

Between a Frontier Hero and Scipio Africanus: The Caballero Martín de Córdoba y de Velasco in the Renaissance Chronicles of the Maghreb

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The figure of Martín de Córdoba y de Velasco, Count of Alcaudete, hero of the military campaigns that led to conquest of the kingdom of Tlemcen in 1543, looms large in the Spanish Imperial conquest of the Maghreb. The Count of Alcaudete, a member of one of the most prestigious noble families of Andalusia, the Fernández de Córdoba, and captain general of Oran and Mers-el- Kebir from 1535 to 1555, is the focus of two works written by early modern chroniclers. One of these works is “Guerra de Tremecén” written in 1543 by Francisco de la Cueva, don Martín’s chaplain and also a captain who participated in the early North African campaigns led by the Count of Alcaudete.¹ The other is “Dialogo de las Guerras de Orán” (Granada 1593), a Renaissance dialogue in which the soldier Baltasar de Morales reports the Count’s actions in the campaigns from 1543 to 1558 as well as the actions of his son Alonso de Córdoba, who served as captain general after his father’s death. Both chroniclers exalt in their works the figure of don Martín de Córdoba y Velasco, honoring his heroic deeds during the conquest of Tlemcen. Cueva as well as Morales offer a portrait of an Andalusian aristocrat in which most of his laudatory aspects are linked to the nobleman’s contribution to the fight against Muslim “Other” on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar by constructing an image of the Count of Alcaudete as a medieval crusader who risked his life, personal wealth and reputation in his attempt to expand Christianity beyond the Iberian borders. Francisco de la Cueva and his contemporary Baltasar de Morales highlight an episode in which the Count of Alcaudete seizes a Christian bell found in the Great Mosque of Tlemcen. Both chroniclers present in a detailed manner this anecdote involving don Martín’s recovery of a religious artifact so imbued with symbolic value and historical resonance as a Christian bell.² The bell was rescued by don Martín from a mosque where it had been employed by the North African inhabitants as a lamp. Cueva’s and Morales’ insistence on the anecdote conveys their understanding of Córdoba’s efforts to self-fashion himself as a military leader whose deeds in the war against the infidel can compete with those of previous generations of noblemen who participated in the Reconquista.³

Both Cueva and Morales offer a nuanced image of Alcaudete in which a crucial element is a comparison of the Andalusian aristocrat with a classical hero. Francisco de la Cueva includes in his account of the expedition to the North African kingdom of Tlemcen in 1543 a characterization of don Martín as a warrior in the Imperial project by comparing him to the Roman general Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, whose participation in the Second Punic

¹ The complete title of this work is *Aquí comienza la Relación de la Guerra del Reino de Tremecén y subjecion de la mesma cibdad, en la cual fué y es capitan general el muy ilustre Sr. D. Martin de Córdoba y de Velasco, Conde de Alcaudete, Señor de la casa de Montemayor*. Francisco de la Cueva finished writing this work 1543 in the Andalusian town of Baeza. The original manuscript, preserved in the National Library of Madrid, was never published until the nineteenth-century.

² Cueva and Morales provide similar information about supplies, the organization of the troops, and individual battles and their outcomes (Liang168).

³ Considered by some historians as a myth, the Reconquista is a dynamic concept that changed throughout the periods and adjusted to a different political and ideological contexts (O’Callaghan 4-6). Charles V aimed to convince Castilians, whose taxes were crucial for the maintenance of a supposedly universal Empire, to identify the crusade against the Ottoman Empire and the infidels as continuation of the Reconquista (Elliot 169).

War, led to the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. Morales also refers to the Count of Alcaudete's military exploits in North Africa as something not seen since the Roman conquest of the area. Thus Cueva and Morales offer a representation of don Martín in the light of the authors' efforts that responds both in a complementary fashion to the notion of the Christian hero who considers the expansionist enterprise in the Maghreb as a continuation of the medieval Reconquista and to the early modern ideal of the "caballero", as middle level member of one of the most prestigious aristocratic families of the time, who seeks social promotion through his military service to the Empire. By offering an image of don Martín as a classical hero, the authors make compatible the nobleman's heroic representation with the concept of "Translatio Imperii", crucial for the construction of an Imperial ideology during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.⁴ It is possible to suggest that the construction of this image of the count of Alcaudete mirrors the fashioning of the political figure of Charles V, as both Roman emperor and Charlemagne's descendant, through the combination of the symbols of the classical world and those of the medieval Christian hero, whose mission is the defense of the imperial project. The image emanates from a symbiosis of the Roman Empire's classical universe and the Nordic Carolingian cultural sphere (Yates 3-5). In this way both Cueva's and Morales' texts might be included in a greater narrative, which starts with Carlos V's accession to the throne, that combines the imperial roman traditions with the imagery developed by the propagandist machinery of the Holy Roman Empire, whose main mission is the protection of Christianity, the church, and the Pope (Yates 8-28).⁵

Also, the representation of Martín de Córdoba y Velasco both as a crusader and as a classical hero constitutes as well an understanding of the role of the "caballeros", as Nader has termed such figures in her study of the House of Mendoza. For Liang, the noblemen on the battlefield, in some instances following their own expansionist agendas and anticipating and helping to define the official imperial project, are as important for the formation of the empire as the members of the intellectual and political elite (10-11). These "caballeros" were broadly recognized for their martial prowess and expertise as army officers but they also acquired remarkable administrative experience in the territories under their command (Liang 12-15). Some of these "caballeros", members of the lesser branches of the Spanish nobility, were deployed to areas which did not represent a priority in the Imperial agenda. A case in point is the presidio of Oran, a penitentiary and defensive settlement where various members of the Fernández de Córdoba family served as general captains, constituting along with Mers-el-Kebir the only permanent Spanish enclaves along the Coast of Barbary.⁶

⁴ Fernán Pérez de Oliva explained in the first third of the sixteenth-century the concept of "Translatio Imperii" in terms of the movement of empires in a westerly direction (Elliott 136). This concept, developed during the late Middle Age and the Renaissance, was employed to legitimize Spain's preeminent position in a new European order and it is consistent with the nation's destiny given the predictability of historical cycles based on the existence of a natural movement of empires from the East to the West (Elliott 136). About the emergence during the early modern period of a myth of the continuity of an unaltered Spanish identity that comes from Roman times, see Hutcheson and Blackmore (3).

