

"Re-Orientations: Spain and Jerusalem in the *longue durée*."

The Spanish Empire and the Mediterranean: New Directions

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By the early 1500s, it was clear that Jerusalem belonged to Spain, at least as far as Spanish sources are concerned. Even before Julius II's 1510 investiture of Ferdinand the Catholic with the title to the kingdoms of the Two Sicilies and Jerusalem, the Aragonese dynasty in its imperial-mercantile-colonial project of Mediterranean expansion had already appropriated a handsome package of 14th-century claims linking the Angevine dynasty in Naples both to the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem and to the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land (the Latin Christian organism responsible for administering the Holy Places on behalf of the Roman church). Robert of Anjou (1276-1343) was, after all, titular king of Jerusalem, and he and his wife, Sancha of Mallorca (1281-1345), were responsible for negotiating with the Mamluk Sultan al-Nāsir Muḥammad (1285-1341) the purchase of foundational properties that would become the origin of the Custody, as Clement VI's 1342 bulls *Gratias Agimus* and *Nuper Carissime* attest. In the wake of Alfonso the Magnanimous' (1396-1458) successful conquest of Naples in 1442—a site whose strategic and symbolic value within late medieval and early modern conceptions of the Mediterranean Andrew Devereux has laid out beautifully¹—these twinned claims to Jerusalemite kingship and Holy Land patronage became part of the Aragonese brand. These claims were also invested with eschatological import as part of a messianic imperial narrative of providential destiny linking Aragon (and later, Spain) to the conquest of Jerusalem, particularly in the 15th and 16th Centuries,² though such ideas continue to reverberate across sources even into the 18th century. Moving in courses that are sometimes divergent and sometimes parallel to that prophetic tradition, Spain's claims to Jerusalem were regularly defended as points of *de facto* dynastic and legal reality binding Spain

to the Holy City. Such connections work not just through the future-tense aspirations of prophetic discourse but also through the past- and present-facing logics of juridical argumentation, substantiated through a dense matrix of material, diplomatic, and economic relationships and prerogatives that stood to render Spain's preeminence within global Catholicism—and especially with respect to France—an objective fact in the present moment.

This bundle of Aragonese ties to Jerusalem, routed through the kingdom of Naples, were seamlessly folded into the composite dominions and patrimony of the Spanish crown, both during and after the reign of Fernando (1452-1516) and Isabel (1451-1504), where they have remained lodged even up to the present day. Felipe VI (1968-present) is, even now, king of Jerusalem, and within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation there remains still a vestigial body known as the *Obra Pía de los Santos Lugares*, which traces its origins to these same historical ties of royal patronage and protection over the Holy Places. These narratives are activated in diverse contexts across time, for a flexible range of reasons and in sometimes contradictory ways, whether during the reigns of Juan Carlos (1938-present), Alfonso XIII (1886-1941), Carlos III (1716-1788), Felipe IV (1605-1665), Felipe II (1527-1598), or during the National-Catholic dictatorship of Franco (1892-1975). In the 21st-century, the *Boletín Oficial de Estado* continues to marshal these twin narratives of Jerusalemite kingship and Holy Land patronage as markers of fundamental Spanish exceptionalism, pointing to a special, unique bond linking Spain and Jerusalem across the long centuries.

Although scholars have not tended to frame the question in these terms, I consider Spain's ties to Jerusalem to serve a key purpose in the historical imagining of what Spain itself is, beginning in the early modern period. The narrative that Spain possesses Jerusalem—fashioned out of the historical materials of an imagined medieval past stretching back to the 11th century and

even earlier, coalescing into a constellation of semi-stable ideas in the 1500 and 1600s—persisted in different forms throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and into the present, where it remains an element of the Spanish national(ist) imaginary even today. The story of Spain's ties to Jerusalem thus demands a *longue durée* approach that is sensitive both to the textures of specific contexts over time and also to the persistent forms of recursion and continuity that endure, even despite historical variations in what Spanish Jerusalem means.

While the contours of the narrative I've just traced in broad strokes take as their frame of reference the exclusionary and supremacist logic of the nation as a category, this obstinately *longue durée* story is also necessarily a Mediterranean story. The idea that Spain possesses Jerusalem, or that Spain enjoys unique and special ties with the Holy City, is an idea that I consider to be directed in a deliberate, studied manner toward the very purpose of managing the inherent Mediterraneanness of both Jerusalem and of Spain as locations across time: their plurality; their heteroglossia; their shifting and conflicting meanings for diverse religious groups; their historical imbrication in dense networks of exchange and collaboration as well as conflict and violence that serve as conduits for the circulation of people, objects, and ideas in and around the inner sea; their surplus as locations that activate but also exceed the homogenizing categories of nation, religion, culture, language, race. What does the Holy City mean for Muslim and Jewish subjects across time, whether in the peninsula or the Maghreb or in Palestine? What does it mean for Spanish *conversos* and *moriscos*, for indigenous subjects in the Indies or the Philippines or for enslaved and free Africans in Iberia and across Spain's global empire, forcibly converted or coerced into adopting a faith that inscribes the sacred geography of Jerusalem with very particular, often nationally-inflected meanings, rehearsed daily through liturgical and para-liturgical rituals that sit always at complex angles with alternatives systems of belief and practice? What does Jerusalem mean for

the Ottoman empire, for the Papacy, for Venice or Genoa, for France, for the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land? Jerusalem, like Spain, is always both in and of the Mediterranean.³

