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Race and Realities: The Black Diaspora and Iberian Enslaving Institutions in Early Modern

Valencia, 1500-1550

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in History

By

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Race and Realities: The Black Diaspora and Enslaving Institutions in Early Modern
Valencia, 1500- 1550

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By

Thomas Samuel Franke

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ABSTRACT

Race and Realities: The Black Diaspora and Enslaving Institutions in Early Modern

Valencia, 1500-1550

By

Thomas Samuel Franke

In the early sixteenth century, the Spanish Kingdom of Valencia was home to a growing black population. Most of these black Valencians could trace their presence on the Iberian Peninsula to Europe's involvement in the West African slave trade, and were either enslaved or freed West Africans or their descendants.

But the documentation recording their lives and experiences poses quantitative and qualitative difficulties. On the one hand, a majority of the documentation recording black and Afro-Valencians' lives and experiences were produced by Valencia's Bailiff General, a royal official charged with regulating Valencia's slave trade. To this end, the Bailiff General was primarily concerned with justifying black captives' enslavement in trials known as captive confessions, in which he also levied taxes on captives' enslavers. On the other hand, other sources that record a wider spectrum of black Valencians' lives—such as civil and criminal court records, notarial contracts, and census records—are numerically sparse and often provide only fragmentary glimpses into black Valencians' lives. In this dissertation, I work with these sources and their limitations to examine two distinct but related aspects of the early modern history of Valencia's black diaspora.

In the first half of the dissertation, I examine records produced by the Bailiff General to show that the official was under multiple logistical strains in the early sixteenth-century. I

argue that these strains encouraged to the Bailiff General to streamline presentations of West African captives through strategies that amounted to processes of race-making. Namely, I show that officials made strategic claims about West Africans' linguistic abilities and places of origin to facilitate their work of interrogating captives and justifying their captivity.

In the second half of the dissertation, I shift focus away from the Bailiff General and instead foreground the experiences of free and enslaved black and Afro-Valencians. Namely, I examine how Afro-Iberians talked about and presented themselves in relation their West African origins, the various sites of black life throughout Iberia, and the contours of black quotidian life in the city of Valencia. In pursuing these topics, I argue that black Valencians' testimonies—even when fragmented or opaque—shed light on heretofore unacknowledged realities and experiences. Taking stock of and foregrounding these realities undermines institutional narratives about early modern European black life and enriches and humanizes early modern European black history.

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Introduction

On Tuesday May 22, 1520, Angela Guarcia marched to the home of Valencian jurist Ausias del Bosch flanked by a notary and an attorney. Guarcia, a widow, had brought this entourage of bureaucrats to the jurist's home to facilitate and record a complaint against del Bosch and his brother, a priest named Luys Carbonell, who were members of the nobility. The previous February, the brothers had sold Guarcia an enslaved Black woman named Francisca. As required by the *Furs de Valencia*, they had disclosed that Francisca had the "defect," or vice (*vici*), of wetting the bed. But now, three months later, Guarcia appeared at del Bosch's home alleging that he and his brother had concealed the fact that Francisca had "another vice, much worse than the bed-wetting."¹

Guarcia's fundamental issue with Francisca was her absence, as she claimed that Francisca had snuck out of Guarcia's home in the middle of the night "like a fugitive" the previous Saturday. The next day, Guarcia struck out in hopes of locating Francisca and, to that end, went to the household of two slave owners, Gregori Don Hieroni de Centelles and Don Jener de Perellos, to inquire about Francisca's whereabouts. The men had, it turned out, seen Francisca the previous night "in the street near the parish of Saint Berthomeu, and in other places," including outside of del Bosch's home in the company of other enslaved black people."² Guarcia followed this lead but, after two days of searching, was unable to locate Francisca.

¹ ARV Fondos Notariales, Protocolos 10117, May 22.

² ARV Fondos Notariales, Protocolos 10117, May 22, "en lo vie vehinat y prop Sent berthomeu y en altres parts."

This alone would have been sufficient basis for Guarcia to demand a refund. A penchant for flight was, after all, a “vice” that enslavers often disclosed when arranging the sales of their captives. It was also a growing concern among Valencian enslaving institutions such as the Bailiff General which, in 1519, began detaining and interrogating individuals suspected of being fugitive captives.

But Guarcia, perhaps lacking sufficient evidence that Francisca had a history of flight which del Bosch and Carbonell had concealed from her, did not cite fugitivity as one of Francisca’s vices. Rather, with the collaboration of her lawyer, Guarcia contended that Francisca’s flight was indicative of her abundant behavioral and moral defects. Guarcia asserted, for instance, that Francisca was lazy and ill-tempered. But the driving claim of Guarcia’s demand for recompense was that Francisca was a “whore” (*bagassa*), who was so “vile, and so taken with Black men that she [Guarcia] does not believe that there is any part of Valencia, or anywhere else she would dare send Francisca, where Francisca would not go to lay in other houses with Black men.”³

Guarcia further emphasized Francisca’s recklessness and licentiousness by positioning herself as particularly maternal and vulnerable to the dangers of the night. Guarcia noted that Francisca had left the door open behind her upon sneaking out. When she awoke and found the open door, Guarcia claimed that she immediately feared that thieves (*ladres*) had broken into her home. Such an incursion, Guarcia noted, would have threatened more just her belongings. Namely, Guarcia claimed that, had thieves come through the open

³ ARV Fondos Notariales, Protocolos 10117, May 22, “es tan vellaca e tant donada als negres que no creu que es trobe altre...anar se fahent per les casas ab los negres...”

door and into her home, they might have slit her and her children's throats.⁴ For Guarcia, Francisca's flight literally opened the door to the dangers of Valencian urban life. It also opens a door onto the central subjects of this dissertation: black history and the history of race in sixteenth-century Valencia.

Although early modern European black history and the history of race are interconnected, they are distinct areas of inquiry. On the one hand, early modern European black history examines the histories of black people in Europe, whether they were residents, enslaved people, dignitaries, soldiers, or travelers. Much of the existing scholarship documenting Spain's early modern black histories has done so through the lens of the history of slavery. Slavery has been an enduring topic of interest for historians of premodern Iberia, with enslaved black Africans making up one sub-section of this field. Within this realm, scholars have examined the conditions black Iberians experiences as enslaved and freed people. What, exactly, constitutes the premodern history of race is less self-evident.

Approaches to, and understandings of, the premodern history of race have varied considerably over the past twenty years. For instance, in the wake of the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2000, which definitively showed that there was no significant genetic variation amongst different "racial" groups, the history of race in premodern world became a popular topic among classicists and medievalists. This era of premodern race history was characterized by classicists and medievalists applying twentieth-century anthropological and sociological paradigms to their respective periods of expertise in order to assess whether racism, specifically, existed in classical antiquity.

⁴ ARV Fondos Notariales, Protocolos 10117, May 22. "ladres... haguessen degollada..."

Classicists David Goldenberg and Benjamin Isaac typified this approach. In his magisterial *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Isaac outlined a lengthy set of sociological and anthropological definitions of racism in order to distinguish it from xenophobia and ethnic prejudice.⁵ Isaac also outlined the parameters for a proposed “proto-racism,” which he also defined as “theories regarding hereditary or unalterable exterior influences.”⁶ Isaac thus scoured Antique sources for evidence of such theories, and dismissed any examples that fell outside these parameters as prejudiced or xenophobic, but not racist. Similarly, in *The Curse of Ham* Goldenberg distinguished racism from colorism, arguing that colorism was the natural byproduct of a sociological concept of “somatic norms,” in which people supposedly favor the skin tones they are most accustomed to seeing. In this formulation, sources that engaged in clear colorism were thus exonerated from the charge of racism.⁷ Both Goldenberg’s and Isaac’s approaches to premodern racism were limiting, insofar as both posed questions and utilized tools that were arbitrarily narrow and specific. While Goldenberg’s and Isaac’s studies were certainly influential, subsequent scholars have taken more dynamic approaches to examining race’s premodern history.

Rather than narrowly defining race or racism and searching for it in premodern sources, many subsequent studies have outlined how modern social and ideological practices of race work, and then found similar or analogous processes in premodernity. Classicist Denise Kimber Buell, for instance, defined race and racism in theoretical terms in her work on race in early Christianity, and as such offered a much less rigid account of ancient

⁵ Benjamin H. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 37

⁷ David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 109

attitudes towards difference and inclusion. Rather than a specific set of parameters, Buell used the work of anthropologist Ann Stoler to argue that racial discourses are combine “notions of fixity and fluidity.”⁸ Buell pointed to early Christian notions of Christianity’s universal truth as an example of this combination of fixity and fluidity. Framing a conversion to Christianity as a perfection of the soul, Buell showed, was based on the notion that there are “acquirable characteristics that transform or activate one’s fundamental essence.”⁹ In taking this more thematic approach to the history of race, Buell challenged “most periodizations of racism and definitions of race [that] assert sharp discontinuity from rather than unpredictable continuities with other discourses about human difference.”¹⁰ Medievalists have also adopted dynamic approaches to race in premodern Europe.

Cord Whitaker’s examination of anti-blackness in medieval English literature has been particularly provocative in this regard.¹¹ Rather than adopting sociological and anthropological frameworks, Whitaker’s approach to race drew on literary criticism and critical race studies. With these influences, one of Whitaker’s central conceits is that race functions as a mirage, since, like race, “The mirage funnels material reality through a set of material conditions...that produce illusions that engage the imagination.”¹² To this end, Whitaker examines medieval rhetorical theory to trace blackness’s role as a literary and rhetorical device. Within the intersecting historiographies of early modern European black

⁸ Denise K. Buell, “Early Christian universalism and modern forms of racism,” in *Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 113.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹¹ Cord Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

¹² *Ibid.*, 5..

history and the premodern a history of race, there are thus a variety of ways in which Guarcia's complaint against the runaway Francisca could be analyzed.

One way to situate Guarcia's complaint within the history of race is to focus primarily on how Guarcia chose to depict Francisca. This approach resonates with many landmark works on the premodern histories race that have focused heavily on the representational strategies of Christian European authors, litigants, playwrights, notaries, and artists who depicted marginalized or minority groups. Geraldine Heng's extensive *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, for instance, examined race in regards to a variety of minority groups—including Jews, Muslims, black Africans, North American Indians, and gypsies—as they were depicted in texts crafted by Christian European authors.¹³ Art historians have likewise placed visual media produced by Christian Europeans depicting minority groups at the center of their examinations of race. In the edited collection *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, for instance, editor Pamela Patton asserted that “visual and material culture constituted a premier medium—perhaps *the* premier medium—by which...notions of race could be explored and expressed.”¹⁴

Taking this approach, the representational strategies that Guarcia employed in her depiction of Francisca were fairly straightforward. In fact, most of the claims and characterizations that Guarcia deployed drew on tropes and anxieties that Iberian enslavers had used to depict enslaved people throughout the Middle Ages. For instance, Guarcia's decision to render Francisca as property liable to have defects (*vicis*) had been a common

¹³ Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁴ Pamela Patton, “Introduction,” in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela Patton (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1.

feature of Iberian slavery throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁵ Moreover, Guarcia characterized Francisca as being “like a fugitive” for leaving Guarcia’s house in the middle of the night, highlighting enslavers’ enduring discomfort and suspicion of enslaved peoples’ mobility. Guarcia’s suspicion of Francisca’s character extended to her participation black sociability, as Guarcia extrapolated that Francisca’s social ties with other black and enslaved Valencians, and particularly men, were evidence of her licentiousness. Furthermore, Guarcia implied that Francisca’s social ties were socially disruptive in and of themselves, as Francisca and her cohort allegedly moved through the neighborhood at all hours of the night when they should have been in their enslavers’ homes, leaving families like Guarcia’s open to the dangers of the night.

The representation strategies that Guarcia mobilized in this case were thus informed by longstanding anxieties about enslaved people, regardless of their appearance or perceived origins, and not by Francisca’s blackness per se. But by the early sixteenth century Valencia’s enslaved population was overwhelmingly comprised of individuals labelled as black (*negre*) and associated with West African origins. As such, it is worth considering the extent to which attributes once ascribed to enslaved people, broadly, started to be associated with enslaved black people, specifically, and perhaps even freed or freeborn black Iberians. Thus, Guarcia’s account of Francisca’s life and actions raises pertinent questions pertinent to histories of race and racialization in early modern Iberia in regards to black Iberians.

But focusing solely on accounts of marginalized groups penned by individuals in positions of power relative to those groups limits the analytical and imaginative of

¹⁵ See, for example, Steven A. Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca, NJ: Cornell University Press, 2001), 81-4.

premodern histories of race. Such an approach centers, and can even replicate, historical perspectives that promoted derisive or patronizing depictions of marginalized or Othered subjects. This was particularly evident in a controversy surrounding Geraldine Heng's expansive *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*. In *The Invention of Race*, Heng focused heavily on English literary sources in order to examine medieval attitudes towards Jews, Muslims, black people, and other racialized subjects. In the course of the book, Heng routinely adopted the vocabularies and categories of the authors, poets, and chroniclers whose works she analyzed. Sometimes this adoption was casual, such as when Heng routinely referred to Islamic literary figures as "heathens" and "Saracens."¹⁶ In other instances, such adoption occurred in the context of intentionally ironical parodies or exaggerations of Christian European authors' characterizations of Others, such as when Heng concluded a discussion of a papal envoy's account of the Mongols by observing that "The irrationality of Mongol social customs and the barbarity of Mongol personal habits, it seems, is ameliorated somewhat by the Great Khan's hospitality."¹⁷ Whatever its intention, Heng's routine adoption of the perspectives had perhaps unintended consequences, as this habit was part of the basis of S.J. Pearce's incisive review of the work.¹⁸

Pearce's overall contention was that Heng's work in *The Invention of Race* replicated Anglophile perspectives and values and, in so doing, perpetuated a type of English colonialism over medieval studies. As a specialist in Hebrew and Arabic studies, Pearce took specific issue with Heng's approach to medieval antisemitism. For instance, Pearce alleged

¹⁶ This tendency is clear, for instance, in Heng's chapter on color or "Somatic race." See Heng, *The Invention of Racism*, 181-242.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹⁸ S.J. Pearce, "The Inquisitor and the Moseret: *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* and the New English Colonialism in Jewish Historiography," *Medieval Encounters* 26 (2020): 145-190.

that *The Invention of Race* “romanticizes the fear and trauma” that English Jews faced in the twelfth-century.¹⁹ To that end, Pearce highlighted a passage in which Heng characterized a scene of Jews’ suffering as depicted in a twelfth-century hagiography as “poignant”—a characterization which, incidentally, Heng deployed regularly when presenting scenes of suffering in the book. Pearce asked “From whose perspective is the palpable fear felt within the Jewish community of Lincoln *poignant?*,” noting that the Jews experiencing this fear would not have viewed it as such. Pearce continued that in presenting such characterizations, Heng “signs on” to the characterizations presented by her medieval European Christian author.²⁰ Pearce’s review mobilized scholars on both sides of the argument to online debates. Regardless of the merits of Heng’s and Pearce’s methodologies and arguments, this exchange highlights the perils of turning exclusively to discourses and depictions of race and human difference produced by groups in positions of power.

As such, it is important to pursue methodologies that productively critically dissect the perspectives of people in positions of power, rather than just reproduce them. To that end, in this dissertation I seek to engage with and build upon Whitaker’s notion of race as a mirage that filters material realities through specific material conditions to produce imaginative illusions. The work of sociologist and legal scholar Dorothy Roberts has been an integral part of this project. In *Fatal Invention*—Roberts’ examination of the relationship between race, medicine, and big business—Roberts noted that material conditions help explain why the false idea that race is a genetic reality persists in the twenty-first century.²¹ After outlining how scientific research, including the Genome Project, debunked the myth of

¹⁹ Ibid., 164.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: The New Press, 2011).

genetic race, Roberts noted that the notion of biological race nevertheless persists in virtually all aspects of American life. Roberts argued that “Race persists neither because it is scientifically valid nor because its invalidity remains to be proven. Race persists because it continues to be *politically useful*. It is therefore imperative to evaluate the political function of race” in its various manifestations.²²

While Roberts’ approach still centers the perspectives and actions of individuals in positions of power who perpetuate notions of racialized differences, it reveals, rather than reproduces, the mechanisms through which they operate. For her part, Roberts adopted this approach to show that the concept of genetic race persists in scientific and medical arenas because it continues to be a useful marketing tool for medical and pharmaceutical companies. Other scholars working in premodern contexts have examined the material conditions in which racializing texts were produced in order to yield novel insights into race’s political and social functions. For instance, in his examination of Golden Age *habla de negros* texts, which feature stylized representations of black African speech, Nicholas Jones foregrounded the material realities of those texts’ audiences, performers, and material accoutrement to upend the existing scholarly literature on *habla de negros* which cast it as just mockery and buffoonery.²³ Likewise, in her study of an Ottoman court in Aintab, Leslie Peirce examined categories of difference that court scribes utilized to gain insight into the court’s sociopolitical stance, arguing that the consistent use of such labels “suggests that there was a kind of standard or ‘default’ identity... This was the freeborn Muslim male adult.” Within this formulation, “ethnicity was a label only for tribal nomadic groups unassimilated to urban

²² Ibid., 79.

²³ Nicholas R. Jones, *Staging Habla de Negros: Radical Performances of the African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), especially loc. 1036-1300.

culture,” and thus ethnic labels were used primarily to indicate litigants’ belonging to “nonsedentary cultures.”²⁴ Applying Roberts’ observation about the political function of race, and the examples of Jones and Peirce, to Angela Guarcia’s complaint about the runaway Francisca helps unpack Guarcia’s motives in crafting her depiction of Francisca.

In order to consider the political work that Guarcia sought to accomplish with her racialized rhetoric, it is important to foreground her immediate audience. While Francisca was the explicit subject of Guarcia’s rhetorical vitriol, she was not present to hear Guarcia’s claims. Rather, Guarcia’s audience was the pair of brothers who had sold her Francisca, the noblemen Ausias del Bosch and Luys Carbonell. Throughout their careers both men had been closely involved with courts and institutions of social control. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, for instance, the jurist del Bosch was an assessor in the court of the Bailiff General, the official who regulated Valencia’s slave trade and which, in 1519, began detaining individuals suspected of being fugitive captives.²⁵ Moreover, in 1510 he was listed amongst the city’s military elite.²⁶ His brother, the priest Carbonell, had an even more extensive association with law and order. He was, for instance, a fixture of Valencia’s Criminal Justice court, where he had presided as judge in 1503 and would again in 1529. Moreover, in 1517 Carbonell served as Valencia’s Governor (*gobernador*), during which time he promulgated an edict expelling all “thieves, vagabonds, and ruffians” from the city.

²⁴ Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 144.

²⁵ Germà Colon Domènech, “El nom de fonts del poeta Ausiàs March” (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2008), 9 and 24.
https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/constituciones_hispanoamericanas/obra/el-nom-de-fonts-del-poeta-ausis-march-0/

²⁶ Rafael Valdecabras Rodrigo, *Cens de 1510. Relació dels focs valencians ordenada per les corts de Montsó* (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2002), 59.

In this context, the target and aims of Guarcia's complaint take on a new light. While Guarcia certainly aimed to disparage Francisca through well-worn representational strategies, alleging that Francisca's flight was the foreseeable result of her "vile" nature was not an end in and of itself for Guarcia. Rather, in claiming that del Bosch had sold her an enslaved woman who acted "like a fugitive," Guarcia certainly meant to draw attention to and undermine del Bosch's association with the institution charged with mitigating captive fugitivity in the kingdom. Furthermore, in claiming that Francisca's flight had left her and her family vulnerable to being preyed on and brutalized by thieves who roamed the streets, Guarcia implied that Valencia's governing elites, including Carbonell and del Bosch, had been ineffectual in managing the city's social ills. Interestingly, when recounting her fear that murderous invaders had broken into her home, Guarcia broke from her derogatory depiction of Francisca to note that her first response was to "call out for the aforementioned black woman [Francisca]" for help, further suggesting that Guarcia prioritized criticizing her audience above disparaging Francisca.²⁷

Moreover, in reporting that witnesses had seen Francisca with other enslaved black people in front of del Bosch's home, Guarcia directly implicated the brothers in the city's social ills, suggesting that they had contributed to the problems that plagued her family by allowing their house to become a site of enslaved black sociability. Guarcia's criticism was particularly salient in 1520, as Valencia was in the midst of the Revolt of the Brotherhoods, or the *Germanias*. The years-long revolt was led by members of Valencia's artisan guilds who were deeply critical of, and sought to depose, Valencia's nobility.²⁸

²⁷ ARV Fondos Notariales, Protocolos 10117, "crida la dita negra."

²⁸ Teofilo F. Ruiz, *Spanish Society, 1348-1700*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2017), 210-212.

Perhaps, with the assistance of her attorney, Guarcia calculated that this timely criticism of the city's governance could pressure, or even shame, the brothers into acquiescing to her demands in the case that they found her claims about Francisca's defects to be unconvincing.

Thus, as in the case of twenty-first century race and medicine examined by Dorothy Roberts, Guarcia's racialized representation of the runaway Francisca had a clear political purpose. Analyzing the political and social function of Guarcia's claims does not erase or mitigate Guarcia's enthusiastic derision of Francisca. But it is useful for revealing, rather than replicating, the mechanisms that encouraged or incentivized such derision. While Guarcia's complaint can thus be situated within a premodern history of race, it also sheds some light on contemporary black history by way of its depiction of Francisca.

Despite all of its breathless and incendiary claims, Guarcia's complaint relayed some vivid details about Francisca's life. Based solely on Guarcia's accusations, for instance, we know that Francisca was an enslaved woman who, by the time of her adulthood, had been enslaved in multiple Valencian households of varying statuses. She was evidently friends with some of her peers and contemporaries, as attested to by the neighbors and witnesses who recalled seeing Francisca socializing "with other black people" before fleeing. At least some of these social contacts, moreover, were enslaved people who Francisca met as a direct result of her enslavement, given that they congregated outside the home of one of her former enslavers. And while Francisca's ultimate fate is unknown, we know that she sought out, and likely found, refuge, at least for a while, in or outside of Valencia city. This information about Francisca admittedly offers less insights and allows for less analysis than Guarcia's representational strategies in depicting Francisca does.

This phenomenon was not unique to Guarcia's complaint. In a majority of the sources that I examine in the following chapters, the perceptions, motives, goals, and strategies of non-black authors—including notaries, officials, litigants, and enslavers—predominate and overshadow records of black Valencians' lives and experiences. As such, one of my central goals in this dissertation is to foreground black Valencians' voices, perspectives, and experiences in these sources, even if they make up only a secondary or minor portion of a source itself.

Plan of Action

I embark on this investigation of the histories of race and the black diaspora in sixteenth-century Valencia over the course of six chapters, which are divided into two parts. In Part One, I place Valencia's premier enslaving institution—the office of the Bailiff General—at the center of my analysis. The Bailiff General was a royal official who, in the broadest terms, was charged with protecting the Crown's royal patrimony. To that end, the official had a broad set of jurisdictions. Throughout the Middle Ages, for instance, the Bailiff General's court heard legal dispute between Jews and/or Muslims, who were considered a part of the Crown's patrimony. The court also oversaw and regulated maritime matters, particularly those involving the taxation of imported merchandise and booty.²⁹ The Bailiff General's office was involved with the slave trade in Valencia throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century primarily by way of trials known as captive presentations.

In these proceedings, enslavers hoping to sell foreign captives within the Kingdom of Valencia were required to first appear before the Bailiff General to prove that their captives

²⁹ Jose Hinojosa, *Diccionario de historia medieval del Reino de Valencia Tomo I* (Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2002), 305-306.

had been procured through “legitimate” means, the limits of which changed over time.³⁰ After receiving enslavers’ presentations, the Bailiff General typically interrogated the captives in question to confirm the legitimacy of their captivity before approving them to be sold. As a part of this process, the Bailiff General assigned captives a monetary value and used that value to assess a tax known as the *quinto*, or “the fifth” on enslavers. This procedure had been designed in the Middle Ages to primarily regulate the importation of Iberian, North African, and Eastern Mediterranean Muslims (*moros*) and non-Catholic Christians, typically identified by color terms such as white (*blanch*) and dark-skinned (*llor*), who were ostensibly captured in religious conflicts. But by the early sixteenth century the majority of captives moving through the official’s court were enslaved West Africans who, as far as the Bailiff General was concerned, were distinct from Muslims and were converted to Christianity upon entering European enslavers’ custody.³¹ Regardless of their subjects, captive presentations were consistently designed and conducted such that nearly all of the individuals who appeared before the Bailiff General in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were deemed “legitimate” captives of good war. Nevertheless, they produced more documentation regarding black Iberians than any other contemporary organization or institution in sixteenth-century Valencia, and as such make up a central part of this dissertation.

³⁰ For full discussions of the parameters of “legitimate” captivity in fifteenth-century Valencia, see Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud en Valencia durante el reinado de los Reyes Catolicos (1479-1516)* (Valencia: Excmo. Ayuntamiento Valencia, 1964), 65-76 and Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 20-33.

³¹ On Iberian practices of subjecting enslaved West Africans to compulsory baptisms, see Aurelia Martin Casares and Christine Delaigue, “The Evangelization of Freed and Slave Black Africans in Renaissance Spain: Baptism, Marriage, and Ethnic Brotherhoods,” *History of Religions* 52.3 (2013): 226-229.

In chapter one, “A Mediterranean Enslaving Institution in an Atlantic World,” I situate the Bailiff General’s captive presentations within the shifting contours of the Iberian slave trade in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Throughout its medieval history, the Bailiff General had overseen a slave trade that consisted primarily of captives captured in frontier battles and coastal and maritime raids in Iberia and North Africa. With Portugal’s incursions into West Africa in the mid-fifteenth century, though, slave traders started bringing large quantities of commercially-sold enslaved West Africans to Valencia’s port to be sold by the 1490s. I argue that this stark change in the quantity and demographics of the enslaved people being brought to Valencia put severe logistical and material strains on the Bailiff General’s office. While these changes posed difficulties for the Bailiff General, they proved to be a boon to the cash-strapped Crown, the beneficiary of the Bailiff General’s *quinto*. I show that these pressures from both within and outside the Bailiff General’s court prompted the official to cut back the time and material that his court invested into captive presentations.

I then move on to show how this streamlining ethos affected the official’s representational strategies in presentations of enslaved West Africans. In chapter two, “Interrogating *Boçal*,” I unpack the Bailiff General’s use of the label *boçal* in the captive presentations of West Africans. The Bailiff General labelled captives as *boçal* when he judged that they could “speak no language other than that of their homeland.” Although an apparently straightforward categorization, I argue that Bailiff Generals decision to label captives as *boçal* was strategic, as it provided the Bailiff General with a pretense for truncating captives’ interrogations or abandoning them altogether. Deeming captives *boçal* thus gave the official further means to reduce the time and resources that interpreters or full

interrogations of hundreds of captives would require. While the Bailiff General devised a strategic use of *boçal* to facilitate the streamlining of captive presentations, he also found ways to overcome the conceptual obstacle of applying long-standing medieval justifications for enslavement to commercially-procured West Africans

In chapter three, “Origins I: European Interpretations,” I argue that the Bailiff General and the European enslavers who appeared in his court recoded West African captives’ origins in ways that sought to justify their enslavement. Throughout the Middle Ages, “good war” (*bona guerra*) was the primary means through which enslavers and the Bailiff General justified the captivity of Muslims and non-Catholic Christians associated with non-Christian polities from Iberia and abroad. The European practice of purchasing large numbers of enslaved West Africans through commercial channels pushed the limit of good war’s applicability as a justification. As such, I argue that the Bailiff General and the enslavers who appeared in his court filtered their accounts of West African origins through what Herman Bennett has called the “discursive prisms” of sovereignty and commerce.³² Rather than interrogate captives about their ethno-geographical origins, in an overwhelming majority of cases enslavers simply reported the polities from which they had procured their captives. For their part, officials in the Bailiff General’s court employed and emphasized geographical vocabularies modeled on earlier precedents in order to facilitate an association between black captives and good war. Together, these practices collaborated to situate West Africans’ captivity as overdetermined by their places of origin.

³² Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic*, Kindle Edition (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), Loc. 3089.

Thus, in the course of these three chapters I argue that, in response to internal and external pressures it faced in the early sixteenth century, the Bailiff General's court crafted a clear and consistent story about West Africans: there were a lot of them, they could not communicate with Iberians, and they were virtually indistinguishable save for the polities from which they procured. The court reified this story through the voluminous documentation it produced through captive presentations. Until only recently, historians who have examined early black Iberians—typically through the lens of the history of slavery—have perpetuated this story, whether with the aid of captive presentations or not. But as the above examination of Guarcia's complaint against the runaway Francisca showed, sources produced by early modern Iberian enslavers can and should be read for what they reveal about black Iberians' own experiences, realities, and truths. To that end, Part Two foregrounds black Iberians' own accounts of their origins, experiences, desires, and lives.

This section opens with chapter four "Origins II: African Realities," a direct response to enslavers' interpretations of West African origins as outlined in chapter three. In "Origins II," I examine how free and enslaved black Iberians from West Africa spoke about their own natal origins and backgrounds in captive presentations, court records, and notarial contracts. While some Afro-Iberians associated themselves with the major West African empires and kingdoms familiar to European audiences, many used more specific and unfamiliar ethno-geographic terms when speaking about their backgrounds. Moreover, Afro-Iberians who identified with major polities often foregrounded elements of their homelands mobilized these origins to different ends than their enslavers did, highlighting their own status as sovereign subjects and casting Europeans as proactive enslavers in their native territories. In addition to providing more nuanced and diverse accounts of their natal origins than Iberian

enslavers and officials did, black Iberians also presented compelling accounts of their movements throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

In chapter five, “The Geographies of Black Iberia,” I examine testimonies from captive presentations and novel procedures known as fugitive confessions to offer a broad account of the sites of black Iberian life in the early sixteenth century. While other historians have produced studies of black neighborhoods and populations in individual cities and areas—including Valencia, Barcelona, Seville, and Lisbon—in this chapter I attempt to situate many of these sites within a broader and dynamic black Iberia. First, I examine the forced movements undergone by enslaved black Iberians, whether Iberian or African-born. While their movements and presence in various Iberian cities were forced upon them by enslavers, I show that these paths of movement nevertheless intersected with site of black communal life throughout the peninsula. Enslaved black Iberians, and especially Africans, were certainly far from home and their established social networks when they arrived to Valencia. But I argue that, through their exposure to Iberia’s many black populations on their forced movement, they would have known that such sources of support and comradery existed and were accessible to them. I then move on to consider evidence from fugitive confessions, in which individuals apprehended on suspicion of being fugitive captives testified to their movements and history of enslavement. Evidence from these sources confirms that black Iberians from a variety of backgrounds and experiences moved throughout the Iberian Peninsula in search of opportunities for improving their circumstances and quality of life. After tracing the trajectories through which many black Iberians ended up in Valencia in chapters four and five, I conclude by examining black life in Valencia city.

In chapter six, “A Tale of Two Parishes,” I examine two sites of black life in early sixteenth-century Valencia. First, I examine the Parish of Sant Andreu, which was the site of the renowned *Bordellet dels Negres*, or “Blacks’ Little Brothel,” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While its early history is unknown, from the late sixteenth century and through the twenty first, the *Bordellet* has been infamous as a site of gambling, crime, and sexual disrepute. I examine the medieval and early sixteenth-century history of the Parish of Sant Andreu to argue that the presence of socially-marginalized groups—of which black Valencians were just one contingent—in the parish was the direct result of official attempts at segregation, expulsion, and social control. I then move on to examine the black presence in Parish of Sant Marti, which until now historians have not considered as a site of black urban life. Using evidence from court, notarial, and census records, I show that the centrally-located Sant Marti was home to a vibrant black population that was concentrated around the meeting place of the city’s black confraternity. I then use the insights into black Valencians’ social networks from these examinations to shed light on broader phenomenon that shaped the lives of many black Valencians living outside these parishes.

In these six chapters I trace the experiences of many black Iberians and examine the mechanisms through which actors in positions of relative power shaped and circumscribed those experiences in the texts they produced. In doing so, my central contention is that the social and ideological processes of race, through which non-black Iberians worked to insist on black Iberians’ difference or otherness, were a direct response to the changing demographics of black Iberia. The mass-introduction of enslaved West Africans to the Peninsula in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries gave rise to communities of free and enslaved black Iberians. These connected phenomena prompted

Part One

Chapter One: A Mediterranean Enslaving Institution in the World of Atlantic Slavery

In late August 1512, Valencian merchant Johan Beneyto transported a group of twenty-three West Africans from Portugal to the city of Valencia. He intended to sell these individuals throughout the kingdom of Valencia's bustling slave markets, which had been attractive to enslavers dealing in West Africans since at least the 1490s. But before he could begin seeking buyers, Beneyto had to appear in the court of Valencia's Bailiff General, a royal official charged with protecting the royal patrimony, to initiate a hearing known as a captive presentation. Since the fourteenth century, enslavers hoping to sell foreign captives within in Kingdom of Valencia had been legally required to initiate these hearings before engaging in any transactions. Presentations began when enslavers appeared in court to present their captives and recount the circumstances of their captivity.

Beneyto's interaction with the Bailiff General in this capacity was brief. The merchant noted that the twenty-three enslaved black people (*testes negres*) he was presenting had been transported to the city from Portugal.³³ He did not provide any information about the group's ages, names, or their gender breakdown. It also seems that he did not know the specifics of the captives' origins or backgrounds, as the Bailiff General recorded that the captives were "natives of" before leaving a large blank space that was never filled. After Beneyto completed this portion of the hearing, the Bailiff General moved on to the next phase of the presentation known as "the captives' confession."

These confessions were interrogations in which the Bailiff General posed a more or less standardized set of questions to the enslaved with two objectives in mind. First, he

³³ ARV BG 197, 131r.-131v.

sought to determine whether captives had been procured through means that the Crown deemed legitimate, most typically being captured in “good war” (*bona guerra*). He then assessed captives’ value and used that value to assess a tax called the *quinto*—a standard tax on war booty that was originally meant to total a fifth of the booty’s value—on enslavers. Only after the Bailiff General completed his assessments, wrote his concluding justification, and collected the *quinto* could enslavers legally sell foreign captives in the kingdom. Beneyto did not have to wait long for the Bailiff General to complete this series of tasks task. The official bypassed the interrogation of captives, or “confession,” altogether and deemed all twenty-three individuals to be legitimate captives of good war. He went on to assess the group to be worth fourteen *lliures* and ten *sous* per head, assessed the *quinto*, and granted Beneyto “the power to sell and to transfer the captives” within the kingdom as he wished.

While this hearing was brief and lacking in the information and procedures that had typically characterized captive presentations, in the early sixteenth-century this was business as usual for the Bailiff General. Less than a month earlier, for instance, the official had deemed Francisco, Ysabel, and Catherina—black captives and “natives of [blank]”—as legitimate captives of good war without interrogating them.³⁴ The day after Beneyto’s presentation, the Bailiff General went on to approved the presentation of one hundred and twenty one black captives—eighty-eight men and thirty-one women who were “natives of Capi and other places in the Land of the Blacks”—without recording any specific information about the captives or interrogating them.³⁵ Moreover, exactly one month later, he deemed a black thirteen-year-old “named [blank]” who was a “native of [blank]” as a

³⁴ ARV BG 197, 124v.-125r.

³⁵ ARV BG 197, 132r.-132v.

legitimate captive of good war without interrogating him.³⁶ As such, it is not surprising that the official did not give a second thought to the missing information or components of Beneyto's presentation of twenty-three captives.

Nevertheless, Beneyto's 1512 hearing exemplified relatively novel trends in captive presentations. Recording so little detail about captives' biographies and foregoing an interrogation of captives would have been unthinkable a century earlier. To that end, Debra Blumenthal has noted that presentations from the first half of the fifteenth century were "chatty" affairs, with the Bailiff General regularly "grilling captives" to collect specific information "detailing the exact time, place, and chain of events" leading up to their capture. The thoroughness of presentations from this period evinced "a very real concern with maintaining slavery's moral legitimacy" even as the Bailiff General used these trials as a means of protecting the Crown's "diplomatic and commercial interests."³⁷ Blumenthal noted that presentations from the last decade of the fifteenth century, by contrast, were of a "markedly different nature," with both presenters and captives providing less-detailed accounts than had been typical earlier in the century.³⁸ María Ghazali has likewise characterized presentations conducted during the sixteenth century as "casual and partial" when compared to the "systematic and thorough" presentations of the fifteenth century.³⁹

Blumenthal has suggested that these changes might have been the Bailiff General's calculated response to the changing demographics of Iberian captivity. Namely, the influx of sub-Saharan Africans and Canary Islanders arriving to Valencia as captives at the turn of the

³⁶ ARV BG 197, 138r.-138v.

³⁷ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁹ María Ghazali, "Le tribunal du Baile General de Valence. Pour une connaissance de la captivité et de l'esclavage en Méditerranée, xve-xviiie siècle," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 87 (2013): 2.

sixteenth century meant that “the bulk of the captives being presented were no longer subjects of rulers with whom the Crown of Aragon had direct commercial and/or diplomatic ties.” As such, the Bailiff General might have been less inclined to assiduously document and demonstrate the legitimacy of their enslavement since they “did not carry the same potential for compromising the Crown’s economic or diplomatic interests” that captive North African Muslims (*moros*) did.⁴⁰ The Bailiff General was certainly aware of the broader economic and diplomatic implications of Valencia’s slave trade. But characterizing changes in captive presentations as the Bailiff General’s calculated response to West Africans’ supposedly heightened enslavability ignores the fact that Europe’s growing involvement in the sub-Saharan African slave trade presented the Bailiff General with significant logistical difficulties.

Foregrounding the obstacles that the Bailiff General faced in this period situates the official within an emerging historiography on the nature of European institutions and power in the nascent years of Europe’s involvement with the sub-Saharan African slave trade. Toby Green, for instance, has characterized sixteenth-century European institutions as “imperfect bureaucracies” with “institutional frailties” whose records provide an unreliable basis for generalization about the slave trade.⁴¹ Moreover, Herman Bennett has critiqued the tendency of scholars and theorists to depict early modern “Europeans and their institutional presence as fully formed....while insisting on the contingency of the non-Western subject.”⁴² In this chapter I push against this trend by illustrating the contingent nature of the Bailiff General’s office, Valencia’s premier premodern enslaving institution.

⁴⁰ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 42.

⁴¹ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6-8 and 209.

⁴² Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, Kindle Edition, 2070.

I situate the Bailiff General within the context of Valencia's growing slave trade and expansionist foreign policy aims to argue that the official's less-detailed approach to captive presentations in the early sixteenth century reflected his court's inability to maintain earlier procedural and documentary norms. While the Bailiff General had been involved in regulating Valencia's slave trade since the thirteenth-century, at the turn of the sixteenth century the scale of that trade was changing dramatically due to its incorporation of sub-Saharan African slave markets. Between 1502 and 1524 alone, the Bailiff General oversaw the presentations of nearly five thousand foreign captives, more than three thousand of whom were West Africans. Furthermore, I show that this growth was occurring as the Catholic Monarchs were looking to Valencia as a source of revenue in support of their expansionary foreign policy goals.

These developments put considerable strains on the Bailiff General, who had to regulate an expanding slave trade while also meeting the Crown's financial expectations. Captive presentations bore evidence of these strains. Early sixteenth-century records of these hearings featured novel textual elements—including scribal shortcuts and errors, blatant omissions, and changes in presentations' materiality—that suggest that the Bailiff General's court was struggling to process the large volume of captives it was receiving. They also reveal that the court sought to manage these mounting difficulties by implementing changes in presentations' language and form aimed at reducing the time, labor, and materials that captive presentations required. In all, these changes reveal that in the early sixteenth century the Bailiff General adopted a streamlining ethos in response to the pressures that Iberian involvement in the West African slave trade had introduced to Valencia.

Growing Pains

By the turn of the sixteenth century Valencia's slave trade had experienced significant demographic changes as a result of developments in the Iberian-Atlantic world. The mid-fifteenth century Portuguese expeditions along Africa's Atlantic coast and the late-fifteenth-century Castilian conquest of the Canary Islands, for instance, resulted in the large-scale enslavement of West Africans and Canary Islanders, respectively. These populations, in turn, were quickly incorporated into Iberian slave markets. In the waning years of the fifteenth century, Spanish and Portuguese incursions into the Americas and India, respectively, likewise resulted in the enslavement of those lands' natives. Unlike Mediterranean and Black Sea captives who had been primary targets for Iberian enslavement throughout the Middle Ages, these groups spoke languages with which Iberians were largely unfamiliar. Enslavers throughout early modern Europe especially bemoaned the difficulty of learning the various languages spoken by sub-Saharan Africans.⁴³

The challenges of these demographic changes were exacerbated by the commercialized means through which Iberians were now procuring captives. While Iberians purchased captives from foreign markets throughout the Middle Ages—such as in the Black Sea ports of Tana and Caffa—Debra Blumenthal has shown that through the first half of the fifteenth century these commercially-procured captives were far outnumbered by those captured in corsair activity that throughout the Mediterranean, in armed conflicts with the Spanish Crown, and through penal servitude.⁴⁴ But by the late fifteenth century this trend had flipped, such that European enslavers were heavily engaging in commercial slaving, particularly of West Africans. Enslavers from throughout Europe, especially Iberia and Italy,

⁴³ See, for example, the Jesuit texts discussed by Ashley Willard, "Ventriloquizing Blackness: Citing Enslaved Africans in the French Caribbean, c.1650-1685" in *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies*, ed. Cassander L. Smith, Nicholas R. Jones, Miles P. Grier (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 88.

⁴⁴ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 10-18.

purchased these captives in factories, trading posts, and settlements established by the Portuguese Crown in Arguim (e. 1435), Cabo Verde (e. 1462), Elmina (e. 1482), and San Thome (e. 1493). The ability to procure large quantities of captives at these markets resulted in a significant increase in the size of Iberia's trade in enslaved people. These changes to the broad contours of the Iberian slave trade were particularly felt in Valencia

In some cases, Iberian officials responded to the growth of the region's slave trade by creating new offices and institutions to regulate the growing slave trade. In 1443, for instance, the Portuguese king Henrique "the Navigator" established the Portuguese Guinea Company (*Casa de Guine e Mina*) in Lagos, which was relocated to Lisbon following Henrique's death in 1460. Furthermore, in 1486 Portuguese king Joao II established the *Casa dos Escravos* in Lisbon. A subsidiary of the Guinea Company, the *Casa dos Escravos* was effectively a jail where the Portuguese Crown detained newly arrived sub-Saharan Africans until royal officials could fully assess them and tax their enslavers.⁴⁵ To that end, that same year, the Crown also established the office of the *Almoxarife dos Escravos*, who was responsible for regulating and taxing the kingdom's West African slave trade.⁴⁶ For their part, in 1503 the Catholic Monarchs established the *Casa de Contratacion* (House of Trade) in Seville to help regulate the growing trade in goods from the American continent. The monarchs saw no need to create such novel institutions in Valencia which, in the last decade of the fifteenth century alone, recorded the importation of more than two thousand enslaved West Africans. Instead, it fell to the Bailiff General to manage this quickly-changing

⁴⁵ J.L. Vogt, "The Lisbon Slave House and African Trade, 1486-1521," *Proceedings of the American Philological Society* 117.1 (1973): 1-16; Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 89.

⁴⁶ J.L. Vogt, "The Lisbon Slave House," 3-4.

landscape of enslavement. This represented an element of continuity for the official, who had been involved with captivity to various degrees since Valencia's founding in 1237.

The *Furs de Valencia*, the Kingdom of Valencia's law codes, trace the Bailiff General's increasing involvement with captivity in the kingdom. *Furs* promulgated by King Jaume I of Aragon (r.1213-1276) in the thirteenth century, for instance, noted only one specific circumstance in which captivity fell under the Bailiff General's purview. In a rubric concerning fugitive captives, the *Furs* noted that any captive Muslims (*sarrahi o sarrahina*) serving Jewish masters could become free if they converted to Christianity and paid their master six *morabatins*. If a captive converted to Christianity and could not afford to pay for their freedom, they could "serve any Christian until they earn the six *morabatins*." In a subsequent gloss, the Crown explained that "if after two months the convert does not pay the Jew," then "the King's bailiff can take custody of the captive and pay" the captive's former owner. Then, "the Bailiff can maintain ownership of the captive, in the service of the king, until the captive can repay" what the Bailiff paid the captive's former owner, at which point they would become free.⁴⁷

Beginning in the early fourteenth century, the Bailiff General's official role in captivity expanded to include captive presentations. In 1308, for instance, Jaume II (r.1291-1327) promulgated new *Furs* that outlined the objective and consequences of captive presentations. The *Furs* noted that "once they have confessed in the presence of the king's Bailiff to being captured in war, Saracens who are taken captive at sea by corsairs or by others" could not revise or recant their testimonies. Those captives who tried to later revise their testimonies before the Bailiff General "will not be believed beyond what they said in

⁴⁷ *Furs de Jaume I (1238-1271)*, ed. Universitat Jaume I, *Arxiu Virtual Jaume I* (2016), 804. <https://www.jaumeprimer.uji.es/cgi-bin/fursv/>

their initial testimony.”⁴⁸ In 1418, moreover, King Alfonso “the Magnanimous” (r.1416-1428) outlined the process of captive presentations in more detail and made them the exclusive purview of the Bailiff General.⁴⁹ Subsequently, until the seventeenth century the Bailiff General regularly issued fines and penalties against municipal bailiffs to assert captive presentations as his exclusive prerogative and outside of their jurisdiction.⁵⁰ Thus, that the job of regulating Valencia’s quickly-changing slave trade in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries fell to the official was unsurprising.

In the mid-fifteenth century, the broader changes occurring in Iberia’s slave trade had only a marginal effect on Valencia’s slave markets and the Bailiff General’s workload. Although no captive presentations survive from this period, records from Valencia’s *Mestre Racional* offer some insight into this early period of change. The *Mestre Racional*, who typically collected the taxes that the Bailiff General levied on enslavers in captive presentations, first recorded the importation of sub-Saharan African captives in 1447. From the 1460s to the 1480s, the number sub-Saharan Africans being brought to Valencia significantly outpaced that of Mediterranean captives. Nevertheless, during this period the *Mestre Racional* typically recorded the annual importation of fewer than one hundred sub-Saharan Africans to Valencia.⁵¹ But the number of enslaved West Africans arriving to Valencia skyrocketed in the last decades of the fifteenth century.

⁴⁸ *Furs de 1302*, 2016, ed. Universitat Jaume I, *Arxiu Virtual Jaume I* (2016), 11.

<https://www.jaumeprimer.uji.es/cgi-bin/fursv/>

⁴⁹ Vicente Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Valencia: Instituto Valenciano de Estudios Histoicos, Institución Alfonso el Magnánimo, Diputación Provincial, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1978), 58.

⁵⁰ Vicente Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia en los siglos XVI y XVII*, 59-61 and María Ghazali, “Le tribunal du Baile General,” 2.

⁵¹ For a full discussion of these records and the importation of sub-Saharan Africans to Valencia in this period, see Debra Blumenthal, “Black African solidarity in late medieval Valencia,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 229 and A. Teixeira

This acceleration in was due, in large part, to the activities of Cesaro de Barchi, a Florentine merchant and slaver who worked as an agent of another Florentine merchant based in Lisbon named Bartolome Marchione. Records from the Bailiff General and Mestre Racional indicate that, between 1489 and 1497, de Barchi initiated captive presentations for 2,148 enslaved West Africans.⁵² In addition to being exceptional for the number of sub-Saharan Africans he trafficked into Valencia, de Barchi was also unique in presenting captives in groups that far outnumbered those that his contemporaries were presenting. As Figure 1 shows, between 1489 and 1497 de Barchi initiated eighteen separate presentations of groups of captives that ranged between thirty-three and one-hundred-and-forty seven. These numbers were unprecedented and far outpaced the transactions that other enslavers were conducting in this period. During this same eight-year window, the Bailiff General and the Mestre Racional recorded nearly four hundred transactions involving the importation of foreign captives by enslavers other than de Barchi. In a majority of these cases, individual enslavers brought between one and fifteen captives in a single transaction. Most presented just one or two.

Year	Month	Number of enslaved people presented by Cesaro de Barchi
1489	June	105
	December	108
1490	September	33
1491	April	147
	October	102
	November	73
1492	June	146

da Mota, "Entrée d'esclaves noirs a Valence(1445-82): le remplacement de la voie saharienne par la voie Atlantique," *Revue française d'histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 66 (1979), 195-210.