⁵ For Yates, Titian's "Portrait of Charles V in the battle of Mühlberg" exhibits an image of the Emperor that resembles both a stoic Marcus Aurelius and a Christian knight, exemplifying the illusion of a new universal Empire that constitutes a renewal of the Roman Empire, echoing as well a medieval epic of by knights fighting for Christianity (22). In this way, Charles V embodies the unity of the Roman world and the ideals of peace, justice and the return of the Golden Age linked to the Carolingians (Yates 11).

⁶ Of the thirty seven general captains of Oran from 1509 to 1708, eight belonged to the Fernández de Córdoba family, who occupied the position without interruption from 1509 to 1564 and from 1575 to 1604 (Sánchez Doncel 221-48).

However, both Cueva's and Morales's texts illustrate don Martín's struggle to shape his own identity in a manner consistent with the aristocrat's status as one of the Empire's most valuable servants, through his twenty four year tenure as captain general of Oran. Don Martín's preeminent position is matched by his capacity to perpetuate through his military endeavors the fight against the infidel that his ancestors undertook in the past. More importantly, the image of the captain governor of Oran echoes the problematic formation of the national identity during the early modern period. The way in which a medieval past and the notion of Reconquista are integrated in the imperial narratives employed in the construction of a national identity causes what Hutcheson and Blackmore define as an "ironic effect of reorienting Christian Iberia toward the South and the East and engaging it in a cultural and intellectual activity that was entirely foreign to Europe" (2). As Barbara Fuchs suggests, the difficult configuration of a notion of "Spanishness" following the unification of the Iberian kingdoms is due, among other factors, to the complications derived from reconciling a historical past defined by a long standing conflict against Islam, which is not in any way resolved in the present, and a new Imperial era marked by ideals of racial purity as well as religious and cultural homogeneity (*Exotic Nation* 5-10).⁷ According to Fuchs, the existence during this period of what she refers to as a "Moorish habit" of incorporating numerous customs, cultural practices and everyday objects of Muslim origin into Spanish culture, both causes the emergence of anxieties among Spaniards and serves as the source of the exotic image of the country that circulated abroad (*Exotic Nation* 2-10). Therefore by representing the Count of Alcaudete as Scipio Africanus, the authors attempt to redefine the aristocrat's military and political stature in a manner more compatible with the new messianic mission of becoming the leaders of a universal Christian empire that the Habsburg monarchs assigned to themselves. The insistence on this association allows for an attenuation of anxieties provoked by don Martín's intimate connection with the Muslim world acquired both through familiar recollection of his ancestors' participation in the frontier war as well as through his own military and political endeavors in the Barbary coast.

Due to the relevance of their content regarding the North African political, geographical and economic realities, both Cueva's and Morales' works could be included in the distinct corpus of the "chroniclers of Barbary", utilizing the label proposed by Bunes Ibarra and Alonso Acero (15).⁸ During the two first thirds of the sixteenth-century, captives, soldiers, missionaries and "rescatadores" [captives' rescuers] produced the sort of knowledge that was necessary for Spanish military intervention in North Africa. The Spaniards' colonial interests in the Maghreb led to the creation of a body of literary works dedicated to the diffusion of geographic, historical and ethnographic information about the area. It is true that the Habsburgs, preoccupied with more pressing matters related to their possessions in Europe and the Americas, showed limited interest in territorial expansion in North Africa toward the end of the sixteenth-century, in this way anticipating the failure of the imperial enterprise in the region.⁹ Spanish society quickly lost interest in news from North Africa, except for the increasingly infrequent chronicles

⁷ Although problematic, due to Castile's and Aragon's distinct historical trajectories, the term "Spain" and Fuchs' notion of "Spanishness" usefully highlights the Habsburgs' efforts to create an image of a unified nation (*Exotic Nation*). The term "Spain" was often used to identify the Iberian Monarchy in a period of intensive political internationalization (Nieto Soria 119- 23).

⁸ See, Martínez Góngora, *Los espacios*.

⁹ See, Braudel (*The Mediterranean* 2: 859-62). Hess refers to North Africa as "the forgotten frontier", given the lack of attention by historians to the colonial activities in the region (207-11). On the Spanish intervention in the Maghreb, see also, Braudel, "Les espagnols"; García Arenal y Bunes; Bunes Ibarra; Garcés (26-29) and Fuchs, *Passing* (14-16).

of great victories.¹⁰ Given the limited impact of the battle of Lepanto, the intensification of conflicts with other European nations and in the New World, the offensive against the Ottoman Empire and the Maghrebi expansion ceased being priorities for Philip II Habsburgs, who signed peace treaties with the Turks in 1578, 1581 and 1584 (Harvey 340-42, Hess 99, Braudel, *The Mediterranean 2*: 1143-85).¹¹ The different levels of interest toward the region in the almost half century that separates the publication of Morales' dialogue and Cueva's chronicle is a factor that has to be considered as well as the disparate cultural and intellectual environments ascribed to the utilization of these literary genres. Morales employs the humanist dialogue in contrast with Cueva's use of the chronicle ("relación"), which is more expected from a former soldier and offers an impression of objectivity about the count's military endeavors and the information provided on North Africa.¹²

