




ARTICLE

The Moriscos of Salé and the Hispanic Monarchy: Power Agents and Identities to the West of the Strait of Gibraltar, 1631–1632

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Abstract

This article examines the multiple frontiers between Maghrebi Islam and the southern European Catholic world by focusing on a very specific episode during the struggle for control of Rabat, capital of present-day Morocco. It addresses the problem of military and political control of the Strait of Gibraltar, which was closely linked to widespread corsair raids in the early seventeenth century. It also examines moriscos' attempts to be allowed to return to Spain. The article points to the key importance of intermediaries and their linkages across borders at a time when both the Hispanic Monarchy and the Sa'adi kingdom were undergoing great difficulties. The strategic importance of the region transformed moments of crisis into opportunities, albeit failed ones, as intermediaries articulated their own interests with those of the king of Spain.

From 1609 to 1613, the moriscos – descendants of hispano-Muslims forced to convert to Christianity in the early sixteenth century – were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. Throughout the previous decade, Philip III and his favourite, the duke of Lerma, had arranged a series of treaties in Europe starting with the Peace of Vervins with France in 1598, when Philip II was still alive, and then the Treaty of London in 1604, and finally the Twelve Years' Truce with the Netherlands in 1609. At that point, switching gears, the monarchy began turning its attention to the Mediterranean, the expulsion being the prime example. It has been argued that the crown was seeking to recover the reputation it had lost by signing peace agreements with the European powers. But involvement in the Thirty Years' War since 1618 had drawn the monarchy back to the battlefield, and by the 1630s, circumstances for the new king, Philip IV, had substantially changed. In broad chronological terms, we are looking at the beginnings of the difficulties in Philip IV's reign from 1628 until the structural crisis of 1640. As resources grew more scarce, threats

to the Indies trade – the source of most of the monarchy’s income – were such that the Atlantic coast and North Africa became enormously critical sites.

After the death of Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur in 1603, there was somewhat of a power vacuum in present-day Morocco, which by the late 1620s led to considerable activity along the Atlantic coast by corsairs and pirates who attacked merchant ships. The port of Rabat-Salé, which at that point was governed by a group of moriscos, was a corsair republic whose influence was surprisingly broad, extending as far as the North Sea. Even so, the ever-changing situation in Morocco allowed for long and complicated negotiations between the ruling moriscos and the king of Spain regarding the possible surrender of the city’s fort, with talks lasting until 1641.

This article examines this process in 1631–2, when conversations were on the verge of success. Few episodes better illustrate the shifting and multifaceted nature of the frontier between Christian Europe and Muslim North Africa. Briefly, I argue that the monarchy’s scarcity of resources and the urgent need to protect Atlantic merchant shipping opened up a window of opportunity for a series of power brokers located along that frontier. They included a high-ranking aristocrat, the 8th duke of Medina Sidonia, who surprisingly assumed the lead role in strategic decision-making, but also members of the morisco community who had been expelled twenty years earlier. Together they explored solutions that, if implemented, might have benefited all parties. This article has three objectives. First, I examine how proposals were presented to the king (and accepted by him), including the form of diplomacy whose language has come to be known as ‘political love’.¹ Second, I highlight the asymmetrical conditions of the negotiations, which also involves analysis of the complexities of morisco life in the wake of the expulsion. And, finally, I hope to explain the role that the morisco community, with its array of cultural and religious elements, played in the negotiations with the various interested powers, as well as the role of intermediaries representing Moroccan and Castilian interests in defining territorial disputes and the functions of the areas in question. The episode reveals plans – which remain somewhat murky – to undo the expulsion of a fairly numerous contingent of moriscos, and also shows that some of Philip IV’s ministers held a rather casual interpretation of jurisdictional divisions among kingdoms. This consideration helps us better understand the latent tension between the crowns of Portugal and Castile under the common sovereignty of the Habsburgs. Indeed, one must not forget that when Philip II incorporated Portugal into the Spanish crown in 1582, most of Morocco’s Atlantic coast remained in Portuguese hands. Some fifty years later, Philip IV, who still ruled both kingdoms, had a clearly Castilian perspective.

¹ With regard to the Hispanic Monarchy on this point, see José Luis Bermejo Cabrero, ‘Amor y temor al rey (evolución histórica de un tópico político)’, *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 192 (1973), pp. 107–28; Iván Sánchez Llanes, ‘Amor y uniformidad en el barroco hispano’, *Edad de Oro*, 41 (2022), pp. 153–66; Tamar Herzog, *Defining nations: immigrants and citizens in early modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, CT, 2011).

The connections between the dukes of Medina Sidonia, whose surname was Pérez de Guzmán, and North Africa can be traced back to the lineage's origins. The mythical Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, 'el Bueno', made his fortune in the late thirteenth century as a mercenary under the command of the ruling Moroccan dynasty, the Marinid. His descendants built up their seigneurial estate in the kingdom of Seville, which at the start of the early modern age extended along the Andalusian Atlantic coast from Gibraltar to Ayamonte.² In 1497, the 3rd duke, Juan de Guzmán, conquered Melilla, which remained in the family's hands until 1558.³ Starting in 1578, the 7th duke put himself, his resources, and his authority at the service of Philip II and was rewarded with military jurisdiction over his territories when he was appointed Captain General of the Ocean Seas and the Coasts of Andalusia. This post was hereditary, passing to his son when the duke died in 1615.⁴ The fact that the Medina Sidonia were simultaneously the owners of a vast seigneurial estate and at the same time in charge of its defence gave them an extraordinary degree of power over a strategic maritime area within the confines of Seville, the Canary Islands, and the Maghrebi Atlantic coast, and which furthermore included the home port of the Indies trade (*Carrera de Indias*) and its Mediterranean and inter-European supply networks. From their port town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, the Medina Sidonia could involve themselves in a wide array of activities linked to Spain's commercial empire, including defence, logistics, and taxation.⁵

Among these, what most interests us here is maintenance of the fortress towns (*presidios*) of Larache and Mamora, which since their incorporation into the crown of Castile in 1611 and 1614, respectively, were under the military command of the Medina Sidonia. The 8th duke (1615–36) had made this one of his chief concerns, and he fought to win financial control over their supply so as to ensure he would not be subject to high costs or loss of reputation should he lose them. After a campaign in the 1620s during which he leaned on

² Pedro Barrantes Maldonado, *Ilustraciones de la casa de Niebla* (Cádiz, 1998; orig. edn 1541); Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *Guzmán: la casa de Medina Sidonia en Sevilla y su reino, 1282–1521* (Madrid, 2015).

³ Luis Salas Almela, "'Melilla, que es en las partes de África', y la casa de Medina Sidonia: conquista, tenencia y cesión (1497–1556)", in André Teixeira, ed., *The Iberian Peninsula and North Africa (15th to 17th centuries): history and heritage* (Lisbon, 2019), pp. 123–46.

⁴ Peter Pierson, *Commander of the Armada* (New Haven, CT, 1989); Luisa Isabel Álvarez de Toledo, *Alonso Pérez de Guzmán: General de la Invencible* (Cádiz, 1994); I. A. A. Thompson, 'The appointment of the duke of Medina Sidonia to the command of the Spanish Armada', *Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), pp. 197–216; Darío Cabanelas, 'El duque de Medina Sidonia y las relaciones entre Marruecos y España en tiempos de Felipe II', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebráicos*, 23 (1974), pp. 7–27; Luis Salas Almela, *Medina Sidonia: el poder de la aristocracia* (Madrid, 2008); Luis Salas Almela, 'Un cargo para el duque de Medina Sidonia: Portugal, el Estrecho y el comercio indiano', *Revista de Indias*, 247 (2009), pp. 11–38; Luis Salas Almela, *Colaboración y conflicto: la Capitanía General del Mar Océano y Costas de Andalucía, 1588–1660* (Córdoba, 2002).

