



ALMERIA & THE FINAL STAGE OF THE RECONQUEST (I) EXHIBITION 2024

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BOARD 1

ALMERIA & THE FINAL STAGE OF THE RECONQUEST (I)

Why 'Moors and Christians'?

- THE RECONQUEST -

In 711 the Muslims occupied almost the entire peninsula. Only the northern mountainous region remained in Christian hands. From there, the Christian kingdoms set about reconquering their territory. From the triumph of Covadonga in 722, a slow but persistent advance southwards began. The kingdoms of Asturias, Leon, Navarre, Portugal, Castile and Aragon came into being. Finally, in 1492, in the time of the Catholic kings, the capture of Granada, the last Muslim stronghold, put an end to the 'Reconquest'.

(See map of the Reconquest)



BOARD 2

ALMERÍA & THE RECONQUEST

1ST RECONQUEST.

In the 12th century, the city of Almería was reconquered after the Muslim invasion of Hispania. This event, which took place on 17 October 1147, was led by King Alfonso VII 'the Emperor', in coalition with Christian kingdoms, King García V of Navarre and Count Ramón Berenguer IV. Also taking part in this Crusade were the Count of Montpellier, knights of the Order of the Temple from Castile and Aragon, to whom the city was handed over for later custody, and the naval forces of Pisa and Genoa. Thus began a period of Christian rule over the city that lasted only 10 years.

As a reminder of these events in which the Genoese squadron successfully participated, the City ended up taking as its own symbol the flag of the 'Genoese Cross of St. George'. The beach of 'los Genoveses' owes its name to this historical chapter.

(see portrait of King VII 'the emperor'. The flag of Almeria and the flag of Genoa).



BOARD 3

THE CATHOLIC MONARCHS: THE FALL OF THE EAST OF GRANADA (1488).

Almería was peacefully conquered by Ferdinand the Catholic on 23 December 1489. The Muslim leader Al Zagal went out to meet the monarch as an act of submission.

Days earlier - on the 10th of that month - the Capitulations of Almería had been signed in Baza (Granada), in which the conditions of surrender were set. The triumphal entry of the Catholic Monarchs took place on 26 December.

(see picture of - the Portrait of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Elizabeth the Catholic)

(see picture of a carved wooden chair with the theme of the capture of Almería, located in the choir of Toledo Cathedral).



BOARD 4

THE AXARQUÍA AREA OF ALMERÍA: THE CASE OF VERA.

CAPTURE OF GRANADA.

After the end of the Portuguese War, the Catholic Monarchs decided to conquer the last Muslim stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula: the emirate of Granada. This episode lasted a decade, from 1481 to 1492. The kings faced an arduous task that demanded an economic sacrifice of arms and human capital.

FIRST PHASE (1481-87). The entire western area was conquered: Alhama, Ronda, Loja and Malaga, with the bloodiest siege.

SECOND PHASE (1488-1492).

Eastern Zone. It began with the 'Capitulations of Vera' in June 1488 and ended with the handing over of the keys of Granada in January 1492.

(see pictures of the episode of the Conquest of Malaga, painted by Rafael Tegeo and 'The Surrender of Granada', by Francisco Pradilla y Ortiz.



BOARD 5

CONQUEST OF THE AXARQUIA AREA OF ALMERÍA AND VERA.

THE LETTERS OF THE MARQUIS OF CADIZ.

They were sent to Queen Isabella the Catholic during the military campaign and are a faithful witness to this chapter that changed the course of the history of the town.

On 18 April 1488, the Marquis received a letter from the Queen calling him to the military campaign. He set out from Marchena (Seville) with more than 400 people ready to do battle. He travelled all the way to Lorca where he was informed that Abu Abd Allah Muhammadel, alias El Zagal, Muslim general and Nasrid sultan, was in Cantoria with ten thousand soldiers and the intention of defending Vera.

