

Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 19

VIOLENCE IN THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL WORLDS

EDITED BY

MARIA CRISTINA PIMENTEL AND NUNO SIMÕES RODRIGUES

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF

GABRIEL SILVA, MARIA LUÍSA RESENDE,
MARTIM AIRES HORTA AND RICARDO DUARTE



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WORDS, ACTIONS AND CONTROLLED LIVES. WOMEN AND VIOLENCE IN MEDIEVAL GALICIA

Miguel GARCÍA-FERNÁNDEZ¹

When discussing the Middle Ages, it is easy to think of war and violence, always carried out by knights, warmongering kings or outlaws. This is because the film and book industries and even historiographical publications have focused mainly on reconstructing a world in which men dominated violence and women were thought of as mere victims of that violence.

The objective of this essay is to briefly look into the complex relationship between women and violence in the Late Middle Ages in Galicia (North-western Spain) by taking a close look at the variety of situations women found themselves in and conceding that they were not only victims, but that they also exerted verbal and physical violence, and controlled other people's lives.

Late Medieval Galicia was marked by the confluence of economic crisis, abuse from the feudal lords and a high level of social conflict which created a notable level of social insecurity. In this setting we cannot forget the "Revolta Irmandiña" (1466-1469), during which many fortresses were destroyed and violence became ingrained in everyday life, something which, on the other hand, can be inherent to any society.

¹ Intern in the *Programa de Formación del Profesorado Universitario* from the *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte*, Researcher within the research group GI-2108 "Historia social de Galicia en la Edad Media," and Member of the research projects "La formación de la monarquía feudal en Hispania. Sociedad y poder en la época de la dinastía Navarra (1000-1135)" (HAR2012-31940), directed by Ermelindo Portela Silva, and "Voces de mujeres en la Edad Media: realidad y ficción (siglos XII-XIV)" (FFI2014-55628-P), directed by Esther Corral Díaz. This article has been written within the framework of the research carried out towards the completion of my PhD, *The position of women in medieval society. An analysis of the testamentary practice in Galicia from the 12th to the 15th centuries*, directed by Prof. Dr. D. Ermelindo Portela Silva.