

## The expulsion of the Moriscos from the Catalan Countries: ideology and history

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### ABSTRACT

The expulsion of the Moriscos from the Catalan Countries, particularly from the Valencian Country, has been interpreted in various ways. Historians who have dealt with the subject have tended towards one or two main positions that can be termed Moriscophile and Moriscophobic. The former considered that the expulsion of a very active Islamic minority brought about a serious check to the process of capitalist development. The latter, taking for granted that the Morisco minority was not so economically important, believed their expulsion did not have such an influence, and even that if they did have an influence, it was in the opposite direction. Both interpretations were heavily charged with ideological presuppositions. The present article attempts to settle the question more objectively by analysing the changes that took place in the population structure in the wake of the expulsion, the evolution of agricultural production during the entire Modern Age, and the changes in the structure of land ownership. The results seem to endorse what we have called Moriscophobic interpretation. This is because the population structure, the evolution of agricultural production, and changes in the structure of ownership seem to point to an acceleration in growth of the capitalistic economy after the expulsion.

**KEY WORDS:** Moriscos, expulsion, capitalistic development, population structure, agricultural production, ownership structure

Just prior to their expulsion in the year 1609, and also during the years after it, the distribution of the Morisco population in the Catalan Countries resulted from the Medieval process of conquest and colonization – or repopulation–. Hardly any of the Moslem population remained in Catalonia during the conquest process of the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries. In some cases, particularly in the first two of these centuries, because they were counties sparsely populated, and in other cases because of the desire and demographic potential for the establishment of a new feudal society, which ill fitted in with the Andalusí social and political structure. In fact, at the end of the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th centuries there were only small settlements of Moriscos in the southern counties of Segrià, Baix Ebre and Ribera d'Ebre, especially in the last one of these. In 1609 the approximately 4,000 Moriscos were altogether some 1.5% of the total population of Catalonia. Moreover, on the whole, they were well integrated into the Christian society, and many were able to avoid being expelled. Much the same happened in the

Balearic Islands, where the Moslem population completely disappeared soon after the conquest.

The situation of Valencia was very different. Apart from the northern counties, which were massively Christianized, in the rest of the country, particularly in the inland counties, there was a very large Moslem population (Map 1). The Valencian Country was a very large extension of land which was conquered in a brief period of time. This made it impossible to repopulate it completely with people from Catalonia, Aragon or other parts of Europe. At the beginning of the 16th century the population of Valencia was a little over 300,000 of which approximately 100,000 were Moriscos. These are approximate figures due to the poor quality of the existing censuses. In 1609, the year of the expulsion, the population of the Valencian Country had increased to 405,000, of which 130,000 were Moriscos. At both dates the Muslims or crypto-Muslims represented 30% of the total population. Until 1525 the Valencian Muslims, termed by historiographers 'Mudejars', had been allowed to practice their religion and customs freely. The revolt of the 'Germanies' (brotherhoods of artisans and farmers) from 1519 to 1523, radically changed the situation. In the royal cities this movement took an oligarchic direction, while in the seignorial towns and villages it was strongly anti-feudal.

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Figure 1. *Embarcament dels Moriscos al Grau de Vinaròs* (Moriscos embarking in Vinaròs, 1613), oil painting by Pere Oromig, and Francisco Peralta. 173 x 110 cm (Bancaja Art Collection)

The Valencian boroughs inhabited by Muslims were exclusively and, with only one exception, seigneurial dominions. Because of this the Valencian Muslims fought in that war on the side of their lords, although perhaps not always willingly. It was because of this that the *agermanats*<sup>1</sup> vented their rage on them, and on many occasions forced them to be christened.

However, once the war was over, this gave rise to a serious religious problem, i.e. the validity of those forced christenings. A board of theologians met during February and March of the year 1525 and decreed that the christenings had been valid. In turn, this was officially endorsed by a Royal Letter Patent dated 4th of April of the same year. From that date the Valencian Muslims became officially Christians, even if they were still in fact Muslims. At the time they were termed 'New' Christians or 'New Converts', as opposed to the Old, or Christians by nature. But, from very early on, historiography and scholars called them Moriscos. Therefore a Morisco is a former Moslem forced to be Christian as a consequence of an official decree. From the start, aware of the problem, civil and religious authorities, including the Inquisition, allowed a period of forty years for the former Muslims who had been forced to convert into Christians, to adapt to their new situation. This was of no use because a great majority of the Valencian Moriscos proved stubbornly faithful to their religion and customs. Evangelizing campaigns carried out with little enthusiasm and scarce means proved

of little effect. Another factor of international politics was added to that:

In the confrontation of that time between the Spanish monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, the Valencian Moriscos were seen as possible internal allies of the enemy. An attack of the Ottoman fleet on the Spanish coast never materialised, but on many occasions the Moriscos conspired with the North-African Berber pirates who regularly harried the Valencian coast.

Little by little expulsion gained ground as the only possible solution to the problem. This was decided upon during the reign of Philip II at a meeting of the State Council held in Lisbon in 1582, but the decision was not put into effect. Finally, it was his son and heir, Philip III, who put the decision into effect by means of a Decree signed in Madrid on August 4th, 1609. The public announcement ordering the eviction of the Moriscos was published in Valencia on September 22nd of that year, and the actual expulsion started immediately. By this time the Moriscos were no longer a problem of international politics as they had been in the 16th century; the decision was adopted, therefore, basically on religious reasons.

### CONFRONTED PERCEPTIONS

The expulsion of the Moriscos has always been a historiographical issue highly contaminated by ideological pre-



Figure 2. *Embarcament dels Moriscos al Grau de València* (Moriscos embarking in Valencia, 1613), oil painting by Pere Oromig. 174 x 110 cm (Bancaja Art Collection)

suppositions, particularly in the Valencian Country. As has already been mentioned, there were no Moriscos in the Balearic Islands and the Pitiüses. The very small numbers in Catalonia were concentrated in the Ebre region, in very small numbers. Historians and chroniclers of the 16th and 17th centuries held attitudes clearly opposed to the Islamic minority, for both religious and social reasons. Apparently this was also the attitude of the Christian majority. A little known author, Jaume Bendicho, from Alacant (Sp. Alicante), perhaps the brother of Vicent, who, among other works, wrote a *Crònica de la Muy Ilustre, Noble y Leal ciudad de Alicante*, published in 1640, wrote in 1643, while he was Mayor of the Marquisate of Llombai, in the Valencian Country: “In the year of the nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ MDCIX reigning in Spain Philip III of Castile and II of the Crown of Aragon, after many and diverse meetings of prelates to see how to repair the damage done by the great murders and offences perpetrated in this kingdom every day by the converts, both against the divine and human majesties, as well as against the old Christians of the aforesaid kingdom, with full deliberation, after having proved the various murders, crimes, offences and actions, one and several processes justifying the execution, on September 22nd, 1609, an Edict was published over the entire kingdom for the Moors and the new converts to leave the kingdom within six days.”<sup>2</sup> Many similar contemporary opinions could easily be added. But the anti-Moriscos statements of the period did not refer only to

religious differences, but also to other social characteristics. Friar Jaume Bleda, priest of the Morisco parish of Corbera, argued after the expulsion that “those wretched people were bad ploughmen and labourers of dry lands, most of them left waste land in their villages. They did nothing to plant them with trees or vines; they busied themselves only in tilling and watering their orchards and gardens, which they divided into small plots; it broke their hearts to have to work in a great, wide field. They did not persevere in their work for the whole day, but just two, three or four hours. They were by nature friends of idleness and very weak due to their poor food and drink; if, in order to be sown, the land required six or seven ploughings, they contented themselves with three or four, done out of time.”<sup>3</sup> We can find this type of opinion in other authors of the time as, for instance, in the Aragonese Damián Fonseca.<sup>4</sup> Apparently reflecting a common theme among the Christian population, the same view is found in other texts. Ximénez de Reinoso, Inquisitor of Valencia, wrote in 1582 that “normally, as proved by experience, the house of an old Christian needs for its sustenance as much as two Morisco houses.”<sup>5</sup> We know many passages similar to this one, and it would not be difficult to reproduce ten or more of the same kind, such as one from a Commissioner of the Duke of Gandia during the repopulation, who pointed out that “the Morisco is satisfied with three acres of land and considered himself rich... And now the new settlers receive twenty-three acres of land each and are not satisfied.”<sup>6</sup>

The cliché current among Old Christians in the 16th and 17th centuries was that the Moriscos were poor and inefficient ploughmen, farming little plots solely for their own subsistence. They neglected commercial farming, as for instance the vineyards, which in our soils and dry lands, was habitual.