⁵² Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 19.

1493	April	133
	August	144
1494	April	134
1495	January	75
	January	82
	January	86
	April	141
	June	146
	July	110
1496	January	139
1497	July	119

Figure 1 Chart of presentations initiated by Cesaro de Barchi

There were only three captive presentations from this period in which enslavers presented groups that came close to the size of the groups that de Barchi was presenting. All three presentations took place in 1494 and none seem to have involved enslaved West Africans. First, merchant Bonet Benavides initiated a captive presentation forty-two captives of unspecified background to the Bailiff General. Then, Miguel Sanz Escuder, a factor working on behalf of the royal treasurer, presented sixty-five Canary Islanders. Lastly, Juan de Nino, a merchant acting as an agent on behalf the lieutenant to the treasurer, presented another fifty-six Canary Islanders.⁵³ In total, these three men initiated presentations for one-hundred and sixty-three captives. That same year, by contrast, de Barchi brought 640 enslaved West Africans before the Bailiff General in six separate presentations. Records from the Mestre Racional reveal that other than these three instances from 1494, only two other presentations from this period featured more than twenty captives. Both took place in 1493 and neither involved West Africans.⁵⁴ These points of comparison illustrate that de Barchi's involvement in slaving was of a markedly different nature than that of his

⁵³ ARV BG 194, 133r.-137v.; 143r.-146v.; 362r.-364v.

⁵⁴ ARV CMR 21, 164v and 165v.

predecessors and contemporaries in Valencia. While de Barchi was exceptional in the late fifteenth century, he was a harbinger of changes that would soon become norms in subsequent decades.

In fact, by the first decade of the sixteenth century, numerous enslaver-merchants were initiating captive presentations that resembled de Barchi's, though none of these enslavers exceeded or even matched the total quantity of de Barchi's dealings in Valencia. Between 1507 and 1522, the Bailiff General received twenty-five captive presentations of groups of enslaved West Africans that ranged in number between fifty-seven and two hundred twenty-eight. These represented only the highest-end of the spectrum. It was not uncommon for enslavers to present groups of sub-Saharan African captives numbering in the twenties and thirties. During this period, enslavers also presented non-West African captives in larger groups than had been typical a decade earlier, thanks in part to the Crown's ongoing Mediterranean military campaigns in North Africa. But, as Figure 2 shows, the size of these groups was not comparable to that of their sub-Saharan African counterparts.

Year	Number of captives in presentations of fifty or more enslaved West Africans	Five largest groups of non-West African captives (and their recorded origins)
1507	107	
1509	57 90	50 (Oran); 40 (Oran)
1510	228	
1511	112 80	

1512	101	
1513	83 76	
1514	95	
1516	66 130	
1517	109 86 80 88 58	
1518	71 50 48 157	157 (origin not recorded)
1519	124 73	
1521		26 (<i>negres I blanchs</i>)
1522	180	39 (origin not listed)

Figure 2 Chart showing size of presentations featuring fifty or more West Africans and the five largest groups of non-West African captives

The Bailiff General welcomed this trend and the revenues it brought to the Crown's coffers. In fact, the official encouraged it. De Barchi's extensive involvement in Valencia's slave trade coincided with the Bailiff General's efforts in the 1490s to make Valencia more attractive to enslavers by assessing the *quinto* at reduced rates. Debra Blumenthal has noted that in the late fifteenth century the Bailiff General seems to have made these sweetheart arrangements on an individual basis.⁵⁵ But captive presentations reveal that by the early sixteenth century he was consistently calculating the *quinto* at a rate of 6.6 percent.

⁵⁵ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 52.

Moreover, it seems likely that the Bailiff General further appealed specifically to enslavers who trafficked in large cargoes of sub-Saharan Africans, as he consistently valued such groups at a conservative per-head rate. In 1517, for instance, the Bailiff General oversaw four presentations involving 88, 80, 105, and 85 sub-Saharan Africans, respectively. In each case, he valued the groups at or near 17.5 *lliures* per-head. That same year, he assessed presentations of sub-Saharan Africans individuals or pairs at a more variable rate that ranged from as low as 12 *lliures* for children to as high as 31 *lliures*.⁵⁶ But even as the Bailiff General was welcoming this influx of enslavers trafficking large groups of sub-Saharan Africans, this change was taking a toll on the logistics of captive presentations.

Given that officials in other Iberian ports were building entirely new structures to detain and assess enslaved people, such as the *Casa dos Escravos* in Lisbon, it is striking that no similar institutions or structures arose in Valencia. Although the Bailiff General resided in a palace that had existed at least since the mid-fifteenth century, there is no direct evidence indicating that captive presentations always took place there.⁵⁷ Vicente Graullera Sanz has suggested that captive presentations regularly took place in the Bailiff General's palace, citing a handful of cases from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which enslavers sought explicit permission to conduct captive presentations without bringing captives before the Bailiff General in person due to illness or injury.⁵⁸ But it seems unlikely that the Bailiff General's palace was designed to accommodate the large groups of sub-Saharan Africans that enslavers were presenting at the turn of the sixteenth century.

⁵⁶ ARV CMR 124, 45r.- 50r.

⁵⁷ For the history of the Bailiff General's palace, see: "Palacio de Bailia," Ajuntament de Valencia, <https://cultural.valencia.es/es/monument/palacio-de-bailia/> and "Palacio de la Bailia," Valencia Actua: Historia de Valencia y sus costumbres," <http://valenciaactua.es/palacio-de-la-bailia/>.

⁵⁸ Vicente Graullera Sanz, *La esclavitud en Valencia*, 112.

Lacking new infrastructure, much of the lodging of captives seems to have fallen to Valencia's inns (*hostals* or *posadas*). Inns had played an important role in Valencia's slave trade since the Middle Ages, as Vicenta Cortes has characterized them as "the natural refuge for a merchant arriving to a new city." In addition to offering enslavers a place to stay, some inns also provided lodgings for the enslaved people that enslavers had in tow.⁵⁹ The influx of large groups of sub-Saharan African captives arriving to Valencia drastically increased enslavers' needs for lodging. Some enslavers likely divided captives amongst multiple inns, especially if they were working in teams, as many did. Others might have kept some captives aboard their docked ships. But evidence from captive presentations reveals that at least one inn had the capacity to lodge upwards of one hundred captives at once. In two separate captive presentations from 1518, enslavers testified to lodging large groups of captives at the Camel Inn (*hostal de camell*), located on the outer edge of the Placa de Mercat in Valencia's city center [Figure 3].

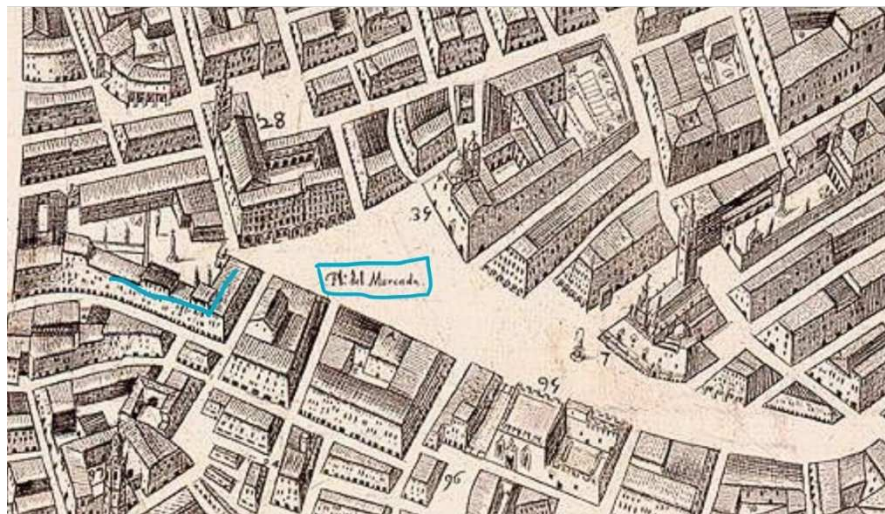


Figure 3 Detail from 1738 map of Valencia by Tomas Vicente Tosca highlighting the Camel Inn (L) and the Market Plaza (rectangle)

⁵⁹ Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 117.

In April 1518, the Bailiff General launched an inquest into the deaths of two sub-Saharan Africans. The deceased had been two of the one-hundred-and-fifty-seven sub-Saharan Africans that merchant Ausias Leonart imported to Valencia a month earlier.⁶⁰ The Bailiff General called Pere Sancho, “the innkeeper (*el hostaller*) of the Camel Inn,” as his first witness. Sancho testified that “about fifteen or sixteen days” after they had arrived to Valencia, “two people in very poor condition had died.” He could attest to this, he said, because he was “the innkeeper at the Camel Inn, the hostel in which the people had been placed,” though he did not specify whether it was just the ill captives who had been lodged there.⁶¹ The Bailiff General’s next witness, Pere Tanst, shed more light on this matter. Tanst was an “agent of the ear” (*coredor d’orella*), or a broker involved in slave sales.⁶² Tanst recounted that “he was at the Camel Inn on that same day, arranging the sales of the aforementioned black people, when he saw the two ill black people who later died.”⁶³ Tanst’s testimony thus suggested that the merchant Leonart had lodged healthy as well as ill captives at the Camel Inn, and perhaps the whole group. Another hearing painted a similar picture.

In December, the Bailiff General launched another inquest into the deaths of four West Africans that Zarazogan merchant Jaume Lopiz “and his company” had brought to Valencia a month earlier in a group that totaled seventy-one. The Bailiff General called Alonso Yayes, apparently a member of Lopiz’s company, as his only witness.⁶⁴ The Bailiff General asked Yayes how many captives had died since arriving to Valencia in November, and Yayes confirmed that he had seen four captives pass away in that time. Yayes said that

⁶⁰ ARV BG 198, 301r.-301v.

⁶¹ ARV BG 198, 301v. “e dix saber ell testimonu p(er)que es hostaller y en lo seu hostel han posat y ell los vist.”

⁶² For more on “agents of the ear,” see Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 47.

⁶³ ARV BG 198, 301v. “vist los dits dos negres malalts e apres morts.”

⁶⁴ ARV BG 198, 328v. “e sa companya.”

“he knew this because he had been continuously staying at the lodging where the said black people had been put, which was the Camel Inn, and was involved in the sale of the black people who had been sold.”⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ Thus Yayas stayed at the Camel Inn and, like the slave broker Tanst, used the inn as a site to arrange sales. Given what little is known of the Camel Inn’s early modern history, the fact that it was an attractive site for enslavers to lodge large groups of captives and arrange for their sale is not surprising.

Accounts of the Inn’s size suggest that it was well-equipped to shelter large groups, though not all of its lodgings were intended for human occupants. Vicenta Alonso Cortes has noted that in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the Camel Inn was heavily utilized by “wholesale merchants” who “stored their goods there.”⁶⁷ This was evidently an enduring feature of the Inn, as in 1862 antiquarian Vicente Boix noted the presence of a warehouse in Valencia’s market plaza “which used to be the Camel Inn.”⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Inn’s storage space likely included stables, as in 1779 Italian merchant Paulo Bernabenes recalled seeing bears and monkeys on display there.⁶⁹ The 1828 *Guia de naturales y forasteros en Valencia*, moreover, listed the Camel Inn as one of four places in the city that offered horses for rent.⁷⁰ Thus, in addition to lodgings designed for humans, the Camel Inn also featured structures that could be used as warehouses or stables. These structures likely helped the Camel Inn meet some of the needs of enslavers looking to board large groups of captives.

⁶⁵ ARV BG 198, 329r. “ell testimoni es stat continuament present en la casa a hon los dits/ negres possave(n) que es lo hostal de camell.”

⁶⁶ ARV BG 198, 329r. “ha entrevengut en les vendes dels negres que son venuts venents ell testimony.”

⁶⁷ Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 118.

⁶⁸ Vicente Boix, *Valencia historica y topografica: relacion de sus calles, plazas y puertas* (Valencia: Imprinta de J. Rius, 1862), 25.

⁶⁹ Vicente Luis Simó Santonja, *Valencia en la época de los corregidores* (Valencia: Ayuntamiento, 1975), 406.

⁷⁰ *Guia de naturales y forasteros en Valencia, y su estado militar, con un plano topográfico de esta ciudad* (Valencia: Imprinta de D. Benito Monfort, 1828), 234.

In addition to having the capacity to house large groups of captives, the Camel Inn was also in a central and highly-visible location that would have been attractive to enslavers looking to conduct sales. For one thing, the Camel Inn flanked one side of Valencia's Market Plaza. Effectively Valencia's city center, the Market Plaza was a considerable distance from the port (*grau*) where enslavers disembarked with captives. It seems likely that services arose specifically to aid enslavers with transporting captives through the city, as a 1510 census identified one resident of Valencia as, Bernat Sandoval, a merchant "who transports black people."⁷¹ Sandoval, coincidentally, lived in Saint Martin's Parish, which shared a border with the Market Plaza.

Once enslavers had transported captives to the Camel Inn, they were apparently well-positioned to display and advertise them for sale. Since at least the late sixteenth-century, the Camel Inn's exterior was a venue for a variety of spectacles, including magic shows, human curiosities, acrobats, and displays of exotic animals.⁷² It was also a favored spot for playwrights and satirists, including Lope de Vega (1562-1635) to stage performances of their works.⁷³ Slave sales, or displays of large groups of West African captives, might have figured among the Inn's early sixteenth-century spectacles.

Whatever the specifics of the Camel Inn's operations, its importance as a site for lodging and selling large groups of captives likely impacted how, and where, the Bailiff General conducted captive presentations. That the Bailiff General forewent interrogations of large groups and recorded only sparse information about them suggests there was a distance

⁷¹ Rafael Valdecabras Rodrigo, *Cens de 1510*, 152. "qui porte los negres."

⁷² For specific examples of these spectacles, see: Ivana Frasquet, *Valencia en la revolución (1834-1843): sociabilidad, cultura, y ocio* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia Servicio de Publicaciones, 2002), 95; Jaume Lloret i Esquerdo, *Els titelles al País Valencia* (Alicante: Publicacions de la Universitat d'Alacant, 2019), 74; Vicente Luis Simó Santonja, *Valencia en la época de los corregidores*, 406.

⁷³ Rafael Gayano Lluch, *La lirica y la declamacion en Valencia en la epoca clasica. Siglos XVI y XVII* (Valencia: Talleres de Vicente Torres, 1944), 25-28.

between the official and the captives he was taxing. But the Bailiff still wanted to ensure enslavers were being truthful in reporting the quantities of captives they were presenting for taxation. The 1518 inquests he launched attest to this specific concern.

The Bailiff General designed inquests into captives' deaths as means to ensure that enslavers were not contravening his authority. Paying taxes upfront on a large group of captives whose sales had not been secured posed inherent risks, which the Bailiff General knew some enslavers might mitigate by arranging illicit, untaxed sales of captives who were not subject to presentations.⁷⁴ Such transactions could result in fines on the buyer, seller, and the notary who recorded the transaction, as well as the court's seizure of the captive. In the late fifteenth century, the Bailiff General regularly enlisted town criers to announce these consequences.⁷⁵ Given his enduring concern with enslavers foregoing presentations, the Bailiff General likely regarded those who reported captives as deceased as potentially concealing illicit activity.

With the Bailiff General caught between a desire to maintain a close watch on the quantity of captives arriving to Valencia and the physical limitations of his court, venues like the Camel Inn likely became sites for some of the official's regulatory activity. The Bailiff General, or one of his lieutenants (*lochtenents* and *regents*) who regularly presided over captive presentations in his stead, likely ventured to captive lodgings like the Camel Inn to, at the very least, take counts of large groups of captives. Structures like the Camel Inn's warehouse and/or stable likely proved amenable to this goal, allowing enslavers to gather large groups of captives in one space where officials could easily count them. While the

⁷⁴ For an example of this kind of acknowledgement from the Bailiff General, see Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 52.

⁷⁵ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 48-50.

Bailiff General was adjusting to the demands that Valencia's growing slave trade was placing on his court's infrastructure, he was also being subject to the external pressures of royal agendas.

Royal Pains

The unprecedented importation of sub-Saharan Africans into Valencia at the turn of the sixteenth century was taking place amidst the Catholic Monarchs' ongoing projects of Mediterranean conquest and military engagement. In 1500, for instance, the Spanish army assisted Venetian forces in conducting an attack against the Ottomans at Cephalonia. The Crown went on to take possession of Naples in 1503 in armed conflict with French forces who had previously been occupying the island jointly with the Aragonese. Following Queen Isabel's death in 1504—at which point the queen, in her last will and testament, encouraged continued military incursions against Muslim North Africa—King Ferdinand conducted a number of invasions and conquests of North African cities, including Oran in 1509, and Bougie and Tripoli in 1510. All the while, Ferdinand maintained designs on broader projects of aggression and conquest with the ultimate goal of capturing Jerusalem. These Mediterranean military endeavors were costly, and Andrew Devereux has noted that “at least through the second decade of the sixteenth century, the human and material resources dedicated to Mediterranean conquests were greater than those dedicated for conquests in the Americas.”⁷⁶

The Crown could only meet these costs by generating new sources of revenue. In 1510, Ferdinand turned to Valencia to pursue this agenda. In that year, Ferdinand called a *corts* in Montso with the specific objective of securing funds for the Crown's future North

⁷⁶ Andrew Devereux, *The Other Side of Empire: Just War in the Mediterranean and the Rise of Early Modern Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 10.

African military invasions [Figure 4].⁷⁷ At the *corts*, Ferdinand announced the *Cens de 1510*, Valencia's first kingdom-wide census, as a means of collecting a new annual tax. The goal of the 1510 tax was to generate 60,000 *lliures* over the course of three years by collecting an annual base tax of one *real* from each household in the kingdom. This household tax was supplemented by an additional tax levied on livestock owners, who were required to pay two *reals* for every one hundred heads of livestock they owned, and additional taxes levied on professional groups.



Figure 4 Illustrated capital from a 1502 printing of the 1483 *corts* at Barcelona depicting Ferdinand I in armor and a sword.

That the Crown made Valencia the site of this new tax regime was not entirely surprising. By 1510, it had been more than twenty years since Ferdinand had last convened the Valencian *corts*. Rafael Valldecabres Rodrigo has noted that in the intervening years the Crown was at “increasing risk of financial collapse” in the aftermath of the civil war of the 1470s.⁷⁸ Moreover, Devereux has pointed out that the Crown's ongoing North African campaigns particularly served the commercial interests of Aragonese ports, including those

⁷⁷ Rafael Valldecabres Rodrigo, *El Cens de 1510*, 19-20.

⁷⁸ Rafael Valldecabres Rodrigo, ed. *El Cens de 1510*, 20.

in Valencia.⁷⁹ In 1510 this new tax was, moreover, just the most recent instrument through which the Crown extracted funds from Valencia. Álvaro Santamaría has noted that throughout their reign the Catholic Monarchs helped support their foreign policy agendas by taking loans from Valencia's municipal government far in excess of their predecessors. In total, between 1474 and 1515 the pair took more than three times as many loans from Valencia than Alfonso the Magnanimous (r.1416-1458) had done during the entirety of his reign.⁸⁰

In this atmosphere of rapidly growing slave markets and a seemingly endless demand for revenues, the Crown certainly came to appreciate and rely on the tax revenues that the Bailiff General was collecting in captive presentations. In 1508, for example, Valencian merchant Luis Morrell initiated a captive presentation of eighteen sub-Saharan Africans. The Bailiff General assessed these eighteen captives at a total value 324 *lliures*. Given that the official was calculating the *quinto* at a 6.6 percent rate in this period, Morrell would have paid nearly 21 *lliures*, or the equivalent of just over 69 *reals*, in taxes on this presentation.⁸¹ Thus, for one relatively small group of captives, the enslaver Morell paid taxes equivalent to what sixty-nine separate households combined would pay in a year under the tax levied by the *Cens de 1510*. Even with the influx of sub-Saharan Africans arriving to Valencia in this period, captive presentations could not generate 60,000 *reals* in three years as the census tax aimed to do. They were nevertheless significant sources of income for the Crown.

The Bailiff General was acutely aware of the role that his office played in funding the Crown's prerogatives, especially as it came into closer proximity with the Crown than had

⁷⁹ Andrew Devereux, *The Other Side of Empire*, 8.

⁸⁰ Álvaro Santamaría, *El Consell General de Valencia en el tránsito a la modernidad*, (Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2000), 183, 183n110.

⁸¹ ARV BG 196, 180v.-181r.

previously been the case. As chief protector of the royal patrimony, the official had always been an integral part the Valencian Crown's governing apparatus. But in the sixteenth century his place in that apparatus was shifting. This was partially the result of changes to the typical rank and social status of the individuals appointed to the office. María Ghazali has marked the sixteenth century as a period in which the role of the Bailiff General started to become gradually more "aristocratized."⁸² While bureaucrats and technocrats had typically held the position throughout the Middle Ages, in the early sixteenth century it was becoming more typical for Valencian nobles to be appointed to the office.⁸³ Ghazali illustrated this point by contrasting one of the Kingdom's early fifteenth-century Bailiff Generals—jurist and royal advisor Johan Mercader—to Luys Johan, the knighted priest who held the position in the early sixteenth century.⁸⁴ Johan was in fact typical of early sixteenth-century Bailiff Generals, who counted ecclesiastical and military nobles among their ranks. Between 1508 and 1522, for instance, the title regularly rotated between Luys Johan and Ferrando de Torres, a soldier (*militar*) and member of Valencia's military nobility.⁸⁵

This period of noble Bailiff Generals coincided with the Crown's increasingly interventionist stance towards Valencia's General Council (*consell general*), in which the Bailiff General played a key role. The General Council was a Valencian municipal governing body composed of annually-elected nobles, jurists, citizens, notaries, and guild representatives. The Bailiff General did not retain a seat on the General Council, but was involved with electing its members. While the Aragonese Crown was typically removed from municipal politics, Álvaro Santamaría has noted that Ferdinand I and his predecessor used

⁸² María Ghazali, "Le tribunal du Baile General de Valence," n5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 21 and n5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, n5.

⁸⁵ Luys Johan held the position in 1508 and 1513, and de Torres in 1510, 1511, 1515, 1519, and 1522.

the Bailiff General as a conduit for heavily influencing the election of members of Valencia's General Council.⁸⁶ Santamaría has argued that this increasingly interventionist stance was directly tied to the Crown's extractive financial aims. Cultivating a "docile" and "easily manipulated" General Council facilitated the release of municipal loans that the Crown needed to support "costly foreign policy" and that tripled under the Catholic Monarchs.⁸⁷ The Bailiff General thus used the powers of his position to actively pursue the Crown's financial aims.

Textual Changes

It was amidst this host of developments and pressures that the Bailiff General began adopting a less thorough, more cursory approach to recording captive presentations that María Ghazali has characterized as "casual and partial." But more than just casual and partial, these captive presentations—especially of West Africans—featured scribal errors, glaring omissions, and subtle erasures that were specific to the early sixteenth century.

Scribal errors in which captive presentations misidentified captives, for instance, suggest that the influx of sub-Saharan passing through the Bailiff General's court took a toll on the court's notaries. In this period, the Bailiff General repeatedly identified non-black captives as black and misidentified West Africans as West Africans. In December 1507, for instance, notaries recorded the presentation of an Iberian-born Morisco named Diego, formerly Amet. The Bailiff General's notaries initially identified Amet/Diego as black, but quickly scratched that label out and replaced it with white (*blanch*).⁸⁸ The next month, when recording the presentation of three captives from Cabo de Gué in present-day Morocco,

⁸⁶ Álvaro Santamaría, *El Consell General de*, 191.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁸⁸ ARV BG 196, 170r.-171r.

officials mistakenly identified Cabo de Gué as a part of the “Land of the Blacks,” whereas he typically categorized it as a “Land of the Moors” or “Land of the Arabs.” Again, he recognized his mistake and scratched out the error. A few days later, he identified another enslaved Muslim from Fez—a man named Addigili—as black before, a third time, scratching that label out and replacing it with dark brown (*lor*).⁸⁹

These three errors were exceptional for their quick succession, but they were not unique to this Bailiff General’s tenure. In December 1516, for instance, the Bailiff General identified an enslaved woman from Brazil named Francisca as black before scratching that designation out and replacing it with white. In January 1518, moreover, the Bailiff General initially labelled a young “brown” captive named Johan as black.⁹⁰ The Bailiff General thus reflexively misidentified a wide variety of captives as black or West African in this period. This trend in misidentification was likely a result of the large numbers of black West Africans who passed through the court for captive presentations in this period. These misidentifications were not the only scribal errors that attested to the Bailiff General’s difficulties in keeping pace with Valencia’s slave trade.

Beginning in 1505, the Bailiff General regularly left large blank spaces in West Africans’ presentations when neither he nor the presenter could deduce or transcribe basic information about captives. Names and places of origin were the two pieces of information most frequently replaced with blank spaces in this system. In 1505, for instance, the Bailiff General identified a captive from Jolof as “formerly called [blank] and now called Johan,” suggesting either that Johan’s enslaver did not know his original name or that the Bailiff General did not know how to transcribe the name. In 1513, he approved of the captivity of

⁸⁹ ARV BG 196, 182v-183v.

⁹⁰ ARV BG 196, 220v.-221r. and 287r.-287v.

“Goncalvo, formerly called Insiqua, native of [blank]” and “Berthomeu, formerly called [blank], native of Capi” in a single presentation.⁹¹ In a particularly striking example from 1512, the Bailiff General identified a thirteen-year-old boy as “named [blank], a native of [blank].” The Bailiff General also devised more subtle ways to omit captives’ biographical information from trial records.

Particularly in presentations involving large groups of captives, the Bailiff General routinely glossed over presentations’ lack of recorded information. In a majority of these presentations the Bailiff General only noted groups’ total quantities without recording their gender ratios, ages, or places of origins. In other cases, he gestured at specificity without actually recording any detail about the captives. In a 1510 presentation, for instance, he described a group of twenty-eight sub-Saharan Africans simply as “men and women of various ages from the Land of the Blacks.”⁹² In 1513, he similarly described another large group of captives as “seventy-six black people, among them Christian men and women of various ages.”⁹³ A presentation from 1517, furthermore, described a group of seventy-one captives as “including elderly and young, men and women, of various ages and from the Lands of the Blacks.”⁹⁴ The Bailiff General adopted an authoritative tone in making these broad and imprecise statements, but they could nevertheless occur alongside glaring blank spots. In 1518, for instance, the Bailiff General identified a group of captives as “forty-eight black people of various ages, from [blank] Land of the Blacks, who were transported from [blank] to the present city” [Figure 5].⁹⁵ This coupling of generalizing descriptions with

⁹¹ ARV BG 198, 16v.-17v.

⁹² ARV BG 197, 4r.

⁹³ ARV BG 198, 27v.

⁹⁴ ARV BG 198, 328v.

⁹⁵ ARV BG 198, 306r.

blank spots highlights the fact that the Bailiff General's use of vague descriptive statements was also a byproduct of the strain his office was experiencing

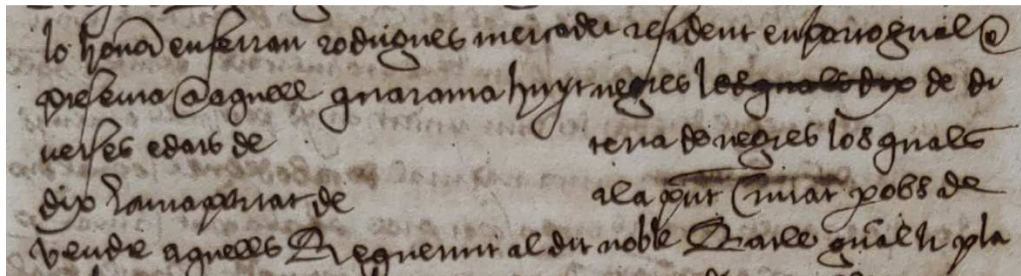


Figure 5 A presentation featuring large blank spots in place of information about sub-Saharan Africans' places of origin.

The one piece of identifying information that the Bailiff General did sometimes record for groups of sub-Saharan African captives was gender ratios. In a 1512 presentation, for example, he recorded the presentation of “eighty-eight men and thirty-three women.” In 1517, moreover, he noted that a group of captives consisted of “forty-eight men, of various names and ages, and forty women, of various names and ages.”⁹⁶ These were the largest groups for which the official recorded gender ratios. Every other group he recorded this information for totaled to fewer than thirty people, suggesting that this information was of interest to him only if collecting it was not labor intensive. While the Bailiff General's calculated approaches to recording, or not recording, captives' biographical information were born of his court's limitations, they were also indicative of the official's new ethos of streamlining captive presentations.

More so than in scattered omissions or turns of phrase, the Bailiff General's streamlining ethos manifested most clearly in his systematic shortening of captive presentations' physical forms. Before 1503 the Bailiff General typically recorded individual captive presentations using between two and three full folios. In the first years of the

⁹⁶ ARV BG 198, 247r.

sixteenth century, the first folio served a cover page that briefly outlined the details of the case, including the name of the presenter(s) and the number and types of captives that they were presenting. Cover sheets were always on the recto side of a folio. Thus, if a presentation ended on the recto side of a folio, the Bailiff General left its verso side blank and began the next presentation on a new folio. The verso side of title pages, moreover, was left blank. The actual presentation and interrogation began on the folio following the cover page. Presentations ended with the Bailiff General's judgment, and the official sometimes dedicated an entirely separate folio to this bit of text. But in 1504 the Bailiff General began to overhaul this format when he did away with the cover folio altogether and stopped dedicating an entire folio to justifications. By 1506, he regularly filled both sides of a folio to record multiple presentations. Single-folio presentations thus became the norm. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for the recto and verso side of a single folio to record two complete presentations. This more compressed format became standard practice in captive presentations through the 1520s.

That the Bailiff General implemented these changes to captive presentations' material form so suddenly and uniformly shows that they were his conscious effort to compress and economize captive presentations. Moreover, they were in line with the Crown's contemporary goals of maximizing its Valencian revenues. By adopting this streamlined format for captive presentations, the Bailiff General minimized the time, labor, and material that captive presentations required while still using them to collect handsome tax revenues. But even as this economizing project aimed to streamline the hearings of captives from all backgrounds, it had a disproportionate effect on the presentations of sub-Saharan Africans.

In the early decades of the sixteenth century the Bailiff General was liable to streamline the presentations of any and every captive who came through his court. In 1510, for instance, he recorded the presentation of a group of eight captives from Tripoli without recording any of their names.⁹⁷ Similarly, in 1523, he did not describe a group of thirty North-African captives beyond noting that “they all testified to their names and that they were captives, and that they were from Xahiha, Land of the Moors” in a presentation that took up less than a full folio.⁹⁸ Amidst captive presentations of North African or other Mediterranean captives, these instances were extreme and exceptional. It was more typical for the Bailiff General to subject these captives, even when presented in groups, to at least perfunctory descriptions and interrogations. This was not the case for enslaved West Africans, especially those were brought to Valencia in large groups.

Thus enslaved sub-Saharan Africans were regularly subjected to these cursory captive presentations characterized by omission, imprecision, and brevity. As other scholars have noted, this disparity was fueled in part by the Bailiff General’s notions of the relative enslavability of different groups of people. But the more immediate cause of this disparity was the Bailiff General’s efforts to grapple with the significant practical and logistical challenges he faced in adapting a centuries-old regulatory apparatus to a quickly-changing landscape of enslavement. As such, the Bailiff General’s notions of sub-Saharan Africans’ enslavability were neither fully-formed nor constant at the turn of the sixteenth century. Rather, they were reactive and transitory responses to the same pressures that produced scribal misidentifications of captives and prompted officials to leave large, visible gaps in court records. The conditional and context-specific nature of the Bailiff General’s approach

⁹⁷ ARV BG 197, 20r.

⁹⁸ ARV BG 198, 559r.-560v.

to the presentations of sub-Saharan Africans becomes even clearer when examining claims that the Bailiff General made about this new population of captives.

Chapter Two: Interrogating *Boçal*

In 1518, enslaver Hieronym Molto appeared before the Bailiff General to initiate a captive presentation of eight sub-Saharan Africans: Anthoni, Francisco, Marti, Ferando, Agnes, Anna, Ysabel, and Margarita. In addition to listing their places of origin and noting that their ages ranged “from eleven to thirty, more or less,” Malto opened the presentation by describing the group as “very *boçal*,” which the Bailiff General sometimes defined as an individual “who does not know how to speak except in the language of their homeland.” This was a common label in captive presentations of enslaved West Africans. Between 1502 and 1524 the Bailiff General conducted captive presentations of over thirty-five hundred West African captives, and categorized more than sixty-five percent of these individuals as *boçal*. Moreover, by the mid-sixteenth century enslavers throughout the Iberian-Atlantic world regularly labelled enslaved sub-Saharan Africans as *boçal*, or its Castilian equivalent *bozal*.

Despite the apparent linguistic difficulties that communicating with *boçal* captives might have posed, the Bailiff General proceeded to interrogate Anthoni, Francisco, Marti, Fernando, Agnes, Anna, Ysabel, and Margarita. First, he asked them what their names were, and each answered. Then, he asked them “if they were captive or free and how they had become captives.” The group testified “that they were captives and that they were the captives of Hieronym Molto.”⁹⁹ But the second portion of this question posed difficulties in communication, as the Bailiff General noted that “because they were *boçal* they did not know how to relate the manner in which they had been enslaved.”¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, he continued with the interrogation. He next asked the captives where they had come from, and they responded by saying they hailed variously from Jolof, Mandinka, and Benin. The Bailiff

⁹⁹ ARV BG 198, 321v.-322r., “digueren que eren catius e que eren del dit hieronymo molto.”

¹⁰⁰ ARV BG 198, 321v.-322r., “perque eren bosals no sabien dit com ere stat presos.”

General concluded the interrogation by noting that “because they are all very *boçal*, such that they do not know how to speak, we were not able to interrogate them further about how they had become enslaved.”¹⁰¹

That the Bailiff General could collect testimonies from Anthoni, Francisco, Marti, Ferando, Agnes, Anna, Ysabel, and Margarita while also describing them as so *boçal* “that they do not know how to speak” illustrates that the official wielded significant influence in determining how presentations of *boçal* captives proceeded and when they should be halted. In fact, faced with large quantities of captives he identified as *boçal*, at the turn of the sixteenth century the Bailiff General regularly opted to shorten or eliminate their interrogations altogether. Given that the interrogation was the most time and labor-intensive portion of captive presentations, this phenomenon neatly aligned with the Bailiff General’s contemporary efforts at streamlining these hearings. This begs the question of the degree to which external pressures and factors informed the Bailiff General’s approach to interrogating *boçal* captives. Considering the institutional motivations and stakes that informed the Bailiff General’s use of *boçal* is a significant shift from the current scholarship on the term, which has primarily focused on aspects of its meanings.

Historians and scholars of slavery throughout the early modern Iberian world have noted that Iberians used to *boçal* describe enslaved people, and especially those from sub-Saharan West Africa. A.C. de C.M. Saunders, for instance, has noted that in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Portugal, *boçal* indicated ““a black who could only

¹⁰¹ ARV BG 198, 321v.-322r. “peque eren molt bosals que no sabien parlar no se son poguens mes interrogat.”

speak an African language.”¹⁰² William D. Phillips, Jr. offered a broader interpretation, saying that Iberians used the term to describe enslaved people who had not “acquired the ability to speak one of the Peninsula’s Romance languages” regardless of their place of origin or skin color.¹⁰³ Debra Blumenthal has likewise demonstrated that in the late fifteenth century Valencia’s Bailiff General regularly designated Canary Islanders and West Africans alike as *boçal*. In this context, the term had connotations of “uncivilized.”¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Nicholas Jones has noted that *boçal* individuals “were viewed as newcomers to the Iberian world in general, unacquainted with its social and cultural practices.” Seventeenth-century Spanish lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias, moreover, defined *boçal* as applying specifically to enslaved black people and claimed that it derived from the word *boca*, meaning mouth. Jones argued that Covarrubias’ definition of *boçal* “fixates on bodily excess,” and “reveals Hapsburg Spain’s somatic and cultural fixation on big African lips.”¹⁰⁵ We thus know a great deal about what *boçal* meant relative to the enslaved people it described. But what can *boçal* tell us about the people and institutions that used it to label and categorize enslaved people?

In this chapter I argue that inasmuch as it reflected a real language barrier between enslavers and the enslaved, the Bailiff General’s use of *boçal* also performed strategic work in line with his office’s broader program of streamlining captive presentations. Throughout

¹⁰² A.C. de C.M Saunders, *A social history of black slaves and freedmen in Portugal, 1441-1555* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 99.

¹⁰³ William D. Phillips, Jr. *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 73, 150.

¹⁰⁴ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 42-3; Debra Blumenthal, “‘La Casa dels Negres’: black African solidarity in late medieval Valencia,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 230.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas R. Jones, *Staging Habla de Negros*, Kindle Edition, Loc. 2000-2022. The racialization of *boçal* has endured in modern Catalan and Castilian dictionaries, which regularly define the term first and foremost as a description of enslaved Africans recently arrived to Europe or America. See, for instance, *Diccionari català-valencià-balear*, Institut d’Estudis Catalans, <https://dcvb.iec.cat/> and *Diccionari de la lengua española*, Real Academia Española, <https://dle.rae.es/>.

the Middle Ages and into the early modern period Iberian Christian officials, ecclesiastics, missionaries, colonists, and enslavers adopted various strategies to engage with the linguistic difference of outsiders in ways that met their own ends. Examining the Bailiff General's interrogations of *boçal* sub-Saharan Africans in the first two decades of the sixteenth century makes it clear that the official fits squarely within this tradition. The Bailiff General employed a variety of identifiable *boçal* strategies designed to eliminate, truncate, and manipulate the interrogations testimonies of *boçal* captives. These *boçal* strategies allowed the Bailiff General to further streamline presentations without undermining or jeopardizing the legitimacy of his office, captive presentations, or the changing Iberian slave trade. Moreover, these strategies represented a premodern manifestation of racializing logics. While *boçal* West Africans were the initial targets of this project in race-making, the Bailiff General was subject to redirect his strategic efforts as his needs, and the contours of Valencia's slave trade, changed in the 1520s.

Iberian Language Projects and Boçal

Becoming conversant in the languages that West Africans spoke posed novel difficulties for European enslavers. Christopher Columbus, for instance, claimed that while the peoples of "the Indies" spoke languages that were mutually intelligible, in "Guinea...there are a thousand kinds of languages and one does not understand the other."¹⁰⁶ This was an enduring European trope for describing African languages. David Wheat has noted, for instance, that in the seventeenth century one observer noted that if slave ships arriving to Cartagena contained Upper Guineans, then the

¹⁰⁶ Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493*, trans. James Edwards Kelley and Oliver Charles Dunn (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989): 146-149.

captives on board “spoke ‘so many languages that sometimes they numbered more than forty.’”¹⁰⁷ The Spanish Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval likewise demonstrated a keen interest in the varieties and mutual intelligibilities of African languages in his seventeenth-century treatise *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute*. These accounts reflected the realities of sub-Saharan African linguistic difference and diversity, which historians have characterized as the impetus for enslavers’ use of adjectives like *boçal* and its counterpart *ladino*.

But scholars of the early modern black diaspora have illustrated the dangers of accepting European claims to sub-Saharan African difference at face value. Herman Bennett, for instance, has noted that historians of early modern European slavery regularly contend that “perceived or embodied differences—racial alterity—configured the experience” of sub-Saharan African slavery more than other factors did. This emphasis on sub-Saharan Africans’ racial alterity, Bennett noted, has come at the cost of excluding historically contingent political and economic factors from serious consideration.¹⁰⁸ Bennett characterized this trend as an “anomaly” in the historiography of the medieval and early modern Iberian-Atlantic world, as in other contexts scholars have shown that Iberian Christians “wielded various strategies for engaging the diverse people” they encountered throughout the medieval and early modern periods.¹⁰⁹ These strategies included Iberian efforts at overcoming or mitigating language barriers.

Throughout the Middle Ages Iberian Christians engaged in projects of translation, interpretation, and language education as a means to bridge linguistic difference and further their own interests. R.I. Burns, for instance, has shown that in the aftermath of Christian

¹⁰⁷ David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 25.

¹⁰⁸ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, Kindle Edition, Loc. 916.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Loc. 943.

conquests of Iberian Muslim Kingdoms, mendicant orders in Castile and Aragon began establishing language schools to teach their members Arabic and Hebrew. In doing so, they hoped to equip their students with the linguistic skills necessary to convert Iberian Muslims and Jews to Christianity.¹¹⁰ These language schools dwindled in popularity by the early decades of the fourteenth century, but translation and interpretation remained commonplace in Christian Iberia throughout Middle Ages. Iberian ecclesiastics, administrators, and scholars all engaged, to different degrees, with matters related to linguistic difference.

Kings in the medieval Crown of Aragon, for instance, regularly maintained Hebrew-and-Arabic-speaking Jewish and Muslim officials and soldiers in their courts. These officials often acted as intermediaries between the Crown and the kingdom's Islamic and Jewish religious communities, and could also produce translations of official documents, particularly in Arabic.¹¹¹ Religious converts, moreover, could strategically mobilize their multilingualism to craft accounts of their conversion in multiple languages, as was the case for the Majorcan Christian convert to Islam 'Abdallāh al-Turjumān (1352-1423) and Castilian Jewish convert to Christianity Anselm of Valladolid (1270-1347).¹¹² Valencia's Bailiff General was not immune to this phenomenon, as his court regularly maintained Arabic-speaking interpreters to assist in captive presentations throughout the Middle Ages.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Robert I., S.J. Burns, "Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion," *The American Historical Review* 76.5 (1971): 1397-9.

¹¹¹ For examples of translation and interpretation in Aragonese recruitment of Muslim soldiers, for instance, see Hussein Fancy, "Theologies of Violence: The Recruitment of Muslim Soldiers by The Crown of Aragon," *Past and Present* 221.1 (2013): 40 and 44.

¹¹² On these two figures, see Ryan Szpiech, "The Original Is Unfaithful to the Translation: Conversion and Authenticity in Abner of Burgos and Anselm Turmeda," *EHumanista* 14 (2010): 146-77.

¹¹³ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 21.

This Iberian impetus towards strategic interpretation carried over into the early years of the Atlantic slave trade. In the middle of the fifteenth century, Portuguese merchants and ship captains were deeply invested in facilitating communication and language acquisition with enslaved West Africans. As Saunders notes, by 1455 there was a substantial number of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans in Portugal put to work as interpreters in pursuit the Portuguese project of taking new captives “back to Portugal in the hope that some of the captives already there might be able to understand the new people’s language and to teach them Portuguese.”¹¹⁴ Valencia’s Bailiff General likewise maintained an interest in interpretation in this period, as in the 1490s he utilized enslaved Canary Islander interpreters to assist with captive presentations, though this project was short-lived.¹¹⁵ Interpreters also played a key role in Iberian-African diplomatic exchanges, in which various Portuguese kings engaged with Mandinka, Jolof, Benin, and Congolese rulers and dignitaries. Moreover, these efforts at interpretation were contemporaneous with linguistic creolization that was occurring on the Caboverdean Islands, where by the 1520s Kriolu was emerging as a primary means of communication between the island’s European-descended settlers and enslaved West Africans.¹¹⁶

But this trend of actively cultivating interpreters did not give way to more systematic or widespread efforts in Iberia. By the turn of the sixteenth-century, for instance, Valencia’s Bailiff General had abandoned the use of interpreters altogether in captive presentations. By the mid-sixteenth century, moreover, Lisbon’s archbishop still cited the large numbers of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans who could not fluently speak Portuguese as an ongoing

¹¹⁴ Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 99, 12.

¹¹⁵ Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 68.

¹¹⁶ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave*, 122.

obstacle to pastoral care.¹¹⁷ This lack of sustained and widespread efforts in interpretation was not characteristic of other Iberian language projects in the Atlantic World.

As had been the case in the nascent years of Portugal's involvement in the Saharan African slave trade, European incursions into the Americas in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were accompanied by an effort to cultivate interpreters among the region's natives. This was just the earliest in a long series of linguistic projects that European colonists and missionaries conducted in the course of the next few centuries.¹¹⁸ One remarkable testament to these ongoing language projects is the late sixteenth-century Florentine Codex, written in Castilian and Nahuatl by the Spanish Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún and Nahua men who had formerly been his students at the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco in modern day Mexico City. Interpretation and translation were not the only strategies that Iberians pursued in mitigating linguistics difference.

Particularly in the sixteenth century, Iberian and colonial officials began to regularly employ the restriction and prohibition of language as strategies for managing linguistic difference. Amidst the forced conversions and expulsions of Spanish Muslim populations that occurred throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for instance, linguistic barriers became a particular site of anxiety for "old Christians" trying to distinguish themselves from forcibly converted Moriscos. Barbara Fuchs has noted that this anxiety manifested clearly in literary texts that

¹¹⁷ Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 99.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of some of these language projects and how they impact the recording of enslaved peoples' voices, see Ashley Willard, "Ventriloquizing Blackness."

grappled with Arabic's influence on Castilian vocabularies.¹¹⁹ One response to this anxiety was to restrict or prohibit the use of Arabic and the textual Aljamiado, which rendered Castilian using the Arabic alphabet. The most sweeping attempt at such a restriction came with Philip II's *Pragmatica*, which he issued in 1567. Along with restrictions on food, dress, and bathing

Granada's Moriscos, a sweeping set of restrictions that incited resistance and rebellions.¹²⁰ In the late 1570s, moreover, both the Council of the Indies and the Inquisition began prohibiting the production of scripts in indigenous American languages, which forced Sahagún to redact and revise the Florentine Codex.¹²¹

Thus, by the turn of the sixteenth century various Christian Iberian officials, ecclesiastics, and institutions—including Valencia's Bailiff General—had a wide range of experiences in dealing with linguistic difference. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century, Iberians continuously devised strategies to overcome language barriers that served their own interests: missionaries learned languages to bolster their conversion efforts, merchants and dignitaries employed interpreters to facilitate their trade and diplomacy, and kings and governors forbade the use of languages that they feared threatened their authority. Within this realm of activity, the Bailiff General's approach to managing the language barriers presented by captives whom he deemed *boçal* should likewise be regarded as potentially strategic and self-serving. Examining the immediate context of the Bailiff

¹¹⁹ Barbara Fuchs, *Exotic Nations: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 24-30.

¹²⁰ For a discussion of the customs targeted by the *Pragmatica* and the response by Granadan Moriscos, see Olivia Remie Constable, *To Live Like a Moor: Christian Perceptions of Muslim Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, ed. Robin Vose (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

¹²¹ For more on how these restrictions shaped the Florentine Codex, see Leisa Kauffman, "A Theater of Terror: Staging the Encounter in Sahagún's 1585 Revision of Book XII of the *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 44.2 (2011): 43-60.

General's use of *boçal* reveals that he was well-positioned to engage in such a strategic language project.

While the Bailiff General liberally used *boçal* to describe enslaved people, at of the sixteenth century this was a relatively novel and specialized usage of the term. recently as the mid-fifteenth century, most Iberians would have likely understood mean muzzle. In 1458, for example, Barcelona's city council issued a proclamation punishing blasphemy in the *Peso de la Harina*. While free people were subject to a fine or imprisonment for violating this stricture, the council declared that enslaved perpetrators would be forced to wear a muzzle, or a *boçal*.¹²² While this offers a compelling glimpse into how Iberian enslavers might have come to associate *boçal* with enslaved people's speech, it nevertheless represents a distinct usage from that of Valencia's Bailiff General. Captive presentations show that the Bailiff General's usage of *boçal* was not always apparent to all parties involved in these trials.

On a handful of occasions, for instance, the Bailiff General felt the need to explicitly explain his use of *boçal* in the course of captive presentations. In 1504, for example, the official explained that he could not interrogate a captive Saxe man named Johan because he was *boçal*, and as such "does not know how to speak except in the language of his homeland." The Bailiff General repeated this claim in 1512 when explaining why he did not interrogate twenty-year-old sub-Saharan African woman named Violant.¹²³ In three other cases from 1504, 1510, and 1518 the Bailiff

¹²² Ivan Armenteros Martinez, "La esclavitud en Barcelona a fines de la Edad Media (1479-1516:) El impacto de la primera trata atlántica en un mercado tradicional de esclavos," (dissertation, Universitat de Barcelona, 2012), 1202.