⁵ Luis Salas Almela, 'Nobleza y fiscalidad en la ruta de las Indias: el emporio señorial de Sanlúcar de Barrameda (1576–1641)', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 62 (2007), pp. 13–60.

royal councils, the king, and the king's favourite, the count-duke of Olivares, Medina Sidonia got what he wanted in 1628 when Fernando Novela, a rich merchant under his control, signed an agreement with the king to supply the *presidios*. But the contract did not include a specific amount forthcoming from the crown; rather, the Council of Finance was supposed to supply the money. This came right at the point when royal finances began suffering the consequences of the capture of Spanish treasure in Matanzas (Cuba), in September 1628, along with the war of Mantua and currency debasement that same year.⁶ As a result, there were major delays in a matter of months. But though Novela's contract was a financial failure, Medina Sidonia succeeded not only in having the Councils of War, State, and Finance negotiate with him as a privileged interlocutor but, in addition, of owing him favours in return for his considerable efforts. As a result, Novela's contract was renewed until 1634.⁷ Among the most urgent problems were the fiscal consequences of Philip IV's suppression of the *millones* tax, which was to be replaced with a simple tax on salt consumption, enacted in late 1630 and to be implemented on 1 January 1631.⁸ Quickly, the financial system and the supply chain suffered the consequences, one of which included an episode in February 1631 when a company of soldiers in Larache went out to seek supplies in the surrounding areas and was ambushed by forces under the command of a religious warrior (*murabit*), Muhammad al-'Ayyashi. There were several deaths, and seventy men were captured.⁹ The disaster set off an angry dispute between Medina Sidonia and Olivares, with the latter saying the soldiers had ventured out because they were greedy and the former insisting his men were desperate.¹⁰ In December 1631, the duke managed to ransom the seventy soldiers for the reasonable price of 800 reales per person, another sign of his negotiating powers.¹¹ Philip IV gave his approval and ordered the Council of Finance to provide the money, although in 1633 there was still no word that the ransom had been paid.¹²

⁶ J. H. Elliott, *The count-duke of Olivares: the statesman in an age of decline* (New Haven, CT, 1986), pp. 409–44.

⁷ Archivo General Fundación Duques de Medina Sidonia (AGFCMS) leg. 2414, draft of a letter from the duke to Philip IV, in the hand of Council of War Secretary Gaspar Ruiz de Ezcaray, n.d., mid-1631.

⁸ Juan E. Gelabert, *Castilla convulsa (1631–1652)* (Madrid, 2001).

⁹ On the rise of the *murabits* and the political importance of religion after the death of Muly Ahmad al-Mansur, see B. A. Mojuetan, 'Legitimacy in a power state: Moroccan politics in the seventeenth century during the Interregnum', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13 (1981), pp. 347–60, esp. pp. 355–7.

¹⁰ Salas Almela, *Medina Sidonia*, pp. 279–83.

¹¹ Compare the price to the 1,350 reales considered the average ransom price in 1627–44. Daniel Hershenzon has pointed to ransom negotiations as a way of measuring the respective powers of the parties: Daniel Hershenzon, *The captive sea: slavery, communication, and commerce in early modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia, PA, 2018), pp. 71 and 168.

¹² AGFCMS leg. 2414, letters from Ruiz de Ezcaray and royal writs for Medina Sidonia, Dec. 1631 to Feb. 1632; Archivo General de Simancas (AGS) Estado leg. 3446, council to duke of Alcalá, 21 Mar. 1633 (my thanks to Daniel Hershenzon for this reference).

Military commanders in Castilian *presidios* in Morocco thus could see that Medina Sidonia was more than just their superior. His personal and financial commitment to the forts had saved them and might continue to do so. This awareness often led to personal loyalty between officers in North Africa and the ducal palace in Sanlúcar de Barrameda. It was very rare that communication between the royal court and Larache or Mamora did not pass through the duke's hands, a situation well known beyond the fortress walls given that Spanish governors of the *presidios* generally had close relations, sometimes even cordial ones, with local authorities from whom they received news from the Moroccan interior (Figure 1). If we then add the fact that Medina Sidonia had frequent communication with Portuguese authorities and his own, quite dense, network of informers throughout the Moroccan courts, we can see that the duke was an essential reference point. It is important to



Figure 1. Map of the southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula and the North African coast in the early seventeenth century. Illustration by Luis Parejo Fernández.

add, however, that his seigneurial powers over maritime defence were not unique in southern Castile; the marquises of los Vélez played a decisive role in the defence of the kingdom of Murcia, and the Mendoza had played a similar role in the kingdom of Granada in the sixteenth century.¹³ But what made Medina Sidonia unique in Lower Andalusia was that his seigneurial interests were felt far beyond supply chains or military patronage. The presence of his estates all along the coast, over whose defence he was in charge, and the economic weight of those estates and their close relationship to the Indies trade hugely expanded the areas affected by his actions.¹⁴

One must also keep in mind that Castilian and Portuguese *presidios* in the same maritime region communicated with the monarch during the era of the Union of Crowns through different institutional channels. But it is also true that there was a sort of royal Castilianization in the region, partly the result of Medina Sidonia's accumulation of responsibilities but also due to the king's preference for resolving problems through what we might call common channels of government, that is, the Councils of State and War, which though they included Portuguese members tended to favour Castilian perspectives. Thus, the episode that is the subject of this article can be seen not only as an outcome of the build-up of Castilian strategic power but also as an element of positive feedback acting upon that same tendency.

II

Morocco was one of the favoured destinations for moriscos expelled from Castile and Aragon both because it was close and because many people still had family there.¹⁵ This ended up encouraging corsair raids and piracy, which many moriscos engaged in as a means of survival, given that their reception in North Africa was at times difficult. The well-known story of what happened to moriscos from the town of Hornachos, in Extremadura, is one of the more remarkable chapters of the expulsion, in large part owing to that community's persistent efforts to remain united.¹⁶ It appears that

¹³ Antonio Jiménez Estrella, 'Los Mendoza y la proveeduría general de armadas y presidios norteafricanos: servicio nobiliario y función militar en el marco geopolítico mediterránea (1535–1558)', *Revista de Historia Militar*, 95 (2004), pp. 123–56; Pelayo Alcaina Fernández, 'La defensa del litoral frente a los ataques berberiscos por los dos primeros marqueses de los Vélez: D. Pedro y D. Luis', *Revista velezana*, 21 (2002), pp. 33–56; Yuen-Gen Liang, *Family and empire: the Fernández de Córdoba and the Spanish realm* (Philadelphia, PA, 2011).

¹⁴ Luis Salas Almela, 'Las paradojas financieras del abastecimiento de Larache y Mamora: presidios, logística militar y aristocracia, 1611–1635', *OHM: Obradoiro de Historia Moderna*, 30 (2021), pp. 219–47.

¹⁵ Beatriz Alonso Acero, 'El norte de África en las relaciones entre moriscos y mundo islámico en torno a la gran expulsión', *Estudis*, 35 (2009), pp. 9–102.

¹⁶ Guillermo Gozalbes Busto, 'La república andaluza de Rabat en el siglo XVII. Contribución al estudio de la Historia de Marruecos', *Cuadernos de la Biblioteca Española de Tetuán* (Tetuán, 1974); Hossain Bounizeb, *La alcazaba del Buregreg. Hornacheros, andaluces y medio siglo de designios españoles frustrados* (Madrid, 2006), pp. 29–34; Alberto González Rodríguez, *Hornachos, enclave morisco: peculiaridades de una población distinta* (Mérida, 1990); Esteban Mira Caballos, 'Los moriscos de Hornachos: una revisión histórica a la luz de nueva documentación', in *XXXVIII Coloquios*

after first landing in Ceuta, they went to Tetuán, where the ruler, Muley Sidan, wanted to remove them to the southern edge of his kingdom. However, for reasons not entirely clear, the Hornacheros went to Salé, at the mouth of the Buregreg River.¹⁷ The city then had few inhabitants, who for the most part lived in two separate areas: the new city on the outskirts (*arrabal*), and the citadel (*alcazaba*).¹⁸ In 1610, the citadel was a partially ruined medieval fortress but, owing to its strategic location, it controlled the entrance to the port and therefore the entire city. We know that moriscos not only from Hornachos but from elsewhere as well settled there, though the Hornacheros took control, restoring and shoring up the *alcazaba*, while the other moriscos lived in the *arrabal* (Figure 2).¹⁹

From this stronghold, and in the fragmented political context of Morocco after the death of Ahmad al-Mansur, the Hornacheros developed relationships with successive rulers of Marrakesh and Fez during a period when the kingdom was essentially undergoing a civil war,²⁰ as well as with local leaders.²¹ The lack of any solid power structure in the interior was key to the Hornacheros' virtually autonomous development as corsairs and pirates, to the point that in around 1625 they declared themselves to be an independent republic and would not pay tribute to any outside power. Given that Salé was the northernmost Maghrebi Atlantic port not under Philip IV's control, it was there that corsairs from many places, both European and North African, centred their operations, which worried the principal European powers such as Spain, the United Provinces, France, and England. There was a symbiotic link between corsairs and stolen goods, of course, making Salé a site of exchange not only with Fez and Marrakesh but also, for different reasons, with the United Provinces.²² Once they controlled the *alcazaba*, the Hornacheros created an unusual administrative structure in which power was held

Históricos de Extremadura, I (Badajoz, 2010), pp. 17–54; Mercedes García-Arenal, 'Los moriscos en Marruecos: de la emigración de los granadinos a los hornacheros de Salé', in Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Albert Wieggers, eds., *Los moriscos: expulsión y diáspora: una perspectiva internacional* (Valencia, 2016), pp. 276–311; Rafael Benítez Sánchez-Blanco, 'La expulsión de los moriscos', in *XLI Jornadas de Historia Marítima: la expulsión de los moriscos y la actividad de los corsarios norteafricanos* (Madrid, 2011), pp. 11–20; Manuel Lomas Cortés, 'Gobierno, ejército y finanzas en el reinado de Felipe III. El proceso de expulsión de los moriscos (1609–1614)' (Ph.D. diss., Universidad de Valencia, 2009).

