

Book Reviews

Ana E. Schaposchnik. *The Lima Inquisition: The Plight of Crypto-Jews in Seventeenth-Century Peru*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. 291 pp.
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Studies of crypto-Judaism practiced in the Iberian empires between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries are marked by a significant paradox, because the memory of this underground religiosity is essentially based on the archives of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, an institution created simply to eradicate the Judaizing heresy.

This so-called modern Inquisition (as distinguished from its medieval antecedent), introduced in Spain in 1478 by the Catholic monarchs, in the course of a few decades successfully destroyed the great centers of crypto-Judaism, a phenomenon known since the forced conversions of 1391. Almost a century after its founding, the inquisitorial system expanded to the New World. Two tribunals were created, one in Lima (1569) and the second in Mexico (1570); they were primarily intended to protect the American colonies from Protestantism, a heresy that, because of its proselytizing bent, was more dreaded at that time than the “law of Moses.” However, against all expectations, the crypto-Judaism that was thought moribund was reborn from its ashes. The dynastic union between the two Iberian kingdoms in 1580 opened the Spanish territories to Portuguese practitioners of crypto-Judaism. We soon find them in the New World, where, during the following century, they became, once again, the main target of the Holy Office.

Through a systematic review of inquisitorial sources and a vast scholarly bibliography, Ana Schaposchnik’s book offers the reader a detailed reconstruction of the Holy Office’s repression of groups of crypto-Jews located in Peru’s viceroyalty in the first half of the seventeenth century. The first merit of the book is its synthesis (186 pages of text), supported by a dense scientific apparatus (70 pages of notes). In six chapters, after an initial review of the peculiarities of the Inquisition, the author focuses her analysis on the years between 1635 and 1639; this was one of the key periods of the Peruvian Holy Office, when the inquisitors decided to launch an unprecedented offensive against the crypto-Jewish groups of the viceroyalty.

The first two chapters of the book delve into and explain the secrets of inquisitorial procedure, based on the famous *Manual de los inquisidores*, a text written by the Spanish Dominican Nicolau Eimeric in 1376 and later modernized by Francisco Peña in 1578. The agents of the Holy Office brought to Lima almost two centuries of inquisitorial experience: everything had already been classified, imagined, and resolved, including the phases of the trial and even the way to torture (firm, but without endangering the victim’s life).

Schaposchnik further details the Peruvian Inquisition’s infrastructure, its buildings, and its prisons. She describes its financial organization, which was initially characterized by a general deficit, but later enjoyed a surplus after the confiscations of rich New Christian merchants’ wealth in 1639. Finally, she portrays some of the inquisitors that marked the history of the Spanish colonies, such as

Juan de Mañozca y Zamora (director of the tribunals of Cartagena and Lima, and ultimately bishop in Mexico) and his cousin and right-hand man in Lima, Juan Sáenz de Mañozca, who a few years later led the repression against crypto-Jewish groups in Mexico. As recalled by the author, the inquisitors were mostly educated men, far from the stereotypes in today's popular imagination that view them as fanatic fundamentalists. They were also men of their century, many of them succumbing to the countless temptations of this remote and exuberant America, as inspectors sent from Madrid alleged.

An intermediate chapter (3) presents the story of two Portuguese tried in Lima in the early seventeenth century: Juan Vicente, a humble cobbler, and Garci Mendes Dueñas, a merchant who made his initial fortune with the slave trade. Despite their tragic fate—the first was burned in Cartagena, while the second committed suicide in Lima's jails—unfortunately these two characters are rather shallow on religious matters. Through Garci Mendes's business, Schaposchnik gives an idea of the scope of Sephardic merchant networks, which had expanded at the time to a global scale. In this chapter, I would have liked a clearer vision of the relationship between the accused and the great Portuguese merchants (*asentistas*) who controlled the slave trade in this period (1580–1640).

