death of Samuel Schwarz and the diminishment of Barros Basto's movement, following the return to power of the Church in 1928, re-isolated the crypto-Jewish community. Schwarz and Barros Basto had convinced them that the republican revolution of 1910 had been the start of a new era of liberty of religion and there was no reason to hide their secret religion any more. The new reality proved that this was not quite so. In the remaining areas of the Portuguese "Marrano belt," in Tras-os-Montes and the Beiras for example, where Barros Basto's message of redemption had been widely accepted, the comedown was ruinous. Crypto Judaism almost disappeared.

Not so in Belmonte. There it was vigorous enough to resist failure. Belmonte had a Jewish community before the forced conversion of 1497, and many of its inhabitants were persecuted thereafter by the Inquisition. However, its present Jewish population settled there only in the mid-nineteenth century, when apparently it was already "clean" of Jewish descendants. They were only a few families, who came mostly from one or two other villages: Sabugal and Monsanto. Actually, they were all members of one family. Through practice of strict endogamous marriages, this allowed for ten different branches of the same family to emerge.

In fact, in Belmonte, the word for Jews is *a família* (the family) and a fellow Jew is a *parente* (a relative). A crypto Jew from Belmonte who went to see a Jewish doctor in Lisbon, asked the nurse to announce "a relative of the doctor from Belmonte." In Belmonte, when a man married an Old Christian, he was automatically excluded from the secrets of his ancestral religion.

Nevertheless, crypto Jews went to church, and had their children baptized. They were married and buried by the priests. At home they made their own Jewish marriage ceremonies and mourning rituals. When asked why this strange double standard they would say that otherwise they would be deprived of their citizens' rights. This was not true, but they sincerely believed in it.

They celebrated some Jewish festivals, such as Passover and Yom Kippur, according to the Jewish dates. They didn't even know of the availability of Jewish calendars, but they learned to calculate the dates counting from the new moon. However, "in order to delude the spies," they celebrated Yom Kippur one day later, on

11th day of the moon of September, not the 10th and Passover on the 14th of the moon of April, not March. Due to leap years in the Jewish calendar there was a discrepancy of one month, of which they were not aware.

They baked their own unleavened bread, picked up in the fields a number of bitter herbs which they considered suitable as *maror*. They used olive oil and linen wicks for Shabbat lamps.

However, the first and most important commandment was the prohibition to reveal any part of their rituals and their prayers to people from "outside the family." Even if somebody declared himself as a Jew, he was suspected of being a spy. Very seldom would they believe that the interlocutor was really a Jew.

I had the fortune of their confidence, since my first memorable visit in 1964. However, from time to time they put me on a probe. It was hard for them to believe that a Jew did not know the same practices they did.

They were particularly harsh with women visitors. Men were not supposed to be acquainted with the ritual. They were supposed only to repeat the words and acts of their wives, but women were the ultimate keepers of religion. They learned from their mothers and grandmothers. Why did women visitors not know the same prayers (in Portuguese!) that they prayed?

Their society was dominated by men, typically Portuguese, except in matters of religion. On the Jewish holy days, when the families gathered to celebrate, everybody went to the wife's mother.

This has been so since the time of the Inquisition. Among the first couples to settle in Belmonte, there were some very dominant women, such as Maria Caetana Velha, the elder. From her stemmed a "dynasty of old women," sometimes known as *sacerdotisas* (priestly women). They were the ones who prepared the blessed linen wicks for Shabbat, celebrated marriages and commanded the ritual "tehara" (purification) of the death. They were teachers to their daughters and other younger women. They responded to questions on religious behavior.

All this said, it is easy to figure out the community's reaction to the

unprecedented journey to Lisbon of the family I met in the synagogue. This opposition was especially aggravated when their daughter showed the *matzot* we sent her from Lisbon. Instead of baking their own "holy bread" would she eat now those "crackers" from Lisbon? Was she a new *sacerdotisa*, introducing new laws?

The momentum for the change arrived in the 1980s when, by the initiative of Dov Halevy Milman, then Israeli Ambassador to Portugal, two groups of crypto Jews from Belmonte visited Israel. When asked to escort each group during the first day of their visit, I anticipated that they would be shocked when confronted with the "relatives" in Israel! Some had never even visited Lisbon. Most had never flown anywhere. Jewish practices should be secret, how come they were shown in a museum? How could one speak openly about our religion?

Over the course of the visit to the Diaspora Museum (*Beit Hafutsot*) a very daring young lady came to meet the *anusim* from Portugal. Shifra Horn, now a successful writer in Jerusalem, was then the secretary of the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS). On the spot she asked me to help her bring these scattered Jews back to the Jewish people. I must confess here that I declined my help. I was so impressed with the total devotion of these people to their own Jewish tradition that I feared that this attachment to their origins would be lost, without gaining a new way of Jewish life.

Shifra won her battle and I am happy she did. But I still have mixed feelings about my own attitude. She was right; Belmonte Jews regained Judaism. But something they kept during 400 years was lost. My old friends in the village don't say that in public, but in the secret of their homes, some of them still practice "the old religion" of their mothers. Maybe the younger people would be lost anyhow, and at least they are good Jews. So I was wrong.

One or two years later, Shifra organized an international event of the WUJS in Guarda, a city near Belmonte. The participants spent the Shabbat in the homes of the crypto Jews. This opened a new window of opportunities for the young men of Belmonte. They discovered the Jewish world. This meant for them many opportunities to find a mate, without being confined to taking a cousin for a bride. One year later, two of them, Joaquim and Elias, took part in a Jewish Summer Camp, in Dijon, France. They made

new friends there, and they participated in a second camp. They learned Jewish songs and stories

Joaquim met Clara, a Jewish girl from Malaga, Spain. Soon they were married and settled in Belmonte. This was new in Belmonte, a fully normative Jewish home quite different from what they were used to. Clara respected the ancient traditions of her mother-in-law but firmly observed in her new home the Jewish traditions that she had learned from her own mother. They celebrated together with Joaquim's parents, and soon his mother was giving-in and accepting some changes in her ritual.

Elias was the grandson and son of the two couples whom I met in 1963, at the synagogue. He joined his parents in subsequent trips to Lisbon. As a youngster he was engaged by the liberty of the cult that he witnessed there. He shared with his friends at home that joy of an open Judaism versus the secrecy which was the main characteristic of crypto Judaism.