¹⁷ García-Arenal, 'Los moriscos', pp. 306–10; Mira Caballos, 'Los moriscos', pp. 34–5; Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, pp. 37–8; Lorenzo Corcobado Navarro, 'Los moriscos de Hornachos. 400 años de su expulsión. Pasado y presente', in *XXXVIII Coloquios Históricos de Extremadura*, I, pp. 55–75, at p. 70.

¹⁸ Gosalbes Busto, 'La república', pp. 60–3.

¹⁹ García-Arenal, 'Los moriscos', p. 307; Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, pp. 41–2.

²⁰ Jerome Bruce Weiner, 'Fitna, corsaires, and diplomacy: Morocco and the maritime states of the West' (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1976); Mojuetan, 'Legitimacy', p. 348; R. Mantran, 'North Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., *The Cambridge history of Islam*, IIA, part VII (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 238–65, at p. 247.

²¹ António de Saldanha, *Crónica de Almançor, sultão de Marrocos (1578–1603)*, ed. António Dias Farinha (Lisbon, 1997); Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, pp. 16–17.

²² Roger Coindreau, *Les corsaires de Salé* (Rabat, 1993; orig. edn 1948); Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra, 'Relaciones económicas entre la Monarquía Hispánica y el Islám en la época de Cervantes', *Revista de Historia Económica*, 23 (2005), pp. 163–8.



Figure 2. The port of Salé with fortifications in new and old Salé, based on the map published by Richard Simson in 1637 in *A True Journal of the Sally Fleet*. Illustration by Luis Parejo Fernández.

by a *divan*, or ministerial council, presided over by a governor. This system reached its high point in the 1620s.²³

As stated earlier, Philip III and Lerma's focus on the Maghreb was to some degree aimed at restoring the reputation they had lost during the Twelve Years' Truce.²⁴ And indeed, at more or less the same time that the moriscos were expelled, Spain conquered Larache (1611) and Mamora (1614), both to win prestige and to fend off the corsairs. Salé, already a possible target even before Mamora was captured, seemed to embody both objectives (Figure 1). The man who planned the city's conquest (in 1614) was Juan Ludovico Ro, a Moroccan converted Jew who at the time was living in Milan under Philip III's protection. In a detailed report, Ro wrote that after the surrender of Larache, the corsairs gathered in Salé and established 'a certain brotherhood

²³ García-Arenal, 'Los moriscos', p. 308, says the person who presided over the *divan* was called a grand admiral, not a governor.

²⁴ For recent discussion concerning Philip III's foreign policy, see Miguel Ángel Bunes Ibarra, 'La expulsión de los moriscos en el contexto de la política mediterránea de Felipe III', in García-Arenal and Wieggers, eds., *Los moriscos*, pp. 45–66; Miguel José Deyá Bauzá, 'La política mediterránea de Felipe III vista desde el archipiélago balear (1601–1608)', in Carlos Mata Induráin and Anna Morozova, eds., *Temas y formas hispánicas: arte, cultura y sociedad* (Pamplona, 2015), pp. 69–83, esp. pp. 69–71.

with the inhabitants and former thieves of the said city of Salé'.²⁵ The omission of any mention of moriscos in his report means the Hornacheros must have arrived in early 1614, but, more important, it indicates that this symbiotic pact between corsairs and locals existed even before they arrived.²⁶ Ro mentioned an important Jewish community which for years in the Moroccan interior had traded goods captured by corsairs.²⁷ In the years to come, it was that community that took charge of obtaining weapons and naval provisions through their contacts with former Portuguese Jews now in Amsterdam. This was a time when several European powers were seeking closer diplomatic relations with the Maghreb.²⁸ We have no specific reference to Salé's role in the process by which Muley Sidan reopened his country internationally, but the fact that it was the only port under his relative control meant it must have been important, considering both the favour he showed to the city and al-'Ayyashi's hostility.

Once Ro's plan had been rejected, and while the corsair republic was developing, the royal court in Madrid continued entertaining conquest proposals in which Medina Sidonia limited his role to that of African expert. But by the end of the 1620s, the 8th duke began thinking he might take control of the city, and that became his goal.²⁹ The key factor in his change of mind, I believe, was the growing quantity there of captured French goods. The linkage of Medina Sidonia, Salé, and attacks on the French can be traced to the traditional presence in Sanlúcar de Barrameda of many French and Breton merchants under the dukes' protection. So the duke had good reason to wish to cut back on the piracy that was reducing his customs intake. As one indication, in 1627 the king of France waged a diplomatic campaign with Muley Sidan and other powerful Maghrebi leaders, but to no avail. That year, the Sa'adi ruler died,³⁰ and two years later Louis XIII sent ten warships under the command of Isaac de Razilly to force Salé to free its captives.³¹ That was when Medina Sidonia began making his moves, deciding how and when to take possession of the city and its citadel.³²

²⁵ AGS Estado leg. 495, 'Papel de Juan Ludovico Ro', n.d., no city.

²⁶ See Weiner, 'Fitna', p. 145; and Leila Maziane, *Salé et ses corsaires (1666-1727): un port de course marocain au XVIIe siècle* (Caen, 2007), pp. 38-9.

²⁷ AGS Estado leg. 495, 'Papel de Juan Ludovico Ro'; in the same legajo, see a letter from Agustín Mexía to Ro asking him to explain his position ('desmenuzase la plática'); Weiner, 'Fitna', pp. 160-3; Maziane, *Salé et ses corsaires*, p. 28.

²⁸ Leila Maziane, 'Entre Salé et les Provinces-Unies au XVIIIe siècle, une complicité haute en couleur', in Ana Crespo Solana and Manuel Herrero Sánchez, eds., *España y las 17 provincias de los Países Bajos* (Córdoba, 2002), I, pp. 255-67, at pp. 261-2.

²⁹ On Duke Manuel Alonso and Africa, see Salas Almela, *Medina Sidonia*; and Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, p. 27.

³⁰ Mojuetan, 'Legitimacy', p. 349; Mantran, 'North Africa', pp. 247-8.

³¹ AGS Estado leg. 2647, letters from the governor of Mamora, 16-18 Sept. 1629, and a letter from the marquis of Villafraña, concerning his meeting with a French official in Rota on 14 Oct. 1629. On Razilly's mission, see Weiner, 'Fitna', p. 204; and Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, pp. 55-6.

³² For example, see AGS Estado leg. 2646, 6 Apr. and 27 Apr. 1627; and leg. 2647, *consulta* dated 19 Oct. 1629 summarizing a letter from Medina Sidonia.

Things began looking better for him when violent protests broke out in Salé between the Hornacheros in their citadel and other moriscos, whom Spaniards called Andalusians, who lived in the *arrabal*.³³ The hybrid cultural identity of the expelled moriscos living in Salé, which in many ways was Castilian, had not played much of a role in relations between the city and the Hispanic Monarchy.³⁴ In their reports regarding the incidents, both Medina Sidonia and his informants said the troubles had been set off when the Andalusians demanded part of the duties (*diezmo*) placed on incoming goods in the port, which the Hornacheros refused to grant them. As things went on, the moriscos of the *arrabal* spread the rumour that those of the *alcazaba* had reached an agreement with Philip IV to surrender.³⁵ Given all the uncertainty, the Council of War resolved to postpone any move until matters cleared up.³⁶ It is worth noting that the royal councils involved in matters pertaining to the Atlantic Maghreb were most worried about the growing influence of al-'Ayyashi, who vowed to expel Castilians and Portuguese from the territory. A first step in that direction had come already in 1628 when he surrounded Mamora.³⁷

III

The year 1631 saw a sudden flurry of activity regarding the Salé fortress whose intensity can best be understood in the context of Olivares's assessment of the Moroccan border. On 4 August 1631, the high crown official Jerónimo Villanueva, *protonotario* of Aragon and one of Olivares's most powerful creatures, asked Medina Sidonia for information regarding agreements concerning Salé between the duke and the king a few years earlier. In particular, he requested that the original of a letter from the king dated 15 February 1625 be sent to him, and he promised to return it once he was finished with it. The letter he referred to contained the king's acceptance of the duke's proposal to encourage communication between Mamora and the Salé citadel as a way of ensuring the *presidio*'s security.³⁸ Medina Sidonia sent the letter to Madrid asking secretary Pedro Coloma to return it because he, the duke, had understood that the letter authorized talks between Mamora and Salé, as a result of which he had approved trade between the two cities and

³³ Starting with Coindreau, it has been said that the Andalusians were somehow less Islamic than those from Hornachos; Coindreau, *Les corsaires*, pp. 44–5; and Gozalbes Busto, 'La república', p. 69. For conflicts between the two communities, see AGS Estado leg. 2647, 14 and 30 Sept. 1629.

