

Justifications for the Spanish Invasion of North Africa (16th Century)

Feridun Bilgin*

Abstract

The process called Reconquista (Reconquest) in history of Spain succeeded with the occupation of Granada (1492). In order to prevent its lands from becoming “Andalusia” again, the Spanish government established the country’s lines of defense outside the country in North Africa. Considering religious, commercial, political and military reasons a *limited occupation policy* was implemented in North Africa. Places on strategic North African coasts such as Ceuta, Melilla, Oran and Merselkebir were occupied, and military garrisons (Presedios/Plazas) were established here. With the help of these garrisons, the Spain’s Mediterranean and Atlantic trade has been secured for decades.

Keywords: Reconquest (Reconquista), Spain, North Africa, Crusade, Limited Occupation Politics, Military Garrisons

Introduction

At the end of the last stage of the process named Reconquista (*The occupation of Spain by Christian kingdoms for the purpose of transforming Andalusia back to Spain*), Granada, the capital of Bani Ahmad, which was the last Muslim sultanate of the Iberian peninsula, was occupied (1492 A.D.). This occupation was an important step taken by the Spanish administration towards maintaining the political, military and administrative unity in the Spanish lands. The unification/integration process that started between the Spanish Christian kingdoms, which started with the marriage (1479 A.D.) of Elizabeth, the Queen of Castilla and Fernando, the King of Aragon who were also known as the Catholic kings (*Los Reyes Católicos*) in the Spanish history, was soon completed with the joining of this unity by the kingdom of Navarra (1515 A.D.).

The Spanish administration, which started taking steps towards maintaining the religious and national unity in the country, also took measures to protect the coasts and coastal cities against external invasions. For this purpose, they started following a foreign policy of eliminating the threats from North Africa at their origin. The military, financial and religious aspects of this new defense/attack policy were established without delay.

Before the Spanish invasion, the socio-economic and political atmosphere prevailing in Northern Africa, has determined the acceleration of the Spanish invasion and played a facilitating role. Meanwhile (end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries) in *Northern African* territories of Tunisia was dominated by Hafsid dynasty while Wattasid dynasty was ruling in Morocco and Abdulwadi/Zeyyani dynasty was dominant in Tlemsen. The struggles among these dynasties, make boundaries unclear that in the field of dynastic domination¹ and the internal struggles within the dynasties for the throne, as well as the socio-economic unrests, have made the entire region defenseless against the external enemies and invasions.² In this period when the central administrations lost control over the periphery, due to the frequent uprisings of the Arab and Berber³ tribes, cities such as Constantiniyyah and Buji, which were under control of the Bani Hafs⁴ dynasty in Tunisia, had declared independence.⁵ The sultanate of Tlemsen administrated by Benî Zeyyân, was divided into four main regions such as Tlemsen, Tenes, Algiers (Argel) and Bacce (Bugía). The capital city of Tlemsen, being

* Feridun Bilgin (Ph.D), Associate Professor, Mardin Artuklu University, Faculty of Letters, Lecturer of Department of History, Kampüs Yerleşkesi/Diyarbakır Yolu 5. Km. Artuklu-Mardin/Türkiye. Email: feridunb@gmail.com. Orcid ID: 0000- 0002-4636-207X.

¹ Charles Andre Julien (1983), *Târîhu İfrîkiyye eş-Şimâliyye*, (Tercüme: Muhammed Mezâli ve el-Beşir b. Sülame), Tunus, pp. 321-322.

² Eş-Şeyh Ebü'l-Abbâs Ahmed b. Halid en-Nâsirî (1955), *el-istikâr li Ahbâri Düveli'l-Mağribi'l-Aksâ*, (tahkik: Cafer en-Nâsirî ve Muhammed en-Nâsirî), Darü'l-Beydâ, p. 109.

³ Berbers are descended from Afrikâş who was one of the sons of Hâm b. Nuh. See for detail, Abdülvâhid el-Merrâkuşî (1994), *el-Muceb fi telhisi ahbâri'l-mağrib*, Kahire, p. 283.

⁴ Bani Hafs that is named after Abu Hafs al-Hintâtî who is a member of the Hintâte branch of the Masmud that one of the Berber tribes. But, the real founder of the state is Abu Zakariyya who declared her independence from the Almohad State by taking the “title of command.” See for detail, İbn Ebi Dinâr, *Kitâbü'l-Münis fi Ahbâri İfrîkiyye ve Tûnus. fi matbaati'l-devleti'l-tûnnisiyye*, 1286, s.124, pp. 125-126.

⁵ Aziz Samih İlter (1636), *Şimali Afrikada Türkler*, İstanbul: Vakıf Gazete Matbaa Kütüphanesi, p. 60.

a religious, cultural and commercial center, was on the crossroads through which the commercial products brought from Niger and other internal parts of Africa were taken to Mediterranean coasts. The cities of Algiers and Bacce were major centers for commercial activities.⁶ In short, the state authority was completely lost in coastal cities under the Beni Zeyyan administration.