(see portrait of Rodrigo Ponce de León, Marquis of Cádiz and portrait of Abu Abd Allah Muhammadel, El Zagal).

Meanwhile, Queen Isabella remained in Murcia with the Council, being promptly informed by the Marquis of Cadiz of all developments in seven letters.

(see History of the deeds of Rodrigo Ponce de León, Marquis of Cadiz. Original manuscript, National Library collection).



BOARD 6

FIRST LETTER.

Friday 6th June. The King orders the Marquis to leave first and go to Vera to demand the surrender of the City. He left on Monday with the rest of the army.

SECOND LETTER

The Marquis explains to the queen that he had arrived in Vera at 6am, he sent for the warden and the notable Moors of the city but they excused their absence and did not show up. Only the head of the city, Yuça Cordela, was present, and negotiations began. King Ferdinand the Catholic arrived in Vera on Tuesday 10 June at midday. (see portrait of King Ferdinand the Catholic).



BOARD 7

THIRD LETTER.

Friday 6th June. The King orders the Marquis to leave first and go to Vera to demand the surrender of the City. He left on Monday with the rest of the army. That same day, the king sent for Juan Benavides to receive the Moors from the town and fortress of Las Cuevas. King Ferdinand showed his concern for Mojácar's absence and his disinterest in handing over the keys to the town.

(See picture of "Old Mojacar" in front of the village of Mojácar. Photo by Kurt Hielscher, 1915).

FOURTH LETTER.

Thursday, 12th June. The King expresses his displeasure at Mojácar's silence, although, that same day, the Warden and the main Moors of the town arrive at Real de Vera to offer obeisance to the Catholic Monarchs.

FIFTH LETTER

The King requests the presence of the representatives of Almanzora, Sierra de los Filabres, Los Vélez and Níjar. The Alcaldes present themselves at Real de Vera to render obedience. Vélez Blanco and Vélez Rubio surrender their fortresses. In the face of resistance from Purchena and Tabernas (due to El Zagal's preventions in the city of Almeria that encouraged the Moors), Juan Benavides went to the first city and Rodrigo de Cárdenas to the second. (See pic of the castle of Vélez Blanco).



BOARD 8

SIXTH LETTER.

The Marquis tells the Queen about the Almeria expedition. There had been previous conversations with the Moors, for fear that the plague would spread to the East. For this reason the campaign and the expedition to Almeria was only mounted to ascertain their position and defence arrangements. (see mosaic painting of the capture of Almeria and panoramic view of the Alcazaba of Almeria).

- King Ferdinand stays at Real area of Vera from the 19th to the 22nd of June. The Marquis of Cádiz, the Duke of Alburquerque and Juan Chacón, the Adelantado of Murcia leave with the army for Almería, the king departing the following day.
- They confronted the Moors before the 'Puerta de Pechina' (Purchena Gate). The King decides to test the defences of Almería with the whole army.
- El Zagal brought his troops out before the walls and a bloody battle ensued, with many Muslims killed. El Zagal left Almería.
- King Ferdinand returned to Vera and provisioned the garrisons for 10 months to remain in the conquered fortresses.
- The documents signed in the Real area of Vera are sent to Rome.



BOARD 9

SEVENTH LETTER.

The army is positioned in Overa, reaches Zurgena, Arboleas, Cantoria and, via Albos, passes to Oria. They place the Real in Cúllar, province of Granada, to make war in Baza. Cúllar surrenders and the king arrives in Baza where a skirmish takes place.

Cúllar to wage war in Baza. Cúllar surrenders and the king arrives in Baza where a skirmish takes place. (see picture of a reconstruction of the Old Vera, called Bayra).



BOARD 10

THE CAPITULATIONS OF VERA

On the 28th of July in 1488, the Catholic Monarchs signed 4 warrants in Murcia:

One of them named Garcilaso de la Vega (father of the famous spanish poet) as Captain General and Chief Justice of Vera and Los Vélez.