The other commonplace attributed to the Moriscos was overpopulation, or rather the higher natural growth of the Islamic population. Martin Salvatierra, bishop of Sogorb, for instance, in 1587 frightened because "*in a very few years they will multiply in such a way that they will surpass the Old Christians not only in numbers but in amount of property, especially gold and silver, because they collect everything and do not spend since they neither eat, nor drink, nor wear clothes or shoes.*"<sup>7</sup> On the same lines is a report presented to the monarch in 1607 by the Junta de Tres (Board of Three) stating that "*while the number of old Christians is dwindling due to the many who enter the religious orders and die because of the illnesses and hardships, as well as to the continuous press-gangs for the war and for the Indies. Many do not marry to avoid the marriage charges. All of them are mighty causes to prevent their multiplication, and the number of the people dwindle while the Moriscos grow and multiply.*"<sup>8</sup> Jaume Bleda added that the universal marriage of the Moriscos was curiously associated with poverty, thinking perhaps of the miserly dowries required in Moriscos marriages. The parish priest of Corbera stated that "*multiplicantur enim nimirummodum propter parvitatem cibi, et potus, qua utuntur, et quia omnes vacant matrimoniis.*"<sup>9</sup>

The negative attitude towards the Islamic minority persisted during at least a good part of the 18th century, although there are no studies on this. The view of the 'Moors' as the enemy was probably caused by continuous raids on the coast by pirates and is clearly shown in several plays performed to great public acclaim in the Valencian playhouse during that century.<sup>10</sup> But at some time in the 19th century, the traditional Moriscophobia or Moorishphobia gave way to Moriscophilia, although this did not happen everywhere as will be seen soon. It was probably related to the spread of the new romantic sensitivity but it was really a more complex phenomenon that would require careful study. On the one hand we have evidence given by foreign travellers who in the previous centuries had never identified the Valencians and in general the people of the peninsula with the north-Africans, who were now in the habit of doing so.<sup>11</sup> But we find this new attitude also in Valencian authors. For instance, in 1889, Melcior Bellver and Vicent del Cacho published in Castelló de la Plana a work in which they emphasized the strong Arabic influence on Valencian commercial agriculture, thereby expressing the exactly opposite point of view that the contemporaries of the Moriscos.<sup>12</sup> The words of the informal but semi-official 'regional' anthem of the Autonomous Valencian Community, written in 1909 by Maximilà Tous, speaks of the "voice of the water, song of joy, played to the rhythms of the Moorish guitar".

Sultanas and palm trees are also mentioned, implicitly asserting the Moslem origins of the Valencian Community without mentioning either the Catalan or even the Aragonese conquerors. The anthem looks to Africa rather than to Europe. Obviously there is a great amount of anti-Catalan feeling in this new evaluation of the Moslem roots but, as we have said before, this is probably only one part of a more complex question.

In this same interpretive vein, or rather sharing the same point of view, we find several historians dealing with the Moriscos and their expulsion. The Catalan Florenci Janer adscribed to the Moriscos all the agricultural advances as well as the monopoly in the commercialization of agricultural products. The Castilian José Muñoz y Gaviña wrote in very similar terms that "*the wrong done to Spain by the loss of that huge part of its population [the Moriscos] was due not so much to their numbers as to the class and kind of the people expelled, who were precisely the farmers, tradesmen, and industrialists, and actually the most productive and best tax-payers. The cultivation of sugar, cotton, and cereals, the breeding of silk-worms, in which the Moriscos were so proficient, all that was wholly abandoned in the fertile lands of Valencia, Murcia and Granada. The paper, silk and cloth factories they used to have in their castles had to be closed down because Spaniards were not used to those arts and industries, and they looked down with disdain and contempt at the practice of those arts which the Moriscos had monopolized with great profit.*"<sup>13</sup> In the work of these authors the Arabist or Africanist perspective was not the result, as it may have been with certain Valencian authors, of an anti-Catalan attitude of mind, but of a liberal conviction that rejected the expulsion of the Moriscos as a measure caused by the intolerance of a Castilian upper class that thought little of productive activities. This was intended in part to be an explanation of the Spanish decadence of the 17th century, in spite of the fact that this interpretation was not found in the *arbitristes*<sup>14</sup> of the 17th century and not even in the projectionists and enlightened authors of the 18th. Nevertheless, the exaltation of the Moriscos was incompatible with hagiography: I am referring to the fact that one of the most resolute supporters of the expulsion was the patriarch Juan de Ribera, archbishop of Valencia from 1569 to 1611, who had even held the position of Viceroy from 1602 to 1604. Ribera was beatified in 1796 and by the end of the 19th century his process of canonization was under way although it did not culminate until 1960. The hagiographers of Ribera, Manuel Danvila and Pasqual Boronat, both Valencian, could not for that very reason support the perception of the Morisco minority as economically decisive element in the Valencian economy of the 16th century. Confronting the Moriscophile interpretation, the former wrote that "*not being able to decorate the Moriscos with any cultural ensign, they have been highly praised for their share as active forces in the agriculture and the arts in the regions they inhabited. You need to suffer a stubborn historical short-sightedness to support such a vulgar*

nonsense.” Boronat expressed himself in similar terms in several passages of his vast work.<sup>15</sup>

### CURRENT HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Current here means the historiography of the 20th century and to date in the 21st century. The exception is the work by Boronat which was dated in 1901. Present day historians have wavered between the tendencies that we have termed in a concise even if vague way, Moriscophobic and Moriscophile, but for different reasons – or at least reasons basically different to those already mentioned. After Pasqual Boronat’s *Los moriscos españoles* no further serious study on the Valencian Moriscos and their expulsion appeared until the first part of the work by the Argentinian historian Tulio Halperín Donghi was published in 1955.<sup>16</sup> This work is the result of the author’s Doctoral Dissertation written during his stay at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris, and the materials he gathered in Spain, mainly in Simancas and Valencia. As Halperín Donghi was Argentinian, we can start from the assumption that he was not so preconditioned by prejudices as were the Spanish historians. The view that Halperín held of the Morisco community was closer to that of their 16th century contemporaries than to that of the late 19th century historians that we have looked at. It is not possible to summarize a work so rich in content as that of the Argentinian historian in a few words, but the following quotation in which he describes the Morisco area is indicative enough: “*this overpopulated land of poor grain, of village sheepfolds, of wheat and oil, of carob trees, this is Morisco land par excellence. The ‘mountain’ as it was called in the 16th century is not necessarily high land but thickets and unirrigated land, the poor crops lost in the scrub.*”<sup>17</sup> The next historian to deal with the subject was the Frenchman Henry Lapeyre in his work of 1959. Although the French historian in his study fundamentally analysed the expulsion and is basically demographic, he also expresses a perception of Morisco society and economy close to that of Halperin. He writes: “*If we go back to the traditional distinction between dry and irrigated land, we verify that the Moriscos predominated in the former, with the exception of the present province of Castelló, where the high lands of Morella and Maestrat (Sp. Maestrazgo) formed a solid Christian block. (...) This leads us to a fundamental contention which will surprise those who believed in the oft repeated affirmation, i.e. that the fertile lands belonged to the Moriscos.*”<sup>18</sup> Joan Reglà, who published an interesting paper on the subject in 1964<sup>19</sup>, did not deal with this issue, which was soon opposed by Eugeni Ciscar in 1977, as will be seen. Although the work by Ciscar had great influence, some later authors still held to the view that we have called Moriscophobic. This was the case with the Valencian historian of Medicine Lluís Garcia Ballester, who in 1984 wrote the following: “*The Moriscos settled mainly in the dry lands*

*working as farmers or shepherds both in seigneuries and in free domains. There was also a minority, probably the wealthiest one, who worked in trade and in the transportation of goods. All of them, including the tiny minority of rich Moriscos, were very much attached to the land and, in general, poverty and dependence on the old Christians, whether nobility or not, were the norms of their lives.*”<sup>20</sup>

