1489: Fernando del Pulgar on a Mamlūk Threat Against the Catholic Monarchs

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Abstract: While they were besieging the city of Baza in 1489, the Catholic Monarchs, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, received an embassy. Two Franciscan friars brought a series of letters addressed to the pope, in which the Mamlūk sultan of Egypt addressed the grievances suffered by the Muslims of Granada because of the war waged against the Naṣrid emirate. Moreover, he threatened to retaliate against the Christians living in his dominions if the Catholic Monarchs did not cease their aggression against Granada immediately. So far, scholarship has interpreted these menaces as the pure rhetoric of a Mamlūk sultan who presented himself as the global defender of Muslims, but was aware of his inability to carry out their threats. By considering the diplomatic use of threats as a tool of political communication, this article argues that threats constituted an important element in Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations in the medieval period.

Source

Fernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo, 2 vols (Granada: Universidad de Granada|Universidad de Sevilla, 2008), vol. 1, p. 349, trans. Alejandro Peláez Martín.

Los Moros del Reyno de Granada, visto que la guerra contra ellos se continuaba, é las tierras que los años pasados habian perdido : pensando ser reparados en lo por venir, embiáron su embaxada al Gran Soldan, faciéndole saber de la guerra que el Rey é la Reyna habian movido contra ellos, é querellándose á él gravemente de las opresiones, é captiverios, é guerra cruel que sus gentes por su mandado continamente les facian, é de las cibdades, é villas, é castillos, é fortalezas que les habian tomado, é cada día pugnaban por tomar: é como los habian lanzado fuera de sus casas é tierras, que ellos é sus antepasados largos tiempos habian poseido.

The Moors of the Kingdom of Granada, seeing that the war against them was continuing and considering the lands that they had lost in the past years, and thinking about being recompensed in the future, sent their embassy to the Great Sultan, letting him know of the war which the King and Queen had waged against them, bitterly complaining to him of the oppressions, captures, and cruel war to which their people [i.e. those subject to the Catholic Monarchs] by their command continually subjected them, and of the cities, and villages, and castles, and fortresses which they had taken from them, and every day were striving to take: and how they had driven them [the Moors] out of their houses and lands, which they and their ancestors had long possessed.

Por ende que le suplicaban, que les diese ayuda para recobrar lo perdido, é para no perder lo que les quedaba. E que si aquella ayuda por agora no les podiese

Wherefore they besought him [the Great Sultan], that he would help them to recover what they had lost, and not to lose what they still possessed. And that if he would not be able

dar, les escribiese que los dexasen estar en sus cibdades, é villas, é tierras libremente, segun que estovieron ellos é sus antepasados de largos tiempos á esta parte.

to provide them with this assistance at this moment, that he should write to them [the Catholic Monarchs] so that they would let them stay in their cities, towns, and lands freely, in the same way as they and their long-gone ancestors had stayed there.

El Gran Soldan oida esta embaxada, mandó á dos frayles del Sepulcro sancto de Jerusalem de la Órden de Sant Francisco, que viniesen á Roma al Sancto Padre con sus cartas : por las quales le embió á decir, como habia sabido que el Rey é la Reyna de España que es en la parte de Europa, habian movido guerra contra los Moros del Reyno de Granada que confina con sus señoríos, é que habian recebido dellos grandes agravios é sinrazones, tomándoles sus villas é cibdades, é apremiándoles que saliesen fuera de sus casas, é captivándolos, é tomándoles sus bienes, é faciendo contra ellos otras grandes crueldades: é que aquello era contra toda humanidad natural, porque bien sabia el Padre Santo, como en sus tierras é señoríos habia gran copia de Cristianos que vivian so su imperio, los quales eran conservados en su ley, é guardados en sus bienes y en su libertad.

Having heard this embassy, the Great Sultan sent two friars of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem belonging to the Order of Saint Francis, to go to Rome to the Holy Father with his letters: through these, he informed him how he had learned that the King and Queen of Spain, which lies in Europe, had waged war against the Moors of the Kingdom of Granada, which borders on his dominions, and that they [the Moors] had suffered great wrongs and injustices from their [the Catholic Monarchs'] hand, who had taken their villages and cities, and forced them out of their houses, taking them captive, seizing their belongings, and subjecting them to other wrongdoings: and that this was against all natural humanity (*humanidad natural*), because the Holy Father was well aware that in his [the Great Sultan's] lands and lordships, there dwelled a great number of Christians under his rule (*so su imperio*), who were governed by their own law, and protected with regard to their belongings and freedom.