In the sequence of the summer camps, Elias took the initiative of creating an association: The Jewish Community of Belmonte. He was elected its first President. Soon he rented an old two-room house, where he and his friends celebrated services, using photocopies of prayer books translated into Portuguese. Practicing Judaism in the open was very attractive, especially for men. Finally, the men were also in command of the religion, not just the women.

The next step was the arrival of a rabbi, sent from Israel, who formed a Beit Din and converted most of the population to mainstream Judaism. It is questionable if conversion was the proper term or just “return,” but this was not a time for polemics. Couples who returned were immediately married according to the religion of Moses and Israel. Everybody was now covering their heads, men with yarmulkes, and women with hats.

When the oldest couple in the village, Carlos and Benvinda Diogo Henriques, passed away, one shortly after the other, they had a plot of land, next to the old historical "Jewish quarter," where they lived. Their children decided to donate the plot for the future construction of a synagogue. The money for the construction was provided by Mr. Azulay, a benefactor from Switzerland, in memory of his Father, whose name was given to Belmonte's synagogue: Beit Eliyahu. The community initiated by Elias Nunes was now officially recognized by State authorities, and a new board was elected, who requested from the local council the concession of a ground, next to the village's cemetery, for a Jewish burial place. The first Jewish burials took place.

As the number of visitors increased, the local council established tourist attractions. A Jewish museum was erected. Nowadays, it is also a place of study, and receives visits by high-school students from all over Portugal.

New initiatives include the production of a Kosher wine "Terras de Belmonte," a kosher version of the famous cheese of the region, kosher meat and smoked sausages.

Lisbon has a small Jewish community and a large beautiful synagogue, where sometimes it is difficult to raise a *minyan*. Beit Eliyahu, in Belmonte, always has a *minyan* for Saturdays and holidays. Everybody can read and pray in Hebrew. In the gallery, women, who lost their status of keepers of the religion, do what other Jewish women do all over the world.

It happens sometimes that a pious Jew from Lisbon must say Kaddish and, to make sure that he has a *minyan*, he travels all the way to Belmonte.

It is said that every Jew needs a synagogue where he goes to pray and another where he will never go. There have been cases of Lisbon Jews who rented rooms in Belmonte, for Yom Kipur, to pray at Beit Eliyahu. So, now it is the

reverse of the event in 1963 that introduced me to the crypto Jews of Belmonte.

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AREAS OF INQUIRY

The Islamic Concept of *Taqqiya* and Its Influence on Spanish Jewry

Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez

For years, rabbis and scholars have speculated as to why so many Spanish Jews converted to Christianity beginning in the year 1391 when faced with violence or coercion in contrast to the tendency of the Jews in Germany to opt for death or even suicide when faced with similar circumstances. The religious commitment of many Spanish Jews is generally assumed to have been weaker than that of their contemporaries in other parts of Europe. Another assumption is that the desire to become assimilated into Spanish society with its array of benefits was ultimately too attractive to ignore for others. Even those who are willing to explain the mass conversion of Spanish Jews in the context of the explosive violence they encountered in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries fail to realize the possibility of other factors behind these mass conversions.

Whether most Spanish Jews converted as *anusim* (i.e. as forced ones), or voluntarily, is the principal issue of contention between the views of scholars like Cecil Roth, Yitzhak Baer, and Haim Beinhart who support the idea of a crypto-Jewish phenomena, and those of Benzion Netanyahu and Norman Roth who largely reject this view. Netanyahu and Roth, while allowing for the possibility that the initial pogroms of 1391 produced "legitimate" *anusim,* largely view most conversions as voluntary or simply the products of economic or social distress.[1]

In the end, why Spanish Jews converted remains a critical issue, but one important cause has largely been ignored: the Islamic concept of dissimulation, known as *taqiyya*. This article reviews *taqiyya* and its possible role in how Spanish Jewish communities understood conversion as a viable option in the face of persecution.

Possible Causes of Mass Conversion

Living at the end of the fifteenth century and having personally

experienced the Expulsion, Don Isaac Abarbanel noted that many Spanish Jews converted "Because of the miseries, the condemnations, and the massacres by the enemies, they left the totality of the Law, and they thought to become like one of the people of the land."[2]

Abarbanel recognized quite clearly that social conditions for Spanish Jews were inhospitable at this stage. While these were immediate reasons, and the "legitimacy" of these reasons for converting can be argued, the belief that something was endemic in Spanish Jewish society is generally presumed.

The rise of the Maimonidean philosophical tradition which reflected the cultural and philosophical heritage of Jewish life in Spain is argued to have partially created the tendency of many Jews to opt for conversion in the face of persecution. This view assumes that secular knowledge and in particular philosophical studies created a greater tendency of skepticism towards religious faith. The view is supported by several Jewish sources of the period. The eminent historian Yitzhak Baer, in his work *History of the Jews in Christian Spain* summarizes the standard view:

"There were many, it would seem, in Spain, who found in Maimonidean philosophy convenient support for their extreme liberalism...These men accepted only a faith of reason and rejected popular beliefs. They put rational understanding ahead of the observance of the commandments...and denied the value of Talmudic Aggadot."[3]

Baer finds further support in the fifteenth century writings of Solomon Alami, Shem Tov ben Shem Tov, Isaac Arama, and Joel ibn Shuaib. Alami held that the philosophical movement was the primary cause of Jewish communal collapse. Alami's argued that in the elevation of philosophy, intellect, rational search and natural inquiry as means to "salvation," obedience to the commandments was undermined.[4] Shem Tob continued the critique of philosophy as a cause of the decline of Jewish communal life, but targeted Aristotelian thought in particular, which promoted the idea of an impersonal G-d. This view is certainly connected to Maimonides' own perspectives. For Shem Tob, a G-d removed from the sphere of human activity undermined Jewish convictions that G-d would ultimately judge people with appropriate reward and punishment.

