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*The 1492 Jewish Expulsion from Spain: How Identity Politics and Economics
Converged*

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in *Department
of History*.

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Under the mentorship of Dr. Kathleen Comerford

ABSTRACT

In 1492, after Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand defeated the last Muslim stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula, they presented the Jewish community throughout their kingdoms with a choice: leaving or converting to Catholicism. The Spanish kingdoms had been anti-Jewish for centuries, forcing the creation of ghettos, the use of identifying clothing, etc. in an effort to isolate and “other” the Jews, who unsuccessfully sought peaceful co-existence. Those who did not accept expulsion, but converted, were the subject of further prejudice stemming from a belief that Jewish blood was tainted and that conversions were undertaken for financial gain. The government’s dramatic action of banishment seemed more appropriate toward the non-conformist Muslim community, rather than the Jewish community. The economic reasons behind why the Jews were targeted were the following: first, medieval Spanish Jews emphasized education, which led to better paying professional occupations. Second, Jews held positions in banking and were subject to fewer regulations involving loans. Spanish Catholics believed that the Jews had too much economic influence over the kingdoms, and this resentment, combined with religious prejudice, led to the expulsion.

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In 1492, King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452-1516, r.1479-1516) and Queen Isabella of Castile (1451-1504, r. 1474-1504) defeated the last Iberian Muslim stronghold in Granada. Muslims first arrived in the Iberian Peninsula in 711 and began to expand northward. Less than two decades later, they had almost reached the border with present-day France. Their domain, named Al-Andalus, lasted from 711 to 1492, slowly shrinking over the centuries as it was pushed back by the Christians from the north. Almost immediately after this victory against the Muslims in 1492, the Queen and King presented the Jewish community throughout their kingdoms with a choice of leaving, converting to Catholicism, or remaining as Jews and being executed. Even though the Spanish kingdoms had been anti-Jewish for centuries, this harsh and uncompromising action came almost without warning. Over the centuries during which Christians, Muslims, and Jews together occupied the peninsula, members of the Jewish community lived and worked alongside Christians, attempting to create a form of *convivencia* or co-existence. Yet their attempts to conform or assimilate were rejected, as Christian rulers both passed laws to separate Jews from Christians and resented the distinctions these laws created, particularly on the economic front. Meanwhile, Muslims, at first in control of most of the land in Iberia but steadily defeated over seven centuries, retreated and resisted both Christian rule and assimilation to Christian society with greater strength and success than their Jewish compatriots and those who had converted to Christianity. As the Muslims were more openly non-conforming and defiant, it would seem more appropriate to punish them, rather than the more assimilated Jewish community. Instead, the stronger economic power of the Jews, resented by Christians who found Judaism and its traditions unacceptable, led to a crisis culminating in the ultimatum of 1492.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact year when Jews first appeared in Spain; however, there is archaeological evidence of Jews arriving before 300 CE. Most evidence shows Jews coming into the Iberian Peninsula from the Mediterranean Spanish ports and then quickly spreading further inland.¹ Jews moved to the Iberian Peninsula while some of the people living there were called Visigoths. This tribe practiced Germanic paganism through the fifth century. The Visigoths first became Arian Christians (believing Jesus to be a lesser deity than God the Father), and then converted to orthodox (Nicene) Christianity under Reccared I (586-601), King of Hispania and Septimania. This was approximately three hundred years later than the Jews' arrival in the peninsula. Other pagans occupied different portions of the Spanish territories of the former Roman Empire, as did some Christians, before the fifth-century collapse of the western portions of the Empire, but the latter were mainly found in the major cities built by the Romans rather than spread throughout the peninsula. The Visigoth conversion to Nicene Christianity in the sixth century stabilized the religion of the territory. Thus, the "first monotheistic religious tradition in Spain" was either Judaism or Christianity, depending on the location.

Interest in such a designation stems from a desire to understand what it means or meant to be "Spanish," an issue very much on the minds of the fifteenth-century officials who created and enforced the Edict of Expulsion and who completed the *Reconquista*. Identity and politics at this time were very closely interwoven, largely because of the type of government. Leadership was determined by lineage (religious as well as social), and

¹ Michal Friedman, "Jewish History as 'Historia Patria': José Amador de los Ríos and the History of the Jews of Spain," *Jewish Social Studies* vol. 18, no. 1 (Fall 2011), pp. 90-1.

not by merit or democracy. The result was that those in power focused on bettering other members of their identity and cultural group, instead of the society as a whole. Religion was a very large aspect of daily life, so the ruling religious group would get the best treatment (with adjustments according to social class). Despite the fact that Jews had lived in parts of the Iberian Peninsula for centuries longer than Christians had, the latter still viewed the former as alien. Seldom do sources, contemporary or historical, acknowledge that technically Jews could be called at least as Spanish as, if not more Spanish than, their Christian neighbors. Indeed, the effects Jews had on Spanish culture, food, architecture, and literature (including in areas greatly valued by Christians, e.g. helping to translate ancient Greek and Roman works back into Latin and the vernacular from Arabic during the twelfth-century renaissance) are often overlooked, even by modern scholars who emphasize the role of identity politics in the persecution and eventual expulsion of the Jews.

It is crucial to keep in mind the location of these two religious groups in medieval Spain and the level of interaction between them and Christians, as well as the willingness of these groups to assimilate into the society of the Catholic majority. Both the Jews and Muslims were defined by the medieval Catholic Church as “the other” and thus as “bad” and a threat. Because of this, the church and state agreed that separation was required to avoid the corruption of Christians by these opposing religions. This was a period in which Muslims still controlled territory on the Iberian Peninsula, and were therefore physically more remote than Jews, who lived in communities governed by both Muslims and Christians. Thus logically, it would have made slightly more sense to expel the Muslims who, as a result of their political power, were in reality more the “other,” and

more proudly so, than the Jewish population. However, because of the stronger financial influence the Jews had within Christian Spanish society at this time, the less powerful group was perceived as a greater threat. This may seem counterintuitive. Muslims had a standing army and state in, and allies outside of, Spain; Jews had neither. Essentially, the Jewish integration into the Christian communities made them vulnerable. They were both more familiar and more similar to Christians than Muslims were, but they were different enough, and close enough, to be seen as a threat. Perhaps more ironically, the population of *conversos* (Jews who had converted to Christianity) was at times considered still more threatening despite their more thorough significant assimilation. Neither the Jews nor those born into the Christian faith trusted this group.

By 711, when time Muslims crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into what became Spain, Jews were found living throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Jews had by then established themselves in essentially every walk of life and every economic class.² Their community emphasized education. As a result, they held administrative positions for ruling monarchs in the various kingdoms, and were well represented in the professions and in craftsmanship: they were frequently tax collectors, bankers, and moneylenders. This would be true under Muslim rule, especially under Abd-ar-Rahman III, 15th Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty, 1st Caliph of Córdoba (891-961, r. 912-961), as well as under Christian rule. Starting in the eighth century, Muslims also occupied every region of the medieval and early modern Iberian Peninsula and could also be found in every profession. However, because of Christian militant resistance and the continuing

² Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), pp. 130-31.

reconquest, the bulk of the Muslim population was slowly pushed primarily to the south. As a result, Christian knowledge of the education and expertise of Spanish adherents to Islam faded. This lasted until the early 1500's with the forced conversion of Muslims to Christianity, which also compelled thousands of *Moriscos* (the converts) to relocate into northern Iberian cities.