¹²³ ARV BG 196, 2r.-2v., "no sabes parlar sino segons lo lenguatge de sa terra," ARV BG 197, 105r.-105v., "no sab sen parlar sino segons lo lenguatge de sa terra."

General explained his usage of *boçal* in more abbreviated terms, simply stating that the enslaved sub-Saharan Africans in question “did not know how to speak.”¹²⁴ Although these moments of definition were aberrations, they suggest that the Bailiff General’s use of the term did not reflect common usage. That enslaving institutions like the Bailiff General maintained usages of *boçal* that were distinct from more common usages of the term comports with the known history of the term’s early development and dispersion throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

Although *boçal*’s fifteenth-and-sixteenth century history is unclear, linguists, historians, and literary critics have identified literary texts as the primary vehicles through which *boçal* became associated with sub-Saharan African ways of speaking. This phenomenon originated in late-fifteenth-century Portuguese texts.¹²⁵ Subsequent to that, John Lipski has identified sixteenth-century Spanish literary depictions of Africanized speech as the first depictions of *boçal* figures in Spain.¹²⁶ The ballads of Sevillano poet Rodrigo de Reinosa, published in the first three decade of the sixteenth century, are the earliest known examples of such texts.¹²⁷ Given the central role that literary texts played as early sources of *boçal* speech, the Bailiff General’s administrative and descriptive use of the term made him an outlier among the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century sources that used the term, though other Iberian enslaving institutions likely used it as well.

¹²⁴ ARV BG 196, 36r.-36v.; ARV BG 197 8v.-9r.; ARV BG 198 321v.-322. “no sab parlar.”

¹²⁵ Juan M. de la Serna claims that the term was used throughout Spain and its colonies to refer to black Africans, novices, and wild or untamed livestock “from the thirteenth through the eighteenth centuries,” though he is an outlier in suggesting such an early date for the term’s use. Juan M. de la Serna, “BOZAL,” in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, ed. Junius P. Rodriguez (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1997), 97.

¹²⁶ John M. Lipski, *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language: Five Centuries, Five Continents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

¹²⁷ Jeremy Lawrence, “Black Africans in Renaissance Spanish literature,” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 72.

That the Bailiff General's use of *boçal* was specific to its institutional context is further suggested by the term's relative rarity in contemporary notarial sources produced in Iberian enslaving cities. Aurelia Martin Casares, for instance, has found that in sixteenth-century Granada fewer than ten percent of enslaved people who appear in notarial contracts of slave sales were labelled as *boçal*, as compared to nearly fifty-percent of the enslaved people brought before the Bailiff General.¹²⁸ Saunders likewise noted that the use of the term *boçal* was "fairly rare in documentary descriptions of slaves" in Portugal during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹²⁹ Moreover, Ivan Armenteros Martinez transcribed and published more than twelve-hundred notarial records involving the buying, selling, gifting, and manumission of enslaved people in his study of slavery in Barcelona in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Amidst this corpus, over six-hundred records concerned enslaved black people. Only one of these records, from 1492, described a West African as *boçal*.¹³⁰ Moreover, Martinez contextualized *boçal*'s use only in reference to Valencian captive presentations and Covarrubias's seventeenth-century definition, further suggesting the term's rarity in Barcelonan sources.¹³¹ The Bailiff General was thus well-positioned to interpret and use *boçal* as he saw fit in captive presentations. In fact, records of these trials make it clear that there were a number of distinct ways in which the Bailiff General strategically deployed and utilized the category of *boçal*.

¹²⁸ Aurelia Martin Casares, *La esclavitud en Granada del Siglo XVI: genero, raza y religión* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000), 156-157.

¹²⁹ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedman*, 99.

¹³⁰ Ivan Armenteros Martinez, "La esclavitud," 907.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 390, 441, 907, 1202.

Boçal Strategies

Eliminating Interrogations

Interrogating captives across a language barrier without consistent access to an interpreter certainly posed legitimate difficulties for the Bailiff General. One of the clearest testaments to these difficulties comes from an idiosyncratic 1503 presentation of a woman “from Mandinka” named Gamba. The Bailiff General did not label Gamba as *boçal*, but nevertheless decided not to administer the oath that normally preceded interrogations, in which captives swore to God and the four evangelists that they would answer the Bailiff General’s questions truthfully. The Bailiff General explained this decision by noting that Gamba “was not able to understand the oath,” an obstacle that he did not normally mention.¹³² Gamba was subsequently able to answer a handful of the Bailiff General’s questions, further suggesting that the oath presented specific difficulties that other forms of dialogue did not. But Gamba’s case was atypical amongst contemporary captive presentations of *boçal* captives, which in this period were usually much more regularized and seamless.

This was particularly evident in presentations featuring groups of sub-Saharan African captives. In these cases, the Bailiff General always labelled entire groups as *boçal* or very (*molt*) *boçal*. This, in turn, provided the official with grounds to forego interrogations altogether, as he regularly claimed that “we were not able to extract any confessions” from *boçal* captives as a means to conclude presentations without attempting an interrogation. In fact, the Bailiff General did not interrogate a single sub-Saharan African who appeared in his court as part of a large group during this period. Moreover, enslavers who presented these

¹³² ARV BG 195, 200r.-2001v. “no pagues saber lo jurament.”

large groups of *boçal* captives were not expected to provide specific identifying information about them beyond saying that they were *boçal* “blacks from the Land of the Blacks.” Declaring an entire group of captives as *boçal* and foregoing an interrogation also streamlined the official’s duty of assessing captives’ values, as he regularly assigned a flat per-person-rate to large cargoes of *boçal* captives. These practices resulted in captive presentations that were remarkably short, even compared to other contemporary streamlined presentations that were the norm for the Bailiff General.

In 1505, for instance, two Valencian merchants and a milliner (*boneter*) presented a group of thirty-three “very *boçal* natives of Jolof” without providing any identifying information about them. The Bailiff General, in turn, claimed that because the captives were *boçal* he could not interrogate them and proceeded to deem them all captives of “good war” valued at sixteen *ducats*-per-person. The entire record of the trial for these thirty-three individuals occupied less than a full folio.¹³³ That previous year, by comparison, a sailor and shipmaster presented a group of twenty *moros* from Algiers to the Bailiff General. The presenters provided identifying information about each captive—including their names, ages, various places of origin, and genders—and the Bailiff General subjected them all to cursory interrogations. These interrogations were neither thorough nor detailed. As was the case in interrogations of other groups of North African captives, the Bailiff General only interrogated a handful of the captives in the group and then noted that the others the same or similar answers. Even so, the record of these proceedings occupied nearly three folios,

¹³³ ARV BG 196, 71r.-71v.

making it significantly longer than any contemporary presentations for groups of *boçal* sub-Saharan Africans.¹³⁴ Moreover, the Bailiff General did not record a valuation of the captives in this case, presumably leaving that task to the Mestre Racional.

This comparison highlights the *boçal*'s strategic potential for the Bailiff General. In labelling entire groups of captives as *boçal*, the Bailiff General was able to push his project of streamlining captive presentations to its extremes by reducing the amount of time, labor, and materials that these trials required. In her analysis of early-fifteenth-century captive presentations, Debra Blumenthal noted that the “time, resources, and energy that were invested in these proceedings suggests that they were more than calculated maneuvers whereby the bailiff general could assert his authority and garner more revenues.”¹³⁵ As such, the official's attempt to reduce his investments in captive presentations across the board in the early-sixteenth-century can be read as a pivot towards the kinds of calculated revenue-maximization he had been uninterested in a century earlier. That the official's use of *boçal* was a calculated measure was especially clear on occasions where notaries failed to label captives as *boçal* before subjecting them to streamlined presentations.

In two captive presentations, the Bailiff General's court took pains to label captives as *boçal* after initially forgetting to do so. The first instance occurred in 1512 in the presentation of three individuals, thirteen-year-old Francisco, seventeen-year-old Ysabel, and ten-year-old Catherina. The Bailiff General identified the trio as “natives of [blank] Land of the Blacks,” suggesting that neither he nor the group's presenter, notary Johan Serra, had discerned the group's individual origins.¹³⁶ Moreover, the Bailiff General did not interrogate Francisco,

¹³⁴ ARV BG 196, 27r.-29r.

¹³⁵ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 21

¹³⁶ ARV BG 197, 124v.-125r.

Ysabel, or Catherina. His notaries also did not initially label them as *boçal*. However, a notary later returned to the trial record’s opening lines and added the word “*boçal*” above his initial description of the captives [Figure 6]. Similarly, in 1518 an enslaver presented fifty “natives of [blank] Land of the Blacks” to the Bailiff General without providing details about their names, ages, or places of origin. The Bailiff General’s notaries failed to identify these captives as *boçal* before noting that “the aforementioned captives neither swore the oath, nor could they be interrogated.” The notary later returned to this line and clarified that he came to this judgment “because they are very *boçal*” [Figure 7].¹³⁷ These examples show that the Bailiff General’s labelling of captives as *boçal* was not merely descriptive. Rather, in presentations involving groups of captives, the label of *boçal* provided the official with grounds for eliminating interrogations and not recording captives’ basic demographic details. In presentations of individual *boçal* captives, however, the Bailiff General modified this approach.

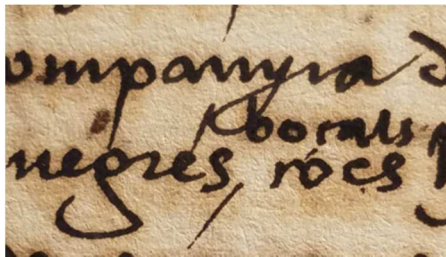


Figure 6 Boçal inserted after the fact. ARV BG. 124v.

¹³⁷ ARV BG 198, 311v.-312r.

the Bailiff General, getting *boçal* captives to testify to these three pieces of information was integral to his project of legitimizing and justifying their captivity.

In first asking captives to testify to their places of origin, for instance, the official was gauging whether or not he could situate them within a legitimate “slaving zone,” a phrase that Jeffrey Fynn-Paul has defined as “a geographical area impacted by a given society’s demand for slaves.”¹³⁸ From the Bailiff General’s perspective, legitimate slaving zones were those that he could construe as participating in holy war against Christendom. To that end, in the justifications that concluded captive presentations the Bailiff General regularly described “the Land of the Blacks”—a catch-all toponymic that the official used to identify sub-Saharan African origins—as home to “infidels and enemies of the holy Catholic Faith.” By this calculus, captives who testified to originating from groups or territories within the “Land of the Blacks” were legitimate “captives of good war.” Whereas asking *boçal* captives to testify to their origins allowed the Bailiff General to broadly situate them as enslavable, the other information he collected from them was meant to more directly situate them as unambiguously enslaved.

In compelling *boçal* captives to testify only to their status as captives and to the identities of their captors, the Bailiff General sought to present their captivity as overdetermined. These questions were *de rigueur* in captive presentations, as the Bailiff General posed them to all captives in the course of their interrogations regardless of their origins or backgrounds. With very few exceptions, captives

¹³⁸ Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era,” *Past and Present*, 4. For Fynn’s discussion of sub-Saharan Africa as a European slaving zone, see 38-40.

acknowledged that they were, in fact, captives under the power of the individuals who were presenting them. While this question-and-answer exchange was rote, the Bailiff General invested it with serious weight. This was clear in a 1518 presentation in which Johan, a “nine-or-ten-year-old brown (*llor*)” boy from the Azores, said that he did not know if Pero Alvares, the man who was presenting him, was in fact his captor. In response, the Bailiff General called witnesses to testify to Pero’s claim to the boy before deeming Johan a legitimate captive.¹³⁹ But unlike Johan and their other non-*boçal* counterparts, *boçal* captives did not have an opportunity to testify to the conditions of their captivity or provide additional context about their lives. Whereas non-*boçal* captives appeared in captive presentations as once-free individuals who were reduced to captivity, *boçal* sub-Saharan Africans appeared in these records as always-already captives. While interrogations of *boçal* captives were highly orchestrated and repetitive in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, the Bailiff General nevertheless made adjustments to their form.

Between the first and second decade of the sixteenth century, the Bailiff General transitioned from informally summarizing *boçal* captives’ interrogations to recording more standardized question-and-answer exchanges. In the first years of the sixteenth century, the Bailiff General recorded *boçal* captives’ testimony as his own paraphrases or summaries of interrogations. His manner of recording the 1508 interrogation of Gomba—who, upon her enslavement and baptism was renamed Catherina—was typical of this trend. In this interrogation, the Bailiff General did not transcribe any questions. Instead, he noted that because Gomba/Catherina was *boçal*, he could not extract any testimony from her “except to say that she was a native of Mandinka and that the aforementioned Gonsalbo Lorens,” who

¹³⁹ ARV BG 198, 287r.-287v. For more on the importance that the Bailiff General invested in captives admitting to their enslaved status, see Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 27-8.

had initiated the presentation, “was her captor.”¹⁴⁰ As presentations like Gomba/Catherina’s became a more common, the Bailiff General began incorporating the question-and-answer format he regularly utilized in interrogations of non-*boçal* captives. Thus in his 1512 interrogation of *boçal* Maria, formerly Mencia, the Bailiff General recorded asking Mencia/Maria “where she was native of.” In response, “she said Benin.” He then asked Mencia/Maria if she was a captive, “and she said that she was a captive” of the man who had initiated her presentation.¹⁴¹ The official recorded no further questions before moving on to his ruling and justification. This was certainly not a decision that the official made lightly, as it ran counter to his court’s contemporary ethos of cost-cutting and streamlining by requiring more time and labor to record individual captive presentations.

The Bailiff General’s court likely implemented this transition in order to assert the legitimacy of these interrogations. In the earlier informal system, the official suggested that *boçal* captives’ ability to testify to only to the pieces of information that were most central to his goals was happenstance, mundane in its frequency and consistency. Moreover, these accounts were a step removed from proper testimonies, as the Bailiff General recorded the information as summarized paraphrases. The more standard and formalized mode, on the other hand, foregrounded the fact that the Bailiff General engineered the brevity of *boçal* captives’ interrogations. It also produced a clear record of captives’ testimony and left no ambiguity about who, exactly, had attested to the facts of their origins and

¹⁴⁰ ARV BG 196, 204v.-205r. “sino salvo que dix que era natural de mantyngua e que lo dit en gosalbo lorens era son amo.”

¹⁴¹ ARV BG 197, 198r.-198v.

captivity. But even as the Bailiff General worked to portray *boçal* captives as unambiguously attesting to their status as legitimate captives, he made strategic alterations to their accounts.

The Bailiff General could strategically “ventriloquize,” or interpolate his own voice, into his record of *boçal* captives’ testimonies.¹⁴² In 1503, for instance, he claimed that captive named Piga was too *boçal* to provide any testimony “except for confessing to coming from Mandinka, the Land of the Blacks and infidels.”¹⁴³ That Piga would identify his origins as “the Land of the Blacks and infidels,” the exact phrase that the Bailiff General used in justifications for cases involving sub-Saharan Africans, is doubtful. Nevertheless, the Bailiff General regularly claimed that *boçal* captives identified as natives of “the Land of the Blacks and infidels” throughout the first decade of the sixteenth century. Even as this phenomenon came to a halt in the 1510s with his transition to recording interrogations in question-and-answer format, the Bailiff General took other liberties. In 1513, for instance, he asked Pedro, a *boçal* fourteen-year-old “from Mandinka”, “if he was captive or free.” As the Bailiff General recorded it, Pedro ostensibly “said that he was a captive and that he was captive to the revered priest Johan Venrell, son and agent (*procurador*) of Luis Venrell, laborer in the city of Xativa.”¹⁴⁴ That Pedro would enthusiastically situate himself within a chain of custody, complete with the honorifics and stations befitting his enslavers, seems dubious at best. While the Bailiff General did not systematically adopt this ventriloquizing of captives’ testimonies across interrogation, it was nevertheless of a piece with the Bailiff General’s other *boçal* strategies in making novel claims about the Bailiff General’s authority.

¹⁴² For more on enslavers’ practice of ventriloquizing enslaved black peoples’ speech in the early modern world, see Ashley Williard, “Ventriloquizing Blackness,” 85-6.

¹⁴³ ARV BG 195, 176r.

¹⁴⁴ ARV BG 198, 25v.-26r.

Rather than just an arbiter charged with demonstrating that cases of captivity met contemporary legal and moral standards of legitimacy, in the early sixteenth century the Bailiff General used *boçal* strategies to position himself as an expert in navigating linguistic difference. The official had the power to label captives as *boçal* and then use that label to chart the course of individual presentations. Thus, whether a *boçal* captive would be subjected to a truncated interrogation or no interrogation at all was his decision. To that end, his adoption of multiple strategies for interrogating *boçal* captives reinforced his authority on this matter. Foregoing the interrogations of *boçal* captives altogether could have drawn attention to the self-serving nature of his approach and tarnished his office's claims to moral legitimacy. The instances in which he subjected *boçal* captives to some form of interrogation, highly orchestrated thought it was, lent credibility to those cases in which he abandoned recording any information about *boçal* captives at all. The Bailiff General's sure-footed claims to authority obscured the more counter-intuitive and contradictory ways in which *boçal* strategies engaged in racial rhetoric.

Boçal Strategies and Race

Cord Whitaker has outlined a framework for understanding premodern ideas about race in which *boçal* strategies can be productively situated. In his study of medieval black metaphors, or the “literary and rhetorical presentation of black humans,” Whitaker characterized race as a rhetorical mirage.¹⁴⁵ Like race, a mirage “has its genesis in material reality but quickly moves into the realms of imagination

¹⁴⁵ Cord Whitaker, *Black Metaphors*, 7.

and interpretation.”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Whitaker contends that race’s rhetorical mirage is characterized by a shimmer, or “dynamic shifts in meaning,” that produces its “simultaneous “simultaneous presence and nonpresence, its polysemy.”¹⁴⁷ The Bailiff General’s *boçal* *boçal* strategies embodied these features of race as rhetorical mirage, as they transformed the material reality of *boçal* captives’ language difference into shimmering interpretations of *boçal*’s meaning. Bringing together the various implicit claims that the Bailiff General made about *boçal* captives demonstrates that *boçal* strategies bore the shimmer of race-as-mirage.

On the one hand, the Bailiff General eliminated interrogations for *boçal* captives on the basis that they “did not know how to speak.” This curt claim ignored the fact that Valencia was home to a significant number of sub-Saharan Africans who remained fluent in their native tongues. Moreover, it papered over the Bailiff General’s long history of utilizing interpreters in captive presentations. In glossing over these realities, the Bailiff General insisted that any effort at a proper interrogation was stymied by *boçal* captives’ lack of speech. On the other hand, when the Bailiff General judged that *boçal* captives could be interrogated, he claimed that they only responded to some of the most conceptual and abstract questions that he posed to them. *Boçal* captives could not attest to their names, familial relations, or occupational backgrounds, he claimed. They could, however, readily testify to originating from “the land of the infidels,” being captives, lacking free status, and being under the power of European enslavers—matters that were all central to demonstrating the legitimacy of cases of captivity. While the total elimination of interrogations suggested *boçal* captives’ inability to speak, these highly orchestrated *boçal* interrogations suggest that *boçal* captives might speak more than the Bailiff General deemed necessary or seemly.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

The official's more subtle manipulations of *boçal* interrogations—such as his experimentation with their format and his ventriloquism of *boçal* captives' testimonies—bore their own rhetorical shimmer. Namely, in devising these manipulations the Bailiff General sought ways to legitimize captive presentations that hinged on *boçal* captives' ability to credibly acknowledge and rehash their captivity in their testimonies. These efforts contradicted, but were contemporaneous with, the Bailiff General's claims that *boçal* speech was unintelligible, unknowable, and not worthy of pursuing.

Thus, the Bailiff General portrayed *boçal* captives as fundamentally removed from communicating with their European enslavers as a means to more fully incorporate them into his court's practices and ideologies. This tension between exclusion and incorporation echoes Whitaker's claim that "the very thing the shimmering mirage of racial difference distorts is intimacy."¹⁴⁸ But unlike Whitaker's literary and rhetorical sources, in which the distorting shimmer of race-as-mirage operated solely in metaphors of blackness, the subject of *boçal* strategies' shimmer could change with the Bailiff General's needs.

The Changing Faces of Boçal

In 1521, the Bailiff General oversaw a captive presentation of thirty-three *boçal* captives who "each testified to their names and said that they were captives." He then noted that, because they were *boçal*, he was unable to extract any further confessions out of them. With that, in a trial that took less than a single folio to record, the Bailiff General declared the group to be legitimate captives of good

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 51.

war.¹⁴⁹ By the 1520s, this kind of presentation was apiece with the trends and norms that the Bailiff General had been implementing throughout the early sixteenth century. But unlike in previous decades, in this case this case the Bailiff General employed *boçal* strategies in the presentation of thirty-three non-black North African “Moors” (*moros*). While this would have been remarkable in the first decades of the sixteenth century, in the 1520s it was becoming a new norm.

Although the Bailiff General had described Canary Islanders as *boçal* in the late fifteenth century, between 1502 and 1520 he only applied the label to non-sub-Saharan Africans in one 1509 presentation of three “brown” (*llor*) and “white” (*blanch*) captives from the “Land of the Moors.”¹⁵⁰ Between 1521 and 1522, by contrast, he labelled one hundred and twenty-five non-West-African captives as *boçal*. Moreover, he labelled another group of twenty-six “black and white” captives as *boçal* without enumerating how many were black and how many were white. The Bailiff General identified most of these *boçal* captives as having North African origins, including cities like Azemmour, Pauhia, and Medinqua. Given their backgrounds, these captive likely spoke Arabic. Arabic-speakers had regularly appeared in the Bailiff General’s court throughout the Middle Ages and into the first decades of the sixteenth century without being classified as *boçal*. As had been the case the late fifteenth century, this development in *boçal*’s meaning and usage was a response to changes in the nature of Valencia’s slave trade that were taking place.

In 1516 Ferdinand, the Catholic Monarch who had turned to Valencia as a source for tax revenue, died and was succeeded in the throne by his grandson Carlos V. Given that Ferdinand’s aims of Mediterranean conquest had shaped the Bailiff General’s operations in

¹⁴⁹ ARV BG 198, 559r.-560v.

¹⁵⁰ ARV BG 196, 278r.-219v.

the early sixteenth century, it is not surprising that Carlos' reign also ushered in changes to these operations. In fact, responsiveness to royal agendas was a characteristic feature of the Bailiff General's operations throughout much of the office's medieval history.¹⁵¹ But whereas Ferdinand exerted influence on Valencia's slave trade indirectly, Carlos took more direct measures in 1518 when he authorized the direct exportation of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans from Africa to the Americas. This monumental decision was meant to help address the Spanish colonies' growing needs for forced labor in the aftermath of mass deaths of indigenous Americans caused by enslavement and disease in the prior decade.¹⁵² The first trans-Atlantic shipment of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans along this new route did not embark until 1520, but the reverberations of Charles's decree seem to have been felt in Valencia two years prior.

In fact, 1518 marked the beginning of a downward trend in the numbers of West Africans that enslavers were bringing to Valencia. In 1517, the Bailiff General oversaw forty presentations in which enslavers presented 504 West Africans. In 1518, by contrast, those numbers dropped to twenty-six presentations of 388 sub-Saharan Africans. 1519 witnessed further decline, as enslavers initiated a total of twenty-two presentations of 235 captives. Moreover, enslavers were trafficking smaller groups of sub-Saharan Africans to Valencia than had previously been typical. In 1519, for instance, only three presentations consisted of more than twenty sub-Saharan African captives. By comparison, enslavers initiated six such presentations in 1517, and another five in 1518. This downward trend continued into 1520, which witnessed

¹⁵¹ Jose Hinojosa Montalvo, *Diccionario de historia medieval*, 305.

¹⁵² David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 3-8.

both the smallest number of captive presentations for sub-Saharan Africans (13) and the smallest number of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans (114) brought before the Bailiff General since 1510. Moreover, all but one of these presentations featured only single captives. By 1521, enslavers presented fewer than thirty sub-Saharan Africans to the Bailiff General. Records of taxes assessed by the Mestre Racional suggest that this decreased volume of trade in enslaved sub-Saharan Africans continued into the next three decades.

As the numbers of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans arriving to Valencia diminished, enslavers began presenting significantly higher numbers of North African captives than in previous decades. Between 1521 and 1522 the Bailiff General recorded the presentations of over four-hundred non-black captives, including “brown,” “white,” “Christian,” “Moor,” and “white Moor” individuals who the Bailiff General identified as natives of “the Land of the Moors” or “the land of the Arabs.” This represented nearly thirty percent of the total number of non-black captives (1,385) who appeared before the Bailiff General between 1502 and 1524. This increased importation of captives from the “Land of the Moors” and “Land of the Arabs” was partially driven by crises in contemporary North Africa. Lhoussain Simour has noted that the early 1520s were a period of health and environmental disaster in Morocco. Between 1521 and 1522, the region was plague-stricken and suffered a famine-producing drought. As a result, some impoverished and starving Moroccans surrendered themselves to European enslavement in hopes that servitude would grant them access to food and thus be a source of survival.¹⁵³ But this influx was also driven by enslavers’ redirected energies.

Contemporary captive testimonies make it clear that in this period European enslavers were actively engaged in procuring enslaved North Africans. In 1522, for instance, a “black

¹⁵³ Lhoussain Simour, “(De)slaving history: Mostafa al-Azemmouri, the sixteenth-century Moroccan captive in the tale of conquest,” *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire* 20.3 (2013): 352.

Moor” (*mora negra*) named Harahila who originated from the city of Pauhisa in “the Land of the Arabs” recounted that she had been captured by Berbers (*barbars*) in the middle of the night, while she was sleeping.¹⁵⁴ From there, Harahila’s captors transported her to their native city of Azemmour. Azemmour had been under Portuguese control since 1486, and by the sixteenth century it was apparently a hub for slave traders, as it was where Harahila’s captors sold her to a European merchant who brought her to Castile.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, in 1522 eighteen-year-old Eyra, a black captive from Benysera in “the Land of the Moors,” recounted that “Christians came by sea to his land and captured him. Those Christians then took him to Azemmour, in the Land of the Christians, and from there sent him to the present city of Valencia.”¹⁵⁶ That the Bailiff General recorded Eyra’s testimony in such detail seems striking given that the Bailiff General identified Eyra as *boçal*. But as the mechanics and demographics of Valencia’s slave trade were changing in the 1520s, so too was the Bailiff General’s approach to *boçal* captives.

In this period the Bailiff General’s interrogations of *boçal* captives were not as systematic, consistent, or truncated as they had been throughout the previous two decades. Certainly, some presentations of groups of *boçal* captives from this period were virtually identical to those of their predecessors. This was the case in three presentations from 1521 and 1522, which consisted of twenty-six “black and white” *boçal* captives, twenty-eight *boçal* captives “from the Land of the Moors,” and thirty *boçal* “captive Moors,” respectively. The Bailiff General did not interrogate any of

¹⁵⁴ ARV BG 198, 711v-713r.

¹⁵⁵ Lhoussein Simour, “(De)slaving history,” 350-1.

¹⁵⁶ ARV BG 198, 580r.-580v.

these captives.¹⁵⁷ But in the early 1520s, the Bailiff General did not just forego interrogations for groups of *boçal* captives. Rather, he was liable to bypass interrogations for any group of captives, whether they were *boçal* or not. In 1522, for instance, he approved of the captivity of a group of thirty-nine individuals from the “Land of the Moors,” who he did not label as *boçal*, without so much as recording their names.¹⁵⁸ This more liberal approach to eliminating interrogations and basic details about groups of captives was occurring alongside more detailed interrogations of individual *boçal* captives.

While the Bailiff General’s goals in these interrogations remained the same, he began soliciting more detailed testimonies from *boçal* captives, including West Africans. In 1522, for instance, Joana, a “very *boçal*” twenty-two-year-old from Trona in the Land of the Blacks, appeared before the Bailiff General with her three-year old daughter. The first three questions that the Bailiff General posed to Joana were those that had been typical in truncated interrogations of *boçal* captives in previous years, as he asked her where she was from, if she was a captive, and who her enslaver was.¹⁵⁹ Joana answered these questions, but also spoke at length about how she had become a captive and brought to Valencia. She first noted that she was captured in her homeland “by other black people.” Her captors then “sold her to a certain group of Portuguese, who in turn sent her to Lagos and kept her there for about eight months, more or less, before selling her” again.¹⁶⁰ She recounted changing hands three more times before ending up in the custody of the man who had initiated her captive presentation. Similarly, a “very *boçal*” captive named Duart from “Nona” in the Land of the

¹⁵⁷ ARV BG 198, 482v.-483r. and ARV BG 198, 511r.-512r., ARV BG 198, 599r.-560v.

¹⁵⁸ ARV BG 198, 611v.-612r.

¹⁵⁹ ARV BG 198, 555v.-556r.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, “los quals portoguessos la portare a lagos y poc haver huyt messos poch mes o menys que aquells la venere.”

Blacks testified that “it had been about two years, more or less, since he was taken captive by other black people who sold him” to some Christians.¹⁶¹ He recounted that those Christians then took him to the Portuguese village of Sines, from which point he changed hands two more times before being taken to Valencia.

In some ways, these testimonies were only minor departures from the more truncated captive presentations that had predominated in the first two decades of the sixteenth century. The additional information that the Bailiff General recorded for captives like Joana and Duarte, after all, primarily worked to further affirm their status as captives. Nevertheless, these more detailed testimonies of *boçal* captives reveal that the Bailiff General could adapt his use of *boçal* strategies to best meet his own needs. Moreover, they reveal that while the Bailiff General developed *boçal* strategies in the captive presentations of sub-Saharan Africans, he did not perceive *boçal* to be the exclusive purview of black or sub-Saharan African captives.

In the early sixteenth century, external and internal pressures were chipping away at the norms and procedures that the Bailiff General had used to demonstrate the legitimacy of captive presentations and, by extension, Valencia’s slave trade. In response to these changes, the Bailiff General implemented *boçal* strategies—including the shortening or eliminating of interrogations, manipulating interrogations’ forms, or ventriloquizing captives’ testimonies—to save face while introducing novel and streamlined norms in captive presentations. Rather than measures aimed at reducing the time and cost of captive presentations, the official claimed, these strategies were necessary responses to the language barriers presented by *boçal*

¹⁶¹ ARV BG 198, 596v-598r. ha dos anys poch mes o menys que es estat pres per altres negres e aquells lo han venut.”

captives, who “did not know how to speak.” Framed in this way, the Bailiff General’s economizing measures were merely reflections of the changing realities of slavery that did not did not jeopardize or undermine the moral and institutional legitimacy of slavery or of captive presentations. This calculus of expediency and legitimacy allowed the Bailiff General to invest himself a subtle but significant new form of authority that relied on contradictory and competing claims about *boçal* captives. Thus, although it ostensibly reflected sub-Saharan Africans’ linguistic alterity—an assertion that historians and scholars have taken at face value—the Bailiff General’s always shifting, but consistently strategic, use of *boçal* in captive presentations was reflective of his office’s own limitations, motives, and goals.

Chapter Three: Origins I: European Interpretations

In 1507, a Valencian merchant named Luis Morell initiated a captive presentation of one hundred and ten *boçal* sub-Saharan Africans. In typical form, the Bailiff General did not interrogate any of these *boçal* captives, instead relying on Morell to relay any pertinent information about the captives. To that end, Morell identified the entire group as being “natives of Jolof, land of the Blacks.” The Bailiff General was evidently more concerned with the latter portion this identification than the former, as in his concluding justification he identified the captives as “Blacks from the land of the Blacks, infidels and enemies of the holy Catholic faith.” This exchange regarding captives’ origins was representative of how captive presentations typically proceeded. In a majority of cases, for instance, enslavers were the sole source of information about sub-Saharan Africans’ origins. Moreover, Jolof was the most commonly-cited origin that enslavers provided in these cases. The Bailiff General, for his part, never mentioned sub-Saharan Africans’ specific places of origin in his justifications for their enslavement, but did regularly note that they hailed from “the Land of the Blacks.”

Given the regularity with which enslavers and the Bailiff General discoursed on black captives’ origins in captive presentations, scholars have subjected captive presentations’ reports on captives’ origins to quantitative assessments. In her study of slavery in Valencia during the reign of the Catholic monarchs (1479-1516), for instance, Vicenta Alonso Cortes conducted a quantitative analysis of captive presentation to conclude that individuals “from Jalof, the Wolofs, were the most abundant” group of sub-Saharan Africans brought to Valencia in this period, finding 2,452 captives who were identified as being “from Jolof.”¹⁶² Other scholars have followed Cortes’s lead. In his survey of slavery in medieval Europe, for

¹⁶² See Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 58 and “Procedencia de los esclavos negros en Valencia (1482-1516): *Revista Espanola de Antropologia Americana* 7.1 (1972).

instance, Charles Verlinden cited Cortes in highlighting the preponderance of Wolof people (*Jolofs*) among enslaved West Africans arriving to Valencia.¹⁶³ Debra Blumenthal echoed this characterization of the origins of Valencia's enslaved West Africans and cited Cortes when observing that cargoes of enslaved West Africans arriving to the Bailiff General were comprised of "predominantly Wolof men, women, and children."¹⁶⁴ This characterization of Valencia's enslaved population has been useful to scholars working outside of Valencia, such as A.C. de C.M Saunders. In their study of black slavery and freedom in Portugal, Saunders noted that while Portuguese authorities "showed little interest in the slaves' nationality," Valencia's captive presentations "indicate that the majority of blacks were Wolofs from Senegambia."¹⁶⁵

But there are fundamental problems with treating sources produced by enslaving institutions as reliable indices of captives' origins. Hortense Spillers has made these problems clear in her discussion of an eighteenth-century account book of enslaved people from Barbados. Spillers noted that entries in this account book were characterized by "detail and precision," but in their unyielding uniformity they shed no light on the specific experiences or humanity of enslaved people. As such, in this account book and sources like it, "the destruction of the African name, of kin, of linguistic, and ritual connections is so obvious...that we tend to overlook it."¹⁶⁶ While erasing substantial elements of enslaved Africans' lives, these records also perpetuated the goals and value systems of their creators. To that end, Saidiya Hartman has pointed out that relying solely on the data produced by an enslaving institution reproduces that institution not just as "as a holding cell or space of

¹⁶³ Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale* (Brugge : De Tempel, 1977), 355-6.

¹⁶⁴ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 15-16.

¹⁶⁶ Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 73.

confinement but as an episteme.” The consequence of this epistemological reproduction has been a historiography of slavery focused primarily on “quantitative matters and on issues of markets and trade relations.”¹⁶⁷ These issues limit, if not totally foreclose, the utility of quantitative approaches to the data recorded in captive presentations.

But there are other, more useful, avenues for examining aspects of Sub-Saharan African origins as recorded in captive presentations. Herman Bennett’s examination of European chronicle accounts of sub-Saharan West Africa offers one such avenue. Bennett noted that in these texts European Christians employed their own “discursive prisms” for rendering African places and polities legible to themselves and to their audiences.¹⁶⁸ In these sources, trade was the primary discursive prism through which Europeans interpreted West Africa, as it was “[b]y means of exchange, or lack thereof, [that] local historical memory assumed meaning for Christian travelers and guided them in their interaction with Guinea’s diverse *ethnos*.”¹⁶⁹ While trade was an integral element of captive presentations, it was not the only discursive prism through which the Bailiff General and enslavers interpreted sub-Saharan African origins.

In this chapter, I trace the distinct ways that the Bailiff General and enslavers, respectively, deployed claims about captives’ sub-Saharan African origins in captive presentations. Using evidence from these records and contemporary chronicles, I situate these modes of identifying sub-Saharan African origins within contemporary European ideas about African and European slavery, commerce, and history. In doing so, I shed light on the discursive prisms that enslavers and officials used to render value-laden claims about

¹⁶⁷ Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 26 (2008): 3-4.

¹⁶⁸ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, Kindle Edition, Location 3089.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

captives' sub-Saharan African origins as neutral statements of fact. On the one hand, the Bailiff General's two objectives—deeming cases of captivity as legitimate and assessing the values of captives—prompted him to emphasize black captives' affiliations with the sub-Saharan African “Land of the Blacks,” even in cases where such claims were dubious. On the other hand, enslavers who were solely responsible for reporting sub-Saharan African captives' origins did so in ways that situated their captives and themselves within well-known African-European networks of diplomacy, trade, and expansionary missionary activity. Thus, both the Bailiff General and enslavers represented European interpretations of origins as African realities.

The “Land of the Blacks” and the Bailiff General’s Uses of Origins

The Bailiff General was one among many Iberian officials that maintained an interest in the geographical backgrounds of enslaved people and captives. Nancy van Deusen, for instance, has shown that sixteenth-century Castilian courts' interest in the geographical origins of enslaved American *indios*, which was ostensibly important for determining imperial jurisdiction, also functioned to give Castilians access to “knowledge of areas previously inaccessible to Europeans.” Soliciting this information from *indios* brought “the world into sharper focus” for audiences of Castilian officials.¹⁷⁰ Daniel Hershenzon identified similar elite interest in the geographical knowledge and experiences of Europeans held captive in North Africa. These captives often found that their captivity was subject to being

¹⁷⁰ Nancy Van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 218

instrumentalized in the interests of state politics, and thus positioned themselves “as authoritative informers with knowledge superior to that of their interlocutors.”¹⁷¹

The Bailiff General’s practice of noting the geographical origins of sub-Saharan West Africans, on the other hand, met the official’s more immediate need of justifying their enslavement. The Bailiff General drew on a number of rationales—including captives’ religious affiliation, appearance and lineage—in crafting these justifications. But in cases involving captives from outside of the Iberian Peninsula, he always cited captives’ origins when deeming their captivity legitimate. Thus, by the first decade of the sixteenth century he regularly noted that West African captives originated from “the land of the Blacks (*terra de negres*), infidels and enemies of the holy Catholic faith.” Although formulaic, this was an identification that Bailiff General took seriously when justifying the enslavement of sub-Saharan Africans.

The importance that the Bailiff General assigned to this designation is evident in the 1502 presentation of an enslaved *boçal* woman named Francisca. Although Francisca’s enslaver had claimed that she was from the “Land of the Blacks,” Francisca responded to the question of her origin by saying “she did not know” where she was born. Francisca’s uncertainty evidently disturbed the Bailiff General, as he took the unusual step of pressing the matter by asking Francisca if she had been born in the Land of the Blacks or the Land of the Christians.¹⁷² This question was unique to Francisca’s case. That the Bailiff General felt it necessary to goad Francisca into explicitly identifying her origins in the Land of the Blacks shows that sub-Saharan African origin was an important point of note for the Bailiff General.

¹⁷¹ Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 147.

¹⁷² ARV BG 195, 76r.-78r.

This use of origins as a proxy for enslavability was not a novel practice. Rather, it was indebted to the Bailiff General's medieval norms of justifying the captivity of individuals who lived throughout the Mediterranean, particularly in Islamic territories. By the sixteenth century, the Bailiff General rendered Islamic polities as the "the Land of the Moors (*terra de moros*)" or "the Land of the Arabs (*terra de alarps*)," terms that he used interchangeably. Inhabitants of these lands, the Bailiff General contended, were "infidels and enemies of the holy Catholic Faith," and as such were captives of "good war." This reflected the official's longstanding practice of conflating captives' residence in Islamic polities with their participation in Christian-Muslim religious hostilities. Debra Blumenthal has shown that in the fifteenth century this justification was acceptable even in cases when captives were obviously non-combatants whom European corsairs and raiders had captured in surprise attacks outside the context of conflict. In these cases, enslavers were able to successfully defend their actions by noting that their captives had lived in the Land of the Moors or Land of the Arabs at the time of their capture.¹⁷³

Similarly, the Bailiff General deemed sub-Saharan Africans from the Land of the Blacks to be infidels and captives "of good war." That the Bailiff General based this mode of justifying sub-Saharan Africans' enslavement on earlier models developed for enslaving Muslims is unsurprising. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries Iberians regularly modeled their portrayals of sub-Saharan Africans on tropes and themes common in earlier depictions of Muslim difference. Kenneth Baxter-Wolf, for instance, has shown that fifteenth-century Portuguese chroniclers depicted sub-Saharan Africans as Moors in order to

¹⁷³ For residence in hostile territories as a justification for enslaving Muslims, see Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 23-4.

situate them within the realm of Holy War and enslavability.¹⁷⁴ While the Bailiff General's use of the Land of the Blacks as a justification for sub-Saharan Africans' enslavement was based on the model of captives taken from Islamic territories, captive presentations make it clear that by the early sixteenth century the official understood Land of the Blacks and the Land of the Moors to be the homes of groups that were distinct from one another.

Captive presentations of sub-Saharan Africans who resided in North Africa make the Bailiff General's distinction between the Land of the Moors and the Land of the Blacks clear. Many of these captives had likely been brought to North Africa by way of the overland trans-Saharan slave trade as captives long before being captured by Europeans. This was likely the case, for instance, for a black sixteen-year-old "from Guinea" named Mobarich who was captured by Europeans in Oran. In his 1509 presentation, Mobarich testified to the Bailiff General that in Oran "his occupation was that of a servant" (*offici es servir*).¹⁷⁵ Similarly, another captive named Mobarich—also a "native of Guinea" who was captured in Oran—noted that "he did not have an occupation, except that he was a servant in a home."¹⁷⁶ The Spanish conquests of Oran in 1509 and Tripoli in 1510—which the Spanish Crown framed as Holy Wars—were integral in bringing these captives across the Mediterranean and into Iberia. In fact, more than half (thirty-eight of sixty-six) West African captives captured in North Africa who appeared before the Bailiff General between 1502 and 1524 were brought to Valencia in the immediate aftermath of these conquests, often alongside native North Africans.

¹⁷⁴ Kenneth Baxter-Wolf, "The 'Moors' of West Africa and the Beginnings of the Portuguese Slave Trade," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24 (1994):469.

¹⁷⁵ ARV BG 196, 298v.-300r.

¹⁷⁶ ARV BG 196, 331v.-333v. "no te offici sino que servia en casa."

In this context, in which the Bailiff General could have reasonably invoked these captives' residence in the Land of the Moors at the time of their seizure, he instead deferred to their associations with the Land of the Blacks. In 1510, for instance, enslaver Cristobal de Caranagal identified captive captured in Tripoli in 1510, a *boçal* woman named Almasora, as hailing from the "land of the Arabs." Nevertheless, in his justification the Bailiff General noted that Almasora was "a black woman from the Land of Blacks and Moors," a characterization of Tripoli that was unique to Almasora's case. Similarly, another black captive named Caterina—who, before being enslaved by Europeans and converted to Christianity was a Muslim named Arqua—testified that she was captured in the "invasion of Tripoli." Even so, in his justification of Caterina/Arqua's enslavement, the Bailiff General noted only that she was from the Land of the Blacks and did not mention her residence in Tripoli or her status as a recent convert from Islam.¹⁷⁷ Arqua's case highlights that the Bailiff General chose to foreground these captive's associations with the Land of the Blacks even when there was no doubt as to their residence in Islamic territories and their status as forced converts to Christianity from Islam.

This practice was a marked departure from the Bailiff General's approach to identifying black African captives just a few decades earlier. Debra Blumenthal found that in the late fifteenth century the Bailiff General typically referred to sub-Saharan African captives as Moors (*moros*) when justifying their captivity, regardless of whether or not they were Muslims. Blumenthal noted that in categorizing black Africans as *moros*, the Bailiff General "made it easier for himself to declare them to be *catius de bona guerra*."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ ARV BG 197, 8v.-9r.

¹⁷⁸ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 41.

This calculus of identification had evidently changed by the first decade of the sixteenth century, during which time the Bailiff General began to characterize black captives as Moors only when they were Muslims who came from North Africa. While this change was striking, it was not sudden. By 1502, for instance, the Bailiff General had stopped regularly categorizing West Africans as Moors. However, he was not yet consistent in associating them with the “Land of the Blacks.” Rather, he often characterized them as “blacks from the land of the infidels” in his justifications. It was not until 1506 that he began consistently labelling black Africans as hailing from “the Land of the Blacks.” This change coincided with the officials 1506 decision to shorten captive presentations’ physical format by removing cover pages and using both folios of a page for separate presentations. But while the Bailiff General’s practice of disaggregating West Africans from Moors was novel at the turn of the century, by 1509 it was a distinction that enslavers assisted him in maintaining.

Enslavers, for instance, could adopt modified vocabularies for describing the origins of sub-Saharan Africans captured in North Africa. In presentations of sub-Saharan Africans captured in the invasions of Oran and Tripoli, for instance, enslavers sometimes indicated that these captives were merely residents (*habitadors*) of these North African cities and were natives (*naturals*) of the Land of the Blacks. This was the only context in which enslavers distinguished their captives’ statuses as residents and natives in captive presentations from this period. Thus, in 1509 enslaver Pere Vizcaino identified a twenty-year old captive named Barqua, who was captured in the invasion of Oran, as a “native of Guinea, inhabitant of Oran.”¹⁷⁹ That same year enslaver Johan Climet likewise identified the *boçal* sixty-five-year-old Mobariqua as “a native of Guinea, inhabitant of Oran.” The Bailiff General evidently

¹⁷⁹ ARV BG 196, 298v. -300r.

found this distinction useful, as in his justification for Mobariqua's captivity he characterized her as being only from the "Land of the Blacks, infidels and enemies of the Catholic Faith" and made no mention of her North African affiliations¹⁸⁰

Other enslavers indicated these captives' status as residents of North Africa without explicitly invoking the categories of resident and native. Enslaver Alejandro Adret, for instance, presented forty captives "from Oran" to the Bailiff General in 1509. One of these captives was a forty-year-old named Muse, the only black captive in the group. Although Muse had been captured in Oran, Adret singled him out as a "native of Susse, Land of the Blacks." Similarly, enslaver Manuel Capdevila presented another nine captives "from Oran" in 1509 and noted that twenty-year-old Mobarich—who testified to having been captured in "the invasion of Oran" and was the only black captive in the group—was "a native of Guinea."¹⁸¹ For his part, enslaver Johan de Banuelos presented "two *moros* from Tripoli" in 1510, including ten-year-old Maria, who before being captured in Tripoli and forcibly converted to Christianity was called Mariem. Banuelos identified Mariem/Maria as a native of "Uson, Land of the Blacks."¹⁸² Likewise, in his presentation of ten "captives from Tripoli," enslaver Juan de Postigo identified the sole black captive in his group, forty-five-year-old Fatima, as a "native of Bornagale, Land of the Blacks."¹⁸³

In most of these cases, information about captives' sub-Saharan African origins was not relevant to the Bailiff General's goal of legitimizing their enslavement insofar as he did not mention the Land of the Blacks in his concluding justifications. But even in cases where the Bailiff General did cite North African captives' associations with the Land of the Blacks

¹⁸⁰ ARV BG 196, 389r.-389v. "natural de Guinea habitador de Oran."

¹⁸¹ ARV BG 196, 331v.-333v. "la presa de Oran."

¹⁸² ARV BG 197, 57r.-57v.

¹⁸³ ARV BG 197, 9v. – 10r.

in his justifications, he could have ruled them to be “captives of good war” by noting that they had been captured during Christian-Islamic military conflicts. Invoking the Land of the Blacks was thus not essential to the Bailiff General’s justifications. In fact, it seems likely that foregrounding these captives’ sub-Saharan African associations was meant to assist the Bailiff General in achieving another objective of captive presentations: assessing captives’ monetary value.

Compared to other factors—including gender, age, appearance, and health—a captive’s origins could play an outsized role in determining their value in Valencian courts. Records maintained by Valencia’s Mestre Racional lay bare the ways in which particular features were emphasized in the Bailiff General’s valuation process. Following captive presentations, enslavers typically paid the *quinto* to the Mestre Racional, who would in turn record the payment and the amount at which the Bailiff General had valued the captives. Unlike captive presentations, which addressed captives’ values only briefly after the presentation and interrogation, in the Mestre Racional’s account books a captive’s value was the central feature. In fact, other than a captive’s valuation, gender and label (i.e., black, white, *llor*, *moro*), the Mestre Racional seldom recorded any discerning information about them. When the Mestre Racional did record additional information about captives, it directly correlated to their valuation. To that end, in instances where the Bailiff General had assigned a lower-than-average valuation to a captive, the Mestre Racional often noted that the captives were malnourished (*sotil*), ill (*dolent*, *malalt*), elderly (*vell*), or were infants (*chiquet*). The one detail that consistently correlated with higher valuations, on the other hand, was place of origin.

