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## An Ethnomusicological Approach to Orientalism: The Musical and Historical Study of the Moors and Christians in Villena (Spain)

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### Abstract

This article examines the historical and musical forms of Orientalism found in the festival popularly known as *Moros y cristianos* (the Moors and Christians) in Spain and, in particular, the town of Villena in the province of Alicante. Since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this traditional festival is mostly celebrated in towns along the eastern Mediterranean coast of Spain which includes Villena. The contextualization of this festival through Orientalism provides an understanding of the exoticization of Muslim-Spanish music through the *música festera* (the music composed for *Moros y cristianos*), a musical style with more than four thousand pieces composed by more than three hundred Spanish composers over the course of the last two centuries. This article reveals by conducting ethnomusicological studies using Orientalism, there is a possibility of reconsidering the colonial narrative embedded in the cultural and musical symbolism of *música festera*.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, *Moros y cristianos*, *música festera*, Spanish-Muslim history, Ethnomusicology

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## Un enfoque etnomusicológico del orientalismo: el estudio musical e histórico de las fiestas de Moros y cristianos en Villena (España)

### Resumen

Este artículo examina aspectos históricos y musicales de las fiestas de Moros y cristianos a través del concepto del orientalismo en España y, en particular, en la ciudad de Villena, provincia de Alicante. Desde el siglo XII, estas fiestas tradicionales se celebran sobre todo en las ciudades españolas que se encuentran alrededor de la cuenca mediterránea, incluida la ciudad de Villena. La contextualización de dichas fiestas a través del concepto de orientalismo proporciona un entendimiento de la exotización de la música hispano-musulmana a través de la música festera, un estilo musical que cuenta con más de cuatrocientas piezas musicales compuestas por



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más de trescientos compositores en los últimos siglos. Este artículo revela que llevando a cabo un estudio etnomusicológico a partir del concepto de orientalismo, es posible reconsiderar el simbolismo histórico y cultural de la música festera.

**Palabras clave:** orientalismo, Moros y cristianos, música festera, historia hispano-musulmana, etnomusicología

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## Um enfoque etnomusicológico do Orientalismo: o estudo musical e histórico das festas de Mouros e Cristãos em Villena (Espanha)

### Resumo

Este artigo examina aspectos históricos e musicais das festas de *Moros y cristianos* através do conceito de Orientalismo na Espanha, e, em particular, na cidade de Villena, província de Alicante. Desde o século XII estas festas tradicionais se celebram sobretudo em cidades da costa oriental mediterrânea, o que inclui a cidade de Villena. A contextualização de tais festas através do conceito de Orientalismo proporciona um entendimento da exotização da música hispano-muçulmana através da *música-festera* (a música composta para tais festividades), um estilo musical que conta com mais de quatrocentas peças compostas por mais de trezentos compositores ao longo dos últimos séculos. Este artigo revela que, através de um estudo etnomusicológico baseado no Orientalismo, é possível reconsiderar a narrativa colonial embutida no simbolismo cultural e musical da *música-festera*.

**Palavras-chave:** orientalismo, *Moros y cristianos*, *música-festera*, história hispano-muçulmana, etnomusicologia

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## Introduction

Villena is a town of 35000 inhabitants situated in the province of Alicante in the Eastern Mediterranean coast of Spain. As a local citizen from Villena, I acknowledge that a significant number of the main historical monuments from my town were built by Spanish Arabs such as the Atalaya castle or Santa Maria's Church (built as a Mosque and later reconstructed as a Church). However, in Villena, we address the Spanish-Muslim influences from our historical monuments as foreign by referring to Muslim culture as a separated agent from Spanish Christian history. The creation of this historical separation between Spanish Christian and Spanish Arab history within Spain related to what Said (1979) defines as Orientalism. One of the most evident manifestations of Orientalism in Villena is the festivals of the *Moros y cristianos* because it commemorates the conversion of the Spanish-Arabs into Christianity after the *Reconquista* in 1492.

This article provides an analysis of the *música festera* in relation to the historical interconnectedness between *música festera* and some forms of Arab music through the use of the so-called "oriental scale" (or *hijaz* in the *maqamat*). The "oriental scale" in *música festera* was originated in the nineteenth century as an aesthetic value in Western Classical music that addresses the use of *hijaz* in the music composed for *Moros y cristianos*. As a result, this article demonstrates that the notion of Orientalism provides a theoretical foundation for the understanding of the semiotic interaction between music, history and society in *música festera*<sup>1</sup>.

## Ethnomusicology, exoticism and Orientalism

There have been extensive ethnomusicological studies on the use of exoticism towards non-Western musical styles by the music industry (Hesmondhalgh 1998, Bolhman 2002, Taylor 2007, Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012, and Born 2013). The use of timbre or traditional instrumentation as a form of identifying musical cultures serves to categorise the music from non-Western geographical regions by the music industry. Such territorialisation of musical styles provided a narrow understanding of how non-Western music is influenced by many agents beyond its present geographical bounds and how certain musical styles circulates in wider spaces than the one exposed by the music industry.

For Bolhman (2002: 2), the creation of the world music industry lies on a Western narrative after World War Two in which the West commercializes non-Western music as a form of othering by imperial and colonial forces. Taylor (2007: 1) also notes that the global narrative of exotic music imposed by the music industry implies historical and geographical Western hegemony because the music is categorized from a Western, imperialist or colonialist point of view. However, rather than analysing the categorization of non-Western music as exotic by the music industry, this article reconsiders the historical and colonialist discourse embodied in the contextualization of *música festera* through the notion of Orientalism. In this article, I propose

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<sup>1</sup> For general information about Spanish Muslim music before the *Reconquista* see Cortés Garcia (2007).

that exoticism is more related to studies on the global discourses on non-Western music by the music industry whereas the notion of Orientalism reconsiders the origins of colonial narratives to study a musical culture.