In addition to their financial skills and economic influence, Jews were seen as “the other” in Christian society because of their religious differences. The Jewish and Christian communities had distinct religious practices and rites of passage which nevertheless were parallel in many ways. For example, the Christian day of worship was Sunday, while the Jewish was Friday; Catholics are baptized into the Church at birth then Confirmed around the time of puberty, while Jews have a naming ceremony at birth then a Bar/Bat Mitzvah to usher in adulthood. The major holidays in Christianity, Christmas and Easter, more or less coincide with the Jewish holidays of Hanukkah and Passover. The winter holidays have very different purposes, but the spring ones are closely related. On the other hand, Islamic holidays and practices were more foreign to Christians than Jewish ones. The holy days for Muslims are centered on the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the year. The Islamic use of the lunar calendar means that from year to year the season of this holy month, a period of fasting from sunrise to sunset, changes. It ends with Eid al-Fitr, a one- to three-day period of prayer and charity celebrating both the end of the fast and the community. The second major annual Islamic holiday is Eid al-Adha, the feast of sacrifice, commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac out of obedience to God. It falls in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Neither Jews nor Christians have practices comparable to these traditions. The broader gulf

between Christians and Muslims vs. that between Christians and Jews contributed to tensions between the two political powers in the Iberian Peninsula: Al-Andalus, the Muslim territory, and the Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms, the Christian territory.

Opposition to Muslims manifested itself early as the process called the *Reconquista* or Reconquest, almost immediately after the Muslims established themselves in the Iberian peninsula by creating the Umayyad Caliphate beginning in 711. This means that as relations with the Jews were declining steadily during the Middle Ages, hostility toward Muslims was also strong. In fact, the *Reconquista* started as eighth-century revolts against Muslim rule: in 722, in the Battle of Covadonga (in far northern Spain, between Oviedo and Bilbao), led by Pelayo or Pelagius of Asturias (687-737), Visigothic nobleman and founder of the Kingdom of Asturias. This battle was the first time Christians won against Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula. The Visigothic Christians believed that the land was divinely given to them, not the Muslims, and that since the Christians had been in Spain for several generations at this point that they had more rights to the territory.³ In other words, the time of the *Reconquista* and Muslim rule of Al-Andalus is when the Christians in the peninsula began to identify as Spanish. The resistance eventually became more widespread, gaining more momentum, and turning into a war lasting almost eight hundred years.⁴

Meanwhile, in Christian Spain, resistance to Jews grew steadily during the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century, King Alfonso X of Castile, León and Galicia (1221-84, r.

³ Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea, "The Military Orders and the War of Granada (1350-1492)," *Mediterranean Studies* 19, no. 1 (December 2010), pp. 14-15.

⁴ J.H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p. 20.

1252-84) issued the *Siete partidas*, a statutory code. The *Siete partidas* governed every aspect of life, especially Jewish life. Among other regulations, these laws required Jews to wear identifying clothing; yellow caps were the most common markers. They controlled the way synagogues looked: how tall the building could be (not taller than any cathedral), how decorative the exterior could be (the exterior must be plain), how expensive the construction could be (the cost must not exceed that to build the nearest Cathedral), and so on. They limited where synagogues could be located (no new synagogues could be built with a city, and existing synagogues had to be torn down and rebuilt under the specifications outlined in the *Siete partidas*). They restricted the terms on which Christians and Jews could interact for business and social purposes.⁵ Essentially, Jews were treated as foreigners in their own country. Medieval Jews by and large conformed to these statutes and did not challenge the authority of the state to pass laws regulating their behavior.⁶

Christians perceived both Jews and Muslims as menacing; the heart of the perceived menace as far as Jews were concerned was money. As a result of social and religious restrictions, Christians were underrepresented in banking and moneylending. Jews held many positions in that industry and faced with fewer regulations than Christians when it came to giving loans. The Church had no direct jurisdiction over Jews in Spain or elsewhere in Europe, so historically those who practiced Judaism were more

⁵ Olivia Remie Constable, “*Las Siete partidas*,” transl. Samuel Parsons Scott, in the *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* 2d edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 399-405.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 405.

free than Christians to deal in banking and money lending.⁷ The anti-Jewish legislation of Medieval Spain was strongly associated with economic issues. A large source of resentment toward the Jewish community by the Christians formed specifically from the ability of Jews to deal with loans more freely than Christians could. The Catholic Church had restrictions on who could give loans, what interest could be charged on the loans, and other details of financial agreements, such as when payments were due, what frequency of payments could be set, and how much of the payment could be applied to interest versus principle.⁸

Jewish moneylenders also had another advantage over Christian moneylenders, and Christians in general. Jews talked to other Jews, throughout the peninsula, and even those in other countries, on a social and professional level. These connections gave Jewish moneylenders access to more funds that could be loaned out in Spain and elsewhere.⁹ The international network arose out of need for social support. While Christians needed communication systems too, the Jews were the minority group in each country they resided in. This created a more social need for contact between communities which felt similarly isolated. This could be considered dangerous—tight-knit communities were seen as threatening, and international communication among such groups could be considered alarming by suspicious neighbors and local officials. Despite the possible dangers, Jews needed the additional lines of communication for their

⁷ Dieter Ziegler, G. Kurgan-van Hentenryk, and Alice Teichova, *Banking, Trade, and Industry: Europe, America, and Asia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 230-32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁹ Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, p. 132.

livelihoods: they provided the opportunity to secure goods, money, etc. By contrast, Christians largely communicated with other Christians outside their communities (e.g. foreign kingdoms or city-states) under the premise of engaging in Church business: disseminating information, doctrine, rulings, and decrees from Rome. In other words, Jewish international networks were more social in character than Christians were. The central organization of the Catholic Church meant that regulations such as those on usury would be communicated from local areas to Rome, to ensure consistency.

Attempts to control economic exchanges and protect those who borrowed money, which necessarily affected Jewish commerce, stemmed from Biblical prohibitions against usury. The term refers to charging unreasonably high interest rates, a practice condemned in several passages found in the Christian Old Testament.¹⁰ One such passage can be found in Deuteronomy 23:20 (19): “Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother: interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of any thing that is lent upon interest.”¹¹ In the Italian peninsula and in France during the 1200’s, several official statements were issued by the Catholic Church, making explicit the prohibition against usury and/or changing interest rates after initially loaning out the sum. As the Church, not the state, was issuing these instructions, the content could only be applied to Christians. One such document, *Usurarum voraginem* (“The Abyss of Usury”), from the Second Council of Lyon (1274), created to regulate the act of usury, was reportedly specifically written to

¹⁰ Rowan William Dorin, “Banishing Usury: The Expulsion of Foreign Moneylenders in Medieval Europe, 1200-1450” (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. 2015), p. 281. Accessed January 20, 2018. <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/23845403/DORIN-DISSERTATION-2015.pdf?sequence=1>.