³⁴ Maziane, *Salé et ses corsaires*, p. 30.

³⁵ This was confirmed in 'Relación de novedades...en la alcazaba de Salé', written in Mamora, 16–18 Sept. 1629, in AGS Estado leg. 2647, unfoliated; see also AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 25, memorandum attached to *consulta* from the Councils of State and War, Apr. 1632.

³⁶ AGS Estado leg. 2668, 'Sumario de lo que ha pasado en las cosas de la alcazaba de Salé desde el año de [1]619 hasta el de [1]632', a document used in detail by Bouzineb.

³⁷ AGFCMS leg. 2414, Arce to Medina Sidonia, 23 Feb. 1630, describing the mood at the Council of State, in large part inspired by Medina Sidonia himself.

³⁸ AGFCMS leg. 2414, Villanueva to Medina Sidonia, 4 Aug. 1631; Philip IV letter dated 16 Aug. 1625.

Andalusia, excluding products from Holland that the king had restricted.³⁹ We have no information regarding which products were traded along that route but we do know that Medina Sidonia was in control, issuing the licences, probably with no fiscal supervision by the crown.⁴⁰ Villanueva's interest in the letter, however, concerned not the products being sold but rather an investigation of the governors of Larache and Mamora and their alleged involvement in supply expeditions in February of that same year. The inquiry lasted until spring 1632, resulting in the replacement of the governors and not much else. In summer 1631, Captain Pedro Barrionuevo Melgosa was appointed as the new governor of Mamora, replacing Toribio de Herrera.⁴¹ Olivares in general distrusted what was going on in the *presidios* and had established a committee (*junta*) to inspect the North African fortresses and expand upon investigations the previous year; the *junta* members were Juan Chumacero, Antonio de Contreras, and the count of Castrillo. The committee chose Paulo Arias Temprado, then stationed in Orán, to inspect the *presidios*, though there is no indication he visited anywhere else.⁴²

The conflict between the two morisco communities in Salé was temporarily resolved in early 1631 with an agreement that the Hornacheros would allow other moriscos to participate in two ways: first, from then on there would be two governors, one of them Hornachero, the other chosen by the inhabitants of the *arrabal*; the first men chosen were Ahmad bin 'Ali al-Bashir, chosen by the Hornacheros, and 'Abd Allah bin 'Ali al-Qasari, chosen by the Andalusians. Second, the sixteen seats of the *divan* would be divided between the two groups, and port duties and corsair booty would also be divided down the middle. This division reveals that though the *alcazaba* controlled the port, the relationship with the *arrabal*, and possibly other inhabitants, was more complicated than one group simply dominating the other.⁴³ The situation remained stable until 1636, when the Andalusians managed to wrest control of the *alcazaba* and expel the Hornacheros.⁴⁴

The agreement between the Hornacheros and the Andalusians in 1631, along with Herrera's departure as governor of Mamora, worked to facilitate, renew, and accelerate negotiations between the *alcazaba* and the Hispanic Monarchy through the duke of Medina Sidonia. The impetus for the talks was news that reached Madrid through the Council of Portugal: in early September 1631, the governor of Ceuta sent news of the state of affairs in

³⁹ AGFCMS leg. 2414, Medina Sidonia to Pedro Coloma, n.d., Aug.–Sept. 1631.

⁴⁰ Antonio Romeu de Armas, *Cádiz, metrópoli del comercio con África en los siglos XV y XVI* (Cádiz, 1976).

⁴¹ In June 1632, Diego de la Rasa was specially appointed as judge to investigate the situation in Larache and Mamora and the roles of Governors Sebastián Granero and Toribio de Herrera, respectively. Medina Sidonia was aware of the appointment, and both the king and Ruiz de Ezcaray requested his assistance; see AGFCMS leg. 2415, 26 June 1632.

⁴² AGS Guerra y Marina leg. 1051, 8 July (*consulta* with king's reply on 28 July) and 17 Aug. 1632.

⁴³ Weiner, 'Fitna', pp. 203–10.

⁴⁴ Coindreau, *Les corsaires*, pp. 35–58; Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, pp. 53–9, 63; José Manuel Gutiérrez de la Cámara Señán, 'Los corsarios de Salé', in *XLI Jornadas de Historia Marítima*, pp. 71–81, at pp. 76–7.

the Salé citadel, which at that point was besieged by al-'Ayyashi, who justified the attack (as the Andalusians had done earlier) by pointing to rumours that the *alcazaba* was about to be handed over to Philip IV. The Portuguese governor of Tangier, Fernando Mascarenhas, meanwhile, on 26 October sent Madrid and Medina Sidonia the statements made by three Frenchmen who had fled Salé, according to whom the moriscos were in danger of succumbing to al-'Ayyashi, who was starving them to death. Captives in Salé, they said, were convinced that if the murabit squeezed a bit harder, the moriscos would offer the fortress to Philip IV in exchange for being able to return to Spain and farm their land there (Figure 1).⁴⁵

Philip IV, having received this information from Medina Sidonia, told the Council of War that it was essential that the citadel not fall and that the moriscos could be offered assistance 'even if they have not requested it, and without asking for the *alcazaba*. But if there were a way of negotiating [the handover of Salé], write to the duke of Medina [Sidonia], as that would be an important negotiation.'⁴⁶ The duke, seeing himself in a good position, responded by indirectly praising the moriscos of Salé by saying that al-'Ayyashi had been angered by their refusal to give him artillery during his 1628 siege of Mamora. 'It seems to me', he wrote, 'that with this new motive and obligation I could speak to the Andalusians about the support Your Majesty offers and encourage them by offering measures that will oblige them as their needs and hardship increase.' Thus, Medina Sidonia assumed that negotiations must start without the crown revealing that the object was to take the citadel. He told the king that instructions had been sent to the new governor of Mamora asking him to send an emissary to Salé under the pretext of ransoming captives. In fact, the emissary would have two tasks: to obtain all the information he could, and to offer the king's protection to the moriscos. But the duke warned that if they accepted, aid would have to be forthcoming, so it would be well to have everything ready for all eventualities, including an agreement to hand over the fortress. He himself was preparing, and he asked for assistance in raising men and weapons. He was sure the moriscos would see that 'our efforts and means back Your Majesty's offer'.⁴⁷ Barely a week later, the duke announced he had sent the first shipment of reinforcements to Salé.⁴⁸

Medina Sidonia also wrote to Mascarenhas to say he was implementing the king's orders but that instead of using Tangier as his base, where the first alerts had arisen and which was administered by Portugal, he would use Mamora, which was closer to Salé. 'I regret that someone other than Your Lordship will manage such an important matter', he wrote. To compensate for that loss, the duke said he would keep the governor informed. Beyond the origin of the initial alerts, the safe-conduct provided by the moriscos for ransom negotiations as a subterfuge for starting the negotiations was sent

⁴⁵ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 22, 26 Oct. 1631; see also Weiner, 'Fitna', pp. 210–13.

⁴⁶ AGS Estado leg. 2648, copy of a *consulta*, Council of War, 7 Nov. 1631.

⁴⁷ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 17, 30 Nov. 1631.

⁴⁸ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 16, 7 Dec. 1631.

to Mascarenhas, though it was actually Medina Sidonia who gave it to him.⁴⁹ But it is also true that the approach by inhabitants of Salé to the governor of Tangier was linked to the bad relations between the moriscos and Herrera. So once there was a new governor in Mamora, the duke preferred moving Mascarenhas aside, and from then on his presence in the negotiations was minimal.⁵⁰ The result, in short, was that Castilians, not Portuguese, managed the operation.