An impersonal G-d and the elimination of belief in an afterlife, as far as Shem Tov was concerned, diminished fidelity to Judaism.[5]

To summarize, the root cause according to this dominant view is that pro-Maimonidean circles spread philosophical speculation and this engendered a negative impact.[6] For ibn Shuaib, such speculation led many Jews to abandon belief in the coming of Messiah and hence future redemption. We can only surmise that having abandoned such a hope, many would have opted for an immediate "redemption" rather than in a future one they no longer expected. According to Gerson Cohen, rationalism helped undermine faith creating doubt about miracles such as the resurrection, and this in turn discouraged martyrdom.[7]

The Concept of *taqiyya*

While the *Reconquista* increasingly carved out large sections of Spanish soil formerly under Islamic rule, the influence of Islamic culture on Jewish communities remained significant. Menahem Ben-Sasson notes that under Islamic rule, Jews generally underwent extensive cultural Arabization.[8] The influence of Islamic-Arabic culture in the area of religious thought is clear. Major Jewish religious works were produced in Arabic and the philosophical trend present in Arabic thought bled over into Jewish thinking. As a consequence responses to a whole host of issues including persecution were understood differently by Jews in Islamic lands. These concepts likely remained in force even after the demise of Islamic hegemony.

In Christian Europe, martyrdom or suicide was largely the preferred response to forced conversions. Whether this attitude toward martyrdom was as Mark Cohen asserts an elaboration of the martyr traditions recorded in the *Midrash* is unclear.[9] Jacob Katz argues that Ashkenazi views of martyrdom were also influenced by their conviction that Christianity was idolatrous. Their views were further influenced by the willingness of Christians to suffer martyrdom. If Christians were willing to suffer martyrdom, so should Jews.

Cohen also notes that conversion to escape death likely occurred to a greater degree than alluded to in Hebrew accounts of the period, but that martyrdom remained the Ashkenazi ideal.[10] Nevertheless,

Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid's references to both apostates and various acts of dissimulation in his *Sefer Chasidim* make it clear that the situation was more complicated in Ashkenazic lands than is often appreciated.[11] Rabbi Yehudah for examples points to an example in Rokeach 316 and in Teshuvot Maharil 118.

"When the members of his community were offered the alternative of either converting or being killed, he the rabbi advised them to convert and afterwards to return to Judaism…when things settled down, they all returned to Judaism. Nevertheless, since the rabbi counseled his flock to defect from the Jewish faith, his offspring all became apostates, and he is being punished in the hereafter. as though he was the one who had caused them to sin."[12]

As a consequence, Sephardic Jews did not maintain the same invectives against the dominant religion that Ashkenazi Jews maintained toward Christianity. More importantly, the concept of martyrdom was not a similarly significant concept in Islam as it was in Christianity. As Cohen notes, in Islam, the martyr is a warrior who dies fighting in a holy war. Suicide or execution to evade conversion is not held in the same light. Cohen states that when "Confronted by religious persecution, Muslims favored outward accommodation or dissimulation, in Arabic *taqiyya* while inwardly maintaining belief in Islam."[13]

In addition, in all three great Islamic persecutions of the medieval period (i.e. the persecution under al-Hakim, the Almohads, and the persecution in Yemen) Jews and Christians who were forcibly converted were eventually allowed to revert to their original faiths. Abdul Hamid Siddiqui refers to the words of Ibn Abbas, a Sunni commentator:

> Al-Taqiyya is with the tongue only; he who has been coerced into saying that which angers Allah (SWT), and his heart is comfortable (i.e., his true faith has not been shaken.), then (saying that which he has been coerced to say) will not harm him (at all); (because) al-Taqiyya is with the tongue only, (not the heart).[14]

Siddiqui also refers Abd al-Razak, who in his book "al- Dala-il," wrote:

> The nonbelievers arrested `Ammar Ibn Yasir and (tortured him until) he uttered foul words about the Prophet, and praised their gods (idols); and when they released him, he went straight to the Prophet. The Prophet said: "Is there something on your mind?" `Ammar Ibn Yasir said: 'Bad (news)! They would not release me until I defamed you and praised their gods!' The Prophet said: 'How do you find your heart to be?' `Ammar answered: 'Comfortable with faith.' So the Prophet said: 'Then if they come back for you, then do the same thing all over again.' Allah at that moment revealed the verse: '....except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith... 16:106.'[15]

It is clear then that for Islam, the survival of a faithful Muslim is of utmost importance. The ability to feign loyalty to another religion is not considered problematic when faced with persecution. What is important is that concern for financial and material well being is also included as acceptable reasons for feigning conversion. This is most interesting as possible financial motivations for conversion are often viewed as inherently unacceptable within Jewish thought. In Chapter 6b, Siddiqui also refers to what is narrated in al-Sirah al -Halabiyyah, v3, p61, that:

> After the conquest of the city of Khaybar by the Muslims, the Prophet was approached by Hajaj Ibn `Aalat and told: "O Prophet of Allah: I have in Mecca some excess wealth and some relatives, and I would like to have them back; am I excused if I bad-mouth you (to escape persecution)?" The Prophet excused him and said: "Say whatever you have to say."[16]

The influence of *taqiyya* is arguably evidenced in the writings of Maimonides and his father in response to forced conversions of Jews of Morocco and Yemen. Responding to the situation of Moroccan Jews, Maimonides states the following:

> Now if he did not surrender himself to death but transgressed under duress and did not die, he did not act properly and under compulsion he profaned G-d's name. However, he is not to be punished by any of the seven means of retribution. Not a single instance is found in the Torah in which a forced individual is sentenced to any of the

> punishments, whether the transgression was light or grave….[17]

In this particular case as well as in Maimonides' letter to the community of Yemen who underwent a similar persecution, the fact that Islam was generally not considered as idolatrous was certainly beneficial to this lenient view. In addition, "conversion" to Islam only required recitation of the *shahada* or testimony and not the more involved procedures of Christian initiation. This certainly parallels the Islamic examples provided by Siddiqui. Admittedly, Islamic practice was also much closer to Judaism than Christianity was. This allowed for a greater degree of obscurity when practicing Jewish customs in the case of Maimonides' letters to affected communities. Cohen states:

> Jews could accept Islam outwardly, demonstrating their conversion by attending Friday prayer and avoiding acts disapproved of in Islam, while secretly adhering to Judaism in the privacy of their homes.[18]

In addition, at least one Islamic source of the tenth century upholds the view that the forced conversion is not binding unless the convert has overcome their fear.[19] *Taqiyya* is a fundamental Islamic concept based on the Quran. The Quran holds blameless Muslims who disguise their beliefs in cases of safety.[20]

Conclusion

It is unclear to what extent *taqiyya* influenced Jewish communities in 1391, a period which witnessed the transition from Muslim to Christian authority; yet, the notion deserves a closer review. In the case of Christianity, the dominant Jewish perspective has certainly viewed it as idolatrous. This makes the application of the Maimonidean view toward forced conversion under Christianity more problematic. Nevertheless, the extent of cultural influence is not something that devolves instantaneously.

