

While scholars have occasionally examined the role played by the premodern Mediterranean slave trade in the evolution of the trans-Atlantic, less attention has been paid to how the importation of enslaved people from West and Central Africa into Mediterranean cities disrupted Spanish conceptions of captivity. This paper discusses early modern Spaniards' thinking about race, salvation, and different modalities of enslavement as the presence of newly baptized black Africans introduced a third element to the Christian-Islamic dyad. Here I consider the famous play by Lope de Vega, *El santo negro Rosambuco*, which purportedly told the story of Saint Benedict of Palermo – a black African from Sicily – against a backdrop of corsairs, captivity, and conversion from Islam to Christianity. The paper then shifts to the end of the seventeenth century to examine the central role that a Turkish enemy and the famed Cristo de Medinaceli (“rescued” from North Africa) played in the hagiography of a West African-Spanish holy woman. In both these case studies, although separated by a century, Spanish authors grappled with the newly baptized enslaved from “pagan” West Africa, escalating anti-black racial thought, and persistent anxiety about Africa as the site of Christian captivity. In the end, hagiographers deployed anti-Muslim sentiment as part of an attempt to demonstrate the shared experience of black and white Christians.