

Vol. XIX/XX

Spring/Summer 2011/5771

Issues 2 & 3

HALAPID



***Journal of the Society for
Crypto-Judaic Studies***

Tudo se ilumina para aquele que busca a luz - Ben Rosh

HaLapid
Journal of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies
ISSN:1945-4996

Mission Statement

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies fosters the networking of people and the exchange of information to create a broader understanding of the contemporary development of crypto Jews, mainly focusing on those of Iberian origin. We are a not-for-profit organization.

Editorial Policy

HaLapid editors reserve the right to proof-read, copy-edit, as well as edit for style, substance and structure all accepted submissions. Many contributions are oral histories, and although they are indeed valid expressions of the author's experience or understanding, they may or may not be historically accurate. We do change obvious misstatements or historical inaccuracies. The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS) or *HaLapid*. Articles from *HaLapid* may be reprinted only upon consent of SCJS.

Advertisements

Would you like to promote a product, a conference, a book, a service, or another matter pertaining to the mission statement of SCJS? Our rates are as follows: Color quarter back page, \$100; black and white: full interior page, \$75, half interior, \$50, interior quarter page, \$25; business card, \$15.

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SCJS Membership

Would you like to renew your membership? Do you know someone who would like to be a member? SCJS Board of Directors recommends annual membership dues as follows: Individuals \$50; Seniors (age 65+) \$40; students \$25; Institutions \$60; Sustaining \$100; Patron \$1,000. SCJS members will have a chance to approve or reject the Board's recommendations at the SCJS Annual Meeting, August 9, 2011. Dues include yearly subscriptions to *HaLapid, Journal of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies*, as well as *The Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews* (JOSPICJ). Please make cheques payable to the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS); include your name, mailing address, city, state, zip code, country, phone number, and email and mail them to SCJS, 333 Washington Blvd., #336, Marina del Rey, CA, 90292, USA.

Call for Submissions

Do you have something you would like to share with us? *HaLapid* is seeking submissions in the form of articles, oral histories, papers, short stories, poetry and artistic expressions for its next volume. The text submissions should be formatted in .doc; 12pt Times New Roman font; single space; justified; no indentation on first line of paragraph; 2 spaces separate each paragraph; title of work should be centered; author's name appears directly below title, left side format; Chicago Manual of Style format. Inquire as to suitability of topic before sending full submission. Please submit your work by: September 1, 2011 to halapid.editor@gmail.com. Subject line to read: HaLapid Submission, your last name.

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Letter from the Editor

With turmoil plaguing Libya in recent months, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, one of the world's longest reigning dictators (1969-present) has become a frequent subject in international news. One particular story about Gaddafi caught my attention: "Is Gaddafi a Jew?"¹ It turns out that in October of 2009 Israeli Channel 2 News aired an interview with an Israeli woman, Guita Brown, and her grand-daughter, Rachel Saada. Brown, originally from Libya, claimed that her grandmother had told her that Muammar Gaddafi was her maternal second-cousin. That is to say that Gaddafi's grandmother and Brown's grandmother were sisters. Brown went on to explain that her great-aunt had married a Jewish man who abused her; she then ran away and married a wealthy Muslim sheikh and gave birth to Muammar Gaddafi's mother, who in turn married a Muslim and gave birth to Muammar Gaddafi. Saada added that therefore Gaddafi was Jewish enough to complete an Orthodox *minyán*.

The interview also included comments from Professor Yehudit Ronen of Bar-Ilan University, who noted that, while Brown's story was interesting and that it should not be ignored, there is no physical proof to corroborate Brown's story (i.e. no DNA or confirmation from Gaddafi himself). Ronen noted that over the years she has heard this same story from a number of different sources and that its popularity rises and falls over time. What really makes this story interesting, Ronen suggested, is what it tells us about Libyan Jews and their relations with their Muslim neighbors. Essentially, this is a love story about a woman running away from a Jewish man to be with a Muslim man, whether it is specifically true with regards to Gaddafi's ancestry has yet to be proven.

As an historian I often rely upon oral histories as sources that help me to interpret and understand the past. Indeed, these oral stories often form the most interesting and rewarding components of my research. How these stories are interpreted depends equally upon who is telling the story as it does upon who is listening to them. Some academic historians argue that memories, and by extension oral histories, are distorted by time and experience. However, for the person telling the story, their memories form their realities, and having someone else interpret their story in any way other than how they intended it, can be aggravating or even insulting.

Can this tension ever be resolved? I believe that the answer to this question is well illustrated in the Jewish story about two people who bring their disagreement before a rabbi. The first person pleads his case. After hearing his story, the rabbi says “You’re right.” The second person presents his side of the matter, to which the rabbi responds, “You are right.” The rebbetzin, who has been listening closely to both cases, then asks her husband, “How can they both be right?” The rabbi responds, “You are also right.” This story points to the notion that although one opinion may dominate, alternate understandings of a single event exist and should be given consideration. Ultimately, in my opinion, it is the fusion of the interpretations that gives us a better understanding of the whole. This double issue of *HaLapid*, like the previous one, will expose readers to a variety of opinions and interpretations.

In the **Conference Proceedings & Reports** section Gérard Nahon provides an overview of the first conference put on by Sefarad, the Society for Sefardic Studies, in Jerusalem. SCJS President, Dolores Sloan highlights aspects of the Board of Directors midyear meeting. Roger L. Martínez describes the *Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference*, which was held this past March at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. In the **Member Close-Ups** section Stan Hordes profiles fellow SCJS member Seth Ward. The **Tours of the Past through the Present** section features contributions from Rachel Bortnick, Jacques Cory, Harry Ezratty, and Inacio Steinhardt. Each author reveals their impressions and findings as they tour through historic crypto-Jewish sites of Spain, the Caribbean, and Portugal. The **Areas of Inquiry** section begins with Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez’s query into the role that *taqqiya* played in influencing Spanish Jewry to choose the option of conversion over martyrdom. Lina Gorenstein reveals the history of the New Christians in seventeenth and eighteenth century Brazil. Jeffrey Gorskey’s article on Antón de Montoro, adapted from his forthcoming book, *Jewish Blood*, explores the phenomenon of the *converso* poet. Ethnomusicologist Judith Cohen endeavours to enlighten us on the practice of contrafactum in Judeo-Spanish song. In the **Poetic, Artistic, and Literary Expressions** section author David Gitlitz contributes an excerpt from his recently published work, *The Lost Minyan*, which is accompanied by an article outlining the research behind his book. Poetry by Eliyahu Enriquez follows; Enriquez’s poems incorporate elements from his own

Jewish Filipino identity. The final article of this section, features artist Laura Cesana, whose works are shown on the front and back covers of this journal, and are inspired by the crypto Jews of Portugal. Included in the **Book Review** section are reviews of Miriam Bodian's book, *Dying in the Law of Moses* and of Mitchell James Kaplan's book, *By Fire, By Water*. Lastly, Joan Nathan provides a **Historical Recipe** for *haroset*; she also gives a brief introduction to the recipe's history.

HaLapid contributors are based all over the globe, including: Brazil, Canada, France, Israel, Portugal, and the USA. We hope you find the articles interesting and enjoyable!

Lillooet Nördlinger McDonnell
Editor-in-Chief

P.S. We want to hear from you! Drop us a line, tell us what you think of the journal, send us a story, comment or question.



halapid.editor@gmail.com

1. <http://jewishrefugees.blogspot.com/2009/10/was-gaddafi-jew.html>

President's Message

Join Us at SCJS's Conference in San Diego, August 7-9, 2011

Twenty-one years! That's right, more than two decades. The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS) was founded in 1991, and our 2011 conference will be the 21st gathering of those interested in "the fostering of research and networking of information and ideas into the historical and contemporary development of crypto Jews of Iberian origins." The quotation is from the mission of SCJS, as established early in its score of years, and we will be hearing a variety of presentations attempting to do just that.

Conference attendees will be hearing papers from scholars and researchers on what our mission calls "this immensely fascinating and perplexing area." They will also be offered a variety of art programs—concerts, readings and exhibits—by artists whose work is influenced by crypto-Judaic themes. They will listen to the experiences of those speaking on their exploration of potential crypto-Jewish family legacies. Some will network with academic colleagues. Others will discover new *primos*, cousins, at the conference, or find links and resources to learning more about their backgrounds and the subject. And conferees will be hanging out—with old friends and new—after sessions and during breaks, in the tropical environment of the hotel grounds and the beneficent climate that goes with San Diego and ocean breezes.

I first learned about crypto Judaism in the early 1990s, from those I met traveling New Mexico for the state's Arts Division. They had shared with me, in confidence, stories about Jewish practices in their mostly Catholic families, descended from Spanish settlers. Then, I attended a lecture by SCJS founder Stanley Hordes, which put this in perspective.

My first SCJS conference was in El Paso in 1998. Moving back to Southern California, I was fortunate to be befriended by fellow writer and SCJS member Trudy Alexi (*The Mezzuzah in the Madonna's Foot*), who made sure I went to a Sephardic Festival in LA. There, I met Art Benveniste, then *HaLapid* Editor, as well as Gloria Trujillo, then SCJS President. They told me about the upcoming conference and I quickly arranged things so I could

go. Gloria and I drove together, in the first of adventures to come, not the least of which was being waved through by a smiling guard at the checkpoint from Arizona into California, with five fragrant bags of NM green and red chilies in the back.

I hope you will respond to the Call for Papers which appears on our website, www.cryptojews.com, as well as on the back page of this issue, if you have something to present that fits what's needed. You will also find a registration form both online and in this issue. Updates to the conference program are posted regularly on the website. You can also write gtruj@aol.com if you have any questions. I hope you will arrange your schedule to vacation and to join us in San Diego in August, for what will be my lucky thirteenth conference.

I close with a tribute to Kathleen Álcara, who, as SCJS President for the past two years, has set a new standard of leadership for this position. Thanks, Kathleen, for your unique combination of steadiness and vision.

See you all in San Diego!

Dolly Sloan
SCJS President



CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS & REPORTS

**The Position and Self-Image of Women
in Sefardi Sources**

First Annual International Conference
Society for Sefardic Studies, Jerusalem, January 9-11, 2011

Gérard Nahon

The first annual international conference of *Sefarad*, the Society for Sefardic Studies was held this past January 9-11, 2011 in Jerusalem. Founded in 2009 by Yom Tov Assis, its current chairman, *Sefarad* is affiliated with the Ben-Zvi Institute and is administered through the *Hispania Judaica*: The Center for the Study of Iberian Jewry, The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI). The ultimate purpose of *Sefarad* is to promote and coordinate research in the field of Sefardic studies. This first conference brought together thirty-six lecturers from all over the globe, including participants from Germany, Brazil, Spain, France, Greece, Israel, Portugal, and Serbia.

The opening session was chaired by Michael Glatzer and began with opening remarks by Yom Tov Assis (HUJI). Renée Levine Melammed (Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies) and Shalom Sabar (HUJI) were the first presenters. Levine Melammed presented a paper entitled, "Reassessing Jewish Women's Lives in Medieval Iberia." The presenter successfully explained the status of Jewish women in the medieval Spain. Sabar's presentation was entitled, "Bride, Mother and Heroine: Images of Sephardic Women in the Visual Arts from the Middle Ages until the Modern Era," and outlined a fascinating iconography of various and unusual images of Jewish women.

The first session revolved around "Responsa Literature" and opened with a presentation by Yom Tov Assis entitled, "Widows in Medieval Sefarad: their Economic, Social and Family Position." Assis focused on the economic role played by widows in medieval Spain. In the following presentation, "La 'mujer fatal' en las fuentes judias hispanas," Moisés Orfali (Bar Ilan University), discussed the notion of the *Isha qatlanit*, women who had lost two husbands and, for that reason, were not permitted to remarry. The session ended with José Ramon Magdalena Nom de Deu's

presentation, “El papel de la mujer en la sociedad de Sefarad segun responsa y fuentes hebraicas,” which revealed the many and sometimes dramatic events handled by the rabbis.

The next session, “The Sefardi Diaspora,” (Moises Orfali, Chair) heard Ruth Lamdan (Tel Aviv University) speaking on eulogies honoring Salonika decedents. Her presentation was entitled, “After the Death: Saints, Expressions and Names of Dead Women.” My own presentation followed, and it was entitled, “The Eulogy of Rachel Mendes Dacosta, Bayonne, 5 December 1693.” I discussed how Portuguese New Christians from Bayonne observed Judaism by printing Jewish eulogies in Spanish and engraving cemetery epitaphs in Spanish and in Hebrew. The final speaker, Eleazar Gutwirth (Tel Aviv University), delivered his lecture on “From Ferrara to Salonika: Women Patients in the Sixteenth Century,” and discussed women who remained Jewish while their husbands became *conversos*.