Three men were sent to negotiate with the moriscos: Juan Domínguez de la Yedra and Sebastián Carreño, both of them ship pilots, and former sergeant major Juan López Zubialde. They left Mamora on 2 December, which the governor, Barrionuevo, did not inform his superiors about until 11 December, when he wrote to both the king and the duke, attaching copies of the documents carried by the emissaries. In his letter to the king, Barrionuevo explained that he had received a letter from the duke dated 20 November asking him to find out what the moriscos' intentions were and 'tell them what a good opportunity this is to receive Your Majesty's grace'. The pretext of ransoming captives was a good one, he said, because in fact there were captives from Salé in Mamora who wished to be ransomed in exchange for Christian captives in the citadel. He also told the king he would keep the duke informed.⁵¹ In his letter to Medina Sidonia, the governor said very few people knew about the plan, among them the *presidio's* inspector (*veedor*) and master of accounts (*contador*). They had written to various members of the divan with whom they had 'friendly relations before my predecessor broke with them'. He said he had told the emissaries to transmit 'the king's good wishes and friendship. If they requested a favour he would grant it, and all the moriscos who returned from France or other kingdoms would recover their property by order of the king. If he had reigned when they left Spain they never would have left.'⁵² We do not know how many moriscos who left through France actually returned, but the suggestion here is worth investigating, not only concerning the return but also the existence of morisco communities on the other side of the Pyrenees.⁵³

The letters to the moriscos were cordial and referred to the new age that was upon them now that Barrionuevo was governor, a far cry from the 'unpleasantries and worries' of Herrera's tenure. The letters to various leaders of the divan were signed by the *presidio* paymaster (*pagador*), Diego de la Serna Arce, because (he said) he was the one who had issued the safe-conducts and that that was a way of maintaining institutional continuity regarding diplomatic contacts with the moriscos. The most important of the recipients was Ahmad bin 'Ali al-Bashir, the Hornachero governor of the fortress, to whom

⁴⁹ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 11, Tangier, 10 and 31 Dec. 1631.

⁵⁰ On 13 Dec., Mascarenhas wrote to Philip IV to say he was obeying Medina Sidonia's orders as best he could; AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 12, Tangier, 31 Dec. 1631.

⁵¹ AGS Estado leg. 2650, nos. 2 and 14, Mamora, 11 Dec. 1631.

⁵² AGS Estado, leg. 2650, no. 4, Mamora, 11 Dec. 1631.

⁵³ On moriscos expelled to France, see Bernard Vincent, 'The geography of the morisco expulsion', in Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard A. Wiegers, eds., *The expulsion of the moriscos from Spain* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 19–36.

he said he wished to ransom Francisco de Ortega with cash and merchandise. He also proposed that a brother of the other Salé governor, 'Abd Allah bin 'Ali al-Qasari, who currently was being held captive in Mamora, be exchanged for a Christian captive named Somatías. Other letters were addressed to Mahamet Blanco, identified as 'city council secretary', and Amuza Santiago, both of whom were told of Philip IV's desire to help the moriscos. The last letter was for Somatías, saying he was certain he would be ransomed soon.⁵⁴ The sender of the documents was the inspector, Giuseppe Vela, who replaced Diego Ruiz de Salazar, who was in Madrid. In his first letter, to Blanco, the inspector offered to help him in Mamora or in Spain with whatever he needed as Ruiz de Salazar himself would have done. Barrionuevo also took it upon himself to encourage 'Abd Allah bin 'Ali al-Qasari's captured brother to write, and the captive confirmed the favourable attitude in the *presidio* toward the moriscos.⁵⁵

The emissaries returned to Mamora in late December, where they gave statements to the *presidio*'s judicial officer, Gaspar Osorio Daza. The three men described their difficult arrival, being that there had been a low tide when they entered port and a corsair ship tied up there had sent a boat to attack them. Moriscos firing from the citadel had defended them (Figure 2).⁵⁶ The anecdote showed the sincerity of the moriscos' support and the contrast with their corsair allies. Once they reached the citadel, they were greeted with honours; Domínguez de la Yedra in particular pointed to the friendly reception offered by Ahmad bin 'Ali al-Bashir. As a sign of their trust, the moriscos allowed Spaniards to freely inspect their defence systems; they counted thirty pieces of bronze and iron artillery, many Dutch shotguns, and possibly English shotguns as well.⁵⁷ Domínguez de la Yedra said his hosts were 'very ready to obey His Majesty' and that Santiago and Blanco had told him they were writing to paymaster de la Serna asking that 'they be sent a pass [*seguro*] to come to [Mamora] because they wished to go over to Spain, along with many more of them'. This desire outweighed any help forthcoming from the Dutch, English, or French, because 'given that it was Spain, which was their home through the duke of Medina [Sidonia], they wanted no other king nor lord'. Carreño added that he had 'heard some of them say secretly that they would gladly give His Majesty the *alcazaba* if he would allow them to live in the *arrabal* with their properties'. In conclusion, López Zubialde was sure the moriscos were convinced that Philip IV 'would be a true friend'. Regarding al-'Ayyashi, the moriscos said he wished to crown himself 'king of the *alarbes*' and that he had 30,000 men in Mamora and Salé, though not all the local leaders supported his hostile campaign against the *alcazaba*, preferring instead to attack Mamora.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 3, Mamora, 25 Nov. 1631.

⁵⁵ AGS Estado leg. 2650, 25 Nov. 1631, also with the Arabic date of 28 *zafar* 1040.

⁵⁶ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 1, testimony taken in Mamora, 22 Dec. 1631.

⁵⁷ Zubialde said he had heard that a Dutch ship had recently arrived in Salé loaded with enough weapons and gunpowder to last a year; AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 1, testimony taken in Mamora, 22 Dec. 1531. This was probably the 1629 shipment referred to by Maziane, 'Entre Salé et les provinces', pp. 261–2.

⁵⁸ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 1, testimony taken in Mamora, 22 Dec. 1631.

When he sent the emissaries' statements to the peninsula, Barrionuevo also sent the moriscos' written replies. The first was signed by a divan member, Muza bin Muhamet, who in addition to insisting that al-'Ayyashi's ambitions were dangerous, proposed that Philip IV cut off the ruler's finances by putting an end to contacts between the *presidios* of Ceuta, Tangier, and Larache, on the one hand, and the cities of Tetuan and Alcázar, on the other, both under the control of al-'Ayyashi, making it clear that there would be no trade 'as long as the said saint continues to rule, because port duties must go toward helping and paying the troops'. The objective of this strategy was to produce grumbling and resistance in his camp, and the moriscos themselves did what they could to promote disobedience. Mahamet Blanco, the city council secretary, in addition to being pleased over Herrera's departure, presented a safe-conduct to be used in Mamora, hoping that it would be reciprocated.⁵⁹

All this information took a while to reach Spain, and it did so in two phases, the first of which concerned the fact of the emissaries' journey. Before receiving the news, the duke wrote to the court in December 1631 asking the king for resources 'so that, being that I have gone into debt in Your Majesty's name, I can emerge with a just reputation'. The court's delay in responding annoyed the duke, who complained that in over a month the king apparently had found 'nothing worthy of his royal attention'.⁶⁰ At last, on 28 December 1631, having heard that the king had received Barrionuevo's letter of 11 December, Medina Sidonia also told the king about the emissaries' visit, which he himself had been responsible for. The duke framed his initiative with the moriscos as simple obedience of the king's order to offer them help 'so that, enjoying Your Majesty's protection, they be openly obliged to you and we avoid the grave setback of seeing the *murabit* as lord of that port'. According to him, the only news was that things had moved more quickly because of the statements by the Frenchmen who had escaped from Salé to Tangier. Medina Sidonia to some degree stressed that the moriscos were not only asking to return to Spain in exchange for surrendering the citadel, they also were requesting land to farm. He insisted that it would be dangerous if the king's promise were violated, as withdrawal of his protection would undermine the *amor político* that the duke suggested the moriscos felt, to which end he again asked that everything be properly prepared.⁶¹

The second batch of information was delayed several weeks because of rough seas. On 25 January 1632, Medina Sidonia told Madrid he still did not have any of the documents produced during the emissaries' visit, though he had got word that Barrionuevo's health had taken a turn for the worse.⁶² The governor himself, on his deathbed, managed to sign the letter (written in someone else's hand) accompanying the moriscos' reply and the emissaries'

⁵⁹ AGS Estado leg. 2650, nos. 5, 7, and 8, letters dated 9, 13, and 28 Dec. 1631.

⁶⁰ AGS Estado leg. 2650, nos. 13 and 15, letters to king, 21 Dec. 1631; AGFCMS leg. 2414, Medina Sidonia to Philip IV, 21 Dec. 1631.

⁶¹ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 10, letter, Sanlúcar, 28 Dec. 1631.