Furthermore, while the pogroms of 1391 eventually spread throughout Spain, they began in Seville which is located in Andalusia. Seville, historically part of Moorish Spain, had only been conquered by Spanish Christians in the middle of fourteenth century. The effects of almost six hundred years of Arabic-Islamic

religious, cultural, and social influences cannot be ignored.

Whether *conversos* retained fidelity to Judaism in "their hearts" is what Netanyahu and Roth argue against. While we cannot know the individual reasons that Jews opted for conversion, the individual Jew may have gambled that an eventual allowance of religious behavior may have been allowed to return sometime in the future. After all, history had proven this to be the case before.

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The New Christian Home in Colonial Brazil, 1600s–1700s

Based on a paper presented at the First International Conference on 'The Position and Self-Image of Women in Sefardi Sources,' Jerusalem, 2011

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Women were responsible for three centuries of clandestine practice of Judaism in America and they were among the most numerous prisoners of the Inquisition. From 1708 until 1735, one hundred and sixty seven women were accused of the crime of Judaism and imprisoned in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The history of their lives offers us an example of loyalty, consciousness and sacrifice. This article is based primarily on inquisitorial records. These files provide a unique source for the study of the women in colonial Brazil, and allow a privileged approach to a closed and secret world. Thousands of pages tell us the stories of their lives, families, and their inner conflicts that resulted from a society that discriminated between Old and New Christians.[1]

In Brazil, since the end of the sixteenth century, New Christians were among the oldest "native Brazilian" settler families. They were involved with commerce, agriculture, medicine, law, crafts, army, and also the Catholic clergy, including in its upper echelons. As newcomers to Rio de Janeiro, New Christian men were involved in business; progressively they became landlords, with large participation in the plantations. Many also became liberal

professionals, such as lawyers and doctors. In Rio de Janeiro, New Christian women also played an active role in the society but they were submissive, dependent on the father or the husband.

The family structure in colonial Brazil followed the pattern of Portuguese society—patriarchal, authoritarian, and male-dominated. The legal marriage (performed by the Catholic Church) was the foundation of colonial society, and the regimen was usually that of common property, with the wife bringing a dowry to the marriage.[2] Marriages were endogamous and New Christians often married within the family or within the New Christian group.[3] However, we do not find a family without a mixed-marriage. The marriages were determined by the father, who chose the bridegroom to enhance family alliances, and were part of a determined socio-economic strategy. We find cases of women who rebelled against their parents´ choice, and that sometimes led to a break in the family ties.

From the point of view of education, the role of the New Christian *converso* women was very important.[4] They were responsible for shaping children´s character. Formal education in the Jesuit schools and universities was open only to boys. Although a special law, introduced in the Statutes of Purity of Blood, prohibited *conversos* from studying in universities, many New Christians in both Brazil and Portugal graduated in superior studies. This demonstrates the division between the law as it was written and its real application. Girls learned to read and write at home, and surprisingly half of the women arrested by the Inquisition in Rio de Janeiro were literate; whereas, most of the women in Portugal and the rest of Brazil were illiterate. In colonial Brazil, we also do not find illiterate New Christian men. All those imprisoned by the Inquisition in Brazil knew how to read and to write; and many were cultivated people, who knew languages, philosophy and literature, and had libraries.

Compared to old Christian women, *converso* women were not as reclusive;[5] rather they led very active lives. They went frequently to the village, entertained visitors in their homes and had encounters with other women in the streets. They participated in the administrative and financial affairs of the family, and were acquainted with their husbands´ businesses. Some of these women were sharp business women, and according to the trend of the period, they too did business within the mining region, sending

merchandising and slaves to be sold.[6]

Frequently we find a network in the families, with one member working as a farmer in the plantation, another working as a doctor or lawyer and another working as a merchant in the region of the mines. It was usual that farmers, artisans and military officers, were connected to wealthier families, taking part in a larger family network.[7] In general, even New Christian families wanted to have one family member in a religious career, as this would grant them a chance to prove they had no Jewish blood. In Rio de Janeiro, only one New Christian family (the Dique family) sent their daughters to a convent, but several families had sons that became priests.

Although women were able to inherit land from their fathers and their husbands and they had the right to half of the family possessions, in patriarchal Brazilian society, the fathers or husbands still had means to control their daughters or wives. They could send them to *recolhimentos* (convents) where they had to stay against their will until they were freed. But, in studying the New Christian women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Rio de Janeiro, I found only one case of a rich New Christian woman sent by her husband to such an institution.

Big families lived together in large houses (*casa grande*). The Vale family, a very wealthy New Christian family in Rio de Janeiro, with one of the biggest properties of the region, was administrated by a woman, helped by her sons, daughters, and in-laws. They all lived together, surrounded by about 120 slaves working at the plantation. For the domestic work, they had twenty slaves.[8]

Converso women were also excellent confectioners of fruit compotes. One new Christian lady, owner of a sugar mill, had a business of compotes of various fruits that were sold in the city. Her kitchen was prepared with all she needed for the making of the sweets.[9] There was equipment and special utensils for daily use, and this way sweets, drinks, manioc and corn flour, bread, wines and liqueurs, ceramics, basket making, brooms, hammocks, soap, oil for the lamps, and threads were prepared at home. When New Christian women were arrested by the Inquisition, the first session was dedicated to the "Inventory"—they had to declare all properties and goods they had.

Concerning Judaism, documents show that women had the main responsibility for the continuity of the Jewish religion. All the celebrations, all practices had to be held at home, and in secret. Thus, it was mostly women who preserved the Jewish memory in order to carry on the faith and the practices of their forefathers and so that their children would know what to say in an inquisitorial session. "Confess or die" was a reality in the inquisitorial Portuguese society. Confession was the condition to save one´s life.[10] The Inquisitors knew that women were the main transmitters of Judaism; during the trials they always asked: "who taught you?"