The work of Eugeni Ciscar which I have just mentioned should be explained bearing in mind the intellectual atmosphere which was predominant in Valencian historiography in the 1970s. One concern of the period was the industrial weakness of Valencia in the 19th and a good part of the 20th centuries. Although in 1968 Professor Emili Giralt had proposed a multifunctional and reasonable explanation for the relative failure of the industrializing process in Valencia,<sup>21</sup> other historians preferred a more structural interpretation of the events. Màrius Garcia Bonafè in particular explained not only the failure in industrialization, but also a supposed belatedness of Valencian economy due to the power of an oppressive lordly regime which had its origins precisely in the repopulation that occurred in the wake of the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, and in spite of a certain delay in its acceptance, there was preoccupation as regards the problems of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. This was reinforced by the Dobb-Sweezy debate and its derivation as a more current topic at the time of the discussion on the general crisis of the 17th century. All this, I believe, explains the Moriscophile stance adopted by Ciscar when he considered that the expulsion of the Moriscos was behind the break in the process of transition towards capitalism in the Valencian Country. This author stated in the conclusion of an otherwise well worked on and documented work: “*It seems evident to us that economic motivations and the protection of aristocratic interests were present, together with an awareness of the Moriscos resistance to Christianization and its political dimensions, in the gestation of the expulsion. Its execution and the new situation created by the repopulation will in the end bring a re-feudalization, an extension and an intensification of feudal relationships, which will result in a diminishing of labouring, an incipient rural proletariat, the disappearance of free properties, an increasing number of leases, the greater and superior control of lordly requirements as well as in the breaking down of the former commercial structures and the diminution of craftsmanship. In a similar way it drastically reduces the number and the riches of a bourgeois or para-bourgeois class, whether Christian or Morisco, and limits its subsequent development.*”<sup>23</sup>

The hypothesis of a re-feudalization had already been criticised by Marià Peset shortly after the publication of the book.<sup>24</sup> I myself spoke out in different publications against Ciscar’s interpretation. However, in this article I will try to put my ideas on the subject in better order.<sup>25</sup> Ciscar himself has modified his views and no longer expresses himself with the same forcefulness as he did in

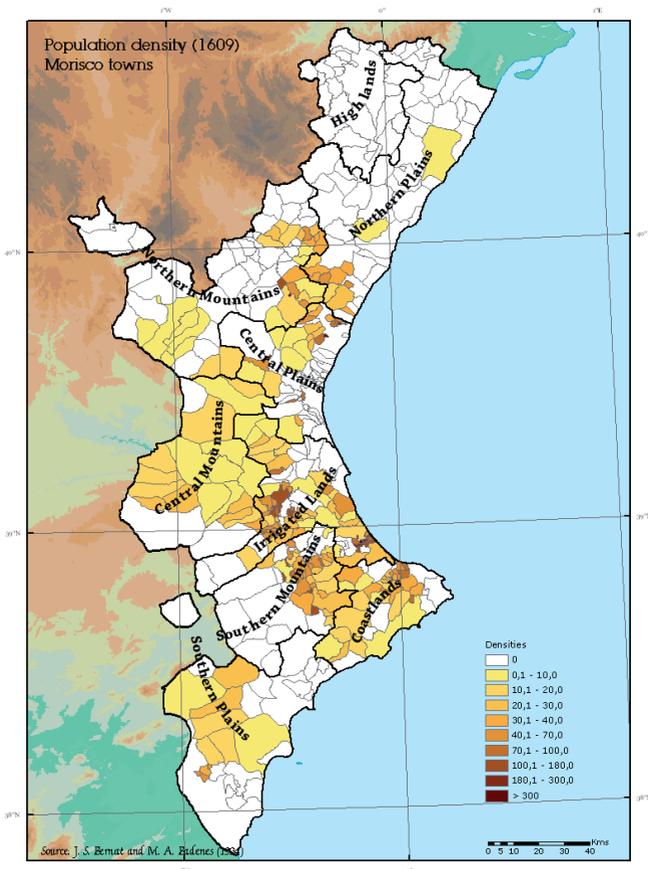
1977, although he still believes that the Valencian Morisco community was rich and dynamic, with the logical exceptions of a society in the process of internal differentiation, and not essentially different from the Christian.<sup>26</sup> In a certain way the previous more structural and theoretical discussion has been transformed into one which looks into whether there really was an important sector of rich Moriscos. Ciscar's strategy is based on giving lists, and he certainly puts forward a lot of evidence but I still believe that macro-historical questions such as this have to be solved in macro-historical terms and not by means of a list of high standing Moriscos which does not include those who were poor and therefore does not in reality solve the problem.<sup>27</sup> Since what he is looking for is rich Moriscos, they can always be found. The link is invalidated from the start and does not provide an explanation as we always find what we are looking for. The question is, giving a very different example, as if we tried to prove the low mortality of the population in the Old Regime by drawing up a list of the living adults above fifty. If we look for them, we will find plenty of them, but since they are not the object of our research, we will silence the multitude of children that died during their first years of life. An analysis with all the available information and using adequate methodology would show us that life expectancy was hardly above thirty.

Coming back to Ciscar's initial formulation, the question we have to ask ourselves is how the Valencian economy would have developed if the Moriscos had not been expelled, that is, to formulate what the new (now not so new) historians of the economy call a contra-factual hypothesis. The quality of information available does not allow us to apply econometric models but we can examine a whole number of macroeconomic indicators and see how they evolved in the Morisco and Christian areas. The differentiation cannot always be drawn in a very clear cut form, but we can make a reasonable approximation. The idea for this approach came to me from an indication of Earl J. Hamilton who noted that the evolution of prices in Valencia in the years subsequent to the expulsion was exactly the opposite of what might have been expected. In fact, after the expulsion of the supposedly dynamic Morisco population, a significant decrease in agricultural production should have taken place and therefore an increase in prices. But, on the contrary, according to this North American historian, "*agricultural prices fell in the two years subsequent to the expulsion of 1609, the year in which the great mass of Moriscos left the country. In 1612-1625 the prices did not go up more quickly than non-agricultural prices and kept well below the non-agricultural commodities in the second quarter of the 17th century. It is obvious that the expulsion did not ruin farming.*"<sup>28</sup> I will now examine the evolution of the population and its geographical distribution, the evolution of agricultural production, and finally the structure of land ownership.

### Demographical redistribution after the expulsion of the Valencian Moriscos

The basis of the present exercise originated in a suggestion by Tulio Halperín Donghi. He wrote: "*Meanwhile the repopulation advances. Not without its ups and downs. If we listen to the people who were present and observed directly this gigantic operation they will tell us that it was also a gigantic failure. There is no doubt that in part it was so; the scars of the great mutilation were not easily erased; already in 1610 Fonseca observed that in the period since the lands had remained empty, although brief, irreparable damage was taking place; every new day the patrimony left by the Moriscos dwindled. But it was a failure above all for the observers who had built themselves a quite simple idea of what the repopulation was going to be; for them it was a question of setting up a house of Old Christians where before there had been a Morisco house. And this, of course, was not going to be possible. The distribution of the population in the Christian-Morisco Valencia was directly linked to the division of Valencia into two national groups that were also two social groups: it did not only depend on the capacity of the land to support more or less dense human groups. This distribution was already unattainable after the expulsion; what can be asked and was not asked by, for instance, those who lamented that the 1,200 Moriscos of the Valley of Guadalest had been replaced by only 120 Old Christians, is whether the restoration of this kind of demographical distribution was desirable or advantageous.*"<sup>29</sup>

I have designed my experiment in the following way. I have distributed the population of the Valencian Country into three chronological moments: the year of the expulsion, 1609, using the so called censuses of the Marquis of Caracena and the two complete later censuses, that of the households, of Campoflorido, of 1713, and the censuses of Floridablanca of 1787. I have drawn nine territorial unities, or macro-counties, in order to simplify the analysis. In each macro-county I have distinguished between the Morisco villages –former Morisco villages, in the case of the censuses of 1713 and of 1787– and those of the Old Christian, calculating the percentage of population in terms of the total population for each one of these units. As the calculation is done within each population recount, it avoids having to do any kind of conversion or correction of the figures. The censuses of 1609 and 1713 provide the number of households, and that of 1787, the inhabitants. The household censuses of 1713 is very inaccurate. This means that the figures of the absolute population for that year are incorrect, but not the relative proportions if we assume, as is probable, that the errors are distributed in a random manner. The macro-counties, together with the map of municipal densities of the Morisco population in 1609, are shown in Map 1. In this the Valencian Country is shown with its 17th century frontiers, and the proportional distribution of the population is shown in Table 1. I have omitted the details of the sources used as well as other details. I direct the reader to the published work in which these figures were presented.<sup>30</sup>



Map 1

As can be gathered from a close reading of the Table, all the Morisco counties lost relative population after the expulsion, except for only one, the Central Plains, where the Morisco population was small and where this did not happen until the year 1787. In the whole of the Valencian Country the population of the Morisco boroughs, which in 1609 represented a third of the population (32.35 % to be precise), fell to a quarter, around 25 per cent, with only slight differences between 1713 and 1787. The fact that

the results of a very badly done census as that of 1713, and another of excellent quality like that of Floridablanca in 1787 are so similar, supports the assumption that the errors in the census of 1713 are randomly distributed. This corroborates Halperín’s hypothesis that the process of repopulation was much more than just that, since it implied a radical change in the model of settling the population.