The session “The Perception of Women in Medieval and Early Modern Texts” (Dalia Ruth Halperin, Chair) examined the daily relationship between men and women in the Middle-ages. Nahem Ilan (Lander Institute) spoke about the famous ‘And do not over-talk with the woman.’ Consideration on Several Spanish Mediaeval Commentaries and their Implications.” Nadia Zeldes (HUJI) presented “The Reforms of *Dayyan* Joseph Abenafia on Family Law and Women's status in the Wake of the Aragonese Conquest of Sicily” and discussed the changes related to an event that occurred in 1302. Alisa Meyuhas Ginio (Tel Aviv University) presented “The Perception of Jewish Women according to Rabbi 'Ya'acov Kuli's *Me 'am Lo' ez* on the Book of Genesis,” and examined the perception of women as portrayed through the eyes of a popular eighteenth-century Ladino commentator of the Bible.

In the session “Modern Literature,” (José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, Chair) Suzy Gruss (Bar Ilan University) presented “Ester Morguez Algranti de Esmirna: El Punto de vista literario de una mujer sefardi,” from the Portuguese synagogue of Smyrna. Michael Studemund Halévy (Institute für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden, Hamburg) presented “La mujer en el lenguaje erotico sefardi: fuentes bulgarias.” Lucia Liba Mucznik (University of Lisbon) presented “‘Da Mulher-anjo à balzaquiana:’ A representação of 'judía' na literatura portuguesa do séc. XIX” and

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highlighted—from the perspective of women in the New Christian milieu—change: from the grotesque to the romantic.

The session “The Converso Home,” (Nitai Shinan, Chair) included three presentations. Isabel M. R. Mendes Drumond Braga (University of Lisbon) presented an economic and social survey entitled “On the property and Occupations of seventeenth and eighteenth century New Christians in Portugal and Brazil.” Her discussion focused on 300 inventories of goods confiscated from New Christians by the courts of the Holy Office in Lisbon, Evora, and Coimbra, which involved 128 women, aged thirteen to eighty. Many of the women were single or widowed and earned their own living. Some worked as petty traders or as manufacturers of artificial flowers; others were in charge of sugar cane plantations in Paraiba; still others possessed slaves whom they used to sell candy in the streets of Rio. Schulamith Halévy (University of Illinois) presented “Mujeres Fuertes: Women of Valor among the *anusim*,” commenting on Portuguese prayers of the *anusim* or descendants of *conversos* in Mexico. She emphasized the creative, liturgical, and literary capacity of these *converso* women. Lina Gorenstein (University of São Paulo) examined “The New Christian Women in Colonial Brazil in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” Her research was based on inquisitorial trials, and she showed how women made their way into economic activities and created their own often dramatic destinies.

The second day began with the session “The Image of Women in Medieval Texts” (José Ramon Magdalena Nom de Deus, Chair). Meritxell Blasco Orellana (University of Barcelona) presented the first paper, “La mujer en fuentes médicas séfardies hebraico” and examined previously unreleased material for medical recipes. Hanna Davidson (Lander Institute) presented “Rabbi Avraham of Girona and the Night Women Witches in fourteenth century Catalonia,” and revealed some strange and unknown practices of daily life in medieval Catalonia. Rachel Peled Cuartas (University of Illinois) presented “Between lo Terrenal y lo Divino: Una imagen femenina in Don Vidal Benbenist y el arcipreste de Hita,” and compared the visions of female otherness in Jewish sources and reflections on human destiny in Christian sources.

The session “Sefardi Women in Modern Time” (Avraham David, Chair) opened with Jelena Filipovic and Ivana Vucina Simovic

(University of Belgrade and Kragujevac, Serbia). Their presentation “Asociacion de las mujeres judias de Belgrado como vehiculo/agente la modernización y emancipacion femenina” showed how women's societies, such as the Umanidad in Sarajevo or Sociedad de Beneficencia de las Judias, *Kupat Shalom* de Skopje contributed, along with the Alliance Israélite Universelle, schools which encouraged the emancipation of Jewish women. The session continued with Moshe Ovadia's (Bar Ilan University) “Socio-economic world of Maghrebi Sephardic women in four holy cities at the time of the British Mandate (1918-1948)” in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias. The session ended with Yitzhak Kerem (Aristotele University, Thessaloniki), “Sephardic Female Dress in Salonika: Issues of halakha and modesty in the 19th and 20th centuries.” He discussed feminine clothing as prescribed by notions of religious modesty.

In the session “Women and Early Modern Society,” (Aldina Quintana, Chair) Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros and José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim (Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical) presented “Cristãos (ãs), Mouriscos (as), Judeus e Mouros” and “Dialogos em transito no Portugal,” which discussed the still poorly understood relationships between Jews, *conversos*, moors and *morisques* in sixteenth century Spain and Morocco. Raquel Sperber (HUJI) presented “Fermosa/Raquel “judía” Toledo: transformaciones de la leyenda,” and followed the legend of the love affair between the Jews of Toledo with King Alphonse as depicted through the novel *La desgraciada Raquel* by Antonio Mira de Amescua, ca 1625.

The last session “Women in Early Modern Literature” (Tamar Alexander, Chair) heard from Ruth Fine (HUJI) on “Mulieres malae sunt? La representacion de la mujer judia en obras del Siglo de Oro español” and Florbela Veiga Frade (Nova Universidade de Lisboa) on “The Rainbow Colors that Portray the Feminine *Historia de Rut* in João (Moshe) Delgado.” A prolific New Christian author, João Pinto Delgado lived for a time in Rouen where he published in 1627 *Poema de la Reyna Ester, Lamentaciones del Profeta Jeremias, Historia de Ruts y otras poesias*. His character of Ruth focuses on her past as a *converso* and her return to the Holy Land to her own religious and messianic callings. The conference was capped by a visit to the Israel Museum. Conference participants admired, among other wonders,

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the Portuguese synagogue of *Tzedek ve-Shalom* of Paramaribo (Suriname, 1736), which was disassembled and rebuilt with its original furnishings in Jerusalem.

Gérard NAHON was a professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études Section des sciences religieuses, Sorbonne. He is a founding member of Sefarad. www.sefarad-studies.org

Are you interested in San Diego's Jewish Past??

If you want to brush-up on your knowledge of San Diego's Jewish history, Stanley Schwartz, President of the Jewish Historical Society of San Diego, has suggested that SCJS members read an article written by Stan and Laurel Schwartz on the topic:

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0018_0_17476.html

SCJS Midyear Board Meeting Summary

Dolores Sloan

February 12-13, 2011 the SCJS Board of Directors met in Los Angeles and Santa Monica for the midyear meeting. The following items were covered:

1. Approved candidates to be considered for a slate of officers and members at large for the Board of Directors to be voted on by the general membership at the Annual Meeting, August 9, 2011, following the annual conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, San Diego. Following is the slate that has since been finalized:

President: Dolores Sloan
Immediate Past President: Kathleen Alcalá
First Vice President: Roger L. Martínez

Vice Presidents:
Program: Seth Ward
Membership: Arthur Benveniste
Communication: Lillooet Nördlinger
Conferences & Meetings: Gloria Trujillo
Secretary: Rachel Amado Bortnick
Treasurer: Diana Zertuche

Members at Large:
César Ayala Casas
Harry Ezratti
Debbie Wohl Isard
Seth Kunin
Abe Lavender
Lois Rose Rose
Arnold Trujillo
Matthew Warshawsky

2. Appointed Stanley Hordes Senior Advisor to the Board

3. Accepted, with regret, the resignation of President Kathleen Alcalá, and expressed appreciation her wise leadership and vision for the Society; appointed Dolores Sloan as President to complete the balance of the term

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4. Approved recommended changes to Bylaws to be presented to Annual Meeting
5. Agreed on need for Society to affiliate with a four-year academic institution
6. Received Treasurer Diana Zertuche's report showing a positive financial situation (copies available to members on request)
7. Supported efforts to secure additional financial support for programs and speakers, scholarships and fellowships and to assist officers and board with necessary expenses
8. Received a grant of \$2,000 from the Martin Sosin-Petit-Stratton Foundation, to continue supporting arts programs at the annual conference; presented in person by its President, Marty Sosin
9. Participated in Strategic Planning, initiated by presentation by President Alcala, of potential future models for SCJS to consider and considered in context of SCJS moving into its third decade of service
10. Approved survey of membership on visions and expectations for Society
11. Discussed potential online communication and its use
12. Considered choice of the conference hotel for San Diego
13. Analyzed conference expenses and fees and considered impact on members and attendance

Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference

March 10-11, 2011
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Roger L. Martínez

On March 10-11, 2011, Sephardic and crypto Jews, scholars, artists, and community members gathered for the *Sephardic Memory and Movement Conference*, a cultural and scholarly event that highlighted the history of the Sephardim and their contributions to the American Southwest. Focused on the notions of “memory” and “movement,” the conference explored both the history of the Spanish Jewry as well as its continued resilience in the Americas and Israel.



The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) hosted and generously funded the program that attracted approximately seventy persons from Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Morocco, and the United Kingdom. Over the course of one evening and an additional day, the participants attended lectures on historical and contemporary issues surrounding the Sephardim, a musical performance of medieval and modern Sephardic music, and an art exhibit of crypto-Jewish glassware.

The keynote address given by Seth Kunin (Durham University and past SCJS Board Member) intricately explored the issues of memory and the construction of crypto-Jewish identity in contemporary New Mexico. Kunin’s lecture identified memory as the focal point of a crypto-Jewish identity and he buttressed his argument by noting that memory forms the basis of origin and identity narratives and crypto-Jewish cultural practices. Fundamentally, Kunin posited that the underlying structure of crypto-Jewish identity is derived from folklore, oral history, and ultimately, memory.

Prior to Kunin’s keynote address, Roger L. Martínez (UCCS and SCJS Board Member), relayed the historical trajectory of

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Sephardic Jews from the time of their prominent settlement in the Iberian Peninsula during the Roman Era (200 BCE to 200 CE) until the anti-Jewish pogroms of the 1390s and their final expulsion from Spain in 1492 by the Catholic Monarchs. Stanley Hordes (University of New Mexico and SCJS Board Member) offered a corollary lecture on Jewish families' survival as they migrated secretly to colonial Spanish America and, especially, present-day New Mexico. He offered that many of Spanish families who were associated with the conquest and settlement of New Mexico, such as the Oñate clan, hailed from *converso* backgrounds.

Two splendid vocal and lute music performances by Vanessa Paloma and accompanied by the accomplished pianist, Abe Minzer (UCCS), showcased medieval and contemporary cultural issues pertaining to the Sephardim. Relating to the history of Sephardic music, Paloma stated:

Women have been the main transmitters of this repertoire throughout the Sephardic Diaspora. This feminine Oral Torah stresses themes of women's purity, a wife's faithfulness to her husband and the soul's longing for the Divine. Stories from medieval Europe's nobility or the relationships between Christians and Muslims during the Reconquista wars reappear even when melodies may have gone through numerous transformations. They stand as examples that may elucidate delicate issues faced by Jewish women throughout the Sephardic Diaspora.

In her solo appearance, Paloma performed *Al Pasar por Casablanca*, *Una Hija Tiene el Rey*, *Bendigamos*, *Paxarico sos mi*, *Ein Keloheinu/Non como nuestro Dio*, *Primo Rabi*, *Los Bilbilicos*, and *Mosé salió de Misrayim*. Paloma and Minzer also performed contemporary Sephardic music composed by Ofer Ben-Amots (Colorado College), including selections from *Kantigas Ulvidadas* and *Songs from the Pomegranate Garden*.

A key aspect of the event, especially as demonstrated by the performance of Ben-Amot's works, related to contemporary interpretations and revival of Sephardic Jewish and crypto-Jewish culture. Ben-Amots noted that Ladino, the language of the exiled Sephardim, remains a vibrant language in Jerusalem as well as in contemporary Israeli music. In a separate panel on current Jewish

and Latino affairs, Dr. Seth Ward (University of Wyoming) guided Corinne Brown and Michael Atlas-Acuña in a discussion of the state of community relations and awareness of Sephardic Jewish history.

At the conclusion of the conference Sonya Loya, a Sephardic returnee to Judaism, lectured on and presented her *Holy Water, Holy Saturday* series of clay and glass artwork. One of her inspiring pieces, *Hamsa Light*, was showcased on the commemorative conference poster. The palm-sized *Hamsa Light*, made of roku clay and diachronic glass, serves both as a mezuzah and a receptacle for holy water.