Some of the women transmitters—a grandmother, a mother, an aunt, a sister or a cousin—were really heresiarchs, as they were the first to bring the Jewish religion to New Christian families. Some were very active in this job. One woman, Izabel da Paz, taught Judaism to forty-two members of her extended family. Men also appear as teachers, uncles, fathers, and could be also heresiarchs. The transmission of secret Judaism was fundamental. Children learned only after a certain age that they were Jews. The instruction of Judaism was always made behind closed doors, in the teacher´s or the student´s house.

All New Christian women arrested by the Inquisition in Rio de Janeiro were antagonistic towards Catholicism. The Jewish faith was sometimes times mixed with Christian habits. In order to save their lives, all New Christian had to admit that they were Judaizers. They confessed to have—or to have had—the faith on the Law of Moses for the salvation of their souls. So it is very difficult to be sure of their feelings. Repeating Father Antonio Vieira´s opinion, the Inquisition frequently punished innocent people.

New Christian women were very critical about Christian dogmas, many believed in only one God, and they did not consider Jesus as the Messiah. Ana de Paredes, considered that "Christ was a great saint, but he was not God, and the Messiah still had not yet arrived."[11] This was the most common idea in the New Christian society.[12] Time weakened Judaism and prayers were very rare among New Christian women. In the beginning of the Seventeenth century we found only one woman arrested by the Inquisition who knew Jewish prayers. Only one of her descendants in the eighteenth century declared she knew oral prayers, but they were very difficult to interpret.[13]

The dietary laws and the fasts and other practices, were performed far from the eyes of the large society, and were the most common among the women. The majority did not eat pork, rabbit or sea food, and all of them fasted in honor of Queen Esther and for *Dia Grande* (Yom Kipur) or did what they called "Jewish fasts."

We find only one mention to *Pesah* (only one woman was accused of maintaining this celebration, but she did not acknowledge it), and there is no remembrance of *Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot* and other Jewish holydays, including the purification rites such as the *mikve* (ritual bath) or circumcision. In rare cases, some women kept *Shabbat,* did not work on Saturdays, used clean clothes, cleaned the house and lighted new candles or lamps. This distinguishes the cultivated Rio de Janeiro New Christian society from the New Christians that lived in regions like Bahia and Paraíba, where the Judaism was more present.

The main characteristic of Judaism in Rio de Janeiro was identity. All the New Christian women knew they belonged to a people. As most of the religious life was secret, we can never know exactly what their deep feelings were. All the New Christian women were discriminated against. They knew they were Jewish and even if this knowledge brought them suffering, most chose to transmit their heritage onto their descendants. They must be considered and studied as Jewish women, as part of the Jewish history.

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Contrafactum in Judeo-Spanish Song

Judith R. Cohen

Contrafactum is a very old practice, well documented in both Jewish and Christian religious (and other) music—even some of the psalms include instructions to use certain melodies, though we have no idea what they sounded like. The word is Latin: literally, "constructed against," and the plural is "contrafacta," though in English it is often simplified to "contrafact."

There are several forms of contrafactum, of which the most common is to set lyrics, which may be new or pre-existing, to a

melody associated with a different set of lyrics, in the same language or a different one (parody is one form of contrafactum). Another form involves changing the words. For example, in the time period around the Sephardic exile from Spain and Portugal, Christian *a lo divino* contrafacta were common: a song, often the lyrics of a narrative ballad (*romance*) would be adjusted from a secular to a religious setting. For example, a ballad beginning with a description of a castle is adjusted *a lo divino* so that the castle is a metaphoric one, standing for the kingdom of heaven. A highly technical form of Sephardic contrafactum involves setting a Judeo-Spanish text to a tune usually used for a Hebrew text, while adhering to both the essential meaning and the general sound and assonance pattern of the Hebrew lyrics.

Contrafacta probably played an important role among the Jewish poets of pre-exilic Spain. Medieval Hispano-Hebrew poetry was deeply influenced by Arabic poetry and its major structural innovations. To date, no manuscripts have been discovered with any Jewish or Muslim melodies of the time, but it is quite likely that in adapting the metres and rhymes of the new style, from Arabic to Hebrew poetry, Jewish poets also adopted melodies which would fit this new structure. That is, it seems fairly likely that musical influence was from Muslim to Jewish, rather than the opposite. There is also documentation of Jewish women and young people in medieval northern Spain and southern France annoying rabbis by singing songs of the Christians. This does not mean there was no specifically Jewish music, but it does suggest that one should exercise caution when people talk glibly about, for example, the influence of "medieval Sephardic" music on flamenco.

Edwin Seroussi, in collaboration with Rivka Havassy,[1] recently published an exhaustive study of all the known *incipits* (first lines) indicating Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) songs whose melodies were used for religious poems, some going back centuries. The collection of the Sephardic sage and poet of Safed, Rabbi Israel Najara (ca. 1555-1625), has also been studied intensively by Seroussi. Najara not only indicated names of songs, but also Ottoman *maqams* (the *maqam* is a complex scale-mode system), demonstrating his close familiarity with Ottoman music. Again, however, we are frustrated because we simply do not know which melodies are referred to: most *romances* can be, and often are, sung to several different melodies, which also change over time, and

there is, at least for the moment, no way we can determine whether any melody known today or even written down in the late nineteenth century and afterwards, was one of those named in these incipits.

Ethnomusicologists are drawn to contrafactum for its wealth of musical and social content. Amnon Shiloah relates a nineteenth-century anecdote about two rabbis in Izmir who habitually stood at the door of the local church to pick up some good melodies for the High Holiday services.[2] Moroccan Sephardim often sing "Lekha dodi" to a Spanish *pasodoble* which may be heard in the bull-ring: the tune has become popular and many people do not realize where it is from. Or, they might sing a *piyyut*, a Hebrew metered hymn, to the tune of a *romance* such as "La adúltera" (the adulteress) or "Paipero" (a Sephardic adaptation of a Spanish romance about the priest Fray Diogo and his relationship with the residents of a local convent). Jeff Summit's article about contrafacta in a Boston Reform community is summed up in its title: "I'm a Yankee-Doodle dandy."[3] Ellen Koskoff explores in-depth the spirituality behind Hassidic rebbes' use of secular melodies for their *niggunim*. She explains how removing a melody from the secular world can be seen as reclaiming a melody's divine essence by can as an act of *tikkun* (repair).[4]

One well-known contrafactum in the eastern Mediterranean Judeo-Spanish tradition is "Tsur mishelo akhalnu" sung to the melody of "Los bilbilikos" ("La rosa enflorese"). An early twentieth-century Greek Orthodox Christian song is also sung to this melody, as Professor Martin Schwartz has pointed out (via personal communication), but it is unclear which version came first. The melody has become very popular: I have also heard it used by such different singers as Bene Israel Jews of India and, in English, Richard Farina, who was the husband of the late Mimi Baez, Joan Baez' sister.