### **The use of Orientalism in music as the general act of othering: The notion of art, folk and non-western music**

In the music of the *Moros y cristianos*, the notion of Orientalism not only comes from historical narratives after the *Reconquista* but also from the exoticisation of Arab music in the West. In Western classical music, the notion of Orientalism has existed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In music, the concept of Orientalism is constructed under the harmonic and melodic aesthetics of Western classical music (as an art form) in relation to local music (as a folkloric form) or non-Western music from the Middle East (as an Oriental form). This type of comparison between Western classical music (art form), local music and non-Western music provides a clear definition of the concept of Orientalism in the music for *Moros y cristianos*.

In Musicology, one of the first evidences of the word Orientalism appears in reference to Gypsy music by Sinclair in 1907. Sinclair states that Gypsy music is Oriental because the Gypsy population stretches from Afghanistan to Spain, and therefore their music produces a connection between the Western world, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia (Sinclair 1907: 17). Sinclair continues, noting different sorts of generalizations about Gypsy music, by saying that this music has a related harmonic system that produces the understanding between different civilizations (Western and non-Western civilizations). Under such generalizations, Sinclair attempts to explain the attraction of Liszt or Brahms (as Western composers) to Gypsy music which, according to the author, relates to the Hungarian Rhapsodies, Arabic and Persian music:

Thousands of Gypsies have been wandering to and fro all over south-eastern Europe and into and over Asiatic Turkey. During this period they have been the public musicians of the whole territory. Could their music not naturally be Oriental? On listening to Brahms's Hungarian Dances one at times hears distinctly the Oriental drum, the vertical flute, often the snapping of the castanets. So Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies are distinctively Oriental in character, although few pianists can play these Rhapsodies, –first, because they are very difficult; and, secondly, because few realize their true meaning (1907: 18).

Sinclair further demonstrates how the Western composers were attracted to a body of non-Western musical knowledge that was related to Gypsy, Arabic and Persian music during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The interest in the so-called Oriental music by the above-mentioned Western composers is related to the combination of “traditional music” and “art music”.

In traditional music from Europe (or folk), the notion of Orientalism is also evident. As an example, Pennanen (2008) examines the origins of Balkan traditional music (in reference to Turkish music after the Ottoman Empire to the present) from which some musicians draw on to Persian and Arab music. Meanwhile, other Balkan musicians consider their scales as originating in Ancient Greece. Under such circumstances, Pennanen (2008: 127) states that there is a conflict between Orientalism (non-Western folk) and Occidentalism (Western and Eastern folk) concerning the musical origins of Balkan scales.

In reference to the use of Orientalism in art and folk music in Spain, Marco (2005: 339), asserts that the appearance of *zarzuelas* in Spanish borrowed the notion of “oriental scales” from Eastern Europe and combined them with Spanish folk music, mainly from Andalusia (southern Spain) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This type of Andalusian-*zarzuela* became popular in the whole of Spain. *Zarzuelas* such as “*El tío Caniyitas*” by Soriano Fuertes is one of the first *zarzuelas* that became rapidly popular in Spain during the 1850s (Marco 2005: 341).

For Marco (2005), in order to gain the attraction of non-Spanish audiences in Europe, the Spanish musical identity of the *zarzuela* was promoted by the Spaniards through its relationship with rhapsodies and Eastern European music. Within this framework based on the *zarzuela* as a sign of nationalism within and outside of Spain, the music for *Moros y cristianos* was created during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The music of this festival is characterized by being specifically composed to be performed by *bandas de música*<sup>2</sup>.

Botella Nicolás (2012: 71) states that the *música festera* should be identified as an artistic form because the music of *Moros y cristianos* has produced more than four thousand pieces by more than three hundred composers. In my opinion, the *música festera* is both artistic and folkloric because the social and historical contextualization of the music is as relevant as the music itself. The examination of *música festera* through the use of Western classical harmony suggests a form of Orientalism by not analyzing the aesthetics of folk music in the so-called Andalusian scale as well as by the meaning of Oriental scales identified by the use of the second augmented interval. In other words, the examination of *música festera* through Western classical harmony limits the inter-relationship between music and the folkloric context.

This article examines the use of Orientalism in the music composed for *música festera* for the festivity of *Moros y cristianos* in Villena by analyzing the historical context of the festival and by analyzing the so-called Oriental scales in relation to the exoticization of the Spanish Muslim history.

### **Orientalism in relation to the contextualization of *Moros y cristianos*, the Mediterranean and North Africa**

According to Edward Said (1979), the notion of Orientalism is a Western construction which defines the so-called “Orient” as a “place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes... [a]nd remarkable experiences” (1). Said continues by saying that while North Americans related Orientalism to the exotic notion of the Far East (China and Japan mainly), Western Europeans related Orientalism to a constructed notion of the Middle East (Said 1979). In general, the notion of Orientalism is an imaginary non-Western geographic space for Westerners that stretches from Morocco to Japan and embraces Arab, Persian, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese and Japanese culture (Said 1979). Further, considering the notion of Orientalism, Sohat notes that “the professionalized study of compartmentalized historical periods and geographical

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<sup>2</sup> As previously mentioned, the *bandas de música* are composed of wind-metals instruments (trombone, trumpet, saxophone, *bombardino*, western flute and *fiscornio*), wind-wood instruments (clarinet, *requinto* and oboe) and percussions (bass drum, gong and *platillos*).

regions” (2014: 88) such as the so-called study of the Middle East or Mediterranean Studies has often contributed to reinforce the oriental literature of the non-western civilizations by the West. Therefore, the history of North Africa (or sometimes considered as the Middle East) or Mediterranean Studies reveals a created division of Western and non-Western knowledge.

