

**1492 RECONSIDERED: RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CHANGE
IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY ÁVILA**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is an assessment of the impact of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 on the city of Ávila, in northwestern Castile. The expulsion was the culmination of a series of policies set forth by Isabel I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon regarding Jewish-Christian relations. The monarchs invoked these policies in order to bolster the faith and religious praxis of Catholics in the kingdoms, especially those Catholics newly converted from Judaism. My work shows how the implementation of these strategies began to fracture the heretofore relatively convivial relations between the confessional groups residing in Ávila. A key component of the Crown's policies was the creation of a Jewish quarter in the city, where previously, Jews had lived wherever they chose. This transformation of a previously shared civic place to one demarcated clearly by religious affiliation, *i.e.* the creation of both Jewish and Christian space, had a visceral impact on how Christians related to their former neighbors, and hostilities between the two communities increased in the closing decades of the fifteenth century.

Yet at the same time, Jewish appeals to the Crown for assistance in the face of harassment and persecution were almost always answered positively, with the Crown intervening several times on behalf of their Jewish subjects. This seemingly incongruous attitude reveals a key component in the relationship between the Crown and Jews: the "royal alliance." My work also details how invoking that alliance came at the expense of the horizontal alliances between Abulense Jews and Christians, and only fostered antagonism between the confessional groups. Ultimately, this antagonism was resolved by the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. But rather than plunge the community into a

decline, the expulsion had no immediate detrimental effect on the city; rather, post-1492 Ávila experienced economic and social growth.

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Map 1 – Spain, major cities



Map 2 – Ávila, circa 1485



List of Abbreviations

ACA	Archivo Catedral de Ávila
AGS	Archivo General de Simancas
AHPAv	Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ávila
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional
AM	Archivo Municipal de Ávila
ASAA	Archivo de Santa Ana de Ávila
ARCV	Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid
BN	Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid
CODOIN	Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España

c. (caja)	box
cód. (códices)	codices
exp. (expediente)	file
f. (folio)	page
leg. (legajo)	bundle
lib. (libro)	book
núm. (número)	number

Introduction

In Sepharad, we settled our debts,
quit our estates, exchanged houses for asses;
our daughters of twelve and up married off,
so that they might cross over adversity
in the shadow of a husband.
From the moment of the Expulsion Order
our goods were seized.
We had no rights as persons to be spoken
to in public or private.
The Bibles, synagogues and cemeteries
were confiscated by the dogs of God.
From the early morning we took the road into exile
as far as the impenetrable night of history.

– Homero Aridjis, *Sefarad, 1492*¹

In his poem, *Sefarad, 1492*, twenty-first century Mexican poet Homero Aridjis echoes contemporaneous accounts of the expulsion of the Jews from the Spanish kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1492.² In so doing, he also reinscribes popular tropes about the expulsion, and the year 1492: that it marks a watershed moment, both the nadir of Iberian Jewish experience, and the pinnacle of persecution and intolerance of Iberian Catholics, led by their monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabel I of Castile.³

¹ Homero Aridjis, *Eyes to See Otherwise/Ojos De Otro Mira: Selected Poems*, trans. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Bilingual edition (New York: New Directions, 2002), 215.

² See, for example, the excerpts in David Raphael, *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles: An Anthology of Medieval Chronicles Relating to the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal* (Valley Village, CA: Carmi House Press, 1992).

³ See Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Medieval Spain's Golden Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005); Erna Paris, *The End of Days: A Story of Tolerance, Tyranny, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1995).

1492 cannot be separated from the two other signal events in Spanish history: the defeat of the last Muslim polity on the peninsula, Granada; and Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas. It is thanks to these events as much as the expulsion of the Jews that 1492 becomes so historically weighted. The year has become a ready marker for scholars, easily demarcating a distinct "before" and "after" in Spanish history.⁴

Events matter, and together the three I have just mentioned had a profound effect on the history of the Spanish kingdoms. But as Barbara Fuchs has stated, "[b]y 1492, Iberian culture [was] so profoundly hybridized that the year itself does not constitute a meaningful boundary of any sort. From this perspective, the Iberias before and after 1492 share far more than what differentiates them, and the teleological drive to an imperial Spain seems somewhat attenuated."⁵ Fuchs uses the term "hybridized" to counter periodization, specifically in literary studies, but the same arguments hold for historiography. Spanish history has perhaps too often been read as a teleological drive from a medieval, Muslim-dominated, tolerant polity through a period of "reconquest" towards a unified, intolerant, Catholic Spain on the brink of a global empire by 1492. The year becomes an overdetermined marker, ending the medieval (Muslim) period, and beginning the modern (Catholic) period. However, Fuchs asserted that when we look

⁴ For examples of this type of scholarship, see, James Morris Blaut, *1492: The Debate on Colonialism, Eurocentrism, and History* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992); Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *1492: The Year the World Began* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010); Barnett Litvinoff, *1492: The Decline of Medievalism and the Rise of the Modern Age* (Avon Books, 1992). I do not suggest that any of these events are unimportant, or that their effect on the Spanish kingdoms is not profound. However, the effects of these events took years to filter through Spain, and to suggest that 1492 clearly marks a noticeable "before and after" in history is somewhat misleading.

⁵ Barbara Fuchs, "1492 and the Cleaving of Hispanism," *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 493.

away from the larger historical events and focus more closely on the finer details of history – art, for example, or architecture, or language, or (I would argue) social networks – chronologies such as “medieval” or “modern”; and the categories “Christian,” “Jew,” or “Muslim” become far more complex and far less distinct.⁶

To choose this one particular year to mark a historical divide is misleading for implicit in such a divide is the notion of *change*. Attitudes alter; society moves in a new direction; and people convert to different religions. History takes an irrevocable step in a completely new, unplanned direction, all within the space of a year. Also implicit in this notion is the idea that society and culture was fixed or frozen before 1492, and then immediately shifted: from a medieval world to a modern one; from a peninsula fractured and divided into one united – politically, religiously and culturally from a tolerantly heterodox society of three religions to a persecuting, rigidly orthodox society.

Tolerance and intolerance; heterodoxy and orthodoxy; disparate communities: all of these existed in Spain both before and after 1492. My aim in this dissertation is to use the city of Ávila to explicate this continuity, thus allowing for a reconsideration of the date 1492. Ávila is a perfect exemplar; a close examination of the city during the closing decades of the fifteenth century allows us a glimpse at how “ordinary” people reacted to events that now loom large in the historical record. This was indeed a city of *convivencia* – living togetherness – where Jews, Christians and Muslims interacted on a daily basis. It was not physically divided along religious lines and this alone made for greater cohesion and interreligious relationships. It also lacked a large noble class and for the majority of

⁶ Ibid., 493.

the population, there was little, economically speaking, to differentiate between Christians, Jews and Muslims. Ávila was an agricultural and an artisanal community, and the majority of the population worked in either of those industries. Though Abulenses may have worshipped in different ways, in every other respect, theirs was a hybridized city, in the sense that there were no sharp religious divisions: they lived in the same neighborhoods, shopped at the same markets, celebrated festivals and conducted business together.

In truth, I became interested in Ávila precisely because of both this unique hybrid quality, and also because of the thought that 1492 might indeed serve as a noticeable turning point for the city. Of all the events that occurred in 1492, the expulsion of the Jews is one that would have had an immediate and definite impact on a community. I wanted to trace that impact on a specific community, to determine exactly how it was affected, not just religiously, but socially, culturally, and even geographically, once the local Jews were expelled. I chose Ávila because by the closing decades of the fifteenth century, the city had one of the more significant Jewish populations in Castile.⁷ If any community were to show marked changes as a result of expelling its Jewish citizens, Ávila would be it. What I found instead is that the impact of the departure of the Jews left scarcely a historical trace on the city. After 1492, the Jews vanish from Abulense records. Aside from a few references to the former *judería*, and notarial documents detailing the

⁷ Though we do not have precise population figures, we can determine approximate population size with taxation figures. In 1439, Ávila's Jewish *aljama* paid the sixth largest amount, of all Castilian *aljamas*, in taxes to the Crown. In 1474 they paid the fifth largest amount. See Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "Las juderías de Castilla según algunos 'servicios' fiscales del siglo XV," *Sefarad* 31, no. 2 (1971): 249–64.

sale of a variety of Jewish properties and goods, the extant documents I have read make no mention of what was once a sizable community.

What the documents reveal is that it was not 1492 and the expulsion which ended the hybridization of Ávila; it happened almost a decade earlier. In 1480, the *Cortes* (a proto-parliamentary council of Castilian nobility) met with Ferdinand and Isabel in Toledo and, at the monarch's urging, handed down the edict which stipulated that Jews must live in enclosed neighborhoods, apart from Christians. This edict was not new; monarchs throughout the previous century had enacted similar edicts. But Ávila had more or less ignored the law, and thus Jews lived scattered throughout the city. That changed beginning in 1480, and it was this move that spelled the death knell for the *convivencia* that Abulenses had enjoyed.

Shortly after that meeting of the *Cortes*, in the winter of 1483, Rodrigo Alvarez Maldonado arrived in the city of Ávila on orders from the king and queen, to inspect the city and ascertain the truth about a troubling situation arising from the edict of separation. Prior to 1480, many of the Jews of Ávila had been living in homes located in prestigious neighborhoods throughout the city. Some lived very close to the central plaza Mercado Chico, where the weekly market was held. Others had homes in the Yuradero, a neighborhood just outside the western wall, near the Romanesque basilica San Vicente (see Map 2, page xi). Most families had been in these homes for generations, tranquilly intermingling with their Christian neighbors.

But all that had changed. These families had been forced to pack up their household goods, and move down the hill on which Ávila is located, into the smaller

houses in the space set aside for them: a cramped corner of the walled city, next to the noxious tanneries on the River Adaja. The new *judería* was unpleasant, crowded, smelly, and far too close to the disreputable neighborhood of San Esteban, where the cities' brothels were located.

Isaac Bechacho, one of the leaders of the Jewish *aljama* (community) of Ávila, wrote to Ferdinand and Isabel, certain that the king and queen would see the injustice of their plight, hoping for redress or possibly a reversal of the monarchs' decision. In response to Bechacho's letter, the king and queen dispatched Rodrigo Alvarez to the city, to determine just how their edict had been implemented and whether the complaints of the *aljama* were legitimate.

Alvarez's report to the monarchs detailed that the situation was far worse than Bechacho had stated.⁸ Not only was the *judería* of "great narrowness" and unsanitary, but the houses were overcrowded, the plazas were far too small and lacked the sunlight for the weavers and tailors (two significant occupations for Abulense Jews) to dry their freshly dyed cloths. Worst of all, the door to the *judería* was often kept shut, preventing its inhabitants from entering and exiting freely and causing them "great aggravation." There were even reports that Christians harassed Jews as they went in and out of the *judería*. Overall, his report convinced the sovereigns that life in the *judería* was so deleterious that they ordered the city's chief administrator to find some way to improve

⁸ Rodrigo Alvarez Maldonado's report is missing, but the monarch's letter to the *concejo* (town council) of Ávila makes reference to what he wrote.

the situation and appease the Jews.⁹ At first glance, such concern for their Jewish subjects seems at odds with the actions of Ferdinand and Isabel. Not only were they the ones who had ordered that the Jews be moved into a ghetto, but just a decade later, they would expel the Jews entirely from their kingdoms. A brief foray into the religious culture of fifteenth century Iberia will help elucidate the Crown's positions *vis a vis* Jews.

Ferdinand and Isabel both inherited kingdoms in which converted Jews, or *conversos*, had long been a part. In 1391, a violent campaign of forced conversions had swept through many cities in both Castile and Aragon; ever since, a sizeable *converso* presence had been part of the peninsula's population.¹⁰ Questions concerning the sincerity of these conversions arose almost immediately, as new converts attempted to embrace their new religion, while still holding on to the practices and rituals of the old one. Further, Jews were suspected of attempting to "pass" as Christians by adopting Christian names and dress. King John I of Aragon responded quickly by enacting sumptuary laws for Jews in 1393.¹¹ Markers and badges indicating Jewishness may have sufficed for a short while, but in 1411, Vincent Ferrer pushed the Crowns of both Castile and Aragon for physical segregation, claiming that a "Christian who is neighbor with a Jew will never be a good Christian."¹² And while both rulers enacted such edicts, these

⁹ AGS, RGS, 148603,89

¹⁰ David Nirenberg, "Massacre or Miracle? Valencia, 1391," in *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (University of Chicago, 2014), 75–88; José María Quadrado, *La Judería de Mallorca En 1391*, 1. ed (Palma (Mallorca): Leonard Muntaner, 2008); Emilio Mitre Fernández, *Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III: el pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1994); José Hinojosa Montalvo, *The Jews of the Kingdom of Valencia: From Persecution to Expulsion, 1391-1492*, Hispania Judaica 9 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993).

¹¹ David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 222.

¹² Quoted in *Ibid.*, 223.

laws were never fully enforced.¹³ As we have already seen, in certain cities – such as Ávila – Jews continued to live fully intermixed with Christians for much of the fifteenth century.