Nevertheless, during the reigns of Charles V and Philip II, captives such as Mármol Carvajal, Antonio de Sosa, "rescatadores" such as Diego de Torres, and soldiers such as Francisco de la Cueva and Baltasar de Morales produced the knowledge necessary for expansionist activities in the Maghreb and the fight against the Ottoman Empire.¹³ The writing of these reports on North Africa coincides with the inclusion of this area in the imperial agenda. During the first decade of the sixteenth-century Spaniards seized Peñón de Vélez (1508), Oran (1509), Béjaïa, and Tripoli (1511). More military advances carried out afterwards and frequent attacks by the Turks led to the campaigns of Djerba, (1520, 1560), Tunisia (1535, 1573, 1574), Lepanto (1571), Bizerte (1573) and Coron (1574). The Crown's imperial aspirations initially coincided with an aim to extend beyond the Iberian borders the sort of colonial society established in Granada following its seizure in 1492 to 1571, when the descendants of the Muslims were deported to other areas of the Spanish territory after their defeat in the Civil Wars that followed their uprising in the Alpujarras in 1568.¹⁴ However Oran, along with Mers-el-Kebir, ended up being the only permanent settlements established by the Habsburgs in the Maghreb. In general, these military presidios were extremely costly to the Crown since most of the provisioning of alimentation, arms and other supplies depended on shipments sent from the Peninsula (Alonso Acero 8-15).¹⁵

Although belonging to the House of Alcaudete, a lesser branch of the Fernández de Córdoba's family in terms of power and affluence, the caballero Martín de Córdoba spent his life

¹⁰ These works' lack of editorial success, including their main source, Leo Africanus, is an indication of the general loss of interest in Africa. Leo Africanus' *Della descrizione dell'Africa* was quickly translated into the all main European languages other than Castilian.

¹¹ Corsair attacks across the Mediterranean continued, however, against both ships and the Italian and Iberian coastal populations (García-Arenal 127).

¹² According to Liang, Cueva's and Morales's works resemble the chronicles of battles and deeds (*relaciones de guerras y hazañas*) composed by members of the royalty and high nobility in the medieval and early modern periods (168).

¹³ Transferring to North African soil the war against the infidel and thus renewing the spirit of the Reconquista, searching for gold or slaves in the interior of the continent, controlling trade routes, securing the Spanish and Italian coasts from the attacks of corsairs, as well as deterring Ottoman military advances in the Mediterranean are some of the different reasons that may coexist in the same text.

¹⁴ In Granada, the Old Christians subjected the now converted Muslims with the purpose of creating a subaltern stratum of the population that could be exploited as cheap labor (Caro Baroja, 43; Braudel, *The Mediterranean 2*: 787). Braudel also points out the exploitation suffered by the Morisco population in the kingdom of Valencia (*The Mediterranean 2*: 278). It is not just a coincidence that the initial impulse of the Spanish Crown to colonize North Africa takes place at the same time that the Castilians consolidated their authority over the populations of Muslim ancestry in Granada.

¹⁵ About the city of Oran, see Sánchez Doncel, Alonso Acero.

in service to the Empire, as did the other members of this aristocratic clan both before and after him.¹⁶ As Yuen-Gen Liang asserts, in the Fernández de Córdoba family members of the minor houses of Cabra and Alcaudete utilized for their own social and economic promotion the kind of military expertise and administrative skills that they could acquire through the defense of the Imperial frontiers, as well as through holding governmental offices in those areas (13-15; 54-170). The figure of don Martín, whose title of Count of Alcaudete in 1529 was a reward for his performance on the battlefield and for his service in the official posts in Navarra and Oran, illustrates what Liang terms “the transformation of locally rooted *senores* (sic.) into international imperial offices ” (6). However, as these chroniclers made clear, this transformation was not perceived as complete by don Martín’s contemporaries. It is true that Francisco de la Cueva and Baltasar de Morales, soldiers themselves who participated in the North African campaigns led by the Andalusian aristocrat, focus their narratives mainly on don Martín’s military prowess and on his contribution to the expansionist enterprise of the Habsburgs in the region and attend less to Martín’s role as captain governor of Oran. Although the authors aim to construct an identity for don Martín through a portrayal of the Andalusian nobleman as an active agent in the formation of the Empire, both Cueva and Morales appeal to the Count’s familiarity with the frontier war in a way that echoes the fight against Islam conducted by previous generations of the Fernández de Córdoba on peninsular soil.

Martín de Córdoba y Velasco, the son in law of Diego Fernández de Córdoba, occupied the administrative posts of Corregidor of Toledo, viceroy of Navarre and captain general of Oran. Martín was granted honorary offices in Cordoba and also received from the Emperor financial recompense. Unlike his relatives in the previous generation who were rewarded with large extensions of land by king Ferdinand of Aragon, the nobleman was never offered land (Liang 101). As Liang convincingly asserts, “the lack of land as part of Martín’s recompense signaled that the lord was no longer a medieval caballero conquering territories in the Reconquista. He was transforming into an administrator for a developing state” (101). Therefore Charles recompensed the then Lord of Alcaudete with the commissioning of the governorship of Navarre from 1520 to 1534, when he was appointed captain general of Oran. During his twenty four year term as captain general of Oran, Martín de Córdoba y Velasco exhibited a high degree of autonomy from the central government in the exercise of his duties as the highest political authority of the Spanish settlement. The Cordovan nobleman controlled the life of the presidio in such a fashion that even Charles V’s son, the future Philip II, ordered an audit of Martín’s affairs out of suspicion that the governor of Oran might have surpassed the powers related to the position (Liang 160-63). Yet the Count of Alcaudate’s independent conduct during his tenure as captain general in Oran was fully justified when viewed in light of the several occasions in which he was obliged to use his own financial resources and mobilize his Andalusian friends and clients in order to properly defend the North African frontier. In spite of the onset of a new imperial order signaled by the absence of land as a compensation for his service, the type of leadership exercised by the governor of the only permanent Spanish colony in Africa remained similar to that exhibited by the frontier commanders in previous times. Don Martín’s prerogative to use his own military forces and supplies to supplement the limited assistance from the emperor came along with efforts to carry out expansionist activities in the region, especially those devoted to placing the neighboring kingdom of Tlemcen and its harbor city of Mostaganem under the authority of the Habsburgs. The Count saw the political instability of the Kingdom, whose throne was occupied by six members of the Zayanid dynasty twelve

¹⁶ Liang discusses the dependence of Charles V on the Castilian nobility (84).

different times between 1534 and 1551, as an opportunity to transform the city state into a Spanish protectorate (Liang 157-58). Thus the captain general led expeditions in 1535, 1543, 1545 and 1558 to the Tlemcen area in which he displayed a capacity to make independent decisions. For instance in an expedition in 1543 he mobilized an army of several thousand soldiers with supplies from the Peninsula to install Abu Abdallah Muhammad and his grandfather Abd al-Rahman ben Reduan on Tlemcen's throne. Although the Count of Alcaudete conquered Tlemcen, occupying the state city before he handed it to Muslim allies, he could not pursue the siege of Mostaganem due to the emperor's order to send soldiers north to secure Navarre's borders from a French offensive. Don Martín did not receive any assistance from the Emperor for extending beyond the limits of the presidio his dominance over the North African region (Liang 159).