Also popular is the emblematic song "Adio kerida." Eastern Mediterranean Sephardim, many of whom were well-versed in opera and other Western art music genres, seem to have adapted the melody from Verdi's opera "La Traviata," as they did with many other opera, operetta and popular music melodies. However, it has become popular to claim the contrary, i.e. that Verdi adapted the melody from local Jews. Verdi did indeed know people in the

Venice Jewish community, but it is highly unlikely that the contrafactum went in the direction "Jews to Verdi." It is a very modern Western European melody, certainly not "ancient," and there is no historical documentation to suggest the direction was any other than "Verdi to Jews." In fact, a lot of popular music from that time became part of the Judeo-Spanish repertoire. Maurice Chevalier tunes, melodies of tangos, foxtrots and the Charleston abound; in fact, Ashkenazim often adopted melodies in a similar way. Nevertheless, the "Adio kerida" myth persists—like many others, it is appealing and it makes for good marketing.

Here, I would like to include a brief note about crypto-Jewish (Marrano) use of contrafactum. In my fieldwork in Belmonte, on-going since the mid-1990s, it is apparent that the Jewish community established in the twentieth century uses the melody of "Cuando el Rey Nimrod," taught to them by a rabbi who was resident there in the early 1990s, for synagogue contrafacta. One text they regularly sing to this melody, for example, is "Ein kelohenu." They also use the very-few local tunes specific to them for certain Hebrew texts. Women both in Belmonte and in northeastern villages have told me they sometimes used local melodies for their own lyrics, or did not change the local lyrics, but ascribed different meanings or associations to them.[5]

Contrafactum often influences performance practice, especially if the borrowed melody is from a different genre. Borrowing a melody from a different language often involves adjusting accented syllables, and borrowing from a different culture adds elements such as a different vocal style and timbre. In Morocco, a simple local tune is used for a somewhat bawdy ditty about "Señor Jacob" and the young girl "Mazaltó" and their frying pan and oven; it is also used for a brief song about preparations for Pesah; for "Lekha dodi," welcoming in the Sabbath and for "Yitgadal." Each use of the tune is performed differently: "Yitgadal" is the slowest, sung with dignity and more vocal ornamentation.[6]

The Moroccan Sephardic ensemble Gerineldo, of which I was a founding member, once staged an entire concert based on contrafacta, put together by our founder-director, Oro Anahory-Librowicz, Solly Levy, Kelly Sultan Amar and myself. We staged the concert as a rehearsal including discussions of the suitability of certain songs as contrafacta, in the characters Solly Levy had

created in the plays he created for us. In my own fieldwork, over the past three decades, I have not encountered objections to any secular melody being used in the synagogue. However, Seroussi and Weich-Shahak report Sephardic rabbis of both Morocco and Turkey stating their objections to a cantor using frivolous Ladino and Spanish songs for contrafacta, and varying reactions among rabbis to the use of Arabic melodies.[7] Vanessa Paloma, in her fieldwork with Moroccan Sephardim, has found that at least one man, a descendant of a rabbi, disapproved of the use of the tune of the ballad "Paipero"—the one cited above, about their priest—for religious *piyyutim*. Paloma interprets the use of melodies of Judeo-Spanish songs in the liturgy as "a Zoharic form of musical unification of masculine and feminine musical languages."[8]

Contrafactum performs many functions. It can promote the accessibility of, and, thus, more participation in religious texts by using local, well-known tunes—or a sense of renovation and interest by using new, unfamiliar melodies. It can highlight and develop skills in handling different verbal and musical idioms. It can connect, through melodies, sacred and secular worlds, and sometimes worlds of genders and class. Borrowing from another culture requires familiarity with it, and, as Jews are so often part of a host culture, it is a way to both demonstrate this familiarity and, in a way, absorb some of the power of that culture, even strengthening the relationship with it. In the Judeo-Spanish tradition, contrafactum has been indicative of the dynamic, rather than the static nature of the culture of these resilient people in their far-flung diaspora.

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POETIC, ARTISTIC AND LITERARY EXPRESSIONS

Writing *The Lost Minyan*

David Gitlitz

Research over the last four decades has deepened our understanding of crypto Judaism in Spain, Portugal, and their colonies. Numerous scholars, including myself, have logged countless hours in archives, gloved and masked, straining our eyes over ancient histories, wills, deeds, shipping records, letters, lawsuits, and testimony logged by scribes of the Inquisitions. With a few notable exceptions, the studies that have emerged from this research—including my own *Secrecy and Deceit: the Religion of the Crypto-Jews*—have attempted to summarize and categorize the experiences of the Iberian Jews who became Catholic between 1391 and 1496. The lives of these converts and their descendants, who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries still clung to some remnants of their Jewish heritage, the *conversos* do indeed have some commonalities that permit generalization.

Yet, as any archive addict will admit, the most truly fascinating aspect of all of those sources is the insight they give into the daily

lives of individuals: the wife who struggles to carry on when the Inquisition takes her parents, her husband, and her teenage son; the sisters who try to keep their deceased mother's Jewish traditions alive without their devoutly Christian father finding out; the Moroccan teenager, son of a Jewish mother and Muslim father, who flees to Spain to become Christian but finds that he cannot put aside his mother's Jewish customs; the lonely Mexican crypto-Jewish silver miner on the frontier who makes annual trips to Mexico City to celebrate the Jewish holidays with his friends; the seamstress in Madrid who gradually introduces her daughter into Jewish practice but fails to persuade her son to follow the old ways.