Meanwhile, concerns about the religious beliefs of *conversos* continued to arise and abate throughout the fifteenth century, prompting a series of new policies on the part of both the Crown and the Church. During the reign of Isabel and Ferdinand, these policies were responses to the now overt heresy of *judaizing*, as it was called.¹⁴ Jews were suspected of being sites of temptation for “new” Christians, as associating with them might lead a *converso* to “backslide” and revert to practicing Jewish rites and giving up the “true” faith of Catholicism. The Crown thus instituted the Holy Office of the Inquisition to investigate this heretical behavior, which led to the insistence on the physical separation of Jews and Christians. When that failed to expunge *judaizing* behavior, the only recourse left was the expulsion of the Jews, so often historiographically interpreted as a signpost of the pinnacle of the hatred and intolerance the monarchs must have felt towards the Jewish populations of Castile and Aragon.¹⁵

While such a point of view is understandable, it fails to account for the concern the king and queen showed towards their Jewish subjects in the years leading up to the expulsion. Why would Ferdinand and Isabel have responded to the letter from Isaac

¹³ Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. Louis Schoffman, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971) v., 2, nos 264-270.

¹⁴ *Judaizing* could range from continuing to practice Jewish customs and rites, such as eating kosher food and lighting candles on the Sabbath, to attempting to persuade converts to reject the Catholic faith and return to Judaism.

¹⁵ Joseph Pérez, *History of a Tragedy: The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, trans. Lysa Hochroth (University of Illinois Press, 2007); Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, vol. 2nd (New York: Random House, 2001); Baer, *A History of the Jews*.

Bechacho? And even more perplexing: why would Isaac Bechacho have written to a king and queen whom he believed hated him and his co-religionists? The answer is that they were both participating in a well-established relationship, what Yosef Yerushalmi calls “the royal alliance” – the affiliation between earthly authorities and their Jewish subjects.¹⁶

How to articulate such an alliance? Yerushalmi described it as a “vertical” alliance, where in the king offered protection of the Jews in his realm, and allowed them certain freedoms (freedom of worship, and freedom of internal governance, for example) in exchange for revenues, in the form of special taxes, and intense loyalty. (As an exiled people, with no homeland, Jews were the most vulnerable of subjects, and therefore the most loyal.)¹⁷

David Nirenberg further explicated this relationship, noting that for the king, it was comprised of “impossibly disparate” ideals: on the one hand, Jews were to be punished for their role in the death of Christ, but on the other hand, he had committed to act as a guarantor of Jewish safety. Thus toleration of Jews became both “a political and spiritual compromise.”¹⁸ Making such a compromise gave Christian subjects a tool with which to chastise their king in the event of an unpopular Crown policy (often relating to increased taxes.) Because Jews were associated with money, and money-lending,

¹⁶ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Servants of Kings and Not Servants of Servants: Some Aspects of the Political History of the Jews* (Atlanta: Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, Emory University, 2005), 9. Yerushalmi located the roots of this alliance in the Jewish exile to Babylon, circa 600 BCE. While the roots might be present from such an early date, David Nirenberg argued that the alliance did not become overt until circa 70 BCE, when Roman emperor Vespasian conquered Jerusalem, and claimed all living Jewish captives as his own property.

¹⁷ Yerushalmi, *Servants of Kings*, 9.

¹⁸ Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 187–188; 199–201.

whenever issues of finances arose, nobles and local communities could – and did – attempt to rebel by accusing sovereigns of being too friendly to Jews, or even too Jewish themselves.¹⁹ The vertical alliance protected Jews, but at the same time, it came at the expense of horizontal alliances with their local communities.

These local communities might then turn on Jews. Popular tropes linking Jews to carnal dangers such as rape, murder (especially through poison), and cannibalism (especially of children) became common throughout Europe from the twelfth century onwards. Toleration of Jews was a danger, and by continuing to protect them, the king allowed their corrupting presence to fester in the realm.²⁰

While variations of the “royal alliance” can be found throughout most of the polities of medieval Europe, it was in Iberia that it was longest lived and most effective.²¹ Jews first showed their value to Christian kings as they progressively took control of cities throughout Iberia during the period known as the Reconquest. Because they had often served as administrators for Muslims, their linguistic and administrative skills were highly valued, and often Jews would simply continue in their roles as court officials.²²

But it was also in Iberia where vertical alliances most damaged horizontal alliances. We have already seen how local communities would too easily mark Jews as

¹⁹ Ibid., 200. Ferdinand and Isabel were both at times accused of being Jewish. See Javier Liske, *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal en los siglos xv, xvi y xvii* (Medina: Casa editorial de Medina, 1879), 47; Maurice Kriegel, “Histoire sociale et ragots: Sur l’‘ascendance juive’ de Ferdinand le Catholique,” in *Movimientos migratorios y expulsiones en la diáspora occidental: terceros encuentros judaicos de Tudela: 14-17 de julio de 1998* (Pamplona: Universidad Publica de Navarra, 2000), 95–100.

²⁰ Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 203.

²¹ Yerushalmi, *Servants of Kings*, 15. On the royal alliance throughout Europe, see Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 183–216.

²² Yerushalmi, *Servants of Kings*, 15–16.

scapegoats, with violent results such as the enforced conversions of 1391. These conversions only served to complicate religious matters, as now these communities had a new religious group with which to contend. *Conversos* were meant to be full members of the Catholic community, able to own land and take jobs that they previously had been barred from due to their religion. Many of these converts integrated successfully into the Catholic religion and society. Yet at various moments throughout the fifteenth century, mistrust in the sincerity of these conversions erupted in violent outburst. One notable example was in Toledo, in 1449, when citizens, enraged by a new tax in the midst of a faltering economy, took out their frustrations on the city's treasurer, Alfonso Cota, who was of *converso* origin. They first attacked and plundered his house, and then the revolt shifted focus toward other *conversos*, who were seen to be financially successful. Riots continued throughout the year, and in June the city imposed the first *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) statutes in the peninsula – theoretically barring anyone with *converso* origins from various municipal offices, including treasurer.²³

The events of 1449 were watched closely by both the Crown and the Church, and the “*converso* problem” was the subject of much debate. *Converso* apologists, such as Alonso de Cartagena, argued that baptism purified *everyone*, Christian and Jew. Isabel's personal confessor Hernando de Talavera made much the same argument in 1478, claiming that to persecute *conversos* made a mockery of baptism and stripped the rite of

²³ Eloy Benito Ruano, *Toledo en el siglo XV: vida política* (Madrid: CSIC, 1961).

its significance.²⁴ The Toledan *limpieza de sangre* statute, however, claimed that *conversos* were false converts, who kept to Jewish rites and ceremonies, and were enemies of both the city and the church. The statute went on to call *conversos* perverse thieves intent only on destroying the ancient houses of the “old” Christians.²⁵

Mistrust of the *conversos* continued and in the late 1470s, Dominican Alonso de Hojeda, convinced that Seville was home to a large group of “crypto-Jews” or *judaizers*, lobbied Isabel and Ferdinand about the matter. His report, authorized by Archbishop of Seville Pedro González de Mendoza and Dominican Tomás de Torquemada convinced the monarchs that the Church was in dire threat from *judaizing* heretics. They appealed to Pope Sixtus IV, who, in 1478, issued the bull entitled, *Exigit Sinceras Devotionis Affectus*, which allowed the Crown to create a new version of the medieval inquisition. The Spanish Inquisition, or Holy Office, as it came to be known, differed from the medieval institution in that it was under royal rather than clerical control. The first *auto da fe* (act of faith), or public trial and sentencing of accused heretics, was not held until three years later, on February 6, 1481.

Thus other communities such as Toledo and Seville experienced tensions between confessional communities much earlier than Ávila. For Ávila, these tensions were – as far as the documentation can tell us – largely non-existent until the 1480s and sparked by the creation of the new *judería*. But throughout the decade of 1480, culminating with the

²⁴ Alonso de Cartagena, *Defensorium unitatis christianae: (tratado en favor de los judíos conversos)* (Madrid: Escuela de Estudios Hebráicos y Oriente Próximo, 1943); Hernando de Talavera, *Católica impugnación*, ed. Francisco Márquez and Francisco Martín Hernández (Barcelona: Flors, 1961).

²⁵ Benito Ruano, *Toledo en el siglo XV*, 191–192.

expulsion in 1492, as the Jews relied more and more on the “royal alliance,” it served to further drive a wedge between them and their former Christians neighbors.

The Jews were unhappy with their new living arrangements, and had made their displeasure known to the Crown. The Crown, in turn, warned the city’s *concejo* (town council) to address the complaints of the Jews. The *concejo* were caught between seemingly contradictory orders: the fulfillment of the edict, which brought about agitation on the part of the *aljama*, and the directive to placate that same *aljama*. As the decade wore on, harassment of the Jews increased. Segregating the Jews from their former neighbors in this manner only served to increase antiJewish sentiment on the part of Christian Abulenses, a tension which did not dissipate until the Jews were expelled in 1492.

What this hurried overview of the fifteenth century shows is that 1492 is no less a significant date for Castile and Aragon than 1391 or 1411 or 1449 or 1478. Indeed, it seems as though every city or region has its own date which marks a sea change in interactions between confessional groups. While these cities are not disconnected, it is also misleading to assume that each is representative of attitudes toward Jews or *conversos* throughout the peninsula. Ávila did not witness the violence that Seville experienced in 1391, nor did it undergo the *anticonso* riots that Toledo did in 1449. Each city or region in the Spanish kingdoms was, in this sense, exceptional.

It is true that the fifteenth century over all saw a deterioration of conditions for Jews and thus it remains tempting to read the entire century as one of increased antiJewish sentiment and hostility towards a minority religion. In Ávila, however, what

we see evidence of is a disintegration of the horizontal alliances Abulense Jews might have had with their “old” Christian neighbors, thanks to the continued reliance on the vertical alliance the Jews had with the Crown. And though the thoughts and motivation of Ferdinand and Isabel are closed to us, my goal in this project is to shed some light on how they might have viewed the religious and political situation in their kingdoms, by focusing closely on Ávila and how the Crown reacted to events that played out in that city. Although this project is in many ways a micro-history, and a case for exceptionalism, I maintain that examining events in Ávila helps shed light on the complexities of Spanish society in the late fifteenth century.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In Chapter One, I provide the background and context. I begin with a history of the city of Ávila, as well as a description of the city and society as it was in the late 1470s. I am not only interested in discovering how many people lived there, what sorts of jobs they did, and what industries were successful in the community, but also in the physical and social geography of the city: where people lived, where they worshiped, where they shopped and where they worked. I also detail social life in the city – including interreligious socializing.

Chapter Two focuses on the changes that begin to occur in Ávila in the 1480s. As mentioned above, the *Cortes* of 1480 stipulated that all Jews in Ávila had to live in an enclosed neighborhood, a decree that led to a wholesale dislocation of the Jewish community and other disruptions, both economic and social. Thus this chapter will focus on the changes to the physical and social geography of the city, which includes clerical

and municipal laws concerning relations between Jews and Christians during this period. Some of these laws had been ignored for decades but under the increased scrutiny of the sovereigns, the *concejo* became more stringent at enforcing these laws. Many were concerned with commerce, but others dealt with more interpersonal relationships between people of different faiths. In addition, conditions for the Jewish community worsened over the decade, as they were harassed with more frequency over the years. But instead of passively allowing the harassment to continue, the *aljama* took steps to alleviate the situation. The entire decade was witness to the many letters written by the *aljama* to the Crown asking the monarchs to step in on their behalf, the increased frustration of the *consejo* caught between the Crown and the rising tension between Christians and Jews.

Chapter Three examines the actions of the Holy Office in Ávila. The tribunal in Ávila was not permanent; it was only active for a ten year period. However, the Abulense tribunal was responsible for trying one of the most infamous inquisitorial trials in the history of the institution: the men accused of ritually murdering the *Santo Niño de la Guardia*, or Holy Child of la Guardia. This chapter will first explicate the drama of the *auto da fe*, and how witnessing these events had a marked impact on local communities and their regard towards their *converso* neighbors. The chapter then moves to concentrate on the trial and *auto da fe* of the *Santo Niño* case, and how that trial further acted as a wedge between Jewish and Christian Abulenses, and all but destroyed any sort of horizontal alliance which might have existed between these religious communities.

Chapter Four outlines the expulsion of the Jews from Ávila. Documentation relating to this event is thin, but materials relating to exchange of goods and property do

exist. Jews virtually disappear from the records after 1492; however, I do not believe that this indicates the entire *aljama* decided to leave Ávila. Some did, certainly, and there are notarial documents that attest to the sale of Jewish goods and properties. But rather than solely quantifying the expulsion, I have attempted to ascertain the impact of this on this fairly small community. The main thrust of this chapter is how the “pious cruelty” of Ferdinand and Isabel played out in the city of Ávila. This includes how “old” Christian Abulenses attempted to erase the memory of their Jewish neighbors; both literally, in terms of converting former Jewish religious sites in to Catholic religious spaces; and figuratively, as town authorities attempted to untangle and resolve matters of Jewish finances after their departure.