In these texts written about the Count of Alcaudete's military victories, the renewal of the spirit of the Crusade manifests itself through the relevance given by the authors to the religious artifacts found by the Spanish soldiers in the North African cities. These sacred objects are especially significant for their ability to appeal to the historical roots of the Spanish intervention in the Maghreb by connecting the medieval past with an Imperial present. At the same time the recovery of the religious artefacts contribute to the establishment of a relation between two apparently separated geographical spaces, those of the North African region and the Peninsula. In their description of the Great Mosque of the city of Tlemcen, several chroniclers mention that the Count of Alcaudete seized a lamp made of a Christian bell that had previously been stolen from a Christian church by the Muslim invaders. Francisco de la Cueva attributes to the bell a North African indigenous origin, which operates as a crucial argument for probing the existence of a Christian tradition in the area that precedes the arrival of the Arab-Islamic invaders. According to the author of la "Guerra de Tremecén", the Christian bell discovered in the Mosque "pareció ser muy antigua, y, por razón, es del tiempo que Tremecén era de cristianos, y se perdió cuando fué destruida España, en tiempo del Rey D. Rodrigo, por aquel maldito Conde D. Julian. ¡Juicio grande de Dios! que por Conde fué perdida esta cibdad de Tremecén, que Conde la ganase" (Cueva 104). Therefore, for Francisco de la Cueva, the bell symbolizes the connection between two distant events in terms of time and in space: the fight against the Muslim invaders in the Iberian Peninsula and the territorial expansion enterprise carried out by the Spaniards along the Barbary Coast. Cueva mentions the Muslim invasion in the eighth-century in order to confer the same degree of historical significance to the conquest of Tlemcen led by don Martín, to whom the author is paying homage.

While Francisco de la Cueva assures his reader that the bell belonged to the Christian inhabitants of Tlemcen, for Baltasar de Morales the artifact was "nuestra" (258), that is, it belonged to the Spanish people, affirming the object's clear Peninsular origin. Morales concludes that the appropriation of the bell and its conversion into a Muslim lamp were considered by the Spaniards "como una afrenta contra la religión Cristiana, ahora está como por trofeo de la victoria de la Cruz de Jesucristo" (258). Referring to the Count of Alcaudete, the author maintains in relation to the recovery of the bell that "las demás injurias de los cristianos que vengó, y los daños que reparó, seria cosa larga relatarlos" (258). As the author suggests, the recovery of the bell by don Martín symbolizes the reinstatement of Christianity and civilization in the area due to the Spaniard's military victories, putting into an end the cycle of religious error and brutality initiated by the Arab-Islamic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb. It is not an accident that both texts reflect the Spaniards' obsession with the trophies of bells, given that they consider the absence of bells from the mosques a direct offense against Christianity, as

they interpreted such an absence as an effort made by the Muslims to distinguish themselves (Bunes Ibarra 219). The connection with the past is clear considering that, as John V. Tolan explains in the context of the medieval confrontation between Islam and Christianity, “the ringing of the bells represents, for some medieval Muslim authors, an audible symbol of Christianity, a noisome racket that one should silence. Likewise, Christian authors express their disdain for the *adhân*, which is the call to prayer of the muezzin (mu’adhdhin)” (147). The appropriation of the bells from the Christian churches made by the Muslims and their conversion into lamps utilized for the lighting of the mosques constitutes a frequent practice from the first years of the Muslim invasion, and it is in this moment when the symbolism of the transformation is developed in greater depth. For the Muslims, as Tolan maintains, “the destruction of bell towers struck as the most visible and audible symbols of Christianity and affirmed the superiority of Islam against its Christian detractors” (155). For instance, in 997, Almanzor removes the bells of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and gives orders that they be transported to the Great Mosque of Cordoba (Tolan 147; 156-57). According to Tolan, from Almanzor’s perspective, he is able to silence the Christian infidel’s bells that and use them to illuminate the true religion (147).

The return of the lamps to their original state and locations, as well as the conversion of the minarets into bell towers are presented in medieval texts as the main arguments in favor of considering the recovery of the bells as a fair compensation for the frequent acts of sacrilegious vandalism that accompanied the Arab invasion. When Ferdinand III of Castile conquered Cordoba, he not only placed the royal cote de arm with the cross in the minaret of the Great Mosque, but he ordered the return of the bells stolen from Santiago de Compostela by Almanzor to their original location in the Cathedral. Lucas de Tuy mentions in his *Chronicon mundi* the conquest of Cordoba by Fernando III and the return of the bells to Compostela ordered by the Christians, as well as the transformation of the Great Mosque into a magnificent Cathedral. For Lucas de Toy, the Mosque was consecrated once “all the Mohamed’s dirt was eliminated” (qtd. in Tolan 157). The vision of don Martín recovering the bell suggests an identification between the figure of the Andalusian aristocrat and King Ferdinand III the Saint, the Castilian monarch who according the medieval chroniclers returned the bell from the Mosque in Cordoba that had been transformed into a lamp, to its original location in Santiago de Compostela (Martínez Góngora, *Los espacios* 83-84). Indeed the Reconquista’s most remarkable territorial advances are attributed to Ferdinand III the Saint, especially the seizure of the main Andalusian cities, such as Úbeda in 1233, Córdoba in 1236, Jaén in 1246 and Seville in 1248. This parallelism makes the Maghreb appear as a natural extension of Al-Andalus in the texts written by Morales and Cueva, which allows for a construction of the propagandistic message. The equivalence between the figure of the Count of Alcaudete and the historical Ferdinand III the Saint in terms of a leadership that culminates symbolically with the recovery of the bells suggests, given the semantic value conferred upon this religious artifact, the transferring of the spirit of the Crusade during the Renaissance to the other side of the Mediterranean (Martínez Góngora, *Los espacios* 83-84).