¹¹ Duet. 22:19-20 (King James Version).

avoid mentioning Jews, despite their significant presence in banking and lending.¹² This document would not have applied to Jews since it was issued by the Catholic Church. *Usurarum voraginem* could have targeted Christians who rented rooms to Jewish money lenders, or placed penalties for Christians who interacted with Jewish moneylenders. However, the document avoided such things.

When early movements were made by the international Catholic Church to prohibit usury, there was little desire on the part of governments or local churches to use expulsion as a form of punishment. By the turn of the fourteenth century, those who had opposed expulsion for Jews who were usurers began to advocate a different position. Men like Cistercian theologian Jacques de Thérines (d. 1318), and canonists Oldrado de Ponte (d. 1343?) and Pierre Bertrand (1280-1349), who had opposed expulsion then started to encourage a rewriting of official statements of the church to allow local governments the right to expel Jews who issued usurious loans. They persuaded both church and political leaders, but were more successful in getting secular leaders to act. For example, in 1306, King Philip IV (1268-1314, r. 1285-1314 as King of France, r. 1284-1305 as King of Navarre) expelled Jews from his kingdom.¹³ The laws the Catholic kingdoms in Spain passed during this time (e.g., laws that prohibited Jews from interacting with Christians, or prevented them from holding government positions, or forced them to wear identifying clothing), also found in other parts of Europe, make it

¹² Dorin, p. 281. For the Latin text of *Usurarum voraginum*, see John Batteridge Pearson, *On the Theories on Usury Adopted or Enforced by the Ecclesiastical and Secular Authorities in Europe during the Period 1100-1400 A.D., as Compared with the Provisions of the Mosaic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1876), pp. 71-72. Accessed April 6, 2018. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=chi.20569068;view=1up;seq=81>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 282-88.

believable that in Spain, Catholic lawmakers held beliefs regarding Jews and usury to their counterparts in France and Italy. As a result, scholars can conclude that medieval anti-usury laws in France and Italy would be similar to those which Spanish kingdoms observed. The Spanish Christians, excluded from lucrative positions, resented the Jews, whom they believed had too much economic control and too much influence over some Catholics.

In addition to such physical restrictions, Jews were also often restricted from certain professions, particularly those related to Christian guilds (although Jews did have guild-like structures, called *hevrah*, or *havurah*). Before Isabella and Ferdinand began their reigns in their separate Spanish kingdoms, laws were already in place to prohibit Jews from obtaining work in professions, as well as in the government and schools, and to require that they separate their living quarters from Christians.¹⁴ This was true even though Jewish communities valued education and were trained in their communities to engage in crafts and intellectual pursuits—and notwithstanding the fact that Jews had proved to be good citizens, even lending money to the government and to nobles over the centuries. The restrictive laws culminated in the *limpieza de sangre* statutes (beginning in 1449), or the “purity of blood” laws, which addressed how long it took for Jews who converted to Catholicism to truly become Catholic. Jewish blood was believed to be tainted. The laws imposed a requirement that the taint could only be removed by four generations of marriage with “Old Christians,” those who had been born into a family

¹⁴ Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p. 49.

which had been Christian for generations, as their blood would cleanse the family.¹⁵

By the fifteenth century, this belief was already hundreds of years old. One of the first mentions of Jews and the taint in their blood can be found in the time around the first Crusade (1095), the beginning of a series of military efforts to recover the Holy Land from Muslims. Jews in communities across France and the Holy Roman Empire were targeted by mobs responding to Crusade preaching. In Spain, rumors spread that Jews used Christian blood to cure ailments and ensure fertility. In other words, Christians claimed that even the Jews thought they were biologically inferior to than Christians, and in need of Christian blood to prosper.¹⁶ A second notable mention of Jews and blood came from the Black or bubonic Plague (1347-1350 in Europe), during which the Jewish communities throughout Europe reportedly did not suffer as much as the Christians did. Terrified by the devastation of this virulent disease, people sought understanding and a scapegoat: was God punishing communities for allowing Jews to live and work among Christians? Were other evil forces at work? Many determined that the answer to why Jews were less likely to die of the plague was in their blood: it was a kind of evil and less susceptible to the plague (and therefore demonstrated the evil within the religion itself). Others argued that Jews were poisoning the wells and causing the disease.¹⁷ The stress of the plague and fear of the other led to anti-Jewish violence, including mass burnings, throughout Europe. Persecutions continued in some areas through the end of the

¹⁵ Jerome Friedman, "Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1987), p. 14.

¹⁶ John Efron et al., *The Jews: A History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), p. 152.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

fourteenth century, for example in multiple Spanish cities in 1391.¹⁸ In fact, if Jews did have lower plague mortality rates, this can be traced to more robust sanitary practices than Christians observed in the Middle Ages: Jewish law required frequently hand-washing and bathing, and had stricter regulations regarding cleaning and burying dead bodies, than Christian religious or secular laws did. Since better sanitation translates into better health, it is likely that Spanish Catholics observed higher plague mortality in their communities than among Jews.

Over time this tension, and the belief among Catholics that important jobs in the economic sector should only be held by Catholics, caused resentment significant enough to lead to the wholesale expulsion of Jews by the end of the fifteenth century. The combination of fear and prejudice with legislation over centuries means that within Spain, Christians saw their Jewish neighbors as lesser people: less deserving of respect, citizenship, and wealth. Norman Roth, a twentieth-century Jewish historian, points out that in medieval Spain, “Old Christians cannot bear seeing wealth, especially new wealth, in the hands of those they consider undeserving of it.”¹⁹ This included *conversos* as well as Jews. Despite the many repressive laws against Jews, all restrictions on jobs, living quarters, civil rights, and so on were lifted once a person converted. This made many Old Christians skeptical of converts, and question their intent. The Old Christians implied that any conversion was based on a desire to improve social standing, rather than on genuine belief. Many Jews were already prominent and prosperous members of society, and conversion to become New Christians could improve their lives further. This frustrated

¹⁸ Samuel K. Cohn, “The Black Death and the Burning of Jews,” *Past and Present* vol. 196 (2007), p. 32.

¹⁹ Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, p. 110.

the Old Christians. The traditional families feared that, with fewer restrictions, an outside group which already threatened the economic balance of society might rise further.²⁰ The *limpieza de sangre* laws, which created the legal distinction between Old Christians and New Christians, were therefore an attempt to treat New Christians like Jews, until over generations there was a complete assimilation.

In addition to facing multiple barriers to full membership in Spanish society, Jews were often the target of violence. In addition to the rash of persecutions in the time of the Black Death, Spain was the location of other forms of anti-Jewish assaults, for example in the pogroms of 1391 which killed thousands of Jews and forced the conversions of thousands more. This period was described by David Nirenberg as “a cataclysmic year that witnessed the greatest loss of Jewish souls in the Middle ages and (in retrospect) marked the beginning of the end for Spanish Jewry.”²¹ Yet the surviving Jewish victims rarely did more than protest in writing or warn other communities. Indeed, Jews had integrated themselves into Christian society, even if the Christians continued to see them as “others.” As a result, they did not engage in public protests when laws were passed that took away their rights, including the early fourteenth-century *Siete partidas*.²² Similarly, *conversos* were relatively passive in the face of mistreatment. Most were like Alonso Cota (b. 1449), a tax collector, who along with his family converted to Christianity and completely abandoned the Jewish culture and practices. In so doing, they gave up everything about their identity, to take on the new identity as Christians. This

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 110-11.