Overall, the conference and the number of attendees demonstrate that southern Colorado is a receptive audience to the study and exploration of the Sephardim and crypto Judaism.

Roger L. Martínez , PhD, is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

Calling all storytellers!

The “Less is More” Short-Story Contest*

Ernest Hemingway is reported to have said that his greatest short-story was only 6 words long.

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

HaLapid invites readers to submit their 6 word short-story (no it can't be longer) with a crypto-Jewish theme. Deadline, July, 31, 2011. Prize for top story! The winner will be announced at the SCJS Conference in San Diego. A selection of the stories will be published in the next issue of *HaLapid*. Email stories to: halapid.editor@gmail.com or herrera.miriam@gmail.com. *Minimum of 10 contestants required.

MEMBER CLOSE UPS



Member Profile: Seth Ward

Stan Hordes

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies Vice-President for Programing, Professor Seth Ward, brings a wealth of education and experience to his position. Serving as Program Chair for the 21st Annual Conference, to take place in San Diego this August 7-9, Professor Ward has been on the faculty of the University of Wyoming (UW) since January 2003, where he teaches Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Prior to this, he directed the University of Denver's Institute for Islamic-Judaic Studies for ten years. Today he continues to be a Research Associate of the Institute for the Study of Israel in the Middle East at the Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver (UD).

Professor Ward received his academic degrees from Yale University, with additional studies at Hebrew University and at the Jewish Theological Seminary. His teaching has included courses on Islam, Middle East, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, Encounters

between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and Women in Judaism, The Splendor of Spain, Jewish Mysticism, and other topics. Ward initiated and taught the Arabic program at UD, and has taught both Arabic and Hebrew at UW.

Professor Ward has not confined his professional activities to the classroom. As a Wyoming Council for the Humanities Forum presenter, Ward has lectured on Islam, Middle East, and other issues in towns and community colleges throughout Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. He is widely published in a number of scholarly journals. From 1996 to 2001 he served as Director of the Hispano Crypto-Jewish Resource Center in Denver, maintaining a reference library on the University of Denver campus, preparing resource folders, acquiring funding, and supervising oral history projects, consulting and advising researchers, journalists and crypto-Jewish descendants.

TOURS OF THE PAST THROUGH THE PRESENT

Returning to Sefarad:

The Ladinokomunita Group visit Spain
October 6-18, 2010

Rachel Amado Bortnick

For each of the last four years, Ladinokomunita (LK) members have gotten together to tour a country with historic or current Sephardic significance.¹ After Israel, Turkey, and Argentina, in the autumn of 2010 we visited Spain, the land of our deepest roots. For many it was their first return to Sefarad since 1492.

The first four days of our tour in Madrid, Toledo, and Segovia included members from France and their local organization called *Aki Estamos* (We are here). (What a beautifully defiant and proud name for these Sephardic remnants of the Holocaust!) Thereafter, in Sevilla, Jaen, Cordoba, Granada, and Barcelona, our tour group numbered only twenty four. We traveled by bus, high-speed train, and airplane. Our tour was arranged by one of our Spanish members, Jose Galves, a descendant of *anusim*, who is now returning to Judaism and who co-owns "Pissarro Sefarad Tours." Among the extraordinary arrangements Jose made for us included a very official reception in Sevilla, which I will describe below.

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Also, we had the cooperation of “Tarbut Sefarad,”² whose representatives greeted us wherever we went, and whose president, Dr. Mario Saban, gave us an unforgettable tour of Jewish Barcelona, and a lecture during a wonderful Shabbat lunch. But in this short space, let me give a few short notes on impressions of some of the towns.

Madrid holds no visible traces of its Jewish past. We toured the city one rainy Saturday and the guide recited her usual spiel, mentioning perhaps that this church was built on the site of a synagogue, or that convent on the site of a Jewish cemetery. In Plaza Mayor, there was no mention of the spectacular *auto-da-fé* that took place here, where countless “Judaizers” were burned alive to the delight of thousands.

The main synagogue, where we attended Friday night services, is a nondescript building on a remote side street, as if trying to hide from the public eye, even though Madrid has about 12,000 Jews. Since 1994, national Spanish radio has hosted a weekly Sephardic program presented by our friend Matilda Barnatan who resides there.³

Toledo has not a single Jew, but the spirit of our ancestors is everywhere. With its two medieval synagogues (although one is a Jewish museum, both structures bear Christian names), and a well delineated *Juderia* (Jewish quarter), Toledo flaunts its Jewish past for touristic purposes, largely ignoring the sordid side of that past. The *Santo niño de La Guardia* (Holy Child of La Guardia) is greatly revered, and the ignoble Inquisition-invented legend, which resulted in the burning of 11 Jews in 1491, is depicted in a painting at the entrance to the Cathedral of Toledo.⁴

Segovia, a beautiful town with the largest Roman aqueducts anywhere and the city of Abraham Senior, also has a well-kept *Juderia*. In a convent, we heard about the accusation of “desecrating the host,” which caused the confiscation of the Mayor Synagogue. As we came out, a group of us broke into song: *Am Israel Hai* (the people of Israel lives).

In **Sevilla**, on October 11, 2010, at the appointed time at the Alcazar, in the *Salon de Embajadores*, we were welcomed “home,” by an official, Rosa Mar Prieto-Castro Garcia-Alix (*Teniente de*



Ladino komunita group in Toledo.

Alcalde Delegada Fiestas Mayores.) Coming to the microphone, she added:

Estamos encantados de acogerles en Sevilla y esperamos que se encuentren como en casa, porque esta es su casa. Para muchos, quizás, nunca ha dejado de ser su casa.

She spoke at length, of the multicultural history of the city, and of Jewish history in particular—mentioning for the first time



Sra. García-Alix welcoming LK, Seville.

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anywhere—the murderous anti-Jewish riots of 1391 which had begun here. She also spoke of our language:

*Es un verdadero placer ver cómo mantienen vivo el idioma de los habitantes de nuestra antigua Sevilla. Los pueblos que comparten un idioma, comparte por ello mismo, unas raíces culturales que facilitan la amistad y el entendimiento. Por ello, espero que se sientan como en casa entre nosotros.*⁵

We had tears in our eyes.

In **Cordoba** who can forget the welcome and attention we received at Casa Sefarad, a gem of a Jewish museum and center, especially from its founder, Sebastian de la Aza? Or, standing in front of the statue of Maimonides, as we read a poem in Ladino describing the outpouring of emotions?⁶



Sra. Garcia-Alix & Rachel Bortnick

In **Jaen**, center of Spain's olive oil industry, home to largest preserved Arab bath-house and host to a city-square and street bearing the name of Rabbi Sabetay Djaen, we received the most congenial and longest welcome and personal attention, especially from Rafael Camara, town historian and representative of Tarbut Sefarad. We also attended the Andalusian *feria* (fair). There we were wined and dined and welcomed by the *alcaldessa* (lady mayor) and her entourage. Our friend Al DeJaen, from Seattle, got special attention for carrying the name of his Spanish ancestral home.

Granada, like Madrid, has erased all traces of its Jewish past. Nevertheless, in the Alhambra Palace, our guide (who claimed to be of Jewish ancestry) did mention that the edict expelling the Jews was signed there. The next morning, Jose R. Ayoso, Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Granada, lectured briefly on the Jewish history of the town, and led us through the area that was once Jewish.

Any Jew who goes to **Barcelona** must contact Tarbut Sefarad first! Mario Saban knows the history and the sites, even where the

famous disputation involving Nahmanides took place, and he has permission to enter places where no one else can. And to be inside the Mayor Synagogue, the only medieval synagogue which has been rededicated as a living synagogue, gives one a sense of triumph.

Girona and Besalu are two towns close to Barcelona with a lot of Jewish reminders, but not a single Jew. Girona's Jewish museum is a jewel, and the Judaica bookstore below belongs to J. Vicente Zalaya, a member of LK.

This trip was a "once-in-a-lifetime" emotional experience for all of us. In 1492, Spain "cleansed" itself of Jews and much of that hostility remains to this day. We saw an example of this at the Jewish monument in the form of a sculptured menorah in Jaen, which was covered in antisemitic graffiti. Almost everywhere we went we saw or heard some expressions of anti-Jewishness. But we also saw incredible congeniality and pro-Jewishness. Were the official welcomes we received genuine, or were they, as cynics would say, a ploy to promote tourism? I believe they were both. Still, none of us wish to move to Spain anytime soon.

Sources

1. LK was founded in December of 1999, is the online group for speakers of Judeo-Spanish (Ladino). At present it has over 1300 members from 35 countries, and can be found at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ladinokomunita/>
2. www.tarbutsefarad.com
3. www.rtve.es/radio/20100127/emision-sefardi/314526.shtml
4. Read more at: www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=473&letter=G#ixzz1FEARCDtC
5. Anyone who wishes to have the entire text of the speech can write to me at: bortnickra@sbcglobal.net
6. Anyone who wishes to have a copy of that poem by Jenny Tarabulus can request it from me.

How I discovered the synagogue of Coria

Originally published in Spanish "[Cómo descubrí la sinagoga de Coria](#)," in *Tarbut Sefarad, asociación cultural*. March 2011 www.tarbutsefarad.com/index.php/es/

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Jacques Cory

I am a businessman, with a doctorate in business ethics. I teach courses in various universities and I have published academic as well as literary works. However, I am not an archeologist, an historian, or a medium. The following story can be read on a realistic or a surrealistic level. Some people will say "if it is not true, it is a good fairy tale," others will read it with skepticism, wonder or incredulity. Everyone according to his own inclination...

On August 10th 1998, I wrote a letter to Jose Maria Alvarez Pereira, the mayor of Coria in Spain, notifying him that I intended to visit his town, as it is thought that my family name originates from there. I told him that my mother-tongue was Ladino, but that I had also studied Spanish. I added that I live in Israel, was born in Egypt, from parents and grandparents originating from Greece and Turkey, and that I had visited Spain many times on business.



The entrance to Coria's synagogue

Ten days later, the mayor of Coria wrote back. "Greetings to Don Jacobo Cory, Being aware of the interest that you have in our town I am pleased to invite and welcome you...Jose Maria Alvarez Pereira takes this opportunity to express personal respect to you."

That same day, I received an email from Juan Pedro Moreno, the archeologist responsible for the Service of Historic and Cultural

Consultancy for Coria's town council. Moreno wrote, "The motive of your visit seems to me very interesting and exciting. Mr. Mayor has transmitted to me your intention to visit us. Coria keeps in its historic memory the name of the synagogue street, and there are two possible locations. We hope to see you soon in our town, you will be well received." On the 24th of August 1998, I responded to Moreno saying that I would like very much to visit with him in his town and to see the possible locations of the synagogue and the Jewish quarter. Who knows, it might be that with my DNA I would be able to assist him in finding the exact location where my ancestors lived.

On the 8th of October, I visited the old synagogue of Castelo de Vide on the Portuguese side of border. I noticed how that synagogue was built, and the next day my wife, Ruthy, and I traveled to Coria where we were received by Moreno. He showed us three possible sites where the synagogue could have been, but I discarded the first two options. (DNA, intuition or luck?) When we arrived at the third site, which was a private home, Moreno told me that the old lady, Mrs. Castaniera, who lived there was unwilling to open her home for anybody. Suddenly, Mrs. Castaniera, who as it turned-out looked exactly like my mother, opened the door and came to greet us. I introduced myself, told her that I came from Israel, and that my family name is Cory. I said that we were trying to find out the location of the old synagogue and that we would like to visit her house. She smiled and invited us in.

Moreno was astonished. When we entered the house, I saw that it was built exactly like the synagogue of Castelo de Vide. The main difference was that the porch was square and not in an arch as it had been with the synagogue of Vide. When I asked why, she told me that she heard from her family, who had lived in the same house for centuries, that the original porch was in arch but it was destroyed during the earthquake of 1755. We went down to the basement and she showed us ancient books, but the oldest one was from 1500, after the Jews were expelled from Spain. Mrs. Castaniera told Moreno that she would allow archeological excavations of her house to discover if it was indeed Coria's synagogue.