Francisco de la Cueva points out in his “Guerra de Tremecén” that the bell found in the Great Mosque of Tlemcen, once its authenticity was verified, was sent to Oran, “donde al presente queda” (105). According to Baltasar de Morales the bell recovered by don Martín was exhibited at the time in which the dialogue was composed in the castle of Alcaudete, located in the province of Córdoba (258). In this way, he makes it clear that the Count could have kept the bell in his Andalusian estate, following the example of many other noblemen who participated in

the Reconquista, by placing, conserving and exhibiting arms and artifacts in their castles or ancestral palaces out of a wish to be remembered for their past victories over the Muslims. As we observe in Andalusian noble families' inventories, their members used to pass these trophies to their descendants as the most valuable part of their inheritance, usually to be received by the eldest son (Urquizar Herrera 74-76). Urquizar Herrera regards this custom as illustrating the typical mentality of the warriors trained in the frontier, which explains, for instance, how the Count of Comares maintained until the nineteenth-century the arms and clothing that his ancestors seized from king Boabdil of Granada when they made him prisoner in 1483 (75). It is interesting that the Count of Alcaudete finally left the bell for the decoration of the tomb where his parents were buried in the convent of Santa Clara. As Liang asserts "Portraying himself as a Christian warrior, Martín de Córdoba wanted a bell that he seized in an expedition to Tlemcen to be hung in the tomb where his parents were buried and where he and his wife would be laid to rest. A bronze plaque placed underneath the bell was to explain the provenance of the object that had been dedicated to the Virgin Mary" (179). Therefore, don Martín chose to be remembered for his contribution to the territorial expansion attached to the military campaigns in the Maghreb and to the subjection of the Muslim "other", having transported the spirit of the Reconquista, so exemplarily embodied by his ancestors, across the Mediterranean. In spite of Morales's efforts to construct an image of the southern aristocrat consistent with his active role in the formation of the Empire, he makes the decision to maintain his place in the collective memory as a member of a noble lineage that founded their prestige and wealth in the frontier wars.

It is clear that the authors seem to be aware that their references to the Count's exhibition in his estates of the religious artifacts brought from North Africa as symbols of Christian triumph over Islam contributes to an image of the Andalusian aristocrat as a Christian hero imbued with the spirit of the Crusader. Cueva highlights in the first pages of his work the fact that don Martín fought "contra los enemigos de nuestra sancta fe católica, empleando sus fuerzas y ánimo generoso como fidelísimo y católico Cristiano, en servicio de Nuestro Señor, y honra de su sancta fe, y en servicio de su Rey . . . y así de noche como de día, contra los infieles en la guarda de la cibdad de Orán" (6). Cueva, after all a priest, underlines the Count's Christian virtues referring, for example, to his efforts to assist women and children in crossing a river while they were fleeing from the North African Muslims, efforts that extend to the point of rewarding a prostitute who helped the fleeing parties (74-75). Also Cueva alludes to the aristocrat's generosity toward Christian captives and renegades, reporting don Martín's personal involvement in one of the renegades' reconciliation with the Catholic Church (120-21). Morales offers a depiction of don Martín as a medieval frontier hero as well, pointing out, for instance, that under his command, the soldiers attacking the North African Muslims screamed the old yell of "Señor, Santiago" (300).

By the end of the sixteenth-century, however, the Count of Alcaudete's decision to hang the bell seized in one of his North African expeditions would have become the target of some mockery. By this time, participation in the North African campaigns seems not to be perceived uniformly as a cause for pride. To the contrary, during the reign of Philip II the proud exhibition of the bell would be considered absurd and laughable by some Spaniards, as is illustrated by the sonnet entitled "A Martín Alonso de Montemayor, que colgo en la capilla de los condes de Alcaudete un alfanje y una banderilla que trajo de Oran" (Millé 550). As we observe in this satiric sonnet attributed to Luis de Góngora and dated by Millé around 1587 or 1588 (535), a soldier is the object of ridicule for having pretentiously placed warfare artifacts seized from North African Muslims during the military campaigns in the area coincidentally in the chapel of

the Count of Alcaudete. The Cordovan poet questions the location of these North African artifacts in the interior of a chapel since the soldier's manifestation of empty bragging is absurd in the light of the problematic circumstances of the Spanish soldiers in Oran. The moralistic undertone highlighted by use of these terms, "vergüenza" (5), and "necedades" (8) suggests that at the end of the sixteenth-century the fight against the infidel is no longer an effective form of legitimization for any sort of expansionist enterprise. The criticism of placing North African war objects brought from Oran in the chapel of the Count of Alcaudete not only denotes the lack of validity of the religious dimension as a justification for the Spanish presence in North Africa but a rejection of interpreting signs of religious or cultural syncretism as metaphors for the Spanish superiority. The soldier's conduct is almost sacrilegious due to de fact that he dares to hang his humble spoils of war in a holy place, as it is the Count's chapel, and for that reason, he asks himself if the sacred post is appropriate for such "vergüenza" (8).