Chapter Five offers a glimpse of post-1492 Ávila. My primary concern here is to challenge historiographical assertions regarding the decline of Castile and Aragon due to the expulsion of the Jews. As this chapter will show, this was far from the case in Ávila. Rather than any signs of decline, Ávila prospered in the years immediately following the expulsion. The economy flourished, the population grew, the nobility embarked on a building campaign and constructed many new palaces, while the local government began various public works projects to enhance the city. A secondary concern is to show that despite the tensions of the 1480s, *conversos* from elsewhere in Castile were drawn to Ávila, possibly due to the economic opportunities. Their experiences in Ávila were mixed: some suffered greatly thanks to inquisitorial investigations. Others escaped that institution relatively unscathed. Some *conversos* achieved great wealth and managed to

join the ranks of the local minor nobility, yet remained excluded from local political power.

What this dissertation does, then, is reconsider the prominence of 1492 within the historiography of Spain. Clearly the year will never lose its broader significance, nor cease to be an easy demarcation point for periodization: the historical events of the year are simply too weighty. It is my hope that this dissertation offers a view of the experience of living through 1492, the view from the ground, as it were. For the central players of my project – people such as Isaac Bechacho and his fellow Abulense citizens – 1492 did not signal the start of a new era. Yes, the expulsion of the Jews was a significant event for the community, but as this dissertation will show, it was only one significant event in a period of numerous significant events, and at the time, seemed of no more or less importance. The horizontal alliances between Abulense Jews and “old” Christians had already been shattered; the expulsion, then, only allowed the citizens of Ávila to put a tumultuous decade behind them.

Chapter One

Medieval Ávila: Reconquest, *repoblación*, and true *convivencia*

Ávila, today a rather sleepy little city, lies nestled in the hills on the north side of the Sierra de Gredos mountain range, about seventy miles northwest of Madrid (see Map 1, p x). Famous for the thick, medieval walls which have encircled the oldest part of the city for over five hundred years, it has become a regular stop for tourists who come to walk on those walls, visit the birthplace and convent of one of Ávila's most celebrated citizens – St. Teresa of Ávila – and marvel at the Romanesque architecture of Ávila's many churches.

In the fourteenth century, tourism was not a priority; rather, Ávila was a place of industry. Livestock and agriculture dominated, but there was also a significant amount of artisanal work: smiths of various metals; weavers and tailors; tanners and other providers of leatherwork. Another main industry, not surprisingly for this time and place, was religion. By the closing decades of the fifteenth century, Ávila was home to eighteen churches, numerous monasteries and convents, and at least three synagogues and three mosques, all for a population of several thousand people.¹

¹ It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of people living in Ávila at this time. Angel Barrios García has calculated, by the number of documented houses, that the population of the city at the close of the fourteenth century was between 3000 and 5000. Ángel Barrios García, *La catedral de Ávila en la edad media: estructura socio-jurídica y económica* (Ávila: Obra Social y Cultural de la Caja Central de Ahorros y Prestamos de Ávila, 1973), 91.

In many ways, late medieval Ávila seems unremarkable; a smallish town whose citizens lived together peaceably and where not much had changed over the course of several centuries. And yet it is for just this reason that Ávila can be considered something of an anomaly in medieval Iberian history which saw a great deal of inter-religious strife and outright warfare. This was the time of the *Reconquista*, when Christian armies waged what has been called a crusade against the Muslim polities in the peninsula, attempting to “reconquer” what the Muslims had taken from their ancestors three, four and five hundred years in the past. And while Ávila participated in many of these battles against Muslims – and indeed, for a time was known as Ávila de los Caballeros (Ávila of the Knights) – within the city itself, Christians, Jews and Muslims lived peacefully, side by side. Its *vecinos*, or citizens, shared geographic space and an economically and culturally interconnected society; a perfect example, perhaps, of what scholars have termed *convivencia*. Literally a “living togetherness,” *convivencia* has come to be used as a countermeasure against the institutional histories of Spain, which tell the story of an increasingly intolerant, heterodox Church, and a vicious and fanatical Inquisition. *Convivencia* looks closer at life “on the ground”: how did the locals, the commoners, the regular people live their daily lives? What scholars such as Stuart Schwarz have uncovered is that outside of institutions, many people were content to simply live their lives and were largely unconcerned with their neighbor’s religion.²

² See, for example, Stuart B. Schwartz., *All Can Be Saved : Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (Yale University Press, 2008).

In this chapter, I will outline the history of the city and its place in the wider history of medieval Castile. I will then move into a more detailed discussion of the city's governance, economy, and society in the medieval period – which includes the position of Jews and Muslims, in the kingdom, and in the city. In this discussion, I hope to explain why Abulense *vecinos* were content to live in relative tolerance in a time of increasing intolerance, an explanation rooted in the evolution from a highly militarized society (which was militarized at least partially along religious lines) to one structured by profession and urban spatiality. Unlike other sites, municipal organization in Ávila did not differentiate between Christians and Jews for almost the entirety of the medieval period.

Beginnings

Foundational stories for a myriad of medieval European cities and kingdoms often have their roots in Roman or Greek myth.³ For Ávila, such a founding myth recounts how a son of Hercules named the city Auila after his mother.⁴ It is rather more likely that Ávila began as a Roman fort – Ptolemy mentions a place called Abula in his description

³ Refugees from Troy are prominent figures in many founding myths. London, for example, was supposedly founded by Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, who fled Troy before it fell to the Greeks. Both the *Historia Britonum* (circa 830) and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (circa 1135) recount this story.

⁴ Fray Luis Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas de la ciudad de Ávila* (Alcalá de Henares: Luys Martínez Grande, 1607), pt. 1, folio 2.

of Hispania in *Geographia* (II 6,60) – and grew to city status under the Christianized Romans, who made it one of the nineteen bishoprics of Hispania.⁵

When the Visigoths overpowered the Romans in 409, Ávila was not exactly abandoned, but neither was it considered of key importance to Visigothic monarchs, and it seems possible that population levels dropped dramatically over the next century. Sources from this period, however, are somewhat nebulous; nevertheless, modern historians have attempted to create narratives of this period. Juan Martín Carramolino covers the fifth and sixth century in his *Historia de Ávila, su provincia y obispado*, and is mainly concerned with the Christianization of the Visigoths as they settled throughout the peninsula.⁶ Enrique Ballasteros offers a much more politically driven narrative of the same period in *Estudio histórico de Ávila*, detailing the conquest and consolidation of Visigothic power through these two centuries.⁷ Over time, the Visigoths attempted to reinvigorate the city: it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Toledo at the beginning of the seventh century and its status as bishopric was re-established in 633, when new churches were built.⁸ Physically, all that remains from this period is one of these churches, Santa María de la Antigua, located just outside the western walls, founded in 687.

⁵ Michael Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and Its Cities* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 40. Kulikowski notes the Council of Elvira, which took place in circa 309, and which was attended by nineteen bishops. One of Ávila's more famous bishops of the Christian Roman period was Priscillian, for whom the Gnostic heresy of Priscillianism is named. Priscillian was tried and executed for practicing magic circa 384. See Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, II, caps 48 and 50. See also Isidore of Seville, *De viris illustribus*, II, 1-6.

⁶ Juan Martín Carramolino, *Historia de Ávila, su provincia y su obispado* (Madrid: Librería Español, 1872) vol 2, 90-136.

⁷ Enrique Ballesteros, *Estudio histórico de Ávila* (Ávila: Manuel Sarachaga, 1896), 23-27.

⁸ Ana Echevarría, *City of the Three Mosques: Ávila and Its Muslims in the Middle Ages* (David Brown Book Co, 2011), 15-16.

Soon after, in 711, Muslim Berbers and Arabs invaded Spain from North Africa, and by 722, they had control over much of the peninsula. Like the Visigoths, the Muslims saw little of import in Ávila; the city is not mentioned in any of the contemporaneous Arabic sources. Latin sources tell us that Berbers settled along what was known as the Silver Route which ran from Sevilla to Santiago de Compostela. However, the known trajectory of this route bypasses Ávila, and any Visigothic roads which may have been in use are now lost.⁹ We do know that groups of Berbers settled in the Duero valley and the region between the Sierra de Gredos mountains and the Tajo river.¹⁰

Despoblación and repoblación

As the Umayyad Caliphate established itself in Córdoba (746-1031), Ávila vanished from the Arabic sources, though from toponyms of Berber origins in the surrounding region, we can deduce that the area was not completely abandoned.¹¹ According to the *Crónica de Alfonso III*, written in the early tenth century, Alfonso I of Asturias (r.739-757) harried the Berber troops garrisoned throughout this region, and reconquered many cities, including León, Segovia, Salamanca and Ávila.¹² However, this was not to last, and the region remained a highly unstable zone for the next century, with documented clashes between Christians and Muslims in 818, 871, and 910.¹³ This is not necessarily to say that Ávila or other nearby settlements were constantly changing hands,

⁹ Ibid., 17–18.

¹⁰ Angel Barrios García, “Una tierra de nadie: los territorios abulenses en la Alta Edad Media,” in *Historia de Ávila*, vol. 2 (Ediciones de La Institucion Gran Duque de Alba, 2000), 193–226.

¹¹ Ibid., 211, 215.

¹² Zacarías García Villada, ed., *Crónica de Alfonso III* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1918), 68.

¹³ Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas*, pt. 2, folio 2.

however. The “seizures” of these cities may well have been limited to summer raids, and it seems probable, given the frequency of attacks, that neither Christian nor Muslim forces were willing or able to secure and defend any city. Since Ávila was of marginal interest to chroniclers of this period, sources for this period are meager.

Historians have traditionally referred to this period as the *despoblación*, a term which alternatively has been taken to mean that the area was more or less deserted, or that the region was not under any sort of administrative authority.¹⁴ It is speculative, but Ana Echaverría suggests that any depopulation of this zone could have meant a temporary abandonment of settlements in the face of military offenses.¹⁵ In the same way, the *repoblación* which occurred in the eleventh century can be understood as either a resettlement of people (and Christian immigration was certainly encouraged), or that the region came, and remained, under Christian authority.

The *repoblación* period for Ávila occurred in the late eleventh century. Toledo, a key Muslim *taifa* (kingdom), fell to Alfonso VI of León-Castile (r. 1065-1109) in 1085, thus extending the southern frontier of his kingdom. Ávila, together with Segovia and

¹⁴ Historians have argued this point: Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz believed that Alfonso II ordered the population to leave the Duero Valley, to make it a natural buffer between the Christian remnants in Asturias and the Muslims to the south. This argument has been challenged by archaeologists and historians who claim there is no way to explain the physical evidence of artifacts in the valley, as well as the Arabized personal and place names found there, other than by postulating that many inhabitants remained. See Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, *Despoblación y repoblación del Valle del Duero* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de historia de España, 1966). See also Richard Hitchcock, “Arabic Proper Names in the Becerro de Celanova,” in *Cultures in Contact in Medieval Spain: Historical and Literary Essays Presented to L.P. Harvey* (London: King’s College, 1990), 111–126; Angel Barrios García, “Toponomástica e historia: Notas sobre la despoblación en la zona meridional del Duero,” in *Estudios en memoria de Profesor D. Salvador de Moxó*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1984), 115–134; Thomas Glick, *From Muslim Fortress to Christian Castle: Social and Cultural Change in Medieval Spain* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1995), 113–115.

¹⁵ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 24.

Salamanca was “resettled” by 1089.¹⁶ Alfonso gave jurisdiction of this region, which made up the western part of his kingdom, to his son in law, Don Raimundo of Burgundy. He in turn appointed Ximen and Fortún Blázquez, sons of a minor noble of Asturias, with the care and defense of Ávila, still considered very much a frontier city on the edge of the Christian/Muslim divide.¹⁷ A “Christianization” campaign took place in Ávila and its neighboring cities, which included the establishment of both local parishes and shrines, converting mosques to churches (although Ávila had no mosque at the time) and creating a series of religious myths, creating a “symbolic geography” of Christianity.¹⁸

For Ávila, one such myth was the story of the siblings Vicente, Sabina, and Cristete, who were supposedly martyred in the third century. According to legend, a Jew witnessed the martyrdom of the three and laughed as their bodies were thrown over a cliff. A serpent then emerged from the rocks and attacked him, nearly suffocating the man until he repented his mockery and vowed not only to convert, but also to build a church on the site where the siblings died.¹⁹ That church, the Basilica San Vicente, founded circa 1190, stands just outside the northeast gate of the city walls. Though the

¹⁶ Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, ed. Juan Fernández Valverde (Alianza Editorial, 1989), 173.

¹⁷ Bernard Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castile Under Alfonso VI, 1065-1109* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 307–308. José Ignacio Moreno Núñez, *Ávila y su tierra en la baja edad media: siglos XIII-XV* (Spain: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, 1992), 73–74.

¹⁸ Ana Echevarría, “La transformación del espacio islámico (siglos XI-XIII),” in *Á la recherche de légitimités chrétiennes. Représentations de l’espace et du temps dans l’Espagne des IXe-XIIIe siècles* (Lyon: ENS Éditions – Casa de Velázquez, 2003), 60–67.