In 1999, Mrs. Castaniera's house was sold to a private owner and as of 2011 no excavations have been made. Moreno informed me



The Corys in front of Coria's Cathedral

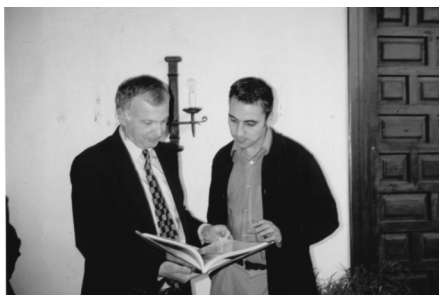
that Coria's archives show that Mrs. Castaniera's house was effectively the site of the synagogue. I read on the internet that Coria's Jewish community dates back to the twelfth century. Approximately forty-six families lived in the Jewish quarter, including goldsmiths and tax collectors. When the Jews were expelled from Spain, some of them settled in Portugal where

they were later converted to Christianity. Truly, those are the facts.

Due to Coria's proximity to Portugal, I presume that after fleeing to Portugal in 1492 Coria's Jews (my ancestors among them) may have thought that they would one day return to Coria and they left the synagogue in the care of one of the families who remained behind. It is possible that Mrs. Castaniera was the descendent of this family. It was common for Marranos to change their names to the names of trees—*castaniera*, the chestnut tree, for example.

When they fled, Coria's Jews must have taken all the books written in Hebrew, because there were no books in the house dated before 1500. The Jews of Portugal were forced to convert to Christianity, but many of them later fled with the assistance of Doña Gracia Mendes and others to Turkey, Greece and Italy, where my family lived until they emigrated to Egypt, Israel, France and Brazil.

Mrs. Castaniera, who, being a Marrana, probably knew that her house was the synagogue, decided in her old age to enable excavations and transform the house to its initial function of a synagogue. Her likeness to my mother was not an optical illusion. Indeed, even today many Sephardic Jewish women resemble Spanish women, as they have intermarried with Sephardic men for 500 years. The



Cory and Moreno

sympathy that Mrs. Castaniera showed us, opening her house to a Jewish Israeli while she did not want to open it to her fellow town's people, proved probably that she knew something of her Jewish ancestry. But who knows how things happen. Why did I decide to visit Coria? Why did the archeologist ask me to assist him in finding the synagogue? Why did Mrs. Castaniera decide to open her house to us? How did a descendant of Coria, coming from Israel, discover the synagogue after 500 years—is it witchcraft, a negligible incident, a logical story? Who can really know?

*Como me siguen
En fila interminable
Todos los yos que he sido!
Como se abre el ante mi
En infinita fila*

Para todos los yos que voy a ser!

Y que poco, que nada soy yo

Este yo, de hoy

Que casi es de ayer,

Que va a ser todo de mañana!

—Juan Ramon Jimenez, “El presente,” *La realidad invisible*



Patio of Coria's synagogue

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An historical tour through the Jewish Caribbean

Harry A. Ezratty

Since 1995 I have led Jewish heritage cruises throughout the Caribbean. Participants most often come with the traditions of Eastern and Central European Jewry. We sail past some of the thirty plus inhabited islands of the Caribbean forming a graceful and lush archipelago (together with others sparsely inhabited) beginning with Cuba ninety miles south of Florida and extending to Curaçao, off the coast of Venezuela.

Many islands were once home to Sephardic Jews, refugees from or descendants of those who suffered under Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions. This region, known as the West Indies, is home to the

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oldest continuous Jewish presence in the Western Hemisphere. One could argue that until the middle of the nineteenth century it was the most significant Jewish community in the New World. A few islands, like Jamaica, Barbados, Curaçao and the US Virgin Islands are still home to original settler families.

When I first address a tour group as we push through the Caribbean Sea, I always say:

“Welcome to the oldest continuous Jewish neighborhood in the Western Hemisphere.”

This statement often sets the group abuzz. American Jews tend to focus on the New World’s Jewish presence beginning with the great migrations of 1880-1920. Some are aware of the German migration of the 1840s. Few, if any, have clear knowledge of the first Jews to settle in the Americas other than the famous group of twenty-three who came ashore in New York (at the time Dutch *Nieuw Amsterdam*) in 1654.

As we sail through the Caribbean I explain the history of these West Indian Jews with Hispanic names who spoke no Yiddish but rather the languages of Iberia as well as Ladino, the special Spanish dialect used among themselves. I tell them: “These settlers were expelled from Recife, Brazil, where they lived peacefully as Jews under Dutch rule for a quarter of a century. When the Portuguese took the colony away from the Dutch in 1654, the Jews were in peril. They were *anusim* or forced converts subject to the inquisition. As such, they faced torture and possible death because they had abandoned Catholicism.”

It is difficult for many on the tour to comprehend this. “How did they get to Brazil?” they ask. I treat them to an overview of the history of the horrors of the Inquisition, the *anusim*, those who willingly converted and the flight to Amsterdam, ‘the New Jerusalem,’ where they shed their forced and unwanted religion and began rebuilding a strong Sephardic culture under the auspices of a friendly Dutch government which allowed them to openly settle in their colonies as Jews.”

Most tourists are impressed by what they see at Curaçao, Barbados and St. Thomas, where there are old synagogues, cemeteries and

vibrant Jewish communities. It is a graphic reminder of the tenacity of the Jewish people. When they walk through the ancient graveyards filled with stones going back to the middle of the 1600s, they linger to read the inscriptions, marveling at the gorgeous carvings, some depicting a deceased's profession or station in life. "How interesting." "Who were these people; what were they doing here?" they ask. Their interest is genuine and many marvel at learning about these men and women, who not only returned to the faith of their ancestors, but were important contributors to the world economy with their milling and export of one of the world's most important commodities—sugar.

I make my participants work. I purposely bring them to the tiny islands of Nevis and St. Eustatius. They are difficult to get to; their airports can accommodate only small propeller plans. We have to proceed by sea from the harbor at St. Kitts to these islands. Twenty or twenty-five of us jam into a small ferry or a work boat and proceed across the open sea. As we pass St. Kitts and bounce over a choppy sea, I remind my group that they are now following the same routes refugee *anusim* followed centuries ago, accompanied by their families and possessions. There are no longer any Jews on St. Eustatius or Nevis.

On British-oriented Nevis, the local historical society highlights the island's Jewish past and takes excellent care of the old Jewish graveyard. We walk through the old cemetery, reading gravestones written in Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew and English. Then we proceed to Jew's Walk, a lush, leafy country lane flanked by a sturdy stone wall connecting the cemetery to the synagogue which disappeared so long ago. I tell them that Alexander Hamilton was born on this island and that as a young boy he attended the Jewish day school. It is a revelation. Some of the comments I regularly hear are: "I never knew. Or "How come I never learned about these people in Hebrew school?"

At St. Eustatius, a dependency of the Netherlands, my tours are always greeted by the island's governor as we alight from our boat at dockside. Less than 3000 people live there, but they have a fierce pride in *Honen Dolim*, the old eighteenth century synagogue which was torched in 1781 (along with rest of the island) by the British navy during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. The *Honen Dolim* synagogue has recently undergone restoration, all done with the

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efforts of the “Statians” (as the islanders are known). They maintain the old synagogue, the cemetery and the *mikveh* in prime condition. Long ago I prayed within its ruined walls with a group of fellow Caribbean Jews. The chairs, lecterns and food were provided by the accommodating Statians.

It is a living lesson in the history of how the *anusim* lifted themselves from the depths of religious intolerance into freedom, long before the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe came to America. My group walks among the old gravestones marveling at the Hispanic names, inscriptions and carvings unique to West Indian Jewish cemeteries and at the way they have been lovingly preserved by non-Jews.

No cruise ships dock at these out-of-the-way-islands so the uniqueness of Nevis and St. Eustatius is almost a secret. Islanders always greet my tours warmly. Relatively few tourists come here and the islanders make sure my groups leave with a new understanding of the pioneering role of seventeenth century Sephardic Jews in the Caribbean.

I field many questions on the return to St. Kitts. I can tell that the members of the tour have understood the many things I have pointed out. Some say they will read to learn more about these Jews when they get home. I have made some impact. After our cruise is over I return home to find requests for my books and some Jewish groups inviting me to lecture after learning about me from a member of the Jewish Heritage Tour.

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The Tale of Belmonte's Crypto Jews

Inacio Steinhardt

Long after their Spanish neighbors, Portuguese municipalities have finally recognized the potential of Jewish tourism.

This probably has to do with a surge of interest among the Portuguese to unveil their crypto-Jewish roots, concomitantly with a new momentum among young and not-so-young historians who

engage in the research of Portugal's Jewish past.

Revisiting villages, where I perambulated several decades ago, I find a change in the atmosphere. In the past, these so-called "Jewish villages" were easily identified by the local population, but back then it was extremely difficult to get the old women to recognize that they were *anusim*, let alone talk about their secret practices. Today it is different. After a few decades of increased numbers of educated people in the villages, the secret praying meetings and ritual ceremonies became almost extinct. Now, a new generation has emerged, which is anxious to learn from their grandmothers, mothers and aunts about their secret ancestral traditions. When I go there today, even the old people, who were so secretive in the past, step forwards when asked, and proudly declare: "We are Jews, we are all Jews."

Here and there, we are invited by the local councils to conferences, which attract researchers and simple tourists, if for no other reason than our contribution to the local economy.

Jewish museums have been inaugurated or are in the process of creation. They will be included in the new "Jewish Roadmap of Portugal," which is in-the-making in several districts.

Obviously, Belmonte, the unique village where crypto Judaism has been kept for over four centuries, is the first place and a must for the Jewish tourist. Belmonte now has a synagogue, a Jewish cemetery and a Jewish Museum, which receives thousands of visitors every year.

Several years ago, the scene in Belmonte was quite different. I met, for the first time, a family of crypto Jews from Belmonte on the evening of Kol Nidre, at the Lisbon synagogue, Shaare Tikva. Elias Diogo Henriques, the butcher, his wife, daughter and son-in-law undertook what was then considered a long journey, in order to fulfill a promise. Their enterprise was a breakthrough in the relations between Belmonte's crypto Jews and mainstream Judaism. On their return to the village, they were received with mixed feelings.

Until the arrival of Samuel Schwarz, in 1915, Portugal's crypto Jews did not know of the existence of other Jews in the world. The

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 “tehora” (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

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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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HaLapid: Journal for the SCJS

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 Beinart 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,³ 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-Halabiyah, 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*

Lina Gorenstein

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 en florese”). 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, ongoing 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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1. Edwin Seroussi, *Incipitario sefardí : el cancionero judeoespañol en fuentes hebreas (siglo XV-XIX)*. Con la colaboración de Rivka Havassy. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2009.
2. Amnon Shiloah, “The Music of the Jewish Communities in Greece and Turkey and its Relation to Byzantine Music,” *Musica antiqua* VII, 1985: pp.250-251.
3. Jeff Summit. “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy?” Identity and Melody at an American *Simhat Torah* Celebration.” *Ethnomusicology* 37(1) 1992: pp.41-62.
4. Ellen Koskoff, *Music in Lubavitcher Life*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2001: pp.77-78, 97.

5. Judith Cohen, "'Maria, sister of Aaron, play your tambourine:' Music in the Lives of Crypto-Jewish Women in Portugal," In Tamar Alexander, ed. *Gender and Identity: El Prezente: Studies in Sephardic Culture* p. 3. Be'er Sheva: University of Ben Gurion Press, 2009: pp.293-314.
6. Cohen, "Musical Bridges, The Contrafact Tradition in Judeo-Spanish Songs," pp.121-7; Seroussi and Weich-Shahak, "Judeo-Spanish *Contrafacts* and Musical Adaptations, the Oral Tradition," pp.164-194. See also Avner Bahat, "Les contrafacta-hebreux des romanzas judéo-espagnoles." *Revista de Musicología* 9, 1986: pp.68-141; and Israel J. Katz, 'Contrafacta' and the Judeo-Spanish Romancero, A Musicological View," *Hispanic Studies in Honor of J. H. Silverman*, ed. J.V. Recapito. Newark, Delaware, 1986, Juan de la Cuesta, pp.169-87.
7. Seroussi and Weich-Shahak, "Judeo-Spanish *Contrafacts* and Musical Adaptations, the Oral Tradition," pp. 184-185.
8. Paloma, "Gender and Liturgy in Music: Masculine and Feminine forms of Language and Ritual in Sephardic Secular and Sacred Music," pp.91-92.

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 Nación*, 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-deprecating 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 Córdoba 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, Montoro 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—

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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.

1. Francisco Marquez Villanueva, "Jewish 'Fools' of the Spanish Fifteenth Century," *Hispanic Review*, V. 50, No. 4 (Autumn, 1982), p.393.

2. Yirmihayu Yovel, "Converso Dualities in the First Generation: The Cancioneros," *Jewish Social Studies*, V.4, N. 3 (1998), pp.4-5.