It is tempting to consider Luis de Góngora's possible personal motivations for attacking the soldier to whom the poem is addressed or, perhaps, the house of Alcaudete itself, given the striking coincidences of the soldier's first name and surnames with those of several members of the Fernández de Córdoba's family, including the first Count of Alcaudete, whose full name was Martín Alonso Fernández de Córdoba Montemayor y Velasco. In this way, it would be clear that for the poet the figure of the crusader had lost its luster and appeal at the turn of the century. The poet's satiric allusion to the soldier, who offers both "alfanje" and "banderilla" (3) as tokens of his martial deeds in North Africa, demonstrates a negative view of the colonizing experience in the Maghreb. Góngora criticizes the servile attitude of the soldier who hangs in the religious site owned by the family of this Andalusian aristocrat these insignificant "despojos" (11), as signs of a victory. Not in vain, according to the poet, such a triumph is only made possible given the military expertise of the Count in the frontier war: "Pues maldito, diablo reconoce / tu sentencia al olvido, y da la gloria / al Conde tu señor de estos despojos / . . . / [quien] no cuelga señas de victoria" (9-13). The soldier's pompous behavior is perceived by the poet as ridiculous since he is trying to place himself in the Count of Alcaudete's level in terms of military prestige and social status. According to the poet, unlike the soldier, the nobleman "no cuelga señas de victoria" (13). Nevertheless, the poet does not just criticize the soldier who dares to appropriate the Count's heroism in his attempt to attain an eternal glory that is only deserved by Alcaudete but expresses his repulsion with assigning religious value to war trophies seized in the North African campaigns.

Luis de Góngora's final recommendation in the sonnet to the soldier "no hagas lenguas tú de nuestros ojos" (14), suggests a broader condemnation of forms of popular piety founded on the devotion of relics, mainly the saints' body parts, and other types of holy artifacts. Through the double synecdoche, he refers to the critical reaction ("hacer lenguas") provoked by the vision of the war trophies ("nuestros ojos") as much as he expresses his disapproval for expressions of piety based on materiality and physicality. These were often associated with disciplinary practices of *Imitatio Christi* as well as to the devotion to relics, many of them of dubious authenticity, as the Jesuit Juan de Mariana denounced in 1597 (Olds 145). In spite of the theological and legal restrictions posed by the Catholic Church in the post Tridentine period on the verification of the authenticity of relics, discovery of new saints and the proliferation of these relics discovered by hunters and traders eager to satisfy numerous patrons were the norm, as Olds has studied.

However, Góngora could not ignore that the Andalusian lord indeed hung his famed bell, according to Morales, and, therefore through his soldier's parody of the first Count of

Alcaudete's action, don Luis could exhibit his contempt for the aristocrat. Of course, the striking contrast between the disapproving elements in the sonnet against the soldier's proud display and the laudatory comments of Morales' "Diálogo de las Guerras de Orán" in relation to the high value placed by don Martín on the bell demonstrates that although contested by church scholars and theologians, the role of relics and religious artefacts was crucial for the construction of religious and national identity during the period. Relic collectors of the stature of Philip II himself attributed to them an important function in the formation of monarchic, spiritual and national identity, for the legitimacy of the Monarchy as well as for the construction of collective identity founded on the Christian past and in the invention of a Hispania Christiana that could counteract a regionally divided territory and a heterogeneous population (Lazure 60-68).

Also the authors' differing reactions to the exhibition of artifacts demonstrates the lack of an unified perception regarding the actions of military officers deployed in the Maghreb, since, for instance, both the sonnet and the dialogue were published around the same time. Góngora's disdain of the presumptuous soldier in this satiric sonnet contrasts with his seemingly sympathetic view of the frontier troops deployed in the North African presidios, as is displayed in his two North African ballads that relate the adventures of "the Spaniard of Oran" ("el español de Orán"). By this time the presidios of Oran and Mers-el-Kebir had been neglected by the Crown, given the high costs of their maintenance and, above all, the secondary position that the North African territories occupied in the Habsburgs' Imperial agenda. The difficult living conditions of the soldiers serving in these citadels are echoed in the two African ballads composed in 1585 and 1587 by Góngora, one of the maximum exponents of Spanish Baroque poetry. The poet exhibits in these compositions an understanding attitude towards the perils and difficulties of life in the Spanish presidios in the Maghreb through the actions of a gallant Spanish soldier deployed in Oran. However, as is obvious in Góngora's satirical sonnet, his sympathy for the hard living conditions of the Spanish soldiers in the Maghreb does not extend beyond those placed at the lower ranks of the Imperial armies. As mentioned above, suspicious coincidence of both the name and surname of the soldier that Góngora successfully derides with the bearer of the noble title of the Count of Alcaudete, was perhaps intended ~~in order~~ to denounce the excessive pride of the Andalusian aristocrats. Moreover, the North African material objects mentioned in the ballads function as signs of a shared identity that confirms the porosity of the boundaries that separate the cultures and religions on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. To the contrary, in the sonnet, the soldier's conduct constitutes a rupture of Góngora's ideal of hybridity as a sign of transculturation based on an integration of the cultural and the religious other through the assimilation of the difference into the new Spanish identity. Not only is the arrogance of the soldier Martín de Alonso Montemayor in the satiric sonnet placed in the antipodes of the elegance that characterizes the "español de Orán" but the significance of the artifacts of Muslim origin is very different in the North African ballads as well.¹⁷

The presence of the bell in Cueva's and Morales' texts allows for the construction of an image of the Count as Christian warrior that is complemented with a vision of the Andalusian aristocrat as a classic hero. For instance, Cueva establishes in his "Guerra de Tremecén" a parallel between the Spanish aristocrat and the Roman general Scipio Africanus in order to underline the bravery and the martial disposition of the Count of Alcaudete, the man responsible for subjugating Muley-Ababdila and making him a vassal of Charles V. At the end of his account's final section, the chaplain decides that from this textual segment on, "nombraremos a vuestra señoría el Africano; con mucha razón Cipión, siendo natural romano, solo porque

¹⁷ See Martínez Góngora, "Los romances".