⁶² The duke had suggested the names of men to replace him in case he got much worse or died; AGFCMS leg. 2415, letters 12 and 25, (3) Jan. 1632.

statements.⁶³ Barrionuevo included copies of the replies he had written to the citadel leaders after the visit. The most institutional of these letters, to Ahmad bin 'Ali al-Bashir, 'Abd Allah bin 'Ali al-Qasari, and Santiago, mentioned not only his desire to retain friendly contacts between both cities but also stressed Philip IV's affection, assuming that the Christian captives would by now be enjoying this new friendship thanks to the divan's intercession.⁶⁴ But the most important missive was to Diego de Vargas, in which he alluded to the long friendship and trust that this morisco in particular had with Medina Sidonia. Barrionuevo said, 'knowing as I do how passionate [the duke] is about your lordships', referring to the leaders of the Andalusian moriscos, he had begun the paperwork for their passage to Spain 'which I hope occurs soon'. The safe-passages (*licencias*) would be in the names of Vargas and 'your grace's daughters'. Barrionuevo further offered him the opportunity to wait it out in Mamora. Barrionuevo was so sure things would work out that he offered to provide protection for Vargas's daughters in Seville, where he had relatives.⁶⁵ From these letters, we can see that there were intense contacts between Medina Sidonia and the moriscos before December 1631, not all of them through official royal channels, suggesting that the fact that the moriscos' requests coincided with the duke's suggestions was perhaps not a coincidence. Adding weight to this theory, we have Jerome Weiner's information, based on a statement by an unidentified governor of Mazagan, that some of the Andalusians in Salé were from Sanlúcar.⁶⁶ We have no way of knowing if Philip IV knew about this, but we cannot assume that he did not.

Preparations for this little visit by emissaries reveal civilian and military authorities' immense capacity to mediate or even dictate royal agendas on a frontier that was not a priority for Olivares's government. Herrera's hostility toward the moriscos, so different from the attitude of his predecessors and successors, had established a clear limit, albeit temporary and reversible, to what could be accomplished in transborder relations without the collaboration of those authorities. On the Moroccan side, we can see how agents' varying interests were blurred in this intricate balance of personal relationships and shifting powers. The fluctuating connections between the corsair republic, on the one hand, and what was left of Sa'adi rule, local leaders, and *murabits*, on the other, depending on their respective capacities to threaten Salé's independence, meant prospects for negotiation were considerably broadened for the *alcazaba* moriscos, even including the possibility of returning to Habsburg sovereignty. Medina Sidonia's role, both his own initiatives and his mediation of crown initiatives, shows that border security for Lower Andalusia was a matter that reached the Moroccan Atlantic coast. His actions

⁶³ AGS Estado leg. 1650, no. 21, copy of letter from Pedro de Barrionuevo, 14 Jan. 1632.

⁶⁴ This reciprocity, offering political gain in exchange for improved living conditions for captives, is a direct and express complement to reciprocity based on generic cultural principles. On unwritten principles governing the treatment of captives on both sides, see Hershenson, *The captive sea*, pp. 118–39.

⁶⁵ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 21, Barrionuevo to 'the captains...of the *alcazaba*', Mamora, 13 Jan. 1632; copies of the four letters and guarantee for communication between Salé and the *presidio*.

⁶⁶ Weiner, 'Fitna', p. 149.

were not only relatively autonomous but revealed an agenda of clearly defined interests that did not always coincide with the monarchy's. The principle behind all these interests was to shore up his prestige, his *crédito*, as visible leader of that transcontinental border acting not only as protector of peoples and coastlines but as the man in charge of the defence of the *Carrera de Indias*. However, it is also true that no matter how many possibilities for decision-making this balance of powers conferred upon Medina Sidonia, at the end of the day his proposals were subject to an asymmetric relationship with the royal court.

IV

All the Salé negotiations were mirrored in vigorous conversations in Madrid. From December 1631 to January 1632, while news from Salé was impatiently awaited in Sanlúcar, the Castilian forts suffered from bubonic plague. Barrionuevo died on around 15 January. The duke conveyed the news to the palace on 29 January, the same day he sent the documents regarding the emissaries mentioned above. Medina Sidonia said the *presidios* were in a grave state; twelve or fourteen people were dying daily, the supply chain had collapsed, and millions were owed in debts to Fernando Novela.⁶⁷ The Council of State's first response to the situation included a variety of proposals, including that the king immediately pay off debts and free up supplies; the marquis of Leganés suggested abandoning Mamora, using the plague as an excuse, in order not to lose standing. Though his proposal was not accepted, and the council decided to encourage the duke and trust his judgement under these urgent circumstances, it is important to note that at a time of extreme financial pressure, when Spain was at war on multiple fronts around the world, there were some who considered the North African *presidios* to be a burden.⁶⁸ Leganés in fact reflected widespread opposition to involvement in the Maghreb, a current of thought already present during the reign of Philip III if not earlier.⁶⁹

In late February, having informed the court about the emissaries' visit, the duke wrote to the king through the Council of War to say that a lieutenant in Mamora, Marcos de Berganza, had gone to Salé upon the duke's orders on an informal mission to assess the post-plague situation there. According to Medina Sidonia, al-'Ayyashi's siege had not loosened, and the moriscos 'remain aware of how Your Majesty favours them and are offended and disturbed by the *murabit's* efforts and are willing to take up the offers that I, in Your Majesty's name, have extended to them for whenever they might need them'. The duke said he had supplies ready but that they would soon request weapons and other items he did not have.⁷⁰ Though the Council of War in prior

⁶⁷ AGS Guerra y Marina leg. 1048, letters 1–4, 26, 27 (2), and 29 Jan. 1632.

⁶⁸ AGS Guerra y Marina leg. 1048, *consulta* Council of War, 2 Feb. 1632.

⁶⁹ Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra, 'La defensa de la cristiandad: las armas en el mediterráneo en la Edad Moderna', *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos*, 5 (2006), pp. 77–99, at pp. 95–6.

⁷⁰ AGFCMS leg. 2415, letter, 29 Feb. 1632.

weeks had repeated the duke's demands, Philip IV's reply was forthcoming only on 10 March 1632, limited merely to order a provisional solution for the lack of men in Mamora and Larache.⁷¹ But in March, the *peste* crisis was exacerbated when al-'Ayyashi tightened his siege of Mamora, pushing Medina Sidonia to accelerate his efforts by sending seventeen ships loaded with provisions and troops. In March, the Council of War met several times; it thanked the duke for his extraordinary efforts and sent the king several *consultas* asking him to accept the duke's requests.⁷² Secretary Gaspar Ruiz de Ezcaray, one of the duke's confidants, told him the Council of War was on his side, and he regretted the king's long delays in responding to the council's recommendations.⁷³

It was not until late April that the joint Council of State and War met for a special session devoted entirely to Salé. Members received a memorandum outlining all the important issues concerning the *alcazaba* since 1619.⁷⁴ But the introduction to that document, drawn up by the Council of War, went back only as far as Medina Sidonia's correspondence to the *presidio* governors starting in 1631. The background documentation also included an order from Philip IV to the duke in November 1631 telling him to find ways to take Salé or, failing that, to keep the Andalusians in charge of the citadel, offering them aid even in the absence of their agreement to give up the stronghold. Even before the papers concerning the emissaries had arrived, the Council of War had been asking for a plenary meeting to discuss Salé; after receiving the information indicating the moriscos were willing to serve Spain, the council insisted again, asking the king and Olivares to call a meeting. While awaiting agreement from members of the Council of State, those of War continued collecting papers and managed to locate four key *consultas* from the period 1619–31. On 30 April, the marquis of Gelves became the only member of the Council of State to second the joint meeting, and it was decided to move ahead despite State's scant representation. Gelves was the first to speak, and he pointed to the danger that France, England, or the United Provinces might take Salé, leading him to support Medina Sidonia's plans. He also agreed that the Andalusians should be allowed to return to Spain where they would be given 'homes and lands in the regions most appropriate both for their manner of agriculture and for the benefit of these kingdoms, where they are much needed' and that if they chose to live in the Salé *arrabal* once the citadel was in Castilian hands, that was fine, too, 'because in that case they would be better disposed' to return to Spain. The marquis of Castrofuerte agreed with Gelves on all points, including the moriscos' return, but noted his concern over the danger that Salé posed for the Indies trade. He noted that negotiations for the handover were not very advanced and suggested that Medina Sidonia continue corresponding and see how things developed. Responding to those who argued against Spain having another *presidio* in the Maghreb, the marquis said it was unassailable and

⁷¹ For the council's request, AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 30, *consulta*, 11 Feb. 1632.

⁷² AGS Guerra y Marina leg. 1049, *consulta*, 23 Mar. 1632.