3. Antón de Montoro, *Poesía completa*. Ed. Marithelma Costa. Cleveland: Cleveland State University Press, 1990, Poem No. 12

4. Ibid, poem No.10

5. Marquez Villanueva, p.403.

6. Montoro, Antón de. *Poesía completa*, p.23.

7. Ibid, pp.29-30.

8. Yovel, pp.5-6.

9. Barbara Weissberger "A Tierra, Puto!" in *Queer Iberia*, (Duke University Press, 1999), p.294.

10. Ibid, p.316.

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.

Excerpt 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

the line between lies and truth.

It is Friday, and the sky and the sea look the way they did on Tuesday. The ship leaves no wake. The crewmen grumble from task to task. I crossed this ocean as a wide-eyed teenager a dozen years ago. I never thought I would be going back to Spain this way. If I returned at all, it would be as a merchant weighted down with enough silver to build myself a fine house in Madrid or, better yet, Bordeaux. To live like a gentleman, like one of the dukes of Alburquerque.

Three times a week the quartermaster opens the hatch and orders me and the ship's other prisoner to haul ourselves up onto the deck dragging the chains that were welded to our leg irons in Veracruz; Tuesday and Friday for an hour of fresh air and exercise and hygiene. Except that the air is fetid, exercise is clumping from one mid-ship rail to the other, and hygiene is dousing with a bucket of seawater. Sunday we hear mass with the crew and the ship's company of marines. The chaplain does not offer us the communion wafer. A quick *Ite, missa est* and the quartermaster shoves us back into the hold.

The other prisoner is Santillana. No first name, he says, just Santillana. We pass the interminable hours in our hole below deck scratching for vermin and telling each other lies: about the towns we grew up in; the trouble we got into as children; women; monumental binges. Santillana must be twenty years older than I am, maybe more. His beard, as best I can tell beneath the grime, is white, and his hands and arms are covered with the spots that come with age. I don't know how many times I've asked him to tell me what he did to land him in this stinking ship's hold, but all he ever answers is, "We're all sinners, aren't we? One way or another. The Devil's children." On his left hand, where the index finger used to be, is a gnarled stump, but he won't talk about that either. Sometimes, when I ask him yet another question that he will not deign to answer, he'll say to me, "You talk today, Diego. I don't feel like it. But I love your stories. Tell me whatever you like: I won't rat you out. It's not in me to spread gossip." And then he gives a wheezing laugh, the way so many miners do, their lungs choked with dust.

So I talk, my back against the creaking hull and my legs braced

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against a barrel to keep the leg irons from rubbing off another layer of skin every time the ship pitches or rolls. Stories to fill the hours. Some of what I tell him is the truth, and some . . . I've told so many tales in my life, to so many people, that I'm no longer sure that I know the difference between what is a lie and what is the truth. As if that matters now.

There aren't many men who can say they have been tried three times by the Inquisition and escaped with their lives. One time, yes, and with luck they let you go with a slap on the wrist and a fine and a program of penance, prayers, and candles. And your moment of fame in the auto-de-fé, don't forget that. Twice, maybe: with a flogging, a stretch in jail, and the loss of every peso the Holy Office can squeeze out of you. But a third trial, that almost guarantees you a date with the garrote or the flames. I must be one of the lucky few. Or maybe not, seeing what lies ahead for me. I can still hear that friar's nasal whine: "He shall be paraded through the city streets on the back of a donkey while the town crier reads out his crimes; then, stripped to the waist, he shall be given one hundred lashes with a whip. He shall be taken to Spain where he shall be made to serve as an unsalaried oarsman for eight years in His Majesty's galleys. When his service is complete, he shall be remanded to the Inquisition prison in Sevilla. He shall be banned from the Indies for life. He shall forever wear his sambenito in public. And for the rest of his life he shall hear mass every week and take communion at least three times a year." Well, the stripes on my back are nearly healed, and where there's life, there's hope. Only God knows what the future will bring. "Amen!" echoes Santillana with that scratchy laugh of his.

I was born into an old-Christian family in the Spanish city of Segovia. My father, Diego de Acosta Albuquerque, had moved there from Braganza, in Portugal, for business reasons. We were related to the illustrious dukes of Albuquerque, which gave us a certain elevated status, although not a lot of money. Since you can't get anywhere in this world without the proper credentials, my brother Juan went to Madrid and had papers drawn up attesting to our purity of blood and our condition as *hidalgos*. After my first trial here in Mexico, I went to Puebla and paid a notary to draw up another set of papers just for me, in case I ever needed them: fancy paper, an official seal, and all the relevant particulars. Set me back thirty reales. How does that sound, eh? That's the family story I

always told people. The truth? Well, Father was from Braganza. As was my mother, Beatriz de Acosta. And my grandparents, too, the whole family. Sometime way back they went there from Spain. But as far as I know my parents never set foot in Segovia. Instead, once they left Portugal they went to Bordeaux and set up a business importing cloth. That's really where I was born, in Bordeaux, around the year 1600. They told me I was baptized there, too, in the Church of the Holy Cross. And here I am, crossing the water again.

My earliest memories are the Bordeaux harbor: the ships' masts as tall as trees, the wharfs along the Gironde River, the crowds of merchants and sailors, the dizzying smells of leather, dyed cloth, and spices rising from the barrels stacked alongside the warehouses. I can't have been more than four or five years old, but those masts and barrels etched themselves into my brain. At that age I didn't see the garbage, the drunken sailors passed out in the alleys, the rats: just the wonder of those enormous masts against the blue sky. That's what I remember most from those years. That and the fact that my father was never home and my mother smelled of lavender.

Like all great ports, Bordeaux attracted the plague; it struck the city hard in 1605. Anyone with money moved away. My parents took me, my older sister, Isabel, and my two baby brothers, Luis and Juan, to Toulouse. During the six years we lived there my sister Beatriz de Acosta was born. She lives with her husband back in Bordeaux. I think she must be eighteen or nineteen by now. Isabel's in Bordeaux, too. My father had enough money to send me to the Jesuit school. At first my mother went with me every day. As a woman she couldn't go into the school, of course, but she waited at the street door until I had crossed the courtyard to my classroom and had been herded inside with the other six-year-olds. She was there when they let us out, too, and she would walk me home in the afternoon. What I mostly remember from that school was how hard the benches were and how the schoolmaster's black cassock swirled behind him as he paced back and forth droning the rudiments of Latin into us. Any seat softer than those benches and we all would have fallen asleep. Over and over we would recite for him the Latin conjugations and declensions. By the time we left Toulouse I had almost finished the third level and could read most Latin texts without much difficulty. My favorite was the *Wars*. My friends and I used to act out the battles, chasing each other with

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stick swords, arguing about who would get to be Caesar, and shouting out our battle cries in Latin. When we weren't pretending to be at war, we played tag or threw a ball around. Most of my schoolmates were from families like mine, just off the boat from Spain or Portugal. We all spoke Spanish or Portuguese at home, and we played in those languages, too. The few French kids at that school used to get angry with us, but most often we ignored them, unless we needed them to fill out some team, in which case we switched to French.

What else did we study? Numbers, of course. We had to know basic arithmetic to be admitted to the second level. That wasn't hard, though, since at home most of us were surrounded by business talk. Our fathers, almost all of them textile merchants, insisted that we master the rudiments of keeping accounts. We learned religion, too. Besides hearing mass every morning in church, we had an hour of catechism every day. And when we weren't reading the classic Latin authors, we got a steady diet of the lives of saints. Most of us could recite the *Flos sanctorum* by heart. I could, anyway. I hear something two or three times, I remember it. Word for word.

I think those were the happiest years of my life. I often went with my mother and our kitchen servant, Paola, to the great open-air market behind the Jacobins Church. After the day's shopping, Mother sometimes bought me a small toy or a sweetmeat. If the baskets of vegetables were too heavy, Mother would pay one of the market boys to help Paola carry them back to our house. Sometimes she bought a live goose or a chicken and my father cut its throat with a knife in the small yard behind our house. On special days when there was no school, my brother Juan took Luis and me hiking up in the wooded hills outside the city. In the high pastures there were cows and sheep and horses; lower down we often stopped to watch peasants leaning into their plows, their massive yoked oxen billowing great clouds of steam in the early morning air. Later in the summer, when the fields turned brown, we would watch the lines of farmers scything down the stalks of wheat or barley and tying them into neat sheaves that they forked onto carts to take to the threshing floors. On clear days we could see all the way to the snow-covered peaks of the Pyrenees that form the border with Spain. We had relatives over there, in Madrid, and my brother Juan would talk about one day going to visit them.

On Sundays we all trooped to mass together as a family.

Another lie. No, not what I'm telling you: how we were living. It was all a sham. I'm not talking about the happy times. Those were real enough. My father was gentle with us, letting us do pretty much as we wanted, and never raising a hand to us. But in one way he terrified us. And that was by warning us, over and over, that we must never, ever, tell people what we did behind the closed doors of our house. When he said that his eyes grew as hard as flint, and he lowered his voice so that we had to strain to hear him. There were certain things that we must not share, not with our friends at school, not with our Jesuit teachers, not with our confessors when we grew old enough to make confession. Not one word, ever. And what was this terrible secret?

At first, I remember, I didn't have the faintest idea; I saw things through a child's eyes. Gradually I picked up hints about how we were different. When the family sat down to eat, my father blessed our food with some mumbled words in a language I did not understand, words I never heard at school. Nobody in our house ever crossed themselves the way my school chums were always doing. I knew all the important Christian prayers, thanks to the Jesuits, but when we were in our house I never once heard my parents pray the Our Father, the Ave Maria, or any of the others. At home we had no woodcuts of saints, no holy water font. At the market my mother never bought sausages. We rarely ate beef, and when father brought some home my mother covered it with salt and washed it two or three times, but not until she first closed the kitchen shutters. We fasted on the days the priests told us to, of course, but we fasted on other days, too.

When I was old enough to ask why we did all this, my parents began to explain things to me. The Christians in France kept one Law, my father said, but we came from Portugal, so we had a different Law with different customs. Ours was the Law of Moses, not Jesus. That's why we washed our hands before and after we ate, and why we tried not to do any work on Saturday, and why at home we never crossed ourselves. Our kitchen maid Paola was Portuguese, too, so naturally she did all those things with us. But we weren't allowed to let anyone else in Toulouse know because if anyone saw what we were doing, they might report us to the authorities. And it could be dangerous for our relatives in Spain. To

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the world outside we were good Christians. Alburquerque, members of the Portuguese nobility. That's what we wanted everyone to believe; that was the face we showed our non-Portuguese friends. So naturally, when I was arrested the first time in Mexico, that's what I told the friars who questioned me. A family of good Christians, through and through, one hundred percent.

We lived in Toulouse for six years or so and then went back to Bordeaux because my father thought he would have better business opportunities there. But since the plague was still raging, we took the ferry across the Garonne River to Libourne, where we lived in a small rented house. I didn't like Libourne very much. It was a small town, and after Bordeaux and Toulouse it seemed pretty dull. There were hardly any other Portuguese kids to play with, and I had few friends. I mostly sat around our house and dreamed about the day we would go back to Bordeaux. I soon discovered that in this life you have to be careful what you wish for. After two years in Libourne my father judged that the plague had abated sufficiently for us to return to Bordeaux. He was wrong. Right after we moved into our new house he got sick. We buried him a week later and my brother Luis shortly after that. Then the hard times began.

What with all the moving around, my father had left us very little, and what there was—mostly unsold cloth—the creditors took. Childhood was over: it was time for us all to go to work. All meant the three women and me. Beatriz, who must have been five or six when my father died; my mother; my sister Isabel had married Luis de Acosta when she was sixteen, but eighteen months later, still childless, she was a plague widow and back living with us. My brother Juan had already left the family, gone south to seek his fortune in Spain. In the two rooms we now rented in Bordeaux, Isabel and my mother spun thread and tatted lace every day from sunup to sundown. That's what we lived on, the thread and lace that my mother sold to a couple of clothiers in the Place des Carmes. I left our rooms every day before sunup and went to the market where I earned a few sous helping unload the produce wagons or toting peoples' purchases home for them. As for Paola, within a week of my father's death my mother realized that we could no longer afford her, so she had to go.

I was thirteen or fourteen and, like all boys that age, proud of the thin fuzz on my chin. One afternoon my mother came home and told me that one of her Portuguese customers, a Senhor Horta de Silva, with whom she had begun keeping company, had a brother in Rouen who was a shopkeeper and needed a cashier who was good at languages and numbers. Would I go?