In the attempt to connect the study of different Mediterranean cultures from southern Europe and northern Africa, Cooper and Dawe’s “Mediterranean in music” (2005) analyses the connection between different musical cultures or even the study of North African transnational communities in present Europe. However, as this book reveals (Plastino 2005: 187), the Mediterranean is an imagined cultural and historical space of crossing in which “Eastern and Western civilizations” merge and influence mutually. Further to this, there is not a homogeneous Mediterranean musical culture.

The Mediterranean Sea has been used by many traders and civilizations that inhabited Spain and moved along other parts of the Mediterranean. Thus, people from different parts of the Mediterranean have coexisted and circulated between Spain and North Africa during several centuries prior and after the *Reconquista* in the fifteenth century. As an example, previous to the entrance of the Muslims in Spain in 711, other civilizations have entered Spain through the Mediterranean Sea such as the Phoenicians in 800 BC and later the Greeks, Romans or Berbers since 500 BC.

Plastino (2003: 1) also notes that the notion of Mediterranean music is also due to present commercial purposes in the world music industry. Within the artists that fall under the Mediterranean category, Plastino mentions a few from different countries such as Radio Tarifa from Spain or Savina Yannatou from Greece. In musicological studies and within the music industry, the Mediterranean has been labeled as a cultural region that has been paid special attention by scholars because the understanding of Western history is the result of different civilizations that originated in the Mediterranean such as Ancient Egypt, Greece, the Roman Empire, the Western colonization or the Ottoman Empire. However, the origins of musical cultures in the Mediterranean are perhaps more complex than the interconnectedness in the Mediterranean. For instance, as Alicia González claims in the conference “*La historia del flamenco*” held in Cordoba in 2015, Spanish flamencologists claim that the creation of *flamenco* comes from both Europe and from the Hispano-Arabic history as follows:

Blas Infante noted “felag-mengu” (wandering peasant in Arabic) as if the music came from the Arabs that resided in Spain. Maximo Jose Khan claims that flamenco comes from the music of the Jewish cantillations from the Sephardic Jews that immigrated to Flandes in Holland...[C]arlos Almendro refers to flamenco in order to define the artists that Carlos I brought from Flandes.... [G]arcia Matos claims that the etymology of flamenco comes from the argot of the XVIII century to name someone who is arrogant or pretentious as well as genuine” (translation in my own words)<sup>3</sup>.

Flamenco music, *zarzuela* or *música festera* has been the result of such historical coexistence between people from different parts of the Mediterranean and from northern Europe

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjMWdhUaDio> [Accessed: February 12, 2015].

in Spain. Through the historical and musical study of *Moros y cristianos*, this article analyses how Spanish Christians and Spanish Muslims met, separated or are interconnected along the centuries. Perhaps, music is a central point to the understanding of the intertextual analysis of history and culture. In this case, the notion of Orientalism is able to address the geographical centralization of history after the *Reconquista* and how the separation of other geographical areas such as the Middle East or North Africa contributes to the mentioned orientalisation. Further, Orientalism considers the semiotic interaction between music and society in *Moros y cristianos* as a form of connecting history and music between Spain and North Africa. This point coheres with Sohat's historical reconsideration of the notion of Orientalism by saying that:

I argue for a relational to multicultural studies that does not segregate historical periods and geographical regions into neatly fenced off areas of expertise and which does not speak of communities in isolation, but "in relation" (2014: 88).

In accordance with Sohat on the interconnectedness of musical cultures, this article analyses the historical and musicological aspects reenacted during the festival of *Moros y cristianos*.

### **Historical context: The origins of the *Moros y cristianos* in Spain**

According to Domene Verdú (2008: 17), the oldest manifestation of *Moros y cristianos* occurred in Lerida, northeastern Spain, in 1150. The author provides evidence of this historical event, but does not describe the main features of this festival. The first description of *Moros y cristianos* is found in González Hernández' book entitled *Las fiestas de Moros y cristianos: Orígenes (siglos XIII-XVIII)* (1996). He narrates how in 1309 in Ceuta, James II ordered his soldiers to simulate the battle against the Spanish-Muslims. González Hernández continues by saying that the reenactment of this battle commemorates the battle won by the Christians over the Muslims attributed to the sacred appearance of Saint Jordi on his white horse. Nowadays, this festival is celebrated in many towns of Eastern Spain and also maintains as its main acts both the reenactment of the battle for the conversion of the Spanish Muslims to Christianity and the veneration to a divinity in the form of Saint or Virgin (González Hernández 1996: 24).

González Hernández (1996: 35) also notes that gradually *Moros y cristianos* was celebrated for diverse reasons in other towns such as: Valencia in 1373 to welcome the dukes of Gerona, Murcia in 1488 to welcome the Catholic Kings, Toledo in 1533 to celebrate the disembarkation of Carlos I in Barcelona, Tudela in 1707 to celebrate the birth of Felipe V and, in Alhaurin el Grande (Malaga) to celebrate the new kingdom of Carlos III. Later, between the XVII and XX centuries, *Moros y cristianos* also spread throughout the Mediterranean coast of Spain and even over to Mexico and the USA<sup>4</sup>.