²¹ David Nirenberg, “Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain,” *American Historical Review* vol. 107 (2002), p. 1066.

²² *Las Siete partidas*, pp. 399-405.

was not a new or unique occurrence for *conversos*.²³ His story was just one of hundreds who were pressured to give up parts of their identity. As had so many others, the Cota family did not protest the additional restrictions that *conversos* were subject to, but furthered their attempts to assimilate into Christian society.²⁴ Before the 1520 *Comunero* Revolt, a rebellion against King Carlos I (Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, 1500-1558, as king of Spain 1516-56, as emperor 1519-1555) in which *conversos* played a significant role, Jewish converts rarely engaged in social unrest.

Regardless of the lack of hostility from, and even resistance by, the Jewish “other” and *conversos*, the Christians continued to push against them, and indeed increased the pressure. Perhaps the most restrictive of the anti-Jewish and anti-*converso* laws are those associated with the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, established in 1478 by Ferdinand and Isabella. The Spanish monarchs wanted an institution to revive but also (from their perspective) to improve upon the medieval Inquisition, which had been solely operated by the Catholic Church since the High Middle Ages. This commission, staffed largely by priests in the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) and the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), two religious orders associated with preaching and teaching, attempted to stamp out heretical beliefs using a combination of interrogation and torture. Even in its time, the Inquisition was considered controversial. The first Inquisitions were begun, in the thirteenth century, around 1231. Inquisitions established prior to 1478 had been completely under the Catholic Church’s jurisdiction and were designed to combat heresy wherever it might be found in the

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 195-96.

Church. Those earlier Inquisitions did not require that priests or bishops answered to the monarchs of the region in which they operated; instead, the friars working as inquisitors reported to the local dioceses and to the Holy Office in Rome.²⁵

In a significant shift, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella requested that Pope Sixtus IV (1414-84, r. 1471-84) grant them the authority to establish an Inquisition in their kingdoms, and to choose their own judges. The papal bull *Exigit sinceræ devotionis affectus* (“Feelings of Sincere Devotion Demand”) (1478) did just that. The significance of secular power over their own Inquisition was that Ferdinand and Isabella would have more control in their kingdoms. They were not subject to the previous chain of command which would require submission of final authority to the pope, and could determine the direction that the tribunal would take.²⁶ In addition to this distinction in leadership, the Spanish Inquisition also differed from earlier tribunals by establishing fifteen separate courts throughout the Iberian Peninsula.²⁷ Medieval Inquisitions were less formal and functioned within the larger system of church courts rather than requiring a dedicated judiciary. After 1478, inquisitorial courts in Spain functioned continuously, and exclusively, to monitor heresy and to try offenders against ecclesiastical law.

The Spanish Inquisition was largely meant to target New Christians, who were suspected of having retained Jewish rites and traditions. Inquisitors attempted to determine the sincerity of someone’s conversion, by requiring them to undergo a series of

²⁵ R Vose, “Beyond Spain: Inquisition History in a Global Context.” *History Compass* vol. 1 (March 2013), p. 317. Accessed March 22, 2018. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hic3.12045>.

²⁶ Patricia W. Manning, *Voicing Dissent in Seventeenth-century Spain: Inquisition, Social Criticism and Theology in the Case of El Crítico* (Leiden: Brill NV, 2009), pp. 1-2.

²⁷ R Vose, “Beyond Spain: Inquisition History in a Global Context,” p. 321.

questions to ascertain whether their religious change was honest. Old Christians feared that, in addition to hiding their own Jewish practices, the New Christians were “Judaizing,” or converting other Christians to Judaism, and were in effect running an underground religious ring. Thus the Spanish Inquisition was not aimed at Jews who continued to claim their Jewish faith, but only at those who had converted and were suspected of continuously practicing or spreading the Jewish faith in secret.²⁸ Muslim conversions were less frequent at this time, so the Inquisition in the beginning mainly focused on the converts from Judaism. However, in the early sixteenth century, Muslims were forced to convert to Catholicism through a series of edicts issued that outlawed Islam and they also became subject to the Inquisition.²⁹

The establishment of an Inquisition greatly affected the relationship between Christians and Jews in the Iberian Peninsula.³⁰ At roughly the same time as the Spanish Inquisition was founded, the Catholic Church responded to a growing interest in occultism by repressing both Satanic and magical practices. Pope Innocent VIII (1432-92) issued *Summis desiderantes affectibus* (“Desiring with supreme honor”) in 1484, allowing the Inquisition to act against anyone suspected of witchcraft or other occult practice. It expressed the desire “that all heretical depravity be put far from the territories of the faithful,” so that “all errors being [may be] rooted out by our toil... and devotion to this faith may take deeper hold on the hearts of the faithful themselves.” This document

²⁸ Manning, *Voicing Dissent in Seventeenth-century Spain*, pp. 212-13.

²⁹ Natalia Muchnik, “Being against, being with: Marrano Self-identification in Inquisitorial Spain (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries.) An essay,” *Jewish History* vol. 25, no. 2 (May 2011), p. 160.

³⁰ Jennifer L. Green, “The Jews of Medieval Spain in Modern Spanish Historiography: Spain, its Jewish Past, and Modern Spanish Identity,” *International Social Science Review* vol. 73, no. 1/2 (1998), pp. 16-17.

referred to witches and those who “give themselves over to devils male and female” in the German states, but portions of the wording can be applied to other non-believers, in particular to Jews, as they too were accused of a relationship with the devil [see Figure 1]. For example, the bull notes that the guilty “deny with sacrilegious lips the faith they received in holy baptism,” which could be applied to *conversos* as well as devil-worshippers. Perhaps most significantly, *Summis desiderantes affectibus* provides for some local independence for inquisitors:

desiring... to remove all impediments by which in any way the said inquisitors are hindered in the exercise of their office.... [We] do hereby decree... that it shall be permitted to the said inquisitors in these regions to exercise their office of inquisition and to proceed to the correction, imprisonment, and punishment of the aforesaid persons.³¹

Like the bull establishing the Spanish Inquisition established eight years earlier, this decree empowered on-site authorities to act without reference to Rome.

³¹ Innocent VIII, *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, December 5, 1484. University of Pennsylvania. Dept. of History: *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history*. Vol III:4, pp. 7-10. Accessed April 9, 2018. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/witches1.html>.



Figure 1: The “Moralised Bible” (*Bible moralisee*) c. 1225-45, scene from the Apocalypse. The image depicts Jews as being on the spectrum between the devil and the golden calf, a symbol of idolatry.³²

In effect, the result of this and other late Medieval anti-heretical legislation was an attack on people who were perceived to be different. Witch hunts focused primarily on women who did not conform to society in some way. They were often accused of rejecting the religion of that society, instead choosing other forms of worship.³³ Those who hunted them acted on allegations of improper behavior from family and neighbors. The Inquisition worked much like a witch hunt in two senses: it was empowered to

³² The “Moralised Bible” (*Bible moralisee*), c.1225-45. The British Library, Harley MS 1527, fol. 140v. Accessed April 11, 2018. <https://www.baslibrary.org/bible-review/17/2/15>.