Porende que le exôrtaba, que escribiese al Rey é á la Reyna de Castilla, que cesasen de aquella guerra, é tornasen á los Moros todas las cibdades, é villas é castillos é fortalezas que les habían tomado, é los reduxesen en toda libertad, según y en la manera que él en sus tierras é señoríos mandaba tratar á los Cristianos. É que si esto ficiese, él faria bien en ge lo mandar, y ellos farian aquello que notables príncipes son obligados á la piedad natural. É que si no lo ficiesen, á él seria forzado de tratar á los Cristianos de su señorío en la manera que el Rey é la Reyna de Castilla trataban á los Moros que eran de su ley y estaban so su amparo.

Therefore, he exhorted him [the pope] to write to the King and Queen of Castile to cease that war, and to return to the Moors all the cities, towns, villages, castles, and fortresses that they had taken from them, and to endow them with all the liberties, according to and in the manner in which he ordered to treat the Christians in his own lands and dominions. And if he [the pope] did this, he would do well to order them to do so, for they would then do what respectable princes are bound to do by natural piety. And that if they did not do so, he would be forced to treat the Christians of his dominion in the manner that the King and Queen of Castile treated the Moors who were of his law and under his protection.

El Papa vistas estas cartas, é oido lo que aquellos dos Frayles embaxadores del

The pope, having seen these letters and having heard what those two friars, the ambassadors of

Soldan le dixéron, acordó de lo remitir al Rey é á la Reyna : y embióles con ellos un Breve, por el qual les facia saber lo que el Gran Soldan le había escripto.	the Sultan, told him, agreed to send them to the King and Queen: and he sent them a papal brief, by which he made known to them what the Great Sultan had written to him.
Porende, que diesen la respuesta que cerca de lo habian de dar, é ge la embiasen con aquellos dos Frayles.	Therefore, they should give the reply they were bound to give on this subject and send them by means of the two friars.

Authorship & Work

[§1] Fernando del Pulgar (d. c. 1492), royal secretary and official court historian of Castile, was probably born in the late 1420s,or early 1430s. Apart from his *converso* background, we know little about his personal life. He grew up and was trained as a scribe at the Castilian court under John II (r. 1405–1454) and Henry IV (r. 1454–1474), where he fulfilled bureaucratic and, eventually diplomatic tasks. His proximity and loyalty to Henry IV did not prevent him from improving his position after the latter's death, during the rule of his sister, Queen Isabella (r. 1474–1504). Using his gifts as a prose writer, he began to write apologetic writings in defence of the Catholic Monarchs. In the following years, he accompanied the court on several journeys and, around 1480, replaced Alfonso de Palencia (d. 1492) as appointed royal chronicler. Since his new post obliged him to take part in the war of Granada, he participated in the siege of Baza (1489). He died in early 1492, without having been able to finish the account of the fall of Granada.[1]

[§2] Pulgar's historiographical work consists mainly of two books: the "Famous Men of Castile" (*Claros varones de Castilla*), which was published in 1486 with great success, and the "Chronicle of the Catholic Kings" (*Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, which remained in manuscript form and was not printed at the time, perhaps because it did not please Queen Isabella, to whom he gave his drafts for correction. The *Crónica* is divided into three sections. The first part refers to the events that took place before the rule of the Catholic Monarchs. The second one includes the first eight years of Isabella's reign and focuses particularly on legitimising Isabella's right to succeed her brother Henry. The third and final part deals with the Catholic kings' major military campaigns, particularly the war against the Naṣrid emirate of Granada. All three parts enrich the chronicle genre with classical rhetorical elements. A scholar with a predominantly biblical and patristic background influenced by models of Graeco-Latin thought and literature, Pulgar introduced humanistic elements and stylistic novelties to the field of historiography. Sometimes using real documents as inspiration, he used the literary device of direct speech to represent his protagonists' point of view.[2]

Content & Context

[§3] The marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469 achieved dynastic unity. The kingdoms, however, remained separated and continued to face different challenges: supported by Aragón, Isabella dealt with her Castilian contender, Joanna *la Beltraneja*, backed by Portugal; Fernando, in turn, had problems in Catalonia. Once in power, both rulers jointly promoted a process of territorial expansion, which led to the conquest of Granada (1481–1492), of Navarre (1512) and the Canary Islands (1496). Strengthening royal power, the Catholic Monarchs put an end to the conflict with the nobility characteristic of the late Middle Ages.