¹⁹ This martyrdom supposedly dates from the third century, however by the time Jimenez de Rada wrote his *Historia*, in the thirteenth century, the story was considered apocryphal. Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas*, pt. 1, folio 9; Rada, *Historia*, 235.

story is apocryphal, a plaque inside the church claims that the converted Jew is buried there.

In addition to the basilica, many of Ávila's significant landmarks date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Foremost among these monuments are the imposing city walls, which encircled the city and remain intact, albeit largely rebuilt, today. The walls were deemed necessary to protect the city from raids from the south, mostly instigated by Muslim lords from the *taifa* of Talavera, located to the south of the Sierra de Gredos mountains, in the region which came to be known as New Castile.

Within the walls were several of the most important buildings of Ávila. First and foremost is the imposing "fortress-cathedral" of San Salvador, the apse of which forms part of the city walls. Construction began circa 1090, though it was not completed until the fourteenth century. There was also some sort of castle, or *alcázar*, probably in the southwest corner of the walls.²⁰ The heart of the city was the *plaza mayor*, called the Plaza Mercado Chico, which is close to the center of the walled city. Then, as now, it was the center of commercial life for the city and here farmers, and later artisans, would come to sell their wares. Two other significant plazas are located just outside the walls: outside the Puerta de Alcázar, to the east of the city, is the largest plaza, the Mercado Grande (today also known as Plaza Santa Teresa). This plaza became the judicial center of the city; from the earliest days it was the site where punishments were meted out to

²⁰ No trace of the *alcázar* remains today; however, the southernmost gate on the eastern side of the city is called the *Puerta de Alcázar*. It has been suggested by scholars that Alfonso must have built some kind of palace for himself, and given the name of the gate, this spot seems most likely. See Rafael Domínguez Casas, *Arte y etiqueta de los Reyes Católicos: artistas, residencias, jardines y bosques* (Madrid: Alpuerto, 1993), 319.

criminals.²¹ Finally, to the northeast of the walls, is the smallest of the three, the Plaza San Vicente, beside the basilica of the same name. (See Map 2, p xi)

Though the walls were there to provide defense for inhabitants of the city, newcomers to Ávila were not afraid to build outside of the walled perimeter. In large part, this was due to the need to feed the population: the walls were ringed with small agricultural holdings, and those who worked on these holdings made their homes close by. As more *vecinos* made their homes outside of the walls, other buildings were erected as well. The church of San Pedro graced the eastern edge of the Plaza Mercado Grande, while the much smaller church of San Andrés was built to accommodate those living outside the walls at the bottom of the hill on the north side of the city.

The area surrounding the cathedral was the most popular *barrio*, or neighborhood, in which to live. Though we do not have exact numbers, the anonymous *Crónica de la población de Ávila* (written circa 1250) tells us that, together with the aforementioned Blazquez brothers, the families Ximenos, Zorraquienes and Velascos, all from Vizcaya, came to Ávila in the closing years of the eleventh century.²² Others came from further afield: Don Raimundo was from Burgundy, and records indicate that several Burgundian families also arrived in Ávila around this time: names such as Ricart, Robert, Guiscard, Beltraine and de Chanú are found on twelfth century documents.²³ (Ávila was not the only place to see an influx of French; Salamanca had its own *barrio de franceses* near the

²¹ Carramolino, *Historia de Ávila* vol. 2, capítulo 8.

²² Amparo Hernández Segura, *Crónica de la población de Ávila* (Valencia: Anubar, 1966), 21–26.

²³ Ballesteros, *Estudio histórico de Ávila*, 97.

cathedral.)²⁴ These French families were merchants and artisans, and not nobles, though they were considered respectable.²⁵ Most of these settled within what would become the walled city, in the prestigious *barrios* of San Juan and San Pedro, near the central market and the cathedral. The nobles owned large estates in the lands surrounding Ávila, and derived their income from the rents of these estates. The Christian merchants owned property, as well, but on a much smaller scale: small farms, vineyards, pastures or orchards, near or within Ávila.²⁶

In addition to the northern newcomers, there were families who had been living in the region since well before the Christian conquest. Again, numbers elude us, and even names are lacking; a sixteenth century history simply tells us of “those who had been living and inhabiting the city of Ávila since before the Moors entered.” José Belmonte speculates that these families may not have been living in the city proper, but rather on small farms in the foothills of the Gredos.²⁷

Some of these families may have been Muslims, and indeed, from a very early point there were both Muslims and Jews living in Ávila. Reasons for moving to the city varied: those living near the foothills may have deemed it safer to move into the city proper, especially given the high number of raiding parties (both Christian and Muslim)

²⁴ José Maria Quadrado, *Salamanca, Ávila y Segovia* (Barcelona: Daniel Cortezo y Ca, 1884), 86.

²⁵ José Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila: (estudio histórico)*, 2nd ed. (Ávila: Caja de Ahorros de Ávila, 1997), 71.

²⁶ Jodi Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Ithaca, 1992), 15–17.

²⁷ Antonio de Cianca, *Historia de la vida, invención, y milagros, y translación de San Segundo, primero Obispo de Ávila y recopilación de los Obispos sucesores suyos, hasta D. Geronimo Manrique de Lara, Inquisidor general de España* (Ávila: Luis Sanchez, 1595), 72 “...los que antes auian biuido y habitado la ciudad de Auila, antes que Moros la entrassen.”; Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 71–72.

operating in the area during the twelfth century. As well, Muslims were brought back to the city as slaves – the result of those raiding parties on the Muslim *taifas* to the south. It is also highly probable that in-migration was impacted by the arrival of the Almoravids, who entered the peninsula from North Africa in 1086 to aid in the attempt to retake Toledo, and took over the caliphate. Those already in the region would have no incentive to leave: despite now being in the minority, there was no way to know that their situation would be improved in the south. Further, there may well have been increased in-migration northwards as a way not only to escape war, but also to evade the stricter interpretation of the Qur'an endorsed by the Almoravids.²⁸

Local histories mention a group of Jews moving into Ávila in 1085 under the leadership of Rabbi David Centén, and establishing themselves in houses on the streets of Santo Domingo and Santa Escolástica.²⁹ Exactly where this group came from is unclear, though Jews were able to move around Castile with freedom in the eleventh century. It is possible, though speculative, that they were also trying to escape a harsher life in the south, and the more fertile regions of the north may have seemed especially attractive. Belmonte suggests Jews were enticed by the Crown to settle in Castilian cities, since they were known to be a good source of income from taxation, which is also speculative.³⁰

²⁸ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 26; Serafin Tapia, *La comunidad morisca de Ávila* (Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1991), 49. Tapia discusses three towns in the province of Ávila called *Tornadizos*: turncoats, or converts in English. Surely this cannot be a coincidence.

²⁹ Carramolino, *Historia de Ávila*, 240. See also Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas*, fol 20, v 2; Ballesteros, *Estudio histórico de Ávila*, 176; Gabriel María Vergara y Martín, *Estudio histórico de Ávila y su territorio desde su repoblación hasta la muerte de Santa Teresa de Jesús: premiado en el certamen histórico-literario celebrado en Ávila en el mes de octubre del año 1894* (Madrid: Hernández, 1896), 31.

³⁰ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 73.

Thus, minority religious groups were a key part of Abulense society from the early stages of the *repoblación*. Though significant, this was not unusual: other nearby cities experienced similar population trajectories. León, for example, saw a vibrant commercial quarter develop outside its walls in the latter half of the eleventh century, which attracted Jewish merchants to the city. Due to León's position along the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, such commercial activity only continued to grow and by the beginning of the twelfth century, this suburb had become the commercial center of León. Zamora, on the Duero River, and Salamanca also saw a similar development: a rather rapid influx of Jewish merchants and a shifting of the commercial center away from the defended walled part of the city.³¹

We should not assume, however, that the population of Ávila grew rapidly: despite the work being done on the new cathedral from an early date, Ávila did not warrant its own bishop until probably 1121, and until then was under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Salamanca (installed in that city already by 1102).³² It also took some time for a *concejo*, or town council, to be established. The governance of the city was first taken up almost entirely with military affairs and defense, and the first co-governors appointed by Don Raimondo were Alvaro Alvarez (†1098) and Ximen Blázquez (†1108).³³ Over the next decades, Ávila and other communities like it – Segovia, Salamanca and Toledo – gradually gained some measure of political and administrative

³¹ Thomas Glick, *Islamic And Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Brill, 2005), 121.

³² Reilly, *Alfonso VI*, 309–309.

³³ Vergara y Martín, *Estudio histórico de Ávila y su territorio desde su repoblación hasta la muerte de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, 16; 34.

autonomy from the Crown, and not only over their respective cities, but over the outlying regions as well.³⁴

As northern immigrants increasingly settled in the cities of southern Castile and León, the Crown moved to recognize their legal status as cities. Traditionally this was done by the monarch granting a *fuero*, or a legal charter, to each city. Each city's *fuero* would outline the rights and privileges bestowed on the nobility and *vecinos*, as well as the obligations of the same to the Crown. The text of Ávila's original *fuero* is lost and its exact date unknown; however, other *fueros* contemporaneous to it give us some idea of what it likely contained, as do later editions, which allude to the one conferred by Alfonso VI.³⁵ This first *fuero* was likely rather brief, and dealt primarily with territorial jurisdiction, civil law (fines for various crimes) and military service owed to the Crown.³⁶ Though Abulense citizens were not the only ones to render service to their king, military feats and strength became an overarching characteristic of the city during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Certainly the Muslim forces to the south were not content to retreat – retaking Toledo was their primary objective. Ávila remained a prime target over the next decades,

³⁴ Luis García de Valdeavellano, *Curso de historia de las instituciones españolas: de los orígenes al final de la Edad Media* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1968), 241–242.

³⁵ Ricardo Blasco, “El problema del fuero de Ávila,” *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos* 60 (1954): 8.

³⁶ See, for example, the two samples provided in Olivia Remie Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, Second Edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 162–165. On military service, see James F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284* (University of California Press, 1988), chap. 1. While the date the *fuero* was administered is unknown, however, it was definitely issued before 1166, which is when the *fuero* for the city of Evora, based on the *fuero* of Ávila, was issued. Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 77.

well into the reign of Urraca (r. 1109-1126), daughter of Alfonso VI.³⁷ Thus Ávila was resettled not so much by nobles as by knights, whose key aim was to rebuff Muslim advances from the south.³⁸ Despite the focus on warfare against Muslims and military accomplishments, the city was not, as one might expect, ever homogenously Christian. Muslims and Jews were part of the fabric of Ávila from the early days of *repoblación*.

A frontier city

It is important to bear in mind that despite repeated skirmishes between Christian and Muslim forces during the *repoblación*, Christian kingdoms and Muslim *taifas* did not consistently manifest overtly hostile policies towards each other. Certain *taifas* were persuaded to pay tributes, known as *parias*, in order to maintain peaceful relations. Ferdinand I of Castile-León (r. 1037-1065) received *parias* from Toledo, Sevilla, Zaragoza and possibly Badajoz and Valencia as well.³⁹

There were also times when inter-religious alliances were made. Upon his death, Ferdinand divided his kingdom between his three sons, bequeathing Castile to Sancho II, León to Alfonso, and Galicia to García. This only served to promote infighting amongst the brothers. After being defeated by Sancho at the battle of Golpejera in 1072, Alfonso, who had continued receiving *parias* from Toledo, fled there, and the Muslims offered him refuge. Sancho died that same year, whereupon Alfonso returned to León and

³⁷ Rada, *Historia*, 300.

³⁸ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 26. See also Elena Lourie, "A Society Organized for War: Medieval Spain," *Past & Present* 35, no. 1 (December 1, 1966): 55–56.

³⁹ Richard A. Fletcher, *The Episcopate in the Kingdom of León in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1978), 7.

embarked on an expansionist campaign that would eventually see him turn on his former Toledan allies, and conquer that city in 1085.

Alfonso was a shrewd manipulator of men, and at times allied himself with differing Muslim polities in order to pit them against each other and so weaken them both.⁴⁰ It may be safe to say that Alfonso was motivated much less by anti-Muslim zeal than by his own quest for more territory and power. By the end of his reign in 1109 he had reunited the lands his father had divided, and expanded those lands southwards. Ávila was part of that expansion, and very much on the edge of the Muslim/Christian frontier.

Skirmishes between various polities continued over the course of the twelfth century, and Ávila continued to emphasize and prioritize its military. The Blázquez family distinguished itself in the defense of Ávila, as well as in battles fought further afield. Nalvillos Blázquez, oldest son of Ximen Blázquez, was not only considered a local hero for his efforts in defending the scattered redoubts in the hills surrounding Ávila, but he also was part of the force sent to defend Cuenca from the Almoravids in 1108, a battle which the Castilian army lost.⁴¹

Alfonso's daughter, Urraca (widow of Don Raimundo), succeeded her father in 1109; her reign was also marked by the tumult and infighting her father's reign had seen at the outset. At the time of his death, Alfonso had been negotiating Urraca's second marriage to Alfonso I of Aragon. Though some Castilian nobles were opposed to the

⁴⁰ Reilly, *Alfonso VI*, 125.