In his work on Iberian crusade narratives, David Wacks has worked to generatively restore the late medieval Mediterranean that is basic to how Iberian holy war, both in the peninsula and across the Mediterranean in Palestine, was fictionalized.⁴ That fluid complexity, however, also spills across the symbolic “cleavage” of 1492 that Barbara Fuchs has critiqued; it pushes beyond the “Atlantic turn” that lies at the symbolic limits of what Devereux calls Spain’s 16th century “Mediterranean moment”; it exceeds and overflows the diverse periodizing categories that we often depend on to insulate pre- or nonmodernity from whatever comes after it.⁵ The antithetical notion that Spain possesses Jerusalem is geared precisely toward undermining that complex reality by attempting to fold the Mediterranean itself within the nation, to imagine not a Jerusalem in and of the Mediterranean but rather a Mediterranean that, from within the symbolic regimes of modernity, is imagined to be in and of Spain. But those processes of containment and control are also undermined by their very articulation because Jerusalem, like Spain, is ultimately always a Mediterranean place, and not just in the middle ages but even now.

This session is prompted by two critical questions: “How does a Mediterranean-centered analysis assist in understanding the Spanish Empire? In what way does a study of Spanish history outside of the peninsula itself invigorate our understanding of premodern empires?” In concluding, my response moves in a few directions both in space and in time. Spanish Jerusalem demands to be read as part of a chaotic, rhizomatic tangle of complex connected histories. By thinking through and with Jerusalem’s meanings within the ideologies and practices of early modern empire, we are forced, first, to confront the centrality of Spain’s east-facing entanglements with the Mediterranean in the 16th and 17th centuries. Spain’s connections to Jerusalem in the period go beyond the

abstractions of fevered propaganda, drawing their strength from juridically sanctioned, embodied and material connections between Spain and the Holy City. We perhaps aren't accustomed to thinking in these terms, but such systems of relation at once oblige us to re-center Mediterranean Jerusalem within the multi-nodal structures of the early modern monarchy, and to consider the inter-dependent, entangled, relational nature of that monarchy itself. Such a re-orienting is one key conclusion that I think the Mediterranean paradigm forces us to embrace. The idea of Spanish Jerusalem, I would argue, also "invigorat[es] our understanding of premodern empires" precisely by demanding that we think critically about the temporal dimensions implied in the very category of early modern empire. Spanish Jerusalem, entangled as it is in Mediterranean Jerusalem, makes us think not just about the what, where, why, and how, but also the when. East-facing narratives and practices that gel in the 16th century locate their roots in the misty, mythologized origins of a medieval past and they later project themselves wildly through recursive iteration across time and into our present. The historical memory of those narratives continues to have meaning across the divides of pre / non/ early / modernity. Early modern imperial ideas about Jerusalem continue to be with us. In this sense, the Mediterranean lens demands that we consider how premodernity and early modernity can not be locked away in a hermetically sealed past. In short, Spain's ties to a Mediterranean Jerusalem force us to explode the categories of time and place that have historically confined the field. Early modern Spain belongs to, and is produced in and through, broader geographies and temporalities, including the temporalities and geographies of the Mediterranean.

¹ Andrew W. Devereux, *The Other Side of Empire: Just War in the Mediterranean and the Rise of Early Modern Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

² The bibliography is abundant. The classic work is Alain Milhou's magisterial *Colón y su mentalidad mesiánica en el ambiente franciscanista español* (Valladolid: Cuadernos Colombistas, 1983). See also Devereux, chapters 5 and 6.

³ Michelle H. Hamilton and Núria Silleras-Fernández, eds, *In and Of the Mediterranean: Medieval and Early Modern Iberian Studies*. Nashville: Vanderbilt, 2015).

⁴ David Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction and the Mediterranean World* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2019).

⁵ Barbara Fuchs, "1492 and the Cleaving of Hispanism." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37.3 (2007): 493-510. Devereux, *The Other Side of Empire*. Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). José Rabasa, "The Entrails of Periodization," in *Tell Me the Story of How I Conquered You: Elsewheres and Ethnocide in the Colonial Mesoamerican World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 130–61.