The other three empowered Hernando de Zafra to supply wheat and flour to the places he had won. (see picture of a carved wooden chair with the theme of the capture of Vera, located in the choir of Toledo Cathedral).

Once the CAPITULATIONS (the agreement in which the surrender of Vera was stipulated) had been drawn up, they were summarised as follows:

- The Catholic Monarchs took the Moorish inhabitants of each place as vassals and undertook to treat them as such, to put in place Warden who would know how to honour them and would not allow them to be insulted.
- The Moors (new or baptised Christians) were forbidden to live near the sea to prevent them from helping the Muslims from Africa to land on the coast



BOARD 11

THE BARBARY PIRATES FROM THE NORTH OF AFRICA: TERROR ON THE ALMERIA COAST.

From the Middle Ages until well into the 19th century, the Mediterranean was the territory of Barbary pirates and corsairs. Muslim crews who attacked Christian ships to seize booty and prisoners, either to sell them as slaves or to ransom them. (See Drawing showing an arquebusier firing at a Barbary pirate galiot, possibly on the beach at Vera. Drawn by a scribe around 1638-1639. Vera Historical Archive Collection).

Algiers in particular was famous as the great pirate hotbed of the Mediterranean and the largest slave market in North Africa. Their priority was the coastal populations, and fear of attack meant that large swathes of the coastline were depopulated - despite the construction of watchtowers to spot enemy ships. Berber ships tended to be relatively small, so they were easy to hide on steep coasts.



BOARD 12

After the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada, and the arrival of Andalusian emigrants to various enclaves in Barbary, the pirates specialised. Their knowledge of the coast, customs and language made them expert guides and they were supported by the Moorish residents of the peninsula. Berber 'rides' from the sea were so frequent that the Almeria coastline came to be identified as the Pirate Coast. (see manuscript map on paper in 1575. Design of the tower of La Garrucha, immediately adjacent to the town of Vera. In the right side, the same fortification in the present day).

The coastline was dotted with a network of towers and castles for defence, giving rise to the popular phrase 'the coast is clear'. (see recreation of the pirates landing in San José - Cabo de Gata).



BOARD 13

(See on the leftside , slave market in Algiers (Jan Luyken, 1684). On the right side a map of Barbary (Jan Janssonius, 1650).

On both shores of the Alboran Sea, a network of solidarity was developed and, to aid captivity, religious orders dedicated to the rescue of captives spread. Famous was the priest from eastern Almería, Diego Marín, who from 1579 onwards ended up serving as ambassador of King Philip II to the Moroccan Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur (see Mercedarians rescuing captives (Wolfgang Kaiser, 17th century).



BOARD 14

CONQUEST OF THE AXARQUIA AREA OF ALMERÍA AND VERA.

The fortress Parish Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation in Vera, houses one of the most unique religious altarpieces in Andalusia due to its main theme about the Berber attacks. Initially, this altarpiece was for several centuries located in the Monastery of the Victory, known as well as the Minims Monastery.

(see The 'Moor' altarpiece picture. Located at the Parish Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation in Vera).

The Minims religious order arrived in Vera in 1605, once the monastery was built. Due to the fervour of the people of Vera for Our Lady Star of the Sea, the temple had an image of this Lady and her own altarpiece since the first half of the 17th century. The relationship of the Minims with the coast made them partakers of the people from Vera's fear of pirate corsairs, as this unique altarpieces shows.



BOARD 15

GARCÍA-LEONÉS, A CAPTAIN FROM VERA

This lineage travelled from León (christian area in the north of Spain) to join the troops of Lorca in the Reconquest. Knights of the lineage took part in the battles of the Almanzora River and the border of Granada, on the Murcia side. They were actively present in the Battle of 'los Alporchones', and supporting the Catholic Monarchs in the Reconquest of Almería and Granada against 'El Zagal' and Boabdil, settling definitively in Vera. (see portrait of Boabdil, the last sultan of Al-Andalus).

