

# Rethinking the Zoraida Episode (*Don Quijote*, I, 37–42) : In the Historical Context

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The purpose of this study is to analyze the disputed episode of the Algerian Moorish lady, Zoraida, in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote* (Part I, Chapters 37–42) by examining this work in its historical context.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a number of North African Muslims migrated to Spain to convert to Christianity. The contemporaneous Spanish society extolled their desire to embrace the Christian religion and welcomed them, particularly those who were of noble blood. The episode involving Zoraida—the only daughter of a noble and wealthy Moor, who, being driven by the desire to be a Christian, flees Algiers with a Christian captive (her husband-to-be) and receives a warm welcome in Spain—is set in this historical background. Taking this into consideration, we can say that she is depicted as an exemplary character. However, Zoraida's conversion is not connected to the anti-Islamic propaganda existing in Spain during this period and does not symbolize the victory of Christianity over Islam.