The Marinid dynasty, which ruled in Morocco before the Spanish invasion, was during at its final stages. The critical positions of the state were occupied by Wattasids, who were their cousins. In this period, when the domination of the Marinid was shaken⁷, the last sultan of the Marinids, Abdulhaq b. Ebî Saïd b. Abbâs ordered the murder of his Wattasid vizier Yahya bin Zayyan and his relatives in Morocco, claiming he was aiming to control the state. Because, after the appointment of this person to the position of vizier, the corruption increased and the practices of the state were destroyed.⁸ The Marinid state was erased from the history when Abdulhaq was murdered after four years. A new state was established on their lands by Muhammad bin Yahya al-Sheikh, who was a member of the Wattasid dynasty. While a struggle was going on between Marinids and Wattasid in Morocco, major cities such as Septe, al-Qasr al-Saghir, Tangiers and Asila were occupied by the Portuguese.⁹ Both dynasties proved to be insufficient to fight against the Portuguese and Spanish invasions. Wattasid fought not only against external enemies, but also against the Sharifs of Sa'di, who had taken control of the southern part of Morocco.¹⁰

At the beginning of the 16th century, the societies of Northern Africa were broadly divided into two on the socio-economic basis: tribes, and city settlers. As the researcher Hess has stated, both sections "...were living in different worlds established far from each other ...".¹¹ There were also social inconsistencies between the the Berbers living in the mountains and those living in the deserts. Bedouin Arab tribes in the Maghrib had serious damage to the region both politically and economically. Therefore, there were also problems with agricultural and commercial activities in the region.¹² These social groups were later joined by the Muslim converts (*Renegados*), those expelled from Spain (*Moriscos*), Christian prisoners and Turks.¹³

The political, socio-economic and cultural partition in North African societies had weakened their defense capabilities against the external enemies. At this time, there were not any powers other than the Almoravid Dynasty who had added their political power to their religious influence.¹⁴ In particular, in the XV. Century in the Maghrib lands, it was seen that Sufism sects became stronger and widespread against the invasion of the region by the Portuguese and Spanish in the century. The sects (Şazeli and Qadiri) that have penetrated into the capillaries of the society in the protection of the region against external invaders.¹⁵ The Sufi sects (Khalidi and Qadiri), which had penetrated to every segment of the society had become the only dynamics keeping the society standing. Qadiri sect was popular in the areas occupied by the Spanish. The Qadiri sect was founded by Muhyiddin Ebi Muhammed Abdulqadir el-Gilanî (d. 1166). The founder of the Şazeliye sect was Sheikh Ebü'l-Hasen Ali Eş-Şâzelî (d.1258) and was born in a village near Septe.¹⁶ The teachings and practices of Qadiri sect had probably arrived North Africa via Egypt. The Qadiri sheikhs encouraged people for jihad against Spanish and Portuguese occupations, and supported local administrators.¹⁷ Among those fighting along the Sufis against the Spanish were the Sharifs, who were descendants of Prophet Muhammad. One of these was Hasan bin Muhammad, known as Abu Juma. Organizing the people against the Portuguese, Abu Juma was martyred by the Portuguese while he was praying.¹⁸

⁶ Beatriz Alonso Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, p. 36-37.

⁷ en-Nâsirî (1955), *el-istikâr li Ahbâri Düveli'l-Mağribi'l-Aksâ*, p. 92.

⁸ en-Nâsirî (1955), *el-istikâr li Ahbâri Düveli'l-Mağribi'l-Aksâ*, p. 97.

⁹ For other places occupied by the Portuguese in the Maghrib, see, en-Nâsirî (1955), *el-istikâr li Ahbâri Düveli'l-Mağribi'l-Aksâ*, pp. 110 & 116.

¹⁰ İsmail Yiğit (1995), *Siyasi-Dini-Kültürel-Sosyal İslam Tarihi: Endülüs (Gırnata)-Beni Ahmer Devleti ve Kuzey Afrika İslam Devletleri*, İstanbul: Kayihan Yayınevi, pp. 214-218.

¹¹ Andrew Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar: 16. yüzyıl Akdenizi'nde Osmanlı-İspanyol Mücadelesi*, (Transl. Özgür Kolçak), İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, p. 68.

¹² Salih Abbâd (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükümü't-Türki 1514-1830*, Cicel, p. 11.

¹³ Diego Téllez Alarcia (2000), "El Papel del Norte de África en la Política Exterior Hispana (ss.XV-XVI)," *Tiempos Modernos*, Vol.1, p. 6.

¹⁴ Aziz Samih İler (1936), *Şimali Afrikada Türkler*, p. 60.

¹⁵ On the spread of sects against foreign invaders and their increasing effectiveness, see, Salih Abbâd (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükümü't-Türki 1514-1830*, p. 22

¹⁶ Salih Abbâd (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükümü't-Türki 1514-1830*, p. 24.

¹⁷ Fernand Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, Paidós, Barcelona: Paidós, p. 59.

¹⁸ İsmail Yiğit (1995), *Siyasi-Dini-Kültürel-Sosyal İslam Tarihi*, p. 218.

The war instruments and technology used by the Portuguese and Spanish was much more advanced than those used by the North African dynasties. The military equipment and materials of the dynasties were not sufficient to repel the invasions of the occupiers. For instance, the Wattasids, who were trying to prevent occupation of Morocco were using bows, arrows and shields whereas the Portuguese were using modern weapons such as cannons and rifles.¹⁹ Similarly the weapons used by the Spanish made North Africa an easy hunt for them. Firearms (rifles) were partially used in the North African territories after the arrival of the Andalusian Muslims and the Ottomans.²⁰ Facts such as urban administrations', which were suffering from internal conflicts, lacking the religious and political power to unite the rural and urban areas²¹, unfamiliarity of the local people with the new military technics of the Spanish invaders²², and lack of financial resources to equip a navy against external invasions had facilitated the Spanish invasion.²³

Towards the mid-15th century (1442 A.D.), plague, which had ravaged the Eastern and Western societies, was also seen on the whole Maghreb region (*presently Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya*) causing loss of lives and properties. Draught and famines distracted the economic balance of the Maghreb countries, which also had a negative impact on their political administrations.²⁴

Before the invasion of North Africa, Spain made preparations for the invasion by sending intelligence personnel to the region. The intelligence officer named Lorenzo de Zafira was sent to Tilmisan in 1493 under the guise of a merchant. After the necessary preparations were made, the navy under the command of the duke of Medina Sidonia invaded Melilla (1497). With this invasion step, Spain's presence in North Africa for decades will begin.²⁵ On the other hand Cardinal Cisneros received information from a Venetian merchant named Jorenimo Vizanelli about Africa where he made trade and expeditions.