In this town they were perpetual aldermen and ensigns. According to the local historian Eusebio Garres, at the beginning of the 18th century, one of them, together with the local militia he commanded, defeated the landing forces of a Barbary ship. García-Leonés captain kept a flag from the corsairs in the spot now known as 'Cabezo de la pelea' (Puerto Rey beach).

In 1926, the local historian Miguel Flores González Grano de Oro, had the opportunity to see and describe this flag hanging on the wall of a house in Vera, owned by Pía Isabel García-Leonés Orozco, a descendant of the captain.



BOARD 16

THE SIEGE OF VERA BY ABEN-HUMEYA.

ALPUJARRA REBELLION. GETTING READY FOR THE DEFENCE OF VERA.

The Moorish rebellion in the Alpujarras, which began in 1568, became King Philip II's main problem of state. Since May 1569, the Moorish General Staff has had its eyes on Vera, the most important town to the east after Almería. Vera was surrounded by enemies, with the sea at its back, and could only count on the support of Mojácar and Lorca. The proximity of Abén-Humeya (main leader of the rebellion) in Sorbas convinced the people of Vera to secure the walled enclosure with as much water as possible, for which the water tank located at the fortress Parish Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation in Vera.

(see picture of the fortress Parish Church of Our Lady of the Incarnation. On the right side see a picture of the water tank located at the Parish).

THE EUPHORIA OF ABEN-HUMEYA CAMPED IN THE OLD VERA.

On 17 September 1569, the Mayor of Lorca captured three Moors in the Bajo Almanzora area who declared Abén-Humeya's intentions to take over Vera. The council of Vera was quickly informed to take on defensive measures.



BOARD 17

On 19 September, 900 Berbers landed between the coast of Mojácar and Vera to reinforce the rebel army based in Sorbas.

On 25 September 1569, Saint Cleofas day, Aben-Humeya and his troop arrived at 8 a.m. They were positioned in front of the wall , encircling the city, with the aim of defeating the enemy and the support of 12.000 men. They made 'ZALA', prayers to Allah to help them in such an undertaking. Abén-Humeya camps on the hill of the Holy Spirit (Vera 'the old') to intimidate the population of Vera. (see illustration of Vera and views of the Espíritu Santo hill. Drawn by José Manuel Ramírez Hidalgo).

Agustín Méndez Pardo, Mayor of Vera, far from flinching, went out with his troops from the town to pose a skirmish to the enemy, in a dangerous diversionary manoeuvre that he took advantage of to send couriers to Lorca informing them of the risky situation and the need for help. Inside the walls, over 1,200 people from Vera were waiting, men and women ready to fight.



BOARD 18

THE INCOMPETENCE OF THE MOORISH ARMY. LORCA ASSISTANCE OPERATION.

The squires, Martín Gómez and Francisco Soler set off for Lorca. The battle between Moors & Christians in Vera commenced at 8 o'clock in the morning.

The Moorish artillery barely responded and they did not have adequate war machinery to scale the walls. The bloodiest scenes took place in what is now Mar street.

At 7 p.m., after 11 hours of fighting and, warned by the smoke of his Isentries of the arrival of the Murcia army hosts, Abén Humeya lifted the siege of Vera towards Cuevas del Almanzora. (see Aben-Humeya portrait).

‘MOORS AND CHRISTIANS FESTIVAL’. TWINNING BETWEEN VERA AND LORCA.

In 1580, the District Council decreed to celebrate a ‘Fiesta de Moros y Cristianos’ to commemorate this historical chapter. The festivity was celebrated for centuries and, from 1919 onwards, no more records appear; it was possibly that it was wiped out by the Spanish flu. The festival was restored in 2014, giving it back the place it deserved.

The towns of Vera and Lorca became twinned on 12 June 1988. They reaffirmed their twinning on 20 November 2019.