³³ Richard Kieckhefer, “Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century,” *Magic, Ritual, And Witchcraft* vol. 1 (Summer 2006), p. 79.

prosecute witches, and it relied heavily on neighbors turning in neighbors and on children telling on their parents. Like other courts in medieval and early modern Europe, the Inquisition relied on a form of justice called inquisitorial, in which judges (rather than juries or a combination of judge and jury) determined the outcome of a trial, and relied on denunciations from the public in order to bring a case. Private accusations could lead to arrest and trial, and the Inquisition took seriously all tips on witchcraft, heresy, and Judaizing. Witches were not seen as Catholic; they were seen as pagan and animal worshippers. Heretics by definition were not Catholic, and were understood to be dangerous non-conformists. Similarly, new converts were also frequently seen as not Catholic; they were seen (by suspicious acquaintances and judges) as Jews.³⁴ Because of the economic imbalance between the religious groups, the Jews, who were employed at all levels of the economy and in every profession and throughout the Iberian Peninsula, were common and easy scapegoats for when there was any unrest.³⁵ They were the neighbors whom few non-Jews wanted to get to know. Even had the Christian neighbors been curious, blood laws limited interacts and allowed for discrimination.³⁶

Via the Inquisition and other restrictions over the centuries, Spanish Christians kept converts (and three generations of their descendants) at arm's length, while trying to determine their intentions. At the same time, these New Christians hesitated to open up to their neighbors and make friends due to fear of being seen as not "normal," as Judaizers, or perhaps cooperating with Judaizers, and therefore being reported to the Inquisition.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁵ Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, pp. 52-54.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

The suspicions contributed to a continuing cycle, the result of which was ignorance and increased distrust. Old Christians drew the conclusion that New Christians isolated themselves from society, not because of fear of being unjustly accused and reported to the Inquisition by the Old Christians, but because the New Christians were guilty. They were really only Christians in name, and were in fact running an underground religious organization to maintain and spread their Jewish faith.³⁷ The Inquisition was therefore a force of further deep division in Spanish society, because it fed on and increased the constant paranoia and fear of “the other.” This means that in the long run, the Inquisition contributed to the creation of the 1492 Edict of Expulsion. Old Christians refused to accept New Christians into their communities. They were seen as intruders and not as friends or co-religionists; *conversos* were “the other.” Unfortunately, they had little support anywhere. Jews would not acknowledge New Christians either. They considered those who changed religion to be traitors to the Jewish community. *Conversos* were essentially stuck in the middle, often being seen by both sides as Jews enjoying Christian benefits.³⁸

As a result of centuries of fear building in communities throughout Spain, and of the increased intensity of that fear from the late fourteenth century on, the decision to expel the Jews in 1492 would prove to be easier than it would have been earlier in the same place. The Alhambra Decree was issued and signed by King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile in March 1492. The Decree claimed that the Jews harmed

³⁷ Green, “The Jews of Medieval Spain in Modern Spanish Historiography,” p. 17.

³⁸ Ingram, *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 19-21.

the Christians, and noted that “[King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella] procured and gave orders [to create] that inquisition.” The statement emphasized their support for this council and confirmed that Jewish converts were the principal targets of the Spanish Inquisition. In addition, the Edict noted that the monarchs “ordered the separation of the said Jews in all the cities, towns and villages of our kingdoms and lordships and [commanded] that they be given Jewish quarters and separated places where they should live, hoping that by their separation the situation would remedy itself.” Ferdinand and Isabella had separated the two groups and prohibited interactions between Christians and Jews in Toledo and in surrounding towns.³⁹ In this, the Alhambra Decree confirmed the legitimacy of the Jewish ghettos, which had in fact existed since the mid-thirteenth century in major cities throughout the Iberian Peninsula. According to the monarchs, this history of segregation had not prevented the Jews from causing injury to Christians; thus, they concluded, there was only one remedy. The Jews of their kingdoms were presented with a choice of either converting to Catholicism or relocating. They were given three months to decide, and if any Jew remained after the end of July, that person faced execution.⁴⁰

During the three-month decision period, while the Jews were required to sell “their possession, and their estates,” they still enjoyed government protection. By law, Jews were allowed to “sell, trade, and alienate all their movable and rooted possessions

³⁹ Ferdinand II, King of Aragon and Isabella I, Queen of Castile, March 31, 1492, “Alhambra Decree,” translated by Edward Peters, in *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los Judíos*, edited by Luis Suárez Fernández, pp. 391-95 (Valladolid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1964). Cited at the Sephardic Studies pages of the Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture. Accessed April 7, 2018. <http://www.sephardicstudies.org/decreed.html>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and dispose of them freely and at their will,” without fearing economic exploitation, as the Alhambra Decree ordered that “no wrong shall be done to them against justice, in their persons or in their possessions, under the penalty which falls on and is incurred by those who violate the royal safeguard.” Those who chose exile from Spain were only allowed to leave with “their goods and estates out of these kingdoms and lordships by sea or land as long as they do not export gold or silver or coined money or other things prohibited by the laws of our kingdoms.”⁴¹ Everything not sold to a Christian would be confiscated by the Chamber of Finance. The requirement that most possessions would have to be sold or traded is very telling regarding the royal government’s intentions. The decree directly stated that people had to treat the fleeing Jews with respect and honesty.⁴² Such a goal was impossible to reach, because loss of home and livelihood on religious and economic ground are disrespectful in themselves, and exploitation was predictable. Jewish congregations also attempted to sell communal property (synagogues, cemeteries, etc.) to help members of modest financial resources pay for relocation. This caused controversy in some areas, and in regions near Madrid, nobles reacted strongly, banning anyone in the towns which they owned from purchasing Jewish property. Similarly, bishops in cities like Toledo and Tuy simply took over the property. The royal government determined that the only solution was for them to take over the communal property—that way, it could neither be sold by the Jews nor confiscated by local nobles.⁴³

The Alhambra Decree created a diaspora reaching from North Africa (where

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jose Luis Lacave, “The Final Disposition of the Synagogues and other Jewish Communal Property after the Expulsion,” transl. Wilfredo Morales, *Judaism* vol. 41, no. 3 (1992), pp. 242-44.

Muslim governments welcomed them to Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Syria) to the Americas.⁴⁴ The majority of Spanish Jews went to Portugal; it was the shortest distance to travel, and for the first six months of their refuge there, King John II (1455-95, r. 1481-95) welcomed them. Unfortunately for this group, in 1497, the Jews were also expelled from Portugal by King Manuel I (1469-1521, r. 1495-1521).⁴⁵ Overall, the places that welcomed the Jews did so because of their skills and their potential contributions to academics and to the medical fields. King Ferdinand I of Naples (1423-1494, r. 1458-1494) gave protection to thousands of Jews fleeing, including Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508), Queen Isabella of Castile's financial court advisor and the official treasurer to the King and Queen. Soon after his arrival in Naples, Abravanel became the king's prime tax collector.⁴⁶ This demonstrates that a long-term sense of resentment, which eventually boiled over into a reason for expulsion, was at the same time a reason for being accepted into other countries as refugees. Unlike many refugees, the Spanish Jews had options, although the ideal option would have been to simply stay in Spain—a choice they were denied.