In this study, the reasons for the Spanish invasion of North Africa shall be assessed by focusing on Spanish view. Especially seeing North Africa as a part of Iberian Peninsula or as a "historical legacy" and religious fanaticism has been seen as legitimizers of the occupation, and with these, the economic and political motives were covered.

Spanish invaders in North Africa

1. Military Justification: Piracy

The interest of the European states led by Spain towards the North African lands, showed its first indications after the Moroccan city of *Tetuán* was looted (1399 A.D.) by the Portuguese king Enrique III (1390-1406), due to the city being a hub for North African based pirates and a prison for the Christian captives.²⁶ This interest continued to grow when the Portuguese captured Ceuta, the strategic city of the African coast 16 years after this attack (1415 A.D.).²⁷ Meanwhile, the sultan of Maghrib was Ebu Said b. Ahmad. The Portuguese king was Juan I. During this operation, Portuguese soldiers hid inside ballot boxes and took advantage of Muslims' heedlessness and occupied the city on Friday.²⁸

Following the occupation of Ceuta, which is considered as the beginning of the *overseas imperialism* of Portugal, the country started to control the West African slave and gold trade.²⁹ Spain, on the basis of ongoing piracy activities, had an eye on the region after Portugal.

From the 11th century onwards, as the major Andalusian cities like Toledo (1085), Cordoba (1236) and Seville (1248) were occupied by Spanish Christian kingdoms, most of the Muslims living in these cities were forced for conversion. Others decided to migrate to North Africa, which they considered as "*Land of Emigration*". Muslims immigrating to North Africa wanted to regain strength and an eventual

¹⁹ Beatriz Alonso Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África: Cruzada, Política y Arte de la Guerra*, Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, p. 37.

²⁰ Salih Abbād (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükmü 'l-Türkî 1514-1830*, p. 26.

²¹ Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar*, p. 31.

²² John Huxtable Elliott (1964), *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, New York: Martin's Press, p. 41.

²³ Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar*, p. 26.

²⁴ İsmail Yiğit (1995), *Siyasi-Dini-Kültürel-Sosyal İslam Tarihi*, pp. 213-214.

²⁵ Salih Abbād (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükmü 'l-Türkî 1514-1830*, pp. 25-26.

²⁶ Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, p. 35.

²⁷ en-Nâsirî (1955), *el-istiksâr li Ahbâri Düveli 'l-Mağribi 'l-Aksâ*, p. 92; İsmail Yiğit (1995), *Siyasi-Dini-Kültürel-Sosyal İslam Tarihi*, p. 213.

²⁸ en-Nâsirî (1955), *el-istiksâr li Ahbâri Düveli 'l-Mağribi 'l-Aksâ*, p. 92.

²⁹ Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar*, p. 19.

encounter with Spain. Before and after the occupation of the last capital city of Granada (January 2, 1492), the Muslims of Andalucía who migrated to North Africa, cooperated with North African pirates and attacked Spanish coasts. Andalucía originated pirates, who knew the defenseless ports and cities of their motherland Spain, established fleets through time and continued piracy activities. During the period in question, the coastline from the Atlantic Ocean to Djerba became the shelter of pirates.³⁰ Spanish people living in these coastal cities, whose agricultural and commercial activities were distracted by the North Africa based attacks, declared they will not pay taxes to the Spanish state unless these invasions were not stopped.³¹

In this period of piracy, the regions extending from the coasts of the Atlantic to the east of Tunisia (Tangier, Larache, Honein, Velez de la Gomera, Orán, Argel, Bugía, Bizarte and Tunis) had become a hub of pirates, and showed how much the threat can grow if precautions were not taken.³² In these cities pirates were building ships and attacked Andalucian coasts (from Cartagena even to Valencia) with their armed fleets.³³ Thus, coastal cities of North Africa continued to provide threat and worry for Spain.³⁴ Therefore, in order to protect the Crusader spirit in Spain, it has become important to eliminate the pirate threat from North Africa to the Spanish territory.³⁵

Threats against the lives and properties of the Spanish people, and the blow given to the maritime trade, annoyed the Spanish queen Isabel. While Isabel was thinking on measures to stop the pirate invasions, Archbishop of Toledo Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros convinced Isabel to invade coastal areas of Berberistan.³⁶

2. Religious Justification: War Against Enemies of the Holy Faith

Another justification that was efficient on Spain's North Africa policy along with piracy was the discourse of "war against the enemies of the holy faith (*Los Enemigos de Nuestra fe*)". The policy set forth under guidance of this discourse has been named by some researchers as "Holy Campaign against the Infidels (*Santa Empresa Contra los Infieles*)". In fact since the 13th century, the propaganda of liberating Jerusalem for Christianity was seen in Spain. In the meantime, the rising Ottomans aimed capturing Rome. Spain's targeting North Africa was a result of a *messianic* propaganda, which was a proof that this country was the protector of the Christians. Thus, Spain's expansion policy formed a part of the divine mission of the Spanish church. Spaniards wishing to attribute holiness to their hegemonic policies, started seeing themselves as the *chosen nation* to fulfill the mission of God.³⁷