⁴¹ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 79; Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of Al-Andalus* (Harrow, Essex: Longman, 1996), 173.

marriage, Urraca decided to proceed, to a disastrous end. The marriage unraveled quickly – there were rumors of physical abuse by Alfonso – and the burgeoning resistance on the part of the nobles of Galicia, who were more inclined to support Urraca's five year old son from her marriage with Raimundo as their king, persuaded Urraca to seek an annulment. The estrangement provoked tensions between Castile and Aragon, and for several years, there were battles and clashes amongst the various Christian kingdoms (including Portugal) and the focus on defeating the *taifa* kings to the south was lost.⁴² Urraca managed to forge a peace with both Aragon and Portugal, though she had to give up certain lands in order to do so. By the time her son, Alfonso VII, took the throne in 1126, she had recovered some of her lost territories and was looking to expand Castile-León southwards again.

Abulense knights once again rode with their new king, and took part in several campaigns in the south, including the sieges of Coria and Albalate in 1142.⁴³ Summer raids continued, as described by the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*:

Even though the infidels were on the attack to such an extent, every year the Christians living in the Trans-Sierra region and in Extremadura mobilized their forces and planned military campaigns. These would vary from one thousand to five thousand soldiers, and sometimes as many as ten thousand. They would go to the territory of the Almoravides and the Spanish Moslems and massacre them and, take a great many prisoners. Large amounts of booty would be carried off, and the land would be left in flames. They also killed several Moorish leaders and destroyed many of their castles and towns.⁴⁴

⁴² Bernard F. Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castile under Queen Urraca, 1109-1126* (Princeton University Press, 1982), chap. 2.

⁴³ Ángel Barrios García, ed., *Historia de Ávila*, vol. 2 (Institución Gran Duque de Alba, 1998), 371.

⁴⁴ Glenn Edward Lipskey, ed., *The Chronicle of Alfonso the Emperor*, trans. Glenn Edward Lipskey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1972), 113.

Alfonso VII died in 1157 and split his kingdom in two – his older son, Sancho III, was given control over Castile and Toledo, while León and Galicia went to Ferdinand II. Once again the stage was set for Christian in-fighting and a possible war, but the brothers managed to forge a peace accord by 1158, which quickly became moot when Sancho died that same year. His son, Alfonso VIII, was only three years old, and as his mother was also deceased, a struggle for the regency of Castile ensued. The boy eventually ended up under the protection of the Lara family, while his uncle Ferdinand assumed the regency and consolidated Castilian and Leonese resources for his own ends.⁴⁵

One of these ends was the foundation of a Spanish military order, the Order of Santiago, which became intimately connected with Ávila. Military orders – most notably the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templar – were borne of the crusades and founded to protect Christian pilgrims traveling to and from the Holy Land. Both orders were present in Spain by the mid-twelfth century, as by this time, the wars between Christian kingdoms and Muslim *taifas* had become part of the greater Crusader mentality of a wider European community. In 1089, Pope Urban II had specifically mentioned that Castilian and Aragonese knights were not called to crusade in the Holy Land, as they had their own domestic crusade in which to battle.⁴⁶ The Order of Santiago was founded in order to protect pilgrims travelling to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Two other

⁴⁵ Teofilo F. Ruiz, *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Castilian Society, 1150-1350* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

⁴⁶ Joseph O'Callaghan, *Reconquest And Crusade In Medieval Spain* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 31.

orders, Alcántara and Calatrava, were founded contemporaneously, and were tasked with defending Christian territories in Castile and León from Muslims.

Although both Christian and Muslim chronicles of the late twelfth century frequently mention Ávila as a site of conflict, and as a result, the local militia gained the reputation for being valiant and resolute warriors, there was no organized military order present at that time.⁴⁷ Local knights formed their own brotherhood, a “sacralized municipal militia” known as the *fratres de Ávila* (brothers of Ávila).⁴⁸ The group was offensive as well as defensive in nature, and was responsible for the founding of the first hospital in Ávila in order to treat and care for captives rescued from Muslim territories. The hospital was located just outside the western walls of the city, on the banks of the Adajo river, and today is a hostel for pilgrims walking the Via de Plato pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.

In 1172, the brothers of Ávila were incorporated into the Order of Santiago, and the hospital subsumed into the order’s holdings. By the thirteenth century, it had grown to include a convent, presumably so that it could offer support to recovered captives of both sexes. However, by the early decades of the thirteenth century, discussion of rescued captives disappears from the extant records.⁴⁹ This is likely the result of the shift of the frontier between Muslim and Christian territories southward.

⁴⁷ Powers, *A Society Organized for War*, 46–47.

⁴⁸ Carlos de Ayala Martínez, *Las órdenes militares hispánicas en la Edad Media (siglos XII-XV)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2007), 135.8ij

⁴⁹ José Luis Martín, *Los orígenes de la Orden Militar de Santiago (1170-1195)* (Barcelona: CSIC, 1974), 377–379.

As infighting amongst the Christian kingdoms occurred, so too were there internal struggles amongst the Muslim polities. From the mid-twelfth century on, the Berber-Muslim dynasty known as the Almohads infiltrated and eventually controlled much of Andalucía and by 1173 they had established Seville as the seat of their government. An uneasy peace existed between the northern kingdoms and the Almohads, but by the opening decade of the thirteenth century, that peace began to unravel in the face of renewed raids by Christians into Muslim territory. Spurred on by both the military orders and Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, then Archbishop of Toledo, four of the northern kingdoms – Castile, Navarre, Aragon and Portugal – banded together to attack the Almohads. The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa took place on July 16, 1212, and marks a watershed moment in the history of medieval Spain. The Almohads were crushed and it was not long after that the towns of Córdoba (1236), Jaén (1246), and Sevilla (1248) were under Christian authority.⁵⁰ Abulense knights fought at Las Navas, and the Blázquez family was rewarded for their valor with extensive lands surrounding the city.

The lasting impact of this battle on Ávila was, as noted above, the shift of the frontier from the region just south of the city to one much farther away. This in turn shifted the economic and social foci of the city: no longer was it a frontier city, with an economy based on plunder and a society that revolved around war. Through the latter half of the thirteenth century, Abulense economics began to concentrate on agriculture and artisanal products, and this had a direct impact on its society.

⁵⁰ Joseph O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Cornell University Press, 1983), 245–249.

A settled city: the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

A new fuero and the concejo

In 1254, the new, young king of Castile-Leon, Alfonso X (r. 1252-1284), left Seville to tour his northern territories. The journey was in part motivated by a desire to assess both local governance and the administration of justice in the various cities within his realm. The new municipal laws he initiated are known collectively as the *Fuero Real*, and by 1256 had been issued to the towns of Castile, including Burgos, Trujillo, Arévalo, and Ávila.⁵¹ This move was part of Alfonso's efforts to unify the diverse regions of his realm; towns which until this point had developed differing customary laws and were, at best, a loose-knit collection of cities, rather than a part of a consolidated kingdom.

Ávila's new *fuero* concerned itself with a variety of issues. For one, it redefined the boundaries of the city's jurisdiction, or the *término*, bringing outlying towns and villages under the authority of the city. It also outlined civil and criminal laws – it unified weights, measurements and mandated that at least one day a week had to be a public market day, and also determined punishments for crimes such as theft and murder. An important section of the *fuero* delineated certain privileges and tax exemptions, primarily for the *caballeros* (knights). In order to qualify for these, a *caballero* had to own a house within the *término*, and reside there from eight days before Christmas till eight days after Pentecost (fifty days after Easter). He also had to own a horse, armor and a sword. These

⁵¹ James Powers F., "Two Warrior-Kings and Their Municipal Militias: The Townsman-Soldier in Law and Life," in *The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror: Intellect and Force in the Middle Ages*, ed. Robert Burns., First Edition (Princeton Univ Pr, 1986), 103.

privileges were extended to the *caballero*'s children, his servants, and after his death, to his widow.⁵²

The privileges and exemptions were important for two reasons. For one, Alfonso wanted a reliable militia on which to call should he need it. This was standard practice and something very like it was undoubtedly part of the city's original *fuero*. But Alfonso had another reason. In an unprecedented move, he included a section in the *fuero* which stipulated that the king reserved the right to appoint whomever he chose to any position on the *concejo*, or town council. This was a bitter pill to swallow for the *vecinos* of Castilian cities, who had enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy in the previous century. Even with all the sweeteners included in the *fuero*, resistance to this stricture was strong. Alfonso mollified his *caballeros* somewhat by promising that he would only appoint men from the *caballero* class.⁵³

José Belmonte points out that this *fuero* led to a more sharply divided Abulense society, as it barred a large portion of the population from ever sitting on the *concejo*, arguably the most important administrative body in the city.⁵⁴ The *concejo* had jurisdiction over the entire *término*, inhabitants of which were either *vecinos*, who were regarded as full citizens with rights and privileges, or *moradores* (inhabitants), who were

⁵² Carramolino, *Historia de Ávila* vol II, p 491-493. "E mandamos que los caualleros que tuuieren las mayores casas pobladas con mugeres e fijos, e con los que no tuuieren mugeres, con la compañía que ouieren, dende ocho días antes de Navidad, fasta ocho días después de Cinquesma, é tuvieren cauallo, e armas, de veinte maravedís arriba, y escudo, lanza, é loriga, biafroneras, perpunte, capillo de fierro, espadas, que non peche."

⁵³ Martínez Llorente, Félix Javier, "El régimen jurídico abulense medieval: del fuero a las ordenanzas (siglos XI-XV)," ed. Ángel Barrios García, *Historia de Ávila* 2 (1998): 428-430.

⁵⁴ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 129. This would become a matter of heated debate in the early sixteenth century, as *conversos* sought access to seats on the *concejo*, to no avail.

not. Generally, to qualify as a *vecino*, one had to own property and pay whatever dues and taxes were owed to both the Crown and the town government.⁵⁵ The result of this new stricture and Alfonso's promise to appoint men of the *caballero* class was that by the end of the thirteenth century, Ávila's military aristocrats had become political aristocrats.⁵⁶

In the thirteenth century, the *concejo* generally met weekly (unless there was an urgent matter or a royal *carta* (letter) was received), on Sundays after mass; in Ávila, they met in the choir of the church of San Juan, just off the central Plaza Mayor.⁵⁷ In 1255, the *concejo* was made up of 13 members: the *juez*, or mayor, who was head of the town government; six *alcaldes* (magistrates) and six *jurados* (councilors). That year, the members of the *concejo* were Ihoannes Nunno, the *juez*; *alcaldes* Pascual Enego, Benito Fortún, Ihoanes Blasco, Petro Gómez, Sancho Blasco, and Sant Dominguez; and *jurados* Sanchón Enego, Domingo Blasco el Crespo, Vicente Semeno, Fiorente Iohanes Nunno Dominguez and Sancho Petro.⁵⁸ The *concejo* had jurisdiction over civil and criminal laws, as well as economic and administrative ordinances, all within the parameters of the *fuero*. This included the town's militia.

Abulense men continued to be summoned to fight for their king; however, unlike appointments to the *concejo*, this was not limited to the *caballeros*. In 1255, Alfonso X

⁵⁵ Evelyn Stefanos Procter, *Curia and Cortes in León and Castile, 1072-1295* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 96.

⁵⁶ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 127–129.

⁵⁷ Archivo Municipal de Ávila (hereafter AM) leg...ajo 1 #69

⁵⁸ Archivo de Santa Ana de Ávila (hereafter ASAA), Doc. año 1255, 21 de marzo, cód.. Unfortunately the documents provide no further details on the men other than their names.

marched to Soria to confront Jaime I of Aragon (r. 1213-1276). Relations were cool between the two, despite Alfonso's marriage to Jaime's daughter Violant in 1246. Jaime was concerned by the rapid southward expansion of Castile-León over the past decades, and had been amassing armies and making vague threatening gestures towards his neighbor to the west. Alfonso called his banners from the towns of Extremadura to accompany him to Soria, and the men of Ávila were part of that response.

According to the *Crónica de la población de Ávila*, the Abulense group included seventy mounted Muslims and fifty footmen. When the Abulense men reached the muster point, they were told the king wanted the Muslims sent back to Ávila, and that rather than fight, they should pay two thousand *maravedís*. Gómez Nuños and Gonçalo Matheos were sent to negotiate with the king and suggest that he allow the Muslims to stay and serve him, and that since he was lacking in funds, he could send to Ávila to collect the taxes owed him from those citizens who had remained behind. The king was amenable to this plan, but as he and Jaime eventually resolved their differences in negotiations, there was no need for battle.⁵⁹

Whether the number of Muslims soldiers is accurate or not, it speaks to the integration of Muslim and Christians within Abulense society. Of course, as we have seen previously, Muslims and Christians allying together was not unheard of during the medieval period.

⁵⁹ Hernández Segura, *Crónica*, 47.