[1] Pontón Gijón, Fernando de Pulgar; Tate, Pulgar, pp. 684–685.
[2] Pontón Gijón, Fernando de Pulgar; Pérez Priego, Caballeros, pp. 209–210.

They reorganised the treasury and the royal council, strengthened the judicial administration, and pursued a foreign policy aimed at controlling the western Mediterranean.[3]

[§4] Among the influential Mamlūk rulers of the late Circassian Mamlūk period, the Sultan al-Ašrāf Qāytbāy (r. 872–901/1468–1496) restored the central power and transregional authority of the Egyptian sultanate by consolidating its northern borders and by reviving the dense network of urban Syro-Egyptian communities active on the trade routes connecting the eastern Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean. Resulting prosperity, affluence, and wealth that was expressed themselves in substantial urban transformations. As a great patron of art and architeture, the sultan sponsored constructions in Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo, Alexandria, and Cairo.[4]

[§5] The war of Granada is often considered as an early modern war: the employment and high number of professional soldiers, the degree of royal control, e.g. with regard to funding and concrete military activity, and, finally, the extensive use of artillery.[5] The campaign did not begin in a coherent and planned manner. It lasted eleven years (1481–1492) and took place in three stages. The first stage began with the Naṣrid attack on the town of Zahara (1481), to which the Castilians responded with the capture and subsequent defence of Alhama (1482–1484), a key location for cutting off supplies to the Muslims. The Castilian advance was not without difficulties, but it was favoured by the outbreak of civil war in 1482 between the Emir Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī (alias Muley Hacén) and his son Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad (alias Boabdil), who was later joined by the emir's brother, "el Zagal." In 1485 and 1486, Ronda and Loja were conquered after a heavy siege, depriving Granada of one of its main sources of supplies. Málaga's surrender in 1487 after stiff resistance put an end to the Christian conquest of the western front of the Naṣrid kingdom. Involving a complex siege, the conquest of Baza (1489) resulted in the incorporation of the eastern regions, as Almería surrendered in the same year. The siege of the Naṣrid capital began in 1491, but was only achieved in 1492. Issues of land distribution and the conquerors failure to comply with the surrender agreements provoked the subsequent uprising of the population of Granada between 1499 and 1501.[6]

[§6] The extract presented here for analysis is taken from the third section of the chronicle devoted to the war of Granada. Ino this account, the chronicler not only incorporates the different phases of the conquest but also adds important information on the Naṣrids' internal wider transregional affairs. The capture of Baza counts among the most important military feats of this war, since it took six months and cost 16,000 Castilian casualties to enter a city that was inaccessible on three sides and heavily fortified on the fourth.[7] In the middle of the siege, the embassy from the Sultan of Egypt arrived.

[§7] The quoted text can be divided into two parts. The first one addresses the context of the Mamlūk diplomatic mission to the pope and the reasons why the sultan had decided to send it. The second part considers the content of the sultan's letters. Despairing of their situation, the Muslims of Granada had sent an embassy to Egypt in search of help. The emissaries informed the sultan of the Naṣrid emirate's precarious situation and complained about oppression, captivity, cruelties, conquests, and expulsions. They implored the sultan to either stop the Castilians or at least to convince the Christian monarchs to cease their operations against Granada and to leave the Muslims on the land alread held by their ancestors (*que los dexasen*

[3] Gerli, Catholic Monarchs, pp. 218–220.
[4] Petry, *Twilight*; Meinecke, *Architektur*.
[5] Thackery and Findling, *Events*, p. 17.
[6] Martínez Peñas and Fernández Rodríguez, Guerra, pp. 90–98.
[7] Martínez Peñas y Fernández Rodríguez, Guerra, p. 96.

estar en sus cibdades, é villas, é tierras libremente, segun que estovieron ellos é sus antepasados).

[§8] Having heard these complaints, the sultan ordered two Franciscan friars of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem to present his letters to the pope. He complained to the pontiff about the Castilian harassment of the emirate of Granada and contrasted this with the good treatment enjoyed by the Christians living in his territories. For all these reasons, he demanded that the pope write to the Castilian monarchs to stop their attacks, return the conquered territory, and grant the Muslims the same treatment that he granted to the Christians in his dominions. If his demands were ignored, the sultan threatened to treat his Christian subjects in the same way the Catholic Monarchs treated the Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula.