During the Mid-Ages it was almost impossible to separate religious issues from politics in Europe. Therefore there were rare socio-economic, cultural, political and military events in which the church was not involved. It was believed that Spanish people had been burdened with a hard duty to make the Bible and Christianity dominant in the whole world.³⁸ Catholic kings (*Fernando and Isabel*) and Cardinal Cisneros, have implemented the Catholic-Pope doctrine for the first time in Europe as *religion of the state*. The first groups, which were negatively influenced by this doctrine were the Muslims and Jews living in Spain. In this period where religion was at the center of life (as Fernando was using the phrase "*for God's service*" when referring to occupation of North Africa in most of his correspondences)³⁹ for waging religious wars, permission and support was to be taken from the religious authority. It should be underlined that Cardinal Cisneros also contributed significantly to the religious and psychological motivation of the military campaign to North Africa.⁴⁰

To achieve the religious objectives mentioned above, Spain demanded financial and moral support from the Papacy. Meanwhile, Spain demanded via Garcilaso de la Vega, their ambassador in Rome, from

³⁰ Salih Abbâd (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükmü't-Türki 1514-1830*, p. 20.

³¹ Aziz Samih İltter (1636), *Şimali Afrikada Türkler*, pp. 53-54.

³² Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 53.

³³ Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, p. 56.

³⁴ Miguel Angel de Bunes Ibarra (1992), "La Presencia Española en el Norte de África: Las Diversas Justificaciones de las Conquistas en el Magreb," *Aldaba*, Vol. 25, p.14.

³⁵ Julien (1983), *Târihu İfrîkiyye eş-Şimâliyye*, p. 322.

³⁶ Jornada á Berbería, *Instituto de Historia y Cultura Naval*, <https://www.yumpu.com/es/document/read/14241865/islas-filipinas-armada-espanola> [retrieved 26 November 2019].

³⁷ Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, pp. 58-59.

³⁸ Abdülcelil Temimi (1999), "XVI. Yüzyılda Kuzey Afrika'daki Osmanlı-İspanyol Mücadelesinin Dini Arka Planı," (Transl. Mehmet Özdemir), *İslâmi Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Cilt:12, Sayı: 2, p. 179.

³⁹ Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 49

⁴⁰ Julien (1983), *Târihu İfrîkiyye eş-Şimâliyye*, p. 323.

Pope Alexander VI, *papal permission certificate* to collect taxes and wage a crusade against North Africa (Arenal and Ibarra, 1992, p.52-53). This attempt of Spain was found to be contrary to the agreement made formerly between Spain and Portugal. The Portuguese claimed that Morocco was given to them by the papacy. Fifteen years ago when the *Alcaçovas* agreement was signed between Portugal and the Castilla kingdoms (October 4, 1479); the Portuguese were given the right to dominate the lands of the Morocco sultanate and the Atlantic coasts starting from Bojador, while the Spanish were given the lands of the sultanate of Tlemsen, the Canary islands (Lanzarote, Palma, Porteventura, Gomera, Ferro, Graciosa, Grand Canary, Tenerife and other Canary islands) and some other critical positions in North Africa.⁴¹ Thus, it was not right to demand permission from Papacy to occupy lands left for Portuguese domination.

The Spanish representatives in Rome claimed that the objections of the Portuguese delegation were not reasonable. According to Spain, Morocco and Tlemsen were in the lands of ancient *Mauritania Tingitana* and *Cesariense* and that these lands had connection with Castilla since the Roman and Gothic periods. They believed there were not any historical justifications to prevent Spain dominating these lands.

To settle the dispute between the parties and have a decision on the issue, Pope Alexander VI, arranged a meeting at *Tordesillas* (1494 A.D.). According to the decision taken at the meeting, Spain was going to set up its domination on the line passing from the Moroccan coastal city of Bojador, which was on Portugal's route to Guinea and India, while Portugal would establish its domination on the areas remaining between Spain's Canary islands and the North African coastal line.⁴² Since the agreement did not include the Mediterranean, Spain clinched its dominancy in the Mediterranean and started capturing North Africa.⁴³

After this agreement Pope Alexander declared that all Christians who would join the Spanish in their campaign against North Africa (1493 and 1494 A.D.)⁴⁴ will have their sins forgiven.⁴⁵ The Papacy with this call had given Spain the right to collect "*La cruz*" tax. This tax, which was collected during Reconquista, was continued to be collected after the occupation of Granada.⁴⁶ Thus, by permitting military operations of Spain in North Africa (*La Bula Ineffabilis*), Pope had established the religious legal basis of the occupation.⁴⁷

3. Political and Commercial Justifications

The Spanish have seen North African lands historically as part of the Iberian Peninsula. Especially the coastal cities have always been in contact with Iberian Peninsula throughout the Middle Ages and they have been among the lands followed and administered by Rome-Visigoths. Thus, for the Spanish, North Africa was not only a place to be occupied but also left as a *legacy* and considered as reconquering of a *seized region*.⁴⁸