⁷³ AGFCMS leg. 2415, Ruiz Ezcaray to Medina Sidonia, 23 and 30 Mar. 1632.

⁷⁴ For the report on the Spanish presence in Salé from 1619, see Bounizeb, *La alcazaba*, pp. 43–69.

could be defended with a minimum of men and expenditure. Afonso de Lencastre, a member from Portugal, offered a broad analysis of Castilian fortresses in the Atlantic Maghreb and noted that many reports had been filed about their lamentable state, meaning either that they were of little importance or that repairs had been systematically postponed. Under the assumption that the king's wishes coincided with neither of those options, he opined, reflecting on general strategy, that 'the most beautiful and resplendent pearl in Your Majesty's crown is the Strait of Gibraltar, for there Your Majesty has the key to lock your enemies' trade'. This crucial advantage would be lost if Salé were to fall to rival Europeans, who might capture the other fortresses as well, which would not occur with the Moors as they did not understand modern siege warfare. Furthermore, he went on, corsairs from Salé were already causing considerable economic losses that would have to be factored in when assessing the cost of the takeover. And he also agreed that they should offer Medina Sidonia enough men to take Salé, including the Spanish galley fleet. Juan de Velasco, marquis of Monterrasso, Juan de Castilla, and Cristóbal de Benavente said briefly that they agreed. Bartolomé de Anaya was the only vote of opposition; he suggested they wait for a better time.⁷⁵

Despite the lopsided vote, once again the king took his time in responding, now partly because he had gone to the Cortes of Barcelona.⁷⁶ In the interim, the duke told the court that France and Holland were hoping to take Salé and were increasing their pressure.⁷⁷ Finally on 30 June 1632, Ruiz de Ezcaray told the duke that he had received a handwritten letter from Philip IV saying that while in Barcelona he had tried to set up a committee on the Salé question but it had not met, given the urgency of returning to Madrid. Now, having received the news 'that delays must not be permitted', he had resolved to make a firm decision. To begin with, he assumed that neither the galley ships nor the ocean navy could transport the men and weapons necessary for taking the citadel. With those difficulties in mind, the king wrote, 'as far as we know here it is impossible to put this into effect, and thus it should be referred to the duke of Medina [Sidonia] so that he can put the former [taking Salé] into effect or at least the latter [preventing the moriscos from losing it]'. As for money, despite the crisis, he ordered *contador* Manuel de Hinojosa to provide the necessary funds to the duke. He let Medina Sidonia decide which troops to use, either from Seville or the coast, and, if necessary, to take whatever was left over from the silver galleons plus men from the *presidios*, though without exposing the latter to any risk. Given that the *murabit* did not have a navy, the king said that whichever vessels the duke could lease on the coast would be enough. He closed by saying that Medina Sidonia should be ordered to execute the plan with his, the monarch's, authority.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 25, *consulta*, plenary session of the Councils of War and State, 30 Apr. 1632.

⁷⁶ Elliott, *The count-duke*, pp. 439–41.

⁷⁷ AGS Estado leg. 2650, nos. 120 and 124, Medina Sidonia to Felipe IV, 10 May 1632.

⁷⁸ AGS Estado leg. 2650, nos. 32 and 132, king to Ruiz de Ezcaray and Manuel de Hinojosa, both in Madrid, 30 June 1632.

Preparations swiftly got under way.⁷⁹ On 3 July 1632, Ruiz de Ezcaray sent the duke a draft of the royal writ announcing ‘the disposition, form, and means of execution, and I give and concede to you the force and authority necessary to that end fully and entirely, lacking nothing necessary for the accomplishment of this goal, nor are additional orders from me necessary, and I approve those you might give...as if they were mine, signed by me...so that nothing will be neglected for lack of an order’.⁸⁰ That same day the king also signed an order for Olivares, who was captain-general of the coast of Granada, ordering him to supply Medina Sidonia with whichever men he requested for the Salé operation.⁸¹ The final royal writ, however, was once again delayed and was not signed until 23 July 1632. It was similar to the draft, and included an explanation as to why Salé had strategic value, what the dangers were, and Medina Sidonia’s prime importance in the operation, particularly regarding negotiations with the moriscos, all of which the king said had been well done.⁸²

The duke wrote to the king that he was grateful for the support and he brought the monarch up to date on events since the December visitation. Regarding the propaganda war between the *murabit* and the Andalusians, he said the former was attempting to slander moriscos as Spanish-loving Christians, and if they accepted direct aid from Philip IV this would indeed turn out to be true. But the fact that they had not accepted the aid had undermined the *murabit*’s prestige and helped them gain the assistance of the Moroccan ruler, prompting al-’Ayyashi to loosen his siege of Salé. The duke therefore rather doubted the moriscos would immediately seek Spanish help, though if the goal was to capture the *alcazaba* it would be a good idea one day to help them and ‘oblige them with [our] selflessness’ so as to not ‘increase their distrust’. This suggests that at that point the duke was not in favour of immediate action; rather, he accepted a mid-term strategy based on keeping the moriscos grateful. With this in mind, the duke explained what he had done since receiving the royal writ; despite the king’s guarantees, his modest efforts had only led to an institutional conflict with the royal appeals court of justice in Seville, the Real Audiencia de Grados. Medina Sidonia also said he had sent Fray Alonso Jiménez de Mena, from the Our Lady of Victory order, as an emissary to the citadel to ransom captives. He was accompanied by López de Berganza, who knew the city, as a way of continuing conversations with the moriscos. The duke attached to his own letter a copy of the letters and instructions he had given the inhabitants of Salé.⁸³

In October, Philip IV wholeheartedly approved these measures and said he had ordered the Real Audiencia to stay out of the duke’s way.⁸⁴ But the debate

⁷⁹ Already on 1 July, Jerónimo de Villanueva had returned Hinojosa’s writ to Ruiz de Ezcaray so the secretary of the Council of War could process it immediately; AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 130, note on 1 July 1632.

⁸⁰ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 33, Philip IV to Medina Sidonia, 3 July 1632.

⁸¹ AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 34, Philip IV to Olivares, 3 July 1632.

⁸² AGS Estado leg. 2650, no. 31, copy in AGFCMS leg. 2415, Madrid, 23 July 1632.

⁸³ AGFCMS leg. 2415, Medina Sidonia to the king through Ruiz de Ezcaray, 8 Aug. 1632.

⁸⁴ AGFCMS leg. 2415, *cédula* to Medina Sidonia, 12 Oct. 1632.

was not over yet. On 24 November 1632, the Council of War met to examine Medina Sidonia's latest letters about Salé, particularly concerning the possibility of Larache and Mamora receiving 'relatives and belongings of the [moriscos] that had been gathered up' from the citadel. According to Ruiz de Ezcaray's summary of the discussion, Jiménez de Mena offered his personal impressions of the moriscos saying the Andalusians 'were more enthusiastic...about having Your Majesty so favourably inclined, and they offer to serve him loyally'. Their main concern in supporting Philip IV, however, was to ensure the safety of their relatives in Algiers and Tunis, and for that reason they 'asked the duke to write, in His Majesty's name, to the African borders of the crowns of Castile and Portugal asking that relatives and properties being collected be admitted'. In Medina Sidonia's opinion, in addition to keeping open the possibility of taking the citadel, it was also important to 'allow the Andalusians to trade in Spain with vessels as long as they do not rob those with whom they contract along the coast, [which would] make the Moors trust them less'. Members of the council were divided on this point. The marquis of Castrofuerte favoured allowing morisco women and their properties into the *presidios*, and Anaya agreed, saying it would be 'like having hostages'. Fernando de Toledo also agreed, adding that moriscos would in that case not be tempted to go over to the *murabit*'s side. The marquis of Valparaíso was agreeable to also accepting men into the Castilian *presidios* as long as their goal was to eventually go to Spain. Juan de Velasco had doubts, pointing out that before allowing moriscos back into Spain they would have to remember why they had been expelled in the first place (their religion), an indication of the degree to which the 1609 expulsion order was being criticized. The count of Oropesa, along with Castrofuerte and Íñigo de Brizuela, were sceptical, saying it was still unclear how the citadel would be handed over and that therefore it was not the right moment to talk about accepting moriscos into Spain, though it was always a good idea to win their gratitude. In reply, the king ordered them to meet again, given the differences of opinion.⁸⁵ Once again, postponement won the day, though it was a minority position, owing to the monarchy's other obligations.