[§9] In the rest of the chapter, Pulgar details the reply given by the Catholic Monarchs to the supreme pontiff. They justified their war against Granada, declaring the Muslim presence on the Iberian Peninsula tyrannical and illegal (*aquella posesion era tiránica é no jurídica*). This territory had been ruled by Christian monarchs, ancestors of the current rulers, in the past; and the inhabitants of granada were plundering and enslaving the Christians. For these reasons, their war against Granada was just. In reaction to the sultan's threats, they pointed out that they also treated the Muslims in their kingdoms and even the subjected inhabitants of Granada well, but went against those who continued to resist and to occupy a land that was not theirs.[8] Then, Isabella granted the friars a thousand ducats a year to maintain the offices at the Holy Sepulchre.

[§10] Other sources provide a somewhat different and more detailed version of the same issue. The Eastern historian Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1523 or 1524) recounts that Qāytbāy received an emissary from Granada asking for help and, in 892/1487, wrote to the clergy of the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem to send a priest to the king of Naples with a missive. The king was to convince the King of Castile to end his attacks against the people of al-Andalus (*ahl al-Andalus*). Otherwise, Qāytbāy would punish the priests of the Church of the Resurrection by having their dignitaries arrested, by forbidding the Franks access, and by having the building demolished.[9] That the king of Naples functioned as a mediator is corroborated by a letter sent to him by Isabella and Ferdinand in 1489 in response to the letter he had sent with the delegation commissioned by the Mamlūk sultan.[10] A final source to consider is the work of Alonso de Palencia (d. 1492), the official court historian preceding Pulgar in office. His account adds considerable drama to the event by emphasising the cruelty of the Mamlūk Sultan and exaggerating the response given by King Ferdinand. According to Palencia, the latter threatened the sultan with the execution of all Muslims in Iberia.[11] In view of this, the version of events produced by Pulgar, who had access to the letters and may have been present at one of the interviews with the friars from Jerusalem, seems more plausible.

Contextualization, Analysis & Interpretation

[§11] This was not the first time that Christian rulers had provoked the threats of Mamlūk sultans because of their treatment of Muslims. According to the Syrian historian al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1326), al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars (I, r. 658–676/1260–1277) reportedly learned of the execution of a large number of Muslim horsemen (*fāris muslimīn*) by order of the "Frankish" king, i.e. Charles I of Anjou, in 1271. Baybars is said to have sent a letter to the king of Sicily

[8] Meyerson, *Muslims*.
[9] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, ed. Muṣṭafā, vol. 3, pp. 244–245: "wa-illā yušawwiš al-sulṭān ʿalā ahl al-Qiyāma, wa-yaqbiḍ ʿalā aʿyānihim, wa-yamnaʿ ǧamīʿa ṭawāʾif al-Faranǧ min duḫūl al-Qiyāma wa-yahdimuhā."
[10] Paz y Meliá, *El cronista*, pp. 328–330.
[11] López de Coca Castañer, Mamelucos, pp. 236–237; Palencia, *Guerra*, ed. Peinado Santaella, pp. 395–398.

threatening to kill all Frankish captives, Frankish traders, and all Christians (*ṭawāʾif al-naṣārā*) in his territory if only one more Muslim was executed.[12]

[§12] Scholarship has regarded these threats as pure rhetoric, i. e. as words that could not be translated into deeds. Rachel Arié claimed that Qāytbāy's threats were "purely verbal."[13] According to José Enrique López de Coca , the Mamlūk sultan knew that he did not represent a real danger to the Christian kings and that he could not help his co-religionists.[14] However, in the eyes of his subjects and as the nominal delegate of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, he needed to maintain his symbolical position as the universal protector of the Muslims.[15] He achieved this by resorting to threats. Thus, while negotiating commercial and political agreements were the real reasons for diplomatic missions, presenting threats to foreign addressees was necessary for the sultan to maintain his prestige as the defender of the *umma*.