Unlike the land losses, the financial losses to the Jewish community are not known. However, historians do know that Jewish or *converso* banking financed two of the major events of 1492 in the Spanish kingdoms: Christopher Columbus' (1451-1506) voyage in search of a shorter passage to the Indies, and the *Reconquista*. Luis de

⁴⁴ Richard H. Popkin, "Jewish Christians and Christian Jew in Spain, 1492 and After," *Judaism* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1992), p. 256.

⁴⁵ Jessurun d'Oliveira and Hans Ulrich, "Iberian Nationality Legislation and Sephardic Jews," *European Constitutional Law Review* 11, no. 1 (May 2015), pp. 13-29.

⁴⁶ Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, pp. 52-54.

Santangel (d. 1498), from a wealthy *converso* family, served as finance minister to Queen Isabella. Columbus first approached Isabella and Ferdinand in 1486 in an attempt to gain funds for his expedition. They denied his request, but Santangel convinced the monarchy to pay Columbus about 12,000 *maravedís* annually (about \$700) to stop him from making the same proposition to another monarchy. Eventually, Columbus grew tired of that arrangement and was about to leave Spain. Santangel stepped in once again and financed nearly the entire exploration, providing two ships and three thousand pieces of gold.⁴⁷ As Douglas Hunter has demonstrated in his history of the 1492 Columbus voyage, Santangel was not the only investor, but he was the first one, providing the mariner with thousands of gold pieces and two stocked ships.⁴⁸

It is important to note that Jewish moneylenders funded some of the *Reconquista* efforts.⁴⁹ Nobles along the border between Castile and the Emirate of Granada took out large loans from local sources in order to staff their own armies, which they put in service to the Queen and King. Since the Alhambra Decree (the Edict of Expulsion) was issued only four months after the Treaty of Granada (1491) completing the *Reconquista* was signed, the loans were defunct before they could reasonably be collected. In addition, the Edict of Expulsion prohibited the export of gold or silver. The result was that those who lent the money were unable to recover any of it after they left Spain. While the true amount of the loans is unknown, they must have been substantial to finance the end of a war. It is not far-fetched to assume at least a subconscious connection here. The nobles

⁴⁷ Douglas Hunter, *The Race to the New World: Christopher Columbus, John Cabot, and the Lost History of Discovery* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴⁹ Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, pp. 13-14.

were a source of support, militarily and financially, to the crown, and actions which would forgive the loans nobles had incurred would increase that support. This was not a minor issue, as Isabella's succession to the throne had been questioned in 1478, and the support of nobles was key to maintaining control in any crisis of authority.⁵⁰ Thus, one can conclude that this edict was specifically written to keep wealth in the country, which means that the Christians were aware of the amount of wealth the Jewish community had and sought to capture it. The decree affected everyone who had a loan with a Jew, as the loan was automatically forgiven at the end of July 1492, the deadline for Jews to leave Spain. For the crown and members of the nobility, it meant thousands of gold pieces in loan forgiveness.⁵¹ The very things which gave Jews and *conversos* power in pre-1492 Spain, therefore, were used to recreate Spain as a "pure" Christian nation, free of Jewish residents and Jewish influence.

Thus, for the Christian nobles and for the monarchs of the Spanish kingdoms, life after 1492 improved fairly dramatically. The same cannot be said for Jews and Muslims. Fully understanding the effects of the expulsion requires a better understanding of life under Christian rule for both Jews and Muslims. This calls for clarifying where these groups were located, financially and physically, in Spanish society. On the financial front, Jews could be found in almost every profession in the Iberian Peninsula, under Christian or Muslim rule.⁵² For the most part, they occupied higher economic positions

⁵⁰ Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, "Ruling Sexuality: The Political Legitimacy of Isabel of Castile, *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 53 no. 1 (Spring, 2000), pp. 31-56.

⁵¹ Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, p. 156.

⁵² Renee Levine Melammed, "Judeo-conversas and Moriscos in Sixteenth-Century Spain: A Study of Parallels," *Jewish History* 24, no. 2 (June 2010), p. 155.

than Muslims did under Christian rule. In Al-Andalus, Jewish could more openly study and pursue research in mathematics, science, astronomy; in Christian Spain, they were not allowed to attend universities, but they had a separate education system and could still use some libraries. Some Jews even held lower-level government offices in Muslim Spain. This cultural and intellectual exchange between Jews and Muslims in Al-Andalus, beginning with the Muslim conquest of 711-18 and ending between 1031 and 1066, is known as the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain. This is in part because the distinction between Jews and Muslims there occasionally became blurred. In a Muslim-governed society, anyone who is not Muslim is considered a second-class citizen. In Al-Andalus, laws like the Pact of Umar (c. 673?), and the traditional identification of Jews as *Dhimmi* (protected persons), were not always strictly observed.⁵³ The former consisted of regulations for non-Muslims, which were very similar to the Spanish *Siete partidas*. Among other restrictions, non-Muslims were not allowed “to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments” or to “speak as they do.” No one was allowed to “manifest our religion publicly nor convert anyone to it.”⁵⁴ Marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims were prohibited, as was building synagogues, giving testimony in court against a Muslim, and holding Muslim slaves or servants. Periods of strong anti-Jewish sentiment in Al-Andalus, including an expulsion from Cordoba in 1013, and requirements to wear distinctive caps or badges on their clothing, demonstrate that tensions between Muslims and Jews could reach the same level as those between

⁵³ Ivy A. Corfis, *Al-Andalus, Sepharad and Medieval Iberia: Cultural Contact and Diffusion* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 188.

⁵⁴ Pact of Umar, *The Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. Accessed April 11, 2018. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/pact-umar.asp>.

Christians and Jews.⁵⁵ The Koran classifies both Jews and Christians living under a Muslim state as “People of the Book,” granting them legal protection at a lower level than those whose religion is Islam. Although technically this meant that Jews (and Christians) in Al-Andalus did not enjoy the same privileges that Muslims did, Muslims ruling in Spain did not fully enforce the laws, allowing the Jewish community there to prosper.

Muslim relations with Christians in Iberia were quite tense and were characterized by separation. As the Christian *Reconquista* took more land from the Muslims, most Muslims left to follow the moving border. By the time that the southernmost region of Granada fell, most of the Muslims had relocated there over the course of the centuries.⁵⁶ The progress of the *Reconquista* was almost painfully slow; it took seven hundred years to reclaim less than 200,000 mi². That was a slow process compared to the Muslim establishment of Al-Andalus (conquering the almost the entire Iberian Peninsula in less than ten years), in large part because of periods where generations of Christian rulers did not attack the border.⁵⁷ Initially, most Iberian Muslims stayed in the south after the fall of Granada, becoming *Mudéjars* (Muslim subjects of Christian Iberian rulers with the ability to retain their religion and their laws in exchange for loyalty to the monarch), until the large forced migration of Muslims into northern cities in the 1500’s.⁵⁸ As a result, the average Christian living in the peninsula knew, or had at least met, a Jew at some point in

⁵⁵ Darío Fernández-Morera, “Some Overlooked Realities of Jewish Life under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain,” *Comparative Civilizations Review* vol. 68 (2013), pp. 22-23.