Each town produced a different theatrical representation of the conversion of the Spanish Muslims to Christianity. For instance, the conversion of the Muslim is represented in the Church

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<sup>4</sup> González Hernández (1996: 45) cites that the *Moros y cristianos* are also celebrated and led by the missionaries of that time in some towns in Mexico such as Tlaxcala, Guadalajara, Nombre de Dios and Teotihuacan. In the USA they are celebrated in Santa Fe and San Juan.

of Santiago in Villena. In other Mediterranean towns such as Villajoyosa, the locals reenact a naval battle between pirates and Christians in the Mediterranean Sea. According to González Hernández (1996: 59), the reenactment of the naval battle is an historical remembrance of when the Berber pirates fought against the Christian army in Villajoyosa in 1536. According to González Hernández (1996: 59), there were naval assaults by different types of Berber Pirates such as in Cullera in 1532 by *Barbaroja*, Guardamar in 1543 by *Salah Rais*, or in 1550 by *Dragut* (González Hernández 1996).

This historical fact also reveals how the Pirates were later introduced to *Moros y cristianos*. In addition to the main features of *Moros y cristianos*, namely, the reenactment of the Christian conversion of the Spanish-Arab Muslims and the veneration of a Saint or Virgin, each town introduced new elements to the festival.

### **Social and cultural elements of *Moros y cristianos* in Villena: The *romerías* and the music performed by the ministriles and militias**

The festival of *Moros y cristianos* in Villena is among the most popular in the province of Alicante including Alcoy and Villajoyosa. In comparison to other places mentioned above, in Villena, this festival is rooted in the veneration of the Virgin Virtudes through the *romerías* (processional marches) since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The *romerías* are perhaps the first historical manifestations of the *Reconquista* and triumph of Christianity as a dominant religion in Villena.

It is documented by Domene Verdú (2008: 18) that Villena celebrated a *romería* in honor of their Virgin Virtudes which coincided with the pandemic *peste bubónica* (bubonic plague) in 1476. The *romerías* consisted of a religious act which entailed a procession from Villena to the Chopo's fountain (six kilometres outside Villena) where the local people believed that the Virgin Virtudes appeared in 1476. During that time, it was also believed in many towns of Spain that Virgins and Saints appeared to do miracles and healing people of evil eye or from *peste bubónica*. As a result, the veneration of the Virgin Virtudes appeared as a popular festival to heal pandemic illnesses and to avoid droughts (Domene Verdú 2008: 20).

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *romerías* were sustained by the nobility as revealed by Carlos I's letter to Villena saying that "if this payment was not done (by the nobility) there would be no processions and the devotion would be lost in this house (town)" (my own translation)<sup>5</sup>. According to Domene Verdú (2008: 24), the nobility and the Church promoted the veneration of the Virgin Virtudes as a new form of social domination through the divine power of the Virgins. Therefore, the veneration of the Virgin Virtudes became a tool of domination for the aristocracy and the Church as part of the colonial project from the *Reconquista*.

With regard to the music, the first documented music in the *romerías* of Villena is found in 1547. The richest families from Villena and the Church paid five *reales* to a musician called Gallano from Murcia to play the trumpet on September 8 with his band called "*su compañía y la bestias*". There is no evidence of what type of music Gallano and his band played. However,

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<sup>5</sup> "Sy el dicho gasto no se hiciese no se harian dichas prozesiones y se perderia la devocion en dicha casa" (Domene Verdú 2008: 24).



most probably the music played an important role during the *romerías* because, two years later, the festival cost 103 *reales* and included a salary for more musicians and *juglares* from Elda, a town 20 kilometers away from Villena.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the musicians were known as *ministriles* and played wind instruments such as trumpets. During that time, the *ministriles* worked in palaces for the royal families, in cathedrals for the choirs or for popular celebrations such as the *Moros y cristianos* (Domene Verdú 2008: 26).

In addition to the music from the *ministriles*, Domene Verdú (2008: 273) adds that another type of music was played by the *milicias* (Militias) during the *soldadescas* in the *romerías*<sup>6</sup>. This music had a military style by playing the *atambores* (snare drums), an instrument also used to communicate instant messages by the army during battles. In the *milicia*, there were musicians who played the *pifano*, a high pitch flute that appeared in the military instruction in 1505 and disappeared in 1828 from its military context (Domene Verdú) in Villena.

From 1505, the music for the *romerías* in honor of the Virgin Virtudes was performed by the *milicia* and by the contracted musicians known as *ministriles*. However, although the *romerías* and *soldadescas* provided the foundation of *Moros y cristianos*, the first historical document found about *Moros y cristianos* in Villena is found in the Council of this town in 1863<sup>7</sup>:

Martin Hernandez, Diego Ballester and Diego Valiente, Captains of the *comparsas* (marching squadrons) of Christians, Romans and Moors, have honored the festivity of our Virgin Virtudes since immemorial times (Domene Verdú 2008: 51 –my own translation)<sup>8</sup>.

During the nineteenth century, there were only three *comparsas* in the festival known as Moors, Christians and Romans<sup>9</sup>. At present, there are fourteen *comparsas* (seven of the Moors and another seven on the Christian band).

In summary, *Moros y cristianos* in Villena started as *romerías* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and, the

<sup>6</sup> During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *romerías* also included the *soldadescas*. The *soldadescas* consisted of soldiers firing the *arcabuces* (type of rifle) to emulate the victory of Christianity while accompanying the Virgin of Virtudes. In 1500, the *soldadesca* referred to the soldiers from the *milicia* (Militia) who were part of the *Milicia General del Reino* (General Militia of the Kingdom) that dates back to 1496 as a creation ordered by the Catholic Monarchs (Domene Verdú 2001: 270).