Clergy

The bishopric of Ávila, established during the Visigothic period, had waned over the centuries without Christian authority. With the revival of the archbishopric of Toledo in 1085, eight bishoprics were soon after reestablished; Ávila was one of these, probably reestablished circa 1100. Sources give conflicting information regarding when the first bishop was installed; what we do know is between 1130 and 1135, Alfonso VII bestowed a donation of “the third part of its rights” to the cathedral because it had been “thirty years without a shepherd.”⁶⁰

Documentation becomes more authoritative throughout the twelfth century. In 1120, the bishopric of Ávila was integrated into the Archdiocese of Santiago, along with Salamanca, Zamora, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Plasencia. Much more is known about the cathedral and its workings, particularly the establishment and work of the *cabildo catedralicio*, or cathedral chapter, in the thirteenth century. In the late 1240s, Pope Innocent IV ordered his Castilian cardinal, Gil Torres, to undertake a reforming campaign, which more clearly defined episcopal and capitulary jurisdiction.⁶¹ As a result of this reforming campaign, Innocent was able to issue constitutions to the bishopric of Ávila in 1250.⁶² One of the key items in the constitutions stipulated that the archdiocese not be under royal purview. The monarchs of the thirteenth century all continually

⁶⁰ Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN) Clero, Perg. Carp. 18, núm 1. “Inter plurimas ver huismodi ecclesias avilensis ecclesia titulo Sancti Salvatoris adtitulata fere per tricennium et eo amplius a postore et ab ovibus orbata, modernis vero temporibus a meo genitore nobiliter edificata, ut alias ffeci et facta didici terciam partem totius relatis census...” For an overview of the sources and their conflicting information regarding the reestablishment of the Abulense bishopric, see Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 94.

⁶¹ Peter Linehan, *Spanish church and society, 1150-1300* (Surrey: Variorum Reprints, 1983), 116.

⁶² Barrios García, *La catedral de Ávila en la edad media: estructura socio-jurídica y económica*, 30.

confirmed the donations, benefits, privileges and concessions given to the cathedral by previous monarchs.

The cathedral chapter was composed of seven men: the dean, who led the chapter; the archdeacons of Ávila, Arévalo, Olmedo; the chanter (precentor); the treasurer; and the “maestrescuela” or chancellor. Much of the job of the chapter was to administer the finances of the cathedral. In the thirteenth century, the bulk of this money went to construction and the commissioning and acquisition of art objects for the various churches. The chapter also acquired and managed property – houses, stores, vineyards and wineries, as well as several wheat mills. Over the thirteenth century, the chapter grew quite wealthy. This was not exclusive to the cathedral of Ávila; according to Teofilo Ruíz, the Abulense *cabildo*, as well as those of Burgos, Segovia and Salamanca owned “close to half of all dwellings” within the walled areas of each city.⁶³

The cathedral also made money through tithes. The tithe – a *diezmo* or tenth – was a compulsory payment to the church of a tenth of the fruits of any produce, typically foodstuffs or animals. This was divided into thirds, or *tercios*. One was for the construction and maintenance of church buildings, one to provide for the clergy, and one to sustain abbeys, convents and monasteries. In 1247, Ferdinand III petitioned Innocent to grant him a portion of the first third – earmarked for building maintenance – as a contribution towards the Sevillian campaign. This was the first grant to the Crown, and

⁶³ Teofilo Ruiz, “Trading with the ‘Other’: Economic Exchanges between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Late Medieval Northern Castile,” in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict and Coexistence*, ed. Roger Collins and Anthony Goodman (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 72.

once made, it became a point of conflict between the Crown and the church in the centuries to come.⁶⁴

The Crown's vested interest in the *diezmos* included finding ways to extract money from Jews and Muslims. As non-Christians, they were technically not obliged to participate in the *diezmos*, but this was a point nimbly danced around: as early as 1199, Innocent III had decreed that Jews and Muslims working on lands rented or bought from Christians were required to pay the *diezmos* (the assumption being that Christians ceded their lands in order to avoid taxes.) The collection of these moneys seems to have waxed and waned, for in May 1293, Sancho IV again mandated that, if working on Christian property, the *diezmos* applied to Jews and Muslims as well. The bishop's seat had been empty again, and this lack of leadership resulted in lax collection of the *diezmos*.⁶⁵ Similar letters, chiding the Christian population for failing to contribute to the *diezmos*, had been sent a month earlier.⁶⁶

By 1250 there were nineteen parishes within the city. The largest was San Pedro, the second largest, San Vicente. Both of these were situated outside the walls, as was Santiago, the third largest parish. San Juan and San Esteban were both inside the walls,

⁶⁴ Peter Linehan, *The Spanish Church and the Papacy in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 111–112.

⁶⁵ AHN Clero, Perg. Carp 23, núm 3. “Don Pedro Obispo de Ávila e nuestro clerigo nox dixo que judios e moros de su obispado an pieça de heredamientos e vinnas e ganados que an conprado de los christianos. Et commo de luengo tiempo a aca la su iglesia fue uagada e non ouo y quien gelo afincase, que non diezman ninguna cosa dello. Et pidionos que mandásemos que diesen diezmo del pan e dl uino que cogieron en sus heredamientos e end sus uinnas e de sus ganados asi commo diezman los cristianos e nos tenemoslo por bien.”

⁶⁶ AHN Clero Perg. Carp 23, núm 1 and núm 2.

and were two of the smaller parishes.⁶⁷ In addition to these parishes, convents and monasteries were flourishing. One of the most notable was the Cistercian convent of Santa Ana. Endowed by Bishop Sancho Blázquez Dávila in 1331, the convent would become favored by the noble families of Ávila, and indeed, the kingdom of Castile.⁶⁸

Religious life

The significance of the church to medieval life is undeniable; it was, quite simply, a constant in all aspects of life, both practical and spiritual. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how, for the majority of the *vecinos*, religious praxis manifested itself during the medieval period. Obviously the construction of new churches and the appearance of new parishes in the eleventh and twelfth century speak to the importance of the church. It is not until much later, with the decrees of the Synod of 1384, that we get a window into what religious practice consisted of in this period. The synod, an archdiocesan gathering, met somewhat regularly in order to continually evaluate its approach to education and religious life in the diocese. In terms of the laity, the synod outlined that all Christians were obliged to know: the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Sacraments, the Cardinal Sins and Virtues, and the Works of Mercy. This was a difficulty, as the majority of the congregation could neither read nor write. Priests were obligated, therefore, to recite these teachings on every Sunday during Advent and again on every Sunday during Lent, in a loud, clear voice, so that the

⁶⁷ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 135–136.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 137. Isabel I stayed at the convent when visiting Ávila as a young girl.

congregation could hear, understand, and memorize. Of course, these were all read in Latin, so the efficacy of the practice is questionable.⁶⁹ It was not until the Synod of 1481 that priests were allowed to teach in Spanish.

Social Stratification

As mentioned above, the terms of the Abulense *fuero*, with its bias towards the *caballeros*, meant that social distinctions became more marked as the city evolved through this restructuring period. The highest echelon were the *caballeros*, who were divided into two groups: the *hidalgos*, and the *villanos*. The *hidalgos* were those descended from the Asturian noble families who came to Ávila under the leadership of Don Raimundo. Among them, the Blázquez family, with its huge estates surrounding the city, was the most prominent. The *villanos* were those men who fought in campaigns during the eleventh and twelfth century and were rewarded with land and titles. They were regarded at first by the *hidalgos* as a sort of *nouveau riche*, and the Crown rather encouraged tensions between the two groups. Teofiló Ruíz suggests that Alfonso X was wary of the increased wealth and power of both the landed nobility and the military orders in the wake of the conquest of Seville – both groups gained extensive holdings in

⁶⁹ Antonio García, ed., *Synodicon Hispanum*, vol. VI (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1993), 13–20. “Establecemos et ordenamos que estas dichas ordenaciones ... en cada domingo del Avento et en cada domingo de la Quaresma el capellan mayor de la nuestra iglesia de Ávila ... et cada clérigo curad de la cibdat ... quando viniere el pueblo a la missa, lo deva decir públicamente, a alta boz, en manera que lo oya el pueblo...”

the south. For this reason, his policies towards the *caballeros villanos* was lenient in the extreme, to garner and foster their loyalty.⁷⁰

The majority of the people were the *pecheros*, or commoners. A composite class, it included artisans and craftsmen (smiths, carpenters, shoemakers, tanners); tradesmen and shopkeepers (including butchers, bakers and vintners); and laborers working in agriculture, whether livestock or farms. Also within this group were most of the Jewish and Muslim citizens and residents of Ávila. According to José Belmonte social life was “extremely closed.” The *pecheros* would only mix with the nobility on holidays or perhaps at church, but even then, each class had its designated physical place.⁷¹

In 1303 Don Velasco Velásquez, dean of the Abulense cathedral chapter, commissioned an inventory of all of the cathedral’s possession. Such an inventory had not been done previously, and the cathedral chapter felt they were unorganized and unclear as to what, exactly, was in their possession.⁷² This inventory is particularly useful for historians, as not only does it provide detail regarding many of the houses and properties in the urban center, it also provides information on who is living in these houses. Thus we are able to approximate the religious makeup of the population: 68% Christian, 22% Jewish, and 10% Muslim. Although valuable, this information is limited, as it is restricted only to those properties owned by the chapter, and it does not provide us

⁷⁰ Teofilo F. Ruiz, “The Transformation of the Castilian Municipalities: The Case of Burgos 1248-1350,” *Past & Present*, no. 77 (November 1, 1977): 3–32 p. 7-8. Ruiz adds that sumptuary laws were changed in 1252 and 1258, in curb “magnate ostentation”.

⁷¹ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 140.

⁷² AHN Clero, cód.. 484B. *Becerro de visitaciones de casas y heredades*. “porque non sabién todas las heredades que la Eglesia avié en cada logar.”

with a number as to total population. Nevertheless, it is clear that Jews and Muslims were an integral, albeit minority, part of Abulense society.

In Andalucía, this social divide became more distinct due to regulations regarding the purchase of lands in newly conquered cities. In Seville, conquered in 1248 by Fernando III of Castile-León (r. 1217–1252), land was allotted in single, double, or “special” amounts to *pecheros*, *caballeros*, and *hidalgos*. Fernando’s son, Alfonso X, did likewise in Requena, near Valencia, where a *pechero* could purchase land valued up to 50 *maravedís*, a *caballero* up to 100 *maravedís*, and a *hidalgo*, 150 *maravedís*.⁷³ Abulense *vecinos*, as well as those in other northern cities which had been settled for years, already owned property, so this distinction did not apply to them.

In response, perhaps, to the new *fuero* of 1256 which barred the artisan class from holding public office, the *pecheros* began to set up *cofradías*, an organization akin to a guild, but with religious features. They began as charitable organizations, but by the mid-thirteenth century, were a mix of devotional practices towards a specific saint adopted by the group, charity, and a union of craftsman. Although these were only “timid islands of liberty,” the Crown was extremely suspicious, ostensibly because of a tendency towards price fixing for the goods produced by each *cofradía*, as well as the unwillingness to

⁷³ Procter, *Curia and Cortes in León and Castile, 1072-1295*, 98; “Privilegio del Rey D. Alfonso X, concediendo á los moradores del alcázar de la villa de Requena el fuero de Cuenca y varias franquezas,” *Memorial histórico español* 1 (1851) LX.

allow non-members to practice their craft. In reality, it was much more likely due to the fact that *cofradías* were outside of royal control.⁷⁴

Minorities:

Legal status under Christian authority

Throughout the peninsula, during the period of the Caliphate of Córdoba (929-1031), Christians and Jews had lived under Muslim rule protected by their status as *dhimmi*. Sometimes translated as “people of the book,” *dhimmi* included both Christians and Jews, those whose religions were based on books thought by Muslims to be divinely inspired.⁷⁵ *Dhimmi* were subject to certain restrictions – exclusion from certain political offices, for example – as well as special taxes. When the Christian kingdoms of the north successfully expanded their territory southward, for the first time Christian monarchs had to deal with minorities living within their territories. Looking to the Muslim treatment of *dhimmis*, Jews and Muslims were provided with legal safeguards to ensure group autonomy, albeit with certain key restrictions. The main difference between Muslim and Christian treatment of minorities lay in the legal culture of each religion. Islamic law had from the start codified how it would treat members of these already established, neighboring religious groups. Since the legal safeguards in place for *dhimmi* were always the norm, they were constant across the Islamic world. In Christian law, however, there

⁷⁴ Ana María Sabe Andreu, *Las cofradías de Ávila en la edad moderna* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1999), 20. See also María Cátedra Tomás, *Un Santo para una Ciudad: Ensayo de Antropología Urbana* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1997), 128.

