that stressed that the community was a single entity, and could not be defined otherwise—was echoed, in a more muted form, in the villages and towns of southern Aragon throughout the sixteenth century.

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## Notes:

**Note 1:** The word "Morisco" *does* appear in the baptismal register for Burbaguena in the early 1560s; significantly, it is written in a hand that differs from that of the parish priests of the period. Someone has clearly reviewed the records and written in either the given name of the child, for those presumed to be the children of old Christians, or, for those presumed to be the children of new converts, the designator "Morisco." The auditor made a number of mistakes in his review; these were, in all likelihood, due to the local priest's failure to identify all *nuevos convertidos* in the baptismal registers. The handwriting is more than challenging in many of these registers, and was undoubtedly another factor in the auditor's overlooking a number of Morisco children. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Mikel Epalza discusses the origin of the word "Morisco" and its uses in *Los Moriscos antes y después de la expulsión* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), 15-18. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Ricardo Garcia Carcel, "The Course of the Moriscos up to their Expulsion," in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1987), 73-4. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** "Queda una duda que es preciso formular y que no es de poca envergadura. ¿ Que se entend'a bajo la denominacion de moriscos en los recuentos ? ¿ Como eran definidos por las autoridades y el pueblo cristiano ? Cuestion importante y, curiosamente, olvidada por los historiadores. ¿Se aplicaban criterios etnicos, religiosos o culturales ? El problema es muy complejo sobre todo por el hecho de que los moriscos eran todos oficialmente cristianos." Bernard Vincent and Dominguez Ortiz, *Historia de los Moriscos : Vida y tragedia de una minoria* (Madrid: Alianza, 1979), 89. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Lapeyre's criticism is based upon the figures for total households and total individuals. He claims that a rate of five individuals per household is too high, and cites the Guadalajara count made in 1594 by the Inquisition, which incidentally suggests a lower number of total households, as well as a lower per-household multiplier. Lapeyre, 96, n. 2. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** At least in terms of Aragon itself. A number of Moriscos were sent north, to cross into France, and difficulties were encountered when Henry IV, who had agreed to these arrangements, died. The Moriscos were eventually permitted to exit Spain by way of France. See "Passages de Morisques par le Somport," *Géographie de l'Espagne Morisque* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1959), 100-102. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** Simancas, Estado, leg. 232, in Lapeyre. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** "Le royaume d'Aragon fut, parmi tous les pays d'Espagne, celui qui fut le plus complètement debarrassee de sa population morisque." Lapeyre offers the letter of the Viceroy of Aragon to Felipe III, asserting that Aragon "es el que mas limpio se halla en Espana desta semilla . . . ." [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** Garcia Carcel, 83. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** In Catalonia, in comparison, according to Lapeyre, some 3,463 Moriscos were permitted to remain. The figures for the area around Lerida are even more interesting. In 1497, the census indicated the presence of three villages with Muslims. By 1515, one of the villages, Alcanó, no longer identified Muslims separately, and by 1610 no Moriscos had been expelled from this location. Lapeyre remarks that it is quite possible that the population had become assimilated. Lapeyre, 98-99. [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** In Regla, op. cit., 80. [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** Simancas, Estado, leg. 225, in Lapeyre, 242-47. [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** The 1581 list, found in [Appendix 2](#), is carried forward to 1610 by referencing baptism, marriage, and death registers. Only "[productive couples](#)" have been included here, and duplication in the names of children in the same family is presumed to indicate a death, even where a death cannot be located in the parish register. [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Regla, 92. [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** "Depuis l'automne 1609, les Morisques aragonias s'attendaient a partager le sort de leurs coreligionnaires valenciens ; ils en etaient tellement surs qu'ils ne cultivaient plus la terre et qu'ils vendaient leurs biens." Lapeyre, 99. [Back.](#)

**Note 16:** "Los Moriscos deste reyno estan mu temerosos de que se a de hazer con ellos lo que se ha hecho con los de reyno de Valencia, venden quanto pueden y no quieren cultivar la tierra, pareciendoles que no an de gozar el fruto de su trabajo." In Regla, 86. [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** The group from Burbaguena, among the last to leave Aragon, departed on September 16, 1610. [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** Lapeyre, 99. It is probable that the Crown's real concern was not with the towns, but rather with the nobles who had, historically, resisted Inquisition efforts to disarm or prosecute "their" Moriscos. [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** The Council of State, following upon this recommendation, stipulated that the Moriscos of Valencia should be removed, but those of Aragon and Castile should not be touched. Garcia Carcel, 81. [Back.](#)

**Note 20:** Tomás Gonzales, *Censo de Poblacion* (Madrid: La Imprenta Real, 1829) reprints the 1495 census. See also Lapeyre, 96 n. 2. [Back.](#)

**Note 21:** Regla, 112. [Back.](#)

**Note 22:** "No tiene por cierto lo que refiere el dicho Pedro Alos, ni cree que si hay algunos moriscos sean hazienda que supone, pues nada han dicho los virreyes." ACA, CA, 221,II, 1, in Regla, 112. [Back.](#)

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