[§13] As López de Coca points out, threats thus served as a means to extend the theoretical authority of the Mamlūk sovereign beyond the immediate borders of his direct sphere of rule. By setting himself up as the representative of the Mulsim minority living under a ruler of a different faith, the Mamlūk sultan was obliged to act at least verbally.[16] While this seems valid, it is difficult to accept that the Mamlūks could not carry out their threats when their demands were not met, as the following examples illustrate. In response to complaints formulated by the Muslims of Aragon concerning the demolition of minarets of the mosques in 1480, the Mamlūk sultan had several churches in Jerusalem demolished and would have destroyed even more, had it not been for the money offered by the friars.[17] In 1510, sultan Qānṣawh al-Ġawrī (r. 906–922/1501–1516) ordered the torture of the Franciscans of Mount Zion and their expulsion from Jerusalem along with the Greeks and the laity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in reaction to the naval defeat and destruction of the Mamlūk fleet at Bayās against the Portuguese.[18]

[§14] Mamlūk threats could therefor go beyond mere rhetorics. The sultans of Egypt sent numerous diplomatic missions, especially to the Pope, to protest against the policies of the Catholic Monarchs towards the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula. It may be a somewhat simplistic reading to interpret these threats as a mere cover for an alternative commercial or political objective of Mamlūk foreign policy. Against this backdrop, this contribution analyses the issue of threats from a broader perspective, examining their use as a mechanism of communication in diplomatic relations between Christian and Muslim authorities, and as a parameter that has not yet been contemplated in research.

[§15] The "mechanics" of a process of communication involving threats can be explained as follows: (1) A conflict between a ruler and the religious minority under his sovereignty cause (2) tension that provokes (3) the threat of another ruler who, being of the same religion as the minority, sets himself up as its external defender. The threat can be effective if the first ruler, receiving the threat, changes his attitude, thus putting an end to the whole process. It can be ineffective if the threatened ruler either fails to change his attitude or even retaliates with an equivalent threat, raising the tension even more.

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[12] Al-Yūnīnī, *Ḏayl*, s. ed., vol. 3, pp. 254–255.

[13] Arié, Les relations diplomatiques, p. 96: "Les menaces de Qāʾit Bay étaient, du reste, purement verbales."

[14] López de Coca Castañer, Mamelucos, p. 237: "A decir verdad, Qayt Bey no estaba en situación de exigir nada a los Reyes Católicos."

[15] López de Coca Castañer, Mamelucos, p. 238: "Unas amenazas con las que el sultán de Egipto quiso guardar la cara ante los embajadores nazaríes y ante sus propios súbditos. Era el gesto que cabía esperar de quien, siendo protector de los santos lugares del islam, estaba moralmente obligado a solidarizarse con sus correligionarios granadinos."

[16] López de Coca Castañer, Mamelucos, 234; Moukarzel, European Embassies, p. 696.

[17] Torre, *Documentos*, vol. I, pp. 75–76.

[18] Lopes de Barros, In the Name of Minorities, p. 723.

[§16] In Christian-Muslim diplomatic relations, threats have been used from around the ninth century onwards. We can distinguish between three main periods. The first period (ninth–tenth centuries) corresponds to a time of experimentation, of testing. During the second phase (eleventh–thirteenth centuries), threat as a political tool spread throughout the Mediterranean, triggering processes that corresponded to the communicative pattern or mechanism described above. The third and final stage (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries) represents a period in which this element was used abundantly, but in a more concrete and almost "standardised" way.

[§17] During the first period, threats were used in Christian–Muslim diplomatic relations, but were not documented clearly and were not necessarily exchanged between rulers. During the embassy of John of Gorze to Córdoba (953–956), an event narrated in the hagiographic *Vita Iohannis abbatis Gorziensis*,[19] Otto I (r. 962–73) responded to an embassy sent by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (r. 300–350/912–561) by sending the monk John with a letter and gifts. The contents of the letter, which appear to have slandered Islam, came to the knowledge of al-Nāṣir before he officially received the envoy. Fearing that he would be forced to execute the monk if the contents of the letter became public, the caliph tried to force the monk to hand over the gifts without the letter. Since John refused stubbornly, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān sent a letter to the monk in which he threatened to execute all Christians in *Hispania* if John failed to heed his demands.[20] The monk, however, was not impressed. He replied that the caliph's anger and wickedness would have to be regarded as the real cause of the death of the Christians of al-Andalus, whereas he and his fellow martyrs would enjoy a better life in the hereafter. Eventually, a new mission was sent to Otto's court, where a new letter was drafted to resolve the diplomatic mess. In 956, after three years of waiting, John was finally able to fulfill his mission and meet the caliph. In this episode, threat played a role, not in the diplomatic between two ruler, but between a Muslim ruler and the envoy of a Christian ruler. Moreoever, it should not be forgotten, that the formulated threat is only documented in a narrative text with hagiographic overtones, not in a surviving letter. It remains unclear whether the threat was really formulated or only figured as a narrative device symbolising one of several tests which the monk John had to overcome on his way to martyrdom. In any case, the threat formulated here was not part of an established communicative pattern, but was experimented with as a political tool.