Thus, despite the king's express support, the plans drawn up in December 1631 were halted and the project faded, the result of asymmetric negotiations, multiple institutional blockages, and, above all, a failure of execution. The combination of decisiveness with regard to the ultimate goal and ambiguity regarding implementation left the duke free to interpret as he wished the implications of the king's wishes. Medina Sidonia was clearly aware there was no unanimity among the king's advisers regarding the wisdom of sending forces to the African border and much less to expand the *presidios*. It was obvious that the Council of War was more inclined to support the duke's plans and demands, and the Council of State was more hesitant, and this was a formidable obstacle to putting his ideas into practice. Looking more closely, we can see that the clearest opposition to the duke came, not surprisingly, from individuals who were close to the count-duke of Olivares: the *protonotario* of

⁸⁵ AGS Guerra y Marina leg. 1049, *consulta*, Council of War, 24 Nov. 1632.

Aragon, for example, who appeared as simply an auditor of the North African *presidios*, or the marquis of Leganés, who actually favoured withdrawing from Mamora, or Olivares himself, who had doubts about the *presidios*' internal management. Most clearly, the count-duke was conspicuously absent from this entire negotiation despite the fact that Medina Sidonia went directly to him to resolve many of his affairs. After all, he was also a Guzmán.⁸⁶

V

In 1633, the German military campaigns of Cardinal-Infante don Fernando, the king's brother, put pressure on all sectors of the weary Castilian society, including the aristocracy. Medina Sidonia contributed two companies of men he raised at his own expense in Seville.⁸⁷ As a result, the matter of Salé, once the opportunity that arose as a result of the December 1631 visit had dissipated, was no longer a priority, even for the duke. At the same time, the *murabit*'s pressure on the citadel diminished until finally the siege was lifted in early 1633. In February, Medina Sidonia said al-'Ayyashi's forces had broken up, in part as a result of the help the duke himself was offering to leaders opposed to him.⁸⁸ Even so, contact with the moriscos of the citadel was constant until 1637, when al-'Ayyashi, having reassembled his forces, once again besieged Salé, now with the help of England. Once again, the inhabitants turned to the house of Medina Sidonia. By then, the duke was Gaspar Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, and a second embassy took place under his authority.⁸⁹ Though Philip IV still favoured the idea of taking Salé, the events of 1640 were such that the project was forever abandoned, as the new plans entailed even more logistical challenges than the old ones.⁹⁰

The fact that, in the end, plans to take Salé came to nothing opens up two lines of reflection, one institutional and administrative, the other more political and identity-oriented. Regarding the former, it would be a mistake to say that the count-duke of Olivares, the man principally responsible for managing the Hispanic Monarchy's policies, quashed the project, but it is also true that he was in no way involved in it. Though intermediaries may have enjoyed greater independence on secondary borders of less importance to the crown, the very nature of the situation limited their range of action, particularly

⁸⁶ Luis Salas Almela, 'La agencia en Madrid del VIII duque de Medina Sidonia, 1615–1636', *Hispania*, 224 (2006), pp. 909–58; Luis Salas Almela, *The conspiracy of the duke of Medina Sidonia: an aristocrat in the crisis of the Spanish empire (1641)*, trans. Ruth MacKay (Leiden, 2013).

⁸⁷ AGFCMS leg. 3094, duke to Pedro de Maya, his accountant in Seville, regarding the levy, 27 Apr. 1633.

⁸⁸ AGS Guerra y Marina leg. 1073, Medina Sidonia to the council, 20 Feb.; council meeting, 18 Mar. 1633.

⁸⁹ Mercedes García-Arenal, Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, and Rachid el Hour, eds., *Cartas marruecas: documentos de Marruecos en archivos españoles (siglos XVI–XVII)* (Madrid, 2002), pp. 145–6; Luis Salas Almela, "'Traer moros por segunda vez': de la defensa de Andalucía a la conjura de Medina Sidonia (1578–1641)", *Estudis: Revista de Historia Moderna*, 47 (2021), pp. 77–101.

⁹⁰ Salas Almela, *Medina Sidonia*, pp. 328–34.

during times of scarcity. A sharp lack of strategic resources was inextricably bound up with the usual delays and shortfalls at the *presidios* of Larache and Mamora, so that, paradoxically, the more Medina Sidonia succeeded in expanding his decision-making powers in North Africa, the more he had to drain his own treasury, given that the crown's relative lack of concern translated into a lack of funds.⁹¹ The challenge for Medina Sidonia was to ensure that his own interests – protecting ocean trade and extending it into Morocco while drawing the king's attention to the border – coincided with strategic gains for the monarchy.

Regarding identity, communications between the Hispanic Monarchy and inhabitants of Salé, both Hornacheros and Andalusians, show that their hybrid cultural identity – Muslim and Christian, Spanish and partially Maghrebi – was a two-edged sword, offering possibilities of negotiation but also a threat to their community's survival. Though we cannot assess if moriscos' failure to integrate in the Maghreb was caused by their desire not to assimilate or by rejection by the locals, it is true that in Salé and other places their perseverance led them, just two decades after the expulsion, to consider the surprising possibility of returning to Spain. The fact that from the start the moriscos were willing to give up the fortress in order to return to Spain and farm there indicates how much they wished to return to their old life in the peninsula. Their wish to be farmers again also shows that their corsairing since the expulsion was above all a means of survival in a hostile social, political, and geographic arena and not, as Weiner argued, a vengeful occupation.⁹² For the various Maghrebi powers, the independence of Salé meant that the moriscos at times were allies, at times enemies. Their differentiation as a group led them to be politically and culturally stigmatized as friends of the Christians. Spaniards also used morisco identity as an instrument for their own ends. However, as we have seen, it was also true that there were clear examples within the power structure of sympathy for an eventual return and, at the same time, criticism regarding the consequences of the expulsion.⁹³ These two ideas, which are not identical, interacted; opposition to the expulsion was the starting point for various men in power, particularly Medina Sidonia and the most prominent governors of the *presidios*, to float the idea of an eventual return. Philip IV himself was clearly critical of the expulsion ordered by his father and was more in line with the less intransigent stances of his grandfather, Philip II.⁹⁴ These ideas were not only widespread among lay

⁹¹ Salas Almela, 'Las paradojas financieras'.

⁹² Weiner, 'Fitna', pp. 154–7.

⁹³ Antonio Domínguez Ortiz and Bernard Vincent, *Historia de los moriscos: vida y tragedia de una minoría* (Madrid, 1978), ch. 10. See also Elliott, *The count-duke*, pp. 255–7.

⁹⁴ Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, 'Felipe IV y los moriscos', *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos*, 8 (1959), pp. 55–65; on conversations regarding expulsion during the reign of Philip II, see Benítez Sánchez-Blanco, 'La expulsión', p. 11. For the glorification of the expulsion in the seventeenth century, see Antonio Feros, 'Rhetoric of the expulsion', in García-Arenal and Wiegers, eds., *The expulsion*, pp. 60–101.

advisers, they also were found among the king's religious advisers, including his own confessor.⁹⁵

Finally, the language of emotion and political love during these negotiations sidestepped the expulsion itself while at the same time stressing protection as the primary force connecting the monarch with those who were loyal to him. After the 1609–14 expulsion, some moriscos stayed behind as subjects of the Catholic monarch – for example certain communities in Orán and cryptomuslim families in Spain up through the eighteenth century.⁹⁶ Regarding the moriscos from Hornachos, there is a substantial contradiction between old census records and the numbers of those who left, leading us to assume that quite a few adults, especially women, remained in Castile.⁹⁷ But the most important point is that among all the arguments we have seen in favour of returning to the sovereignty of Philip IV not once did moriscos refer to matters of faith, with the faint exception of Juan de Velasco's reference to the reasons for the expulsion. The 7th duke of Medina Sidonia, when the expulsion took place, and the 8th and 9th dukes in the 1630s were all clearly opposed to the decree. Indeed, it is likely that the possibility that the inhabitants of Salé might return and farm land was proposed by the duke himself, Manuel Alonso, which would explain why the divan's response to the December 1631 mission regarding a possible return to Spain equated political love for the king and love for the duke himself.

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⁹⁵ This opinion was delivered at a Council of State meeting concerning the expulsion of certain freed Muslim or Maghrebi slaves called *cortados* from Andalusia; AGS Estado leg. 2645, n.f., 28 Nov. 1626. See also Seth Kimmel, *Parables of coercion: conversion and knowledge at the end of Islamic Spain* (Chicago, IL, 2015).

⁹⁶ Alonso Acero, 'El norte de África', pp. 102–14; Enrique Soria Mesa, *Los últimos moriscos: pervivencias de la población de origen islámico en el reino de Granada (siglos XVII–XVIII)* (Valencia, 2014).

⁹⁷ Mira Caballos, 'Los moriscos', pp. 23–32.

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