Examining data from 1533 and 1534 makes the correlation between noting captives' origins and their higher valuation particularly clear. Valuations for sixty-two captives survive from this period, and overall the valuations averaged at 37 *lliures*. The Mestre Racional identified the five most highly valued captives from this group as all coming from the Barbary Coast (*Berberia*), and these were the only captives for whom he noted places of origin. By far the most highly valued of these five were a group of “four captives from the Barbary Coast” who officials assessed at 990 *lliures*, or roughly 247 *lliures* per head.¹⁸⁴ This valuation was remarkably high. Removing this group from consideration lowers the average valuation down to 24 *lliures*, which was much more typical of the averages in the first half of the sixteenth century. The next most-highly-valued captive from this set was a “white Moor from the Barbary Coast” who officials valued at 60 *lliures*.¹⁸⁵ As Figure 8 shows, even this valuation significantly exceeded the values assigned to other most highly-valued captives in this period.

Ten Highest Valuations for Captives, 1533-1534 (values in <i>lliures</i> .solidos)
990 (“four captives from the Barbary Coast”)
60 (male, “white Moor from the Barbary Coast”)
47 (black, male)
40 (white, female)
32 (<i>llor</i> , male)
31.10 (white, female)
30 (<i>llor</i> , male)
28 (male)
27 (black, male)
27 (<i>llor</i> , female)

Figure 8 Table listing the ten highest values assigned to captives between 1533 and 1534. ARV CMR 139-140.

¹⁸⁴ ARV CMR 140r., 56v.

¹⁸⁵ ARV CMR 139r., 45r.

That Valencian officials assigned exceptionally high prices to captives from Ottoman-held North Africa suggests that captives' values could be based on their potential to be ransomed. While the demographics and mechanics of Valencia's slave trade in the sixteenth century were transforming such that more enslavers were participating in commercial forms of enslavement than had done so in earlier centuries, trans-Mediterranean ransom-based captivity remained a substantial industry throughout early modern Iberia. Captives from throughout the Mediterranean could be potentially lucrative sources of income for enslavers if their kin, communities, or rulers in their homelands were well-positioned or highly motivated to redeem them.

The Bailiff General's tendency to foreground the sub-Saharan African origins of captives captured in North Africa in captive presentations was thus a reflection of this system of ransom and captivity. Namely, indicating that a North African captives' natal homeland was in sub-Saharan Africa signaled that these captives had already been alienated from their natal homeland before being captured by Europeans, and were also likely already enslaved or of servile status in North Africa. As such, they were less likely than their North-African-born counterparts to be ransomed by their relations across the Mediterranean or to fetch a lucrative ransom if they were. While officials and enslavers knew that captives of all backgrounds were liable to flee, they might have also judged these captives as being less-likely than their North-African-born counterparts to plot trans-Mediterranean escapes back to the Maghreb. Thus, in emphasizing the sub-Saharan African backgrounds of black Muslims caught in North Africa the Bailiff General sought to communicate specific information about these captives' demographics and value.

But while this impulse to highlight captives' sub-Saharan African origins was motivated by procedural concerns, it encouraged a conflation between blackness and West African-ness in the Bailiff General's court. In this period, officials in the court often reflexively, and mistakenly, assigned broadly sub-Saharan African origins to black captives who traced their origins to North Africa or the Iberian Peninsula. This tendency to misattribute black captives' origins was particularly pronounced during the tenure of 1510's Bailiff General. In October of that year, an eight-year-old named Johannis testified that he had been born to an enslaved black mother in the Castilian town of Carmona, and that he did not know who his father was. This information could have provided the Bailiff General with sufficient grounds for justifying Johannis's enslavement, as the court typically treated children born to enslaved parents as de facto captives. Instead, in his conclusion the official claimed that the native Castilian Johannis was "from the Land of the Blacks."¹⁸⁶ A week after Johannis's presentation, the court made a similar slip in the presentation of Catalina, a twenty-year-old black woman from Tripoli who, before being captured by Europeans and forcibly converted to Christianity, was named Barqua. Although the Bailiff General typically rendered Tripoli as a Land of the Moors or Land of the Arabs, he claimed that Barqua/Catalina hailed from the Land of the Blacks in his concluding justification.¹⁸⁷ Then, in early December, he characterized the Barbary Coast as the Land of the Blacks in the presentation of nine unnamed North African black captives. While officials in this particular Bailiff General's court were especially prone to inventing sub-Saharan African origins for black captives, they were not alone in doing so.

¹⁸⁶ ARV BG 197, 7v.-8v. "de terra de negres infiels enemichs de la sancta fe Catholica."

¹⁸⁷ ARV BG 197, 8v.-9r.

In some instances when the Bailiff General confused a black captives' North African or Iberian origins with the Land of the Blacks, he corrected the mistake in the course of the captive presentation. This occurred in the 1518 presentation of a twenty-year-old black woman named Lucrecia. Lucrecia's presenter, leather curer Hieronim Blasco, identified Lucrecia as a "native of Seville," which the Bailiff General erroneously rendered as "Land of the Blacks."¹⁸⁸ He quickly recognized the mistake and struck "Land of the Blacks" from the document before proceeding with the rest of the presentation [Figure 9]. That the Bailiff General felt compelled to correct this mistake draws attention to the fact that he did not intend to conflate Lucretia's skin color with a place of origin, even if he regularly did so in practice. The correction seemingly acknowledged that Lucrecia's blackness did not predetermine her origins. Nevertheless, it is clear that for many Valencians this conflation went unchecked.

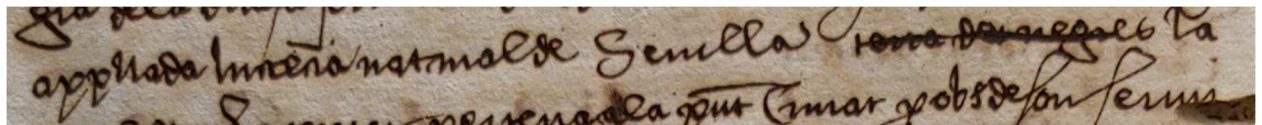


Figure 9 Text from Lucrecia's initial presentation, reading "apellada lucrecia natural de Sevilla ~~terra de negres~~." ARV BG 198, 305r.

The Bailiff General serving in 1508, for example, only partially corrected his own mis-categorization of origins in the presentation of two *boçal* captives named Ali and Auzar. Although the Bailiff General did not label the pair as black—or *llor*, Moor or white, for that matter—his treatment of their account of their origins suggests that he perceived them as being of West African descent. Namely, Ali and Auzar testified to being natives of Cabo de Gué in modern Morocco, a territory which they themselves situated within the Barbary

¹⁸⁸ ARV BG 198, 305r.-305v.

Coast. While the Bailiff General typically rendered Cabo de Gué as a Land of the Moors or Arabs, in this case he claimed it was within the Land of the Blacks. As in Lucrecia's case, he recognized his error and scratched out the misattribution. But in his concluding justification he again claimed, this time without correction, that Ali and Auzar hailed from the Land of the Blacks.¹⁸⁹

The Bailiff General's twinned objectives of justifying the enslavement of sub-Saharan Africans and assessing the values of captives thus formed the "discursive prism" through which he interpreted and recorded sub-Saharan African origins in the early sixteenth century. While this mode of interpretation was based on preexisting practices, such as the medieval enslavement of captives from Islamic territories and ransom-based models of captivity, it had the novel consequence of fomenting a conflation between blackness and sub-Saharan African origins. But this was just one regime of interpreting origins at play in captive presentations. For their part, enslavers presenting captives to the Bailiff General brought their own concerns and agendas to bear when speaking about their captives' origins.

Commerce, Diplomacy and Missionary Activity: Enslavers' Interpretations of Origins

In the course of captive presentations enslavers and the Bailiff General made unique contributions to a dialogue on sub-Saharan African captives' origins. While the Bailiff General deployed the conceptual framework of the "Land of the Blacks" as a way to justify captives' enslavement and assign a value to them, enslavers could make the more concrete contribution of identifying captives' specific places of origin. In many cases enslavers likely obtained this knowledge from captives themselves, as captives' testimonies about their origins generally aligned with the initial claims made by enslavers. But, as noted in Chapters

¹⁸⁹ ARV BG 196, 181v.-182r.

One and Two, a majority of sub-Saharan African captives were not interrogated on the basis that they were *boçal*, or “did not know how to speak in any language except that of their homeland.” In these cases, enslavers had the first and final word on captives’ origins, and as such their understandings and interpretations of these origins need to be scrutinized.

A majority of enslavers opted merely to satisfy the Bailiff General’s minimum expectations, identifying more than seventy-one percent (2,329) of black captives who appeared before the Bailiff General between 1502 and 1524 only by saying that they were “from the Land of the Blacks.” In most of these cases the captives in question were *boçal* and thus were not interrogated. In cases where these captives did testify, though, they more or less corroborated their enslavers’ characterizations of their origins. Some, however, made it clear that the lack of specifics in their accounts of origins was a consequence of the young ages at which they were enslaved. In 1518, for instance, an eighteen-year old named Ysabel testified “that she was from the Land of the Blacks, and that she does not remember from which land therein she came” and that “because she was very young when she came from her land, she does not remember where she was forced into captivity.”¹⁹⁰ Ysabel was not unique in this experience. In total, one hundred and fifty captives who appeared before the Bailiff General in this period could only trace their origins to the broadly-construed “Land of the Blacks.” But while a majority of enslavers simply parroted the Bailiff General’s preferred terms of origin in their presentations, many made more specific claims about captives’ origins.

In fact, enslavers identified specific origins for nearly one thousand black captives in this period. By far the three most commonly-cited were “Jolof,” (256) “Benin,” (82) and

¹⁹⁰ ARV BG 198 310v.-311r. “dix que de terra de negres e no li recorda de quina terra com vingues de chiqueta de alla”; “per co com vingue molt chique de sa terra e nos recorda de quinna manera fonch presa e feta cativa.”

“Mandinka,” (70) respectively. In a majority of cases in which enslavers offered these terms of origin, their accounts were not corroborated by enslaved people themselves. More than sixty-four percent of the 256 “natives of Jolof,” for instance, were labelled as such only by their enslavers and were not interrogated on the matter. One hundred and forty three of these captives arrived to Valencia in two large groups, and thus their collective origins were accounted for by just two enslavers.¹⁹¹ Moreover, more than a third of the seventy captives identified as being “from Mandinka” were not interrogated about their origins either on the basis that they were *boçal* or too young to testify. Similarly, the Bailiff General chose not to interrogate thirty-one of the eighty-two captives “from Benin” about their origins on the grounds that they were *boçal*. Given enslavers’ outsized roles in recording captives’ origins in these cases, it is important to outline how they understood and utilized the terms Jolof, Benin, and Mandinka.

Although these terms—especially Jolof and Mandinka—could reference languages, groups of people, or places, in the context of captive presentations enslavers used them squarely as toponyms. This is most evident in the fact that they were explicitly identified as lands (*terra*) rather than tribes, nations, languages or lineages. In contrast, contemporary notarial records of slave sales frequently identified these same terms as referring to “peoples” (*gens*) rather than as lands. This practice of rendering sub-Saharan Africans origins as toponyms in captive presentations was of a piece with norms of identifying enslaved sub-Saharan Africans throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Ivan Armenteros Martinez has noted that in the late fifteenth century Iberian officials most typically identified West Africans by way

¹⁹¹ ARV BG 196, 71r.-71v and ARV BG 196, 145v.-146r.

of geographical designations rather than with ethnocultural or linguistic terms.¹⁹² Europeans’ also displayed toponymic understandings of these terms in their maps, such as Abraham Ortelius’s “Africae tabula novum,” which he produced in Antwerp in the late sixteenth century [Figure 10]. In claiming captives’ Jolof, Mandinka, and Benin, origins, enslavers were making clear references to West African polities that their European audiences would find easily recognizable.



Figure 10 "Africa tabula novum," Abraham Ortelius c.1584.

Captives that Europeans identified as “Mandinka,” for instance, were typically exports from the Mali Empire [Figure 11].¹⁹³ Established in the thirteenth century on the northern banks of the Niger River, the historical nucleus of the Mali Empire was a small Mandinka kingdom centered on the city of Niani which had been in existence since at least the eleventh century. By the fourteenth century, Mali became the largest empire in West

¹⁹² Ivan Armenteros Martinez, “La esclavitud en Barcelona,” 183, n59.

¹⁹³ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 106.

Africa. As it expanded, the Mali Empire contained multiple Mandinka states and was home to speakers of the Mande language group, which was comprised of five distinct languages including the Mandinka language. At its peak in the fourteenth century, Mali incorporated the major cities Timbuktu and Gao, though by the late fifteenth century Mali had lost both cities to the ascending Songhai Empire.¹⁹⁴

When enslavers claimed that captives had Jolof origins, on the other hand, they were referencing the Jolof Empire, located between the Senegal and Gambia rivers. The Jolof state was established in the mid-fourteenth century and in its earliest iteration was a tributary to the Mali Empire. By the end of the fourteenth century Jolof was an empire in its own right, and had incorporated the independently administered Waalo, Kayor, Baol, Sine and Saloum kingdoms, all situated along the Atlantic Coast. Like the much more expansive Mali Empire, the Jolof Empire was home to an ethnically and linguistically diverse population, which included speakers of the Wolof and Serer languages.

Lastly, when claiming captives' originated from Benin, enslavers were referencing the inland West African Kingdom of Benin. Established in the second half of the twelfth century, Benin's geographical and cultural core was made up of the Edo people, speakers of the Edo language. Benin's predominantly Edo central regions were supplemented by Yoruba people to the west and by Igbo people to the east.¹⁹⁵ Benin's territories underwent significant expansion under Oba Ozolua "the conqueror," who spearheaded substantial campaigns of military conquest in the late fifteenth century. While enslavers' most commonly-made claims

¹⁹⁴ Michael A. Gomez outlines the expansiveness of imperial Mali at its peak. See Michael A. Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 125-126.

¹⁹⁵ Alan Frederick Charles Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897* (London: Longmans, 1969), 2.

about captives' origins were thus clear references to prominent West African polities, they were not neutral acts of identification.

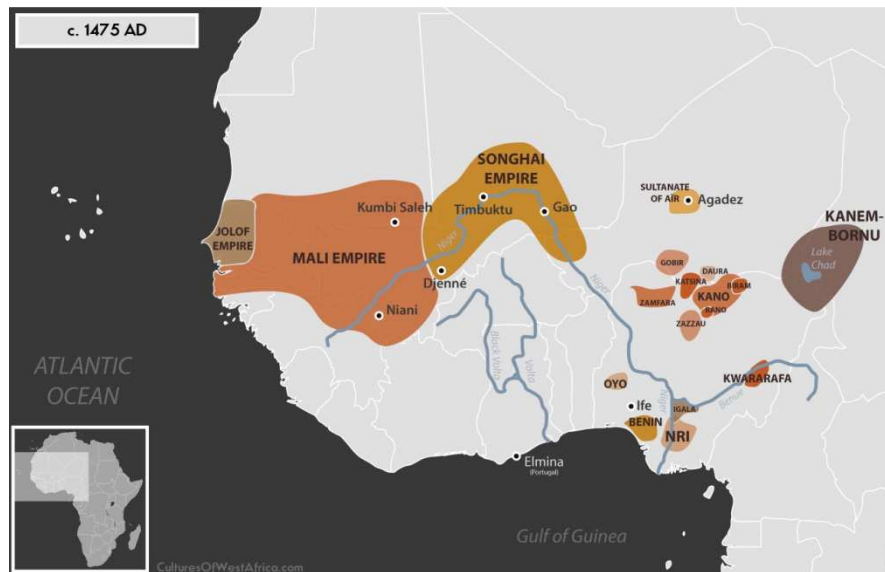


Figure 11 Map of West African Kingdoms c. 1475. culturesofwestafrica.com

Rather, Herman Bennett has shown that by the early sixteenth-century European enslavers had invested West African places with specific values and meanings that were tied to their own interests. Bennett noted that in 1508 “nine Germans, four Italians, and three Portuguese composed sixteen accounts of the African continent” in which they “manifested a discursive unity on the purported relationship between sovereignty and trade.”¹⁹⁶ Bennett showed that these writers’ interest in naming, describing, and engaging with West African groups was directly proportional to whether they perceived those groups as being lucrative trade partners. As Bennett puts it, “The more highly valued the commodity” an African polity could produce for European consumption, “the more visible and the more intelligible” it became in the writings of Europeans, who in turn rendered them as “kingdoms and nations resembling those then prevalent in Christendom.” Examining contemporary European travel

¹⁹⁶ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, Kindle Edition, Loc. 3082.

writing about West Africa demonstrates that the Jolof and Mali Empires and the Kingdom of Benin were specifically implicated in this process of interpretation.

The Venetian slave-trader Alvide Ca' da Mosto (c.1432-1488) typified this paradigm of interpretation in the *Navigazioni* (1507), his account of the mid-fifteenth century West African travels he undertook as an agent of the Portuguese King Henrique “the Navigator.” Ca' da Mosto spent significant time describing in particular his time in the Jolof Empire, which he regarded with a mixture of both admiration and disdain. While he was amazed to report that “the whole country was green, full of trees, and fertile,” for instance, he was also disturbed to find that inhabitants lived in “huts of straw” as a result of the “great lack of stones” in the region. His assessment of the region’s inhabitants was similarly mixed, as he noted that “in general they are great liars and cheats; but on the other hand, charitable, receiving strangers willingly, and providing a night's lodging and one or two meals without any charge.”

Ca' da Mosto’s ambivalent account of Jolof extended to matters of commerce in his description of the region’s kidney beans, which he deemed “the largest and finest in the world.” Ca' da Mosto concluded a lengthy and laudatory description of the beans—in which he described their varieties, colors, sizes, and the manner in which they are grown—with a critique of their growers, who he deemed to be “very bad labourers” who were “unwilling...to sow more than will barely support them throughout the year. Few trouble to raise supplies for market.”¹⁹⁷ Thus, for Ca' da Mosto the exceptional quality of the region’s standout commodity was marred by its growers’ lack of interest in commodifying it.

¹⁹⁷ Alvise Cadamosto, *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the second Half of the Fifteenth Century* (Surray: Ashgate, 2010), 42.

Commerce and sovereignty intersected in Ca' da Mosto's account of the month he spent with Damel, the king of the coastal Jolof kingdom of Kayor. Ca' da Mosto regarded Damel with his characteristic ambivalence. On the one hand, Ca' da Mosto was disturbed that Damel lacked the trappings characteristic of European kings, such as a palace, treasures, or gold. On the other hand, he noted that Damel had a reputation among the Portuguese for being a "notable and an upright ruler...who paid royally for what was brought to him," which prompted Ca' da Mosto to seek out the sovereign.¹⁹⁸ In Ca' da Mosto's estimation, Damel lived up to his reputation: in exchange for Ca' da Mosto's "Spanish horses...woollen cloth, Moorish silk, and other goods," which he valued at three hundred ducats, Damel offered "100 slaves" as well as "a handsome young negress, twelve years of age...for the service of my chamber."¹⁹⁹ Thus, while in Ca' da Mosto's estimation Damel lacked recognizable forms of wealth, he was a worthy trade partner. Moreover, Ca' da Mosto characterized enslaved people as being Damel's primary commodity, a claim that resonated with contemporary realities in which kingdoms within the fracturing Jolof Empire produced a majority of the slaves purchased by Europeans in the late fifteenth century.²⁰⁰

But European accounts of West African kingdoms were not all as focused on commercial exchange as the merchant Ca' da Mosto's was. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, for instance, the royal Portuguese chronicler Rui de Pina (1440-1522) recounted the diplomatic relationships between the Portuguese crown and various West African polities. In his *Cronica de el-rei D. João II*, which he had completed by 1504, de Pina wrote at length about the exchanges between his work's subject—the Portuguese King

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁰ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 79-81.

João II (r.1481-1495)—and Bumi Jeleen, the Muslim ruler of the Jolof kingdom. This relationship began with João’s attempt to induce Jeleen to convert to Christianity, as João began sending missionaries to Jeleen in the 1480s. Between 1481 and 1485 they regularly exchanged gifts, with Portuguese merchants and Christian missionaries acting as intermediaries. Jeleen was not receptive to the Portuguese king’s efforts at conversion until 1488, when Jeleen fled to the Portugal amidst a rebellion which cast him into exile.²⁰¹ João received Jeleen at his makeshift court in Palmela, where Jeleen solicited military aid from the Portuguese king and converted to Christianity.

Whereas Ca’ da Mosto emphasized Budomel’s difference from European kings, de Pina emphasized Jeleen’s emulation of European notions of inborn nobility even before his conversion. In recounting Jeleen’s initial entrance to João’s court, de Pina described him as “a man of great stature, very black, with a very long beard, well-proportioned limbs, and a very gracious presence.”²⁰² Moreover, de Pina recounted that “with great ease, majesty, and much composure” Jeleen made a speech in which “he used such remarkable words and sentences in support of his case that did not seem to come from a barbaric black, but from a Greek Prince educated in Athens.” These noble characteristics, in de Pina’s characterization, made Jeleen a worthy recipient of João’s support but did not mark him as João’s equal. de Pina claimed, for instance, that Jeleen acknowledged João as “the lord of Guinea,” and characterized himself “as his [João’s] vassal.”²⁰³ Jeleen’s subservience to the Portuguese Crown was further illustrated by his conversion to Christianity, through which he became the

²⁰¹ David Northrup, *Africa’s Discovery of Europe*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 25-27.

²⁰² Rui de Pina, *Cronica de El-Rei D. Joao II*, ed. Allberto Martins de Carvalho (Coimbra: Atlantida, 1950), 91.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 92.

godchild of “the king, the queen, the prince, the duke, a commissary of the pope...and the bishop of Tanger.”²⁰⁴

Despite his emphasis on the diplomatic and royal contexts of Jeleen’s relationship with João, de Pina nevertheless disclosed that João’s eventual decision to assist Jeleen was based on Jolof’s commercial potential. de Pina noted that “one of the principle reasons” that João decided to aid Jeleen “was his certainty that the aforementioned [Senegal] River” led “to the city of Timbuktu...where the richest trading and gold markets in the world” were located. Moreover, João intended to establish a fortress at the river’s entrance, “believing that the said fortress would provide...security for trade...and great security for merchants” who traded there.²⁰⁵ Whereas de Pina framed his account of Portugal’s involvement with Jolof around religious conversion and the relationship between kings, he framed his account of Portuguese relations with the Kingdom of Benin around a commodity.

de Pina noted that the Portuguese first encountered the Kingdom of Benin in 1486, “from where there came to these kingdoms [in Europe] the first pepper from Guinea.” He explained that pepper was produced in Benin in a “great quantity,” and that samples “were sent to Flanders and to other parts, and soon it became expensive and highly esteemed.” This European commercial activity prompted a royal response from Benin’s Oba, or ruler, who sent an ambassador to Portugal. In his brief account of this diplomatic exchange, de Pina noted that the ambassador was “a man of good repose and natural wisdom,” and that João sent him back to Benin with gifts, diplomats, and Christian religious advisors. de Pina also noted that the ambassador’s retinue included “new factors of the king, who were to stay and

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 94.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 95.

collect the said pepper, as well as other things that concerned the king's trade."²⁰⁶ de Pina ended the account on a somber note, recounting that this nascent trade failed due to the deadly illnesses that merchants contracted in Benin.

But illness was not the only obstacle to establishing trade in Benin. Benin's rulers and merchants regularly implemented policies designed to keep European merchants at arm's length. Ryder noted, for instance, that the 1486 establishment of a Portuguese factory in the city of Ughoton—the kingdom's port city and the home of the ambassador that came to João's court—did not prompt either the Oba or local merchants to significantly redirect or modify their trade.²⁰⁷ Benin's authorities were also infamous for "opening and closing the market" in specific goods in order to manipulate Portuguese demand and prices. This was an especially important tool in the kingdom's management of its slave markets. In 1516, for example, the Oba separated the market in enslaved men from that of enslaved women and imposed stricter regulations on the former. Consequently, European merchants had a harder time receiving royal permission to purchase enslaved men than enslaved women. These limitations gradually evolved into a complete restriction of the sale of enslaved men in the kingdom, which lasted until the end of the seventeenth century.²⁰⁸ Obas also undermined attempts by Portuguese authorities to implement their own trade policies, such as in 1516 when the Oba gave a group of merchants from San Tome open access to his kingdom's markets in exchange for lavish gifts, even though the Portuguese Crown had not licensed the merchants to engage in such trade.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 74

²⁰⁷ Alan Frederick Charles Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, 44.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 45.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 44.

In any case, later chroniclers expanded upon de Pina's narrow commercial focus on Benin by noting that the ambassador's visit also represented a potential expansion of Christendom into the interior of the African continent. In his *Décadas da Ásia*, for instance, João de Barros (1496-1570) noted that while in Portugal, Benin's ambassador described the Oghene, a suzerain whose domain was far to the east of Benin. According to the ambassador, the Oghene played an integral role in the ascension of new Obas, and in this capacity he dispensed "a staff and a head covering" made of tin, as well as a "cross made of that same tin, to be worn around the neck" to the new Oba and his ambassadors.²¹⁰ Given this information, de Barros characterized the Oghene's position in Benin as comparable to that of the pope in Christendom.²¹¹

But based on his own geographical and historical knowledge, João II "thought that he [the Oghene] should be Prester John," the mythical Christian king of the east who might provide the Portuguese "with some entry into India."²¹² This represented both a religious and a commercial opportunity, as it raised the possibility that Benin's Obas acknowledged the authority of a Christian king who also had access to sought-after Indian markets. These possibilities prompted João II to send Berthomeu Dias on an expedition in 1487 to find India by sailing around Africa's southern tip. While this effort failed, it was not the end of religious diplomacy between Portugal and Benin. In 1514, Oba Ozolua sent another delegation to Lisbon to discuss matters of commerce and conversion to Christianity. The Oba had demonstrated a sustained interest in Christianity throughout the second decade of the

²¹⁰ João de Barros, *Decadas da Asia*, ed. Diogo de Couto (Lisbon: Na Regina Officina Typografica, 1778), 182.

²¹¹ Alan Frederick Charles Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, 31-2.

²¹² João de Barros, *Decadas da Asia*, 183.

sixteenth century, and eventually adopted the religion in 1516, though it did not endure in the kingdom for long.²¹³

While European connections to the Jolof Empire and the Kingdom of Benin were novel to the late fifteenth century, the Mali Empire occupied a more enduring and historical place in European political and commercial imaginations. Iberian awareness of the Mali Empire predated the fifteenth-century thanks in part to the spectacular *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, undertaken by the emperor Mansa Musa in the fourteenth century. Musa engaged in thrilling displays of wealth throughout his journey in cities such as Cairo and Medina, and Michael Gomez has estimated that a retinue of up to fourteen thousand enslaved people accompanied the Mansa carrying gold, which he sometimes showered upon onlookers.²¹⁴ Europeans throughout the Mediterranean heard about this lavish caravan, and by the middle of the fourteenth century Timbuktu began appearing on European maps, which often noted the Empire's lucrative trade in gold. This was particularly evident in maps produced in Majorca in the late fourteenth century.²¹⁵ Of these, perhaps the most famous was the 1375 Catalan Atlas commissioned by the Aragonese king Pedro IV from the Majorcan Jewish cartographer Abraham Cresques, which featured a depiction of Mansa Musa, "lord of the blacks of Guinea" [Figure 10].

²¹³ David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe*, 32-33.

²¹⁴ Michael A. Gomez, *African Dominion*, 159.

²¹⁵ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 72.



Figure 12 Image of Mansa Musa from the Catalan Atlas (1375).

Medieval Iberian connections to the Mali Empire existed outside of accounts and depictions of Mansa Musa's pilgrimage. Toby Green, for instance, has noted that "there had been deep commercial and cultural connections between centres such as Gao, Timbuktu, and the Islamic kingdom in Granada" well before the fifteenth century, "with architects from Al-Andalus coming to the Sahel to work for the Emperor of Mali."²¹⁶ Moreover, before the 1391 pogroms that drove many Jews out of Spain, "Jewish traders of Barcelona and Aragon had long offered Spanish monarchs access" to Malian gold "through a network with the Jews of Tlemcen (Algeria) and Sijilmassa (southern Morocco)." Then, following the anti-Jewish pogroms that swept through Spain in 1391, many Spanish Jews fled to Morocco, where they and their descendants often acted as "the principal agents in the early Portuguese cloth trade," and in so doing served as conduits between North and West African markets.²¹⁷ Thus, in regard to the Mali Empire, late fifteenth century European commercial and diplomatic

²¹⁶ Ibid., 74.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 72.

efforts in West Africa were a new phase of a longer history. Ca' da Mosto and de Barras wrote about this new phase of European relations with Mali in their respective chronicles, placing particular emphasis on the empire's access to gold.

Ca' da Mosto offered a thorough description of Mali's gold trade, which he began with an account of Taghazi in northern Mali where "a great amount of rock salt is mined." Once mined, the salt was transported to Mali where "within eight days of its arrival all is disposed of at a price of about two to three hundred *mitigalli* a load." Although Malians wasted no time in buying this salt, Ca' da Mosto noted that "only a small quantity is consumed in their country."²¹⁸ Malians transported the larger part of this salt "a great distance" to a far-off body of water, where they would "pile it in rows." The following day, "another race of blacks who do not wish to be seen or speak" would arrive "in large boats" to exchange the salt for gold in a ritual in which neither party would speak or see one another.²¹⁹ Then, one caravan took a portion of the gold to Gao and another took the rest to Timbuktu. In Timbuktu, merchants divided the gold into smaller portions and took them through various routes to cities throughout "Barbary," including Tunis, Oran, Fez, and Morocco. Ca' da Mosto noted that these North African cities were where the gold "is bought by us Italians and other Christians." Gold that arrived in the Algerian city of Honaine, moreover, "is carried to the sea coast, and sold to the Spaniards."²²⁰

de Barros wrote about Mali in less detail than Ca' da Mosto did, but nevertheless emphasized the Empire's association with gold. In his description of the Senegal River, de Barros noted that the river was flanked by many cities, "the principle one being Timbuktu."

²¹⁸ Ca' da Mosto, *The Voyages*, 21.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-3.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

Although by the end of the fifteenth century Timbuktu was under the control of the Songhay Empire, de Barros made it clear that it was still implicated in the Mali Empire's trading networks, as "many merchants—from Cairo, Tunis, Oran, Tlemcen, Fez, Morocco, and Other Kingdoms—gather there on account of the gold that comes there from the great Mandinka Province."²²¹ de Barros subsequently explained that the Mansa of Mali "is the most powerful prince in the Mandinka Province." It was only after highlighting the Mansa's place in Timbuktu's gold trade that de Barros briefly described João II's attempt to establish diplomatic relations with the Mansa in 1488.²²²

Although none of these chronicles were written by Spaniards, much less Valencians, they nevertheless offer insight into how enslavers in the Bailiff General's court understood prominent West African polities. Ca' da Mosto's *Navigazioni*, for instance, was first published in Italian in 1507, but by 1515 translations existed in Latin, German, and French. Moreover these chroniclers clearly situated themselves within broader European-African networks of exchange and information transmission. Ca' da Mosto, a Venetian agent of a Portuguese king, recalled trading Spanish horses for enslaved people in the Jolof Empire, and noted Spain's involvement in Mali's trans-Saharan gold trade. de Barros, moreover, recalled that European merchants brought pepper from Benin to markets in Portugal and Flanders.

The presenters in the Bailiff General's court mirrored the trans-European nature of these texts. The court, for instance, was a stopping point for merchants from throughout Europe who wanted to access Valencia's slave market. In addition to Spanish Kingdoms, these merchants came from Portugal (21), Italy (50), and France (5) [Figure 11

²²¹ Joao de Barros, *Decadas*, 220.

²²² *Ibid.*, 257.

] Before arriving to Valencia these merchants conducted business throughout western coastal Africa—in Portuguese-held factories and markets in Arguin, Elmina, Cabo Verde, São Tomé—or in Portuguese and Spanish cities including Lisbon, Porto, Seville, Granada, and Alicante. In the course of these travels, as well as in Valencia, these merchants struck deals with local artisans, nobility, clergy, jurists, and doctors who were in the market for enslaved people. These Iberian locals could, in turn, bring their captives to Valencia for sale and initiate their own captive presentations.

Number of Merchants	Place of Origin
129	Valencia
71	Spain (Aragon and Castile, not Valencia)
50	Italy (Genoa, Florence, and Venice)
21	Portugal
5	France

Figure 13 Origins of merchants who appeared before the Bailiff General, 1479-1516. Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 171-175.

Whether directly or indirectly, then, presenters who appeared in the Bailiff General’s court were implicated in trans-European and Euro-African networks of trade and exchange. They foregrounded their position in this network by locating their captives’ origins in well-known West African polities such as Benin, Jolof, and Mali. In making these claims, enslavers drew upon and advanced the political-ideological projects of chroniclers like Ca’ da Mosto, de Pina, and de Barros, whose texts filtered Europe’s involvement in the sub-Saharan African slave trade through shared histories of commerce, diplomacy, and missionary activities. Enslavers thus used claims about their captives’ origins to present themselves and the Valencian Crown as actors in an expansive and dynamic realm of exchange between polities, rather than as commercially-oriented traffickers of enslaved peoples.

Conclusion

The Bailiff General deemed captives as *boçal* on the basis that they “did not know how to speak in a tongue other than that of their homeland.” This characterization could be easily applied to the Bailiff General and to the European enslavers who made claims about captives’ West African origins in the early sixteenth century. Both groups spoke about captives’ origins using languages that were native to Europe and that reflected their own goals, experiences, and notions of sovereignty and commerce. But while this language of origins represented broader European understandings of West Africa, it was nevertheless specific to the context of Valencian captive presentations. Contemporary Valencian notarial contracts of slave sales, for instance, utilized their own vocabularies for rendering sub-Saharan African origins, citing enslaved Africans’ affiliation with their native peoples (*gens*) or nations (*natio*). Moreover, Aurelia Martin Casares has found that in contemporary Granada, nearly eighty percent of s notarial contracts recording slave sales involving black captives did not indicate the captives’ origins at all.²²³ But while this language was specific to the Bailiff General, it was also specific to the early sixteenth century. Like other languages, this lexicon of sub-Saharan African origins changed over time.

In 1519, amidst the unrest and violence of the Revolt of the Brotherhoods (*Germanies*), the Bailiff General began repurposing captive presentations, using them as a venue to determine whether suspected fugitive captives apprehended in the Kingdom of Valencia were free or enslaved. This new genre of captive presentations—which did not feature presentations from enslavers and typically recorded longer and more idiosyncratic interrogations of suspected fugitives—was formally and procedurally distinct from

²²³ Aurelia Martin Casares, *La esclavitud en Granada*, 149.

presentations of foreign captives on which it was based. These new presentations also represented a significant ideological shift that was taking place in the Bailiff General's court. Whereas captive presentations had previously been tools for maintaining the legitimacy of Valencia's slave trade and protecting the Crown's interests, these new fugitive presentations more closely protected the interests of enslavers as a class.

Records of fugitive presentations exist through 1530, at which point no captive presentations of either genre exist until 1550. In the intervening years the Bailiff General's interests and operations shifted significantly. As greater numbers of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans were being directly exported to the Americas in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, the volume of captives imported to Valencia plummeted and only twenty-two captive presentations recorded between 1550-1551 and 1557-1560. Of these, only three involved black captives who were born outside of Iberia. Amidst this new landscape of captivity, in which the importation of foreign captives was no longer a lucrative source of income and in which the Bailiff General had reoriented to represent interests of enslavers, the court's interest in black captives' origins had markedly decreased.

A 1550 presentation of an "eighteen or twenty-year-old" black man named Luys, who was apprehended on the suspicion that he was a fugitive captive, illustrates the changed approach towards origins in these proceedings. A basket weaver named Johan Ferrer had brought Luys before the Bailiff General, and while he did not try to account for Luys's homeland, Ferrer recounted a different kind of origin story. He claimed that he had come upon Luys in Valencia's brothel where he captured Luys "like a fugitive."²²⁴ For his part, Luys testified that he had been baptized in Lisbon, and noted that at the time of his baptism

²²⁴ ARV BG 201, 14r. -16v.

he received the name Luys. But while his testimony on this matter suggested he came to Lisbon from somewhere outside of Iberia, Luys could not testify to his origins with certainty. When the Bailiff General asked Luys where he was from, he testified that he “did not know if he was born in Portugal or in Guinea.”²²⁵ This kind of ambiguity had been problematic to the Bailiff General in the first decades of the century, when he painstakingly sought to situate black captives within the sub-Saharan African Land of the Blacks. But in 1550 the official deemed the matter irrelevant, and did not pursue it any further before deeming Luys a captive.

The language of sub-Saharan African origins that the Bailiff General and enslavers utilized in captive presentations was thus well-suited to meet both parties’ interests and needs. As I will show in the next chapter, though, it was far removed from the realities and interpretations of sub-Saharan African origins that captives recorded.

²²⁵ ARV BG 201, 14r. -16v. “no sab si es nat en portogal o en guinea.”

Part Two

Chapter Four: Origins II: African Realities

In February 1506 a formerly enslaved black woman named Hieronyma enlisted the services of a Valencian notary to draw up a marriage contract between her and her betrothed, Sebastian Figuera, a “freed black man” (*nirgo liberto*).²²⁶ Unlike Sebastian, Hieronyma did not have a surname. She did, however, note that she was a “freed black woman of the Cenich people” (*nigra liberta de genere de Cenich*), perhaps a reference to the Serer people of Senegambia.²²⁷ The manner and the context of Hieronyma’s self-identification are striking. During the first half of the sixteenth century, Valencian legal and notarial records typically only noted information about sub-Saharan African origins in the context of their enslavement, such as in captive presentations and records of slave sales. Moreover, when other free black Iberians identified with their origins in Valencian records during this period, they typically cited Iberian toponyms. Hieronyma’s decision to declare herself a “freed black woman of the Cenich people” in the opening lines of her marriage contract was thus exceptional. But, in invoking her sub-Saharan African origins, she was not unique.

Free and enslaved diasporic black people throughout the early modern Iberian-Atlantic world mobilized their African origins in a variety of contexts. In his reading of Lope de Rueda’s *Los engañados* (ca.1538-1558), for instance, Nicholas Jones has shown that the character Guiomar, a formerly enslaved black woman, “articulates a black feminist subject position by underscoring her royal sub-Saharan African lineage,” which included multiple

²²⁶ ARV Fondos Notariales Protocolos 1871 15r.-16v.

²²⁷ P.E.H. Hair, “Black African Slaves at Valencia, 1482-1516: An Onomastic Inquiry,” *History in Africa* 7 (1980): List B.

royal women.²²⁸ Erin Rowe has noted that black confraternities in Lisbon occasionally “elected a king and queen” who “sometimes took the names of historically important Central African rulers” to preside over their meetings and processions.²²⁹ Chloe Ireton has shown that Black Iberians also successfully invoked their West African origins throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to prove their “Old Christian” status in inquisitorial courts.²³⁰ Across the Atlantic, David Wheat and Rachel Sarah O’Toole have shown that throughout the early modern period, black people of sub-Saharan African descent often incorporated references to their native lands or peoples in their surnames.²³¹ Moreover, many black confraternities throughout the Americas drew up parameters for inclusion or exclusion based on specific region of origin.²³² John Thornton moreover, has noted that a number of leaders of slave rebellions in the Americas—such as King Bayano in Panama and Nyanga in Mexico—fashioned themselves as descendants of sub-Saharan African royalty.²³³

These examples do not directly shed light on Hieronyma’s motivations or intentions for making her exceptional self-identification as a “freed Black woman of the Cenich people.” They do, however demonstrate that early modern diasporic black Iberians and Americans—both free and enslaved—invoked their sub-Saharan African origins towards different ends in a variety of documentary contexts. As such, examining enslaved peoples’ invocations and accounts of their origins in captive presentations and contracts of slave sale

²²⁸ Nicholas Jones, *Staging Habla de Negros*, Loc 3702.

²²⁹ Erin Rowe, *Black Saints in Early Modern Global Catholicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 94-5.

²³⁰ Chloe Ireton, “‘They Are Blacks of the Caste of Black Christians’: Old Christian Black Blood in the Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Iberian Atlantic,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 97.4 (2017).

²³¹ Sarah Rachel O’Toole, “To Be Free and Lucumí: Ana de la Calle and Making African Diaspora Identities in Colonial Peru,” in *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, ed. Sherwin K. Bryant and Sarah Rachel O’Toole (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012): 73-92 and David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640*, xviii, 25-7.

²³² Erin Rowe, *Black Saints*, 94-6. Rowe also tentatively suggests that such confraternities might have existed in Lisbon, Erin Rowe, *Black Saints*, 100.

²³³ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 294.

will situate Hieronyma's exceptional self-identification within a broader set of possibilities and meanings. The rote and standardized nature of captive presentations and slave sales—a byproduct of their creators' restrictive objectives and regimes of data collection—may appear to disqualify them as sources that can offer serious insight into black Valencians' understandings of their origins. But Nicholas Jones's study of Golden Age Spanish texts that utilized the *habla de negros*, or “black talk,” trope has shown that even texts with dubious representational agendas can be valuable repositories of early modern black Iberian life.

Jones has demonstrated how centering and critically engaging with the voices of early modern black Iberians in sources crafted by non-Black authors reorients the analytical possibilities of such texts. In the case of *habla de negros* texts, which were framed by the interests and perspectives of white authors and audiences, Jones noted that “some scholars will contend that it is impossible for any white author of *habla de negros* materials to engage in nonracist characterizations.” But in treating black characters in these texts as both agentive figures and as reflections of elements of black Iberian life, Jones convincingly shows that *habla de negros* texts “do, in fact, render legible the voices and experiences of black Africans in fundamental ways that demand our attention.”²³⁴ The same is true for Valencian captive presentations and contracts of slave sales.

Although these sources were designed to further the interests of the enslavers, notaries and officials who produced them, they nevertheless recorded enslaved black people's voices and testimonies. For their part, captive presentations rendered many captives' interrogations in curt and formulaic language. Nevertheless, some captives' mentioned specific details that were rarely, if ever, mentioned in other testimonies. This was particularly

²³⁴ Nicholas Jones, *Staging Habla de Negros*, Kindle Edition, Loc. 386-393.

true of captives' accounts of their initial enslavement and homelands. The details, irregularities, and variations—which did not work to serve the aims of enslavers—reflected the contributions of enslaved black people themselves. For their part, contracts of slave sales only recorded the voices of enslavers, but they rendered sub-Saharan African origins using inconsistent terms and categories that reflected captives' own claims about their origins. Thus, it is imperative to recognize the presence of sub-Saharan African voices and interpretations in these records.

Centering the diverse testimonies that sub-Saharan Africans gave about their origins makes it possible to outline three modes through which sub-Saharan Africans challenged, complicated, and undermined the interpretative frameworks that European enslavers mobilized when rendering sub-Saharan West African origins. The first mode pertained to captives who cited origins using terms that were uncommon in contemporary Valencian documentation, many of whom were *boçal*. Historians have typically noted that citing uncommon origins posed logistical and linguistic challenges to Valencian officials charged with translating and transcribing them.²³⁵ However, in claiming these uncommon origins, many captives were drawing upon notions of belonging and origins that the Bailiff General could not fully recognize or comprehend. Captives who spoke about their origins in terms that were familiar to their enslavers, on the other hand, could draw upon legible frameworks of sovereignty and enslavability in ways that challenged the Spanish Crown's claims to being moral or legitimate enslavers. Thirdly, a handful of captives upended European frameworks of enslavement and legitimacy altogether by characterizing Europeans as active and enthusiastic enslavers of freeborn African.

²³⁵ Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 57.

Outlining these three interpretive modes of interpreting and recording origins will not answer the question of why the bride-to-be Hieronyma began her marriage contract by identifying as a “freed black woman of the Cenich people.” It will, however, illustrate that Hieronyma was one of many sub-Saharan Africans—from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of experiences—who interpreted and recorded their origins on their own terms, and in ways that native Iberians found surprising, unexpected, and challenging.

Uncommon Origins

In 1513, two *boçal* captives—Anthoni, formerly Mareti, and Cristophol, formerly Onthoa—appeared before the Bailiff General in a single presentation and testified to being “from Beafor.” Because the Bailiff General had deemed the pair *boçal*, Mareti/Anthoni and Onthoa/Cristophol did not get to contextualize or elaborate upon their origins or the context of their initial captivity. Nevertheless, in identifying as being “from Beafor,” the men were clearly identifying as members of the Biafada-speaking Biafada people.

It is possible that officials in the Bailiff General’s court recognized this mode of self-identification. Five years prior, the Portuguese explorer Duarte Pacheco Pereria had published the first-ever European account of the Biafada people in his *Esmeraldo de situ orbis*. In his account, Pacheco noted that the Biafada people lived near the Rio Grande in Gambia, were “very black in color, and many of them walk around nude, and others wear cotton cloths.” Moreover, they practiced male circumcision and “were subjects of the Mandinka king.”²³⁶ While Pereria’s text was not distributed beyond the Portuguese court, his account of Biafada people might have represented what other enslavers knew about the Biafada people. Internal evidence from captive presentations, though, suggests that Mareti/Anthoni and

²³⁶ Duarte Pacheco Pereria, *Esmeraldo de situ orbis*, ed. Augusto Epiphanyo da Silva Dias (Lisbon: Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa, 1905), 91, 95.

Onthoa/Cristophol's claim to being "from Biafada" was beyond the Bailiff General's comprehension.

For one thing, captives who claimed to be "from Biafada" were rare in Valencia in this period. Only five other captive presentations involved captives "from Biafada," and they all occurred after Onthoa/Cristophol's and Mareti/Anthoni's presentation. First, in 1515, three captives—Maria, Pedro and Francisco—all testified to originating "from Biafada."²³⁷ The *boçal* captives Johana and Francisco then identified themselves as "from Biafada" in 1517 and 1519, respectively.²³⁸ More telling than the rarity of captives who self-identified as Biafada, though, was how the Bailiff General recorded the term.

The Bailiff General was notably inconsistent in how he recorded the terms of origin that Biafada captives used. Spelling variations were common in the Bailiff General's rendering of West African terms in captive presentations, and in fact were common features of notarial and legal documents produced in Spain and its colonies throughout the nineteenth centuries. But in more commonly-cited terms of origin these variations were phonetically consistent. Thus, the Bailiff General rendered Jolof as *Jolof*, *Jalof*, or *Galoff* and Mandinka as *Mandinka*, *Mantinga*, or *Mantingua*. His renderings of Biafada peoples' origins, however, were strikingly inconsistent even in their phonetics. Firstly, he recorded Onthoa/Cristophol's and Mareti/Anthoni as being "from *Beafor*" in 1513. Then, in 1515, he identified Maria, Pedro, and Francisco as captives "from *Brafara*." He then identified Johana, in 1517 as being "from *Biafara*," and in 1519 he rendered Pedro as a native "of *Befant*." This variation in spelling *Beafor/Brafara/Biafara* suggests that the Bailiff General was not specifically familiar with Biafada as a term of origin. The phonetic differences between these spellings

²³⁷ ARV BG 198, 149v-150r, 150v-151r, 156bis r-v.

²³⁸ ARV BG 198, 241r.-141v., 354v.-355r.

also suggest that the Bailiff General's renderings of Biafada were ad hoc attempts to transcribe the pronunciations of the captives who used these terms. Thus, in testifying to their origins, these captives highlighted the limits of the Bailiff General's knowledge of sub-Saharan African terms of origin.

The testimonies of these Biafada captives also challenged the broader ideological premises upon which the Bailiff General based his rendering of sub-Saharan African origins. In identifying as Biafada, these captives located their origins amongst a peoples and linguistic group rather than a place or polity, as was typical in the Bailiff General's toponymic rendering of sub-Saharan Africans' origins. While Biafada people resided in the coastal region of modern-day Guinea-Bissau, they were more dispersed than was typical amongst nearby groups and were not organized around a central village.²³⁹ In fact, there three separate Biafada kingdoms with their own administrative apparatuses in the region: Biguba, Guinala, and Bissege.²⁴⁰ Moreover, in the early sixteenth century the polities throughout this littoral region were still subject to the political, economic, and cultural influence of the Mali Empire.²⁴¹ This influence was longstanding, as Biafada oral histories attribute the Mali Empire's thirteenth century expansion to driving the Biafada to the Atlantic coast from their previous, more inland, residences.²⁴² Thus, in identifying their origins with the Biafada people, Mareti/Anthoni, Onthoa/Cristophol and their fellow Biafada captives situated themselves within specific histories and social organizations. Moreover, in choosing to

²³⁹ Walter Rodney, "A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800," (dissertation, University of London, 1966), 60.