People like these, framed and constrained by a Christian world, their threads of Judaism woven into a garment of Christian beliefs and customs, their lives clouded by fear of the one mistake that will propel them into the prisons of the Inquisition, have increasingly been the focus of my attention. While they are not unknown to scholars, the intensity and variety of their experiences are not easily approached by the general public. I set out several years ago to try to find a way to fill this gap, to present the lives of real people in a form that would be accessible to a wide readership. Responses to the mini-biographies related in my previously published book with Linda Davidson, *A Drizzle of Honey: the Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews*, made clear that there was a hunger for such material.

I decided that a collection of stories, related for the most part in the first person by the protagonists themselves, would be an effective way of portraying these individuals. I have tried to bring ten of them to life in *The Lost Minyan,* including the people already mentioned, as well as a Turkish-Spanish con man, an agnostic trying to reconcile his Jewish and Christian beliefs, and a *converso* bishop. The facts of their lives along with the bulk of the details and dialogue in their stories are drawn from the documents listed in the book's endnotes.

I had a wealth of material to choose from. Since the early 1970s I have been reading about crypto Jews in Spain's *Archivo Histórico Nacional* and Mexico's *Archivo General de la Nacíon*, which between them house tens of thousands of pages of Inquisition records. These include the genealogies of accused crypto Jews, their autobiographical statements, their answers to protocols of

"That Old Faggot Jew"

Exploring the work of the *converso* poet Antón de Montoro

Jeffrey Gorsky

This article is adapted from "Jewish Blood," my nearly-completed history of the Jews in Spain. The book covers the period from the Visigoths to the expulsion of the Jews. Given the importance of this period in both Jewish and world history, my goal is to provide a comprehensive history of the Jews in Spain. Writing "Jewish Blood" was inspired, in part, by my career in the US Department of State, where I spent half of the 1980s on Spanish-related assignments, first as Vice Consul in Bilbao, then as an Intelligence Analyst in Iberia. My dedication to this project, which I have worked on for over four years, was also driven by my belief that the religious and ethnic conflicts at the heart of Jewish history in Spain are particularly relevant today, where the resolution of ideological disputes of the twentieth century have led to a resurgence of religious and ethnic conflicts.

—Jeffrey Gorsky

The fifteenth century Castilian poet, Antón de Montoro, is an historically representative figure from among Spanish *converso* poets. A convert to Catholicism, Montoro flaunted his Jewish heritage by dramatizing the plight of fellow converts, victims of discrimination and violent persecution. He wrote about a unique event in Jewish history: a community of thousands brought into Catholicism through force or compulsion, and that over the generations struggled to integrate into the Spanish Christian world.

These *conversos* quickly achieved enormous success. They obtained high public office, rose to the top of Church hierarchy, and married into the aristocracy. But their success bred resentment. During sixty years of civil war and instability, they became handy scapegoats and inherited the hatred and resentment traditionally directed against Jews. This led to violent anti-convert riots, mostly centered in Southern Spain.

By the reign of King Enrique IV (half-brother to his successor,

Queen Isabella), most *conversos* had been Christian for at least two generations. The instinct of earlier generations of *conversos* to side with the ruling monarch for protection, led the first generation to side almost unanimously with King Juan II and his principal minister, Alvaro de Luna, who eventually betrayed them. When Juan's son, Enrique, inherited both the throne and civil unrest, *conversos* were found on all sides of the civil wars: some stuck by the King, some sided with his brother, Prince Alfonso, while others supported the untrustworthy minister, Don Pacheco, even after he proved he could be as treasonous to *conversos* as he had been to the King. As a result, *conversos* of the fifteenth century enjoyed less solidarity with other *conversos* than did their forefathers.

The new political loyalties of *conversos* reflected their assimilation and adoption of Old Christian manners. Although *conversos* rejected Judaism—whether through free-will or compulsion—Old Christians still distrusted and discriminated against them. This discrimination blocked the full assimilation of *conversos*, and led to the development of their own perspective and customs, which soon became an important force in Spanish art and culture.

The *converso* perspective first erupted through humor. The court jester, or *truhan*, became a feature of the Court in the fifteenth century. The jesters were largely or wholly *conversos*. This may have been due to the Jewish cultural acceptance of humor. It also reflected the *converso's* marginal status—it was easier for Old Christians to laugh at these former Jews and, conversely as outsiders, *conversos* looked more skeptically and satirically upon Castilian society.

A school of poetry developed during this period; the poets were called the *cancioneros*, or songsters. While these poets wrote in a wide variety of styles, much of their poetry was burlesque—jester poetry written to entertain and gain the patronage of the royal court and grandees. Many, if not most of these poets, were *conversos*. Among them, Antón de Montoro stood out as the *cancionero* poet who most openly admitted to his Jewish heritage. He also dramatized the plight of the *converso* and protested the killings and discrimination they suffered in Castile.

Born circa 1404, in or close to Córdoba, it is probable that Montoro converted around the time of the anti-Jewish legislation of 1414. Montoro's Jewish name was Saul, and his mother remained Jewish.

He became known as the "*Ropero,*" due to his occupation as a clothes peddler. This moniker was indicative of Montoro's social status as well as his self-depreciating style of humor. In general, tradesmen were considered to be of low status in Castilian society, and *roperos* ranked particularly low. While a tailor could service the aristocracy, and anyone with money would have clothes made-to-order, *roperos* sold used or ready-made clothes and only serviced those too poor to buy fashionable wear.

Montoro's first-known poems date from the 1440s, when he obtained the patronage of a dominant Córdoban aristocrat, Alonso de Aguilar. Montoro became one of the most successful poets of his day, engaging in poetry duels or correspondence with other well-known poets. Montoro may have stressed his low-class Jewish background partly as a pose. Like jesters, comic *cancioneros* poked fun at themselves, a prominent *converso* poet Juan Baena, for example, pointed to his physical ugliness and short stature.[1] Like a physical defect Montoro's low-ranking occupation and Jewish background allowed for self-deprecating humor.

