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Uneven Relationships: Exploring the Dependence of Muslims on Military Orders in Medieval Iberia

Abstract:

The main reason for the existence of military orders was to protect Christendom and contribute to its growth. In the context of the ongoing conflict between Islamic Al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms in the medieval Iberian Peninsula, they concentrated their efforts on the defence against military aggressions from Muslim armies and on contributing to the territorial expansion of the Christian kingdoms. Military orders were therefore often involved in warfare against Muslims. Beyond these military activities, however, Muslims and military orders often interacted and, while doing so, created asymmetrical bonds of dependence. Indeed, conquests and other military endeavours contributed to Muslims becoming dependent on the rule of military orders through different types of relationships. Being on the losing side in territorial conquests, Muslims were systematically at a disadvantage in the establishment of these relationships of dependence. However, this inherent power imbalance between conquerors and conquered was uneven, and manifested itself in a more complex manner than the classic dichotomy of freedom and unfreedom. The aim of this paper is to explore that unevenness, with a special focus on the Muslims who were nominally free. Doing so will shed light on the complexity of the dependency relationships they established with the military orders, and on the interests, limitations, and other factors that shaped them.

Bio:

Clara Almagro (PhD University of Granada 2012) is a researcher at the Historisches Seminar at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, where she is the recipient of a DFG Research Project on the topic of Muslims under the Rule of Military Orders in the Medieval Iberian Peninsula. She has authored a number of papers on landscape analysis, religious minorities, and the history of the military orders, among other topics, and co-authored several volumes on medieval sources about Castilian nobility. Her first monograph was published in 2016 under the title *Paisajes Medievales en el Campo de Calatrava* (ed. La Ergástula) and she most recently co-edited with Jessica Tearney-Pearce and Luke Yarbrough the volume *Minorities in Contact in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Brepols 2020) and coordinated with Jörn R. Christophersen a special issue of the Portuguese journal *Hamsa: Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* about the visibility of religious difference in the Middle Ages.