²⁴⁰ Walter Rodney, "A History," 64. Primary source accounts of these separate kingdoms can be found in John Ogilby, *Africa: Being an Accurate Description of the Regions of Ægypt, Barbary, Lybia* (London: T. Johnson, 1670); John Barbot, *An Abstract of a Voyage to Congo River, or the Zair, and to Cabinde, in the year 1700* (London: Messrs. Churchill, 1746).

²⁴¹ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 33. Walter Rodney, "A History," 57.

²⁴² Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 33.

identify themselves with their Biafada lineage and language, these captives chose not to identify as subjects of particular Biafada kingdoms or tributaries of the Mali Empire. Their strategy of self-identification is thus suggestive of Toby Green's observation that in early modern West Africa "lineages and kin connections were of far greater importance in determining how people related to one another" than other categories of identification.²⁴³

The Bailiff General did not acknowledge, and in fact was likely unaware of, these contexts and nuance in Biafada captives' self-identifications. Instead, he reflexively labelled Biafada as a "Land of the Blacks." He was not unique in this regard. Herman Bennett has noted that European writers regularly transplanted homegrown notions of place and nationhood onto African polities, as it was "European travelers [who]...introduced the language and the concepts" of nations to these collectivities. In so doing, they "rendered *ethnos* into kingdoms and nations resembling those then prevalent in Christendom."²⁴⁴ This outcome was embedded in these writers' engagements with West African peoples, as European travelers and writers arrived to West Africa's Atlantic coast attempting "to identify local lords, discern the extent of their jurisdiction, and learn whether they represented vassals of a more powerful sovereign."²⁴⁵ This was certainly the case for Duarte Pacheco Pereria, who demonstrated some nuance in distinguishing the Biafada people from the polities to which they were subject.

The Bailiff General was thus engaged in this broader ideological project of applying European political structures to accounts of sub-Saharan Africa. But unlike these travelers—who Bennett characterized as proactively importing European concepts of nations into their

²⁴³ Ibid., 62.

²⁴⁴ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, 187.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 188.

accounts of West Africa as a means to guide their European audiences to the regions and peoples who presented the most lucrative opportunities for trade and enslavement—the Bailiff General’ participation in this project was at least partially fueled by his own unfamiliarity or ignorance of the terms of origin that captives used in their testimonies. Biafada captives were not alone in using terms of origin with which the Bailiff General was unfamiliar.

Between 1517 and 1524, for instance, ten captives testified that they were “of the Igbo” (*ibo* or *ybo*) people, who resided throughout southern Nigeria. Although the geographical and sociopolitical backgrounds of these Igbo captives’ origins are unclear, it is possible that some were enslaved in the Kingdom of Benin. Igbo people were predominant in the kingdom’s eastern territories, and Duarte Pacheco Pereira claimed that the enslaved people sold in Benin’s markets consisted primarily of “the Opuu,” which A.F.C. Ryder suggests may have been a transliteration of Igbo.²⁴⁶ In 1518 an enslaved fifteen-year-old Igbo girl named Margarita gave testimony that might have alluded to Benin’s enslavement of Igbo people when she had been enslaved “by other black people who then sold her to Portuguese Christians.”²⁴⁷ Thus, as was the case for Biafada captives, Igbo captives like Margarita identified themselves primarily in reference to their lineage and language groups rather than by way of the polities where they had lived.

These Biafada and Igbo captives were just a few of the many captives in this period who used terms of origin that were beyond the Bailiff General’s expertise. Between 1502 and 1524, *boçal* and non-*boçal* captives identified their origins using more than ninety terms that were either unique to them or that appeared in the testimonies of five or fewer other captives.

²⁴⁶ Duarte Pacheco Pereria, *Esmeraldo*, 119; Alan Frederick Charles Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, 35, n.1.

²⁴⁷ ARV BG 198, 327r. – 327v. “per altres negres los quals la venere a xpians portoguesos.”

The Bailiff General displayed significant spelling variations of some of these infrequently-used terms, as well. Only eight captives, for instance, identified as Cenich in their testimonies, and scribes in the Bailiff General's court spelled the term variously as *Cenich*, *Senis*, *Seni*, *Ceny*. The variations in these spellings' final syllable especially suggest that court's spellings of the term Cenich reflected the ways in which Cenich people said them. While these captives' articulations of their origins highlighted the particular shortcomings of the Bailiff General's treatment of sub-Saharan African origins, captive presentations were not the only documentary context in which these modes of identification occurred.

Notarial contracts of slave sales also bear evidence of captives identifying their origins with peoples rather than with places. Unlike captive presentations, which consistently rendered sub-Saharan African terms of origins as lands, notarial contracts listed captives' terms of origin either as nations (*natio*) or peoples (*gens*). Thus, while in 1512 thirty-year-old Joanna used language that would be familiar to some Valencians when she identified as originating from "the Mandinka nation," in 1519 eighteen-year-old Beatrice opted for a less familiar label when she identified as being "of the Camorie people," a term of origin that did not appear in any contemporary captive presentations.²⁴⁸ Given the Bailiff General's difficulty with rendering and recognizing uncommon terms of origin, the notaries recording these contracts likely relied on the vocabularies and pronunciations of captives when recording their origins.

Thus, by simply testifying to their origins, enslaved sub-Saharan Africans could draw attention to the limits of the regimes of categorization and identification utilized by officials and enslavers. They could, on the one hand, invoke terms with which officials like the Bailiff

²⁴⁸ARV Fondos Notariales Protocolos, 1877 February 10 and 1353 December 12.

General was unfamiliar. In using these unfamiliar terms, moreover, sub-Saharan Africans could draw upon logics of self-identification that were even more confounding to officials, as they located their origins amongst people and lineages rather than amongst states, nations, or lands. That West African captives engaged in these forms of self-identification, regardless of whether or not officials labelled them as *boçal*, suggests that they quickly became conversant in these terms and that they were of enduring significance. This is clear in the case of the new bride Hieronyma's self-identification as a "freed black woman of the Cenich people" in her marriage contract, a documentary context in which such self-identification was neither expected nor required. Enslavers and officials were thus unable to fully comprehend the literal meanings of the uncommon terms of origin with which some black Valencians identified. But even black Valencians who described their origins in terms more familiar to Iberian enslavers could use their testimonies to make claims that challenged their enslavers' interpretative frameworks.

The Meanings of Capture

Sub-Saharan African captives regularly recounted entering captivity at the hands of other sub-Saharan Africans who then sold them to European merchants. The 1502 testimony of a woman from Jolof named Maya was typical of most captives' testimonies on the matter. Maya simply noted that she had been captured "by other black people" before being sold to Europeans.²⁴⁹ Some captives explicitly cited warfare as a context of their captivity, such as thirty-five-year-old Johan from Jolof who testified succinctly in 1506 that "he was captured in war in his homeland."²⁵⁰ In 1507, moreover, eighteen-year-old Joan Marquo from Terranova recalled that he "was captured in his land during a war waged with other black

²⁴⁹ ARV BG 195, 168r.-168v.

²⁵⁰ ARV BG 196, 119r.-119v. "ffonch pres en la guerra en sa terra."

people.”²⁵¹ Similarly, in 1522 twenty-three-year-old Maria recalled being captured “by other black people from other lands.”²⁵² Eleven-year-old Diego “from Mandinka” provided even more detail in 1509 when he recalled that “black people from other lands were warring with the people of his land, during which time he was captured.”²⁵³

These captives’ testimonies reflected longstanding patterns of enslavement throughout sub-Saharan West Africa. John Thornton, for instance, has noted that sub-Saharan West African polities “were not, for the most part, selling their own subjects [into slavery] but people whom they, at least, regarded as aliens.”²⁵⁴ Likewise, oral accounts of imperial Mali’s early history, for instance, sometimes recount that the empire’s founder, Sunjata, exacted revenge against a disrespectful Jolof ruler by killing him and bringing seventeen-thousand of his subjects back to Mali as captives.²⁵⁵ In the early sixteenth-century wars plagued the Jolof state and the Mali Empire was under regular military attack from neighboring powers, including imperial Songhay.²⁵⁶ But being captured by outside groups was not the only context in which sub-Saharan Africans testified to entering captivity.

In fact, some individuals testified to entering slavery as a result of internal slaving mechanisms and civil conflicts. In 1503, for instance, a twenty-year-old “from Mandinka” named Rodrigo testified that “in his homeland, along with other black people, he was captured by the black king (*lo rey negre*) who then sold them to Christian men.”²⁵⁷ Although the Bailiff General recorded Rodrigo’s testimony in imprecise terms, it is suggestive of

²⁵¹ ARV BG 196, 164v.-165r.

²⁵² ARV BG 198, 576v.-578r.

²⁵³ ARV BG 196, 401r. – 401v. “los negres de altres terres tenim guerra ab la sua terra e han presa ell confessant ensemps.”

²⁵⁴ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 99.

²⁵⁵ Michael A. Gomez, *African Dominion*, 85.

²⁵⁶ Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 99.

²⁵⁷ ARV BG 195, 263r. – 265r. “en la dita sua terra ensemps ab altres negres foren presos per lo rey negre.”

contemporary slaving practices in the Mali Empire. Michael Gomez has noted that beginning in the fourteenth century many enslaved people living in Mali were non-Muslims who were taken from the empire's rural territories.²⁵⁸ Twenty-four-year old "native of Guinea" Johan recounted another tale of royal enslavement in 1518 when he testified that "the king of his homeland captured him and others and sold them to Christians."²⁵⁹ Other captives cited civil war as the context of their enslavement, such as in 1504 when a twenty-year-old from Jolof named Johan testified that he was "captured in his land along with other black people, including his wife, by other black people from the aforementioned land of Jolof, who had waged war against them," likely referring to the civil wars between kingdoms that plagued the Jolof Empire in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.²⁶⁰

Since the fifteenth century, Europeans had been aware that sub-Saharan African captivity was often linked to external and civil wars, raids, and conflicts. Alvise da Ca' da Mosto's account of his travels illustrate this familiarity. Ca' da Mosto noted that kings on the West African littoral supported themselves, in part, through "raids, which result in many slaves from his own as well as neighboring countries."²⁶¹ He also claimed that autonomous groups such as the Serer recognized no internal lords for fear that such a figure might "carry off their wives and children and sell them into slavery, as is done by the kings and the lords of all the other lands of the negroes."²⁶² Furthermore, Ca' da Mosto claimed that people who lived along the Gambia River "do not commonly venture far outside their own country," for

²⁵⁸ Michael A. Gomez, *African Dominion*, 159-162.

²⁵⁹ ARV BG 198, 316v.-317v. "dix que lo rey de la sua terra prengue ell dit confessant e altres e ven els a xpianos portugueses."

²⁶⁰ ARV BG 196, 14r.-15r. "en la sua terra ensemps ab altres negres foren presos e la dita sa muller per altres negres de la dita terra de galoff los quals los donaren guerra"; for more on Jolof civil conflict in this period, see Green, 79-80.

²⁶¹ Ca' da Mosto, *The Voyages*, 30. John Thornton deploys this same characterization in *Africa and Africans*, 99.

²⁶² Ca' da Mosto, *The Voyages*, 54.

they are liable to “being taken by the Blacks and sold into slavery.”²⁶³ Bennett has likewise observed that Portuguese chroniclers displayed an “incessant...focus on wars, raids, and Guinea’s inhabitants enslaving one another” in their accounts of sub-Saharan West Africa.²⁶⁴

Regardless of whether they were captured in wars with foreign groups or were the victims of internal raids and civil wars, the fact that these individuals entered captivity at the hands of non-European captors was certainly of interest to the Bailiff General. Bennett has noted that West African modes of slaving were central to European calculations of sub-Saharan Africans’ enslavability, at least insofar as European writers rendered sub-Saharan Africans who had been captured and enslaved before being brought to markets for European purchase as sovereignless subjects. Bennett has argued that chroniclers like Zurara and Ca’ da Mosto “deemed sovereignless subjects as objects for enslavement.”²⁶⁵ Zurara, for instance, went so far as to distinguish “Moors” from sub-Saharan African “blackamoors” on the basis that the former were sovereign subjects who could be ransomed and the latter were not.²⁶⁶ Bennett noted that his equation served European ideological needs, as “by representing Guinea’s inhabitants as the culprits” responsible for reducing free sub-Saharan Africans to captivity for European consumption, chroniclers absolved “Christians from having violated canon law, which expressly forbade the enslavement of the *extra ecclesiam*.”²⁶⁷

Thus, in soliciting captives’ accounts of entering slavery at the hands of other West Africans—whether through foreign wars, civil conflicts, or royal raids—the Bailiff General was further situating captives within legible frameworks of enslavability. But in offering

²⁶³ Ibid., 69.

²⁶⁴ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, 152.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 80-2.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 150.

these accounts of their captivity, sub-Saharan Africans were not seeking to meet their enslavers' ideological expectations. At the very least, they were responding to questions that enslavers and the Bailiff General were coercing them to answer. But for some sub-Saharan Africans, recounting their entrance into captivity was an opportunity to express their displeasure and throw their claims to native belonging into relief.

The potential for captives to mobilize their stories of captivity in this way was especially clear in the remarkable 1518 interrogation of a Mandinka man named Hernando.²⁶⁸ Hernando's presentation had been like any other until the Bailiff General asked him if was free or enslaved, typically the penultimate question in interrogations. In response, captives—who had been brought to the Bailiff General's against their will—typically acknowledged that they were, legally, in the custody of their captors, and then answered a final question about how they had become enslaved and brought to Valencia. But Hernando was one of only three Black captives who, in the first half of the sixteenth-century, took this question as an opportunity to contest his captivity and claim that he was free (*franch*). The Bailiff General thus modified the final question of Hernando's interrogation by asking how, if he was free, Hernando had been brought to the Bailiff General's court as a captive.

Hernando began his response to this question by recounting his initial capture. He reported that, about six years prior, he “was taken by other blacks” who sold him to “whites from Portugal.” This mode of enslavement resembled the testimonies of many of Hernando's contemporaries, but Hernando included a unique detail that set it apart. Namely, he claimed that he had been “gong along a path with the son of the king of his land” at the time of his capture. While a handful of other sub-Saharan African captives mentioned their native

²⁶⁸ ARV BG 198 324r.-325r.

nobility in their testimonies, Hernando was unique in characterizing such a figure as his ally rather than as his enslaver.

That Hernando highlighted his association with Mandinka nobility while giving this testimony, at which point he had lived throughout the Iberian Peninsula for nearly six years, suggests that it had held purchase for him in other contexts. Hernando might have included this detail so as to hint at his own native nobility. It was certainly not unheard of for West African elites to be enslaved and sold to European merchants during this period. Nzinga Mbemba, the king of Congo, wrote lamentingly about this reality in a letter he sent to King João III of Portugal in 1526, in which he noted that “merchants are taking every day our natives...sons of our noblemen and vassals.”²⁶⁹

But more than claiming native nobility, Hernando’s account of being captured alongside the son of a Mandinka king situated him within frameworks of sovereignty that were familiar to Iberian royal officials. Mandinka was, after all, the third-most-cited term of origin used in captive presentations. Moreover, for Iberian officials familiar with the Mali Empire, Hernando’s invocation of Mandinka kings would bring to mind notions of diplomacy and statehood. In Hernando’s estimation, noting his proximity to Mandinka royalty might have given him more standing in the eyes of the Bailiff General. More fundamentally, associating himself with a Mandinka prince allowed Hernando to draw attention to his status as a free subject of a Mandinka sovereign. In citing his noble status Hernando insisted on being recognized not as a sovereignless subject ripe for enslavement, but as a free subject of a king whose connection to his home was violated. This was not, however, the crux of his claim to freedom.

²⁶⁹ Nzinga Mbemba, “Appeal to the King of Portugal, 1526,” in *Worlds of History Volume 2*, ed. Kevin Reilly (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2019), 566.

After recounting his initial capture in his homeland, Hernando noted that his Portuguese enslavers transported him to Portugal and sold him to a man named Hernando de Leon, likely Hernando's namesake. De Leon died four years after purchasing Hernando, at which time de Leon "had neither son nor daughter nor wife nor sister nor someone to whom he was betrothed." In outlining de Leon's lack of living relatives, Hernando likely intended to portray himself as de Leon's most significant relation. This provided important context for what Hernando recounted next: upon his deathbed, de Leon manumitted Hernando with a letter of freedom (*carta de franquesa*), a standard legal instrument. Such an arrangement would not have been uncommon. As Rachel Sarah O'Toole has shown in the context of colonial Peru, enslavers often manumitted the people they enslaved as public or private shows of kinship throughout the early modern period. This was especially likely in cases where—as in Hernando's case—enslavers had little or no extant blood kin.²⁷⁰

Hernando's enjoyment of his freedom was short-lived, though, as "a mistress in his master's household took the letter" from Hernando while "saying that he was a captive." Hernando subsequently fled de Leon's household and settled in the town of Huerta in Castile. There, he entered the home of a man named Joan de Sandoval, who employed Hernando as a servant for a year. But, lacking documentary proof of his freedom, Hernando was eventually re-enslaved in Castile by Berthomeu de Paredes, a priest who promptly transported him to Valencia to be sold as a captive. This was a serious accusation. As Debra Blumenthal has noted, Valencia's law code outlined that "knowingly being party to the unlawful seizure and sale of a free person into slavery constituted the crime of *collera*, punishable by a sentence of

²⁷⁰ Sarah Rachel O'Toole, "The Bonds of Kinship, the Ties of Freedom in Colonial Peru," *Journal of Family History* 42.1 (2017): 3-21.

death without possibility of pardon.”²⁷¹ Thus, the crux of Hernando’s claim to freedom was that he had been manumitted by his Portuguese master and then illegally re-enslaved. Hernando’s claim hinged on events that took place on the Iberian Peninsula, which could suggest that his account of being captured alongside the son of a Mandinka king was ancillary to his central narrative objective.

But there were clear parallels between Hernando’s accounts of his entrance into captivity and his subsequent Iberian re-enslavement that suggest that the former was more than just expository. Firstly, Hernando repeatedly illustrated his freedom by articulating his relationships to men of a higher status than himself. In his account of his origins, Hernando claimed proximity to the son of a Mandinka king to illustrate his native status as a free sovereign subject. Then, he emphasized his particularly close relationship to his Portuguese enslaver Hernando de Leon—who Hernando claimed had no living relations—in order to lend weight to his claim that de Leon manumitted him with a letter of freedom. He then noted that his Castilian employer Joan de Sandoval employed him as a servant of freed status. Secondly, in both his West African and Iberian contexts, Hernando attributed his loss of his freedom to the intervention of hostile neighbors: “other black people” in his homeland and “a mistress from his master’s household” in Portugal. In fact, Hernando drew explicit parallels between these two actors by using the same verb—*prendre*, to take or capture—to describe their actions: he recalled that “he was taken by other black people” just as “a mistress from his master’s household took” his letter of freedom. Lastly, Hernando followed both accounts of his encounters with takers by noting that he then entered the custody of third parties who removed him from his home and transported him significant distances: “white Christians”

²⁷¹ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 20.

who transported him from his homeland to Portugal, and the priest Barthomeu de Paredes who transported him from his new home in Huerta to Valencia.

These parallels reveal that Hernando's account of his origins and entrance in captivity was constitutive of, rather than incidental to, his claim to freedom. On the one hand, Hernando used his account of his native free status and initial enslavement to provide thematic backdrop and foreshadowing for his subsequent account of manumission and re-enslavement. Then, in explicitly characterizing his Iberian re-enslavement as illegitimate and the consequence of immoral actors, Hernando implicitly critiqued the legitimacy of his initial enslavement. While the Bailiff General and his European contemporaries would have regarded Hernando's initial capture and sale as licit and legitimate modes of enslavement, Hernando directly aligned it with the illegal activities of his Iberian re-enslavers. While his testimony was exceptional in its detail and structure, Hernando was certainly not unique in interpreting his capture and enslavement in terms that the Bailiff General would have found familiar. In fact, Hernando's testimony is a useful lens for interpreting the less-detailed and more rote accounts of capture that many of his contemporaries offered.

While Hernando was unique in claiming familiarity with his native nobility, for instance, other captives framed their origins in terms of sovereignty and nationhood. In 1512, for instance, nobleman Gaspar de Castellim initiated the sale of the "black Christian captive, or slave, named Johana." Whereas sub-Saharan Africans regularly rendered their origins in slave sales by using the category of peoples (*gens*), Johana identified herself as originating "from the Mandinka nation" (*nacionis de Mantinga*).²⁷² This suggests that, in her own account of her origins, Johana foregrounded her affiliation with a powerful sub-Saharan

²⁷² ARV Fondos Notariales Protocolos 1877 February 10.

African polity. A captive from Jolof named Agnes likewise emphasized her affiliation with a prominent polity in her 1516 slave sale. Whereas other Jolof captives regularly identified as coming from “the Jolof people,” Agnes identified as being “from the people or nation of Jolof.”²⁷³ But captive presentations provided the documentary context in which most captives could situate themselves as sovereign subjects.

One means through which captives highlighted their native status as sovereign subjects was by noting that their captivity had been the result of conflicts between formidable peoples and polities. This was particularly clear in the 1522 case of thirty-year-old Ysabel. In her testimony, Ysabel noted that she was from Jolof. Moreover, she testified that when she was a child, “other black people from Mandinka came to her land and captured her and other children.”²⁷⁴ Ysabel recalled that she was then taken to “the land of Mandinka and was in the power of a black man from the aforementioned land of Mori” before being sold to Europeans.²⁷⁵ Ysabel thus named her place of origin, identified the provenance of her captors, and traced her movements between West African territories. Doing so allowed her to characterize herself as an individual torn from her home and caught in the snares of conflict and competition between regional powers rather than as a sovereignless subject and self-evident object of enslavement. Captives who recounted entering slavery at the hands of their own kings could adopt a similar stance to Ysabel’s by situating themselves within the machinations of West African sovereigns. But Hernando’s example suggests that in

²⁷³ ARV Fondos Notariales Protocolos 1350 April 8.

²⁷⁴ ARV BG 198, 615v. “dix que estant ella dita confessant en sa terra ensemps ab altres vinguere altres negres de mantinga prenguer sa ella dita confessant ab altres chichs.”

²⁷⁵ ARV BG 198, 615v. “portare en la dita terra de mantinga e estat en poder de hun negre de la dita terra mori e ella dita confessant crestia en poder de huna filla que tenya lo dit ~~negre~~ son amo e la dita fila la vene...”

foregrounding the role that their own kings played in their enslavement, these captives could also invite critique of “legitimate” modes of enslavement.

No other sub-Saharan African drew explicit parallels between their African and Iberian captors in the way that Hernando had done. Nevertheless, characterizing African kings as enslaving their own subjects in collusion with Christian merchants—as the aforementioned Rodrigo and Johan had done in their 1503 and 1518 testimonies, respectively—provocatively foregrounded the European and African economic interests that fueled “licit” slavery.²⁷⁶ Highlighting this collusion of royal and economic prerogatives was especially provocative in the context of captive presentations, in which officials representing the interests of the Spanish Crown sought to tax and legitimize slavery on the pretense that it was an extension of Catholic Holy War. Moreover, the Spanish king (*senyor rey*) was a central figure in the boilerplate language that opened and concluded these proceedings. Thus, in drawing attention to the role that African kings had played in their enslavement, captives like Rodrigo and Johan implied that the Spanish Crown was just their most recent royal captor. The potential implications and intentions of these testimonies were, of course, flattened by the curt boilerplate language that the Bailiff General used to record testimonies.

But turning to the conclusion of Hernando’s case reveals that the Bailiff General was receptive to the troubling implications that captives’ testimonies could carry and took measures suppress them. After Hernando concluded his account of enslavement, manumission, and re-enslavement, the Bailiff General halted the interrogation without rendering a judgment. The official resumed the interrogation later that day by asking Hernando a question that he had already answered: whether he was a captive or free. This

²⁷⁶ ARV BG 195, 263r. – 265r.; ARV BG 198, 316v.-317v.

time around, Hernando said that “he was the captive of the said brother Berhtomeu de Paredes.” The Bailiff General then asked why, “in his other confession, did he say that he was free?” Lacking the vitality and detail that had characterized his earlier testimony, Hernando replied flatly that he had claimed to be free “because he wanted to.” It is likely that either the Bailiff General’s officials or Hernando’s enslaver had pressured him into recanting his earlier testimony. And with that, the Bailiff General concluded the presentation and deemed Hernando a legitimate captive.

Thus, sub-Saharan Africans could situate their initial capture within frameworks of sovereignty, trade, and captivity that were familiar to Iberian officials. But they could also mobilize these frameworks in ways that challenged, complicated, or undermined those officials’ notions of enslavability and moral legitimacy. While these captives characterized Iberians and the Spanish crown as active arms of the sub-Saharan African slave trade through implication and suggestion, other captives explicitly identified Europeans as active and enthusiastic enslavers of free sub-Saharan Africans.

European Agency

In the first three decades of the sixteenth century, three captives from Benin descried their entrance into captivity in similar, though unusual, terms. The first was Lopo who, in 1505, recalled that he was captured and enslaved along “with other black people in his homeland by Christians.” A twenty-six-year-old named Francisco similarly recounted in 1522 that “it had been about six years, more or less, since he was captured in his homeland, along with many others, by Christians,” who took Francisco and his fellow captives to

Portugal.²⁷⁷ In that same year, a twelve-year-old named Ysabel also testified to entering captivity at the hands of European Christians.²⁷⁸ Typically, captives cast Europeans as middlemen who had purchased them from African enslavers. But Lopo, Francisco and Ysabel each contended that European merchants were engaging in small-scale slaving raids of their own well into the sixteenth century. That Lopo, Ysabel and Francisco were apparently captured in Christian-led raids disrupts many of the implicit claims to legitimacy that were central to Europeans' involvement in the sub-Saharan African slave trade.

Firstly, these show that Europeans' involvement in the African slave trade often fell outside of the neat discursive prisms of commerce, diplomacy, and sovereignty. Moreover, the persistence of these raids into the first three decades of the sixteenth-century also disrupts the typical historiographical narrative of European involvement in the sub-Saharan African slave trade, which posits that the mid-fifteenth century Portuguese raids on coastal West Africa were a short-lived precursor to later commercial modes of enslavement. The testimonies of Lopo, Francisco, and Ysabel suggest that rather than giving way to commerce, these raids gave way to commerce and more raids.

Toby Green has emphasized that this enduring element of European slaving was historically significant but has been historiographically underappreciated. Although the European contraband trade in enslaved Africans escalated in the second half of the sixteenth century and was directed towards the Americas, Green has shown that “contraband had been recognised as a problem in the slave trade in Western Africa since 1514 at least.”²⁷⁹ For his part, the Bailiff General occasionally tried to mitigate this kind of malfeasance by sometimes

²⁷⁷ ARV BG 198, 608r.-608v. “ha sis anys poch mes o menys que estant ell dit confessant en sa terra fonch pres per crestians ensemps ab molt altres.”

²⁷⁸ ARV BG 198, 752v.-753r.

²⁷⁹ Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 191.

asking presenters to provide bills of sale (*titols*) that could verify captives' chains of custody. Typically enslavers were able to provide such documentation. But in a handful of cases enslavers lacked such documentation. This did not prevent the trial from proceeding. Nevertheless, the Bailiff General's interest in seeing this documentation speaks to the reality of contraband slave-trading.

Given the context of slave-trading in Benin during the sixteenth century, it is not surprising that such raiding activity continued alongside more regulated commercial transactions. The reticence of Benin's Obas and merchants to cater to the demands of Europeans likely encouraged European merchants to conduct illicit raids and enslaving. European settlers on the island of São Tomé had particular motivation for accessing these vehicles of enslavement, and Green has noted that in 1505, São Tomé's slave traders were accused of engaging in illicit raiding and slaving activity, and that by 1519 the Crown took action to curtail such activity.²⁸⁰ During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-centuries, settlers on the island were in acute need of enslaved laborers to maintain the island's labor-intensive sugar cultivation industry. Like their continental counterparts, they were subject to the Oba's restrictive approach to managing Benin's slave trade and to limits on trading imposed by the Portuguese Crown. As such, they had reason—and more regular opportunity—to engage in these raids, which likely took place along the coast of the Bight of Benin and along the rivers that cut inland from the coast.

In addition to disrupting contemporary and historiographical narratives of European involvement in the sub-Saharan African slave trade, the testimonies of Lopo, Francisco, and Ysabel also provide a framework for situating trends in the importation of captives from

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 90.

Benin to Valencia. Unlike captives from Jolof, who enslavers often brought before the Bailiff General in large groups, no enslaver presented captives from Benin in groups larger than eight. It was more common that captives from Benin appeared before the Bailiff General alone, as was the case for over half of the captives from Benin (forty-four of eighty-two). The remainder appeared before the Bailiff General in groups of five or less. Certainly, these smaller groupings were, in part, a byproduct of Benin's scaled-back involvement with European slavers. But the preponderance of individual or small groups of captives from taken to Valencia Benin also reflected the limited quantity of captives that small bands of enslavers could capture in illicit raids.

But these testimonies do more than just shed light on the specifics of European slaving in Benin. Rather, the testimonies of Lopo, Francisco, and Ysabel demonstrate that, in testifying about their origins and the means through which they had been enslaved, captives could depict Europeans as active and enthusiastic participants in the sub-Saharan African slave trade. That is, rather than just merchants who passively benefitted from West Africans enslaving one another, or soldiers who took captives in the context of military conflict, sub-Saharan African captives could identify Europeans as active and enthusiastic captors and enslavers who reduced free people to slavery.

Thirty year old Catherina, for instance, a native of Caragan in "the Land of the Blacks," took full advantage of her opportunity to cast her European enslavers as active and enthusiastic agents of exploitation in her 1507 captive presentation.²⁸¹ Catherina first noted that she became a captive when a "Portuguese captain entered her land, took her and other

²⁸¹ ARV BG 196, 171v.-172r. The exact meaning of Caragan is unknown, see P.E.H. Hair, "Black African Slaves," List B.

black people captive, and sent them to Portugal.”²⁸² Catherina’s account of her origins and her entrance into captivity was brief but remarkable. For one thing, when Europeans appeared in captives’ testimonies, it was typically in their capacity as merchants who purchased captives from their African captors. Moreover, sub-Saharan Africans typically rendered the identities of their first European captors in broad terms, identifying them only as Spanish, Portuguese, Christian, or white without further detail. Thus, in recalling that she and her peers were enslaved by a Portuguese captain who “entered her land” with the explicit aim of procuring captives, Catherina offered an exceptionally clear account in which Portuguese military personnel played a decisive and active role as an enslaver of free people.

Other captives recounted stories similar to Catherina’s. In 1522, for instance, twenty-five-year-old Catalina testified to entering captivity at the hands of Christians in her youth. A “native of Guinea,” Catalina recounted that “she was a young girl when Christians came to her land, captured her, and transported her to Portugal.”²⁸³ Eighteen-year-old Joan, who could not recall where within “the Land of the Blacks” he had come from, gave similar testimony that same year, recalling that when “he was very young, Christians came to his land, took him, and transported him to Portugal.”²⁸⁴ Thus, neither Catalina nor Joan could recall their specific places of origin due to the young ages at which they were captured. Both, however, could recall being captured by European invaders. Given the Bailiff General’s propensity to mediate testimonies that challenged the Crown’s conceptions of slavery and

²⁸² ARV BG 196, 171v.-172r. “un capita de portoguesos entrant en la sua terra prengue que ella dita catyva e altres negres e foren portats a Portugal.”

²⁸³ ARV BG 198, 716v.-717v. “dix que estant ella dita confessant chiqua en la dita sua terra vinguere crestians e la prenguer e que aquells la seu portare en portogual.”

²⁸⁴ ARV BG 198, 755v.-756r. “dix que vinguere crestians a la dita sua terra e lo prenguer que ell dit confessant molt chich e lo portare en portogal.”

enslavability, the fact that he recorded these testimonies without obfuscating their accounts of European slave-raiding is striking.

Given that the Bailiff General recorded four of the six testimonies in which sub-Saharan Africans testified to entering captivity at the hands of Christian Europeans in 1522, his lack of reservations was likely the consequence of contemporary changes in Valencia's slave trade. As I noted in Chapter One, Valencia's status as an attractive market for selling sub-Saharan African captives diminished quickly following Charles V's 1518 declaration allowing the direct exportation of enslaved Africans to the labor-starved Americas. This decline was contemporaneous with the *Germanias* revolts, during which time the Bailiff General began to more openly represent the interests of enslavers by using captive presentations as a tool to police suspected fugitive captives throughout the kingdom. Thus, by the early 1520s the Bailiff General was not regularly overseeing captive presentations of large cargoes of sub-Saharan Africans and had altered the moral, legal, and social frameworks upon which he justified his participation in Valencia's slave trade. In this context, the Bailiff General likely did not perceive individual or small groups of sub-Saharan Africans entering captivity at the hands of European Christians to threaten his authority or legitimacy. If anything, he likely regarded the practice as a new norm of the slave trade.

But these captives' testimonies make it clear that this practice was not novel in the 1520s. Tracing the exact timelines of these six individuals' capture and enslavement is impossible. But, as Figure 14 shows, at least four of these captives—Lopo, Francisco, Catalina, and Joan—recalled being captured well before their captive presentations. As such, their testimonies illustrate that some Europeans enslavers were capturing sub-Saharan Africans regularly throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, even as most

other enslavers obtained captives through commercial routes. Thus, these captives' accounts of their origins reveal the longstanding existence of practices that the Bailiff General was only willing to routinely acknowledge in the 1520s.

Captive's Name	Captive's Age	Year of Presentation	Time of Capture	Place of Origin
Lopo	20	1505	As a child	Benin
Catherina	30	1507	Unknown	Caragan
Francisco	26	1522	~1516	Benin
Ysabel	12	1522	Unknown	Benin
Catalina	30	1522	As a child	Guinea
Joan	18	1522	As a child	Didn't know

Figure 14 Data from captives who testified to being captured by Europeans.

The Significance of Origins

When the bride-to-be Hieronyma declared herself “a freed woman of the Cenich people” in the opening lines of her marriage contract in 1506, there were a number of things she might have been communicating to her contemporaries. Like other captives who invoked uncommon terms of origin, Hieronyma highlighted her affiliation with her native kin and linguistic groups rather than with a kingdom or land that figured heavily into European political imaginaries. In other contexts where she could speak more fully about her past, Hieronyma—like Hernando, who testified to being captured alongside the son of a Mandinka king—might have also recalled significant relationships or claims to status she had enjoyed before her capture. But Hieronyma’s specific intention in declaring herself “a freed woman of the Cenich people” is less significant than the fact that she was one among many sub-Saharan Africans in Valencia who documented their enduring and personal relationships to their origins in a variety of social and legal contexts.

The personal nature of sub-Saharan Africans’ interpretations of their origins is particularly clear when considering the limited extent to which sub-Saharan African origins

influenced black Valencians' day-to-day lives and social relationships. In other parts of the early modern Iberian-Atlantic world, diasporic Africans fostered familial and social relationships on the basis of shared origins. In his examination of marriages involving Africans in one eighteenth century Brazilian parish, for instance, James Sweet found that “66 percent of the Africans in the sample married partners who came from the same broad cultural areas of Africa.”²⁸⁵ The sparse Valencian documentation recording the activities of freed people of sub-Saharan African origins makes it impossible to draw similar conclusions for Valencia, but that Hieronyma proudly proclaimed her origins amongst the Cenich people while her groom Sebastian did not disclose a sub-Saharan African background at all suggests that such a pattern did not hold in early sixteenth-century Valencia. Moreover, unlike some of its counterparts throughout the Iberian Atlantic world, Valencia's only black confraternity, the *Cofradia dels Negres de la Sagrada Verge Maria de la Misericordia*, did not establish membership guidelines on the basis of members' origins.²⁸⁶

The apparently minimal role that sub-Saharan African origins played in shaping black Valencian social life is not surprising. Origins—or, for that matter, enduring relationships to origins—represented just one element of black Valencians' self-identifications. In addition to being “of the Cenich people,” for instance, Hieronyma was a free, married, laboring-status woman. Moreover, immediately after identifying as a “freed woman of the Cenich people” Hieronyma identified as “an inhabitant (*habitador*) of the city of Valencia.” This distinction was significant, as she had certainly traversed many parts of the Iberian Peninsula before

²⁸⁵ James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 45.

²⁸⁶ Debra Blumenthal, “La Casa dels Negres,” 30.

coming to Valencia as a captive. In fact, a great deal of free and enslaved black Valencians—born in sub-Saharan West Africa, North Africa, and Europe—had lived and moved throughout the Mediterranean for significant periods of time before arriving to Valencia.

Chapter Five: The Geographies of Black Iberia

In 1457, the Portuguese royal chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara completed his *Chronicle of the Conquest of Guinea*, in which he offered an expansive account of Portuguese incursions into West Africa orchestrated by Prince Henry “the Navigator.” Amidst stories of perilous voyages, coastal raids, royal diplomacy, and political intrigue, Zurara described—often in vivid, emotional terms—the arrival and fates of enslaved West Africans in Portugal. To this end, Zurara bemoaned the physical and emotional suffering that West Africans endured as captives on Portuguese soil. A significant source of captives’ dismay was their forced separation from their families. Portuguese soldiers separated “fathers from sons, husbands from wives, brothers from brothers. No respect was shown either to friends or relations, but each fell where his lot took him.”²⁸⁷ Zurara further explained that as “it chanced that among the prisoners the father often remained in Lagos, while the mother was taken to Lisbon, and the children to another part.”

After recounting the emotional terrors that enslaved West Africans experienced upon their arrival to Lagos, Zurara pivoted to a more optimistic account of how “from this time forth they [West Africans] began to acquire some knowledge of our country.”²⁸⁸ Zurara noted that there were some fronts on which West Africans were proactive in this process of Iberian integration. He claimed, for instance, that West Africans were quick to develop an appreciation of European sartorial customs, claiming that they were “very fond of display, so that they took great delight in robes of showy colors, and such was their love of finery, that

²⁸⁷ Translations based on Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, trans. Charles Raymond Beazley and Edgar Prestage (London: Hakluyt Society, 2011), but occasionally modified in reference to the original Portuguese. Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Cronica do descobrimento e conquista de Guine*, ed. Visconde da Carreira (Paris: J.P. Aillaud, 1841), 134.

²⁸⁸ Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Cronica do descobrimento*, 136.

they picked up the rags that fell from the coats of the other people of the country and sewed them on to their garments, taking great pleasure in these, as though it were matter of some greater perfection.”²⁸⁹ More significantly, Zurara claimed that in contrast to North African “Moors,” West Africans readily recognized and accepted Christianity. Viewed through this lens, Zurara suggested that even interrupted or incomplete integrations into Iberian culture were success stories, noting that West Africans who died of illness on the Peninsula at least did so “as Christians.”

But according to Zurara, West Africans’ integration into Iberian society was largely driven by enslavers themselves. Zurara claimed, for instance, that enslavers who purchased young captives “caused them to be instructed in mechanical arts.” Moreover, “Those who they saw fit to manage property they set free and married to women who were natives of the land.” Furthermore, “some widows of good family who bought some of these female slaves, either adopted them or left them a portion of their estate by will; so that in the future they married right well.”²⁹⁰ Zurara thus offered a broad account of the social and cultural trajectories that West Africans faced in Iberia, including both vivid accounts of their enslavement and optimistic reports of their integration into Portuguese society. As such, the *Chronicle* and its depictions of West Africans have become a foundational text in studies of the Atlantic slave trade.

Historians, literary critics, theologians and philosophers have unpacked the text’s various rhetorical and representational strategies to situate it within premodern histories of race and slavery. Kenneth Baxter-Wolf, for instance, has demonstrated how Zurara’s

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 137-8.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 136-7.

decision to label West Africans as Moors in earlier parts of his chronicle was a convenient means for Zurara to situate this new category of enslaved people within extant Portuguese cultural frameworks.²⁹¹ In his Christological reading of the text, Willie James Jennings has argued that Zurara “deploys a rhetorical strategy of containment, holding slave suffering inside a Christian story” of religious conversion and salvation.²⁹² Drawing on Jennings’ work, Cord Whittaker has argued that, in Zurara’s text, the “Middle Ages’ dialogizing approach” to understanding blackness and whiteness “cedes primacy to an early modern colonialism in which the European Christian norm is firmly established and with it blackness as a metaphor for that which is essentially different.”²⁹³ Herman Bennett has flagged Zurara’s text as marking a transition between conquest and commerce as domains of Iberian Christian Holy War, noting that “despite their increasing temporal preoccupations, the princes and their chroniclers employed the conquest rhetoric” of earlier generations to justify and contextualize a largely commercial slave trade.²⁹⁴ Historian of American slavery Jennifer Morgan, moreover, has argued that Zurara’s evocative description of enslaved West Africans’ responses to their enslavement highlighted “the inherent violence done to families by merchants’ value systems” and “conveys hereditary enslavement’s essential conflict between market and kin.”²⁹⁵

But Bennett has suggested that analyses of this text have historically placed an “undue focus on ideology” that has caused scholars to ignore or overlook the text’s

²⁹¹ Kenneth Baxter-Wolf, “The Moors of West Africa.”

²⁹² Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT; Yale University Press, 2010), 19.

²⁹³ Cord Whittaker, *Black Metaphors*, 198.

²⁹⁴ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, 79.

²⁹⁵ Jennifer Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 59, 60.

immediate historical context as a product of this early phase of Iberia's involvement in the West African slave trade.²⁹⁶ To that end, in this chapter I am interested in the most foundational element of Zurara's account of West Africans in Portugal. Stripped of its ideological and representational agendas, Zurara's text is a story of West Africans moving and existing throughout the Iberian Peninsula's physical and social environs as a result of enslavement, self-determination, and chance. Even when read through this lens, Zurara's account of black Africans' movements throughout Portugal—which focused primarily on the initial moment of their separation from their families and on the benefits they reaped from their enslavers—has clear limitations. Writing from the vantage point of the late fifteenth-century Portuguese court, for instance, Zurara's geographical vocabulary was limited to Lagos, Lisbon, “and other parts.” Moreover, Zurara's desire to alleviate his and his readers' discomfort with the horrors of Portuguese enslaving activities certainly influenced his decision to relay multiple stories of ostensibly benevolent enslavers bestowing their largess upon their freed captives. Nevertheless, Zurara's account provides a starting point for thinking about how and where black Iberians moved and existed through the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Valencian records offer a productive counterpoint to Zurara's Portuguese-centric chronicle account of black movement and mobility on the Peninsula. Unlike Zurara's chronicle account, which sought to contrast the initial distress of West Africans' forced movements in Portugal with the prosperity they eventually enjoyed, sources like the Bailiff General's captive presentations outlined rough itineraries through which black captives were bought and sold. Moreover, census records clearly illustrate that black Iberians lived

²⁹⁶ Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves*, 12.

throughout the Kingdom of Valencia’s various social environs. The *Cens de 1510*, for instance, recorded thirteen black individuals living in more rural communities located outside of Valencia city, in Alboraya, Algezemi, Alzira, Benicalaf, and Cequa, as well as in the larger cities of Orihuela and Xativa [Figure 15]. Given the Crown’s tax-collecting objective in compiling the *Cens* certainly resulted in an underrepresentation of black Valencians, it is especially noteworthy that eleven of the twelve black Valencians who appeared in the census were heads of household.

City	Number of Households	Black People in <i>Cens</i>
Alboraya	42	1
Algezemi	115	1
Cuecua	188	1
Alzira	954	3
Orihuela	1937	1
Xativa	2385	3
Valencia	9879	5

Figure 25 Chart showing the number of households and black residents recorded in the *Cens de 1510* for towns and cities in which black residents appeared.

Valencia also serves as a useful counterpart to Zurara’s Portuguese focus because it was located opposite Lisbon on the Iberian Peninsula’s east coast. As such, Valencia was not a first point of entry onto the Peninsula for enslaved West Africans. In fact, many enslaved West Africans had moved and lived through a variety of Iberian cities and ports before being brought to Valencia. Captives often testified to these movements before Valencia’s Bailiff General in captive presentations.

Furthermore, beginning in 1519, the Bailiff General's office added a new procedure to its toolkit for regulating Valencian slavery. Under the auspices of a novel proceeding called "fugitive confessions," the Bailiff General began investigating individuals who had been detained throughout the kingdom on suspicion of being fugitive captives. This was not the first attempt in the region to mitigate the problem of runaway captives, as courts and officials throughout Iberia had grappled with the issue throughout the fourteenth century.²⁹⁷ The Bailiff General's decision to add this new procedure to its portfolio in 1519 was likely a response to a confluence of factors. The emergence of this procedure coincided, for instance, with the contemporary unrest caused by the entrance of the plague into Valencia and the *Jermanias* revolts. Moreover, as noted in Chapter Two, the Crown's 1518 declaration allowing enslavers to export West Africans directly from Africa to the Americas quickly resulted in the diminishing importation of West Africans to Valencia. This decrease might have freed up the Bailiff General's resources and capacity and allowed the official to pivot to these fugitive trials. Black Iberians figured heavily among the suspects in these trials, with eighty-six of the 159 fugitive presentations recorded between 1519 and 1531 featuring black suspects.

In the course of the Bailiff General's investigations suspects often gave revealing accounts of their movements and habitations throughout the peninsula. Together, these records of forced and self-determined movements throughout the Peninsula will provide the basis for this chapter's extensive—though certainly not comprehensive—account of the

²⁹⁷ For a discussion of the Bailiff General's approach to fugitive captives before 1519 and outside of captives' presentations, see Bruno Pomara Saverino, "Esclavos, identificación y prejuicio en el Reino de Valencia (siglos XVI-XVII)," in *Cambios y Resistencias Sociales en la Edad Moderna: Un análisis comparativo entre el centro y la periferia mediterránea de la Monarquía Hispánica*, ed. Ricardo Franch Benavent, Ferando Andres Robres, and Rafael Benitez Sanchez-Blanco. (Madrid: Sílex, 2014): 234-5 and Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La esclavitud*, 76-9.

geography of Black Iberia. Tracing this geography complicates typical accounts of enslaved black Iberians' geographical trajectories that focus primarily on their West African origins and their arrival to Iberian ports. In her synthetic account of the development of various slaving routes in early modern Iberia, for instance, Aurelia Martin Casares distinguished between the "Inner Iberian Slave Trade" and the "African Kingdoms Slave Trade." While Casares claimed that Iberian-born Muslims and Moriscos were the main targets of the Inner Iberian Slave Trade, she situated black African captives solely within the framework of the African Kingdoms Slave Trade. While useful for providing a broad overview of changes in slaving patterns, this schema overlooks the trade and movement that African captives were subjected to within the Peninsula. Furthermore, it offers no accounting for the place of Iberian-born black captives within these trades.²⁹⁸

Furthermore, this chapter will trouble common generalizations about West Africans' capacity to navigate life in Iberian cities such as Valencia. Vicenta Alonso Cortes, for instance, claimed that black Africans captives in Valencia were "the most unfortunate of all slaves" because, unlike other enslaved groups in the kingdom, they were "transplanted to a world in which everything was unfamiliar and in which they had no help."²⁹⁹ Mark Meyerson has echoed this sentiment in claiming that West Africans enslaved in Valencia, who found "themselves in a completely foreign environment...endured far greater alienation and disorientation" than their Iberian and North African counterparts.³⁰⁰ West Africans' experiences of enslavement in Iberia certainly differed from those of their North African and

²⁹⁸ Aurelia Martin Casares, "Evolution of the Origin of the Slaves Sold in Spain from the Late Middle Ages till the 18th Century," in *Serfdom and Slavery in the European Economy, 11th-18th Centuries*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Firenze University Press), 417.

²⁹⁹ Vicenta Alonso Cortes, *La Esclavitud*, 58.

³⁰⁰ Mark Meyerson, "Slavery and Solidarity: Mudejars and Foreign Muslim Captives in the Kingdom of Valencia," *Medieval Encounters* 2.3 (1996), 308.

Iberian counterparts, and consequently West Africans grappled with obstacles and hindrances that these counterparts did not. But tracing the numerous sites of black life on the Iberian Peninsula reveals that by the late fifteenth century black Iberians sought out and created spaces that would have alleviated the “alienation and disorientation” of newcomers.