conquistó a la ciudad de Cartago, junto a la lengua del agua, y no más, le nombraron el Africano; con justo título ponemos a vuestra señoría el Africano, pues entre y reencuentros y batallas, pasando y señoreando el África, ha vuestra señoría vencido diez y seis” (Cueva 199). In the third section of his “Guerra de Tremecén”, Cueva compares the encounter between the Count of Alcaudate and the North African sheikh Humida-Lauda to the meeting held by Scipio Africanus and the chief of the Cartago’s army Hannibal Barca (209). The soldier and clergyman alludes on several occasions to don Martín as the “Buen Conde el Africano” (Cueva 222; 225). By utilizing this name Francisco de la Cueva not only attempts to aggrandize the stature of the historical figure of the Count of Alcaudete but more importantly to locate himself on the same level as classical authorities such as Plutarch or Valerius Maximus, among others, who guaranteed the Roman general’s ascent to posterity, and thereby assured their own eternal fame. More importantly, the parallel allows Cueva to reinforce Charles V’s image as Caesar that circulated during the period and, by extension, the Spanish Empire’s status as heir of Rome.¹⁸ Therefore Francisco de la Cueva introduces in his chronicle an image of Martín de Córdoba y Velasco compatible with the political, religious and cultural environment of the Renaissance through the comparison with Africanus.

Also Baltasar de Morales praises in his “Diálogo de las Guerras de Orán” the military actions in Africa of his patron the Count of Alcaudete by explaining, through one of the characters, that the noblemen’s victory is a “Cosa es nunca oida ni escripta desde el tiempo en que los Romanos perdieron la última vez a África” (260). Morales’s appeals to a classical past are consistent with the specificity of the Renaissance dialogue, one of the most popular literary genres of the period. The Renaissance dialogue was inspired by Greco-Roman authors, such as Aristotle and Cicero, and was cultivated by the most illustrious figures of the sixteenth-century Humanism including Erasmus of Rotterdam, fray Luis de León, and the brothers Alfonso and Juan de Valdés in Spain. As with Erasmus’s follower, Alfonso de Valdés, the main theorist behind Charles V’s notion of universal Empire (Maravall 111), Morales selected the use of the Humanist dialogue to affirm his support for the Count of Alcaudete and for the imperial agenda in which the aristocrat so courageously cooperated. Morales’ use of dialogue was natural, as he was educated during the first part of the sixteenth-century, a period in which the Erasmist movement was most influential. It might be interpreted as a sign of adhesion to the Emperor’s original Imperial project whose relevance in relation to North African matters faded even during Charles V’s reign. The Emperor’s lack of support for the Count is a source of criticism in the dialogue (258, 294), and anticipates the limited interest in the North African expansion demonstrated by his son, Phillip II. The use of this literary genre responds to Morales’ efforts to fashion himself as a cultivated writer able to conform to new aesthetic styles and validates his experience as a soldier in the eyes of his contemporary readers. The author introduces in his dialogue an aprioristic and circumstantial approach in the didactic function of the text (Gómez 63-66), since the other participants, Mendoza and Guzmán, do not confront Navarrete’s assertions and opinions and in this way elicits the truth through his exposition. In the first part of the dialogue, which takes place in Guzmán’s beautiful orchard, a location to

¹⁸ Garcilaso de la Vega refers to Charles V as the “Caesar” in his Eclogue II (6) as well as does Fernando de Herrera in his sonnet 5 (12). In the series of paintings entitled “Victories of Charles V”, which were commissioned by Philip II to Maerten van Heemskerck in 1556, the Emperor’s figure appears adorned by the attributes of Caesar. Such attributes also appear in the famous sculpture “Charles V and the Fury” by Leone Leoni. Tanner explains the relation between the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Empire in terms of the Emperor’s genealogy (2), which causes the proliferation of classical symbolism incorporated into the Habsburg’s propagandistic machinery.

which the proponents had decided to move; from the orange tree patio of the Mosque of Cordoba, Navarrete expresses his intention to clear the name and reputation of the count of Alcaudete. Morales refutes at the beginning of the conversation Mendoza's characterization of don Martín as "un hombre como aquel, que nos decian acá, que robaba y mataba á los soldados" (249), stating that is "muy gran mentira, y sé deso mucho, y así lo puedo bien decir tan claro" (249). The soldier attempts to vindicate the figure of don Martín several years after the military campaigns, in a period where the Count's reputation had declined and, moreover, where the figure of the autonomous military leader who acts independently from the Crown was no longer appreciated. Furthermore, by comparing the Count's military accomplishments in the North African campaigns with the heroic deeds of the Roman in ancient times and through the use of the Humanist dialogue, Morales aspires to reinvent himself as a Renaissance author who deserves to be remembered in the company of other illustrious learned men.

In general the claims of a common classical heritage, present both in the Iberian Peninsula and in North Africa, constitute one of main strategies employed by the Renaissance chroniclers to legitimize the territorial rights of the Iberian Monarchies on the other side of the Mediterranean. Allusions to a common heritage shared by the inhabitants of the Maghreb and the Peninsula contribute to a cultural authorization of the Spanish expansion in the North African area, since it is the nation's duty to reincorporate the former Christian and Latin territories to the new Holy Empire. Although problematic, since this common heritage undermines the distance necessary to fashion a Christian and European identity, the shared cultural and religious background of the two regions facilitates the articulation of an ideological justification for the colonization of the area and its peoples (Braudel, *The Mediterranean 2: 757-835*).¹⁹ It is also important to understand that most of the information about the African continent introduced in these imperialist discourses is founded primarily on the work of classical and medieval geographers and historians including Pliny, Ptolemy, Strabo or Aristotle. In Mármol Carvajal's *Descripción General de África* (Granada, 1573) and also in the works that came after his, the weight of authority continues to emanate as much from authors of the classical world as from the few contemporary chroniclers.²⁰ For instance, Leo Africanus insisted in his *Della descrizione dell'Africa et delle cose notabili che quivi sono, per Giovan Lioni Africano* (Venice, 1550), in the classical heritage of the North African region (34-39).²¹ Mármol Carvajal echoes in his *Descripción* the importance conceded by Leo Africanus of the Latin and Christian roots of the Maghreb, stating that after consulting the historical archives, one shall find that the Arabs "acaudillados por su falso profeta Mahoma . . . salieron de sus tierras de Arabia, y se hizieron señores de las ajenas" and "quitaron de las tres Arabias el señorío de los Romanos" ("Prólogo al lector").²² Along the same lines, the also captive Antonio de Sosa includes in his *Topografía e historia general de Argel* (1602) numerous references to the classical roots shared by the inhabitants on both sides of the Mediterranean. Sosa borrows information from several classical authorities including, among others, Ptolemy, Plutarch, Suetonius or Plinius to underline the

¹⁹ According to Hess "the separation of the Mediterranean world into different, well-defined cultural spheres is the main theme of its sixteenth-century history" (2).