Would I go?! What do you think? I jumped at the chance to leave home. Horta put up the money for passage, making it clear that I would have to repay him, and I was also expected to send half of my wages back to my mother and sisters in Bordeaux. Two days later I found myself sailing up the Atlantic coast to Honfleur, from which a riverboat took me up the Seine to Rouen. The world was mine. I felt as free as the terns swooping all around our boat, their eyes searching for the flash of minnows in the gray water. As I watched them, I could see myself in a boardinghouse with a window that overlooked the roofs of the city; or exchanging confidences with my new friends in some great plaza while we stuffed ourselves on sugared fruit and flavored ices; or in the back pews of a dark church, in intimate conversation with one of the beautiful girls I felt certain abounded in Rouen. Soap bubbles, all of it, going pop-pop in the breeze.

Reality turned out to be one airless room over the stable behind Horta's house. I had no time to make friends: Hernando Horta de Silva worked me from dawn to dusk, and I feel certain he would have worked me half the night, too, if it weren't for the price of candles. And as for girls . . . the only female I talked with was Horta's wife Lucrecia, who weighed two hundred pounds if she weighed an ounce and had more pockmarks on her face than there are flies in a slaughterhouse. There was nothing sweet about her. She was a busybody, too. She and her husband may have been of our Nação, but the reek of fried salt pork in their house made it clear that they had put all that business behind them.

Senhor Horta's accounts were so simple that I quickly mastered the bookkeeping. I kept his shop neat, too, and alerted him when he was about to run out of some fast-selling item. Before long he had me writing out the orders for new stock. When I found him someone who would sell him buttons for only half of what his current supplier charged, he put me in charge of buying. Most of the time Horta just sat looking out the window or ogling the

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women who came into his shop. After a few months I could see that Senhor Horta had come to depend on me, so I screwed up my courage and told him that if he wanted me to continue working for him I needed more free time to myself. He harrumphed for a while, but finally agreed to let me break off early a couple of times a week, providing, that is, that I got all my work done.

About this time I met Juan Carvallo, who had a business provisioning ships on the quay. Carvallo was a dozen years older than I, a strapping, red-headed fellow with muscles that bulged from years of lifting heavy barrels. He knew his way around, too. Among other things, he looked out for the Portuguese newcomers in Rouen. One Sunday as I was heading home from mass he struck up a conversation with me in the street. I thought it was a chance meeting, but I believe now that he had been looking for me. Anyway, what with one thing and another, we soon became friends. The upshot was that he invited me to observe the Kippur fast with him and his family. Although some vague memories of fasting with my parents when I was a child came back to me, lots of what the Carvallos did was completely unfamiliar. For one thing, after the evening meal before the fast they all took off their shoes. They dressed up in their finest clothes—I remembered that from when I was a child—but the men all put on hats, even though we were indoors, and that was new to me. We had gathered in an inside room, so the only light came from the dozen large new candles that Carvallo's wife lit after chanting a few words that I didn't recognize or understand. And then they began to pray the Penitential Psalms in Portuguese and some other long prayers in a language that I now know was Hebrew. They prayed the whole night and the entire following day. I thought I would die from boredom. The only thing that kept me awake was figuring how I would explain to Horta why I had missed an entire day's work.

When I got home Lucrecia de Horta lit into me. Where had I been? What had I been doing? I told her I'd been having a good time with my friends, that we'd drunk too much, and that I'd been sick the whole next day. She didn't believe me for a minute. "It's that Jewish fast. That's what you've been doing. Don't you know that you are condemning your soul to Hell?"

Well, I knew that's what Christians believed, but since I'd been friends with Carvallo I had been thinking of myself more as a Jew.

Obviously I couldn't tell Senhora Horta that, so I just nodded my head, as if I was agreeing with what she was saying. She rattled on about how the mercy of Christ would save me if I would have faith and follow his Law. I nodded again, but she insisted that I swear to her that I would. Since I wasn't inclined to do that, I told her I wanted some time to think it over. She forbade me from leaving the house, insisting that she was caring for my soul the way she would for her own son's, and said we would talk some more in the morning. Sure enough, no sooner was I awake than she called me to the room that served the Hortas as an office. I didn't see any point in arguing with her, so I told her that she had truly convinced me to be a Christian. I thought that might be the end of it, but she straightaway took me to the Monastery of San Agustín to talk with her confessor, whose name I have long since forgotten. For the next two months he fed me a steady diet of Christian doctrine. Eventually the friar's arguments made such perfect sense to me that I resolved to commit myself with all my heart to the Law of Jesus Christ and to live and die under that Law. And from that day to this I have been a true and faithful Christian.

Santillana gave one of those wheezing coughs that were his idea of laughter. "A true and faithful Christian, eh? So that's why they put you on this stinking ship, to show us what a model Christian was like. No need to worry about your soul: if we sink, it will float." He laughed again. "I'm too old a dog to jump at that bone."

All right, then. So it's not precisely true; but it's a nice story, isn't it? The Mexican Holy Office believed it, at least for a while. The real truth is that the whole Horta family brought the Law of Moses with them from Portugal and followed it just the way I did. That's why my mother sent me to them. Later, back in '15, when King Louis booted the Jews out of France, the Hortas moved to Flanders. That's where they are now, safe and sound, so I can tell you this without any risk to them. Lucrecia Horta never tried to convert me to the Law of Jesus; she was too busy keeping the Sabbath herself. And as for the friar teaching me to love Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin . . . Lord knows the friars have tried often enough. But in those days I was too certain of myself to entertain the thought that what I knew might be wrong. My parents had drummed into me that their Law was the true one, and that was good enough for me.

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I don't think that any of my close friends from those days were Christian. I mean not true Christians. In fact, most of them were ten times more Jewish than I was, though unless they knew you well enough to have confidence in you, they would never let you see it. It was Juan Carvallo who gave me my first detailed lessons about how to keep the Law of Moses, things that I still remember as clearly as the day he instructed me: the laws of the Sabbath; the great fasts; *Shevu'ot*; *Sukkot*; *Tsha b'Av*; the Passover seder; and reading the scroll of Esther on Purim. I learned to call those days by their Hebrew names, too, just the way they did. For each festival they made me memorize everything I had to do. *Roshanah*, the first two days of the new moon of September: you can't work, you have to wear your best clothes, and you have to give charity to the poor members of the Portuguese community. *Hanukah*, in memory of Judas Macabee's victory over the Gentiles: the first day you light one little candle and hang it up on the wall, the second day two candles, and so forth, up to eight. Or maybe it was only seven. Something like that. I learned by heart half a dozen prayers, too: the first prayer of the morning; the prayer for washing hands; all kinds of things. In Spanish, most of them, but a few in Portuguese, a couple of short ones in Hebrew. I memorized the words, though I can't tell you exactly what they meant. The one I said most often began . . .

Santillana interrupted me. "So, is there any sex in this story? Or am I going to have to listen to you praying the whole damn afternoon?" "Hold your water," I said. "I'm getting to that." The old fart only wanted to hear about women. Well, all right. I hadn't even scratched the surface of the things we did in our prayer group in Rouen. But it really didn't matter which direction my story took. We were just passing the time.

Here it is, then: how I fell in love. At least I guess it was love. It was at Carvallo's house, and her name was María de Acosta. No relation to my mother's Acostas. She was slim as a willow wand, with black hair and eyes the color of coal. She was a widow, they said, whose husband João had died on his way to Salonica. The Carvallos had taken her in when her husband went away in return for María helping out with the two Carvallo children. When nearly three years had passed without their hearing one word from João, they had presumed him dead. Under Catholic law, of course, which demands concrete proof of widowhood, María could not remarry,

but nobody I knew cared much about those things. If João wasn't dead, then he had abandoned her, and that was enough for the Carvallos. If María took a new husband, Rouen's Portuguese community would not object.

At first, in my innocence I assumed that the Carvallos had their eyes on me as María's potential new husband, although since I was just fourteen I realize now that was hardly likely. In those days I was visiting the Carvallos' house once or twice a week—I tried to spend at least part of the Sabbath with them when I could—and before long María and I grew close. Well, one thing leads to another, and despite the fact that she was eight or ten years older than I was, we became confidants, spending hours together sharing our thoughts and dreams. We began to touch hands, and our eyes began to reflect more than just friendship. By December the weather in Rouen turns cold and dank, and two can heat up a bed far better than one. That first night—my very first, to tell the truth—as our hearts slowed and the sweat dried on our exhausted bodies, she asked me to call her by her real name, Miriam. Our daughter, Clara Margarita was born just after the Great Fast of September. She was just learning to walk when I left Rouen eight years ago. I have had no news of them since; nor they of me, I have to say. I pray that they are still alive and happy and getting on with their lives. It wouldn't be right of me to go back to them, not after all this time. María's bound to have found someone else by now. Even if I survive the galleys, I don't think I will ever go back to Rouen. So why did I leave them? Time passed, the way it does. I got older, and as my eyes opened wider to the world around me, Rouen seemed to shrink. María's honey voice began to sound shrill and demanding. The cashier's job was a dead end, the salary was lousy, the prospects . . .

“And you're a bastard at heart, just like all of us men.”

Santillana smiled. “Don't forget that.”

“All right. That, too.”

“And a liar.”

“Only when it suits my purpose.”

Santillana snorted. “Only then?”

“Do you want me to go on, or not?”

“Mmmmm.” Santillana at his noncommittal best.

“Yes or no?”

“Have you got something better to do?”

I didn't, but now I was angry, so I sat silently and glared at him, even though I knew he could not see my face in the dim light of the hold. Minutes passed.

Finally curiosity got the best of him. "You were fed up with your life in Rouen. So then . . ."

David Gitlitz lives in Rhode Island; for more information on his publications visit www.gitlitzdavidson.com

Eliyahu Enriquez: Poet

Eliyahu Enriquez is a descendant of Filipino *anusim*. He has been in a long process of reawakening, acclimation, and solidarity. He has found himself not alone in the *Filipino-Hudyo* identity. Enriquez believes that *Filipinim* are in a unique position, with the potential to build bridges between East and Western Spanish-speaking countries as well as its Far-East Silk Road ties. Enriquez has been conducting research into the burgeoning Jews of Color (J.O.C.) movement, tracking Israel-East Asia cooperation, as well as chronicling the *mitzvot* of East Asian Jewry, with a focus on *Filipini* overseas migrant workers in Israel, as well as Filipino Jewry. He is a frequent micro-blogger and is working on a benefit in support of the Comfort Women of WWII, among other projects. Eliyahu very much misses giving complementary *poi* shows (a form of juggling in which the balls are swung around the body) to off-duty IDF soldiers in Tel Aviv.

Filipino Hudyo

—*Hudyo means "Jew, Jewish, wily" in Tagalog*—

If Hebrew is the letter of fire
Let my words be boiling water

That melt in the light
And wail in the night

I'm a self-hating Hudyo
I'm a self-hating Filipino

Toward the Rising of the Tsunami

My sister Mercy and her husband, Joshua, own a beauty salon called B & M, whose acronym is the antithesis of another ineffable ritual:

At each sunrise, purple, black, and white bath towels are strewn all over the dining room table with a mahogany pavilion carved at the heart, manufactured in China, Pakistan, and India. While Bahay Yosef sleeps in during muted Saturday morning cartoons, Lola Keturah folds laundry into banners, the shape of Lolo Terah's stroke-imbued mouth, balancing mantle after mantle upon Asian carp. He supervises from an orange-cushioned sea beside the stairway. *K'ruvim* glisten below their razor gaze, and as we get a head start on the Silk Road to everywhere but *Yerushalayim*, your dreams are bestirred by the aroma of olive oil tombs, opining.

Laura Cesana's Artistic Exploration of Crypto-Jewish Portugal

Lytton N. McDonnell

Laura Cesana's reputation as an internationally renowned artist is well warranted. Born in Rome, Cesana spent her childhood in New York City, and currently lives and works in Portugal. She has exhibited her work since the 1970s, held almost ninety one-woman shows on four continents, and is represented in museums and public collections in Portugal, France, Italy and Brazil. She also has advanced degrees (in Economics, Art, and Education) from each of the countries she has called home.

Her creative work has drawn inspiration from a diverse array of sources at different points in her career, including abstract walls,

the poetry of Fernando Pessoa, women and fantasies, and sea and music. However, it is her “Jewish phases” (artwork dealing with blessings, abstract candles, roots, etc.) and her research on Jewish vestiges in Portugal, that have perhaps garnered her the greatest acclaim in recent years.¹ Her interest in the long and often shrouded history of Jews in Portugal, was initially sparked by a poignant dream she had after attending a conference at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon on the “Jewish influence on the Occidental civilization.”