⁵⁶ Rodríguez-Picavea, “The Military Orders and the War of Granada,” p. 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁸ Melammed, “Judeo-conversas and Moriscos in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” p. 156.

their life. The *Siete partidas* promoted neighborhood separations, and eventually led to the creation of ghettos, but the two groups could still do some business together.⁵⁹ On the other hand, most Spanish Catholics did not know Muslims. *Mudéjars* tended to remain in neighborhoods with other Muslims, and were thus almost as remote to the average Catholic as those in Granada had been. Because of this continued separation, and the prolonged *Reconquista* Christians had a warped perception of Muslims. The Muslims were looked down on, stereotyped, and seen as traitors to the Iberian Peninsula, because their co-religionists also lived in and ran the Ottoman Empire, which was a major threat to Christianity and to Christian Spain. Many Spanish Christians believed that although Muslims had lived in the peninsula for centuries, even under Muslim rule, their true loyalty still lay with the Ottoman Empire: they were a “fifth column,” prepared to overthrow Spain and reestablish Al-Andalus. These Christians feared that Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula would turn on them at any moment, and concluded that the Muslims could not be trusted—and that they did not belong in the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁰

Jews and Muslims had different reactions to living under Christian rule. Muslims spoke Arabic and kept the lunar calendar, as oppose to the Julian (solar) calendar the Christians were using, and retained observance of Islamic holidays. Jews and *conversos* alike were fluent in Spanish but often spoke Ladino, a kind of hybrid of Hebrew and Old Spanish. Jews kept their holidays but would use both the lunar calendar, in order to determine when their holy days would fall, and the solar calendar.⁶¹ Muslims wore Arab

⁵⁹ *Las Siete partidas*, pp. 403.

⁶⁰ Melammed, “Judeo-conversas and Moriscas in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” p. 156.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

garb, using fabrics which were more earthy in tone compared to Christian clothing. Even immediately after the forced conversions in the early 1500's, the converts, called *moriscos*, retained parts of their culture and still did not fully integrate into Christian society. In figure 2, for example, the *Moriscos* were still not dressing like Christians in the 1530's. These *Moriscos* are in brighter colored clothing; however, the style of the clothing is still distinct from their Christian compatriots. Jews overall tended to dress more like either Muslims or Christians, dependent on who ran the government, an example of which can be seen in figure 3. This image, from the period between 1290 and 1320, depicts Jews and Christians engaging in commerce. It would be difficult to determine who is Christians and who is Jewish, if not for the headdress. The *Siete partidas* required Jews to wear distinguishing markers on their heads.”[King Alfonso X of Castile ordered] that all Jews male and female living in [his] dominions shall bear some distinguishing mark upon their heads so that people may plainly recognize a Jew, or a Jewess.”⁶² The law did not specify what kind of cloth or what style was required for the headdress; however, wearing it in public at all times was mandatory, and failure to do so was punishable by fines or lashes.⁶³ Frequently, Jews were depicted in artwork with pointed yellow caps, as seen in figure 3. Muslims and Christians also had headdresses, but they were distinct from each other. Christian headdresses were simply cloth that was placed over the head and mainly worn by women, while in Muslim society turbans (cloth wrapped around the head) were primarily worn by men.⁶⁴ Jews would wear either

⁶² *Las Siete partidas*, p. 402.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁶⁴ Anwar G. Chejne, *Islam and the West: The Moriscos, a Cultural and Social History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 70.

headdress or hats, depending on where they lived, and the laws there. The clothing people wore was extremely important because that was the first method both of self-identification and of how others could identify them. In this time, with such great amounts of othering from the *Reconquista* and Inquisition, people watched what they wore and especially what their neighbors wore. Both Jews and Christians observed *conversos* carefully to see what colors and headdresses they wore, and how integrated they appeared to be.



Figure 2: *Trachtenbuch* [Costume Book], c. 1530/1540. A Morisco man leads a horse carrying his Morisco wife and child across land.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Christopher Weiditz, *Authentic Everyday Dress in the Renaissance: All 154 Plates from the "Trachtenbuch" [Costume Book] c. 1530/1540*, ink on paper, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg. Accessed April 1, 2018. <http://dlib.gnm.de/item/Hs22474/html> .



Figure 3: *Vidal Mayor*, c. 1290-1310. Initial E: A Christian and a Jew Transacting the Sale of a Golden Goblet.⁶⁶

The argument that nearby Muslim territory was a physical threat was used to justify the *Reconquista*. Originally, the Muslims were granted religious tolerance and were allowed to retain their culture through the Treaty of Granada (November 1491) which completed the conquest.⁶⁷ However, in 1501, the treaty was dismissed and forced conversions were begun. There were approximately three hundred thousand Muslims in and around the Emirate of Granada when it ceased to exist in January 1492. Soon after the surrender of Muhammad XII of Granada (c. 1460-1533, r. 1482-83 and 1487-92; known to the Christians as Boabdil), some 20,000 Muslims were displaced into cities

⁶⁶ Michael Lupi de Çandiu, *Initial E: A Christian and a Jew Transacting the Sale of a Golden Goblet, 1290-1310*, Accessed April 1, 2018. <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/4528/unknown-michael-lupi-de-candiu-initial-e-a-christian-and-a-jew-transacting-the-sale-of-a-golden-goblet-spanish-about-1290-1310/?dz=0.1852,0.3911,3.15>.

⁶⁷ "Surrender Treaty of the Kingdom of Granada," in Jon Cowans, ed., *Early Modern Spain: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), Accessed April 11, 2018. http://2slo.pl/wgrane_pliki/Surrender%20Treaty%20of%20the%20Kingdom%20of%20Granada.pdf

further north in the peninsula, so that they were now residing in the Kingdom of Castile. This was not a solution to the “fifth column” problem, as Muslims still lived on the peninsula, and in fact now were more visible to Christians as they lived in the same regions and cities. Nevertheless, the Muslims lived apart, like the Jews had, in their own neighborhoods. In fact, they kept to themselves more than the Jews had.⁶⁸

The conquest of Granada and the Edict of Expulsion, both of which dramatically shifted power relationships in the Iberian Peninsula, had roots in religious conflict, not just social and economic tensions. Religiously, these groups clashed because they claimed different truths, yet similar histories; e.g. the Biblical patriarchs Abraham and Isaac were fundamental to all three faith traditions, but each diverged in their interpretations of the lives and importance of these patriarchs.⁶⁹ Among the more significant distinctions among the three traditions is the question of what to do with non-believers. Judaism is a hereditary religion and thus does not try to convert others, while Islam and Christianity, both missionary religions, clashed in Spain and elsewhere.⁷⁰ Evangelical traditions seek conversion from outsiders in order to “save souls.” When they succeed in transforming a person’s belief, however, they also (either consciously or unconsciously) convert that person’s value sets and adjust, sometimes significantly, their way of life as well. Conversion is a way to make someone previously different, or “other,” into someone more similar, or included. Religions have behavioral rules, moral beliefs and codes of law. Conversion changes more than the individual’s belief; it also

⁶⁸ Popkin, “Jewish Christians and Christian Jews in Spain,” p. 249.

