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GREEN-MERCADO, Mayte. *Visions of Deliverance: Moriscos and the Politics of Prophecy in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781501741463. Pp. xi, 310, 3 maps. Cloth \$54.95.

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For some scholars, the theme of *Visions of Deliverance* might appear at first glance well-known, while others might almost discard it as merely epiphenomenal—for being popular “superstitions” or because of the limited source base. However, both opinions would be misled in this updated focus on the prophetic dimension articulated by the crypto-Muslim populations of the sixteenth-century Iberian Peninsula. In its analysis of “the efflorescence of apocalyptic beliefs and practices among Moriscos”, Green-Mercado’s work offers an in-depth exploration of “the conditions and processes of the production, reception, and transmission” of the apocalyptic prophecies, as well as “their social and political effects” (2-3): not only does it widen the scope by taking into account spaces abroad, but its main approach considers and investigates the role of prophetic writings socially, culturally, *and* politically. In doing so, Green-Mercado studies prophecy as a meaningful discourse for their producers, users, and audience. She highlights the catalyst such discourse was in the configuring and positioning of a Morisco group and its action; hence, the role the prophecies played in both individual and communal agencies. The discursive and the agency approaches accurately contest the notion of a static and passive Morisco identity by describing the processes involved in or involving the apocalyptic prophecies. If the main textual corpus consists of less than a dozen prophecies, the author’s constant contextual analysis against other historical sources results in a thorough examination of the texts in their contexts (6-7). The main hypothesis, convincingly demonstrated, is that, through the use of prophetic discourse, some Moriscos internally managed to mobilize their crypto-Muslim brethren in an enterprise of Islamic reaffirmation and externally established diplomatic relations in order to play an active role on the geopolitical stage of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean. The six chapters are all different aspects of Morisco prophetic discourse, meticulously assembled, explored, and interconnected.

The first chapter (19-63) relates the case of Agustín, a young Castilian new-Christian seer, his entourage, and his progressive islamization. The itinerary from “a domestic visionary experience” into “a local cult in which [the youth] was venerated as a Muslim saint” (49) immerses the reader into the Castilian new-Christians’ spiritual atmosphere and demonstrates the responsiveness of prophecies to their environment. Agustín’s visionary message of an Islamic regeneration reflected its socio-political circumstances: “the Ottomans would defeat the Christians, Islam would spread throughout the world, justice would be restored,” and “the

Castilian Moriscos would play a central role in the events at the End Times” (60-61). The potential political movement of this case, though aborted by Agustín’s inquisitorial trial, leads the scholar to a (re)consideration of the Alpujarras revolt (1568-70).

In “The return of Muslim Granada” (64-99), the prophecies are analyzed for their role and significance in that famous episode. As “cultural resources that the Morisco rebels relied on to construct a [...] discourse of mobilization” (66), the Apocalyptic prophecies played an ideological role in that rebellion, by offering a unified and victorious Muslim identity. This discourse aimed at mending the rifts among the new-Christian population and at urging all the Moriscos to act by taking up arms. Closely related to Messianism or Mahdism and to Martyrdom, “Apocalyptic discourse was thus the cornerstone of a Morisco political theology that sought to resist and transform” their current situation (66-67). The leaders’ instrumentalization of prophetic elements is absolutely striking in the self-definition attempt of a renewed Andalusí community and, thus, in its internal and external positioning: “prophecy was an articulator of a [theological, ideological, and political] Morisco identity” (99).

The third chapter (100-129) explores the circulation of prophecies around the Mediterranean. If prophecy already appears in the former chapters as a conflictual, yet common discursive field for Christians and Muslims, the shift of scale highlights the shared centrality of prophetic elements and motifs in sixteenth-century geopolitics and Mediterranean societies. Furthermore, the analysis of prophecies and Inquisitorial sources together allows the author to map out the diffusion of some medieval prophecies among the Moriscos, as much as their adaptation and appropriation for local circumstances and purposes: the opening example of an Aragonese Morisco commenting on the foretold conquest of Rome by the Turk and his arrival in Spain (100, 128) illustrates an awareness of Christian and Ottoman prophecies and the local meaning of deliverance for some members of that persecuted group, who were hoping—or waiting—for better days.