Montoro often satirized his Jewish descent. In a poem to his wife, he notes that they were well matched as *conversos*, and that he won the match because she was considered unworthy for any reputable Christian:

> You and I
> and to have but little worth,
> we had better both pervert
> a single house only, and not two.
> For wishing. to enjoy a good husband
> would be a waste of time for you,
> and an offense to good reason;
> So I, old, dirty, and meek,
> will caress a pretty woman.[2]

As a comic poet of his era, he could be bawdy even by contemporary standards. For example, one of his poems is entitled, "To the Woman Who Is All Tits and Ass" ("Montoro a Una Mujer Que Todo Era Tetas Y Culo")*.*[3] In another poem, "Montoro to the Woman Who Called Him Jew," he refers to a woman as a sodomite, implying that the mouth that insulted him was also used to perform oral sex.[4]

In several poems, without entirely abandoning the satiric voice, he

bitterly protested the mistreatment of *conversos*. After the attacks on *conversos* in Carmona, he addressed King Enrique IV: "What death can you impose on me/That I have not already suffered?"[5]

The massacre of *conversos* in his hometown of Córdoba elicited a lengthy and complicated poem to Alonso de Aguilar, the aristocrat who initially befriended the *conversos,* then later deserted them and allowed them to be exiled and barred from public office: "Montoro to Don Alonso de Aguilar on the Destruction of the Conversos of Córdoba." The poem begins as a fulsome panegyric to Aguilar, possibly reflecting Montoro's need to continue to live under Aguilar's protection in Córdoba. Only after eight verses in praise of Aguilar does Montoro point to the massacre, noting that after this disaster "it would serve the *conversos* better to be Jews than Christians."[6] By verse 19, he praises the Grandee, and abjectly begs mercy for the *conversos*: "We want to give you tributes, be your slaves and serve you, we are impoverished, cuckolded, faggots, deceived, open to any humiliation only to survive." In the next verse, Motoro describes himself as "wretched, the first to wear the livery of the blacksmith" (in reference to the man who started the anti-*converso* riots). He pleads for the Grandee's mercy, while he remains "starving, naked, impoverished, cuckold, and ailing."[7] It has been suggested that this poem is an ironic attack on his former patron, yet there is no apparent irony in the poem. The attitude of the speaker of the poem seems to be mainly one of helpless despair in the wake of the destruction of his fellow *conversos*.

His best-known depiction of the plight of the *conversos* comes in his poem dedicated to Queen Isabel:

> O sad, bitter clothes-peddler *ropero*.
> who does not feel your sorrow!
> Here you are, seventy years of age,
> and have always said to the Virgin.:
> "you remained immaculate,"
> and have never sworn directly. by the Creator.
> I recite the credo, I worship
> pots full of greasy pork,
> I eat bacon half-cooked,
> listen to Mass, cross myself
> while touching holy waters—

and never could I kill
these traces of the *confeso*.
With my knees bent
and in great devotion
in days set for holiness
I pray, rosary in hand,
reciting the beads of the Passion,
adoring the God-and-Man
as my highest Lord,[8]
Yet for all the Christian things I do
I'm still called that old faggot Jew.

The epithet at the end of the verse, *puto Judio*, is a generic insult, not an imputation of homosexuality—it is the worst insult in the language: "behind the sodomite, bearer of pestilence, is the outline of the *converso.* They are joined in the worst popular insult that could be hurled: 'faggot Jew!'" [9] "The English translation of *puto Judio* cannot fully convey the pejorative sense of the masculinization of *puta*, which figures the Jewish male subject both as a whore and as the passive partner in the homosexual act."[10]

The poem ends with a chilling prediction of the soon to be established *auto-da-fé*: He asks Queen Isabella that, if she must burn *conversos*, to do it at Christmas-time, when the warmth of the fire will be better appreciated. Montoro himself evaded the Inquisition, and died soon after writing the poem, likely before the Inquisition came into force. He showed his lack of respect for the Catholic Church by leaving it only a nominal sum in his will. His wife was not as fortunate: she was burned as a heretic before April, 1487.[11]

Like his own dual identity within Spanish society, Montoro's poetry marks a dual historical significance. Following Montoro's death and concomitant with the imposition of the Spanish Inquisition and the *Limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood laws), *conversos* could no longer proudly point to their Jewish roots, even in jest. The attitudes and expressions prevalent in Spanish society no longer tolerated the likes of poets such as Montoro. Instead, *converso* artists turned to secrecy and anonymity. It is no coincidence that the two most important works by *conversos*, "La Celestina" and "Lazarillo de Tormes" (both classics of world

literature), were both initially published anonymously. Although Montoro's poetry represents the beginning and the end of the *converso* genre of poetry, the attitudes that he and other *cancioneros* embraced—irony, irreverence, and the use of lower-class characters to attack the pretensions of the higher classes—would soon inspire a much more important genre. Picaresque literature came out of the *cancionero* tradition.[12] The picaresque novel, in its turn, was to become part of the foundation of modern literature.

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11. Marquez Villanueva, p.397.
12. Victoriano Roncero Lopez, "Lazarillo, Guzman and Buffoon Literature," *MLN 116* (2001), p.237.

questions, the depositions of their family members, friends, business associates and neighbors, and the inventories of their possessions. Some investigations dragged on for years, with the record of their *procesos* filling over one thousand challenging pages hand-written in old Spanish and Portuguese with faded ink, idiosyncratic spelling, and archaic terminology and abbreviations. Reading them I often felt like a voyeur. Here were verbatim accounts of arguments between parents and children, tender moments between husbands and wives, malicious gossip, and revelations of infidelities, child abuse, and even murders. Running through all the documents were the concerns with identity that affected every aspect of these people's daily lives: whether to rest from work on Saturday, or Sunday; whether to eat bacon; whether to celebrate Passover or Easter, or both; whom to marry; how to raise their children; how to keep their secret life hidden from prying eyes.

In this issue of *Halapid* you will find the opening section of the chapter narrated by Diego Pérez de Alburquerque to his shipmate Santillana. Diego, an Iberian crypto Jew whose origins are Spanish, Portuguese, and French, spent much of his adult life in Mexico trying to eke out a living as a traveling merchant. He was not a nice man. His third brush with the Inquisition resulted in his being shipped back to Spain to row in the King's galleys.

Except from *The Lost Minyan* by David Gitlitz. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2010.

Diego Pérez de Alburquerque
1629

The ocean is flat today, flat and greasy, with a sheen that mirrors the leaden clouds. Light gray, dark gray, with flecks of crystal that glimmer like the silver ore that boasting miners pull out of their rucksacks in the taverns of Zacatecas. The sails droop. Nothing separates the gray sky from the gray sea. The horizon is as hazy as