<sup>7</sup> There is another piece of evidence of *Moros y cristianos* in Villena documented in an article entitled *Costumbres valencianas: Moros y cristianos* by the magazine *Semanario pintoresco español* on June 5, 1839. The article described how this festival was celebrated in Biar (a town seven kilometers from Villena) and alludes to how this town brings the *Mahoma* (a giant symbolizing the image of the Prophet Mohammed) to Villena during its festival. This document does not show how the *Moros y cristianos* occurred in Villena, however, it demonstrates that there was a relationship between the festivals in Biar and Villena. On the other hand, the representation of *Mahoma* as the false Prophet in the march through Villena is highly problematic and demonstrates a lack of respect towards the Muslim religion given that, in Islam, it is prohibited to create images of the Prophet. The appearance of the *Mahoma* in the festivals represents what Said (1993: 23) defines as the “Oriental pleasure” by local people. The Oriental pleasure refers to the act of “othering” the Spanish-Muslims through the image of *Mahoma* during the festivals.

<sup>8</sup> “Martin Hernández, Diego Ballester y Diego Valiente, Capitanes de las comparsas de cristianos, romanos y moros, las cuales hacen honor a las fiestas desde inmemorial en obsequio a Ntra. Sra. La Virgen de las Virtudes” (Domene Verdú 2008: 51).

<sup>9</sup> The relationship between the Romans and the festival is unknown.

*soldadescas* were introduced later by the *milicia*. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *soldadescas* became a *desfile* (local citizens marching together with to rhythm of the music). However, as González Hernández states (1996: 92), “after the War of Independence against the French Napoleonic army (1808-1812), many archives were destroyed and, until 1830/1840, we cannot know the history of *Moros y cristianos* in many towns” (in my own words).

### Main characteristics of the *Moros y Cristianos* since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Villena

*Moros y cristianos* has been celebrated every year from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of September since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first historical evidence of music in this festival in Villena dates back to 1884 and is well documented in the historical archives of the town. Domene Verdú (2008: 51) states that these local documents reveal the existence of “*bandas militares*” that accompany the *comparsas* (Moors, Christians and Romans) during the major acts of the festival such as the *desfiles* (*comparsas* marching around the town and accompanied by the *música de banda*) during the five days of the festival and, to welcome the Virgin Virtudes by all the *comparsas*.

*Moros y cristianos* has been gradually formed by the different aspects of the festival such as *romerías* in the morning, *desfiles* (marching) in the afternoon and, theatrical representations of the conversion known as *embajadas*. In order to find different forms of Orientalism, I describe the main characteristics of the *desfile* and *embajadas* in Villena before analyzing how the music applies to these events in later sections.

The *desfile* has a direct relationship with what González Hernández (1996) calls *sibbka* from Morocco or *dabke* (a dance by men holding arms together and marching to the rhythm of music found in certain countries from North Africa and the “Middle East”). Alajaji (2013) calls this group dance *dabke*. The *dabke* is still performed on the West Bank in Palestine. Alajaji describes *dabke* as a “participatory line dance comprised of various song types” (Alajaji 2013: 139). In reference to the relationship between the *desfiles* in *Moros y cristianos* and the Palestinian dance, they are characterized by the appearance of a line of people dressed and marching under the same walking path (in *dabke* with percussions and in the *Moros y cristianos* with *música festera*). The origins of *desfiles* (or *dabke*) in Spain remain unknown and it would be difficult to assume that there is a direct link between both forms of walking holding arms together to the pace of music. Therefore, one can only affirm that there is a generic relationship between Palestinian *dabke* and *desfiles* because a group of people organize a dance line holding arms and march to the tempo of music.

Equally important, the *desfile* also has a certain resemblance to ancient *mascaradas*. González Hernández (1996: 25) states that during the *mascaradas* in medieval times in the province of Alicante, people used to dress in similar ways to those found in *Moros y cristianos* today such as the ones of the *campesinos* and *labradores*. Indeed, the *mascaradas* could be the initial inspiration for the different types of dresses in *Moros y cristianos*. As an example, in Villena, there are fourteen *comparsas*. In the *bando moro* there are: *Moros viejos*, *Moros nuevos*, *Marruecos*, *Moros realistas*, *Nazaries*, *Bereberes*, *Piratas*. In the *bando cristiano*, the *comparsas* are: *Estudiantes*, *Marinos Corsarios*, *Andaluces*, *Labradores*, *Ballesteros*, *Almogavares* and *Cristianos*. Therefore, the evolution of the *Moros y cristianos* in Villena

represents the influence of *dubkka/dabke* and Spanish *mascaradas* in the *desfiles* of *Moros y cristianos*.

The *embajada* is a theatrical representation of the conversion of the Muslims to Christianity. The reenactment of wars is related to the concept of *naumaquia*. The *naumaquia* was performed by the Romans during their occupation of Spain and consisted of a theatrical representation that simulated the war between two groups (González Hernández 1996: 23).

With regard to the *embajada* (or *naumaquias*) in Villena, there are three *embajadas* during the festival. The first two *embajadas* have no text and are re-enactments of a battle; therefore, it can also be defined as *naumaquias*. The Moorish *embajada* is on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September and, the Christian *embajada* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September before the conversion (the third *embajada*). Thus, the third *embajada* (or conversion) starts after the second *embajada* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September. During the third *embajada*, there is no theatrical representation of the battle between *Moros y cristianos*. The third *embajada* is based on the diplomatic conversation between the main representatives of *Moros y cristianos* that follows the conversion of the Spanish-Muslims to Christianity in the Church of Santiago (the main church in Villena).