A detailed reading of the Table shows nevertheless important nuances. In some of the macro-counties the fall in population in the Morisco boroughs was small, although the interpretation is not always the same. The slight fall in the Southern Plains seems to indicate that in this area the Moriscos had not been restricted to especially disadvantaged areas. We would get similar results for smaller areas if we analysed the Table in a more detailed way. These were territories where the economically elite Morisco were abundant. In the Central Mountains where the relative fall in population was also small the case is different. Here the fact that the only Christian borough in the Foia de Bunyol was the depressed Setaigües, exercised a considerable influence on the results. In all the other regions the decreases were greater than the average in the Valencian Country, especially the zones in which the Moriscos occupied the narrow mountain valleys, such as the Coastlands, where the fall was 17 per cent and the Northern Mountains where it was 12 per cent. But it is surprising that we still find substantial falls in the regions typical of Morisco prosperity, such as in the Irrigated Lands (12 per cent). If we study in detail this macro-county we still find important falls in population at La Safor (17 per cent) and at La Ribera Alta (12 per cent), while we find only minor falls in the prosperous areas of La Costera and Ribera Baixa where the Morisco populations were small.

I will complete this section with another passage from Halperín Donghi: “Almost two centuries after the expulsion, in his wandering in the Valencian lands, in the high *Espadán* and other hilly spots, Cavanilles found abandoned villages, hamlets of which only the memory survived, living

Changes in the spatial distribution of the Valencian population (1609-1787)

	1609 (households)		1713 (households)		1787 (inhabitants)	
	Morisco boroughs	Christian boroughs	Morisco boroughs	Christian boroughs	Morisco boroughs	Christian boroughs
Southern Plains	33,62%	66,38%	27,13%	72,87%	27,20%	72,80%
Southern Mountains	34,18%	65,82%	22,08%	77,92%	24,21%	75,79%
Coastlands	62,29%	37,71%	49,42%	50,58%	44,81%	55,19%
Irrigated Lands	45,56%	54,44%	34,43%	65,57%	32,91%	67,09%
Central Plains	12,32%	87,68%	12,62%	87,28%	9,57%	90,43%
Northern Plains	16,26%	83,74%	12,05%	87,95%	14,45%	85,55%
Highlands	-	100%	-	100%	-	100%
Northern Mountains	39,66%	60,34%	24,83%	75,17%	27,77%	72,23%
Central Mountains	78,60%	21,40%	71,77%	28,23%	73,32%	26,68%
Total	32,35%	67,65%	23,98%	76,02%	24,97%	75,03%

Table 1

witnesses to the ruin and the desolation caused by the withdrawal of the Moriscos. But these wounds that in the mountain confines remained still open after two centuries following the expulsion (and continues so even today. In the fabulously dense population of present day Valencia, there are still hamlets which used to be Morisco with fewer inhabitants now than in 1609), in other Valencian areas were healed in a few years. Those swarming nooks in the mountain where the population thronged without finding a way out, were extinguished for ever.”<sup>31</sup>

## THE EVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

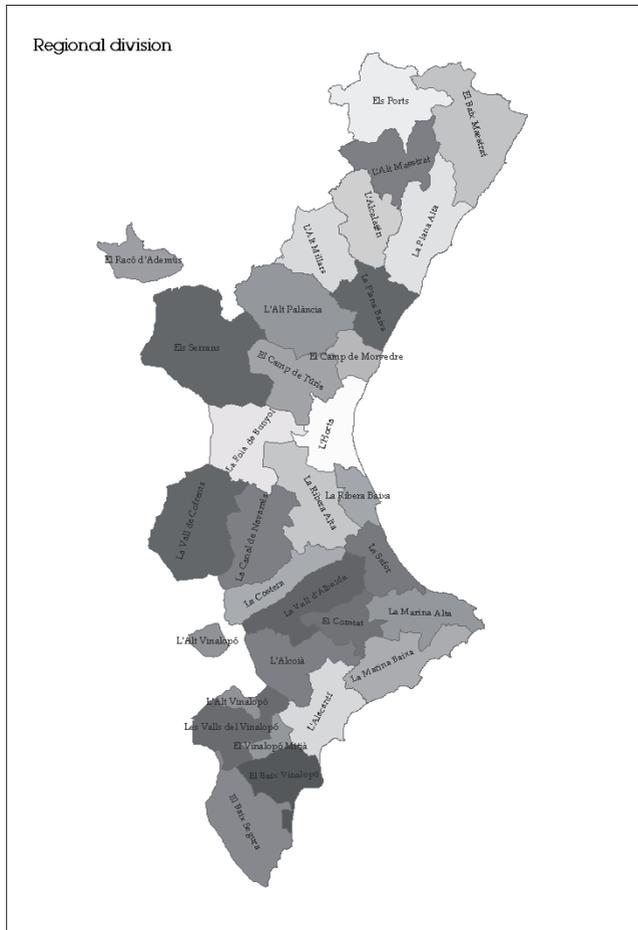
The subject of our next analysis will be the evolution of agricultural production. To do this I will use the classic source of information for the study of this variable during the pre-industrial age, that is the documentation generated by the collection of ecclesiastical tithes. The old kingdom of Valencia, with the exception only of two boroughs which belonged to the Bishopric of Zaragoza (Betxí and Olocau del Rei), was divided into four Bishoprics: Oriola, Valencia, Sogorb and Tortosa. From these, I have studied the tithes of the Archbishopric of Valencia which spread over the greater part of the territory using figures which for this reason can be considered quite representative (See Map 2). The Valencian see collected different kinds of

tithes of which the most important was the one called “of bread and wine”, which basically placed a tax on cereals and wine, but in many occasion also on all the goods subject to this tax. Only in a few very limited territories were there some specific tithes, such as those called “of the basket” (which taxed the horticultural products), and that “of the mulberry tree leaf”. The taxes on meat or flocks and on fish have not been used in this research. They were tithes farmed out and not collected in kind, which means they had several limitations. As these tithes were farmed out usually for quadrennial periods and by public auction, and since the bidders made their bids based on previous results and how they thought the production would evolve in the next quadrennium, the results reflect the expectation rather than the actual production of the period. In spite of this, the evolution of production that can be inferred from the tithes is in the long run quite correct, although involving some delay.

There is no absolute certainty that it is so, but it seems that deduction of tithes was maintained throughout the period of our study, although it varied slightly according to the different zones. The Archbishopric of Valencia had divided its territory into various districts called *delmaris* (tithable districts) which often, especially in the 18th century, with the increase in agricultural production and the consequent difficulties in tax collection, were divided into *subdelmaris* (tithable sub-districts), given the name of *filloles*. These *subdelmaris* have always been integrated into the original *delmari* so that the resultant series for the same territory would be consistent. Following the usual methodology used in this kind of studies, I have deflated the series of each *delmari* with the prices of wheat. From the deflated tithable product I have elaborated numerical series of indexes for the period 1585-1599, which was fairly stable and previous to the expulsion of the Moriscos. The aggregated series that I have made are the arithmetic average of the individual series of which they are constituted. The aggregated territories sometimes coincide with those used in the previous analysis on the population, but this is not always so since I considered that in some cases it was more convenient to proceed to a greater disaggregation. Specifically, I have separated the counties of La Safor and La Costera from the macro-county of the Irrigated Lands. In Map 3 the county divisions of the Valencian Country are shown, so that it is possible to locate the territorial divisions to which I have referred. All the other macro-counties coincide with those that I have used before. Whenever possible, I have separated the Old Christian tithes from those of the Moriscos, but this has not always been feasible.<sup>32</sup> I have not reproduced here the series which in any case can be consulted in the publication referred to in the previous footnote, so I will comment on them based on the graphs that are included here. As will be seen, the results of the hypothesis that we try to contrast are not so clear cut as those in the preceding case on populations. Therefore I will essay a nuanced commentary which will anyway remain pending more accurate