²⁰ Luis del Mármol Carvajal, born in Granada in the first third of the sixteenth-century, was the illegitimate son of a state functionary. Starting in 1535, when he joined the Imperial troops in the campaign of Algiers, Mármol Carvajal spent about twenty two years serving the army in Africa. The author was held in captivity by the Turks during seven years and owed part of his knowledge about the continent to this experience.

²¹ About Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan Al-Fasi, Leo's name before his conversion to Christianity, see Davis (16-87); Rubio, "Introduction" (without pagination in the original).

²² Without pagination in the original.

belonging of Algiers, as well as other cities in the Maghreb, to the Ancient Roman provinces of Mauretania Cesarensis y Mauretania Tingitana (93-98).²³

The use of the classical past of the Maghreb allows not only for a legitimization of the expansionist activities in the region, since the Spaniards will return it to Western civilization, or for an aggrandizement of the Count of Alcaudete's military prestige. Rather we suggest that when they eulogize the figure of a member of the Fernandez de Cordoba family, the authors' use of Renaissance literary forms allows them to equate themselves with the Roman chroniclers, in this way authorizing their own voices and to gaining access to a higher social status than their military rank would make possible. Through their narratives, Cueva and Morales proudly appeal to their knowledge and experience acquired in the North African campaigns. Nonetheless Cueva's and Morales's accounts of don Martín's heroic deeds are not written in the form of epic poetry. Rather they share with the soldier poets of the sixteenth-century their desire to occupy a more prominent presence in society.²⁴ As the professional soldiers of the second half of the century became members of the lower classes, Cueva and Morales attempt to showcase their contribution to warfare, which is comparable to the preeminence of "caballeros segundones" as the Count of Alcaudete, in an epoch in which the high ranks of the nobility become gradually disinterested in their traditional leadership positions in the army.

The representation of the Count of Alcaudete as both a medieval warrior and a Roman general offered by Cueva is not unique since similar representations can be found in early modern Iberian narratives of the expansionist activities in North Africa. In the case of the chronicles by Cueva and Morales, don Martín de Córdoba y Velasco's image contributes to a vision of the military actions on the other side of the Mediterranean as a continuation of the frontier war that took place in the Peninsula and, therefore, collaborates with the construction of a propagandistic message of the North African campaigns and the territorial expansion of the Maghreb. Yet this vision needs updating in order to highlight the aristocrat's role in service to the Emperor via an image of don Martín as Roman hero. In this way the authors seem to be inspired by the artistic patronage of other Andalusian members of the nobility. Both Cueva and Morales employ a similar strategy for the characterization of the Count of Alcaudete that southern lords of previous generations used to configure their own public personas as for instance, don Pedro Fajardo Chacón, the Marquis of Vélez (Marañón 31-62).

This "Adelantado" of Murcia, who subdued the Moorish uprising of 1500 in the region of Granada, successfully reconfigured his image as the military leader who, by self-fashioning himself as classical hero, as the ornamentation of his castle-palace of Vélez Blanco reveals. More importantly, by embracing the new Renaissance artistic forms for the construction of the patio of this castle built in Southeastern Spanish province of Almería, Pedro Fajardo Chacón emulates his fellow nobleman and neighbor Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar y Mendoza, Marquis of Cenete, who hired artists from Liguria and Lombardy for the decoration of his castle of la Calahorra, bringing to the remote Andalusian region the purest artistic forms of the Italian Renaissance (Raggio 152).²⁵ In this way, by embracing the new aesthetic, both aristocrats

²³ Antonio de Sosa, a Portuguese cleric wrote *Topografía* while he was held captive in Algiers between 1577 and 1581 and his work was published posthumously in Valladolid, Spain in 1612 by fray Diego de Haedo, who credited the work to his uncle also named Diego de Haedo and Archbishop of Palermo, Sicily. Late nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars demonstrated that the author of *Topografía* was indeed Antonio de Sosa (Garcés 51-57). See also Garcés for Sosa's biographical information (57-78) and about Sosa's relationship with Cervantes (38-41).

²⁴ See Martínez about the relation between the emergence of Renaissance epic poetry and the efforts from the part of the "soldado plástico" to affirm his public relevance during that time.

²⁵ About the patio of the Velez, currently in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, see Raggio.

announce their sense of belonging to the new historical period that corresponds to Charles V's imperial project to which they actively contributed through their military expertise.

In conclusion, through the praise of don Martín de Córdoba y Velasco's heroic performance in the military campaigns that led to the conquest of the North African kingdom of Tlemcen, the texts studied in this project exploit parallels and similarities between the expansionist activities carried out by the Spaniards in the Maghreb and the frontier wars in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages. While it is important for Cueva and Morales to glorify don Martín's military prowess against the Muslim "other" as that which makes him deserving of the eternal fame that their chronicles guarantee, they also emphasize the Andalusian aristocrat's crucial role as one of the most valuable constructors of and servants to the Empire. The result is a balanced and nuanced representation of the Count of Alcaudete that is compatible with the image of the Habsburgs displayed in the Renaissance culture as commanders of a new superpower and heir to the Roman Empire. At the same time don Martín's image as is constructed by Cueva and Morales maintains the traditional appeal of the medieval hero, one who is still eager to rescue Christian bells from the eternal and familiar Muslim enemies.

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