⁶⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Cultures in Conflict: Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 14-15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

shifts that person's mindset and lifestyle. In short, it changes people, either by sincerity or (as during the fifteenth century in Iberia) through fear. The Christians feared Muslims and Jews for different reasons: Muslims because they were an external threat, and Jews because they were an internal threat. Forced conversion should have made both groups into potential true neighbors, not enemies.

However, centuries of coexistence among Old and New Christians demonstrate that this desired result did not develop. In the Spanish kingdoms, Jews lived in their neighborhoods within Christian cities, and traded and worked among Christians, but were treated as outsiders. *Conversos* may have anticipated better treatment, as they were able to assimilate more into non-Jewish Spanish society; yet they were still seen as threatening. The Muslims posed a danger politically, religiously, and physically even after 1492, when they too were left without domestic political power. That threat was tied to a fear of conquest; on the other hand, as Jews had no foreign kingdom to fight on their behalf, the perceived hazard was quite different. It included a fear of impure or wrong religion.⁷¹ It was also, however, tied to financial issues. Jews had for centuries provided the service of moneylending, an economic benefit to many in the Spanish kingdoms as Christians were severely limited in the banking professions. By 1492, that benefit was increasingly viewed not as an advantage, but as an invasion worse than the Muslim occupation. Jews moved quietly through society despite attempts to hinder them; they maintained their influential positions because of their obvious prosperity and because they filled an economic need. In other words, by the end of the fifteenth century, the Jews

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 26.

were technically integrated into society, without actually being integrated into society.⁷² To make matters worse, when some Jews attempted to fully assimilate by converting, they were still treated as unassimilated. The most dramatic example of this continued “othering” is the Inquisition, created to combat Christian fears of an internal “invasion” by Jews who would bring ruin to them.

A major difference between these groups, Jewish and Muslim, is related to this level of assimilation into the Christian society, in part related to the necessity of assimilation. Jews and Muslims both devised ways to retain their own cultural identities, but Muslims did so more successfully, and more legally, than Jews. Over the centuries, Jews mixed their culture with either Christian or Muslim practices, depending on who controlled the government in the Iberian Peninsula. Jews had a much greater need to assimilate into the ruling culture, simply because it was the ruling culture. Jews seldom held office, or were given political power, in any pre-modern state. As there was no independent Jewish state, there was no Jewish army either; so they had limited choice on what they could and could not do. By conforming to the culture of the nation in which they lived, Jews could move more quietly and with less resistance. If they looked and acted less like “the other,” they would be treated less like “the other.”⁷³ Muslims, on the other hand, had internal and external armed forces, and they were in control of their own government in Iberia for hundreds of years. Therefore, when Christians defeated them once and for all on the peninsula, they were already seen as different people. There was less incentive for them to assimilate, so instead they retained more of their cultural

⁷² Ibid., p. 33.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 35.

practices. Once Granada was conquered by the Christians in 1492, all Spanish Muslims lived under Christian rule, and they had to adjust their behavior.

In appearance, in religion, and in proximity, there were clear distinctions between the Jews and Muslims in Christian society. For centuries, Jews were more integrated into the Christian Spanish kingdoms than the Muslims had been. Christian rule demanded a level of assimilation which the Jews continuously attempted to achieve. Jews, despite the attempts, were met with the rejection of that assimilation, e.g., the Spanish Inquisition and the purity of blood laws. The Muslim community under Christian rule more openly refused to assimilate. Given the physical and religious resistance to Christianity from the Muslim population, the question of why the Jews were expelled instead of the Muslims in 1492 is therefore relevant. Arguably, the answer is money and economic value. As Jews were generally more educated than Iberian Muslims, they performed services that the Christians relied on them for—but which the Christians could, and did, learn and take over. The process was time-consuming. After the expulsion, moneylending and banking in general suffered greatly. The medieval historian Henri Pirenne said that Christian bankers could not compete; they could not keep up with the demand for loans, nor with the ever changing economy introduced by the creation of Atlantic trade networks. Soon after July 1492, the economy of Spain began to suffer greatly from the lack of labor and the inability of the Christians to continue work previously done by Jewish financial experts.⁷⁴ Those who could go outside of the country to obtain loans did, and foreign moneylending became more and more popular. This can also be seen in how many Italian merchants and bankers entered Spain soon after the expulsion. They then helped fund

⁷⁴ Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, pp. 132-34.

Columbus' later voyages and continued doing business in Spain.⁷⁵

Christians still were faced with legal limitations in moneylending and banking, but they could have done the job. They could not, however, take over the shipping and trade the Muslims had done when in power.⁷⁶ The power of Islam declined toward the end of the *Reconquista*, but the economic power the Muslims in Al-Andalus had remained. The Muslims in Southern Spain, who were traders and merchants, were not just trading within the Spanish ports; they were trading across the Islamic Empire.⁷⁷ They could communicate with those groups for trade. In addition to Spanish, Muslims knew Arabic and were better educated in the cultures than the Christians. Jews and Muslims could navigate through conversation and with merchants, in part because Hebrew and Arabic are both Semitic languages, more closely related to each other than Spanish and Hebrew or Spanish and Arabic, making the language barrier easier to bridge. In addition, because banking and trading involved copious amounts of human interaction and would result in communicating with people in other countries, most Jews and Muslims would most likely speak two or three languages. Thus, they could more easily trade goods in and out of Spain.⁷⁸ As Muslims held less economic influence in Christian Spain than Jews, thus they were less of a threat, and could even be an asset. They had little stake in the moneylending and banking industry in the Christian kingdoms. The Christians owed them little and could still profit greatly from their work. Yet after the Alhambra Decree

⁷⁵ Hunter, *The Race to the New World*, p. 145.

⁷⁶ Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, pp. 132-34.

⁷⁷ Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 24-25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

was carried out, Spanish Christians turned their attention to suppressing and controlling Muslim culture, for example via the forced conversions and forcible resettlements of the early 1500's.

The events of 1492 were a success in some senses: Spain became more centralized, more Christian, more powerful, and more homogenous. The costs, on the other hand, show that on balance late Medieval Spain was failing. The characteristics which made for a prosperous economy and which, in fact, created the opportunities for those successes ironically depended on the rich differences in Iberian society. The “others”—Muslims, Jews, and *conversos*—provided not merely the social necessity of a perceived enemy or some difference to measure one's self against. They also provided the economic conditions which made their different defeats possible: the conquest of Granada, the Edict of Expulsion, and the Inquisition all depended in some way not just on the existence of non-Christians, but also on their financial contributions. The Spanish kingdoms and empire of the sixteenth, and particularly of the seventeenth, century suffered because of their loss. In other words, while contemporaries considered 1492 to be an expression of the highest greatness Spain could achieve, in reality it was the beginning of the end.

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