This view of Spain was brought to life in the articles of an agreement signed by two Spanish Christian kingdoms at the end of the 13th century. According to the *Soria* or *Monteagudo* agreement (1291 A.D.) signed between the Aragon King Jaime II and Castilla King Sancho IV, the foundations of the future occupation of North Africa was laid down. The area, which stands on the west of the *Muluya* river in Africa and is referred to as *La Mauritania Tingitana* (with its capital city of Tingis/Tangier) in the agreement, was identified as expansion zone of the Castilla kingdom. This region extended from

⁴¹ For the full text and English translation of the Agreement see Frances Gardiner Davenport (1917), *European Treaties bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648*, Carnegie Institution of Washington, pp. 33-48; Acero (1997), "Orán –Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una Sociedad Española en la Frontera de Berbería," Doctorate Thesis, Departamento de Historia Moderna Facultad de Geografía e Historia Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, p. 3. During most parts of the century, there have been a series of struggles between Castilla and Portugal about capturing the Atlantic coasts of Africa. One of the reflections of this struggle was Portugal supporting Juana Beltraneja for the throne of Castilla against Isabel la Católica, the queen of Castilla. The struggle for the throne of Castilla started with the death of Enrique IV (1474 A.D.). Portugal recognized Isabel as the queen of Castilla after the Agreement of Alcaçovas (1479 A.D.). See Alarcia (2000), "El Papel del Norte de África en la Política Exterior Hispana (ss.XV-XVI)," p. 6.

⁴² Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, p. 54.

⁴³ Faruk Bal (2011), "XVI. Yüzyılda Osmanlı-İspanya İktisadî İlişkileri: Akdeniz'de Rekabet," *Öneri*, C.9. P.36, (Temmuz), p. 203.

⁴⁴ Mercedes García Arenal ve Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra (1992), *Los Españoles y el Norte de África*, Madrid, p. 53; Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 50, dn.3.

⁴⁷ Alarcia (2000), "El Papel del Norte de África en la Política Exterior Hispana (ss.XV-XVI)," p. 8; Arenal ve Bunes Ibarra (1992), *Los Españoles y el Norte de África*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, pp. 50-52.

Muluya river, which is on the west of Maghreb, to the Atlantic coasts. Being far away from Rome, the region remained under control of *Bética* in administrative and political terms.⁴⁹

The region, which was named *La Mauritania Cesarianse*, and remains to the East of the Muluya river, had been identified as the expansion area of Aragon. This situation shows us that having an influence on North Africa has been seen as a historical mission for Spain. Therefore Spain has been mentioned as *Hispania Tinginata*, and then *Hispania Transferana* for many years (referring to Betica region). *La Hispania Tinginata* covers the lands of Mauritania including the capital city of Tangier, and has remained under Betica Romana since 69 A.D. after the fall of the Roman Empire, *Hispania Tingitana* has remained under Hispano-Godos until 554 A.D, whereas Mauritania and the regions in Southern Europe remained under the rule of Justinianus, the Byzantine Emperor. When Sisebuto occupied Septe and some parts of Mauritania, these areas started to be mentioned as *Hispania Transfetana* and then captured by the Arabs and Berbers in 708 A.D.⁵⁰ Thus, military campaigns of Spain to North Africa were not seen as an occupation but rather as an *indemnification of the legacy*.⁵¹

North Africa was an important region for Spain also for the protection of commercial benefits. The wheat and barley grown in North Africa had an important share in the Mediterranean trade. Spain imported grain, processed iron, cloth, spices from the East and weapons from North Africa, and was in competition with Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence and Marseille on this issue.⁵² In case Spain dominated this trade, it would both meet its wheat requirement and thus maintain a fall in wheat prices in Spain. In addition, controlling valuable mines such as gold brought to North African ports from Sudan and imported from here, would contribute largely to Spanish economy. The Spanish knew the benefit obtained by the Portuguese, who controlled these trade routes in the past. The gold taken out from inner parts of Africa (countries like Sudan) was brought via Tombuctú, Tagaza and Draa valley and from Septe and Honein coasts in Tlemsen (Tremecén) was carried to Europe. Gold export made from Tunis and Vahran (Oran) cities to Malaga and Cadiz was important.⁵³ A commercial line was established from these two points to Andalucía during the Nasris, which was the last Muslim dynasty. The commercial goods used for trade at these points were grains, wax, wool, carpets, cloth, leather, olive oil and soap.⁵⁴ These goods carried to Europe were distributed to European cities via Aragon and Italian ports. Grains consumed in Europe were provided from the Maghreb region because the wheat grown in Maghreb was both cheap and had a good quality. Thus, controlling the grain trade routes is one of the major reasons that led Spain to North Africa. Namely, the coastal cities of North Africa were important centers of commercial activity in Europe and therefore had to be dominated.⁵⁵

In North Africa campaigns, Spanish administrators' and soldiers' adventurer souls and the ambition to obtain property had played a major role as efficient as religious causes.⁵⁶ The struggle of the land owner seigneurs, who stood by the Catholic Kings during the occupation of Granada and contributed both in material and moral terms to this occupation, for having influence around the palace annoyed the Catholic Spanish administration after a while. Directing the energy of the seigneurs, which was consumed inside the country to get a share from the administration, outside the country and using this energy in the occupied territories might have been an important step.⁵⁷ In this way it was aimed to prevent some of the struggles caused by these seigneurs inside the country. Thus the capturing of *Melilla*, which is the first place occupied in Africa, was achieved under financial and administrative leadership of Juan Pérez de Guzmán, the duke of Medina Sidonia.⁵⁸

⁴⁹ Arenal ve Bunes Ibarra (1992), *Los Españoles y el Norte de África*, p.15; Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ Acero (1997), "Orán –Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una Sociedad Española en la Frontera de Berbería," p.2, footnote.2; The invasion of North Africa, which many of the XV. century Spanish thinkers saw as a heritage land left over from the Romans and Visigoths, was considered a duty and a right for the Spaniards. One of these thinkers was Alonso de Cartagena, the priest of Burgos and the representative of the Spanish Church in Rome. (1384-1456), see Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, p. 48.