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were two different texts found for the third *embajada* in Villena. The first text for the third *embajada* was written by Diego de Omedillo as a comedy entitled *Coloquio al santo nacimiento de nuestro señor Jesuchristo entre un moro y un cristiano* and was edited between 1741 and 1765<sup>10</sup>. The second text was also written by Omedillo and is a diplomatic conversation between the two main representatives of the *Moros y cristianos* for the conversion of the Spanish-Muslims to Christianity. The second text was written by the author during the “independence war” (1808-1813) because he dedicated it to Jaime I Bonaparte (Domene Verdú 2008: 169). The fusion of the first and second texts was firstly represented in 1893 on September 8 during the festival. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century both texts were mixed and represented during the third *embajada*. Since 1994, both texts have been fully included (and not only some extracts from each text) and represented (Domene Verdú 2008: 170).

Omedillo’s text about the conversion has clear signs of Orientalism involved in the Christian theology of that time. At the beginning of the text, the representative of the Spanish Muslims describes his difficulties in understanding the veneration of the Virgin Mary by the Catholics as follows:

**Moor:** Today the Christians celebrate with joy the day that was born the Divine God/ That Prophet of Ala that some people call Christ... (Looking at the image of the Virgin): Who has dared with such bravery to put here, this image or curse of this woman who they call Mary, the mother of Christ? (Domene Verdú 2008: 170 –my own translation)<sup>11</sup>.

The Christian ambassador responds by saying that the Muslims must surrender and convert

<sup>10</sup> The edition of this book proves that was made during the *reforma ortográfica* of 1741 (Domene Verdú 2008: 169).

<sup>11</sup> “**Moro:** Hoy que celebra el cristiano/ con fiestas y regocijos/ aquel día que nació/ el que llaman Dios divino/ aquel profeta de A la que algunos llaman Cristo... ([Mirando una imagen de la virgen]: Quien el atrevido fue/ Que con tan osado brío/ se atrevió a poner aquí/ esta imagen, o este hechizo/ de esta mujer, a quien llaman/ María, la madre de Cristo?”.

to Catholicism. Therefore, during the third *embajada*, Christianity is observed as the new identity of the Spaniards. The third *embajada* is also a reflection of the Spanish identity since the *Reconquista* because, according to Omedillo's text, it is believed that the world would be "civilized" through Catholicism and, Islam must be secluded from the Spanish identity (see extracts of the conversion below).

**Christian:** In the name of Christ, leave your idolatries, receive the divine baptism/ and you will have me on your side/ as the most loyal friend (Domene Verdú 2008: 170 –my own translation)<sup>12</sup>.

**Moor (reply):** Enough, brave Christian/ You have defeated me twice/ one with your argument/ and the other with your sword/ Take me before my people and I regret your offense/ and I confess to Christ/ take me quickly, Christian/where I can be baptized/Each moment waiting for my baptism seems like a century/ And you, sacred Mary/ my most humble apologies/ from this blindness in which I lived/ and while I confess my new faith/ Viva Christ (Domene Verdú 2008: 170 –my own translation)<sup>13</sup>.

Nowadays, during festivals in Villena, despite the interest of many locals in the imagined clothing of Spanish Muslims, it is yet a form of Orientalism by growing their beards; painting their faces in black; or riding camels by *comparsas moras* during the *desfiles*.

For many locals, the notion of *Reconquista* in *Moros y cristianos* remains as the foundation of religious identity and, more specific, as non-Muslim. From Said's notion of Orientalism, the agency exercised by the *villenenses* to refuse the Islamic history of Spain as part of Spanish identity is a form of Orientalism because history is conditioned by the *Reconquista* and colonial connotations. Further to this, there is a deliberate historical separation between Christian-insider and Muslim-outsider in the representation of Spanish history during the *Moros y cristianos*.

Equally problematic, the historical separation between Spanish-Christian and Spanish-Muslim identity is also demonstrated in Omedillo's text for the third *embajada*. As a Villenense, I tended to hear from the locals that the text related to the conversion of the Spanish Muslims to Christianity should not be changed as it represents the history of the town. Therefore, there is an "oriental pleasure" by local *Villenenses* assuming the notion of *Reconquista* and the separation of Spanish Muslim history as not Spanish up to this present day. As a case in point, in the music composed for the *desfiles* and *embajadas*, there is also evidence of how the music enhances the sense of Orientalism and the separation between the Spanish Muslims and the Spanish Christians.

<sup>12</sup> "**Cristiano:** Confiesa el nombre de cristo,/Dejate de idolatrías,/Recibe el santo bautismo/Y me tendras a tu lado/Como e mas leal amigo".

<sup>13</sup> "**Moro (responde):** Basta valiente Cristiano, /Que dos veces ya me has vencido,/Una con el argumento/Y otro con tu acero limpio/Llevame antes de que te sienta mi gente, que apercebidos/Están para si me ofendes:/Y confieso a Jesucristo/Llevame presto, Cristiano,/Donde reciba el bautismo/Que, cada instante que tarda,/A mi me parece un siglo/Y vos, sagrada Maria,/El perdón humilde os pido/De la ceguedad en que/En este siglo he vivido/Y confesando la fe:/Viva Cristo!".

***Música festera: Minor scales, hijaz, marchas and pasodobles***

Under such a social and historical framework described above, the music for this festival is influenced by the exoticization of an “imagined” Spanish Muslim music. In order to discuss this form of musical Orientalism, there will be an analysis of the scales, rhythms and instrumentation used in the *música festera*.