⁷⁵ Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain*, 168.

was no norm for the treatment of minorities, and thus these guarantees of autonomy were subject to wildly differing interpretations in different kingdoms, as well as being likely to change from monarch to monarch.⁷⁶

Alfonso X, who had issued the *Fuero Real*, also compiled a new statutory code, known as the *Siete Partidas*, sometime between 1255 and 1265. Like the *Fuero Real*, the aim of the *Partidas* was to establish uniformity in law throughout his kingdom. Two sections, *De los judíos* and *De los moros*, are of particular importance here. It becomes evident that, although both religions are treated as inferior to Christianity, they are done so in differing ways. Jews were castigated for failing to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah and for keeping to Mosaic law, as well as for their role in Christ's death. However, because of their ancestry, their close ties to Christianity, and because of precedent, the *Partidas* recognized that Jews should be allowed to live unmolested amongst Christians (echoing the spiritual compromise of the "royal alliance").⁷⁷ There were certain restrictions, of course. Jews were (ostensibly) prohibited from being in positions of authority over Christians – though even Alfonso ignored this and often appointed Jews to positions of administration within his court, particularly in the realm of tax collection and finances. On a local level, Christians were at times employed as servants, child-minders or wet nurses by Jews in Ávila.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid., 169.

⁷⁷ Dwayne Carpenter, "Minorities in Medieval Spain: The Legal Status of Jews and Muslims in the *Siete Partidas*," *Romance Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1986): 275–276.

⁷⁸ García, *Synodicon Hispanum*, 1993 Título 7, Capítulo 1.

Jews were allowed freedom of worship, and to maintain and build new synagogues, though they could not be taller or grander than churches. They also could not be compelled to break the Sabbath. Jews and Christians were also prohibited from eating, drinking or bathing together, and when ill, Christians could not receive care solely from Jewish physicians.⁷⁹ The presence of these proscriptions speak to their commonality in society. In addition, in the mid-thirteenth century, the Crown of Castile created an office called *rab de la corte* or “court rabbi.” The first holder of this office was likely Rabbi Todros ben Joseph HaLevi, appointed by Alfonso X.⁸⁰ His job was to oversee all the *aljamas* in the Crown, act as a final authority in judicial matters and act as a mediator between the monarchy and the *aljamas*.

Muslims suffered more restrictions on their religion. They were barred both from having mosques, and from praying in public: Islam was considered more distant from Christianity, and more repugnant. In addition, Muslims were still deemed a political threat, while Jews were not. The *Partidas* makes no mention of restrictions on social intercourse between Christians and Muslims; this does not mean to say it did not happen, but rather that there simply was no theological tradition regarding the two religious groups sharing space.⁸¹

Sex was the one area where draconian prohibitions existed for all groups. There could be no sexual contact between Christian women and Jewish or Muslim men, on pain of death for the man. The woman’s punishment would depend on her status: if she were

⁷⁹ Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 399–405.

⁸⁰ Baer, *A History of the Jews*, I. 119.

⁸¹ Carpenter, “Minorities in Medieval Spain,” 282.

unmarried or a widow, she would lose half her property for a first offense, and her life for a second. A married woman would be given to her husband to do with as he saw fit, while a prostitute could be flogged for a first offense, and put to death for a second.⁸²

We must remember that, rather than a legal code, the *Siete Partidas* were a compilation of laws Alfonso thought should exist: the code has more of an exhortatory function, and were not necessarily put into practice.⁸³ The existence of mosques throughout Castile would speak to this.

The *Partidas* make no mention of specific quarters or neighborhoods in which Jews or Muslims must live. These areas, called *juderías* and *morerías* respectively, seem to have evolved somewhat naturally. When cities were under Muslim authority, there is no extant evidence regarding *juderías* – or, for that matter, a Christian equivalent. This could be due to the scarcity of data, especially given the various changes in Muslim governance; documents may very well have been destroyed when the Almoravids and then the Almohads came to power. Heather Ecker has explained that while Arabic sources refer to Jews living in Seville during the Muslim period, none of them mention a *judería*. There is also no evidence of a *judería* existing in the city at the time of the Christian conquest.⁸⁴

⁸² Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 402, 405. See also David Nirenberg, “Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1065–93.

⁸³ Leonard Patrick Harvey, *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67. Joseph O’Callaghan argues that Alfonso did indeed intend the *Partidas* to carry the full force of the law; however, it remains that in many places, they were not enforced. See Joseph O’Callaghan, *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile* (University of Pennsylvania, 1993), 36–37.

⁸⁴ Heather L. Ecker, “The Conversion of Mosques to Synagogues in Seville: The Case of the Mezquita de La Judería,” *Gesta* 36, no. 2 (January 1, 1997): 191.

When looking at data gathered by historian José Luis Lacave regarding the *juderías* of medieval Iberia, a pattern emerges. In the north, cities such as Ávila, Segovia, Burgos, Salamanca and Valladolid, all had somewhat nebulous *juderías* prior to 1412.⁸⁵ Jews tended to live in proximity to each other, not because it was law, but rather like other neighborhoods informally designated by the background of the population. Salamanca, for example, had both a *barrio de los franceses* and a *barrio de los Gallegos* in the eleventh century.⁸⁶ In much the same way that cities today develop neighborhoods known as "Chinatown" or "Little Italy," newcomers to these lands during the *repoblación* naturally grouped themselves along linguistic and cultural lines and Jews were no exception.

Andalucía saw increased in-migration from the north after the Christian conquest of cities such as Córdoba, Jaén and Seville, and Jews were a part of this immigration. When they arrived in these southern cities, the Crown designated which parcels of land they were permitted to live on.⁸⁷ These parcels were often next to the *alcázar*, or other royal fortress, a visual reinforcement of the "royal alliance." This would not only ensure the community's security, but also serve as a subtle message that Jews owed no (financial) obligation to any local noble.⁸⁸ As was stipulated by the *cortes* of Valladolid in 1322:

⁸⁵ José Luis Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), 188–190; 205–206; 215–216; 220–221; 262.

⁸⁶ Quadrado, *Salamanca, Ávila y Segovia*, 86–88.

⁸⁷ Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas*, 346–347; 359; 378–379.

⁸⁸ Jonathan Stewart Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista And the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia* (Cornell University Press, 2006), 148–149.

Furthermore, that all the Jews who reside in all parts of the kingdom should come to reside in the King's royal towns. And that neither prince, nor lord, nor baron, nor knight, nor baroness, nor lady nor any other shall not have Jew nor Jewess nor Jewish quarter, but that all the Jews are of the King and reside in his towns. And the Jew that does not want to come, that those magistrates and judges or justices of the towns are to have them do it by force.⁸⁹

Even with this royal impetus to live near each other, there still was no specific law regarding where Jews could live.

That changed in 1412. Queen-regent Catherine of Castile, mother of the infant John I, moved by the passionate anti-Jewish preaching of Vicente Ferrer, issued edicts restricting certain aspects of Jewish life, such as what jobs they could be employed in, interactions with Christians, and stipulating that all Jews and Muslims living in Castile had to live in separate, enclosed parts of the city:

Firstly that from now on all the Jews and Muslims of my kingdoms and domains will live apart from Christians in a place apart from the city, town or place where they are residents, and that they are encircled with a wall that has a gate....⁹⁰

In places like Seville and Córdoba, this ordinance was already essentially in effect, and in the northern towns, although effort was made to create an enclosed *judería*, it was at best half-hearted, and the decree was essentially ignored. In 1420, a year after John had

⁸⁹ Manuel Colmeiro, *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de Leon y de Castilla* (Rivadeneyra, 1861), 356–357. See also Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier*, 149. “Otrossy que los judios todos que moraren en todas las partes de los rregnos que vengan morar a las uillas rreales que sson del Rey. Et que inffante nin rico omme nin inffançon nin cauallero nin rrica ffenbra nin duenna nin otra ninguno que non aya judío nin judía nin tenga judería ninguna, mas que todos los judios ssean del Rey e moren en las ssus villas. Et el judío que non quisiere venir, que los alcalles e los merynos e los juezes e las justičias de las villas que lo ffagan assy ffazer por ffuerza.”

⁹⁰ Francisco Fernández y González, *Estado social y político de los mudéjares de Castilla considerados en sí mismos y respecto de la civilización española* (Real Academia de la Historia, 1866), 400. “Primeramente que de aquí adelante todos los Judios e Moros e Moras de los mis regnos, e señoríos sean e vivian apartados de los Christianos e Christianas, en un logar aparte de la cibdad, villa o logar, donde fueren vecinos, e que sean cercados de una cerca en redor, y tenga una puerta sola por donde se manden en tal circulo..”

attained his majority, he himself extended privileges to both his Jewish physician and Jewish tax officials – neither of whom, had the decrees of 1412 been enforced, would have been permitted to work in these capacities.⁹¹

Inside the *judería*, the synagogue was the most important building. Typically, Iberian synagogues adhered to no special architectural style, save for a western wall with a niche or arch in which to house the Torah. As they were prohibited from being larger or taller than any church, they were rather small buildings, and quite plain on the outside. Inside, however, they could be very richly decorated with calligraphy and geometric reliefs.⁹² Women sat separate from men, usually in an upper gallery.⁹³ New synagogues could be built; however, the *aljama* needed permission of both church and Crown in order to do so. Usually there was a bathhouse next to the synagogue, and often a religious school as well.⁹⁴ In addition to religious buildings, most of the *aljama* would frequent Jewish businesses such as butchers, bakers and the like. These shops may or may not have been inside the *judería*, as often Christians were customers of the same shops.

Juderías and *morerías* denoted the physical *barrio* or neighborhood where these groups lived. The religious group as a community was known as the *aljama*, from the Arabic *jama*, meaning “to gather, congregate.” The word also signified the Jewish and Muslim presence within city governance, as a distinct entity from Christians. Each *aljama* had its internal structure and governance, and members were subject to its own

⁹¹ Pilar León Tello, *Judíos de Toledo*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Madrid: CSIC, 1979) Vol. 2, 222, No. 747.

⁹² Jerrilynn D. Dodds, María Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture* (Yale University Press, 2008), 179, 241–242.

⁹³ Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas*, 13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

specific laws (primarily based in religion), though of course still subject to the local city ordinances as well. The *aljama* was both a part of the city, yet separate from it, as both Jews and Muslims were directly under Crown control⁹⁵. These links will be of paramount importance in Ávila at the close of the fourteenth century.

Muslims

The Muslim population in Ávila was neither numerous nor influential. Many of them rented properties from the cathedral chapter, which, while scattered throughout the city, were in prime locations: near the central plaza San Juan, on the *calle de los Zapateros*, in the *barrio Santa Cruz* and the *barrio Yuradero*, as well as near the large plaza beside the church of San Pedro. This was a mutually beneficial arrangement, since from 1293, Muslims were not allowed to own property, and as the cathedral chapter did not want to sell the houses it owned, renting to Muslim families was an obvious choice.⁹⁶

Many Abulense Muslims worked as laborers. In the fourteenth century, almost a third of the Muslim population were in the construction industry, both as builders, and as makers of construction materials (brick makers and slate or tile makers). Almost 20 per cent were metalworkers, primarily blacksmiths, while lesser numbers worked in the

⁹⁵ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 70. See also Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas*, 10. Echevarría points out that in Castile in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, *morería* was used to signify the community as well as the physical space Muslims inhabited, whereas in Aragon, the word *aljama* dates from 1174. José Luis Lacave maintains Jewish communities in Castile had to advance to a “superior organized state” for them to be referred to as an *aljama* rather than a *judería*. It did not become a commonplace in Castile until the fourteenth century. For the purposes of this work, to avoid confusion, I hold to the latter usage of the terms.

⁹⁶ Manuel Danvila y Collado, ed., *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla* (Impr. y estereotipia de M. Rivadeneyra, 1866), vols. I, p 127–128.

textile industry. There were also a number of merchants: shopkeepers, butchers, a bathhouse keeper, salt traders and livestock traders, as well as farm laborers, who might work in the fields, or with livestock, or both. Another key industry for Muslims was transportation, the cartage of foodstuffs from the surrounding countryside to the markets in the city. The other main occupation for Muslims was as domestic servants, primarily for various Christian religious houses in the city.⁹⁷ Finally, the local mosques needed muftis to lead prayer and educate the young.

As noted above, the 1303 census indicates that Muslims comprised approximately 10 per cent of the population. This number was large enough to warrant more than one mosque – again, ignoring the prohibition in the *Partidas* against mosques. There was no mosque in Ávila when Don Raimundo came to settle there, these were all built since the *repoblación*. The first mosque, mentioned in the 1303 cathedral chapter census, was called Mezquita del Solarejo, (at times also called Mezquita de San Esteban); this was the *almagid mayor* – the “main mosque” and was next to the church of San Esteban – one of the poorer neighborhoods of Ávila, located within the walled city towards the Adajo river.⁹⁸ It was maintained both by donations from the Muslim community as well as rents on certain residential properties it owned.⁹⁹ La Solana Mosque was located outside the city wall, near the plaza San Pedro (today Mercado Grande). The last mosque was built in the barrio San Nicolás, which became an informal *morería* in the early fifteenth

⁹⁷ Tapia, *Comunidad morisca*, 68–72.

⁹⁸ *Becerro de vistaciones de casa y heredades* AHN, Clero, cód. 484 B, f. 7 v.