⁵¹ Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, p. 2, footnote 2

⁵² Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 48.

⁵³ Aurelio Espinosa (2005), "The Grand Strategy of Charles V (1500-1558): Castile, War and Dynastic Priority in the Mediterranean," *JEMH*, Vol. 9, No. 3-4, p. 250, footnote 42.

⁵⁴ Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, pp. 63-64; Alarcia (2000), "El Papel del Norte de África en la Política Exterior Hispana (ss.XV-XVI)," p. 6.

⁵⁵ Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, pp. 54-55; Salih Abbád (2002), *el-Cezáir Hilále Hükmü 't-Türkü 1514-1830*, p. 16.

⁵⁶ Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 54.

⁵⁷ Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, pp. 49-51.

⁵⁸ Acero (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, p. 52.

Researcher Hess, has justified the continuation of Granada with the existence of a strong aristocracy, which benefited from such policies. According to Hess, Hernando de Zafra, who was responsible for the protection of Granada, was the pioneer of this attempt. Zafra believed that none of the dynasties in North Africa owned the firearms owned by the Spanish, and thus the occupation would be an easy task.⁵⁹ From the beginning of the XVI. Century, the steps taken by the Ottoman State towards becoming a global power limited the military and political geography of the Habsburg dynasty. One of these restricted geographies was the land occupied by Spain in North Africa. Therefore, Spain had to take measures to prevent the Ottoman Empire from fully settling in North Africa and the Western Mediterranean.⁶⁰

Military and Politic Borders of the Occupation

It is possible to suggest that there are two different views regarding the scope and borders of Spain's military and political operations in North Africa. The first one is the line represented by Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, who had dedicated himself to the holy war, and had an imperialist soul. According to this view, occupying only the coastal areas of North Africa was not sufficient and thus the aim should be extending the occupation to Sahara, which is in the inner parts of Africa, and make Africa a Spanish province. The other view was represented by King Fernando, who wished occupying the strategic ports and points in order to help to protect the Spanish ports, protect the Spanish territories in Italy and control the trade routes.⁶¹ To achieve this policy, Fernando aimed to make the sultanates in Maghreb dependent to Spanish domination via taxes, similar to the practice in the Middle Ages.⁶²

The policy represented by Fernando, which aimed to maintain security of the trade routes and protect Spanish coasts from pirates' invasions, was named as "restricted occupation policy" (*Ocupacion restringida del espacio*) by researchers. Considering the facts detailed in the previous pages, King Fernando first of all wished to build a safe route (*Cordón sanitario*) against threats of both Muslims and pirates.⁶³ The Reconquista process, which was completed with the fall of Granada (1492) in Andalucía was aimed to be extended to the other side of the sea through occupation of North Africa.⁶⁴ In this way, the losses in naval trade caused by pirates would be prevented and the property and life safety of the people living in coastal areas would be maintained.⁶⁵ The Spanish administration, which took action with this thought, sent the navy under the command of Pedro de Navarro to the coast of Algeria and the coastal cities were invaded (1505). The wave of occupation continued with the invasion of Wahran (Oran) (1508), Bicăye and Tripoli. Spanish invasion slowed by defeat in Djerba (1511). Later, Spanish expansion will continue with the occupation of coastal cities such as Şerşel and Müstaganem.⁶⁶

Cordón Sanitario policy was basically a defense policy aiming to capture strategic castles and main ports. Thus it did not require penetrating into inner parts of Africa and the coast cities.⁶⁷ Even though the Spanish administration might have aimed controlling all regions extending to Jerusalem, due to the fact that they lacked the human and material resources sufficient to control Africa, King Fernando was aware that he needed financial resources and Christian population to achieve dominance in African cities (such as Oran, Bugia and Tripoli). Hence, he has mentioned this issue in his letter to Pedro de Navarro.⁶⁸ The psycho-social situation brought by the social and political conflicts caused by the disputes observed at the heart of Iberia between 1415 and 1515, and the fact that the amount to be paid

⁵⁹ Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar*, pp. 53-54

⁶⁰ Abdülcelil et-Temimi (1975), "Risâletü min Müslimi Ğırnâta ilâ Sultân Süleymân el-Kanûni, sene 1541," *el-Mecelletü 't-Târihiyyetü'l-Mağribiyye*, Sayı: 3, Tunus, p. 40

⁶¹ Arenal ve Bunes Ibarra (1992), *Los Españoles y el Norte de África*, pp. 57-58; Elliott (1964), *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, p. 42.

⁶² Miguel Angel de Bunes Ibarra (2001), "Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa ve Mağrib'in Osmanlılaşması," (Transl. M. N. Kutlu), *OTAM*, Sayı: 12, 2001, p.263.

⁶³ Acero (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África*, p. 55.

⁶⁴ Acero (1997), "Orán –Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una Sociedad Española en la Frontera de Berbería," p. 1; Ibarra (1992), "La Presencia Española en el Norte de África," p.23.