The heart of the book (chapters 4 and 5) focuses on the lawsuits against the so-called “Great Complicity” discovered in 1635 in Lima, a set of trials against crypto-Jews on a scale never seen before in the Spanish Indies. During the *auto de fé* celebrated in Lima on January 23, 1639, sixty-three persons were convicted, eleven of whom were condemned to be burned. The author offers a detailed account of the three years of oppression experienced by the Lima crypto-Jews, and highlights the particular conditions that characterized their detention. She delineates the prisoners' individual and collective strategies to delay the procedures, such as the creation of false accusations against Christians or the revocation of their confessions. These strategies, more than the culprits' deep practice of Judaism, explain the harshness of the Holy Office's sentences (which sometimes went beyond inquisitorial standards and were criticized by the supreme council). The Portuguese New Christians' social rise and power over colonial trade, to the detriment of Castilians, were, doubtlessly, another reason why the inquisitors punished them so severely. Unusually for inquisitorial records of this period, indeed, none of the eleven people condemned to death relapsed.

In the last chapter (6), the author reproduces every detail of the celebration of the *auto de fé*, a major act of inquisitorial dramaturgy meant to stage the triumph of good over evil. On that day, the condemned were marched through the city's streets and were afterward presented on a scaffold before civilian and ecclesiastical authorities. The baroque nature of the ceremony is perfectly rendered by Schaposchnik.

In conclusion, although the author's work of synthesis and the solid scientific foundation of the book are to be saluted, I regret the lack of new data about the religious matters of crypto-Judaism practiced in the Peruvian viceroyalty. The poverty of religious practices—in Peru, but also in the Nueva Granada—is substantial in comparison with the Iberian model of crypto-Judaism current in Mexico, which was organized within the family. In Spanish South America

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crypto-Jewish women, who traditionally relayed beliefs, were almost nonexistent. The minimalist rites of isolated men in Peru thus contrast with the religious life of crypto-Jewish groups in Mexico, where the engagement of some women (whom the inquisitors called “dogmatists”) ensured the smooth running of Yom Kippur, Passover, fasts, the festival calendar and the initiations of children.

The men arrested in Peru lacked a crypto-Jewish family basis. Among them, ambiguity reigned and the spirit seemed reluctant. This is the case of one of the men condemned to be burned, Manuel Bautista Pérez, a successful merchant and the leader of the group of New Christian traders in Lima. Despite being tortured, Pérez never confessed any heretical practices, always asserting his good Catholic behavior. The charges against him are not conclusive. Concerning his heart of hearts, the mystery remains. Some historians even ask whether he was a Jewish or Christian martyr. Maybe both, if we admit a duality of beliefs (see Nathan Wachtel, *La foi du souvenir* [Paris: Seuil, 2001]).

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Ephraim Shoham-Steiner. *On the Margins of a Minority: Leprosy, Madness, and Disability among the Jews of Medieval Europe*. Translated by Haim Waltzman. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014. 288 pp.
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Today, it is almost a truism that medieval social history can be profitably reconstructed by taking a view “from the margins.” As foundational works by R. I. Moore, Michael Goodich, Shulamit Shahar and others have shown, the dominant values, norms, and mentalities of medieval society can be illuminated by focusing on marginalized Others, and by exploring how their perspectives and identities intersected with—or were constructed by—the dominant social and religious power structures. For historians of medieval Christendom, Jews in particular have come to function as Others par excellence, and a wealth of scholarship has explored the fraught role that Jews—both real and imagined—played in medieval society and in the process of Christian identity formation. Increasingly, these studies have drawn connections between the roles and representations of Jews and those of other paradigmatic marginal groups, including women, heretics, lepers, and “sodomites.”

But as Ephraim Shoham-Steiner reminds us in his important book, Jewish communities themselves were hardly homogeneous or socially undifferentiated. “Marginalized” Jewish communities had margins of their own, and it is the inhabitants of those margins that Shoham-Steiner brings into focus, with a particular emphasis on Jews suffering from leprosy, mental illness, and various physical disabilities. *On the Margins of a Minority* explores the ways in which these maladies were conceptualized by medieval Ashkenazic theologians, exegetes, and