Map 2

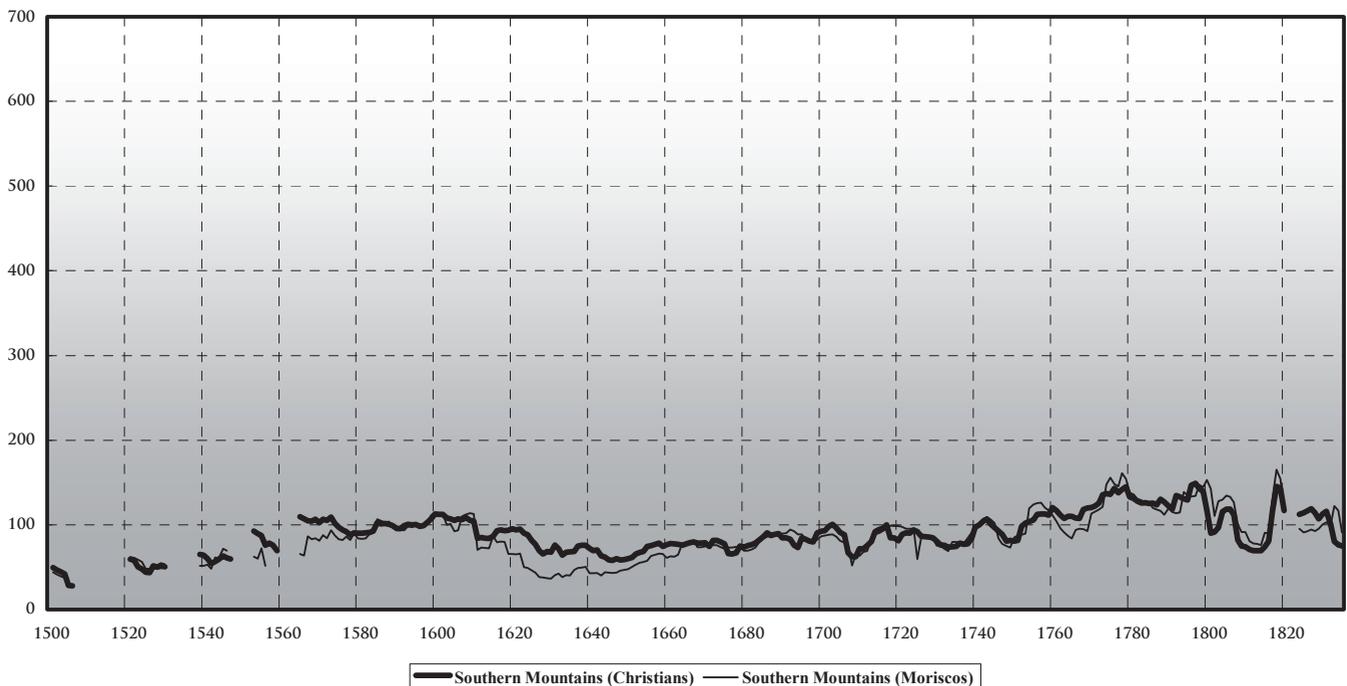


Map 3

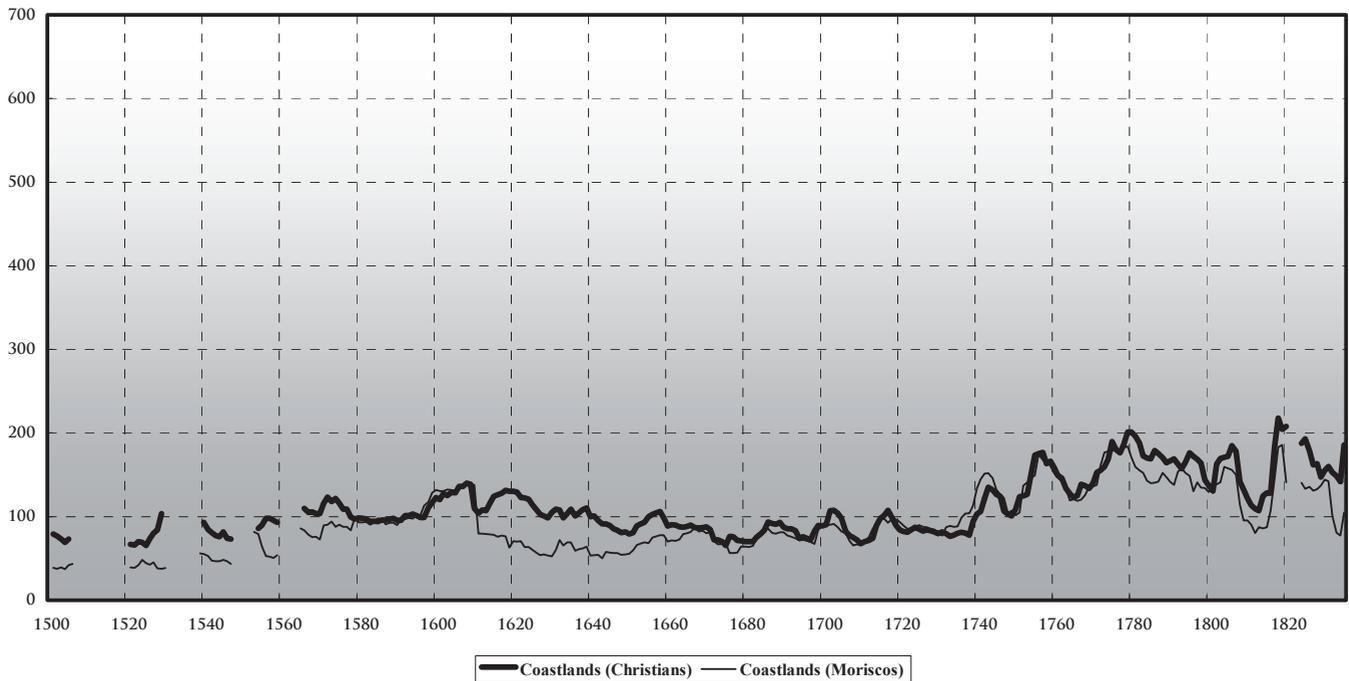
interpretation as our knowledge on this issue becomes wider.

There are indeed very marked differences in the evolution of product of the tithes in the various macro-counties, and in counties in which we have assembled the tithes of the Archbishopric of Valencia. We will examine them separately, since a single graph of the whole would be confusing and it is preferable to carry out a separate analysis by territorial units. Graph 1 shows the evolution of the “bread and wine” tithe of the macro-county we have termed Southern Mountains, which includes the counties of El Comtat, L’Alcoià, and the Val-ley of Albaida.

The evolution of the deflated tithal product showed little dynamism in the whole period that we have studied. Both series, that of the Christian tithes and that of the Moriscos developed in a similar way if we disregard the small variations that probably have no special meaning. However, if we ignore the development of the series in the 16th century, in which its fragmentary character makes the reading difficult, we only observe a clear fall of the agrarian production in the Morisco territory in the fifty years after the expulsion, a drop in production that can be observed in all the series and which is obviously due to the depopulation caused by the expulsion of the Islamic population and by the initial difficulties of repopulation. In spite of this, we should point out that the Morisco areas achieved a level of production similar to the Christian ones whereas the relative population fell 10 per cent between 1609 and 1707, as we have already seen. This could be due to a greater efficiency in the farming done by the people who repopulated those areas.



Graph 1. “Bread and wine” tithe Indexes (Base: 1585-1599= 100). Southern Mountains



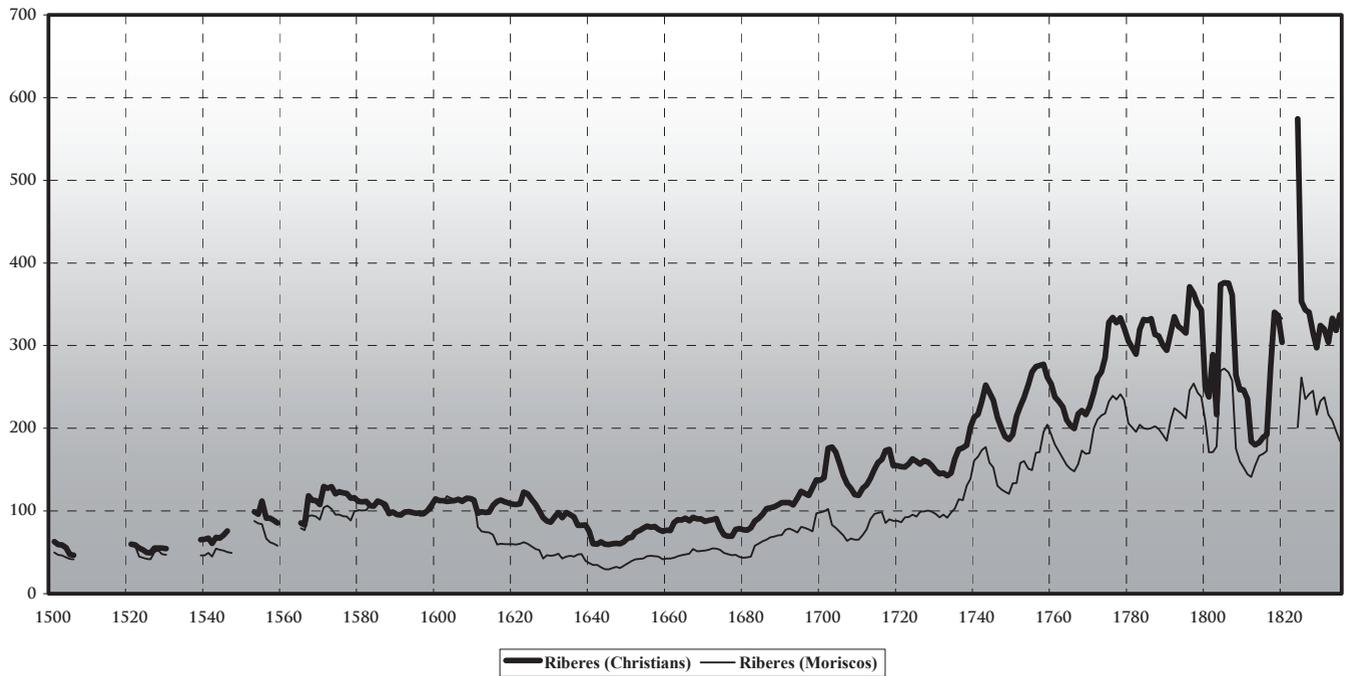
**Graph 2. "Bread and wine" tithe**  
**Indexes (Base: 1585-1599= 100). Coastlands**