Cesana’s initial attraction to the subject in the early 1990s quickly transformed into a multi-year “voyage” of research and artistic exploration—an inner and outer journey that would become, as she describes it, one of the most exciting periods of her professional life. Cesana’s “voyage” took her throughout Portugal, from the Val de Judeus (Valley of Jews) to Ponta Delgada in the Azores. She learned about the “Feast of the Grasshopper” and other Jewish customs that were distinct to Portugal, and she researched the lives of well-known Portuguese Jews of the past, including Marrano poet Samuel Usque, noted rabbi Abraham Isaak Aboab, and a slew of other astronomers, physicians, philosophers, and playwrights. In talking with people all-over Portugal about her budding project, Cesana often received comments such as: “Oh, my grandmother was a crypto Jew” or “my mother was practicing such things” or “my father-in-law was...” and the news would always be shared with great tenderness, which Cesana found very moving. At the same time, she took time to explore her own understanding of Portugal’s crypto-Jewish heritage by creating a series of artistic works.

Her voyage culminated in the publication of *Jewish Vestiges in Portugal: Travels of a Painter* (*Vestígios hebraicos em Portugal: viagem de uma pintora*). Published in 1997, on the 500th anniversary of the expulsion/forced-conversion/massacre of Portuguese Jewry, this book is as unique as it is informative. It combines historical and ethnographic notations with photographs and original artwork to create an elaborate depiction of little-known segments of Sephardic Portuguese Jewry over the last several centuries.

The artwork itself (including the copper engravings found on the previous pages as well as the oil on canvas works entitled,

“Margaridas, etc.” and “A Viagem,” on the front and back covers of this issue) combines traditional still-life motifs of fruit and Jewish table settings with modernistic artistic forms—cubes, collages, overlapping, streaking, tattering, and shadows. Often the paintings are embedded with Jewish imagery such as menorahs or candles, as well as other elements borrowed from the more discreet Jewish practices that persisted after the Inquisition, such as *candeias* (oil lamps). As Cesana notes, “For many centuries the crypto-Jews [sic] in Portugal substituted the candle with the oil lamp, which they would hide in a closet or in a jar in case a stranger should suddenly appear.”² (The engravings accompanying this article feature several images of *candeias*.)

Written in both Portuguese and English, the book stands as a very diverse, and at times a very personal picture of Portuguese Jewry over the centuries. In many ways, it exposes readers and viewers to Portuguese Jewish landmarks in a manner that has never been attained by the few existent guidebooks of the area.



The photo features Enriquez's cousin, Joel Romulo (far right), and classmates, during cadet training, c.1995, at Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation, Republic of the Philippines. The image evokes the common folk of the archipelago rising to the challenge; as well as Yoel 4:10 which reads, "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; the weak one shall say, 'I am mighty.'" Other prominent surnames in Enriquez's family are Armamento, Robles, and Rivera, mostly residing throughout the Philippines and nearby Hong Kong.

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Now in its second edition, more information on the book and Laura Cesana's artwork can be found at www.lauracesana.com or if you find yourself in Lisbon, why not visit Laura Cesana's atelier in person!

1. In 2004 Cesana held several shows in different cultural spaces, including Lisbon's Main Library, Museum of Patriarcal, Insitituto Camões, Centro Nacional de Cultura and the City Museum. These collections included many pieces from her "Jewish phases."

2. Laura Cesana, *Jewish Vestiges in Portugal: Travels of a Painter (Vestígios hebraicos em Portugal: viagem de uma pintora)*, Lisboa: ISBN: 972-97370-0-2, p.66. Laura Cesana is the publisher and editor of both editions.

BOOK REVIEWS

Miriam Bodian, *Dying in the in Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. xvii + 278 pp. Reviewed by Juan Marcos Bejarano Gutierrez

In the aftermath of the explosive violence that began in 1391 and continued at various levels throughout the fifteenth century, many *conversos* resigned themselves to their status as New Christians. Many abandoned Jewish praxis for practical reasons. Noting this, Don Isaac Abarbanel states:

They don't observe G-d's laws, rituals, and commandments for fear of the Gentiles. Lest they the Christians, should say that since now they form part of them and their society, if they observe the laws of Israel they would be killed as sectarians and heretics.¹

But the fear of punishment by the Inquisition was insufficient for a select number of individuals who preferred to remain or even become faithful to the Law of Moses, regardless of what consequences they might encounter.

Dying in the in Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World is written by Miriam Bodian and reviews the cases of four such individuals: Luis Rodriguez de Carvajal, Diogo d'Asumpcao, Francisco Maldonado de Silva, and Lope de Vera y

Alarcon who ultimately chose a road to martyrdom after being arrested by Spanish Inquisitional authorities. Bodian begins with a brief review of the concept of martyrdom as perceived in ancient and medieval Jewish sources. She also provides a review of the events which created the *converso* phenomena in the fourteen century.

But the heart of the book is focused on the analysis of the four martyrs. The four individuals in question were products of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and reflected the Judaizing experience in both in the Iberian Peninsula and in Spanish holdings in the New World. Interestingly, Bodian reveals that d'Asumpcao was of limited Jewish ancestry and de Vera y Alarcon appears to not have been of Jewish ancestry. Both however opted for a path of spiritual discovery towards Judaism which ultimately led to their arrest and eventual martyrdom. This fact reveals the complex makeup of crypto Judaism and the diversity of Judaizing adherents.

What is most significant about these individuals and distinguishes these four martyrs is the nature of their confrontation and argumentation with inquisitors and surprising elements found in the interchanges with the Inquisitors. All were well educated and could count knowledge of Latin as a part of their intellectual repertoire. This knowledge as Bodian comments opened up sources otherwise inaccessible to the average crypto Jew/Judaizer.

Once the die was cast, the four largely abandoned any notion of conciliation to the Church, even if only to preserve their lives, and instead opted to present their commitment to Judaism to the utmost. In fact they did so with a zeal which must be characterized at times as



No céu (Up in the Sky), engraving on copper

almost evangelistic. Regarding a cell mate of Luis Carvajal, Bodian relates:

The cellmates began to discuss theology. Presumably, they also pledged not to reveal each other's beliefs to the inquisitors. Neither informed on the other, and as a result the friar was sentenced only for his unauthorized administering of sacraments—despite the fact that after his conversations with Luis he was actually converted (in some fashion) to the Law of Moses.²

Bodian also comments on the influence of Christian dissidents and



Leite e mel (Milk and Honey), engraving on copper

martyrs on the mentality of Jewish or Judaizing martyrs. The willingness of Christians to suffer martyrdom challenged a group that survived by its very secrecy. If Christians were willing to suffer martyrdom, however, so should Jews. As Bodian notes:

One of the hallmarks of the great judaizing martyrs was

their readiness (and ability) to engage the inquisitors in disputations for months or years on end. Death at the stake was inevitable. But if the martyrs rejected a compromise and chose to be burned alive (rather than being garroted first), they achieved the crowning distinction.³

In contrast to many other crypto-Jewish individuals who were tried and ultimately punished by the Inquisition over a period of several centuries, these individuals opted for a path characterized by a defiant defense of their own convictions and a fervent attack on Christianity itself. While crypto Jews arrested by the Inquisition were often characterized by a rather minimal knowledge or simplistic understanding of the “Jewish” practices they observed or the beliefs they maintained, these individuals represented rather sophisticated and developed personal theologies.

The minimal level of Judaic knowledge found among most crypto Jews was to be expected given the fact that Jewish educational resources were so limited in Spanish held areas even within two generations of the last openly practicing Jew having departed. In fact, for many crypto Jews, faith was typically an amalgamation of Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices. In light of this, Bodian emphasizes the intellectual and educational sophistication of the four eventual martyrs.

Bodian investigates a largely under analyzed area in crypto-Jewish research. She argues that elements of Protestant belief appear to have influenced crypto-Jewish religious thought. Bodian points out that contrary to popular opinion that Reformation theology had not penetrated Spanish culture, it indeed had and that it extended a surprising influence on the four. The most significant factor is the Reformation element emphasizing the authority of the Biblical text and the autonomy of the individual in approaching the Bible. In fact, the Alumbrado movement is noted specifically for its apparent influence on Luis Carvajal. Among its various tenets, the Alumbrado movement de-emphasized objects of worship and ultimately drew the attention of the Inquisition on suspicions that they embraced Protestant sentiments.

A number of works have been written on the Inquisition and on crypto Judaism. Few however, have delved so eloquently and readably into the unique elements that both explore the issue of martyrdom among crypto Jews and Judaizers and distinguished also these individuals from the countless others who experienced the same fate. *Dying in the Law of the Moses* joins Miriam Bodian's other work, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* as a valuable contribution to the study of *conversos* and crypto Judaism.

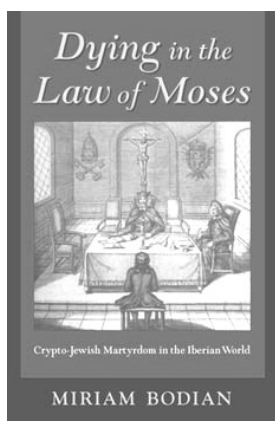
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Sources

1. Jose Faur, *In the Shadow of History: Jews and Conversos at the Dawn of Modernity*, (New York: SUNY, 1992), p.50.
2. Miriam Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p.63.
3. Ibid., p.xi.

Mitchell James Kaplan, *By Fire, By Water* (New York: Other Press, 2010) pp.320, Reviewed by Deborah Wohl Isard

If ever a book should be judged by its cover, it's *By Fire, By Water* by Mitchell James Kaplan. The book's cover immediately sets the



tone for this well-crafted and engaging work of historical fiction that takes place during the Spanish Inquisition and the days leading up to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. The cover image hints at fragments from an ancient Hebrew text, the proven existence of which would shake the very foundation of Christianity. *Toledoth Yeshu* is the name of the scroll that surfaces in the possession of Genovese merchant mariner Cristobal Colon. The scroll is then hidden again after passing through the hands of the novel's main character, Luis de Santangel, Chancellor of the Treasury for King Fernando of Aragon. The search for this parchment and the fear that its possession engenders, weaves throughout the novel.

Immediately, the reader wants to know how the image of the woman on the cover informs the context of this historical novel. She wears a crucifix: perhaps she is a *converso* struggling with her decision to renounce the faith of her ancestors in order to stay alive? She wears a wedding ring: perhaps she comes from a family of New Christians but hasn't revealed her Jewish heritage to members of her new household? Perhaps she has been asked to provide the names of religious cohorts in order to spare the life of a loved one? Never did I imagine that the image is actually a small segment of a much larger work of art.

The portrait on the book's cover is of Queen Ysabel, a detail from

an 1843 oil painting by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, entitled “Columbus before the Queen.” Kaplan’s interpretive account indicates that the portrait of Queen Ysabel shows her in the throes of spiritual confusion. Kaplan artfully conjures-up questions Queen Ysabel poses to herself: “To what extent was her desire to purify Castile and Aragon motivated by her love for Jesus, and to what extent was it motivated by her resentment over the Muslim theft of her land, centuries before her birth? If anger more than love fueled this desire to cleanse her nation, was that desire unholy?”

Before the Queen can formulate a clear position, she succumbs to the influence of the notorious Inquisitor, Tomas de Torquemada, whose tentacles of distorted ecclesiastical authority spread far and wide. As both her confessor and her political advisor, it is known by historians that Torquemada held terrible sway over Ysabel. As a character in this historical novel, he seems to appear whenever the reader needs to be reminded that evil can exist even in the guise of one purporting to be doing God’s work on earth.

The title *By Fire, By Water*, is borrowed from an ancient Hebrew *piyyut*, a poetic meditation on destiny, death, and God’s perceived intercession. Recited for centuries by Jews all over the world on the most holy of days Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it is known as the *unetanneh tokef*: “Who shall live and who shall die, Who at the measure of days, and who before, Who by fire and who by water, Who by the sword and who by wild beasts...” It is a fitting title and one which reminds the reader that the characters’ destinies have been pre-written.

The search for a second book, a manuscript of the transcribed deposition testimony of a certain tortured *converso*, is another piece of the story. With plenty of mystery and good old-fashioned intrigue, Kaplan unapologetically depicts what men will do when confronted with the dire consequences of looking evil in the face. Kaplan’s experience as a script writer serves him well as he supplies his characters with believable dialogue that is consistent with their personalities. We know what the characters think and feel, and the words they speak are credible given what we know about their circumstances. Indeed, the assortment of languages within the novel: Spanish, Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, and Italian, make the storyline all the more plausible.