The fourth through sixth chapters examine how those prophetic expectations of deliverance were also turned into (frustrated or forged) plans and scrutinizes the historiographical controversial issue of the Moriscos’ conspiracies and collusions with the Sublime Porte. By gathering cross-referencing sources, “The Grand Morisco Conspiracy” (129-164) sheds new light on the plot of rebellion and the diplomatic relations between the Turk and some well-to-do Valencian and Aragonese Moriscos in the 1570’s. Thereby, it crosses internal and external considerations on multiple scales: the Morisco internal tensions exploited by the Inquisition, the networks in the Crown of Aragon and beyond, or the significance of prophecies. Regarding this last aspect, the chapter stresses the systematic association between apocalyptic prognostications and rebellion plots¹; it states that prophecies were “a determinant factor for political action” and “became a beacon that indicated to the Moriscos when to take up arms” (164).

This instrumental angle is deepened in the fifth chapter (165-213), which analyzes the forgeries of two Morisco informants. Albeit invented, the plots offer “an anatomy of a [plausible] rebellion”, whose pattern brings circumstantial and internal elements about the crypto-Muslims among the new-Christian populations—e.g., the centrality of prophecies in the *alfaquíes*’

¹ Instead of “apocalyptic prognostications came to be invariably associated with rebellion conspiracies” (164), my reading of this chapter would rather reverse the subject and the complement of such statement: “[rebellion conspiracies] came to be invariably associated with [apocalyptic prognostications]”.

discourse and of the latter within the groups, or the rift between the Morisco commoners and their elite. Besides, the study of those forgeries apprehends the individual agency and strategies involving prophecy: “Prophecies were produced and deployed at particular moments to satisfy a particular agenda, with a particular public in mind”; “[...] this case reveals prophecy to be not just an identity myth, or a preparatory discourse, but rather a strategic fabrication” (212), closely entwined with individual and collective agency, as a mobilizable resource that could be locally adapted to the current situation.

Last, “Prophecy as Diplomacy” (214-236) explores the diplomatic relations with the French Crown and more specifically the endeavor to obtain providential assistance from Henry IV at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Again, prophetic idioms structure the messages addressed to the French, as a discursive argument of a divinely ordained assistance: “[...] prophecy served as a diplomatic language for Moriscos attempting to secure external mediation and mobilization” (235). After the expulsions, though, the Epilogue (237-248) highlights that the apocalyptic prophetic paradigm was replaced by a providentialist reading among the Moriscos in exile: the Moriscos’ expulsion was a providential deliverance of “Divine Inspiration”, in a Morisco’s words (241); “the present could only be understood as the fulfillment of divine will, which implied the abandonment of any form of political action other than obedience” (248).

The book chapters are well-built, well-led, and well-written with a clear expository style. Eight prophecies are translated into English in the appendixes; let us hope the inquisitorial texts will also be published, due to the interest they hold for scholars. The main benefit of the study is the welcomed willingness to link and cross-check different historical sources in order to revise some images of the Morisco groups. It must also be praised for its daring to question anew historical matters and sources that have been considered poisoned or simply invented.

I shall briefly formulate a few remarks and questions. The fact that the accusations of conspiracies against the members of the Morisco elite (chap. 4) were also motivated and sometimes merely forged, as well exposed later (chap. 5), calls into question somewhat the credibility or reliability of certain cases. Yet, Inquisitorial records do indeed evince the tensions that ran through these far from monolithic groups. The author is fully aware of the differences among the Moriscos, although some specifications might occasionally be welcomed for the non-specialists’ sake: it would make even clearer the internal social distinctions and processes she accurately analyses in the configuration of a group, its identity, and its positioning. In this matter, she brings in some really interesting elements on the Moriscos’ preaching: the prophetic use and reuse by the Moriscos raises the question—for future research—of the evolution before and after the conversions. Studies on sermons are nonetheless still missing to deepen this facet or, at least, to corroborate textually this prophetic centrality amongst Morisco papers—which may differ from the testimonies². Last, if prophecy participated to forge *a* subjective and emotive communal identity instrumentalized by some members, so did other genres and its weight or influence could on occasion be modulated or nuanced, since, e.g., it did not shape as much the objective identity. Prophecy, though, was supposed to be an interpretative key, a spark for an awareness, or a fuse to act by offering a modeling pattern and placing it into action or by situating the present in relation to the future—into the action of evolution or revolution.

² At least for Aragon, the inclusion of prophecies into exhortatory sermons ought to be pondered for the preserved manuscripts. The preaching genres were the main corpus of analyzed texts for my PhD, and I am currently working on projects to publish editions of some of these.

These few words are just thoughts and interrogations that illustrate the interest of this monograph, whose pertinence brings a meticulous and deepened aspect of the Morisco collective, interindividual, and individual personalities.

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Author’s Response

The author was provided with an opportunity to respond to the review, but declined.