The development of Coastlands which we can examine in Graph 2 is very similar although not exactly the same. Here, in spite of the lack of documentation for the 16th century, we can clearly observe the backwardness of the Moriscos agricultural production during this period, and again a verifiable lower level in the last decades of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The

fall in production after the expulsion is similar to that of the whole territory of the Southern Mountains. In this case we can also see that the agrarian production of the Moriscos territories was achieved at the time of a fall in 17 per cent of their relatively greater population, between the moment of the expulsion and the census of Floridablanca.



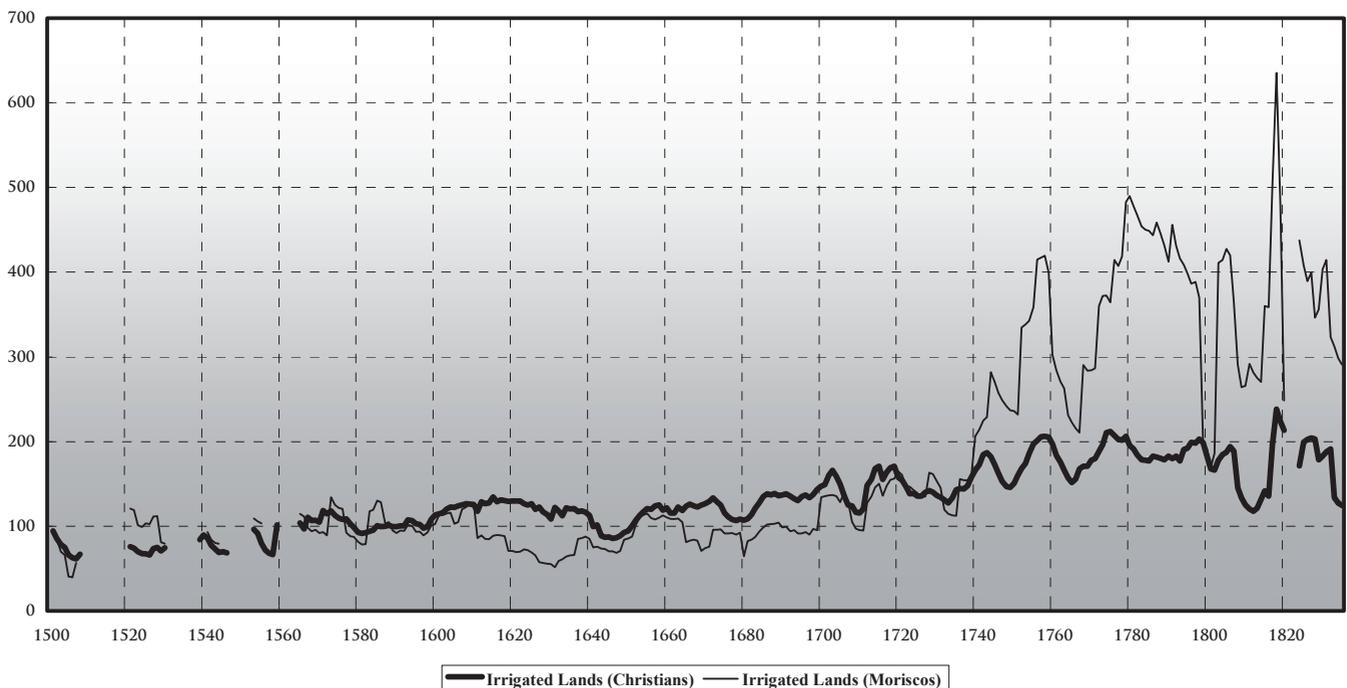
**Graph 3. "Bread and wine" tithe (1500-1835)**  
**Indexes (Base: 1585-1599 = 100). Safor and Costera**



**Graph 4. “Bread and wine tithe” (1500-1835)**  
**Indexes (Base: 1585-1599= 100). Riberes**

In counties of La Safor and La Costera, which had a more dynamic agriculture even if not yet comparable to the other territorial units that we will examine later on– it has not been possible to separate the Morisco from the Christian tithal districts. The crisis that followed the expulsion was much more serious in La Safor

than in La Costera, and this seems to indicate certain difficulties in the repopulation and in the resumption of cultivation, especially, most probably, in the growth of sugar cane. The two areas evolved in a very similar way, but with greater dynamism in La Costera, especially after 1770.



**Graph 5. “Bread and Wine” tithe 1500-1835)**  
**Indexes (Base:1585-1599= 100). Irrigated Lands**

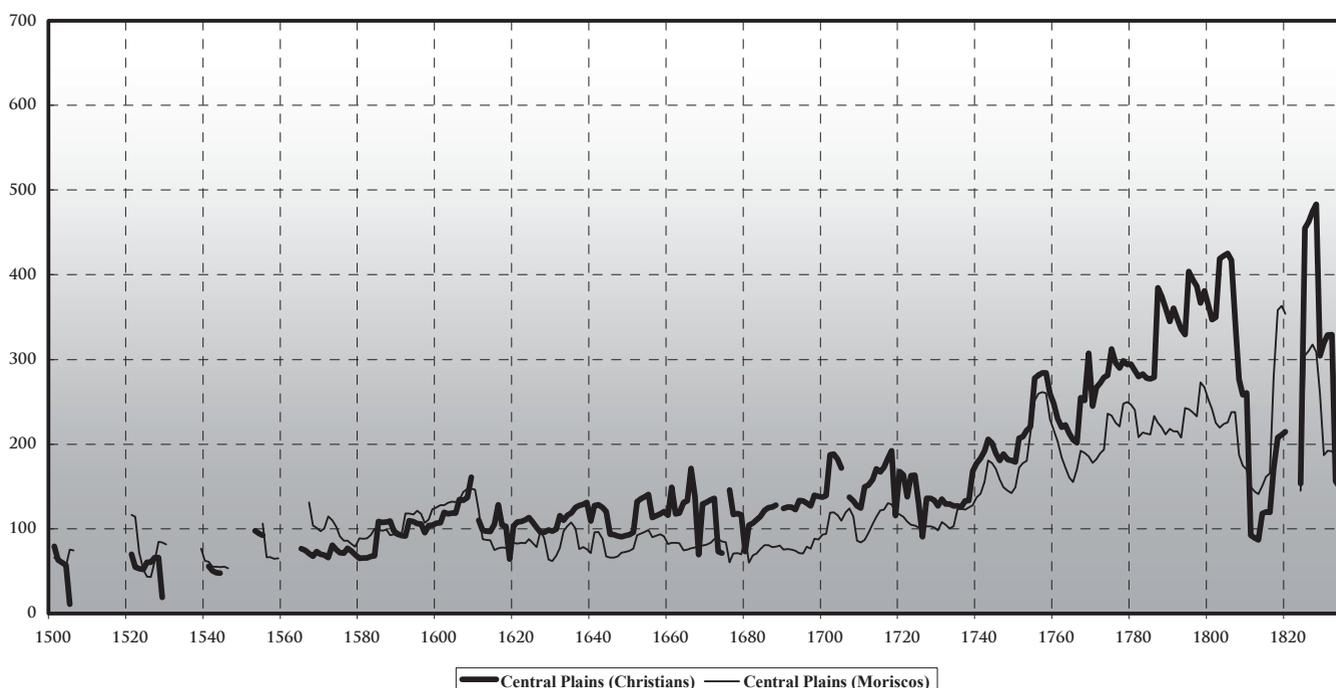
The counties of La Ribera Alta and La Ribera Baixa that we have grouped together in what we called Riberes, underwent an extraordinary agricultural growth during this period; it was due especially to the expansion in rice growing, but also of other products, like mulberry trees. In this particular case, the difference between the Christian and the Moriscos tithes can be very clearly observed. If the difference between them was already noticeable in the 16th century, it became much more acute after the expulsion. In these areas the Morisco population was small and was clearly established in the poorer lands, so much so that the Christian repopulation did not manage to suppress the difference in the volume of agricultural production between the two kinds of territories. This graph needs to be interpreted therefore in the opposite way to the ones we have examined previously. If the Christian agriculture in this set of counties became more efficient than that previously carried out by the Moriscos –as we will examine in a local example in the next section– it did not manage to surpass the production in the extremely rich lands of the Christian population. Much more surprising, though, is the case of the Irrigated Lands, that can be examined in Graph 5.