Lastly, charting sites of black Iberia complicates common depictions of the early modern Iberian Black Diaspora that focus primarily on the Peninsula’s urban centers. The Iberian Black Diaspora certainly initiated a number of urban phenomena—including black neighborhoods, black confraternities, and public displays of African music and dance styles in processions and festivals—in cities like Valencia, Barcelona, Seville, and Lisbon. But these cities were not the only sites of black life in early modern Iberia. Evidence from captives’ testimonies and court and census records reveals that smaller towns and cities within the Kingdom of Valencia were significant sites of black life in their own right, even if they lacked the highly-visible phenomena often thought to characterize black urban life.

Examining these testimonies will also reveal how free and enslaved black Iberians responded to and engaged with the systems of forced movement, mobility surveillance, and re-enslavement that their white counterparts designed and implemented. In their accounts of their forced movements, for instance, enslaved black Iberians demonstrated an active and sustained knowledge of and engagement with the geographies through which they moved. Moreover, whereas enslavers and officials treated captives’ sales and re-sales as reiterating their unfree status, many captives seized these moments of transfer as opportunities for escape. Other runaway captives tried to mask their unfree status by manipulating or fabricating their histories of sale and re-sale. Lastly, free black Iberians looking to move

throughout the Peninsula often procured white travel companions as a way to ensure their safety and facilitate their travels.

Chains of Custody

In 1517, a black Venetian captive named Cristina recounted her history of forced movements to Valencia's Bailiff General. Cristina reported that she was born a captive and had lived in her hometown of Venice until her master sold her to a Spanish galleyman. The galleyman took Cristina to Naples, where she stayed for a year before the Spaniard sold her to a man from Montpellier named Johan Duplass. Duplass took Cristina to Montpellier, where she lived as Duplass's captive for "three or four years."³⁰¹ This arrangement ended when Duplass hired Pierre Rubiel, a French merchant, to transport Cristina to Valencia to be sold. Compared to many of her contemporaries—who typically recounted exclusively Iberian itineraries—Cristina's account of her movements was exceptional for its geographical scope. But Cristina's itinerary was typical in that it was highly orchestrated by the Bailiff General, insofar as it was entirely structured around moments of her sale and re-sale.

The Bailiff General regularly concluded interrogations by asking captives "how they had become captives and how they came to the present city of Valencia." In the early sixteenth century, the Bailiff General consistently recorded black captives' responses to this open-ended question as formulaic and repetitive accounts that focused on moments in which they were bought and sold. Cristina's account of her forced movement—which gave no indication of the routes her enslavers took or the means by which they traveled, much less her own experiences or responses to those travels—illustrates that these testimonies

³⁰¹ ARV BG 198 260r-261v.

resembled chains of custody more than travel itineraries. These responses might have accurately reflected captives' own understandings of how to best respond to the Bailiff General's question. But it is more likely that these testimonies reflected the Bailiff General's efforts to firmly situate captives' testimonies within the framework of their unfree status. But while the Bailiff General tried to situate captives as always-already enslaved, it is nevertheless possible to use these accounts to shed light on the fullness of black Iberian life by highlighting where and how captives would have encountered black Iberian communities.

Most West Africans who were brought to the Iberian Peninsula first arrived in Lisbon. Lisbon was a central site for the management of the Iberian-African slave trade in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century as the pope had granted the Portuguese Crown with trading rights along the West African coast, whereas he had granted Spain the right to the Americas.³⁰² Unless they had received special dispensation, or had been blown off course, European slaving vessels returning to Iberia from the West African coast had to stop in Lisbon to undergo royal inspections and pay customs in the city's Casa de Escravos, an administrative office that oversaw the regulation of Portugal's slave trade.³⁰³ Consequently, Lisbon appeared in many captives' accounts of their forced movements in captive presentations, and was the most commonly-named Portuguese city in these testimonies. Captives' discussions of Lisbon were often brief and perfunctory. This was the case, for instance, for twenty-year-old Lopo, who appeared before the Bailiff General in 1505. Lopo, a native of Benin, succinctly recounted that after being captured by Christians he was "taken to the city of Lisbon, in the Kingdom of Portugal, and from there was sold and taken to the

³⁰² For a brief overview of Lisbon's role in Iberia's slave trade in the late fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries, see John L. Vogt, "The Lisbon Slave House."

³⁰³ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 8, 15.

present city of Valencia.”³⁰⁴ Thus many captives’ testimonies offered little direct insight into their experiences in Lisbon. Nevertheless, it is possible to flesh out the details of what many West Africans likely experienced upon arriving to the Portuguese port city.

Arriving in Lisbon did not mark the end of a captives’ time aboard enslavers’ ships. Rather, royal officials charged with inspecting and assessing taxes on captives typically rowed out to the ships that held them to conduct a preliminary inspection. Once that was complete, captives were disembarked and imprisoned in the Casa de Escravos, where they were subjected to further assessments and physical examinations by royal officials charged with assigning enslaved people a value for the purposes of royal taxation.³⁰⁵ Once royal officials’ examinations were complete, captives were released from the Casa de Escravos and placed back into the custody of their enslavers. From there, enslavers arranged to have the captives sold throughout Lisbon’s city streets and plazas. During the sixteenth century at least three of the city’s squares, including the central market place, regularly hosted slave sales.³⁰⁶

Enslavers and royal officials were not enslaved West Africans’ only points of contact in the course of these procedures and movements. West Africans were frequently transported from West African to Portuguese ports in large numbers. Given the overrepresentation of peoples from the Jolof and Mandinka language groups among Iberian-bound West Africans in this period, a significant number of these captives were certainly able to communicate with one another. Moreover, for as long as the Portuguese had traded in enslaved West Africans

³⁰⁴ ARV BG 197, 51r. – 52v.

³⁰⁵ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 15-16. And John L. Vogt, “The Lisbon Slave House,” 1.

³⁰⁶ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 17.

they made use of free and enslaved West African interpreters on their ships. Captives saw and interacted with these intermediaries in various capacities through their voyage.³⁰⁷ Moreover, as they disembarked in Lisbon for the Casa de Escravos, many West Africans would have seen enslaved black laborers working and conversing in Lisbon's port and docks

Once they were sold in Lisbon, some captives who eventually ended up in Valencia spent a significant amount of time in Lisbon. In 1503, for instance, a fourteen-year-old native of Mina named Johan Agudo testified that he had been enslaved as a small child, likely around the time he was five years old or younger. Mestre Ferrer Tregina, a Lisboan laborer, purchased Johan and took him from Mina to his hometown of Lisbon. Agudo remained under the Tregina's ownership until the laborer's death in 1503, at which point he had been living in Lisbon for over five years. Tregina's widow subsequently sold Agudo to a merchant who transported him to be sold in Valencia.³⁰⁸ In that same year, twenty-year-old Oriquel recounted that he was a young child when he was captured in his native Terranova, baptized in Mina del Oro, and sold in Lisbon.³⁰⁹ Thus, he lived in Lisbon for more than ten years before being moved to Valencia. Similarly, in 1506 twenty-year-old Ysabel testified to being captured in her homeland of Manegueta and taken to Lisbon. A female textile worker purchased Ysabel in Lisbon, and retained custody of her for a number of years before selling Ysabel to a merchant who took her to Valencia to be sold.³¹⁰ As these examples show, by the time captives like Johan Agudo, Oriquel, and Ysabel arrived in Valencia they had spent significant time in another Iberian port city.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

³⁰⁸ ARV BG 195 223r.-225r.

³⁰⁹ ARV BG 195 180r.-181r.

³¹⁰ ARV BG 196 84v.-85r.

Whether they spent years in Lisbon or were only there long enough to be examined, assessed, and sold, West Africans would have had, at the very least, glimpses of black Iberian life. As they were forced through the city to their initial points of sale, for instance, captives certainly saw black people—most of whom were enslaved—collecting water from fountains, whitewashing houses, hauling lumber, and cleaning sewers.³¹¹ Moreover, by the sixteenth century free black Lisboans made up roughly one percent of the city's black population, and thus newly arrived West African captives might have seen free black Lisboans going about their daily lives. Some of these black Lisboans were performers who danced, sung, and played horns and drums to rapt, mostly white, audiences.³¹² Many free and enslaved black Lisboans, moreover, were members of the city's multiple black confraternities and participated in civic or religious processions that newly arrived West Africans might have seen.³¹³ West Africans who spent longer periods of time in Lisbon might have spent time in Lisbon's black neighborhood, Mocambo. The neighborhood, located in the northwest portion of the city and comprised of various laboring-class groups, was likely "named after the Kimbundu word for 'hideout.'"³¹⁴ Fittingly, throughout the early modern period Mocambo gained a reputation as an attractive site for fugitive captives to seek refuge.

Direct to Valencia

Even captives who spent only a short time in Lisbon nevertheless witnessed and resided in other sites of black Iberian life en route to Valencia, as they testified to being

³¹¹ James Sweet, "The Hidden Histories of African Lisbon," in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, ed. Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 239.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 242

³¹³ For an overview of the membership of Lisbon's black confraternity in the early sixteenth century, see A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 150-6.

³¹⁴ James Sweet, "The Hidden Histories," 237.

bought and sold throughout the Peninsula. A majority of these captives were transported from Lisbon to Valencia via ship alongside a large number of other West African captives. Together, these captives were shuttled around the perimeter of the Peninsula, moving through the strait of Gibraltar from the Atlantic Ocean and into the Mediterranean before eventually disembarking at Valencia. In these cases, Valencia seems to have been enslavers' target market. Upon arriving to Valencia, captives would have likely been reminded of the scene in Lisbon's port. [Blank], for instance, has noted that Valencia's port (*grau*) was home to a substantial number of free and enslaved black Valencians. This was, in fact, an increasingly common feature of life in Iberian-Atlantic port cities. Thus, when disembarking from their enslaver's ships, captives would have seen free and enslaved black Valencians toiling in the city's port in as dockworkers or fishmongers.

Once they had been disembarked and were shuttled within Valencia's city walls to be lodged at sites such as the Camel Inn, these captives saw other black captives baking bread at the city's public ovens, doing manual labor such as ditch-digging or construction. They would have also seen free black Valencians living and working as bakers, cooks, porters, trumpeters and drummers working on behalf of municipal authorities. Beggars would certainly have been among these free black Valencians, some of whom were indigent and others who collected funds to support the captive redemption efforts of the city's black confraternity.³¹⁵

These captives did not typically reveal any details of this journey in their testimonies, as most arrived to Valencia in large groups that the Bailiff General deemed *boçal* en masse and did not interrogate. For their part, presenters offered only limited insights into these

³¹⁵ Debra Blumenthal, "Casa dels Negres."

journeys, typically limiting their testimonies to the names and the financiers of the ships upon which captives had been transported. While captive presentations did not record much about these journeys, Valencia-bound ships leaving Lisbon likely made stops at some of the port cities that dotted the Iberian littoral, such as Cadiz and Alicante. But given that many of the enslavers making this journey had Valencia in their sights as their target market, it is unlikely that enslaved West Africans disembarked from enslavers' ships at all of these ports. But not all enslaved West Africans who went from Lisbon to Valencia moved through such a direct and expedited route.

Urban Stopping Points

Major urban cities and ports figured prominently in the testimonies of captives who had been moved to Valencia through more circuitous routes. In 1507, for instance, twenty-five-year-old Juan Moreno recounted that, when he was about twelve, he was taken from his native Cabo Verde to Lisbon. Moreno did not spend much time in Lisbon before a Sevillian enslaver purchased him and took him to Seville. Moreno remained in this Sevillian's custody for six months, until eventually being sold and transported to Valencia. While Moreno was in Seville, he would have witnessed a broad spectrum of black urban life.

By the late fifteenth century, the city's black population was evidently so substantial that white visitors and Sevillians repeatedly compared the city to "a chessboard, alternating between with and black."³¹⁶ Moreno would have seen, and likely interacted with, these black Sevillians, most of whom were enslaved. He might have also encountered members of the city's black religious organizations, of which there were multiple throughout the sixteenth-

³¹⁶ Tamar Herzog, "How Did Early-Modern Slaves in Spain Disappear? The Antecedents," *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 3.1 (2012): 1-7.

century.³¹⁷ Arguably the most prominent among these was the city's black Marian confraternity, which by the mid-sixteenth century had merged with another black religious organization in the city and was re-dedicated to Our Lady of Angels. Moreno might have seen members of the order participate in civic processions throughout the city, or might have attended church services and events that the confraternity hosted.

He could have also encountered the Calle de Conde Negro (Black Count Street), where the confraternity's chapel was located. The street was named for Juan de Valladolid, a descendant of West African nobility whom the Catholic monarchs appointed as the first steward of free and enslaved black people in Seville in 1475. He was known colloquially as the "Black Count."³¹⁸ By the sixteenth century, the Calle de Conde Negro was also a regular site of black dances, weddings, and feast day celebrations. It was also home to the *Casa-Hospital*, which catered specifically to free and enslaved black Sevillans.³¹⁹

Moreno was not unique in being subjected to this pattern of movement. Six other West Africans recounted being transported from their homelands to Portugal and then to Seville before being taken to Valencia in their captive presentations. Additionally, more than ten percent of the Iberian-born captives who appeared in captive presentations (8 of 66) were born in Seville. There were certainly other black captives in Valencia who had passed through Seville. William D. Phillips, Jr., for instance, has noted that "Seville in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the nexus of a trade that brought enslaved people to Spain from

³¹⁷ Isidoro Moreno, *La antigua hermandad de los negros de Sevilla: etnicidad, poder y sociedad en 600 años de historia* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1997).

³¹⁸ Carmen Fracchia, *Black but Human: Slavery and Visual Arts in Hapsburg Spain, 1480-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 50.

³¹⁹ Isidoro Moreno, *La Antigua hermandad*, 68; Francisco Núñez Roldán, *La vida cotidiana en la Sevilla del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Sílex, 2004), 46; Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *La ciudad medieval (1248-1492)* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1976), 150.

Africa...acquired others from Portugal, and re-exported many to other parts of the peninsula.” Moreover, “Citizens of Seville were the most numerous among slave dealers” in Iberia.³²⁰

Though it was substantially smaller than Seville, the Valencian port of Alicante also became home to a black population by way of the Iberian slave trade. A handful of captives testified to living or passing through the city in their testimonies in Valencian captive presentations. But major cities and ports were not the only stopping points in captives’ forced movements.

Orihuela

As Erin Rowe has noted in her examination of black confraternities, “the overland slave trade [in early modern Iberia] created diverse paths for the movement of slaves and the creation of enslaved and free black communities.” Rowe argued that tracing diverse paths “can help us understand the spread of slavery in regions distant from the sea.” (Rowe, 65). These movements also offer glimpses of the sites of black Iberian life that existed throughout the Peninsula. Black captives’ testimonies in captive presentations offer a starting point for tracing these movements.

Between 1502 and 1524, for instance, more than a dozen captives recounted being bought and sold in the Valencian city of Orihuela en route to Valencia, about one hundred and sixty kilometers southwest of Valencia city and about forty kilometers inland from the Mediterranean coast. Often, captives only mentioned Orihuela in passing in their testimonies. In 1513, for instance, a *boçal* Mandinka man named Pedro recalled that he “was purchased

³²⁰ Isidoro Moreno, *La Antigua hermandad*, 68.

by a merchant in Orihuela who transported him, along with other blacks, from there to the present city” of Valencia.³²¹ As a thoroughly inland city, Orihuela did not have immediate access to a port and was thus not an obvious stop on the normal overseas route merchants took once they left Portugal, which was heavily-centered on port cities.³²² The testimonies of other captives whose movements were nearly contemporary with those of Pedro illuminate the routes through which many enslaved black Africans ended up in Orihuela.

The first insight comes from a twenty-year-old Wolof man named Johan. In 1504, Johan told Valencia’s bailiff general that he had been captured “together with his wife” in their homeland. From there, they were transported together to Portugal, where they were sold jointly to a merchant named Alonso Perdernal. Perdernal, in turn, sold Johan to a merchant from Orihuela named Johan Martinez. Perdernal sold Johan’s wife to a Genoese merchant named Polo Negro who lived in the city of Murcia.³²³ These transactions likely took place in the cities in which the respective buyers lived, Murcia and Orihuela. For one thing, Johan confidently testified that his wife was still living in Murcia under Polo Negro’s ownership. He also noted that he was purchased by Johan Martinez in Orihuela. With this information, it seems likely that Johan and his wife were first taken from Portugal to Cartagena, the port city nearest Murcia and the center of the Kingdom of Murcia’s slave market following the Spanish conquest of Granada in 1492.³²⁴ From there, they were likely taken north to Murcia, where Martinez sold Johan’s wife before taking Johan north to Orihuela.

³²¹ ARV BG 198, 25v.-26r.

³²² A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 29.

³²³ ARV BG 196, 14r. – 15v.

³²⁴ Jose Pascual Martinez, “Cuestiones acerca de la esclavitud en Murcia y su huerts,” *Nayades: revista de costumbresm tradiciones e historias de la Region de Murcia* 8 (2021): 5.

That this was likely the route through which many captives like Johan were transported is further suggested by the vivid testimony of a thirty-year-old native of Caragan named Caterina. In 1507 Caterina told the bailiff that she had been captured in her homeland by a Portuguese captain who transported her to Portugal. From there, the “Portuguese captain sold her to a merchant, who then transported her to Cartagena. From Cartagena she was transported to Murcia,” where she was sold to a local merchant named Johan Vasquez who eventually took her to Valencia.³²⁵ Similarly, in 1514 thirty-three-year old Jeromimo from Jolof testified to being captured in his homeland alongside his wife “by other black people” who sold them to Europeans. The couple’s European enslavers, in turn, transported them to Portugal, where they were purchased by a merchant who took them to Cartagena and then Murcia. A church canon purchased the couple in Murcia and relocated them to Orihuela, where they lived for a few years before the canon sold Jeronimo. Thus, this route through Cartagena to Murcia to Orihuela was likely the route through which other enslaved Africans who ended up in Orihuela were moved through the Peninsula.

Other enslaved Africans went from Portugal to Orihuela through less convoluted paths. In 1504, for instance, a twenty-four-year-old Mandinka man named Rodrigo testified that he had been taken from his homeland to Portugal, and then to the port city of Alicante. From Alicante he was taken to Orihuela and sold.³²⁶ Some captives who first arrived to Europe through Spain, rather than Portugal, likewise moved through the city. In 1502, for example, a thirty-year-old Mandinka man named Francisco recalled that, after being taken captive in his homeland, he was transported to the Spanish kingdom of Castile. From there he

³²⁵ ARV BG 196, 175r.-177v.

³²⁶ ARV BG 195, 263r. – 265r.

was taken to Orihuela, where he was purchased by a merchant who eventually took him by sea to Valencia.³²⁷

The diversity of routes through which black captives ended up in Orihuela speaks to the city's attractiveness to enslavers. Throughout the last half of the fifteenth and into the first half of the sixteenth centuries, merchants operating in Portugal found that they were able to demand higher prices for African goods—including enslaved people—in Spanish territories than they could domestically.³²⁸ Thus, merchants based in Portugal likely did not need to travel all the way to Valencia to turn a profit on their purchases. More importantly, tracing these routes illustrates that by the sixteenth century a significant number of black captives were living in or moving through Orihuela. Using sixteenth century records of slave sales, for instance, José Ojeda Nieto has shown that black captives in Orihuela outnumbered their non-black counterparts by more than four-to-one.³²⁹ Orihuela certainly boasted a free black population as well, though it was likely small. In 1503, for instance, one of the prisoners held in Valencia's jail (*presa*) was a free black man identified as "Christophol from Orihuela."³³⁰

Gender, Family, and Forced Movements

Enslaved peoples' gender and family status played a significant role in how enslavers moved them throughout the Iberian Peninsula. In the broadest sense, many Iberian enslavers had a vested interest in separating enslaved people from their family relations.

³²⁷ ARV BG 195, 172r. – 174r.

³²⁸ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 28.

³²⁹ José Ojeda Nieto, "El negocio de esclavos y cautivos en Orihuela (Siglos XVI y XVII)," *Millars. Espai I Historia* 18 (2013):75.

³³⁰ ARV Justicia Criminal 26.

This is particularly clear in the testimonies of married captives who were separated from their spouses. In 1504, for instance, a twenty-year-old Jolof man named Johan testified to having been captured in a war in his homeland alongside his wife and others. They were first taken to Portugal, and then Orihuela. From Orihuela, Pedro and his wife were taken to Murcia, where they were finally separated. Despite their separation, Pedro confidently testified that his wife was “a captive in Murcia in the custody of Polo Negro, a Genoese merchant.”³³¹ Likewise, in 1509, Macota, a forty-year-old black captive captured in the Spanish conquest of Oran, recounted that, while she had been brought to Valencia after being captured, her husband had been taken to Almeria in southern Spain as a captive.³³² These testimonies highlight the separation that enslaved spouses faced while also revealing captives’ abilities to confidently testify to their spouses’ whereabouts.

The testimonies of children and young adults who had been born to enslaved mothers on the Iberian Peninsula further illustrated the degree to which separating enslaved families was a favored strategy of enslavers. In 1505, for instance, Pedro—a ten-year-old boy born to enslaved parents in Lisbon—claimed to know nothing about his parents other than that they had been captives in the household of Lisboan citizen Anthoni Ferreres [INSERT]. Pedro claimed that, although he was born in Ferreres’ household, Pere Ferrandiz, the man who had initiated his captive presentation, was the only master he had ever known. Similarly, in 1510, eight-year-old Johannis, a native of Carmona, noted that he had been born to an enslaved mother, whose master sold him to a merchant who transported him to Valencia to be sold. Johannis’ ability to testify to the identify of his mother but not his father was typical of

³³¹ ARV BG 196, 11r.-12r.

³³² ARV BG 196 314v.

enslaved children in captive presentations, who regularly appeared in captive presentations with a limited ability to recount their paternity.

The separation of enslaved mothers and children was likely fueled, in part, by the same desire to discourage captives from establishing independent familial bonds that encouraged the separation of spouses. But it was certainly also incentivized by a desire to mask instances of enslavers' sexual exploitation of enslaved women. Throughout the Iberian Peninsula, officials regarded the sexual exploitation of enslaved women as undermining slavery's moral legitimacy. In the Kingdom of Valencia, specifically, enslaved women could petition for their freedom if they could prove that they had born a child by their enslaver. Since at least the fifteenth century, enslaved women living in the Kingdom of Valencia had success filing suits on these grounds. As such, enslavers' desire to relocate enslaved mothers and their offspring was likely often a means to mask the occurrence of such exploitation. Nevertheless, this reality was surprisingly visible in the presentation of an enslaved West African woman named Cristina, who testified that, after [DATE].

Thus, in addition to enslaved West Africans who were moved through a variety of somewhat standard overland and sea routes by merchants and slave traders, enslaved families—and especially children born to enslaved mothers—were moved throughout the Peninsula in more sporadic attempts to discourage family-making and cover-up instances of sexual exploitation. But black Iberians' ability to recount the paths of their movements and the whereabouts of their family members they had been separated from demonstrates that they were not passive victims of these forced movements. Black Iberians' awareness of and engagement with their Iberian surroundings was not limited to their forced movements.

Mobility

Ironically, some of the clearest evidence of black Iberians' mobility was recorded as a result of efforts to surveil, prohibit, or undermine such movement. The 1510 captive presentation of a freed black woman named Brigida illustrates this point clearly. Brigida recounted that, while she was a captive in the Castilian town of Medinaceli a few years prior, she received a deathbed manumission from her mistress, a duchess. Brigida's circumstances immediately after her manumission were not markedly different from those of her captivity, as she worked as a freedwoman for the duke of Medinaceli's mistress. After two years of this work, Brigida decided to leave Medinaceli for Guadalajara, fifty miles southwest. She embarked on this journey "in the company of two white women"³³³ who made their living as fruit sellers. Brigida did not give any indication in her testimony as to why she took up with the fruit sellers, or what drew the trio to Guadalajara. Nevertheless, it is clear that Brigida decided to engage in this intra-peninsular movement of her own accord. This mobility and relocation, however, came with acute risks that eventually resulted in her presence in the Bailiff General's court.

Brigida recounted that, shortly after arriving to Guadalajara, she was captured by an unnamed man. Brigida did not disclose what transpired in detail. The assailant might have simply happened upon Brigida—a black woman who was new to the city—and perceived her to be particularly vulnerable or without social support. Alternatively, the two white women that Brigida had been travelling with might have intentionally lured her away from her social networks in Medinaceli and arranged for her capture in Guadalajara in exchange for a monetary reward. This was certainly a scenario that other re-captured black Iberians fell

³³³ ARV BG 197 16v.-17r.

victim to. In 1519, for instance, a formerly enslaved black man from Sardinia named Goncalbo recounted travelling with his master to Barcelona, where he was manumitted. He then took up with a pair of Frenchmen, whom he accompanied in their travels to Granada, France, and Valencia, and who eventually tried to re-enslave him.³³⁴

Whatever the specifics of her re-capture, Brigida's captor promptly presented her to a man named Don Luys, who was residing in Guadalajara. Don Luys had an extensive family history with enslavement, as his father, the count of Plego, enslaved many black captives in his household. This was on clear display in 1505, when one of the count's agents initiated a captive presentation of four black captives from the count's household.³³⁵ Brigida recalled that, upon being presented to Don Luys, he "asked her if she was a captive or free" and "she told them that she was free." Brigida's declaration of freedom sparked a sense of urgency in Don Luys and his henchman, who quickly moved her from Guadalajara to Don Luys's hometown of Plego. Don Luys kept Brigida captive in Plego "for about eight days" before transporting her to Valencia to initiate a captive presentation. Although Brigida's harrowing story of mobility and forced movement was recorded in a captive presentation, in the early sixteenth century there was another venue in which the Bailiff General recorded the testimonies of black Iberians whose attempts to exercise their mobility were undermined by enslavers.

Namely, in 1519 the Bailiff General began conducting a novel procedure known as "fugitive confessions," in which the court investigated individuals accused of being fugitive captives. While these trials represented a shift in the Bailiff General's activities related to

³³⁴ ARV BG 199, 1r.-v.

³³⁵ ARV BG 196, 45r.-47r.

Valencia's slave trade, they closely resembled captive presentations. These trials began with a brief account of the suspects' identity and the circumstances under which they were apprehended. Unlike captive presentations, in which such expository information was presented as formal and thorough accounts reported by enslavers, in fugitive confessions this information was jotted down quickly with inconsistent levels of detail from the Bailiff General's perspective. Following this note, the Bailiff General launched directly into an interrogation of the suspect. Unlike the rote and repetitive interrogations in captive presentations, the interrogations of suspected fugitives were more dynamic and responsive to suspects' answers and conditions.

Following these interrogations, the official would launch an investigation into the suspects' claims, often dispatching messengers or agents to the cities and towns that suspects claimed to have hailed from. These investigations could take anywhere from days to months to complete, and in the interim suspects remained detained in Valencia's municipal prison. While the Bailiff General regularly alluded to these investigations in trial proceedings, he unfortunately did not preserve records documenting these investigations with his trial records. The findings of these investigations were only alluded to when the Bailiff General called suspects back into his court once the investigation had been completed. Sometimes these suspects were re-interrogated and confronted with findings that contradicted their initial testimony. Then, the Bailiff General made his ruling. Suspects whom the Bailiff General found innocent were released and those the court found guilty were either remitted to their masters or, if such a re-enslavement was impossible, were sold as captives in the city.

The creation of fugitive confessions was certainly prompted by contemporary unrest in the city. First, the plague struck Valencia in 1518, prompting many of the city's elites to flee

to the countryside. The following year marked the beginning of the *Germanias* revolts, or “Revolts of the Brotherhoods,” in which the city’s artisans rebelled against the urban elite, often violently. It was amidst these environmental and sociopolitical catalysts for unrest that the Bailiff General began its attempts to regulate and deter captive fugitivity. These crises also coincided with Charles V’s 1518 declaration allowing the direct transportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas. As discussed in Chapter Two, the number of enslaved Africans being brought to Valencia plummeted quickly following this decree. Introducing captive confessions to regulate fugitivity might have been the Bailiff General’s response to the court’s diminished captive presentation caseload. Thus, fugitive confessions were a response to the unrest that was spreading in Valencia and to the city’s decreasing desirability as a port for enslaver. As such, they were likely not designed with the explicit or primary objective of surveilling black Iberians’ movements.

But even if surveilling black mobility was not the objective of these trials, this was their effective outcome. Although officials labelled some suspects in these cases as *llor* and white (*blanch*), black Iberians constituted nearly sixty percent (89 of 150) of the suspects in these cases between 1519 and 1530. Inasmuch as this over-representation reflects black Iberians’ outsized numbers among enslaved populations in early sixteenth-century Iberia, it also reflects contemporary white enslavers’ ideas about what kind of people they regarded with suspicion. This is further suggested by the fact that only two of the black Iberians who appeared in fugitive confessions were women, despite the fact that enslaved women attempted to escape their captivity throughout the fifteenth century, albeit in smaller numbers than men. Despite these caveats and limitations, captives’ confessions still shed important light on the geography and mobility of black Valencia.

Places of Origin

Firstly, examining suspects' testimonies reveals black Iberians' presences in a variety of towns and cities that did not figure prominently in captive presentations' itineraries of forced movement. Six of the black captives who appeared in fugitive confessions, for instance, identified the Castilian territory of Murcia as their place of residence before being apprehended on suspicion of being fugitives, making it the most-cited Iberian place of residence in captive confessions. By contrast, with the exception of one man who identified as a native of Murcia and two men who testified to having enslaved spouses in the city, Murcia primarily appeared in captive presentation as a stopping point in captives' longer itineraries of forced movements. Even then, fewer than a dozen captives invoked the city in this regard. Despite its paucity in captive presentations, it is unsurprising that Murcia was a home to many enslaved black Iberians in the early sixteenth century. Angel Luis Molina, for instance, has noted that slavery was becoming more popular in Murcia in the late fifteenth century thanks to the confluence of Iberia's growing trade in enslaved West Africans and the influence of Roman law on Castilian jurisprudence.³³⁶

This influx of enslaved people in Murcia produced new regulations of enslaved people. Molina, for instance, has shown that by the late fifteenth century Murcian enslavers and officials began associating enslaved Murcians with crime and delinquency. This was clear in a 1478 decree by Murcia's municipal officials, in which they declared that "because the slaves in this city are such great thieves" any enslaved person caught stealing would be "publicly given one hundred lashes" unless their master paid a fine of one thousand

³³⁶ Angel Luis Molina, "Contribución al estudio de la esclavitud en Murcia a finales de la Edad Media (1475 - 1516)," *Murgetana* 53 (1978): 111-114.

maravedis. Moreover, in 1503 civic officials passed an ordinance prohibiting enslaved black people from walking the streets at night and from gathering with one another on Sundays and feast days.³³⁷ Murcia's relative overrepresentation as a place of origin for suspected black fugitives fleeing to Valencia might be a response to these developments.

The second-most-cited Iberian place of residence mentioned in fugitive confessions was Elche, a largely inland town in the province of Alicante. Little is known about the black and enslaved populations of late medieval and early modern Elche, and captive confessions' narrow interests in suspected fugitives' itineraries do not shed much light on black suspects' lives in the town. Nevertheless, the black and enslaved residents of Elche were likely witness to the town's annual production of its famous mystery play, which was first performed in the late fourteenth century and quickly became an annual tradition with a great deal of fanfare. Moreover, Elche's irrigation systems, implemented while the city was under Muslim rule, made the city a producer of relatively inexpensive wine that was in high-demand in neighboring areas like Murcia. Enslaved laborers surely engaged in agricultural labor that produced this wine and the city's other crops. Black Iberians' accounts of their places of origin in captive confession thus expanded the geography of black Iberia that was recorded in captive presentations. Other places figured prominently in captives' testimonies in these cases, but not always as points of origin.

Alzira

³³⁷ For a full discussion of this law, see Angel Luis Molina, "Una ordenanza murciana sobre esclavos negros (1503)," *Monteagudo: Revista de literatura española, hispanoamericana y teoría de la literatura* 56 (1976): 5-9.

This was especially true of the town of Alzira, about forty kilometers south of Valencia, which was evidently home to a significant black population throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1520, two suspects in separate fugitive confessions—a man named Hieronym and a native of Saxi called Anthoni—identified Alzira as their Iberian place of residence before their re-capture. The town also figured prominently in the testimonies of two other captives who did not specifically cite the town as their place of residence. In 1530, for instance, a suspect named Christophol—who could not recall his natal origins or childhood places of residence because “he was brought to this kingdom at a young age”—admitted to being a fugitive on the run from his current master, a merchant in Alzira. In that same year, Pedro, a native of Malaga who testified to fleeing the city as a captive, testified that his master was Diego Lopiz, “a merchant who stayed in Alzira.” That both of these testimonies featured merchant-enslavers suggests that, despite its rarity in captive presentations, Alzira was a significant site of enslaving activity and, consequently, home to a significant enslaved black community.

Evidence from other courts sheds additional light on black life in Alzira. In 1504, for instance, an enslaved black woman from Alzira named Margalida successfully sued for her freedom on the basis that her master had sexually exploited her and fathered a child by her. The thirty-year-old Margalida testified to having lived in her master’s home in Alzira for nineteen years at the time of the suit. None of the witnesses in Margalida’s case were identified as black, but at the very least she certainly knew of other black Alzirans, free as well as enslaved. To that point, the *Cens de 1510* listed three black heads of household in the city, meaning that Alzira boasted the second-most black heads of households in a single city in the *Cens*. Moreover, two of these black heads of household—Pedro Roqua and Climent

Gocalbo—appeared in immediate succession to one another, suggesting that they lived next to one another. Moreover, in 1550 a black man named Francisco was detained in the city on suspicion that he was a fugitive captive. Although Francisco did not testify as to why he had come to Alzira, the presence of a significant black population might have made it an attractive place to linger or seek refuge.

Tracking suspects' accounts of their movements throughout the peninsula further fleshes out this geography beyond Valencia. Unlike captives' filtered and rote itineraries of being bought and sold, suspects in fugitive confessions testified to a surprising variety of routes and patterns of movement. This is clear, for instance, in the case of Barcelona. Barcelona was rarely mentioned in West Africans' captive presentations. This was likely, in part, logistical. Nearly 350 kilometers north along the Mediterranean coast from Valencia, Barcelona was considerably out of the way for merchants travelling east from Lisbon. Moreover, although Barcelona became a hub of the West African slave trade in the 1440s, the Catalanian Civil War (1462-1472) damaged the city's attractiveness and activity as a site of cosmopolitan commerce until the early sixteenth century.

While Barcelona was rarely mentioned in captive presentations, it appeared repeatedly in suspects' accounts of their movements in fugitive confessions. In 1519, for instance, the formerly enslaved Goncalbo recounted travelling to Barcelona from his home in Sardinia alongside his master, a jurist who was staying in Barcelona's royal court.³³⁸ In 1529, moreover, Johan de Cáceres, a native of Jolof, testified to fleeing his master's home in Cáceres and travelling to Bilbao and Barcelona.³³⁹ In 1527, a Saxi man named Anthoni

³³⁸ ARV BG 199, 1r.-v.

³³⁹ ARV BG 199, 229r.

testified to being a fugitive who had fled from his master, “a soldier in Barcelona.”³⁴⁰ Like their counterparts in cities like Lisbon, Seville, and Orihuela, these individuals all likely experienced elements of black urban life in Barcelona that had been in existence since the mid-fifteenth century. In 1455, for instance, the Aragonese Crown issued a charter legitimizing the brotherhood of Sant Jaume, a black confraternity comprised of black Barcelonans. At the time of its charter, the Barcelonan brotherhood of Sant Jaume was only the second Iberian black confraternity to gain official royal recognition.³⁴¹ Throughout the fifteenth century the Brotherhood of Sant Jaume regularly participated in civic processions and was a visible testament to black life in Barcelona.

Granada

Granada was another city that captives rarely mentioned in captive presentations but that suspects in fugitive confessions mentioned repeatedly. Again, the 1519 testimony of Goncalbo—the Sardinian captive who traveled to Barcelona with his master—illustrates this trend. Goncalbo claimed that his master freed him in Barcelona. Goncalbo testified that he subsequently took up with two Frenchmen, who travelled south with Goncalbo to Valencia and then Granada. That same year, a suspect from Malaga named Francisco recounted a similar series of events, as he claimed that he had fled to Valencia, where he met “two brothers of the order of Saint Augustine” who escorted him to Granada. In 1529, moreover, Ferrando, who identified as a native of Guinea, testified to having been enslaved in the Valencian city of Alcoy until his master Anthoni’s death. Ferrando claimed that he spent the

³⁴⁰ ARV BG 199, 217r.

³⁴¹ Ivan Armenteros Martinez, “De hermandades y procesiones. La cofradía d esclavos y libertos negros de *Sant Jaume* de Barcelno y la asimilación de la negrituden la Europa premoderna (Siglos XV-XVI),” *Clio-Revista de Pesquisa Historica* 29.2 (2012): 3.

next eight or nine years living in Castile and then Granada. Lastly, in 1531, a man named Anthoni who had been enslaved in Portugal said that he had fled his master's house to escape mistreatment a year ago. He reported fleeing to Granada and living there for nearly a year before his eventual capture.

That Granada repeatedly appeared in fugitive confessions as a destination that suspects sought out suggests that the city might have had special appeal to black Iberians. In fact, in the first half of the sixteenth century there were a number of factors that would have made Granada attractive. For one thing, following the Christian conquest of Granada in 1492, Christian settlers from throughout the Iberian Peninsula began immigrating to Granada in significant numbers. This type of resettlement had been a typical feature of Muslim territories that fell to the Christian "*reconquista*" throughout the Middle Ages, and was often encouraged by Christian secular and ecclesiastic officials hoping to secure Christian control of the territory. In fact, officials often incentivized this resettlement by offering settlers property or status. In the case of Granada, specifically, in 1495 the Crown began offering Christian settlers tax exemptions in exchange for taking up residence in the city. These incentives were publicized by the crown as well as by Granadan municipal officials, who sent out representatives to publicize the incentives throughout Castile and recruit new settlers.³⁴²

This environment often presented members of marginalized groups rights and access that were unavailable to them in their homes. As Heath Dillard has shown in their study of towns conquered in the Castilian *reconquista*, for instance, women who settled in conquered

³⁴² David Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492-1600* (Ithaca, NJ: Cornell University Press, 2003), 18.

territories often benefitted from property and inheritance regimes that were more generous than those in their hometowns. In the case of post-conquest Granada, David Coleman has noted that the city “was characterized by a somewhat greater degree of social mobility than was possible” in established Castilian communities. To that end, Coleman noted that women and Jewish converts to Christianity (*conversos*) made up a significant portion of Granada’s post-conquest settlers.³⁴³ Moreover, two thirds of Christian settlers in Granada “were from families of artisans or laborers.”³⁴⁴ Once they arrived to Granada, these artisan and laboring-class settlers took up a variety of occupations, ranging from artisans and merchants to domestic servants. Black Iberians certainly found this environment of opportunity as appealing as members of these other socially marginalized groups did, and perhaps even more so if they were fleeing captivity.

But life for black Christians in post-conquest-Granada was not all opportunity and upward social mobility. As in the rest of the Peninsula, slavery and captivity had been a regular feature of pre-conquest Granadan life, and largely ensnared Christian Iberian captives captured in battles and raids. But with the Portuguese involvement in the Iberian-West African slave trade, Granada’s enslaved population came to include many West Africans by the turn of the sixteenth century. Throughout the sixteenth century, self-styled “Old Christian” Granadans and Granadan Muslim converts to Christianity known as Moriscos bought, sold, and owned enslaved black Iberians. The ability of both “Old Christians” and Moriscos to participate in the enslavement of black people was a regular source of tension and controversy in Granada, as Old Christians regularly challenged Moriscos’ ability to own

³⁴³ Ibid., 22-3.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 23.

enslaved black people. This debate came to a head in 1567 when Phillip II passed his *Pragmatica*, which revoked many of Granadan Moriscos' privileges, including slave ownership. Nevertheless, in this environment of widespread slavery, runaway captives or foreigners like Goncalbo, Francisco, and Anthoni could have faced the threats of capture or re-enslavement in Granada that mobile black people in other part of the Peninsula did.

But Granada's Morisco population, and the consistent controversy that Old Christians generated concerning Morisco ownership of enslaved black people might have made Granada attractive to some black Iberians. The crux of many Old Christian polemics against Morisco slave ownership was that slave ownership was little more than a ploy through which Moriscos recruited black Iberians into crypto-Islamic beliefs and practices. Interestingly, this account of enslavers using slavery as a tool for sociocultural assimilation was not dissimilar from the behavior that Zurara lauded Portuguese Christian slave owners for engaging in a century earlier. In any case, Old Christians' hyperbolic accounts of Moriscos' treatment of black captives might have attracted the attention of enslaved and impoverished black Iberians elsewhere in the Peninsula who found their own options for freedom and upward social mobility limited.

Imagined Itineraries

Suspects in fugitive confessions engaged with Iberian geographies not just through their movements, but through their ability to craft accounts of those movements. On multiple occasions, suspects testified to their itineraries only to later admit that they had fabricated or manipulated their accounts. This was the case, for instance, in the 1527 case of Myquel Pere, who had been captured in Valencia city. Myquel Pere testified to being a native of "the land of the blacks" who had been baptized in Portugal before living as a captive in Xativa under

the ownership of a laborer named Pere Alrez, who had lived near “the butchery in the parish of Sant Miquel.”³⁴⁵ Myquel Pere further admitted to fleeing Alrez’s household two weeks before being captured. On its face, Myquel’s testimony likely seemed unremarkable to the Bailiff General’s officials.

When the Bailiff General’s officials had completed their investigation into Myquel Pere’s claims, they brought him back before the Bailiff General to confront him with their findings. In this second interrogation, the Bailiff General began by asking Myquel Pere if his name was actually Berthomeu. Myquel Pere conceded that his name was, in fact, Berthomeu. Moreover, he confessed that he had not been the captive not of a Xativan laborer, but of “the widow of Lors de Roha” who lived in Valencia “near the Marcia Marti towers” near the kitchen of Valencia’s General Hospital.

The relationship between Myquel Pere/Berthomeu’s initial testimony and the truth of his experience is unclear. On the one hand, it is possible that Myquel Pere/Berthomeu completely fabricated his first account of captivity and escape. He might have done so in an attempt to deceive the Bailiff General and, in so doing, be released. Alternatively, he might have crafted the story in response to pressure from Valencian officials. As the case of Hernando in Chapter Four illustrated, the Bailiff General certainly had the ability to coerce new testimonies from individuals whose claims did not align with the court’s goals. Other suspects in fugitive confessions spoke explicitly about these pressures. In April 1526, for instance, Francisco Onrique, who had been born to an enslaved mother on the Iberian Peninsula, said in his interrogation that he was free and, in fact, had never been enslaved. As such, he did not possess *carta de franquesa*. Incredulous, the Bailiff General asked Francisco

³⁴⁵ ARV BG 199, 168v-169v.

if, just a few days prior, he had confessed to being a captive while in Valencia's prison. Francisco admitted that he had claimed to be enslaved "because he had been there [in the prison] for two or three days and had already said that he was free" to no avail, suggesting that he only admitted to being a captive in hopes it might expedite his release from prison.³⁴⁶ Whatever the truth of the matter, after a month-long investigation the Bailiff General found a man who claimed to be Francisco's owner, and remitted Francisco to the enslaver's custody.

It is also possible that Myquel Pere/Berthomeu was telling a half-truth in his initial interrogation. It is certainly possible that, before living in Valencia as the widow's captive, Myquel Pere/Berthomeu had in fact been enslaved to a laborer in Xativa. He might have even gone by Myquel Pere in Xativa. Fabricating a story with an element of autobiographical truth might have been a way for Myquel Pere/Berthomeu to maintain degree of verisimilitude and credibility while still evading re-enslavement. This strategy would not have been unique to Myquel Pere/Berthomeu. For instance, in 1524 Johan—a native of Jaloff who was apprehended in the Valencian town of Torres Torees—testified to fleeing from his master Diego Mendoza, a member of the royal court, while the pair were in Burgos. As in the case of Myquel Pere/Berthomeu, the Bailiff General's investigators found inconsistencies in Johan's testimony and confronted him during a second investigation. Upon re-interrogation, Johan confessed to the truth.³⁴⁷

Alternatively, Berthomeu might have based his testimony on the biography of someone he had known or encountered in black neighborhoods or social spaces in Valencia, Xativa, or perhaps Alzira or Orihuela, if he passed through those cities. The story he told of

³⁴⁶ ARV BG 199, 139r.

³⁴⁷ ARV BG 199, 103r.-v.

fleeing an abusive laborer-enslaver in Xativa was, after all, not unique. More than a dozen other suspects in fugitive confessions, for instance, testified to having been enslaved by laborers. Moreover, two other suspects in fugitive confessions in this period identified Xativa as their prior place of residence. The *Cens de 1510* further suggests that Xativa was home to a significant black community. On the one hand, the city was home to two black heads of household in the *Cens*, Mestre Joan Ferrer and Marti Tolza.³⁴⁸ But, more significantly, Ferrer and Tolza's households were only separated by two entries in the *Cens*, suggesting their households' physical proximity and the potential existence of an informal black neighborhood.

Regardless of how Myquel Pere/Berthomeu and other suspects in fugitive confessions came to craft their false biographies and misleading testimonies, the fact that they did at all is testament to black Iberian's engagement with their social and geographical surroundings. On the one hand, suspected fugitives trying to escape detection were able to craft believable—if not always successful—accounts of their places of residence and geographical trajectories. This demonstrates that while many black Iberians were alienated from their natal homelands, they were not isolated or unaware of their Iberian surroundings. Black Iberians gained this knowledge through various combinations of enslavement and forced movements, self-determined acts of mobility, and interaction with their black peers in black neighborhoods and social spaces.

Furthermore, crafting these strategic itineraries of habitation and movement required black Iberians in these cases to create or strategically edit their own personal histories of enslavement and ownership. While some claimed outright that they were free, others more

³⁴⁸ Rafael Valdecabres Rodrigo, ed. *El Cens de 1510*, 517.

subtly omitted or changed details about the identities and locations of their enslavers so as to avoid being returned to their actual enslavers. In this way, these suspects challenged and undermined the picture of slavery that the Bailiff General tried to cultivate through its formalized captive presentations. In captive presentations, the Bailiff General recorded moments of captives' purchase and sale throughout the Iberian Peninsula in an attempt to render captives' unfree status as self-evident. But suspected fugitives' testimonies offered another understanding of these transactions and chains of custody. Rather than unassailable rituals of possession, moments of sale and protracted histories of ownership provided enslaved black Iberians with opportunities to assert their freedom, whether through the literal act of flight or through the crafting of strategic personal histories that obscured enslavers' claims on them. Similarly, even in the more rote and formulaic testimonies recorded in captive presentations discussed above, enslaved black Iberians' encounters with sites of black social and communal life complicate the notion that their movement through Iberian spaces was shaped entirely by their enslavement and ownership.

If captives' and suspected fugitives' testimonies challenged contemporary Valencian enslavers' renderings of slavery and unfreedom, they also offered a productive counter-narrative to Zurara's account of slavery and the creation of a Black diaspora in Portugal. In Zurara's telling, black Iberians' movement throughout the Peninsula occurred only through their enslavement. Captive presentations and fugitive confessions, though, clearly demonstrate that free and enslaved black Iberians engaged in self-determined acts of mobility, even if they did so in hostile social environs at their own personal risk. Zurara likewise insisted that black Iberians' integration into quotidian Iberian life occurred primarily as a result of their enslavement. But black Iberians' testimonies in fugitive confessions, along

with the black Iberian social spaces that proliferated throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, demonstrate that some of the most vibrant elements of black Iberians' lives were cultivated in response to or outside the bounds of enslavers' prerogatives.

Chapter Six: A Tale of Two Parishes: Black Life in Urban Valencia

In 1529, a black man named Marti appeared before Valencia's Bailiff General as a suspect in a fugitive confession. Marti, a native of Jafara in North Africa, was open in admitting that he was a captive who had fled his enslaver's home in Murcia about a month earlier in attempt to escape his enslaver's mistreatment of him. Marti explained that he fled to Valencia because "his master had told him that Valencia was a good land."³⁴⁹ The implications of Marti's decision to characterize Valencia as "a good land" were not self-evident. This statement after all, was filtered through Marti's account of his abusive enslaver's claims. Did Marti's enslaver characterize Valencia as a land that was good for enslavers like him? That enslavers were emboldened to detain individuals they suspected of being fugitive captives might suggest as much. But as it possible that Marti's enslaver had suggest that Valencia was a good city for enslaved or disenfranchised people like Marti?