⁶⁵ Eloy Martín Corrales (2014), "La Política Antiportuaria Española en el Litoral Norteafricano, Siglos XVI-XIX," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, Vol. XLIX, pp. 35-46; Beatriz Alonso Acero (2006b), "Trenes de Avituallamiento en las Plazas Españolas de Bebería," *Guerra y Sociedad en la Monarquía Hispánica: Política, Estrategia y Cultura en la Europa Moderna (1500-1700)*, E. G. Hernán-D. Maffi (ed.), Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, p. 741.

⁶⁶ Julien (1983), *Târihu İfrîkiyye eş-Şimâliyye*, p. 324.

⁶⁷ Arenal ve Bunes Ibarra (1992), *Los Españoles y el Norte de África*, p. 61; Acero (1997), "Orán –Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una Sociedad Española en la Frontera de Berbería," pp. 3-5; Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 64. Corrales (2014), "La Política Antiportuaria Española en el Litoral Norteafricano," p. 37.

⁶⁸ Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 65.

to include the Muslim sultanates of Maghreb under Spanish administration was much higher when compared to imperial activities elsewhere, have been major obstructive reasons on the military campaigns against North Africa.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the rising power of the Ottoman State and controlling the Mediterranean can be considered as another reason for the mentioned policy.⁷⁰ Even though it is not clearly known how much the Ottomans influenced the determination of the Spanish policy, it is a fact that the limited occupation policy had been previously tested during the occupation of Granada and result was obtained.⁷¹ This policy was consistent with Reconquista, which aimed the *existence* of Spain in North Africa.⁷²

Occupation of the strategic coast regions in North Africa was important for the safety of Spain's Atlantic trade routes. The Strait of Gibraltar and the ports of Maghreb had vital importance for this trade. Therefore the Spanish garrisons in North Africa would become major military bases for the safe conduct of these commercial activities.⁷³

Researcher Acero, evaluates Spain's North Africa occupation policy at three stages. According to him, the period between 1492 and 1493 was the period when the activities prior to the occupation started. In this period a person named Lorenzo de Padilla was sent to North Africa to gather information about the sultanate of Tlemcen. Between 1494 and 1497, which is considered as the second stage, new hegemonic areas were identified via the above mentioned *Tordillas* Agreement signed with the Portuguese, and permission and support was obtained from the Papacy. During the third stage, which covers the period between 1498 and 1504, North Africa policy was ignored due to Spain's military activities in Italy.

There are also other who evaluate Spanish occupation of North Africa from a different perspective. According to this view, Spain's expansion to Africa strategy at this time was a continuation of the Europe's outwards expansion policy. Before the Spanish, Septe was occupied by the Portuguese (1415 A.D.), Western Indies or America was discovered (1492). As mentioned before, an important aspect of this policy was to dominate the wheat market.⁷⁴

Historian Braudel states that the Muslim uprising that took place in Albaycin neighborhood (1501), which started as a result of the oppression against the Muslims of Granada, caused the direction of the Spanish attention towards the danger of Islam in North Africa once again. The rebellions of Alpujarra and Sierra Bermeja have accelerated this process. These rebellions, has encouraged the Spanish to participate in North Africa campaigns and brought these campaigns forward to an earlier date.⁷⁵

Whatever the justification of the Spanish and Portuguese settlement in Maghreb region should be, as Hess has stated this invasion has initially showed itself as a continuation of the Reconquista and in the second stage, Maghreb coastal area has been transformed into a free trade zone, and at the end the border areas into a defense system aiming to protect Atlantic marine route and the Christian coasts. In addition, Hess states that it would be more correct to discuss starting of the Iberian forces' settlement to Maghreb (from the beginning of the 16th century) in a way far from religious perceptions and knighthood passions.⁷⁶ However, when Spanish occupation of North Africa is observed well, it is impossible to ignore that religious motivation and ecclesiastics have an important place in this process. After all, Spain started to dominate North Africa region with religious fanaticism, conversion passion and with an aim to control the border areas of Muslims through an occupation process that started at the end of the 15th century and continued throughout the 16th century.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Castilla Queen Isabel bequeathed the occupation of North Africa before she died. According to her, if this occupation took place, Spain would never experience "*existence*" problem once again. In an age

⁶⁹ Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar*, p. 41.

⁷⁰ Bernard Lewis (2000), *Müslümanların Avrupa'yı Keskfi*, (çev. İ. Durdu), İstanbul: Ayışığı Kitapları, p. 38.

⁷¹ Acero (1997), "Orán –Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una Sociedad Española en la Frontera de Berbería," p. 5.

⁷² Elliott (1964), *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, p. 44.

⁷³ Espinosa (2005), "The Grand Strategy of Charles V (1500-1558)," p. 244.

⁷⁴ Corrales (2014), "La Política Antiportuaria Española en el Litoral Norteafricano," p. 35.

⁷⁵ Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, pp. 62-63.

⁷⁶ Hess (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar*, p. 42.

⁷⁷ Braudel (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, p. 49.

when religious discourse was critically influential on politics, economy and socio-cultural life, this has also been a main factor in waging wars. This discourse has a vital role in Spain's occupation of North Africa. The Catholic ecclesiastics of that period have named Muslims as infidels (*los Infieles*). Thus, "the holy campaign against the infidels (*Santa Empresa Contra los Infieles*)" was a duty for all Christians.

Spain historically has seen North Africa as its part. Formerly, Romans, Visigoths have ruled North Africa as a part of the Iberian Peninsula. Therefore North Africa was seen by the administrators as a *confiscated land* left as a *legacy* for Spain.