In relation to the scales, the music for the *Moros y cristianos* is based on the minor modes (Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian) of the major scale and the so called “minor oriental scale” (or *hijaz* in the *maqamat* modal system - see figures below). The melodic and harmonic minor scales relate to the minor modes and *hijaz* scales. However, I prefer to use the minor modes in order to understand the chordal cadences in *música festera* (in a non-diatonic form) such as the use of the Phrygian mode (also known as the Andalusian scale because of its relationship with flamenco music and which does not always relate to the harmonic or melodic minor scale).

Figure 1. Oriental minor scale or *hijaz*

Figure 2. Melodic Minor or Aeolian



Figure 3. Dorian



Figure 4. Phrygian mode or Andalusian scale

In general, the local or national composers of the *música festera* are trained in Western classical music and, therefore, the concept of Orientalism (as opposed to Western musical harmony) is used to reenact the music of *Moros y cristianos* through the *hijaz* mode (see figure 2). The local composers define the *hijaz* mode as the Oriental minor scale. The use of the *hijaz* mode (or Oriental minor scale) or minor modal scales in *música festera* also come from the *zarzuela* and *pasodobles* by the use of the minor modes combined with the casual use of second

augmented intervals. The first composition inspired in the *Moros y cristianos* and using the second augmented was by the *Villense* and zarzuela composer, Ruperto Chapi. As Botella Nicolás (2012: 349) states:

The *Fantasia Morisca* (Moorish Fantasy) for military music entitled *La corte de Granada* (1873), is a simple piece from the polyphonic point of view and with a lack of formal structure (in reference to a Western classical form of harmony). It was written originally to be performed by a *banda de música* and, in fact, it is a clear example of the influence of the festival of *Moros y cristianos* from his home town, more specifically during the third movement –*Serenata*– which reminds us of those Oriental harmonies by the use of the second-augmented intervals and the use of the Andalusian scale (Oriental) from the music of the Moorish *comparsas* (marching squadrons) for the festival (Botella Nicolás 2012: 349 – my own translation)<sup>14</sup>.

Later, in the twentieth century, other composers have used the second augmented in different forms such as the *Marcha moras* by Mestre Ferrer *Mozarabes 1960* [see second augments in bar 25 C-E flat in [www.mestreferrero.com](http://www.mestreferrero.com)] or *Ibrahim* (see F-G sharp in bar 1 in [www.gasparangeltortosa.com](http://www.gasparangeltortosa.com)) by the *Villense* composer Gaspar Angel Tortosa.

The use of second augmented intervals is related to the Oriental notion of Arab music by composers of *música festera*. However, there is no concept of Arabic music as such because this music is not composed of one harmonic system. For instance, the *hijaz maqam* does not appear in the *Haul* modal system from the Mauritanian and Saharawi people (Gimenez 2012). In addition, the *hijaz* mode does not exist in *Gnawa* music from Morocco, Algeria or Tunisia.

Among multiple forms of Arabic music, the *hijaz* mode exists in the modal *maqamat* system. The *maqamat* is based on tetrachords or a succession of four notes. The fundamental notes in a tetrachord are known as *jin* (in *hijaz* would be C-C#-E-F). The *jins* are the foundation of the melodic system in the *maqamat*. There are seven *maqams* (*rast*, *bayati*, *sikah*, *nahawand*, *hijaz*, *urdu* and *agam*) and some of these modes have quarter tone intervals (not in the *hijaz maqam*) (Peretz 2004: 10).

The use of *hijaz* in *música festera* is not based on the tetrachordal system but in the composition of music for a *banda de música*. There are no academic articles on *música festera* that mention the use of *hijaz* as part of the *maqamat* or its tetrachordal melodic foundation. The use of *hijaz* in *música festera* also demonstrates the exoticization of the Arab world through the playing of a *maqam* mode as a representation of the “music of the Moors”.

In *música festera*, the *hijaz* and other scales are played in three different rhythmic styles: *marcha mora*, *marcha cristiana* and *pasodobles* (see figures below). The music of this festival is characterized by being specifically composed to be performed by *bandas de música*<sup>15</sup>. The

<sup>14</sup> “La *Fantasia morisca* para música militar titulada *La corte de Granada* (1873), obra sencilla desde el punto de vista polifónico y con escasa entidad formal, fue escrita originalmente para banda y es, en realidad, un claro ejemplo del peso de la tradición bandística levantina. Además, en esta obra encontramos referencias a las Fiestas de Moros y cristianos de su pueblo natal, concretamente en el tercer movimiento –la célebre *Serenata*– que nos recuerda con armonías orientales, giros de segunda aumentada y el uso de la escala andaluza, la música de las comparsas moras de esta Fiesta”.

<sup>15</sup> The *bandas de música* are composed of wind-metals instruments (trombone, trumpet, saxophone, *bombardino*,

*pasodoble* is the oldest rhythm of *música festera* because it was borrowed from the *zarzuela* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *pasodoble* is composed of a binary rhythm in 2/4 (approx. 80-85 BPM) and has two different rhythmic styles: *lento* (slow) and *rápido* (fast). The melodies in the *pasodoble* are generally in major scales.



Figure 5. Basic rhythm for *pasodoble* (by the author)

With regard to the *marcha mora*, according to Botella Nicolás (2012: 66), the first *marcha mora* exclusive to *Moros y cristianos* (Chapi's first *marcha mora* was not exclusive to the festival but for *zarzuela* in *La corte de Granada of 1873*) was composed by Camilo Pérez Laporta and named *Benixerrajs* (1904). Laporta named the rhythm *marcha arabe* instead of *marcha mora*. In *Benixerrajs*, the main musical element that characterised the *marcha mora* was the use of *carabassets* (percussion) and later the use of other percussive instruments such as the *clave* or *timbales* (Botella Nicolás 2012).