In this case we observe that the production in the Morisco lands, which in the 16th century exceeded, in general, that of the Christian lands, fell and remained lower, after the expulsion, until approximately the years after 1720. It later experienced an extraordinary increase during the remaining period before the disappearance of tithes in the Valencian Country in 1835. In this case the macro-county includes the counties of L'Horta and Camp de Morvedre,

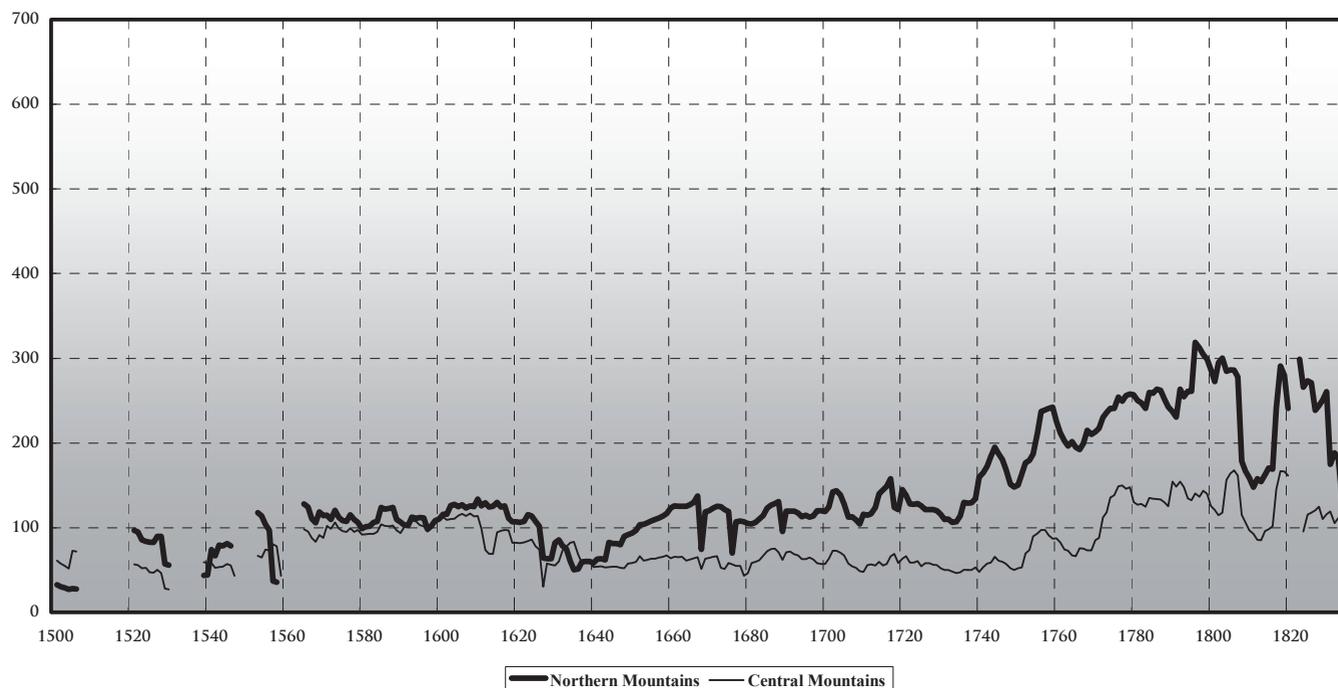
and all the Morisco tithal districts except Picassent and Alcàsser belong to the latter. There is to my mind only one possible explanation. Let us consider, as already mentioned, that the graphs, since they have been basically drawn on indexes, represent relative increases, not absolute ones. The county of L'Horta, even more than the two Riberes, was doubtless the richest in the Valencian Country, and by the middle of the 18th century must have attained levels of production difficult to surpass by a traditional structure. The Morisco lands in the margins of this territory had, on the other hand, still possibilities of expansion by means of the plough; on top of this, its population was in 1787, in relative terms, 12 per cent lower than the population of 1609.

In the Central Plains we see again, as we saw in Les Riberes, an advantage of the Moriscos tithal districts over the Christian ones in the 16th century, and a continuous disadvantage during almost the whole period that followed. These Central Plains formed by the counties of El Camp de Túria and La Foia de Bunyol, include very fertile territories dominated by Christian towns such as Lliria or La Pobla de Vallbona, as well as poorer ones, as were the lands of the latter county. Although the Morisco town of Benaguasil belonged to the first of the two counties mentioned, the hegemony of the Christian territory established after the expulsion was maintained practically during the whole period.

In the Northern and Central Mountains it has not been possible to separate the Christian from the Morisco tithal districts, but the Moriscos were in the majority in the Central Mountains and in the minority in the Northern



Graph 6. "Bread and Wine" tithe (1500-1835)  
Indexes (Base: 1585-1599=100). Central Plains



**Graph 7. “Bread and wine” tithe (1500-1835)**  
**Indexes (Base: 1585-1599= 100). Central and Northern Mountains**

ones, and this difference is clearly shown in Graph 7. If the agrarian production of the two territories was very similar until 1609, after the expulsion the Northern Mountains differentiated themselves from the other macro-county where the Moriscos were in the majority.

The interpretation of the graphs is tricky and has been done by taking into account the particular traits of each territorial unit. It is probable that the evolution of the agrarian production inferred from the collection of tithes in the Archbishopric of Valencia could be interpreted in a different way; but in order to be coherent with our first demographical analysis and with the analysis of the structure of ownership, to which we will turn in the next section, I believe I have taken the most likely option. As James Casey said almost forty years ago when he formulated one of the first interpretations of the consequences of the expulsion of the Moriscos similar to the one I am advancing here “*after the expulsion, the peasant supported himself better from a property that for the first time adapted itself to his needs. (...) The most decisive influence was the stable social structure based on an agriculture that, even if not very flourishing, [Casey is talking about the moments following immediately after the expulsion] was at least more solid than the one that predominated before 1609.*”<sup>33</sup>

**CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF AGRARIAN PROPERTY**

The existing studies on land property in the Morisco boroughs before and after the expulsion have revealed that Morisco property was –in spite of great differences that

depended on the different locations– made up of smallholders, and was sparsely concentrated. This structure underwent a great change with the Christian repopulation, although also with significant contrasts between the different locations. One of the first studies that signalled this characteristic was that of Adelina Bataller on the villages of the La Safor area watered by the river Vernissa; these villages were Real, Benipeixcar, Benirredrà, Gandia and others that disappeared when they became part of larger townships, such as Beniopa, Benicanena, and L’Alqueria Nova.<sup>34</sup> The author studied the structure of agrarian property before and after the expulsion, and her results are summarized in Table 2.

Extension (fanecades <sup>35</sup> )	1593		1630	
	Owners	Fanecades	Owners	Fanecades
≤ 10	75	38	39	13
10,1-30	22	42	48	46
> 30	3	20	13	41

Table 2. The structure of land ownership in the area watered by the river Vernissa (in percentages)

The prevalence of small ownership and the little concentration existing in the year 1593 were replaced in 1630 by a structure in which small properties decreased noticeably and medium and big properties increased. The same phenomenon was observed many years later by Santiago La Parra in the whole area of the Dukedom of Gandia; what happened in the lands watered by the river Vernissa happened also in the land watered by the river Alcoi, now called also river Serpis,<sup>36</sup> as can be observed in Table 3.