In the most immediate sense, Valencia could have represented a "good land" to Marti for the economic opportunities it offered laboring status people from outside of the city. As Dana Wessel-Lightfoot has shown, throughout the fifteenth-century Valencia was an attractive destination for low-status laborers in surrounding towns and cities who were looking for opportunities to raise money and start families. In the early sixteenth century black Iberians were certainly among these emigrants. Of the fifty fugitive confessions that recorded the locations in which enslavers captured suspected fugitives, twenty-eight occurred in the "good land" of Valencia city.

³⁴⁹ ARV BG 199, 222v. "li hon dit que Valencia era bona terra."

Evidence from these suspects' certainly suggests there were opportunities for work for black Iberians new to the city. Four of the captives who were captured in Valencia city, for instance—Myquel Johan (1520), Johan de Sevilla (1526), Martin de Johan del Casar de las Alumbres (1527), and Christophol (1530)—were detained in or while on their way to Valencia's market (*mercat*).³⁵⁰ As the center of Valencia's economic activity, some of these suspects were certainly engaged in some form of economic activity or labor. For his part, Martin de Johan del Casar de la Alumbres said that he was headed to the market to buy bread when he was detained.³⁵¹ Moreover, another two suspects—a “native of Jolof” named Francisco (1525) and Johan Moreno, a native of the Valencian city of Benicarlo (1527)—were captured in the city's port (*grau*), another bustling site of work and economic activity.³⁵² In fact, black Iberians throughout the Peninsula often found large ports to be lucrative sites of work and habitation.

Other suspects, moreover, identified themselves as having occupations in the city at the time of their capture. Johan, who was captured in Valencia in 1523, for instance, testified to being a basket-weaver (*esparter*).³⁵³ Furthermore, Johan de Sevilla, who was captured in Valencia's market in 1526, testified to working as a dyer (*tintorer*).³⁵⁴ While Johan likely learned his trade while enslaved in Seville, he reported being on the run for about a year by the time of his capture, suggesting that he found work in Valencia's lucrative textile industries. Furthermore, Anthoni—a “native of Guinea” who had spent most of his life

³⁵⁰ ARV BG 199, 32r., 149r., 187r., 282r.-v.

³⁵¹ ARV BG 199 187r.

³⁵² ARV BG 199, 124r., 186r.

³⁵³ ARV BG 199, 80r.

³⁵⁴ ARV BG 199, 149r.

enslaved in Portugal—identified himself as a laborer (*laurador*) after being captured near one of Valencia’s city gates in 1531.³⁵⁵

But while Marti might have been referencing these broad economic and occupational opportunities when calling Valencia “a good land,” he was likely also referencing aspects of the city that more specifically appealed to black Iberians’ concerns. This is most apparent when considering Marti’s whereabouts at the time of his capture. Marti’s captor claimed to have detained Marti on “the Carrer dels Renglons, near San Vicente Gate,” the city’s most southern gate. At first glance this seems unremarkable, as a city’s gates seem like a natural place to find foreigners seeking refuge in the city. Moreover, it makes sense that in travelling northwest from Murcia to Valencia, Marti would enter the city through its southernmost gate. But there was another feature of the neighborhood surrounding San Vicente Gate that Marti’s captor did not mention. Namely, the San Vicente Gate opened onto the San Agustin chapel, which had been the meeting place for the *Cofradía dels Negres de la Sagrada Verge Maria de la Misericordia*, Valencia’s black confraternity, since the mid-fifteenth century.

The confraternity’s charter, which Miguel Gual Camarena first discovered and published in 1952, clearly situated it in Saint Augustine’s Chapel in the Parish of Sant Marti.³⁵⁶ Scholars who have subsequently worked with the charter and other sparse documentation concerning the *Cofradia* have presented the organization as expressions of black Valencians’ piety, desire to emulate contemporary Catholic European values, or need for social support. Antonio Albacete, for instance, compared the charters of Valencia’s and

³⁵⁵ ARV BG 199, 317r.-320v. For other examples of suspected fugitives who identified their occupations as laborers, see ARV BG 199 133r., 148r., 164r., 260r.-v, 322r., 323v., 324v.-325r.

³⁵⁶ Miguel Gual Camarena, “Una confradia de negros libertos en el siglo XV,” *Estudios de la Edad Media de la Corona de Aragon* 5 (1952): 441-457.

Barcelona's black confraternities to argue that both organizations served as venue through which formerly enslaved black people could integrate into contemporary socioreligious norms.³⁵⁷ Debra Blumenthal has examined litigation records involving the confraternity's efforts at manumitting black captives to argue that the confraternity "reflected and fostered feelings of black African solidarity."³⁵⁸ Moreover, the chapel de San Agustin was just one site of black social and communal life in sixteenth-century Valencia. Given that Marti's month-long flight from captivity culminated in his presence near the meeting site of a black confraternity known for assisting enslaved people escape their abusive masters, Valencia could have represented a "good land" for the opportunities of support it offered black Iberians like Marti.

The other neighborhood associated with early modern black life in Valencia was known as the *Bordellet dels Negres*, or the "Blacks' Little Brothel." In his expansive *Valencia historica y topografica* (1862), Valencian antiquarian Vicente Boix wrote extensive accounts of both of these sites of black communal life.³⁵⁹ Citing seventeenth-century chronicle sources, Boix highlighted black Valencians' participation in civic and religious processions under the auspices of the city's black confraternity. He also suggested that members of the confraternity resided primarily in the *Bordellet dels Negres*. Boix's peers, including historians and antiquarians Pau Carsi y Gil, Victor Balaguer, and Manuel Calvo y Peladra, followed his lead in writing about the *Bordellet dels Negres* in their own works on Valencian history. Balaguer and Calvo y Peladra cited Boix's *Historica* in these passages.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ Antoni Albacete Gascon, "Les confraries de lliberts negres a la Corona Cataloaragonesa," *Acta històrica et archaeologica mediaevalia* 30 (2009/10): 307-331.

³⁵⁸ Blumenthal, "Black African solidarity in late medieval Valencia," 228.

³⁵⁹ Boix, *Valencia historica y topografica* 128-30.

³⁶⁰ Pablo Carsi y Gil, *Cosas particulares, usos y costumbres de la ciudad de Valencia: dietario de Pablo Carsi y Gil* (Valencia: Societat Bibliografica Valenciana, 2011), 73 and 101, and Gaspar Juan Escolano, *Decadas de la*

Historians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have continued to explore the histories of these two communal bodies. In his important study of slavery in medieval and early modern Valencia, for instance, Vicente Graullera-Sanz cited Boix's discussion of the *Bordellet* as his sole source to argue that in Valencia "slaves, once freed, gathered in distinct neighborhoods where they were able to coexist peacefully."³⁶¹ In her 2002 *Anecdulario histórico valenciano*, moreover, popular Valencian writer María Francisca Olmedo de Cerdá noted that "In the sixteenth century, black people were so numerous in Valencia that they formed an extensive neighborhood...popularly known as the *Calle del Bordellet dels Negres*."³⁶² Boix, and the historians who followed his lead, typically suggested that the *Bordellet* and the *Cofradia* occupied the same physical space in the city and as such treated the two phenomena as more or less interchangeable.

While scholars and historians have done important work on the *Bordellet* and *Cofradia*, their conclusions and insights have been limited by a paucity sources. Since Boix's nineteenth-century entry on the *Bordellet*, for instance, accounts of the *Bordellet* have routinely drawn on the same set of late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century sources. On the other hand, examinations of the *Cofradia* have relied primarily on the organization's charter, a handful of scattered sixteenth-century legal and administrative records, and seventeenth-century accounts of royal processions. In this chapter I seek to remedy this limitation. Unfortunately, I cannot do so by introducing a significant new trove of documentary findings

historia insigne y coronada ciudad y reino de Valenciav (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1880), 558-559; Victor Balaguer, *Las Calles de Barcelona: Origen de sus nombres* (Madrid: Manuel Tello, 1888), 386-7; Manuel Calvo y Pelarda, "La Olivera de Valencia: una nota para 'el Quijote.'" *Revista de Valencia* 3 (1883): 118n3.

³⁶¹ Vicente Graullera Sanz, *Esclavitud*, 161.

³⁶² María Francisca Olmedo de Cerdá, *Anecdulario histórico valenciano* (Valencia: Carena Editors, 2002), 51.

pertaining to the *Bordellet* and *Cofradia*. In fact, in my archival and secondary research I found only a few explicit references to the *Bordellet* and no explicit references the *Cofradia*.

As such, rather than introducing new material on these specific sites of black communal life, in this chapter reorient and re-contextualize the known extant evidence with contemporary legal, administrative, and notarial documents that offer glimpses into quotidian black life in Valencia. In doing so, I situate the *Bordellet* and the *Cofradia* within the broader contexts of the parishes in which they were located: the parishes of Sant Andreu and Sant Marti, respectively. In taking this broader view of the *Bordellet* and *Cofradia*, I argue that neither of these sites played straightforward roles in black Valencians' experiences of daily life. On the one hand, I will show that the *Bordellet's* reputation as a site of racialized sexual and social disrepute was largely fueled by the activities of exploitative enslavers and municipal officials trying to curb black Valencians' efforts at sociability and community. On the other hand, I will show that inasmuch as the *Cofradia* met the needs of free and enslaved black Valencians, it was just one feature of a vibrant black neighborhood that has so far gone unrecognized by scholars. In addition to shedding light on two parishes that housed significant elements of Valencia's sites of black communal life, this examination will also provide a window onto social and family patterns that many black Valencians, regardless of their place of residence, shared.

Sex Work in the City: The Bordellet dels Negres and the Parish of San Andreu

The *Bordellet dels Negres* was located in the Parish of San Andreu, which occupied the southeastern portion of intramural Valencia [Figure 16]. Throughout the later Middle Ages and the early modern period, Sant Andreu was home to a variety of notable landmarks in Valencia. Until the anti-Jewish pogroms of 1391, the parish had been the site of Valencia's

Jewish Quarter and cemetery. In the late fifteenth century, the parish became home to Valencia's university and accompanying poor student confraternity. The parish was also the site of a *trinquet*, a ball court designed for games of *pilota*. The *Bordellet dels Negres* was situated near or between these various points of interest, though how it developed is unclear. The few authors who have written accounts of the *Bordellet* have focused primarily on its late-sixteenth-and-early-seventeenth century history. With the exception of two sources from 1564 and 1599, for instance, nineteenth-century antiquarian Vicente Boix drew entirely upon seventeenth-century sources for his lengthy entries on the *Bordellet dels Negres* in his *Topografico*. Moreover, save for records of a 1585 legal proceeding, historian Vicente Graullera-Sanz drew upon the same sixteenth-century sources in his two articles discussing the *Bordellet*.³⁶³



Figure 36. The south-oriented 1738 Tosca Map of Valencia, reoriented north. The site of the *Bordellet dels Negres* is circled. Image from commons.wikimedia.org.

³⁶³ See Vicente Graullera Sanz, "L'esclavage à Valence. Les affranchis et leur intégration sociale," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 87 (2013): 8.

Nevertheless, sparse documentation from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries allow for a sketchy reconstruction of the *Bordellet's* earlier history. Details from a municipal decree from the late fourteenth century, for instance, suggest that the *Bordellet* first came into existence following the anti-Jewish pogroms of 1391. Philip Daileader has noted that the pogroms “left many houses in the Jewish quarter vacant.” Many marginalized groups seized this opportunity and settled into the parish. These vacated houses became popular sites for gamblers, thieves, and sex workers.³⁶⁴ This new proliferation of sites of sex work in the city prompted Valencia’s municipal *consell* to pass a decree in 1394 restricting where sex workers could practice their trade. The declaration ordered Valencian sex workers living “next to the Valley, in the *Bordell de les Negres*, on San Francisco street, in the towers of Marcia Marti, in the Fishermen’s, near the city wall, and in any other part of the present city” to relocate to the newly-established civic brothel in the Parish of Sancta Creu.³⁶⁵ Three of these sites—the Valley, the *Bordell de les Negres*, and the Fisherman’s Quarter—were located within the Parish of San Andreu. The Valley and *Bordell dels Negres*, moreover, were separated by just a few blocks.

Although the *Bordell de les Negres* came to be associated with early modern black communal life, at the time of this declaration it likely was not home to a significant population of West Africans. For one thing, Iberian-West African contacts were not thoroughly established until the mid-fifteenth century. As such, the sex workers in the late-fourteenth century “*Bordell de les Negres*” were likely Muslim women, perhaps of North African descent. Daileader has noted that in the late fourteenth century sex work was

³⁶⁴ Philip Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer, His World and Life: Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 84, 108.

³⁶⁵ Salvador Aldana Fernandez, *Los judios de Valencia: un mundo desvanecido* (Valencia: Carena Editors, 2007), 132.

particularly lucrative for Muslim women who served both Christian and Muslim clientele in the city.³⁶⁶ Even before 1394, these women had been restricted to practicing their trade within Valencia's Muslim quarters. The city's newly-vacated Jewish quarter was thus likely especially attractive to these women. Moreover, throughout the Middle Ages Christian Iberians regularly depicted their Muslim counterparts as dark-skinned, brown, or black in a way that fell out of fashion in the early sixteenth century. This tendency was on full display in the thirteenth-century *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, which regularly depicted Muslims as dark-skinned. Furthermore, Bensch has shown that Iberian enslavers referred to groups of captives as "black" before the initiation of Iberian-West African trade relations.³⁶⁷

While the 1394 decree might have reduced temporarily quelled sex work in the *Bordell de les Negres*, its effectiveness was likely short-lived. In nearby Murcia, for instance, "local officials acknowledged that prostitutes were living outside their designated" following early fifteenth-century ordinances restricting their places of work in the city.³⁶⁸ Even if the Valencian 1394 decree did remain effective in curbing the sites of sex work in the decades immediately after it was issued, by the middle of fifteenth-century many sites of illicit sex work mentioned in the 1394 decree were still vibrant sites of illicit sex work. This was particularly true for sites in the parish of San Andreu.

The persistence of illicit sex work in the parish of San Andreu is most clearly attested to by the scandal surrounding enslaver and sex-trafficker Ursola Vinader, alias Na Rotlana. Na Rotlana lived in the Parish of Sant Andreu in the fifteenth century in a plaza that, by the

³⁶⁶ Philip Daileader, *Sanint Vincent Ferrer*, 103.

³⁶⁷ Stephen P. Bensch, "From Prizes of War to Domestic Merchandise: The Changing Face of Slavery in Catalonia and Aragon, 1000-1300," *Viator* 25 (1994): 76-9.

³⁶⁸ Philip Daileader, *Sanint Vincent Ferrer*, 99.

early sixteenth century was known as Plaza del Estudi due to its proximity to Valencia's university and poor students' confraternity. Moreover, the Plaza del Estudi was located between the Valley and the *Bordellet dels Negres*—two sites of sex work mentioned in the 1394 decree relocating sex workers. During Na Rotlana's tenure as a resident of the Plaza, it was also a site of illicit sex work and sex-trafficking. Debra Blumenthal has noted that Na Rotlana "achieved local notoriety in the 1460s as a 'madam' of a group of slave prostitutes" whom she compelled into sex work. Some of Na Rotlana's victims even lodged criminal complaints against her for forcing them into prostitution, which was illegal in Valencia and was grounds for enslaved people to sue for their freedom.³⁶⁹ Incidentally, none of the women in these suits were identified as being black. The scandals of Na Rotlana became an integral part of local identity, as by the late fifteenth century the Plaza del Estudi was colloquially known as the Plaza Na Rotlana. This moniker persisted into the sixteenth century, adding a further association between the Parish of San Andreu and illicit sex-work [Figure 17]. But while the Plaza na Rotlana developed strong associations with illicit sex-trafficking in the late fifteenth century, its reputation evidently did not surpass those of the Valley or the *Bordellet dels Negres* between which it was situated.

³⁶⁹ Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 89.

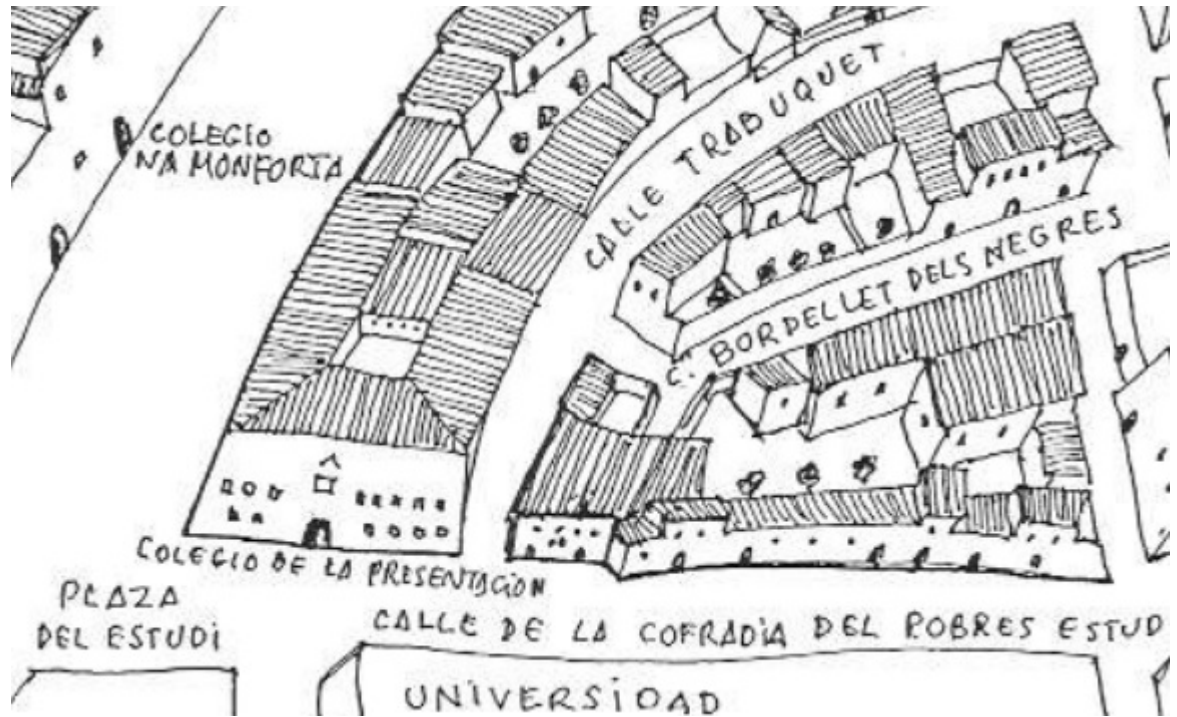


Figure 47 Detail showing proximity of the Plaza del Estudi/Plaza Na Rotlana to the *Bordellet dels Negres*. From Graullera-Sanz, “L’esclavage à Valence,” 8.

This was evident in a 1489 royal declaration regulating sites of sex work in the city that was nearly identical to that issued by the Valencian *consell* in 1394. Like its predecessor, this proclamation forced women “who make a living by means of their bodies” (*viuen de cos*) living within the city’s walls to relocate to the municipal brothel in the Parish of Sancta Creu, which this decree referred to as the Sinful Women’s Quarter (*Pobla de les Fembres Peccadrius*). Like the 1394 proclamation, this royal proclamation specifically mentioned that sex workers living in “the valley, the Bordell dels Negres, San Francesc Street, the Macia Marti towers, and the Fishermen’s quarter” needed to relocate to Sancta Creu.³⁷⁰ While the list of illicit sites of sex work in this proclamation was virtually identical to that of its

³⁷⁰ “al vall, al Bordell dels Negres, al carrero de Sent Francesc, a les torres de Macia Marti, als Peixcadors.” Carles Recio, *Historia Sexual del Reino de Valencia*, 2nd Edition (Valencia: Editorial Sargantana, 2016), Loc. 5096.

fourteenth century predecessor, by 1489 women of West African descent certainly numbered amongst the sex workers in the *Bordell dels Negres*. This was not a phenomenon specific to Valencia in this period. In Barcelona, for instance, enslaved West Africans were involved in the city's sex trade by the 1450s, as by 1454 the orchard in the Monastery of San Pau de Camp was known to be where “enslaved black people had made a brothel.”³⁷¹ Roger Benito Julia has suggested that the orchard was an appealing site for sex workers because “it was far removed from the city.”³⁷² While former Jewish Quarters in the Parish of San Andreu were located squarely within Valencia's city walls, their physical distance from the city's center and their history of housing scandalous and marginalized groups—including Jews, Muslims, sex workers, thieves, and gamblers—likely situated them as “removed from the city” as well.

Evidence from the early sixteenth century suggests that the 1489 proclamation was effective in reducing the prevalence of sex work in the *Bordellet*. The *Cens de 1510*, for instance, only listed “public women” as residing in the Parish of Sancta Creu. Furthermore, because the Crown taxed innkeepers who provided sex workers with lodgings in which they could conduct their transactions, innkeepers often appeared in the *Cens* on behalf of the sex workers whose work they facilitated. To that point, no innkeepers appeared in the *Cens*' accounting of the parish of Sant Andreu. Furthermore, none of the “women of the brothel” or “public women” who appeared before Valencia's Justicia Criminal in the first half of the sixteenth century were identified as black or as living in the parish of San Andreu.³⁷³ The notion that the *Bordellet* continued to be a site of significant sex work in the sixteenth century has also been undermined or explicitly questioned by historians. Urban historians

³⁷¹ Roger Benito Julia, “La prostitució a la Barcelona Baixmedieval (segles XIV-XV)” (dissertation, Universitat de Barcelona, 2018), 106.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 156.

³⁷³ ARV JCrím Cedes y Denunciacions, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31.

who have written about the early modern history of the parish of Sant Andreu, for instance, have characterized it as a home to merchants, laborers, butchers, fishermen, peasants, and members of the bourgeoisie.³⁷⁴ The neighborhood's *trinquet* has also been a recurring topic of interest.³⁷⁵ But these studies make no mention of sex work in the parish beyond occasionally noting the existence of a neighborhood named *Bordellet dels Negres*. Historian of early modern Valencian sex work Pablo Pérez García has been more explicit in suggesting that in the sixteenth century the name of the *Bordellet dels Negres* neighborhood in the Parish of San Andreu “does not appear to be related to the existence of a brothel for people of color” in the neighborhood.³⁷⁶ Pérez García suggested, instead, that the name might have been a reference to the university students, clad in black robes, who lived and studied in San Andreu and spent their free time pursuing “venal passions.” Whether or not the 1489 proclamation actually curbed the prevalence of illicit sex work in the Parish of San Andreu, in the early sixteenth century Valencians continued to regard it as a site of social disruption and criminality.

Two edicts from the first two decades of the sixteenth century paint a variety of locations in the Parish of San Andreu as sites of disorder and disrepute. On November second 1502, for instance, Valencian civic noted that recently “two black men stole more than 500

³⁷⁴ Francisco Javier Palao Gil, *La propiedad eclesiástica y el juzgado de amortización en Valencia (siglos XIV a XIX)* (Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2001), 224; Ricardo García Cárcel, “Notas sobre población y urbanismo en la Valencia del siglo XVI,” *Saitabi: revista de la Facultat de Geografia i Història* 25 (1975): 143, 146, 147.

³⁷⁵ Jose Hinojosa Montalvo, “Espacios de sociabilidad urbana en el Reino de Valencia durante la Edad Media,” *Acta historica et archaeologica mediaevalia* 26 (2005): 992.

³⁷⁶ Pablo Pérez García, “Un aspecto de la delincuencia común en la Valencia pre-agermanada: la ‘prostitución clandestina’ (1479-1518),” *Revista de Historia Moderna: Anales de la Universidad de Alicante* 10 (1991): 32. García asserted that the neighborhood might have gotten its name for its “narrow, solitary, and closed structure,” which resembled the city’s brothel with its high walls and single point of entry. He also suggested that the street might have gotten its name from the large number of university students living in the neighborhood, clad in black robes and pursuing “venal passions.”

ducats from one house, and set fire to another house to rob it.”³⁷⁷ Subsequently, “there was a huge brawl between the aforementioned blacks in the plaza called Na Rotlana, in which there were many injuries, and as a result two or three black people were near death.”³⁷⁸ Officials used this incident to declare that “free black people who have homes shall not dare to take in other blacks, either free or enslaved, to their homes, nor hold gatherings or games in them, under the same penalty. While the degree to which this edict was enforced is unclear, it might explain why, in the *Cens de 1510*, black heads of household are not recorded as living in proximity to one another like those in other Valencian towns and cities did. In any case, this edict was followed by a declaration from Valencia’s governor Luys Carbonell in 1517, which sought to expel the city’s “thieves, vagabonds, and ruffians.” To this end, Carbonell proclaimed that “all of those who were found in the *pilota* court (*triquet*) of the *Bordells dels Negres*” playing an illegal orange-throwing game known as *tragonera* were to be imprisoned. Carbonell then identified one of the more than seventy thieves that were to be expelled from the city as “Blayot, from the *Bordell dels Negres*.”³⁷⁹

Taken together, these two proclamations depict the Parish of San Andreu as housing multiple sites of crime, brawls, and disorder, in which black Valencians and the *Bordellet dels Negres* played just one part. While the 1502 edict regulating sites of black sociability, for instance, singled out black Valencians as causes of social ills in the city, it did not mention the *Bordellet* or allude to illicit sex work. Luys Carbonell’s 1517 proclamation, on

³⁷⁷ All quotes from this decree come from the transcription found in Manuel Carboneres, *Nomenclator de las calles, puertas y plazas de Valencia* (Valencia: Imprenta del Avisador Valenciano, a cargo de Jose Peidro, 1873), 109-110n1. Carboneres’ citation is the *Libro de Actas* 1502 “en aquests proppassats dies, dos negres han furat pus de cinch cents ducats, dins una casa, e donat foch en altra casa per furtar aximatex.”

³⁷⁸ Ibid., “sia seguida una gran brega entre aquells dits negres en la plaça quis diu de Na Rotlana, prop lo Vall, en la qual se son seguides moltes nafres e senyaladament dos o tres negres stan a la mort.”

³⁷⁹ AMV, *Actas*, 1511. Cited and transcribed in Manuel Carboneres, *Nomenclator*, 158.

the other hand, specifically targeted activities and individuals within the *Bordellet dels Negres*, but did not specifically mention or even allude to black Valencians as specifically being the source of those ills. While black Valencians and illicit sex workers might have made up a portion of the Parish of San Andreu's demographics, these were just one part of a wider range of activity and groups. Even so, contemporaries still maintained a strong association between the site of the *Bordellet dels Negres* and illicit, racialized sex work into the mid-sixteenth century.

In 1528, for example, Valencian municipal officials renamed a street in the Parish of San Andreu formerly known as *Calle Emblanch* (Embalming Street) as *Calle del Bordellet dels Negres* (Street of the Blacks' Little Brothel) [Figure 18]. This name change literally transformed a space once associated with Jewish Valencians into a space associated with black Valencians. The *Calle Emblanch* led directly to the city's Jewish cemetery, the *Cemetario de San Andreu*. It also opened out onto the *Plaza Na Rotlana*. By the time officials renamed the street in 1528, more than a century had passed since the 1391 pogroms that had initially depopulated San Andreu's Jewish population and had initiated a series of demographic changes and local scandals that made the neighborhood a site of disrepute. That contemporaries nevertheless still strongly associated the site with the *Bordellet dels Negres* speaks to the neighborhood's enduring reputation as a site for illicit racialized sex trafficking. This close association of Jewish space and black space was part of a larger trend in the early modern Mediterranean.

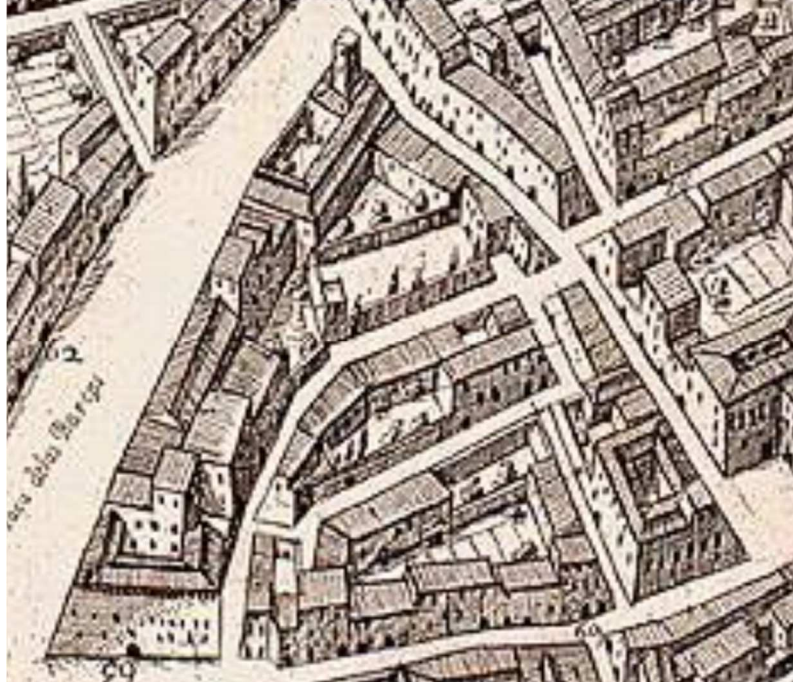


Figure 18 Detail of the 1738 Tosca Map, with the Calle *Emblanch/Calle del Bordellet dels Negres* highlighted

Throughout the early modern period, Europeans regularly conflated black Africans with Jews. Sometimes this association was facilitated by demographic realities. In sixteenth-century Lisbon, for example, the predominantly black neighborhood known as Mocambo was also a site of Jewish life in the city.³⁸⁰ But often this association of Jewishness with blackness was more representational or abstract. Kate Lowe has shown, for instance, that in the fifteenth-century Italians often associated black people with Jews due to contemporary laws requiring Jewish girls to wear gold earrings and depictions of black Africans as wearing gold jewelry.³⁸¹ Moreover, Toby Green has noted that since 1506 European travel accounts regularly claimed that West African griots, or praise-singers, were Jews.³⁸² Furthermore,

³⁸⁰ James Sweet, "The Hidden Histories of African Lisbon," 237.

³⁸¹ Kate Lowe, "The Stereotyping of black Africans," in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* ed. T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 24.

³⁸² Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 142-44, 288.

James Sweet has shown that Europeans visiting Lisbon in the eighteenth-century specifically commented on the city's population of "Jews and Negroes," which they perceived to threaten the city's social order and racial purity.³⁸³ This phenomenon of conflating minority groups was not limited to black people and Jews. Johnathan Boyarin has shown that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Christian Europeans drew upon medieval notions of Muslim and Jewish Otherness when rendering indigenous American alterity.³⁸⁴

Even as the *Bordellet dels Negres* remained a vivid part of Valencia's imagined social landscape, contemporary census, legal, and notarial records bear strikingly little evidence of black life in either the *Bordellet dels Negres* or the Parish of Sant Andreu. For one thing, of the ten Valencian black heads of household who appeared in the *Cens de 1510*, none lived in the Parish of Sant Andreu. The *Cens* did, however, record black heads of household in the parishes of Santa Maria, Sant Marti and Sancta Creu, the same parish that housed the municipal brothel that officials tried to wrangle Valencian sex workers into during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Moreover, of the thirty-eight instances I have found in which black Iberians were associated with specific sites in Valencia in the first half of the sixteenth century—either as places of work, residence, or recreation—only two individuals were associated with the parish of San Andreu [Figure 22]. The first source situating a black Iberian in the Parish of Sant Andreu was a fugitive confession from 1529, in which twenty-year-old Diego, who was apprehended in "the Plaza de Vilarrassa" in the Parish of San Andreu. Diego's testimony was sparse, and he did not account for what he had been doing in

³⁸³ James Sweet, "The Hidden Histories of African Lisbon," 236-237.

³⁸⁴ Jonathan Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

the plaza or how he had spent his time since arriving in Valencia nearly a month earlier.³⁸⁵ Moreover, the Plaza de Vilarrassa was not in immediate proximity to the *Bordellet del Negres* or the Plaza Na Rotlana. Despite the paucity of sources placing black Valencians in the Parish of Sant Andreu in the early sixteenth century, white Valencians still strongly associated the neighborhood with illicit and racialized sexuality.

This is clear in a criminal denunciation made before Valencia's governor in 1550, the only other piece of evidence I have found attesting to black residence in the parish of San Andreu in the first half of the sixteenth century. Ysabel Cardona lodged the denunciation on behalf of her niece Maria Cardona, a minor, to denounce the butcher Guillem Frances and a free black woman named Beatiru.³⁸⁶ Ysabel alleged that Guillem had raped her niece in Beatriu's home, an accusation that squarely situated the defendants within the Parish of Sant Andreu's long history of sexual impropriety and exploitation. But as the attacker in the case, Guillem was the main focus of the denunciation and of witnesses' testimonies. Witnesses primarily spoke about the relationships between the plaintiffs Ysabel and Maria and about the minor Maria's relationship with the butcher Guillem. Moreover, many witnesses focused on parish's meat market (*carniceria*), where Guillem worked and was seen interacting with Maria.

While the meat market was the literal setting of many of Guillem's and Maria's interactions, for witnesses it might have also provided a suggestive backdrop for Guillem's sexual violence. Criminal court records, for instance, suggest that throughout the early sixteenth century butchers represented something of an unsavory element in Valencia's urban

³⁸⁵ ARV BG 199, 216v.-217r.

³⁸⁶ ARV GPC 586.

geography due to their involvement in brawls and fights. An oft-cited 1585 court proceeding, in which the plaintiffs complained of disturbances caused by residents of the *Bordellet dels Negres*, moreover, mentioned butchers among the neighborhood's rabble-rousers.³⁸⁷ On a more symbolic level, witnesses might have foregrounded the meat market in their testimony so as to invite parallels between slaughtered animal carcasses and Maria's violated body. They might have also intended to draw connections between Guillem's trade as a butcher, to which end he prepared and sold meat, and sex workers, who the 1489 proclamation regulating sex work characterized as women who make a living "by means of their bodies," or *carn*. Ysabel and her witnesses were likely trying to achieve similar ends in implicating the free black woman Beatriu in Guillem's crimes.

Although Beatriu was only a minor figure in the denunciation and in witness's testimonies, her home provided a similarly provocative background for the plaintiff's accounts Guillem's actions. Neither Ysabel nor any of the witnesses in the case had anything of substance to say about Beatriu or her involvement in Guillem's sexual predations. Ysabel did, however, note that Beatriu lived "near San Andreu" on a street that opened onto the Carrer dels Barcas. Furthermore, one of Ysabel's witnesses—a goldsmith named Antonio Lopiz—simply described the events as taking place "in a black woman's house near San Andreu."³⁸⁸ No witness described the exact location of Beatriu's residence on Carrer dels Barcas, a long street that encompassed multiple city blocks. But at its south end, the street opened out onto the university near the *Carrer del Bordellet dels Negres* [Figure 19], meaning that Beatriu might have lived near the infamous neighborhood. Ysabel and Antonio

³⁸⁷ For discussion of these proceedings, see Vicente Graullera Sanz, "L'esclavage à Valence. Les affranchis et leur intégration sociale," 8

³⁸⁸ ARV GPC 586, 17r.

might have intended to stir such associations. Doing so would have painted a lurid picture, in which a predatory butcher lured a young girl from one type of meat market to another. Beatriu's co-defendant Guillem might have been attempting to mitigate such implications when he noted that Beatriu's lived in "a house that is near San Andreu, on a street that goes from San Andreu to the Carrer dels Barcas," the most specific description of Beatriu's residence in the proceedings.³⁸⁹ Beatriu, for her part, did not testify about her place of residence.

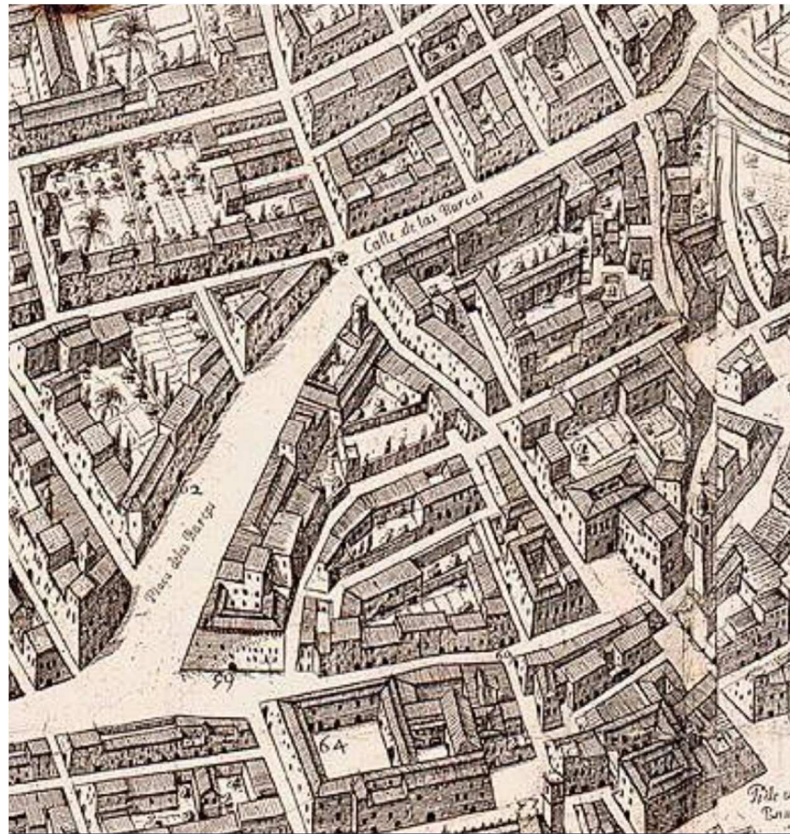


Figure 19 Detail from 1608 Tosca map of Valencia. Carrer dels Barquas is highlighted and the *Bordellet Dels Negres* is circled.

Neither the *Bordellet dels Negres* nor the Parish of Sant Andreu appeared in any other contemporary criminal court records involving black Valencians from the first half of the

³⁸⁹ ARV GPC 586, 1r.

sixteenth century. Only a handful of records from Valencia's Justicia Criminal from this period survive, representing the years 1503, 1515, 1527, 1529, 1535, and 1538. Nevertheless, of the one hundred and fifty-five black individuals for whom I found any documentation, sixty-three (forty percent) appeared in these records as defendants, plaintiffs, witnesses, victims, and bystanders to crime. Another twelve appeared in records of criminal proceedings held in the governor's court (*Gobernacio*). Admittedly, place names and locations were not prominently featured in these proceedings, as only twelve individuals in these records were associated with specific locations. It is nevertheless surprising that, in a venue where litigants and officials had ample opportunity to characterize black sociability as criminal and dangerous, the infamous neighborhoods of the Parish of Sant Andreu, like the *Bordellet dels Negres* was never mentioned.

By the early sixteenth century a number of connected sites in the Parish of Sant Andreu had accrued associations with a variety of marginalized groups or groups perceived to be socially disruptive, including Jews, Muslims, sex workers, thieves, sex-traffickers, university students, gamblers, and West Africans. Civic officials drew upon these associations to justify a variety of measures, from the policing and relocating of sex workers in the late fifteenth century to the early-sixteenth-century prohibitions on black congregating and sociability. Individual litigants could also draw upon these associations to bolster their claims in court, as the case of Ysbael, Guillem, and Beatriu revealed. But despite the parish of Sant Andreu's consistent association with black life by means of the *Bordellet dels Negres* in this period, existing evidence makes it difficult to discern the extent to which the neighborhood was truly a site of black communal life in Valencia during the first half of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, there was another, more centrally-located parish in

Valencia that had been home to a clearly documented black population since the late fifteenth century: the Parish of Sant Marti.

The Cofradia dels Negres and the Parish of Sant Marti

Like the *Bordellet dels Negres*, the *Cofradia dels Negres de la Sagrada Verge Maria de la Misericordia*, or the *Cofradia dels Negres*, has occupied a central role in the historiography of early modern black Valencian communal life. The earliest accounts of the confraternity were largely descriptive. In his seventeenth-century account of the Valencian festivities celebrating King Felipe's wedding in 1599, for instance, chronicler Felipe Gaona described the confraternity's role in civic processions. Gaona noted that the celebrations began "first with the procession of all of the black people of the city, free as well as enslaved, of whom there were many" and who marched as a confraternity "before, and separately from, the other trade organizations." Gaona described black Valencians as singing, dancing, playing instruments, and carrying the banner of the confraternity during the procession. Vicente Boix quoted Gaona's account of black civic revelry at length and coupled it with a more synthetic description of the confraternity's more quotidian business, noting that centuries earlier Valencia had been home to "a confraternity that venerated the coming of the Holy Spirit" and regularly "attended, as a group, the annual procession of Saint Vincent Ferrer," one of the city's most venerated saints.³⁹⁰ More recent studies have approached the *Cofradia*—and Iberian black confraternities more broadly—as an index of, on the one hand, black Iberians' communal solidarity or, on the other, of their assimilation to contemporary Iberian Catholic norms.³⁹¹ But amidst these insights and analyses, scholars have not situated

³⁹⁰ Gaona's account is quoted at length in Vicente Boix, *Valencia historica y topografica*, 128-129.

³⁹¹ Blumenthal, "Casa dels Negres," Rowe, *Black Saints*, Armenteros, "Hermandades."

the confraternity within its immediate social environs. This is surprising given that the confraternity's founding document did, in fact, situate the organization within a specific urban context.

In 1472, twenty free black Valencians successfully petitioned King Ferdinand to grant them a charter recognizing their *Cofradia* (confraternity). This marked the official establishment of the *Cofradia*, but not the beginning of its activity in Valencia. Saunders has suggested that, by the time they applied for royal recognition, black confraternities in sixteenth-century Portugal had already been active for at least five years.³⁹² Although the petitioners did not specify how long they had been gathering prior to their petition, they explained that they had, “with the authority of the office of the governor, been accustomed to meet every year to serve, honor, and glorify our Lord God and the Holiest Virgin Mary” in “the chapel of the Virgin Mary of Grace in the monastery of blessed Saint Augustine,” located on the southern outskirts of the parish of Sant Marti near one of the city's gates.

Given that the Augustinian monastery had been the confraternity's meeting place for at least a few years, it seems likely that—as with the *Call del Conde Negro* in Seville—the neighborhood surrounding the monastery served as a site for black social gatherings and feasts, if not also residence. If this had not been the case before the members filed their petition to the Crown in 1472, it was certainly the case afterwards. Once the *Cofradia* received royal recognition, its members gained new privileges, including the ability buy and maintain a house in Valencia where they could gather and conduct their business.³⁹³ Although their charter did not specify the site of the house, it was likely near the monastery

³⁹² A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen*, 151-6.

³⁹³ Miguel Gual Camarena, “Una cofradia de negros libertos en el siglo XV,” 442.

in the Parish of Sant Marti. That the neighborhood was home to a robust black presence in the late fifteenth century is further suggested that a street near the monastery was known as the *Carrer dels Negres*, or “Blacks’ Street,” throughout the 1470s and 1480s.³⁹⁴ Although its exact location is unclear, the *Carrer dels Negres* was, at the most, just a few blocks away from the San Agustín Chapel. It is not surprising that the Parish of Sant Marti was home to these sites of black communal and social life.

Sant Marti was Valencia’s most centrally-located and largest parish. It bordered one side of the city’s Market Plaza and made up nearly a quarter of the city’s territory. As such, it was also Valencia’s most populated parish and housed residents of diverse social classes, including textile artisans, the commercial bourgeoisie, nobility, and agrarian laborers, all of whom lived in distinct neighborhoods.³⁹⁵ A diverse body of sources—including court records, notarial contracts, census records, and testimonies from suspected fugitive captives—attests to the presence of black Valencians and black Iberians within the parish of Sant Marti. Specifically, nineteen of the thirty-nine sources that I have found situating black Valencians within specific locations of residence, work, and recreation within the city between 1500 and 1550 mentioned streets, plazas, residences, and interactions in the parish of San Marti [Figure 22].

In fact, unlike the *Bordellet dels Negres*, whose early history is most clearly documented in official royal and municipal records, official documents somewhat obscure the parish of Sant Marti’s place in black social life. In 1485, for instance, Valencia’s *consell*

³⁹⁴ Two 1470 notarial act drawn up by officials associated Valencia’s Orphan Hospital referred to the “carrer appellat dels Negres,” see M. Adela Garcia-Mencho Osset and M. Milagros Carcel Orti, *Capbreu de la Confrario d’Orfenes a Maridar de Valencia* (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2017), 558 and 561. A 1485 civic act renamed the street from Carrer dels Negres to Carrer de la Fulla.

³⁹⁵ Francisco Javier Palao Gil, *La propiedad eclesiástica y*, 225.

changed the name of *Carrer dels Negres* to *Carrer de la Fulla*, before once again changing it to *Carrer de la Culla* in the mid-sixteenth century.³⁹⁶ While neither the *Carrer de la Fulla* or *Carrer de la Culla* appear in early sixteenth-century records in association with black Valencians, throughout this period nearby sites in the Parish of Sant Marti continued to be places of black residence and recreation.

One such site was the *Carrer dels Renglons*, a large street which served as the entry point to the *Carrer dels Negres/Carrer de la Fulla*. One of the most detailed records of black residence on the *Calle dels Renglons* came from a 1535 criminal denunciation for which the *Carrer dels Renglons* was the setting. That year, Angela Carros and Speranca Arcis, two formerly enslaved black women who lived and worked in houses on *Carrer dels Renglons*, lodged a denunciation before Valencia's *Justicia Criminal*.³⁹⁷ The target of their denunciation was another pair of formerly enslaved black women named Catherina Colon and Speranca Gomiz, with whom the plaintiffs had maintained a longstanding mutual hostility "for various causes and reasons".

The exact nature of Colon's and Gomiz's relationship and their places of residence are unclear. The plaintiff Arcis claimed that the defendant Gomiz regularly allowed Colon to use her house as a rendezvous point for trysts with her lover, a laborer named Joan Vicent, but did not specify where that house was located.³⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Mark Meyerson has noted that feuds in late medieval Valencia typically involved actors who lived within a block of one another, so Colon and Gomiz likely lived near the sisters Arcis and Carros, perhaps on the

³⁹⁶ Manuel Carboneres, *Nomenclator*, 61, 76.

³⁹⁷ ARV JCrím Cedes y Denunciations 30, 247r. "esien fancies [?] en una casa en lo carrer dels Renglons"

³⁹⁸ ARV JCrím Cedes y Denunciations 30, 252v.-253r.

Carrer dels Renglons.³⁹⁹ In any case, these four women were not the sole participants in this feud. The sisters Carros and Arcis claimed that the hostilities between the two pairs of women were so entrenched that their “friends, relatives, and lovers” had divided into fractions, “the ones against the others.”⁴⁰⁰ Trial records offer a partial glimpse of these factions’ constituencies, which included Colon’s lover Joan Vicent, the “freed black woman Sicilia, wife of Berthomeu the cook,” and a woolworker named Balthazar Lopiz. Though these records document a contentious set of relations between black Valencians, they nevertheless portray the *Carrer dels Renglons* as a place that numerous black Valencians called home.

Black residents of Valencia were not the only black Iberians who spent time on the *Carrer dels Renglons*. On two separate instances in 1529 and 1530, white Valencians apprehended black men—Marti and Pedro, respectively—on the *Carrer dels Renglons* on the suspicion that they were fugitive captives. At first glance, Marti and Pedro’s presence on the street may seem incidental and unrelated to the street’s black residents or presence. For one thing, in their testimonies neither man spoke specifically about what they were doing on Calle dels Renglons, how they ended up there, or for how long they had been there. Moreover, officials reported that both men were captured “on the Carrer dels Renglons, near the Portal de Sent Vincent,” a point of entry into the city located along its southern wall. As such, it could have been the case that both men were captured shortly after passing through the city’s walls, which just happened to be near the Carrer dels Renglons. Given the Portal de

³⁹⁹ Mark Meyerson, “The murder of Pau de Sant Marti: Jews, “conversos,” and the feud in fifteenth-century Valencia,” in “*A great Effusion of Blood*”? *Interpreting Medieval Violence*, ed. Mark D. Meyerson, Daniel E. Thiery and Oren Falk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 57-78.