The attacks by Muslim pirates from North Africa to Spanish ports and coastal cities have shaken the peace and the security of the country and posed a continuous threat to the Mediterranean and Atlantic trade. It was a necessity to occupy strategic locations and establish military garrisons (Presidio/plazas) in these places to prevent the damage given to Spain and the marine trade. Hence, strategic locations in North Africa coasts such as Melilla, Oran and Merselkebir were occupied and military garrisons were established in these locations.

Spain did not own the human and financial resources necessary for occupying the whole Africa. Therefore the occupation operations were limited with the coastal cities of North Africa. Researchers name this policy as "limited occupation policy (*ocupacion restringida del espacio*)".

References

Abbâd, A. (2002), *el-Cezâir Hilâle Hükmü't-Türkî 1514-1830*, Cicele.

Acero, B. A. (2017), *España y el Norte de África en los Siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid: Editorial Síntesis.

Acero, B. A. (2006), *Cisneros y la Conquista Española del Norte de África: Cruzada, Política y Arte de la Guerra*, Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa.

Acero, B. A. (1997), "Orán –Mazalquivir, 1589-1639: Una Sociedad Española en la Frontera de Berbería," Doctoral Thesis, Departamento de Historia Moderna Facultad de Geografía e Historia Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Acero, B. A. (2006b), "Trenes de Avituallamiento en las Plazas Españolas de Bebería," *Guerra y Sociedad en la Monarquía Hispánica: Política, Estrategia y Cultura en la Europa Moderna (1500-1700)*, E. G. Hernán ve D. Maffi (ed.), Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, 739-767.

Alarcia, D. T. (2000), "El Papel del Norte de África en la Política Exterior Hispana (ss.XV-XVI)," *Tiempos Modernos*, Vol. 1, 1-29.

Arenal, M. G. and Bunes Ibarra, M. A. de. (1992), *Los Españoles y el Norte de África*, Madrid.

Bal, F. (2011), "XVI. Yüzyılda Osmanlı-İspanya İktisadî İlişkileri: Akdeniz'de Rekabet," *Öneri*, C.9. S.36, (Temmuz), 201-211

Bunes Ibarra, M. A. de. (1992), "La Presencia Española en el Norte de África: las diversas Justificaciones de las Conquistas en el Magreb," *Aldaba*, Vol. 25, 13-34.

Bunes Ibarra, M. A. de. (2001), "Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa ve Mağrib'in Osmanlılaşması," *Çev.*: M. N. Kutlu, *Otam*, Sayı: 12, 261-179

Braudel, F. (1997), *En Torno al Mediterráneo*, Paidós, Barcelona: Paidós.

Carcel, R. G. (1993), "La Psicosis del Turco en España del Siglo de Oro," *XVI. Jornadas de Teatro Clásico*, Almagro, 15-28.

Corrales, E. M. (2014), "La Política Antiportuaria Española en el Litoral Norteafricano, Siglos XVI-XIX," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, Vol. XLIX, 35-46.

Davenport, F. G. (1917), *European Treaties bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648*, Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Elliott, J. H. (1964), *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, New York: Martin's Press.

el-Merrâkuşî, A. (1994), *el-Muceb fî telhisi ahhâri 'l-mağrib*, Kahire.

en-Nâsirî, A. H (1955), *el-istiksâr li Ahhâri Düveli 'l-Mağribi 'l-Aksâ*, (tahkik: Cafer en-Nâsirî ve Muhammed en-Nâsirî), Darü'l-Beydâ, IV.

Espinosa, A. (2005), "The Grand Strategy of Charles V (1500-1558): Castile, War and Dynastic Priority in the Mediterranean," *JEMH*, Vol. 9, No. 3-4, 239-283.

et-Temîmî, A. (1975), "Risâletü min Müslimî Ğirnâta ilâ Sultân Süleymân el-Kanûnî, sene 1541," *el-Mecelletü 't-Târihiyyetü 'l-Mağribiyye*, Sayı: 3, Tunus, 37-47.

Hess, A. (2010), *Unutulmuş Sınırlar: 16. yüzyıl Akdenizi'nde Osmanlı-İspanyol Mücadelesi*, (Transl. Özgür Kolçak), İstanbul: Küre Yayınları.

İbn Ebî Dînâr (1286) *Kitâbü 'l-Münis fî Ahhâri İfrîkiyye ve Tûnus, fî matbaati 'l-devleti 'l-tûnnisiyye*, Tunus.

İlter, A. S. (1936), *Şimali Afrikada Türkler*, Cilt I-II, İstanbul: Vakit Gazete Matbaa Kütüphanesi.

Jornada á Berbería, *Ínstitulo de Historia y Cultura Naval*, <https://www.yumpu.com/es/document/read/14241865/islas-filipinas-armada-espanola> [retrieved 26 November 2019].

Julien, C. A. (1983), *Târihu İfrîkiyye eş-Şimâliyye*, (Tercüme: Muhammed Mezâli ve el-Beşir b. Sülame), Tunus, II.

Lewis, B. (2000), *Müslümanların Avrupa'yı Keşfi*, (çev. İ. Durdu), İstanbul: Ayışığı Kitapları.

Yiğit, İ. (1995), *Siyasi-Dini-Kültürel-Sosyal İslam Tarihi: Endülüs (Girnata)-Beni Ahmer Devleti ve Kuzey Afrika İslam Devletleri*, Cilt IX, İstanbul: Kayıhan Yayınevi.

Temimi, A. (1999), "XVI. Yüzyılda Kuzey Afrika'daki Osmanlı-İspanyol Mücadelesinin Dini Arka Planı," (Transl. M. Özdemir, *İslâmî Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Cilt:12, Sayı: 2, 179-189.