[§18] In the next period (eleventh–thirteenth centuries), we witness the establishment and consolidation of a communicative mechanism. Unlike previous centuries, the threats were not only used by Muslim but also by Christian rulers. It seems, therefore, that it was considered an effective means of achieving political objectives. In this phase, the phenomenon diversified, allowing us to distinguish between threats directed at individuals and those directed at buildings and holy sites. Threats, moreover, could be directed against generic and rather vague targets as well as against concrete and specific ones. An example for the first category of generic threats can be found in a message, sent by Badr al-Ǧamālī, vizier of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 427–487/1036–94), to the king of Ethiopia in 482/1089–1090.[21] The vizier purported to have the churches of Egypt demolished if the Ethiopian king prevented the building of mosques and failed to guarantee the security of Muslim merchants. The Ethiopian king replied in kind: if this

[19] Valdés, Gesandtschaft, vol. 1, pp. 525–536; Valdés, La embajada, pp. 538–555; Walther, Dialog, pp. 21–44; Sénac, Contribution, pp. 45–55.

[20] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La vie de Jean*, trans. Parisse, p. 150: "nam post multa, quæ ei nisi iussis regis assentiretur comminabantur, quibus tamen nullo modo se motum fuisse testatus est, ad hæc ultimum insertum est, quod si ipsum interimeret, nullum in tota Ispania christianum vitæ relinqueret, sed omnes gladio trucidaret, addens hoc: «Cogita, inquit, quot animrum propter te interfectarum apud Deum reus eirs, qui nisi contentione tua, a quo pacem et salutem magis sperare debuerant, nullo alio reatu peribunt, quique pro eis quæcumque velles optinere a nobis posses, sin tanta obstinatione nobis adversus persisteres."

[21] Derat, L'affaire des mosquées, pp. 15–36; Tedeschi, Ethiopian Prelates, pp. 1005–1006.

happened, he would destroy Mecca and send its bricks and stones to the vizier.[22] An example for the second category of concrete threats is associated with Saladin's (*Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, r. 567–589/1171–1193) siege of Jerusalem (583/1187). In this context, the crusaders are said to have threatened to demolish the Dome of the Rock and to kill all Muslim prisoners in their possession if they were not granted a negotiated capitulation. Following these threats and after receiving advice from his entourage, Saladin decided to reach an agreement.[23]

[§19] In the last period (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries), the threat as a communicative tool became more "mature." The threatened objects continued to be humans (mainly the foreign Christian population) and sacred spaces (mainly the Holy Sepulchre and the churches of Jerusalem). In comparison to the previous periods, the threats were much more severe in tone, involving the menace of death, forced conversion, and the destruction of prestigious religious sites. This escalation was probably due to the success of of Latin-Christian expansionism and the increasing pressure exerted on Muslim populations on the Iberian Peninsula and in the Mezzogiorno to convert to Christianity.[24] The policy of conversions promoted by the Catholic Monarchs showed a clear and decisive tendency towards religious uniformity. Thus, the accustomed *ḏimma* model was in danger of disappearing in the Latin-Christian sphere, unlike in the Muslim-ruled East, where the situation of Christians as protected subjects of minor status, was maintained with its ups and downs. This could explain why the great majority of threats in this phase came from the Muslim side. In fact, the menace described in the text under discussion belongs to this period. In their letters to Christian rulers, the sultans insisted on a principle of parity, i.e. that Muslims and Christians should be accorded the same treatment in their respective territories. In 1503, for example, the Mamlūk sultan Qānṣawh al-Ġawrī sent Friar Mauro Hispano, Guardian of Mount Sion, to Rome to ask Pope Julius II (sed. 1503–1513) to write to the Catholic Monarchs. The sultan explained that Christians were well treated and respected in his territories, and demanded from Christian rulers to act in the same way towards their Muslim subjects. If the Iberian kings did not put an end to their policy towards the Muslims of Granada and treat them as he treated the Christians entering his dominions, he would order the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre, the convent of Mount Sion, all the Christian churches in the East, force all Christians under his rule to convert to Islam, and forbid the entry of foreign Christians.[25] However, in view of the determined policy of sovereigns such as the Catholic Monarchs, threats had ceased to be effective as a political tool and only provoked negative responses or new threats.