Area watered by the irrigation ditch of the river Vernissa		
Places	1593	1630
Gandia	12,26	-
Suburb of Gandia	5,76	-
Alcodar	4,72	18,17
Alqueria Nova	4,87	-
Alqueria de Martorell	7,41	29,25
Beniopa	7,91	13,59
Benipeixcar	6,78	15,32
Benirredrà	10,85	10,77
Real de Gandia	8,25	21,29
Area watered by the river Alcoi		
Gandia	12,65	18,69

Table 3. Average agrarian property in the Dukedom of Gandia (in 'fanecades')

With only one exception –Benirredrà– the average property grew in a very significant way after the repopulation. And even more spectacular were the changes taking place in the dividing up of land, since the majority of the Morisco fields in this county (exactly 75 per cent) were not more than of four *fanecades*, and this proportion decreased to 33 per cent after the expulsion. We are talking about one of the richest counties in the Valencian Country, where irrigated land was predominant. If we move to another scenario and examine the property structure of land in villages and towns of the Southern Valencian county of the river Baix Segura we find a similar phenomenon, but even more accentuated. In this case, only the Morisco ownership during the same year of the expulsion, 1609, has been studied, but not the one established there by the new Christian settlers.<sup>37</sup> The distribution of land ownership in four villages of this county: Redovà, Albatera, Coix and La Granja de Rocamora, is shown in Table 4.

The distribution of land ownership was almost egalitarian, especially in Albatera, Coix and the Granja de Rocamora. According to the same author, in the Christian towns in the same area, *i.e.* Oriola, Callosa de Segura, Almoradí, Catral, and Guardamar, the dimensions of agrarian property were much bigger; there were also noticeable differences between one large group of small landowners and another group at the social top that owned almost half the cultivated land. In the Marquisate of Llombai, the seignury of La Ribera Alta, with an agriculture that was

not so rich as in the villages that we have looked up at to now, it was not much different, although the structure of ownership established with the Christian repopulation was not so concentrated. In this case, though, it has been possible to study the distribution of the crops, and the modifications that took place can indeed be qualified as spectacular.<sup>39</sup> This information can be observed in Tables 5 and 6.

Extension (fanecades)	1581		1699	
	Owners	Area	Owners	Area
<10	61,7	33,4	35,8	10,8
≥ 10, < 20	31,3	44,7	31,9	26,9
≥ 20, < 30	4,4	10,8	16,5	23,4
≥ 30, < 40	1,8	6,2	9,1	17,8
≥ 40, < 50	0,4	2,2	4,2	10,8
≥ 50	0,4	2,7	2,5	10,3

Table 5. Ownership structure in the irrigated lands of the Marquisate of Llombai before and after the expulsion of the Moriscos (in percentages)

We have to admit that the changes that took place between 1581 and 1699 in the irrigated lands of this territory were not so important; nonetheless, a clear increase can be observed in the medium sized and large properties over 10 *fanecades*, which are approximately equivalent to 0,9 Ha. The changes in unirrigated lands property (which I do not offer here in order not to lengthen this article excessively) was of greater importance. This seems to corroborate some of the opinions of contemporaries of the expulsion, such as Bleda, who thought that the Moriscos did not take proper care of the dry lands. Much more important were the changes in the irrigated lands, as can be observed in Table 6.

I do not think it is too bold to qualify these changes as revolutionary. Between 1581 and 1699 agriculture changed from being centred on the cultivation of cereals to an agriculture being clearly orientated towards commerce, in which the hegemonic crop was mulberry leaves. These were the food of silk worms, and the silk produced went to the factories of Toledo and Valencia. The small growth of vineyards, olive trees and carob trees is only apparent, since these crops (as happened partly with cereals, too) started to be grown also in dry lands.

Not everywhere was it the same. It is very probable that

Extension (tafulles) <sup>38</sup>	Redovà		Albatera		Coix		La Granja	
	Owners	Tafulles	Owners	Tafulles	Owners	Tafulles	Owners	Tafulles
≥ 1	40,5	15,2	40,7	25,3	23,7	10,6	9,1	3,4
1,1-2	31,1	21,3	51,3	59,5	48,4	45,3	15,9	12,7
2,1-3	14,9	20,5	8,0	15,2	25,8	38,5	72,7	80,3
> 3	13,5	39,4	0,0	0,0	2,1	5,6	2,3	8,3

Table 4. Structure of Land ownership in four Morisco townships in Baix Segura (in percentages)

Crops	1581	1699
Cereals	86,8	32,5
Mulberry trees	5,2	58,1
Vineyard	3,0	0,9
Vineyard and associated crops	0,8	4,3
Fig trees	1,4	-
Fig trees and associated crops	1,2	-
Olive trees	0,9	2,6
Olive trees and associated crops	0,3	1,0
Garob trees	0,3	0,6
Orange trees	0,1	-

Table 6. Crops in the irrigated lands of the Marquisate of Llobai, before and after the expulsion of the Moriscos (in percentages of the cultivated land)

in some boroughs the Morisco agriculture had a market orientation, had a bigger property on average and a more differentiated social structure. This seemed to be the case in the city of Elx (Sp. Elche), where the situation was very different.<sup>40</sup> Table 7 shows the structure of Morisco agrarian ownership at the beginning of the 17th century.

Tafulles	Owners	Extension
< 5	33,8	3,7
5-18,9	39,8	14,6
19-60,9	18,5	24,4
61-150,9	4,9	21,0
≥ 151	3,0	36,3

Table 7. Structure of the Morisco agrarian ownership in Elx (1600-1609) (in percentages)

The Morisco agrarian ownership in the Southern Catalan lands has not been so well studied, but there are signs that show that it shared the same characteristics we have found in the Valencian lands, especially in reference to the size of the exploitations, which were also small. The information we have collected in this third section of our work is local and undoubtedly incomplete; but if interpreted together with the information offered in the previous sections, it shows that it is difficult to maintain the hypothesis that the expulsion of the Moriscos with the subsequent repopulation did represent any drawback in the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism. We could even suggest that facts point in the opposite direction. There are still plenty of things that need to be researched in order to endorse this interpretation. We would need, among other things, further studies on the Morisco structure of ownership and on the structure established after the repopulation, together with a wider geographical coverage; in particular, a convincing explanation of the peculiar ownership and crops structure in the Morisco boroughs would also be very convenient. It is commonly argued that as a consequence of the whole Medieval process of conquest and repopulation, Muslims were marginalised

in the worst lands. But we have seen that similar characteristics appear also in territories that can not be considered as poor, as is the case in the Valencian county of La Safor. It is probable that these peculiarities may also have a cultural explanation which is, in any case, difficult to guess. The present article has only tried to disavow – to ‘falsify’ in the Popperian sense – the supposed negative influence that the expulsion of the Islamic minority from the Catalan Countries, particularly from the Valencian Country, had in the process of capitalist development.

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- [39] Manuel ARDIT. *Creixement econòmic i conflicte social. La Foia de Lombai entre els segles XIII I XIX*. *Afers*, Catarroja-Barcelona 2004, esp. pp. 68-70 and 110-115.
- [40] Joaquim SERRANO JAÉN. *Estructuras agràries al sud del País Valencià. Propietat, règim d'explotació i distribució social de la terra a Elx. De la problemàtica morisca a la consolidació de la revolució burgesa (1600-1855)*. University of Valencia, Doctoral Dissertation 1990.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Manuel Ardit is Lecturer in Modern History in the University of Valencia and full member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. His historiographical work has dealt with a wide variety of topics. He began with a study on the crisis of the Ancient Regime and the liberal revolution in the Valencian Country. This was the theme of his Doctoral Dissertation, partially published in 1977 in the volume *Revolució liberal y revuelta campesina* ("Liberal Revolution and Peasants' Revolt"). His interest in the study of seigneurial regime, which was central to the debates in the first Spanish liberal parliament, resulted in a very detailed study of a Valencian seigneurie, *Creixement econòmic i conflicte social. El marquesat de Llombai entre els segles XIII i XIX* ("Economic Growth and Social Conflict. The Marquisate of Llombai between the 13th and 19th Centuries"), published in 2004. He has made several contributions to the study of Valencian religious movements of the 16th century, on the trade between the Valencian Country and the American colonies in the 18th century, and on Valencian and Spanish historical demography, as well as some reflections on the consequences of the expulsion of the Moriscos from the Valencian Country, of which this essay is an example. He has also published several handbooks, in particular *La terra i els homes del País Valencià. Segles XVI-XVIII* ("Land and People of the Valencian Country. From the 16th to the 18th Centuries.") published in 1993. This is an interpretation of the Agrarian History of Valencia during the Modern Age.