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In keeping with the genre of historical fiction, the novel's characters are composites of known historical figures who faced similar challenges and opportunities. The characters themselves are truthful insofar as they shed light on a dark and mysterious period of history. Kaplan offers the reader a convincing amalgam of historical context within which fictional characters, portrayed convincingly, bring alive a world that is at once exotically beautiful yet insidiously treacherous.

Through the fictional female protagonist of the story, Judith Midgal, a highly skilled silver-smith, Kaplan introduces the living conditions of Jews during *la convivencia* period (711-1492). Circumstances place Judith on a dramatic path, including her association with Luis de Santangel, an actual historical figure, indisputably descended from a *converso* family and responsible for helping to finance the voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492.

A multitude of characters inhabit the complex world into which Kaplan invites the reader. Some minor characters turn out to have played a pivotal role in their only scene. Occasionally, it might be frustrating for a reader, having bonded with one of Kaplan's skillfully depicted characters, when the character does not appear again or ends up playing only a temporary or minor role. Conversely, one might consider lightly the actions or words of a character who is briefly mentioned, but later discover that the individual deserved closer attention. Some may consider this inconsistency to be a weakness of the author's writing; however, this reader considers it to be one of Kaplan's strengths.

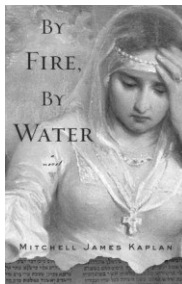
In life, we do not know ahead of time the moments, the people, or the situations that will ultimately influence the course of our personal journey. Uncertainty of loved ones' welfare was typical of the times, as was the possibility for people to go for years without knowing if a loved one was dead or alive, if a secret was discovered or still intact, if a choice made was the right one. It behooves the reader to pay attention to what Kaplan chooses to include or omit.

Kaplan's very readable book could be described as a story about deadly secrets, intentional and inadvertent betrayal, political intrigue, crises of faith, and religious zeal. It is also a historical, sociological, and anthropological study of the late fifteenth century

of the Iberian Peninsula in the years preceding the discovery of the New World. *By Fire, By Water* will appeal to both the academic or pleasure reader. Ultimately, this is a book about people and the choices they make within the context of the particular circumstances of the world in which they live.

I recommend this novel especially for those who enjoy the genre of historical fiction. They will be engaged in the well-crafted plot-lines and develop empathy for the characters while becoming informed about the connections between four simultaneous world-changing events: the establishment of the New Inquisition in Castile and Aragon, the re-conquest of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and Columbus' ambitious quest to sail across the ocean. Kaplan is a gifted storyteller, who has used the historical novel *By Fire, By Water* to, in his own words, "reveal the dramatic core of history." At the conclusion of the book, Kaplan treats the reader to the section, "Author's Notes," and reveals what in the story is fact, embellishment, and well-intentioned fabrication. Do yourself a favor and wait to read this section until you have completed the novel.

By Fire, By Water may be ordered from www.otherpress.com



HISTORICAL RECIPE

***Haroset* from Bordeaux**

Adapted from *Quiches, Kugels and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France*, by Joan Nathan New York: Knopf, 2010, p. 42.

Joan Nathan

Helene Sancy's *haroset* recipe goes back to her family's residence in Portugal before the Inquisition. It is probably one of the oldest, if not *the* oldest, existing *haroset* recipe in France today. Her husband's job is to grind the fruits and nuts in the brass mortar and pestle, which they inherited as it was handed down through the generations.

Although the Sancys do not roll their *haroset* into balls as is called for in other old recipes from Spain, they have another fascinating Passover custom: first they say a blessing over the (*maror*) bitter

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herbs: in their case, romaine lettuce, as a reminder of slavery in Egypt. Then they wrap the romaine around parsley, which has been dipped in salt water, a little celery, and about a teaspoon of *haroset*. The Ashkenazi way, in contrast, is to sandwich bitter herbs and *haroset* between 2 pieces of matzo. Curiously, the Sancy's recipe for *haroset*, in this land of vineyards in the Southwest of France, includes no raisins.

2 apples, peeled and quartered
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups dates
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups walnuts
1 cup almonds
1/4 cup hazelnuts

Put all the fruits and nuts in a food processor and pulse until blended, stopping before they become completely puréed. *Haroset* should have some crunch.

Yield: About 3½ cups

Joan Nathan is a widely published author of Jewish cooking. She divides her time between Washington, D.C. and Martha's Vineyard. For more information on Joan Nathan's publications visit <http://joannathan.com/books>

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!
2011 SCJS Conference in San Diego



©www.ichotelsgroup.com

It has been awhile since SCJS has visited San Diego, and we are looking forward to the 21st Annual Conference. San Diego is

consistently rated one of California's top vacation destinations.

The Crowne Plaza is the site of this year's conference and it is located in Mission Valley, the heart of San Diego, just off the I-5 and I-8 interchanges. The address is **Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2270 Hotel Circle North, San Diego, CA 92108**. We were able to obtain a special room rate of **\$95.00 per night** for single through quad occupancy. Please contact the hotel directly to make your room reservations.

For reservations go online

<<https://resweb.passkey.com/go/21stannualconference>>

or call: 1-888-233-9527

Be sure to mention that you are a member of the **SCJS Conference group** when making your reservations in order to guarantee the special room rate. Please contact the hotel before the **July 8, 2011 cut-off date** to receive the special conference rates. The Crowne Plaza is offering the rate for three days preceding and following the conference, so why not take advantage of the offer?!

Crowne Plaza amenities include free parking, high speed internet, data ports, fitness center, large heated pool, sauna and 24 hour business center. **Request non-smoking rooms when making your reservations.** There is also a full service restaurant, small café and sushi bar on the premises.

The San Diego International Airport is close-by and airport transportation is provided by **Cloud Nine Super Shuttle**. The shuttle cost is \$24.00 for a round trip, but please call in advance for a discounted rate of \$18.00 round trip. Remember to give them code **7J379** to receive the special rate.

For reservations go online: www.supershuttle.com

or call 1-800-974-8885.

Hurry and register early in order to receive the bonus \$10.00 discount off the conference registration fee **The discount will be available only through July 1, 2011**. Note that early bird discount is not available for non-member registration, meals or vendor sales tables.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in San Diego!

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Gloria Trujillo, SCJS VP of Conferences & Meetings
2011 SCJS Conference Registration Form

OPTION 1: Full Conference Registration

Cost per person includes all presentations, entertainment, and includes two dinners, one lunch, two continental breakfasts and all refreshment breaks. Kosher meals are available upon advance request at an additional cost.

SCJS member early bird registration: \$190.00 x ____ (# of people)
SCJS member regular registration (after July 1): \$200.00 x ____ (#)
How many people (if any) want vegetarian meals?: ____ (#)
Supplemental charge for Kosher meals: \$75.00x ____ (#)

OPTION 2: Partial Conference Registration

Cost per person includes attendance to presentations for time, day(s) and meal(s) indicated. Supplemental charge for Kosher meals if requesting partial registration per day—no walk-in requests accepted.

Sunday ONLY (includes dinner): \$59.00x ____ (# of people)
Monday Evening Concert + Dinner ONLY: \$40.00 x ____ (#)
Tuesday ONLY (includes breakfast): \$59.00 x ____ (#)
Monday & Tuesday ONLY (breakfast, lunch, and dinner): \$180.00x ____
How many people (if any) want vegetarian meals?: ____ (#)
Supplemental charge for Kosher meals: \$25.00x ____ (days) x ____ (people)

VENDOR REGISTRATION:

1 Vendor sales-table for full conference \$70.00 ____
Vendors must register before AUGUST 4, 2011

Total

Conference Payment \$ _____

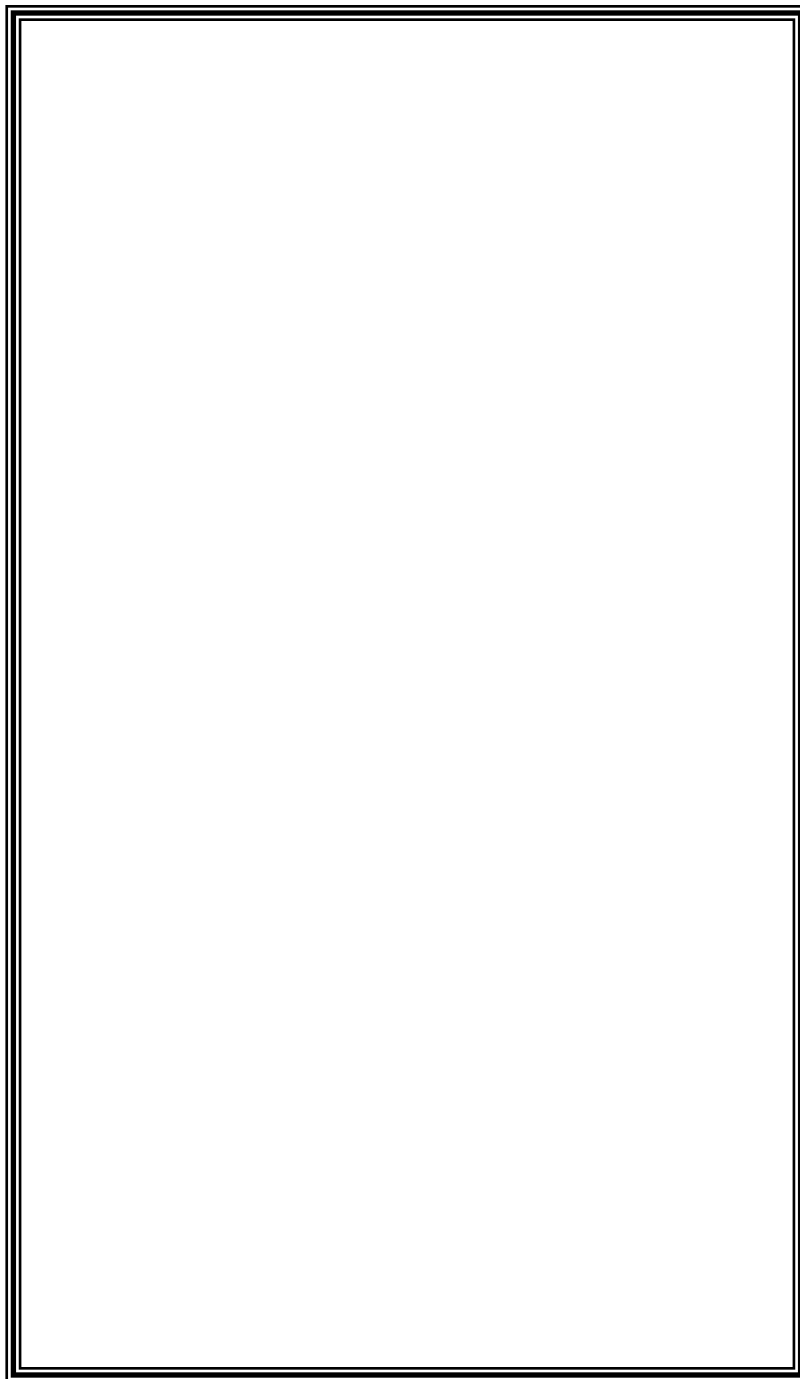
Questions? Contact Gloria Trujillo: gtruj@aol.com
Make cheque payable to: **Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS)** and mail
with completed registration form to:
Gloria Trujillo, P.O. Box 3943, Montebello, CA 90640.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Telephone: _____ *Email: _____

Are you a crypto Jew who likes to cook?

HaLapid wants to hear from you!

Send us a family recipe, tell us it's history and why it's special to you. Pictures are welcome. September 1, 2011 deadline. Send recipes to: halapid.editor@gmail.com



CALL FOR PAPERS

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

**21st Annual Conference, August 7-9, 2011,
San Diego, California.**

We invite papers on crypto Judaism from any discipline and from any geographic location or time period.

We also welcome papers on all aspects of the Sephardic experience and that of other communities exhibiting crypto-Jewish phenomena.

Papers breaking new-ground in research on the California-Mexico borderlands are particularly welcome.

Interested scholars and professionals, including advanced graduate students, are invited to submit proposals for papers, presentations or workshops.

Proposals from individuals with personal stories or other research relating to crypto Judaism are also welcome. Proposals may be for individual papers/presentations or for complete sessions on specific topics. Please indicate if presentation represents completed research or work in progress.

Proposals must include a 200-word abstract and a brief bio. Please send proposals or inquiries to

Seth Ward,
Religious Studies, University of Wyoming,
sward@uwyo.edu.

Proposal Deadline: May 1, 2011.

For more information:

http://www.cryptojews.com/Call_for_Papers.htm

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It is illuminated for one who seeks the Light - Ben Hesh