[§20] In the diplomatic context in which they were employed, the threats served as a formula to maintain a balance and to resolve problematic situations, pursuing the aim of achieving reciprocal terms for Christians and Muslims by the rulers of both faiths. This is what Honorius III (sed. 1216–1227) asked from the Almohad caliph al-Mustanṣir (*Albuiacob Miralmomelin*, r. 610–621/1213–1224) in his letter sent in 1219. As the pope allowed the Muslims present in his territories to freely practise their faith, it was only appropriate that the Muslim sovereign should act in the same way "so that in this our nation and yours there may be no disparate condition" (*ut in hoc nostre ac tue gentis non sit dispar conditio*).[26] The policies of one ruler that went against this principle were of concern to another. In 703/1304, al-Nāsir Muḥammad

[22] Sāwīrus b. al-Muqaffaʿ, *Taʾrīḫ*, ed./trans. ʿAṭiyya, vol. 2–3, pp. 222–223: "in lam tafʿal kaḏā wa-kaḏā wa-illā hadamtu al-bayʿa allatī bi-arḍ Miṣr (…) iḏā hadamta min al-bayʿ ḥaǧaran wāhidan halamtu ilayka ṭūba Makka wa-ḥiǧāratahā ǧamīʿahā wa-awṣaltuhu ilayka kullihi wa-matā ḍāʿa minhu ṭūbatan wāhidatan anfaḏtu ilayka waznahā ḏahab."

[23] ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *al-fatḥ al-qussī,* s. ed., pp. 71–72; Gabrieli, *Arab Historians*, pp. 92–94.

[24] Taylor, *Muslims*; Catlos, *Muslims*; Wiegers, Christianization, pp. 519–543.

[25] Ferreira da Costa Brochado, Ainda a Cruzada, pp. 292–297; García Oro, Fray Mauro Hispano, pp. 345–354.

[26] Lupprian, *Beziehungen*, p. 117. For another papal letter with a similar purpose see Ibid., 282–83; Whalen, Corresponding with Infidels, p. 488; Lower, Papacy and Christian Mercenaries, p. 616.

b. Qalāwūn (r. 698–708/1299–1309) reopened two churches in Cairo in response to James II's (r. 1291–1327) complaints about the closure of churches in "the lands of Egypt" (*bi-l-diyār al-miṣriyya*). Two years later, it was the sultan who wrote to the monarch of Aragón to ask that the Muslims in his country be treated and protected in the same way as the Christians were treated in the lands under his control. When James II forbade the Muslim communities to pray in public in 1318, the sultan wrote to him again five years later to request reciprocity for the Muslims.[27] This time, however, he was unsuccessful: on this occasion, neither threats nor pleas for reciprocity were of any avail.

[§21] In sum, Fernando del Pulgar's report on a Mamlūk threat to the Catholic Monarchs, sent via the pope at the hands of two Franciscan friars from Jerusalem, can be inserted into a longer history of threats as a political tool in Christian–Muslim diplomatic relations. Contrary to what scholarship has upheld traditionally, these threats cannot be regarded as mere rhetoric. Rather, the history of threats as a political tool in interreligious communication on the highest political level can be divided into three phases. The first phase can be regarded as a period of experimentation, the second as a period of consolidation, in which the acts of communication involving the use of threats acquired an almost "mechanistic" quality. The continuing success of Christian expansionism in the western Mediterranean and its interplay with an increasingly intolerant and conformist religious policy on the part of Christian rulers, prompted Muslim rulers to make increasing use of threats and to implement them at least partially. Likewise, Muslim-ruled territories had become increasingly dependent on trade with foreign Christian merchants, making the latter's presence necessary. In any case, as their inefficacy became more and more obvious, as did the Christian rulers' unresponsiveness to pleas for an equal and reciprocal treatment of minorities, the threat was largely abandoned as a tool of political communication.

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[27] Alarcón y Santón and García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 350–354, 355–360, 365–368; López de Coca Castañer, Mamelucos, p. 234.

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