Figure 6. Basic rhythm for *marcha mora* (by the author)

The *marcha cristiana* is generally about 85 BPM and characterised by a binary form (A-B) in major scales. The first *marcha cristiana* composed for the festivity of *Moros y cristianos* was *Aleluya* (1958) by Amando Blanquer Ponsoda (Botella Nicolás 2009).



Figure 7. *Marcha cristiana*

The three rhythms mentioned are the foundation of the *música festera* for the *desfiles*. In melodic terms, according to Botella Nicolás (2011: 48), the main differences between the three rhythms are that the *marcha mora* is in minor scales while the *marcha cristiana* and the *pasodoble* are in major scales.

With regard to the instrumentation, Botella Nicolás (2011) states that the *marcha mora* is

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western flute and *fiscornio*), wind-wood instruments (clarinet, *requinto* and oboe) and percussions (bass drum, gong and *platillos*).

generally characterized by the predominant use of *viento metal* (metal wind which refers to saxophone, trombone, bombardino, trumpet, fliscornio and trompa). On the other hand, the *marcha cristiana* and *pasodoble* are led by the sound of *viento-madera* (wind-wood such as clarinets, *requintos*, oboe, western flute, oboe and bassoon)<sup>16</sup>. As a case in point, the main percussive instruments for the three basic rhythms of *música festera* are the snare, hi hats, bass drum, gong and timbales. As previously mentioned, in the *marchas moras*, the bands use claves and other new instruments as the percussive instrumentation is flexible to new instruments.

The *banda de música* for a *desfile* is composed of 25-30 musicians. Given that each *comparsa* (there are fourteen *comparsas* in Villena) contracts between fifteen and twenty bands during the festival, the number of musicians involved is approximately two thousand in each *comparsa* during the festival. Each *comparsa* has a house where the musicians are hosted and they may perform two or three times each day. As noted previously, there is music for *desfiles*, *romerías* and recently for the *embajada*. Tortosa is a composer from Villena who has included the first composition (classified by the author as a symphonic poem) of *Moros y cristianos* for the theatrical play during the third *embajada* (the conversion) named *La conversión de Villena* (Tortosa 2010). This composition lasts 31 minutes and was released in 2010 by the Spanish record label *Visualsonora* from Villena. *La conversión de Villena* demonstrates that the *música festera* is essential to the festival and continues producing new forms of accompanying the main acts of *Moros y cristianos* in Villena<sup>17</sup>.

The number of musicians depends on which *banda de música* is contracted by a *comparsa* in the festival. In Villena and most of the villages around this town, there are music schools where they have *bandas de música* and the local students learn to play *música festera*. The *banda de música* lends instruments for the beginners to learn music. In this way, the musicians learn to play instruments without having to pay for an instrument. Later, they perform in their town and the surrounding areas where the festival of *Moros y cristianos* occurs. For this reason, the *bandas de música* that perform *música festera* are abundant and, thus a sustainable musical activity exists where the festival happens.

## Conclusion

Said notes that one of his interests in the notion of Orientalism is not fundamentally a theoretical subject or “an academic pursuit on its own” (1993: 26). Said was interested in the “historical study of texts” because “political and cultural issues can be made much clearer in terms of comparable issues in our own time” (1993: 26).

This article demonstrates that the notion of Orientalism is relevant for ethnomusicological studies in which the semiotic interaction between Western and non-Western narratives addresses the historical and musical connections between *música festera* and Spanish-Islamic history.

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<sup>16</sup> In some cases, the *bandas de música* include *dolzainas*, a traditional woodwind instrument from the Eastern Mediterranean coast.

<sup>17</sup> Botella Nicolás (2012: 61) defines the symphonic poem as a musical form classified as an “evoking function” such as hymns or *aleluyas* during the festivity. The author classifies the *marchas* and *pasodobles* as martial function and, the music for the *desfile* as “processional function”.



Further, the notion of Orientalism helps to observe such western tendencies to analyse historical narratives that rely on multiple forms of “othering” non-western agents such as the historical weigh of the *Reconquista* which yet conditions the views of history during the festivals of *Moros y cristianos*. This point coheres with Sohat’s (2014: 88) notion of Orientalism related to how colonial narratives separate vast regions such as the Middle East or North Africa in order to centralize the notion of history in the West.

As a citizen from Villena, this article provides self-ethnographic criticism of the *Moros y cristianos* through the use of Orientalism in the *música festera* and, on the exoticization of Arab music without considering the legacy of Spanish-Muslim history in Spain. *Música festera* is not even based on the bi-musical knowledge of Western classical music and any type of Arabic music but on an Oriental and consequently exotic notion of Arabic musical cultures. Thus, the unknown and non-Western culture becomes an abstract geographical region to be reenacted. The music composed for *Moros y cristianos* is based on a lack of knowledge about Arab music and thus the exoticism and the notion of imagined culture towards Arab culture is evident. The notion of Orientalism helped to consider the historical examination of *Moros y cristianos* in order to highlight the causes of the exoticization of the Arab world through the *música festera*.

In relation to the music for the *Moros y cristianos*, the symbolism of the second augmented interval evoking the “imagined Spanish Muslim culture” provided a form of Orientalism. With regard to the rhythms used in *música festera*, the *marcha mora* is not specific but rather symbolic through the use of the second augmented and a slower rhythm than in Christian marches. Furthermore, the study of *música festera* provides an awareness of the circulation of musical styles with historical links and musical resemblances along Western Europe and North African countries.

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