⁴⁰⁰ ARV JCrím Cedes y Denunciations 30, 247v. “odis rancor e males voluntats p(er) certis/ [precieses] causes e rahons,” “entre aquelles lurs amichs parents e parentes e/ en cara los enamorats de aquells molt mala voluntat que sent parcelitat los huns contra los altres”

Sent Vicent's immediate surroundings, however, it is possible that both men's proximity to the gate was tied to elements of the neighborhood's black communal life.

The Portal de Sent Vicent opened directly onto the monastery of San Agustín, the meeting place for the Valencia's *Cofradia dels Negres*. Martí and Pedro's presence near the Portal de Sent Vicent, then, might indicate that they sought out *Cofradia dels Negres* and perhaps even tried to escape detection with the help of the confraternity's members. This certainly would have been of a piece with the confraternity's contemporary redemptionary efforts aimed at freeing enslaved black Valencians. But the 1519 testimony of suspected fugitive captive Francisco, a black man from Malaga, suggests that Augustinian monks in the city also assisted fugitive captives arriving to the city absent any explicit involvement with the confraternity. Francisco recounted that, upon arriving to Valencia, he set up camp outside the northern end of Valencia's city walls near the Portal Nuevo. The Portal Nuevo was significantly farther from the Augustinian convent than the Portal de Sent Vicent was, but Francisco nevertheless reported that "two brothers from the order of Sent Agustín" met him outside the Portal Nuevo and assisted him in escaping to Granada.⁴⁰¹ Whether Martí and Pedro were aware of the specific opportunities and sources of support that existed for black Iberians near the Carrer dels Renglons is unclear. But examining Martí's brief testimony before the Bailiff General raises the possibility that black Iberians from outside of Valencia were, in fact, aware of the opportunities they could take advantage of in the city.

When Martí appeared before Valencia's Bailiff General in 1529, he first testified to being a native of North African Jafara who had been living in Murcia as a captive. He had fled Murcia a month earlier, he reported, to escape his master's mistreatment of him.

⁴⁰¹ ARV BG 199, 2r.-v.

Furthermore, he reported that he decided to flee to Valencia, specifically, because “his master had told him that Valencia was a good land.”⁴⁰² Marti’s meanings in making this brief claim were layered. In the most immediate sense, he certainly meant to convey that Valencia was a “good land” for the economic opportunities it offered people from smaller towns and cities. As Dana Wessel-Lightfoot has shown, throughout the fifteenth-century Valencia was an attractive destination for low-status laborers in surrounding towns and cities hoping to raise money and start families. But, given that Marti’s month-long flight from captivity culminated in his presence on a street with a notable black population located near the meeting site of a black confraternity, Valencia could have also represented a “good land” in that it offered black Iberians like Marti opportunities for sociability, support, and assistance in their flights. This same appeal might have brought the fugitive captive Pedro to the Carrer dels Renglons in 1530. Pedro, a self-reported native of Guinea, testified to having been a captive in the city of Elche who had been on the run for fifteen days before being captured on Carrer dels Renglons.⁴⁰³

Many black Valencians also lived and worked near the Carrer del Hospital, just west of the Carrer dels Renglons. Formerly known as the Carrer dels Innocents, the Carrer del Hospital received its name in 1524 following the 1512 establishment of the Hospital General, which cared for the sick poor and detained the mentally ill.⁴⁰⁴ Evidence for the presence of black Valencians near the Hospital General comes primarily from testimonies collected in criminal and civil court trials. In 1527, for instance, a man who identified himself as Myquel Pere was apprehended in Valencia on suspicion of being a fugitive captive. Myquel admitted

⁴⁰² ARV BG 199, 222v. “li hon dit que Valencia era bona terra.”

⁴⁰³ ARV BG 199 290r.-v.

⁴⁰⁴ On the foundation and operation of the Hospital General, see María Luz López Terrada, “Health Care and Poor Relief in the Crown of Aragon,” in *Health Care and Poor Relief in Counter-Reformation Europe*, 184-5.

as much in his interrogation, claiming to have fled to Valencia from Xativa fifteen days prior. Upon further investigation, however, the Bailiff General discovered that the Xativan fugitive Myquel Pere was, in fact, an enslaved resident of Valencia named Berthomeu who lived near the Hospital General's kitchen (Cocina del Hopsital General).⁴⁰⁵ In 1530, moreover, African-born Cristophol was apprehended outside of the Hospital on the suspicion of being a fugitive captive.⁴⁰⁶

A handful of other black Valencians lived down the street from the Hospital General in the Plaza de Pellicers (Furriers' Plaza), one point of entrance to the Carrer del Hospital. The proximity of the Plaza to the Hospital was clearly illustrated in a 1533 denunciation that spouses Johana and Anthony Vilabella lodged against Mestre Ferrando, a woolworker, and a free black woman named Brigida. According to the Vilabellas, Brigida assaulted Johana "on the street between the Plaza de Pellicers and the Hospital General," or the Carrer del Hospital.⁴⁰⁷ The *Cens de 1510*, moreover, noted that Christophol, a black head of household in the parish of Sant Marti, lived next to the plaza.⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, on August 17 1529, two black men—a Mandinka man named Nicholas and an Igbo man named Anthoni—were apprehended in the plaza on the suspicion that they were fugitive captives.⁴⁰⁹

Why so many black Valencians lived or spent time near the Carrer del Hospital is unclear. Given its aims and constituency, poor and perhaps even enslaved black Valencians might have patronized the hospital as patients seeking treatment for fevers, illnesses, or wounds. William D. Phillips, Jr., for instance, has noted that throughout the Iberian Peninsula

⁴⁰⁵ ARV BG 199, 168v.-169r.

⁴⁰⁶ ARV BG 199, 282r.-v.

⁴⁰⁷ ARV GPC 152, 1v. "en lo carrer quina de la plasa/del pelises a spital general."

⁴⁰⁸ Rafael Valdecabras Rodrigo, *Cens de 1510*, 174.

⁴⁰⁹ ARV BG 199, 247r.-249r.

many enslaved people turned to hospitals for charity and support.⁴¹⁰ It might seem likely that the fugitive captives who were captured near the Hospital General came to the poor-serving institution seeking refuge or care. But, as María Luz López Terrada has shown, the Hospital General “was not a refuge for all,” primarily admitting only ill or injured Valencian laborers whose ailments incapacitated and threatened to impoverish them. Moreover, by the middle of the sixteenth century the Hospital regularly collaborated with municipal officials in efforts to expel vagrants from the city and to suppress the activities of foreign beggars.⁴¹¹ But there are other reasons that black Iberians might have come to the Hospital General.

One potential reason for the pronounced black presence near the Hospital might have been that both free and enslaved black Valencians worked at the Hospital General. This would not have been unusual in early modern Iberia. There is evidence from the early sixteenth century, for instance, that enslaved Africans worked in the Hospital of All Saints in Lisbon.⁴¹² Moreover, in the eighteenth century a hospital in Cartagena put enslaved men to work as orderlies.⁴¹³ Discerning free black Valencians’ occupational backgrounds is difficult, as a majority of free black individuals who appear in early sixteenth-century court and notarial records were not affiliated with specific occupations. Of the one hundred and sixty-eight black individuals who appeared in notarial in court records, only eighteen were affiliated with specific occupations [Figure 22]. This partially reflected the fact that many formerly enslaved Valencians, like their counterparts throughout Iberia, faced lives of hardship and poverty.⁴¹⁴ Others, moreover, likely retained servile or domestic jobs that

⁴¹⁰ William D. Phillips, Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, 142.

⁴¹¹ María Luz López Terrada, “Health Care and Poor Relief,” 192.

⁴¹² John L. Vogt, “The Lisbon Slave House,” 12.

⁴¹³ William D. Phillips, Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, 142.

⁴¹⁴ Casares, *La esclavitud*, 450.

resembled the work they did while enslaved and which officials did not feel it necessary to note. Debra Blumenthal, for instance, has showed that “freed women who remained in their masters’ or mistress’ households typically would continue performing much the same tasks that they had performed while in servitude.”⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless,

María Luz López Terrada has noted that one-third of the Hospital’s staff was comprised of “service employees,” including “cooks, bakers, [and] poultry farmers.”⁴¹⁶ Some free black Valencians would have been well-equipped to take up these posts. Contemporary evidence reveals that six of the eighteen free black individuals associated with specific occupations in this period were cooks (*coch*). Blumenthal has also noted that many formerly enslaved black Valencians found work as bakers.⁴¹⁷ Black food preparers thus could have made up a contingent of the Hospital General’s service workers. Although the Hospital evidently only laundered patients’ bedding and clothing annually, the prevalence of formerly enslaved black women who worked as domestics and launderers in Valencia suggests that black women might have also worked at the Hospital in those capacities.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, monasteries often employed or conscripted free and enslaved black people to work as groundskeepers or as domestic workers. The Hospital General, situated amidst a significant contingent of free black Valencians, likely drew upon this labor force as well for its needs. Some of these service workers might have even lived in the Hospital.⁴¹⁹

Furthermore, black Valencians were likely involved in more than just the domestic and groundskeeping positions at the Hospital General. Some were likely involved in the

⁴¹⁵ Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 245.

⁴¹⁶ María Luz López Terrada, “Health Care and Poor Relief,” 189.

⁴¹⁷ Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 110, 249.

⁴¹⁸ On formerly enslaved women working as launderers, see Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*. On the hospital’s linen-washing, see María Luz López Terrada, “Health Care and Poor Relief,” 186.

⁴¹⁹ María Luz López Terrada, “Health Care and Poor Relief,” 181.

Hospital's healthcare operations. María Luz López Terrada has noted that in the early modern period hospitals throughout the Crown of Aragon staffed doctors, surgeons, and apothecaries as well as "a variety of menial healthcare workers."⁴²⁰ Half of the staff at Valencia's Hospital General was comprised of such medical staff, and some of these medical professionals were certainly enslavers. Doctors, apothecaries, and surgeons all appear in captive presentations as enslavers in the early sixteenth century. At the very least, some medical staff certainly exploited enslaved laborers in conducting their work, and such workers might have been able to mobilize their experiences to pursue the "menial healthcare" positions at the hospital after obtaining their freedom. The Hospital General was thus one of many identifiable centers of black life in the Parish of Sant Marti [Figure 20].

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 183.

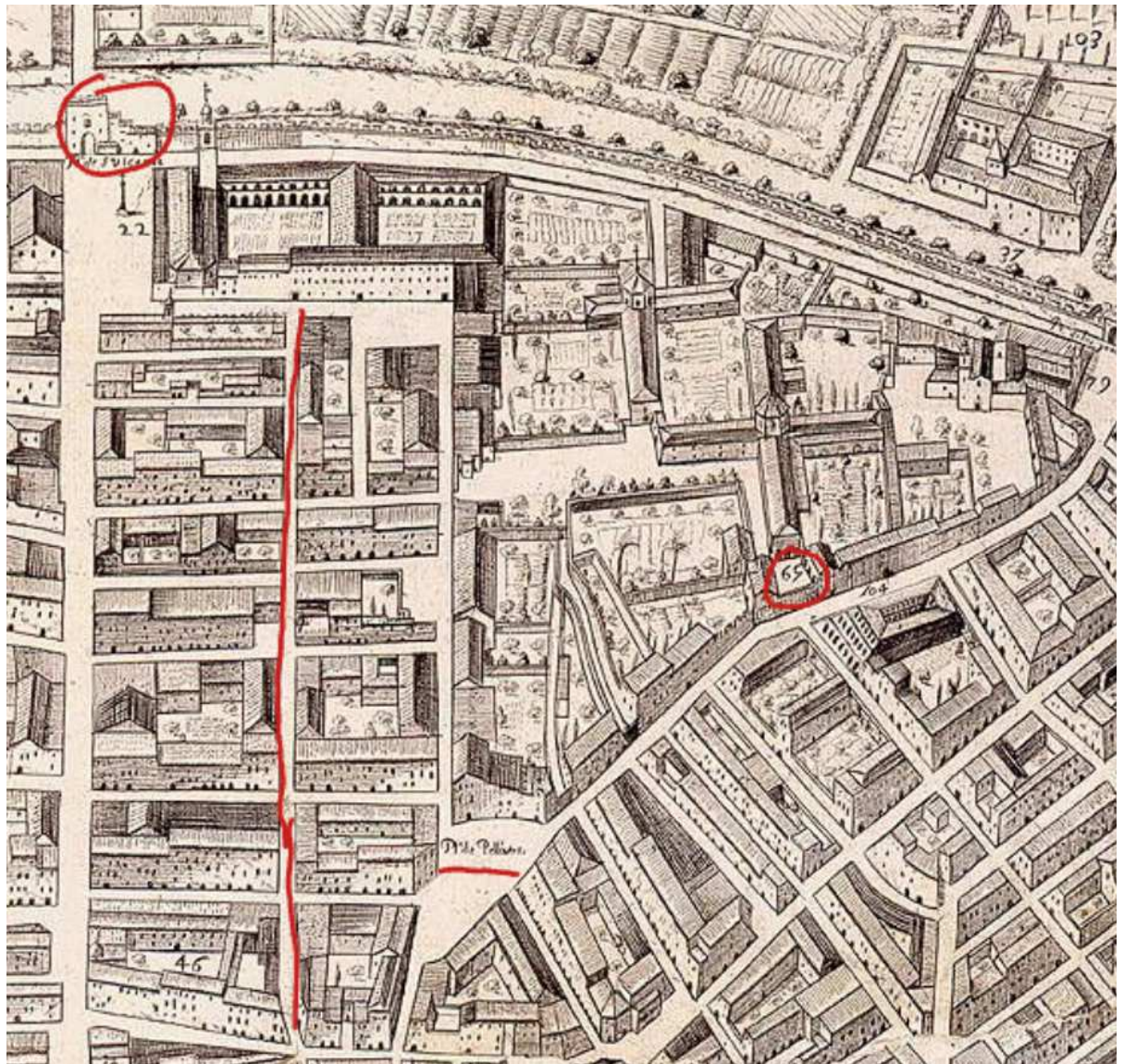


Figure 20 Detail from 1608 Tosca map of Valencia showing above-mentioned sites of black life in the Parish of Sant Marti. The circled gate at the top of the image is the gate near the Chapel of San Agustin, marked with a 22. The long straight line marks the Carrer dels Renglons. The Plaza dels Pellicers is underlined, and the circled 65 marks the site of the Hospital General.

While the neighborhoods surrounding the *Cofradia dels Negres* and the Hospital General were focal points of black life in the Parish of Sant Marti, documents attest to black Valencians' presence and engagement with sites throughout the parish. In her last will and testament drafted in 1520, for instance, Sicilia Serra, a free black resident of the parish,

ordered that she be buried in the Church of Sant Marti, where she arranged to have masses said in her name.⁴²¹ In 1548, moreover, witnesses testified that free black Valencian Johan de la Torre lived on the *Carrer del Barcelonina* in the parish, which was neither located near the *Cofradia* nor the Hospital General.

While archival records offer glimpses into the lives of some of the black Valencians living in the Parish of Sant Marti, the parish was also certainly home to an expansive enslaved population who never appeared in official documentation. In fact, the parish of San Marti was a central part of the city's slave trade, as it flanked Valencia's central market plaza on one side and, according to Ricardo Garcia Carcel, was the "principal location" of merchants' residences in the sixteenth century.⁴²² The *Cens de 1510* noted that officials collected taxes from fifty-four merchants in the parish of Sant Marti. This represented the second-largest merchant taxpaying population in the city after the parish of Sant Johan, which also shared a border with the central market and was home to sixty-nine merchant taxpayers.⁴²³ Many of Sant Marti's merchants were involved, to varying degrees, in the city's slave trade. In fact, nine of the merchants who appeared in the *Cens* as residents of the parish of Sant Marti appeared before the Bailiff General or the Mestre Racional between 1491 and 1522 for transactions related to the importation of foreign captives who they hoped to sell in Valencia. Five of these merchants were involved, specifically, with the importation of black captives to the city.

⁴²¹ APP, Protocol 24204, Notary Francisco Joan Pastor, August 22, 1520. Cited in Vicente Graullera-Sanz, "L'esclavage à Valence. Les affranchis et leur intégration sociale."

⁴²² Ricardo García Cárcel, "Notas sobre población y urbanismo en la Valencia del siglo XVI," *Saitabi: revista de la Facultat de Geografia i Història* 25 (1975): 146.

⁴²³ Rafael Valldecabras Rodrigo, *Cens de 1510*, 151-155.

Significantly, two merchants who lived in the parish were major importers of sub-Saharan Africans to Valencia in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: the Genoese Cesaro de Barchi and the Valencian Luis Morell.⁴²⁴ Discussed in Chapter One, Cesaro de Barchi was responsible for importing over sixteen hundred enslaved sub-Saharan West Africans to Valencia between 1489 and 1497 in over a dozen captive presentations. Moreover, he continued to be active in the trade, albeit on a much smaller scale, in the sixteenth century alongside his son.

Morell's importation of enslaved West Africans to Valencia was less prolific than de Barchi's, but nevertheless significant. Morell initiated captive presentations of more than three hundred enslaved sub-Saharan Africans between 1507 and 1514. Like de Barchi, Morell undertook his slaving alongside his family members, as his brothers Baltasar Morell and Gaspar Morell appeared alongside Luis in a number of captive presentations. Gaspar was also a merchant who lived in the parish of Sant Marti.⁴²⁵ Bernat Sandoval, another merchant living in the parish of San Marti, carved out a different niche for himself within Valencia's slave market, as the *Cens* identified him as "Bernat Sandoval, who transports the blacks."⁴²⁶ Sandoval's work thus likely involved transporting newly-arrived groups of enslaved black people from Valencia's port to their initial temporary lodgings or sites of sale, such as the Camel Inn. Thus, whether they were importing vast quantities of captives from West Africa or were engaged with Valencia's slave trade in a more limited capacity, the presence of prominent enslaver-merchants suggests the presence of a significant number of enslaved black people in the parish of Sant Marti.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 152. "Zézaró de Barci."

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 151

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 152. "qui porte los negres."

While the purported nature and existing documentation of black life in the Parish of Sant Marti were are significantly different from those of black life in the Parish of Sant Andreu in the early sixteenth century, the two parishes did have something in common. Namely, in both parishes black Valencians created and fostered spaces of social and communal life that were distinct, but not entirely separate, from the parishes' other non-black residents, be they butchers, enslavers, gamblers, laborers, artisans, doctors, vendors, or other socioeconomic groups. Moreover, these sites of black communal life were closely intertwined with various Valencian institutions and organizations, from the Hopsital General and the University to the Bailiff General and *consell*, as constituents, laborers, peers, or targets. Thus, the minority-serving organizations and spaces that black Valencians created for themselves were constituent elements of majority institutions and communities. The black Valencians who resided and gathered in Sant Andreu and Sant Marti were of course not unique in being enmeshed in largely non-black social environs.

Reconsidering Black Social Networks

Many black Valencians lived throughout the city's other parishes, and were even more of a minority demographic than their counterparts in Sant Marti and Sant Andreu. The Cens de 1510, for instance, recorded two black heads of household—Mestre Joan Berti and Mestre Berthomeu Loquosch, a cook—living in the parish of Sancta Creu, which shared a border with the city's brothel and was located along Valencia's northern wall.⁴²⁷ Sancta Creu's moderately-sized population was of a decidedly middling sort and included day laborers, artisans, students, and manufacturers.⁴²⁸ Berti and Loquosch were certainly not the

⁴²⁷ Francisco Javier Palao Gil, *La propiedad eclesiástica*, 223-224.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

only black residents of the parish, as in 1550 a weaver named Johan Ferrer apprehended a black man named Luys outside of the parish in the city's brothel alleging that he was a fugitive captive.⁴²⁹ Nevertheless, Berti and Loquosch's entries in the Cens were separated by thirty-five households, suggesting that the two did not live in close proximity to one another. Similarly, in 1539 the widow Ursola Cebria drew up an inventory in which she described the exact location of her house in "the parish of the glorious Sent Thomas" relative to her neighbors, noting that it "faced, on one side, the house of Mestre March, a black cook, and, on the other side, the house of Father Steve."⁴³⁰ Mestre Marti thus spent much of his daily life living and moving through heavily non-black social spaces. Taking note of the litigants and witnesses in criminal court proceedings involving black Valencians further demonstrates the degree to which black Valencians were enmeshed in non-black neighborhoods and social networks.

Records from Valencia's criminal courts, for instance, regularly depict both enslaved and free black Valencians as being deeply implicated in white social circles. In 1503, for instance, Johan, a black captive in the home of the priest Johan de la Fuente, appeared before Valencia's Justicia Criminal on accusations that he had killed Johan de Portau alongside two other members of de la Fuente's household. This attack was likely part of a feud between de la Fuente and de Portau, as elite heads of household regularly mobilized their slaves, servants, and lower-ranking household members in attacks on their rivals. One of Johan's accomplices was a servant called Anthony *moro*, but otherwise the actors in this case were not identified by color or identity category. Moreover, de la Fuente posted Johan's bail with

⁴²⁹ ARV BG 200, 14r.

⁴³⁰ ARV Fondos Notariales, Protocolo, 282, 187v. "afronta de una part ab cases de mestre/ march negre choch e de altra part ab/ cases de mossen steve."

the assistance of notary Garcia Ugard. Thus, de la Fuente mobilized his own contacts in procuring Johan's freedom. In that same year, a man named Gregori was found deceased in the Parish of Sant Marti in the home of free black Valencian Marin Sagra and his wife Leonor. Gregori had been wounded in the head with a club, and had gone to Gregori and Leonor's house to receive medical attention. While Johan and Marin thus appeared in the Justicia Civil's records under very different circumstances, both appeared in primarily non-black social contexts.

White Valencians also figured heavily amongst the witness lists and named bystanders in records of cases launched by black litigants. White social contacts featured heavily, for instance, in the above-mentioned 1538 criminal denunciation launched by black sisters Angela Carros and Speranca Arcis against their black neighbors Catherina Colon and Speranca Gomiz. The defendant Catherina's lover, for instance, was a white laborer named Johan Vicent. Moreover, one of the plaintiffs' black allies, Sicilia, was likewise married to a white cook. Furthermore, the only witness interrogated in the case other than the defendants was a white woolworker who lived near the litigants. White Valencians also figured heavily in the 1548 criminal proceedings initiated by free black Valencian Joan de la Torre against Myquel Johan Solano, a white merchant who specialized in used clothing (*mercader de roba vella*).⁴³¹ De la Torre alleged that Solano, along with unnamed accomplices, had broken into his home in the middle of the night and stolen an assortment of used clothing. The one witness that de la Torre called in these proceedings was white laborer named Myquel Fort. Furthermore, de la Torre launched his denunciation alongside his white mother-in-law Joana

⁴³¹ GPC 413, 56r.

Martinez, who corroborated de la Torre's accusations. Thus, as they appear in trial records, de la Torre's social contacts, both antagonistic and supportive, were heavily white.

It might seem inevitable that, as members of a minority community surrounded primarily by white peers, black Valencians would have many white people in their social networks. But the above examples suggest that many black Valencians actively fostered connections with their white counterparts. In one remarkable instance in September 1533, for instance, Sebastian Randor, a Valencian basket-weaver (*esparter*), contracted his ten-year-old daughter Catherina to work in the home of Martin Carroc, a free black Valencian, for a period of ten years in an arrangement known as a *firma de moca*.⁴³² These were a common means for families throughout medieval and early modern Iberia to secure housing, clothing, food, an income, and perhaps even a dowry for their daughters.⁴³³ In taking Catherina into his home, Carroc was making powerful statements about his status and standing in his community. Members of his community would know that Carroc provided Randor's daughter with an avenue for upward mobility. Moreover, for the next ten years, Carroc would be visible to his neighbors as a black head of household with a white domestic worker in his employ. While Carroc's example is exceptional in its specifics, it nevertheless resembles the family choices that many black Valencians made.

Namely, black Valencians routinely engaged in romantic and marital relationships with non-black partners and spouses. Forty-five percent of black Valencians (ten of twenty-two) who appeared in records as either married or coupled had non-black spouses or partners. While these black Valencians were in the minority amongst their peers with black spouses, it

⁴³² Fondos Notariales Protocolos 10102, Septembr 20.

⁴³³ Eukene Lacarra Lanz, "Changing Boundaries of Licit and Illicit unions: Concubinage and Prostitution," I *Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Eukene Lacarra Lanz (New York: Routledge, 2002), 160.

is nevertheless striking that more than half of these relationships involving black Valencians also involved non-black partners [Figure 21].

Status	Black Man	Black Woman	Non-Black Man	Non-Black Woman
M	Johan Sparsa			Catherina Torres
M	Johan Salvador			Angela Salvador
M	Jeronym Puig	Catherina		
M		Luysa Errandiz	Johan Errandiz	
M	Johan Roig	Sicilia		
M	Johan Alfonso	Beatriu Castello		
M	Sebastio Figuera	Hieronyma		
M	Johan de la Torre			unnamed wife
M	Johan Corella			Ana Speranca
M	Pedro Domingo	Felipa		
M	Joan Marti	Hieronima Berenguer		
U		Catherina Colon	Johan Vicent	
M		Ana Sales	Johan Sales	
M	Juan Esparza			Catherina Ramos
M		Sicilia	Berthomeu	
M	Unnamed Father			Unnamed Mother

Figure 21 Table showing documented couplings/marriages involving black partners.

These findings complicate the picture of exclusively-black marriages propagated in early modern Iberian literature and in subsequent historical scholarship. This characterization is most evident in the common Golden Age trope of *boda de negros*, or black weddings. *Boda de Negros* texts regularly presented black weddings as heavily, if not exclusively, black social affairs between black spouses. These literary depictions were so predominant that modern scholars such as Aurelia Casares and Marga G. Barranco have used them as the basis for asserting that “there was a ‘colour endogamy’” amongst people of color in early modern

Iberia, such that “the selection of partners was usually correlated with the colour of the skin.”⁴³⁴ Scholars examining Valencia’s early modern black history have made similar claims, with Vicente Graullera-Sanz, claiming that that free black Valencians “intermarried amongst themselves, with people of the same race and condition.”⁴³⁵ The findings in Figure 21, however, suggest that black Valencians’ marriage choices were not completely governed by color endogamy.

Shared experiences of servitude, for instance, certainly shaped the marriage prospects and decisions of many formerly enslaved black Valencians. Sometimes those conditions directly shaped black Valencians’ marriage matches as enslavers arranged or facilitated marriages between their slaves upon manumitting them. This was the case, for instance, for Felipa and Pedro Domingo, two enslaved black people, whose masters jointly manumitted them and made arrangements for their marriage in a single notarial contract in 1532.⁴³⁶ Likewise, Johan Roig and Sicilia and Johanico Alfonso and Beatiru Castellane—two black married couples—identified solely as “freed blacks” in a 1506 contract they initiated recording a property transaction, likely indicating that all four had personal histories of servitude and unfree status. But even amongst formerly enslaved couples color endogamy was not a given. In 1530, for instance, a suspected fugitive captive from Lleida named Johana Corde testified that she lived with her formerly enslaved mother, who was white, and that her father, who was black and had once been enslaved, was deceased.⁴³⁷ Whether such a familial composition was common in smaller cities like Lleida is unclear, as Johana’s accuser

⁴³⁴ Aurelia Casares and Marga G. Barranco, “Popular Literary Depictions of Black African Weddings in Early Modern Spain,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 31.2 (Spring 2008): 111.

⁴³⁵ Vicente Graullera Sanz, “L’esclavage à Valence. Les affranchis et leur intégration sociale,” 21.

⁴³⁶ ARV Fondos Notariales Protocolos 10101.

⁴³⁷ ARV BG 199, 268r.-v.

apprehended her on the suspicion that, rather than a woman living with her mother, Johana was merely a “fugitive captive living as if she were free with a white woman.”⁴³⁸

But civil court records offer a glimpse into the more mundane realities of family life for black and white couples. In 1534, for instance, Johan Salvador and nobleman Jaume Carberan appeared before Valencia’s Justicia Civil to draw up paperwork confirming that Johan was the son and heir of the late Johan Salvador, a black porter (*traguera*).⁴³⁹ The two witnesses who testified to the younger Johan’s paternity were his mother, the widowed Angela Salvador, who was not black, and her free black servant Catherina, both of whom affirmed Johan’s paternity. Thus, these proceedings offer insights into a number of family arrangements. Firstly, the Salvador household seems to have been composed of a free black father, a white mother, their child, and a black servant woman. Given the emphasis on the servant Catherina’s freedom, it is possible that her presence in the Salvador household might have been the result of a *firma de moca* and that her domestic labor would be rewarded with a suitable dowry. Furthermore, in the aftermath of his father’s death, the younger Johan entered the household of the white nobleman Jaume Carberan, alongside who Johan initiated these civil proceedings.

Interestingly, the notary in the Justicia Civil was not as interested in recording individuals’ color categories as his counterparts who recorded criminal court proceedings and slaving transactions were. In the opening and closing statements of the case, for instance, the notary did not explicitly note the participants’ blackness. The servant Catherina, moreover, referred to the younger Johan as black, but never referred to the elder Johan as such. Johan’s widow Angela, on the other hand, formally identified her husband as “Johan Salvador, the

⁴³⁸ ARV BG 199, 268r. “com que cativa fugita en companya de hun dona blanca.”

⁴³⁹ ARV Justicia Civil Requestes 1010.

black porter” at the beginning of her testimony but did not mention his color again. She also refrained from assigning any color categories to her son Johan. Nevertheless, the younger Johan’s skin color was apparently a point of interest to his contemporaries as he had received the alias Black Carberan (*Carberan negro*) upon entering Jaume Carberan’s household. Even so, the court notary identified Johan as black only to the extent that he recorded his alias The notary’s inconsistency in recording the Johans’ blackness likely had to do with their status as non-servile free men, as he did not hesitate to immediately identify Catherina as a “free black servant woman.” While these testimonies do not offer direct windows into lives of black-and-white families, contemporary literary offer some, albeit limited, insights.

The anonymous author of the picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) captured the mundane realities and pressures faced by mixed black and white families, while nevertheless treating such families as subjects of spectacle for their white audiences.⁴⁴⁰ In the first chapter of the text, the eponymous protagonist and narrator Lazarillo recounts the details of his widowed white mother’s relationship with a married a dark-skinned (*moreno*) stablehand named Zaide. Initially, Lazarillo notes that when Zaide first started coming to the house “I was afraid upon seeing his color and ugly appearance.” Lazarillo overcame these fears, he says, when he realized that Zaide “always brought bread, pieces of meat, and firewood” when he visited.. Lazarillo subsequently notes that Zaide and his mother gave birth to “a beautiful little black boy.” Lazarillo recalled that one day, while the unnamed child and Zaide were playing together, the child noticed that “my mother and I were white

⁴⁴⁰ *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (Miguel de Cervantes Biblioteca Digital) https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-vida-de-lazarillo-de-tormes-y-de-sus-fortunas-y-adversidades--0/html/fedb2f54-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html. Accessed August 22, 2022. For paginated translation see *Two Spanish Picaresque Novels: Lazarillo de Tormes and The Swindler*, trans. Michael Alpert (London: Penguin, 2003).

and that [Zaide] was not.” The child then ran away from Zaide and towards his mother, calling Zaide, his father, a “boogeyman.” Rather than presenting this as a believable slice of life, Lazarillo use this farfetched exchange between father and son as a vehicle for anti-clerical commentary on priests’ inability to see their own sins.

Lazarillo further recounted that Zaide and Lazarillo’s mother orchestrated an illicit resale business in order to support Lazarillo and his brother. Lazarillo explained that Zaide would regularly smuggle oats, bran, firewood, and horse-care supplies out of the stables and turn them over to Lazarillo’s mother, who would sell them “to raise my brother.” This arrangement bears striking resemblances to the earlier discussed 1548 case of the free black Valencian Johan de la Torre, who apparently made a living by pawning old clothes.⁴⁴¹ Zaide and Lazarillo’s mother’s dealings were only revealed once Zaide’s employer learned of the pair’s romantic and domestic relationship. News of this relationship was, apparently, a cause for alarm, as it prompted Zaide’s employer to launch an investigation that revealed the couple’s operation. Both partners were punished for their dealings, and Lazarillo’s mother was forbidden from entering the stables or further receiving Zaide in her home. Like the story of Lazarillo’s brother being frightened of his own father’s appearance, Lazarillo’s account of his mother’s relationship with Zaide was a vehicle for another anticlerical message. *Lazarillo de Tormes* thus sheds light on the social pressures and suspicions that mixed families could face in sixteenth century Iberia.

Conclusion

The opportunities and pressures that black Valencians faced in navigating social networks and familial relations were thus a microcosm of those faced by black Iberians at

⁴⁴¹ ARV GPC 413.

large in the early sixteenth century. Even as they exercised autonomy and pursued their own self-interests in making social, familial, and communal decisions, black Valencian groups and individuals—and their counterparts throughout Iberia, as I showed in Chapter 5—faced obstacles ranging from suspicion from their peers to regulation and surveillance by municipal and royal institutions and officials. Placing these elements of black Valencian life in dialogue with one another reorients the conversations that have framed scholarly examination of the *Cofradia* and *Bordellet*.

In this chapter I have argued that elements of black communal spaces in the parishes of Sant Marti and Sant Andreu—namely, their interconnectedness with surrounding majority institutions and white neighbors—offer a window into broader patterns of life for black Valencians in the sixteenth century. But the opposite is also true. Namely, tracing the factors that shaped black Valencians’ approaches to navigating social and familial networks has direct implications for understanding contemporary black communal spaces. Rather than barometers of “integration” or “assimilation” into majority Ibero-Catholic sociocultural norms, carefully cultivated sites of black social life like those associated with the *Cofradia* in the Parish of Sant Marti should be regarded as strategic attempts to cultivate and maintain black solidarity and sociability amongst black Valencians. Debra Blumenthal has made a similar argument in regards to the redemptionary efforts of the *Cofradia*, noting that purchasing the freedom of enslaved black Valencians was a means for solidarity-building. In this chapter I hope to have extended this argument further by showing that such communal spaces were solidarity-building simply by virtue of their existence.

This solidarity and sociability certainly had its limits. After all, certainly not all black Valencians sought out or would have been welcomed by the *Cofradia*. Nevertheless, such

communal organizations should be considered primarily as a response to contemporary antiblackness—which manifested itself most visibly in contemporary Iberian slaving practices and widespread suspicion of black Iberians’ mobility and autonomy—rather than an attempt to mimic or emulate the groups and organizations that condoned and perpetuated this antiblackness.

Seen through this lens, the *Bordellet dels Negres* also takes on a new character. Rather than sites of abject criminality and depravity, the *Bordellet dels Negres* and its environs in the Parish of Sant Andreu were responses to contemporary norms of enslavement and to municipal and royal officials’ efforts to separate and ostracize religious minorities and other marginalized groups from participating in full civic life. In this hostile environment, black Valencians—whenever they came to actually live in the parish in significant numbers—built communities in the *Bordellet* amongst themselves and their socially marginalized peers and neighbors, be they butchers, sex workers, gamblers, religious minorities, and others.

Thus, in 1529, when the fugitive captive Marti described Valencia as “a good land,” he was certainly referring to more than just the economic and occupational opportunities that the city offered. Even when such opportunities proved to be lucrative, after all, they came at the price of suspicion, surveillance, and regulation. Rather, he was certainly also referring to the social networks, opportunities and spaces that black Valencians created for themselves in the city.

Figure 22 : Black Valencians Associated with Specific Locations/Parishes

Marin Sagra negre	1503	San Marti
Pere, lo Coch, negre	1510	Santa Maria
Ysabel, negra	1510	San Marti

Christofol negre	1510	San Marti
Mestre Berthomeu Loquosch, negre	1510	Sancta Creu
Mestre Joan negre	1510	Sancta Creu
Goncalbo	1519	Hostal de la Castellana (Carrer de Conejos)/ San Marti
Francisca negra	1520	Sent Berthomeu
Sicilia Serra	1520	San Marti
Myquel Johan	1521	Mercat
Berthomeu, catiu	1527	Torres de Macia Marti (Cocina del Hospital)
Marti de Johan del Cases de las alumbres	1528	Cami de Sent Vicent (San Marti, opens on the Plaza of S. Agosti)
Pedro, catiu	1529	Portal del Quart
Diego	1529	Placa de Villarrasa (San Andreu)
Marti	1529	Portal de Sent Vicent (San Marti)
Thomas negre catiu	1530	market, forn, house of don Pedro Pardo (residence)
Ferrando negre tragner	1530	market, forn
Christofol negre	1530	Market/Hospital
Pedro	1530	Carrer de la Mar (San Thomas)
Pedro	1530	Pont de las Mealles (San Juan)
Pedro	1530	Carrer dels Renglons prop lo portal de Sant Vicent (San Marti)
Anthoni	1530	Need help reading
Anthoni	1531	outside of Portal de Ruzafa (Rucaffa)
Joanni de Alumna nigro liberto	1533	de quondom hospital (San Marti)
Brigida negra	1533	Spital General (San Marti)
Speranca Gomiz	1535	San Marti, Carrer dels renglons
Esperanca Artis	1535	San Marti, Carrer dels renglons
Cristofol, negre llibert, tragner	1535	Placa de Sant Francesch (San Marti)
Johannes Roig	1536	San Marti
Sicilia	1536	San Marti
Johanni Alfonso	1536	San Marti
Beatriu Castellane	1536	San Marti
Joana sclava negra	1538	Placa del noble Don Giner de Perellos (San Nicholau)

Mestre Bernat	1539	Sent Thomas
Miquelet negre llibert	1544	Mercat, witness on Carrer de la Virgen de Gracia (San Marti)
Johan de Frias	1544	Mercat
En Johan de la Torre, negre libert	1548	Carrer de Barcelonina (San Marti)
Luys	1550	Bordell (next to Sancta Creu)
Beatriu , negra	1550	Carrer de Barquas (San Andreu)

Figure 5 black individuals associated with specific parishes within Valencia city.

Conclusion

In 2017 I sat for an oral interview as part of a language assessment test for a fellowship application. After we had moved past the cursory questions about my pastimes and background, the professor who was administering the interview, who was Spanish, asked me what I would be studying in Spain. When I told her that I would be studying the history of black Africans in the sixteenth century, she seemed dubious, and asked for an explanation. “What happened to them?” The African communities in contemporary Spain, she continued, were all North African immigrants who had come to the Peninsula in recent decades. There was not, to her knowledge, a longstanding historical black population in Spain. Then in 2018, when I arrived to Valencia for an extended research trip (which was not, incidentally, funded by the aforementioned fellowship), I had a similar interaction with the cab driver who took me from the train station to my apartment. When I told him that I was there to research black communities in the early sixteenth century, he responded excitedly, “Oh, you mean the Moors!” He was surprised to learn that the individuals I studied were overwhelmingly West African.

Neither the professor nor the cab driver were unique in their responses. Over the past eight years of working on and talking about this project, interlocutors both within and outside of premodern European history have regularly assumed my subject of inquiry is Muslim North African, or have wondered about what happened to Spain’s West African population. This latter question has been attractive to scholars, as well, who have included the early modern fate of black Iberians in research agendas. These interactions and open questions about early modern black Iberians highlight black Europeans’ still uncertain place in broader premodern Iberian, not to mention European, histories.

This is also evident in the broader historiography of minority groups in premodern Iberia. The cornerstone concepts and debates in this scholarship focus almost exclusively on issues related to the region's religious minority groups.⁴⁴² The histories of these groups are, for better or worse, situated around major historiographical events and phenomena: the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the sixteenth-century forced conversion of Muslims to Christianity, the persecution of *conversos* and Moriscos in the Inquisition, and the Morisco revolts that resulted in their expulsion from Spain. No such historical landmarks exist in the historiography of black Iberians outside of the history of slavery. Even in this field, the only significant historical landmark is the initiation of Iberia's involvement in the West African slave trade in the 1440s. But even this moment is often treated as a temporary holding pattern that inevitably gave way to the development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In this framework, the subsequent early modern histories of free and enslaved black Iberians and Europeans becomes incidental, irrelevant, or forgotten.

Nevertheless, the initiation and substantial growth of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century did not mark the end of black history in Iberia. The mid-sixteenth century, for instance, marked the beginning of a relative profusion of Spanish literary and political representations of black/ West Africans. The most well-known and widely circulated *habla de negros* plays and poems, for instance, were not produced until Spain's Golden Age, which began in the late sixteenth century.⁴⁴³ The beginning of the *habla de negros* trend, moreover, roughly coincided with Bartolome de las Casas's 1542 critique of Spanish

⁴⁴² For signature works on the history of Iberia's minority communities, see David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, second edition (Ithaca, NJ: Cornell University Press, 2015) and Maria Rose Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002).

⁴⁴³ For comprehensive discussions of these works, see Nicholas Jones, *Staging Habla de Negros*, and Baltasar Fra Molinero, *La imagen de los negros en el teatro del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1995).

treatment of American Indians, in which he encouraged the continued enslavement of black Africans. While las Casas was participating in a trans-Atlantic debate, his suggestion would have certainly had consequences for black Iberians. Enslaved black Iberians, for instance, might have faced increased risk of relocation to the Americas, further continuing the patterns of separation and forced movement to which they had already been subjected. Moreover, las Casas's claims might have fueled or shaped extant anti-black sentiments on the Peninsula, which free and enslaved black Iberians alike would have had to navigate.

This anti-black sentiment retained some degree of political viability in subsequent decades, as the 1568 memorandum of Granadan Morisco jurist Francisco Nunez Muley illustrates.⁴⁴⁴ Muley was tasked with defending Moriscos' customary rights, which the Crown was threatening to revoke on the basis that they were Islamicizing, or encouraging Moriscos to adopt Islamic practices. Understandably, scholars tend to situate Muley's memorandum within contemporary debates about how Christian officials and "Old Christians" defined the limits of Christian-ness. But, as discussed in Chapter Five, Muley did not only defend practices associated with historically Islamic or Arabic associations. He also defended Moriscos' rights to own enslaved black Africans. He justified this decision, in part, by arguing that while Morisco customs were native to Iberian soil, West African customs—including singing and dancing—were foreign. Like las Casas's debate, Muley's memorandum sheds some light on the sentiments that many black Iberians had to navigate and contend with.

Rather than separate moments in the respective histories of literature, slavery, and Moriscos, these three late-sixteenth phenomena—Golden Age *habla de negros* literature and

⁴⁴⁴ Francisco Nunez Muley, *A memorandum for the President of the Royal Audiencia and Chancery Court of the City and Kingdom of Granada*, trans. Vincent Barletta (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

de las Casas's and Nunez Muley's respective arguments in favor of enslaving black Africans—could be assembled into part of a larger early modern Iberian black history. They can, for instance, be mined for their insights into the political and social processes of race to which black Iberians were subjected. As my examination of the Bailiff General's captive presentations has shown, these kinds of sources can be firmly situated in their immediate political and material contexts to reveal a great deal about how and why authors disseminated anti-black sentiment.

But these texts in and of themselves cannot compose a comprehensive black Iberian history. In the same way foregrounding black captives' testimonies in the Bailiff General's rote captive presentations revealed complicated and personal histories of dislocation and reorientation, or that prioritizing archival records recording black Afro-Iberians' experiences over municipal ordinances and sensationalized accounts and histories revealed expansive and surprising patterns of habitation and residence, applying thoughtful methodologies to the investigation of these records of anti-blackness can produce more textured and human accounts of early modern black life.

While these investigations will yield new and nuanced accounts of early modern European black history, they will not always challenge or complicate existing historiographical narratives. Sometimes they will illustrate, in disturbing detail, the human toll that broadly construed historical phenomena like slavery and anti-blackness took on the historical actors who experienced them. Both elements of this history must be examined and recorded in order for black and Afro-Europeans to have a full place in early modern European history.

A criminal court case that took place in the closing months of 1544 provides one such example of this toll. The case began in late October when Beatriu Torres, a white widow and mother, lodged a denunciation before Valencia's governor against Miquelet, a freed black teenager (*negre llibert* and *menor*).⁴⁴⁵ Torres alleged that her son Honorat Joan had been selling oranges in the market and that Miquelet stole an orange from him. A confrontation ensued in which Miquelet attacked Honorat Joan with a knife and killed him. Torres recalled that in the ensuing ruckus, Miquelet tried to flee the market but was detained by royal officials who regularly detained "thieves and vagabonds" in the city. Miquelet was subsequently remitted from the municipal jail into the custody of his godfather (*padastre*), who Torres alleged transported Miquelet to Gandia, about forty miles south of Valencia. In the weeks following the murder, Torres alleged that Miquelet confessed to killing Honorat repeatedly and openly, suggesting that Miquelet was braggadocios and cavalier about the attack.

After hearing Torres's denunciation, the Governor appointed a lawyer (*procurador*) to represent the minor Miquelet, and also dispatched a court official to collect Miquelet's testimony. Miquelet denied all of the charges Torres had put forth, claiming to not have known who Honorat was and denying ever confessing to his murder. In response, in late November Torres produced a witness, another free black Valencian named Johan de Firas, who would support her accusations. de Firas enthusiastically agreed with the claims in Torres's denunciation, and recalled seeing Miquelet being detained in the market on the day of the murder. He also described the altercation between Miquelet and Honorat in more graphic terms than Torres did, noting that "a great deal of blood" poured forth from

⁴⁴⁵ ARV GPC 314.

Honorat's knife-wound and that he "fell to the earth dead" immediately after the attack. de Firas also repeated Torres's claim that Miquelet had openly admitting to committing the murder "many times" since it had occurred. The only other witness in the case, a butcher named Frances Johan de Valldolinas, also recalled seeing Miquelet in the prison on the day of the attack, but did not testify to witnessing the attack himself.

After hearing the testimonies of the litigants and the witnesses, the governor launched his own investigation into the litigants and the witnesses. To that end, in late January the Governor called Francisco de Castro, one of his own officers (*porters*), as a witness in the case. de Castro testified that de Firas, Torres' star witness, "is a disreputable black man and a huge drunk and a liar, and drunkards are not able to tell the truth" (*negre y de vil condicion y es un gran embrach y falsos y home embrch no pot dir veritat*). The Governor thus dismissed de Firas's testimony supporting Torres's accusations. de Castro was the last witness that the Governor called before reaching his verdict.

As the litigants and witnesses had given their testimonies over the previous two months, they likely could not have predicted how the case would conclude. The governor announced that, nearly three months after Torres lodged her denunciation against Miquelet, in late January she lodged another, separate denunciation against a black Valencian named Franciscito with the help of royal advocates known as *procuradors fiscals*. Based on the diminutive form of his name, it is likely that Franciscito, like Miquelet, was a minor. The Governor thus ruled that Franciscito was the "black man who had killed the said Honorat" (*sa dit negre que mata al dit honorat*). But unlike Miquelet, Franciscito would not be facing a criminal trial, as the governor announced that Franciscito had died while incarcerated.

These proceedings and the governor's ruling raise myriad questions. Had Torres mistaken one black youth for another in her quest to prosecute her son's killer? Was her accusation against Miquelet based solely on the fact that he, in the broadest terms, matched the profile of Honorat's killer? Was Franciscito, in fact Honorat's killer? Or had Miquelet's unnamed godfather, who had previously helped him seek refuge in Gandia, intervened with the Governor or the *procuradors fiscals* to advocate on Miquelet's behalf? Or perhaps, wanting to satisfy Torres' need for closure, but not wanting to pronounce the minor Miquelet guilty solely on the basis of one disreputable witness's testimony, the Governor and the *procuradors fiscals* found the late Franciscito to be a useful scapegoat? In this sense, all parties would have reached their desired ends: Torres would find justice for her son, Miquelet's name would be cleared, and the Governor could claim credit for bringing the case to a close.

Whether or not the Governor was correct in his conclusion, this case paints a grim picture of black Valencians' lives in the city. Two of the three black Valencians in this case were incarcerated minors, one of whom had died in jail. The third was publicly defamed by a royal official, and was perhaps goaded by a white widow into fabricating testimony to support her otherwise tenuous accusations. While stories like this are disturbing, they are as important to constructing an early modern black history as those of Afro-Iberians crafting claims about their subject status, or those of black Iberians who participated in black communal life in the cities where they lived. It is only through engaging with the voices and experiences of black Europeans of all stations and situations—enslaved, incarcerated, or free, prosperous and indigent, victorious and vanquished—that a fuller, more humane black history of early modern Europe can come into being.

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