⁹⁹ Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ávila (hereafter AHPAv), prot 420, fol 276v, cat 1801-1803.

century.¹⁰⁰ Ana Echevarría questions how the community were allowed to build a third mosque when two others were still in use; and speculates that the civil and ecclesiastical authorities might have “turned a blind eye” to the new mosque because it was not a new building, but was situated in a building the community was renting from the cathedral. The new mosque also was near the old bathhouse and it could be that this mosque was the center of an entire complex, complete with a school and residence for the *alfaquí*.¹⁰¹

Through the course of the fourteenth century, Muslim communities under Christian authority in the north gradually lost their knowledge of Arabic. In addition, those communities where the socioeconomic circumstances dictated that the town council protect the rights of Muslims resulted in communities with fairly consolidated *aljamas*. Ávila was one of those communities.¹⁰² Thus, while the Muslim *aljama* was becoming more integrated into Christian society – both linguistically and legally – it was also maintaining a strong sense of self, or difference, along religious lines. That sense of self did not translate to a distinct living space; like the Jews in Ávila, the Muslims lived throughout the city.

The Abulense Muslim *aljama* enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy. In the early days of the *repoblación*, it is likely that the status of Muslims was somewhat nebulous and subject to *ad hoc* decisions, as there was no clear Muslim authority present in Ávila to negotiate with the Christians. A Muslim position, similar to the Jewish *rab de la corte* was created, (in Arabic, *nā'ib qāḍī*) a chief justice who would oversee the judicial life of

¹⁰⁰ AHPAv *Prot* 2, fol 66 and 184; AHPAv *Prot* 294, fol. 615; AHPAv *Prot* 554, fol 102.

¹⁰¹ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 107.

¹⁰² Tapia, *Comunidad morisca*, 55.

all Castilian *aljamas*.¹⁰³ Each *aljama* had its own leader, a *qāḍī* as well as a judge, *alfaquí*. These positions were generally appointed by the chief *qāḍī*, and varied in term lengths.¹⁰⁴

Among the decrees handed down by Catherine in 1412 was one which required that Muslim judges be replaced with Christians; however, like many other edicts, this one was also “heard but not obeyed” by most Castilian towns, and was even revoked in 1418.¹⁰⁵ In a curious turn of events, by the mid-fifteenth century, Muslims were willingly choosing to have their cases heard by the town’s *concejo* or by a Christian judge rather than by their own *alfaquí*. Apparently local judges were not trusted by their own communities to be impartial, perhaps because each community was quite small, and interlaced with kinship ties that might affect both witnesses and judges. In addition, due to the *aljama*’s links with the cathedral chapter (rental of properties, and the like), Abulense Muslims had been subject to some amount of episcopal jurisdiction for some time, and had no objection to submitting to civic authority as well.

Civic disputes might be heard before a Christian judge, but religious matters were handled only within the community. Decisions were based on juridical opinions (*fatwas*), which were consulted and validated by *alfaquí*s, either from Ávila or from other nearby cities such as Valladolid or Burgos.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Juan Torres Fontes, “El Alcalde Mayor de Las Aljamas de Moros En Castilla,” *Anuario de Historia Del Derecho Español*, no. 32 (1962): 144–145.

¹⁰⁴ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 89–91.

¹⁰⁵ For a more detailed overview of the legislation and its impact, see Ana Echevarría, “Política y religión frente al Islam: la evolución de la legislación real castellana sobre musulmanes en el siglo XV,” *Qurtuba: Estudios andalusíes*, no. 4 (1999): 45–72.

¹⁰⁶ Echevarría, *Three Mosques*, 102.

Jews

In 1290, Sancho IV ordered a census of *juderías* in Castile, in order to determine the tax loads of each community. This document, the *Repartimiento of Huete*, shows that Ávila was at that time among the five largest *aljamas* in the kingdom, and paid less tax than only Toledo and Burgos. We know that Toledo had approximately 350 Jewish families by this date, and Burgos' *aljama* likely consisted of some 120-150 families. Serafin de Tapia estimated the Abulense *aljama* to have been between 50 and 100 families.¹⁰⁷

Like many Castilian towns, Ávila did not have a designated *judería*; the *Becerro de visitaciones de casa y heredades*, the inventory of Cathedral possessions from 1303, gives comprehensive information regarding the houses of the city, including residences outside the city walls and nearby farms. The inventory tells us that Jewish families in Ávila lived scattered throughout the city, next door neighbors to both Christians and Muslims. There were several families living near the cathedral; others near the plaza of San Juan; and some along the *rua* de los Zapateros and the Calde Andrín, streets just off the central plaza. (See Map 2, p xi). Outside the walled city, Jews lived near the plaza of Santo Tomás, in the neighborhood of Cesteros and the neighborhood of San Gil. There was one neighborhood in which Jews were the majority, called the Yuradero, which was next to the Basilica de San Vicente.¹⁰⁸ It was near here where the main Jewish butcher

¹⁰⁷ Serafin de Tapia Sánchez, "Las huellas y el legado de las tres culturas religiosas en Ávila," *Anuario de Estudios Místicos*, no. 2 (2005): 46–47. See also Carlos Parrondo Carrette, "El repartimiento de Huete de 1290," *Sefarad*, 1976, 121–40.

¹⁰⁸ AHN Clero cód., 484B

shop was, though there was more than one.¹⁰⁹ The main synagogue was located in this area, on the *calle* de Lomo, near the San Vicente gate. Another synagogue is believed to have been situated on the Calde Andrín (now the *calle* de los Reyes Católicos; presently there is a hotel called Hospederia La Sinagoga on this street.) A third synagogue was near the area which later became the actual *judería*; on the corner of the *calle* de Pocillo and the *calle* de la Dama.¹¹⁰ (This structure has been restored to resemble a synagogue from the outside, with decorative brickwork arching over the doorway. It is not, unfortunately, open to the public.)

The internal structure of Jewish *aljamas* was relatively constant throughout medieval Castile. Like the Muslims *aljamas*, the Jews had their own version of a *concejo* and were permitted to deal with internal conflicts according to Jewish law. There was a council of elders or *adelantados* (Hebrew: *mukademin*) which varied in number from community to community. Overseeing this council was a judge or judges (Hebrew: *dayyan* or *dayyanim*). (The *mukademin* and *dayyan* were roughly the equivalent to the *concejo* and *alcalde* of a city.) The *aljama* abided by the legal code of the Torah, and a rabbi (or several) would be consulted before any judgment was passed in any case. The *mukademin* were also responsible for the collection and administration of taxes.

Any external conflicts – between Jews and Christians – were always a Crown matter; as part of the “royal alliance,” Jews were directly under the authority of the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas*, 217.

Crown, and were protected by the monarchy.¹¹¹ Of course, each town could administer its own restrictions as to what Jews were and were not permitted to do. Despite having to live under certain restrictions, Jews in Spain were generally protected by the Crown and thus safe from grievous harm, until the closing decades of the fourteenth century.

In 1391, a wave of anti-Jewish violence spread throughout the Iberian peninsula. The violence began in Seville, where local Christians had, for several years, been spurred on by the anti-Jewish preaching of Ferrand Martinez, archdeacon of Écija. Martinez exhorted the Christian population to loot and burn synagogues and maintained that Jews should be expelled from the kingdom. Despite being reprimanded and ordered to cease his rabble-rousing by both King Henry II and John I, in 1378 and 1382 respectively, Martinez refused to be silenced. In June of 1391, the new king, Henry III was in Segovia when he received a letter:

And while he was there, he heard the news of how the city of Sevilla had robbed the *judería*, and how most of the Jews had converted to Christianity, and many more of them had died. And later the news was known that the same had occurred in Córdoba, and in Toledo and in many other places in the kingdom. And when the king knew that the Jews of Sevilla and Córdoba and Toledo were destroyed, he sent letters and archers to other places in order to defend them....before these deeds intensified. The same events occurred in Aragon, and in the cities of Valencia, and Barcelona and Lérida and other places. And all this appeared to be due to greed, more than devotion....¹¹²

¹¹¹ Teofilo Ruiz, "Judíos y cristianos en el ámbito urbano bajomedieval: Ávila y Burgos, 1200-1350," in *Xudeos e conversos na historia*, ed. Carlos Barros, vol. 2 (Santiago de Compostela: Editorial de la Historia, 1994), 70. See also Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 191–193; Yerushalmi, *Servants of Kings*, 9.

¹¹² Pedro López de Ayala, *Cronicas de los reyes de Castilla: Don Pedro, Don Enrique II, Don Juan I, Don Enrique III*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Don Antonio de Sancha, 1780), 390–391. " ...é estando alli, ovo nuevas como el pueblo de la cibdad de Sevilla avia robado la Juderia, é que eran tornados Christianos los mas Judios que y eran, é muchos de ellos muertos. E que luego que estas nuevas sopieron en Cordoba, é en Toled, ficieron eso mesmo, é asi en otros muchos logares del Regno. E sabido por el Rey como los udios de Sevilla é de Cordoba é de Toledo eran destroidos, como quier que enviaba sus cartas é Ballesteros á otros logars por los defender, en tal manera era el fecho encendido, que non cedieron ninguna cosa por ello; antes de cada día

Many of the members of the Sevillian *aljama* were either killed, or forcibly baptized. The violence spread to other cities throughout the summer of 1391: Córdoba, Jaén, Valencia, Toledo, Madrid, and Barcelona. By the end of the summer, the greatest *aljamas* of Castile – Seville, Toledo and Córdoba – were all but destroyed. It is difficult to estimate how many were slain, and how many chose to convert to escape death, but this tragic event changed the face of the religious communities in Iberia and would have grave repercussions over the next several centuries.

Ayala's account of this event is very interesting, as he is the only chronicler who mentions that the destructive impulse on the part of the Christian mobs was not limited to the Jews, but that Muslims were unharmed due to the fear that Christians in Granada and North Africa would be killed in response.¹¹³ In addition, Ayala makes the claim that though Henry did what he could to protect his Jewish subjects, it was in vain, as he was but a boy of thirteen, and simply not feared by Martinez, or indeed, any of the magnates in his realm.¹¹⁴ However, the *aljama* of Segovia was one of the few which seems to have

se avivaba mas este fecho: é de tal manera acaeci6, que eso mismo ficieron en Aragon, é en las cibdades de Valencia, é de Barcelona, é de Lérida, é otros logares. E todo esto fue cobdicia de robar, segund paresci6, mas que devoci6n.”

¹¹³ Ibid., 2:391. “E eso mismo quisieron facer los pueblos a los Moros que vivian en las cibdades e vellas del Regno salvo que non se atrevieron, por quanto ovieron resclo, que los Christianos que estaban captivos en Granada, é allende la mar, fuesen muertos. E el comienzo de todo este fecho é da6o de los Judios vino por la predicaci6n é inducimientto que el Arcediano de Ecija que estaba en Sevilla ficiera: ca antes que el Rey Don Juan finase avia comenzado de predicar contra los Judios; é las gentes de los pueblos, lo uno por tales Predicaciones, lo ál por voluntad de robar...”

¹¹⁴ Ibid. “...otrosi non aviendo miedo al Rey por la edad pequena que avia”

survived somewhat unscathed; Ávila was another. It is possible that the king's presence in this region may have protected the Jewish communities in these cities.¹¹⁵

José Belmonte believes that Abulense Jews were spared this violence due to two related factors. One, that at this time, the *aljama* in Ávila was not part of the financial world, either in the arena of tax collection or money lending, in the way that Jews in other cities were.¹¹⁶ In other words, part of the antiJewish sentiment expressed in these riots was rooted in anger regarding tax levels, or jealousy regarding the high status and financial success of a portion of the Jewish community. Since it was not possible to attack the Crown, Jew became easy scapegoats, and any “horizontal” alliances between local Christian communities and their Jewish neighbors were shattered. The Jews in Ávila, however, did not seek after important positions – tax collection being one of the few open to them – and thus were never seen as a focal point for any hostility regarding taxes. It is true that the only documentation of an Abulense Jew working as a tax official is Yuçaf de Ávila, who was appointed to his position during the reign of Sancho IV (1284-1295).¹¹⁷

Belmonte's related thought is that the Christian community of Ávila was dependent on the Jewish community in order to attain their own financial advancement;

¹¹⁵ This is not to say that no such violence happened, merely that the documents do not prove that it did. However, taken with the knowledge that throughout the fifteenth century, the Abulense *aljama* was one of the largest in Castile-León, it seems safe to assume that if there was anti-Jewish violence in Ávila, it was short-lived and did not significantly impact the community. Segovia, however, did have a significant *converso* population through the fifteenth century, though it is unknown just when the conversions occurred. See Bonifacio Bartolomé Herrero, “The Jews and Conversos in Medieval Segovia,” in *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond: Volume Two: The Morisco Issue* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹¹⁶ José Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición en Ávila* (Ávila: Caja de Ahorros de Ávila, 1989), 47.

¹¹⁷ AHN, cód.. 1009 B, f. 163. Libro de cuentas de Sancho IV, 3 junio 1285.

that they preferred to exploit Jews in moments of crisis, rather than commit violence against them.¹¹⁸ This begs the question: how exactly, were Abulense Christians dependent on Abulense Jews?

The cathedral's census of 1303 gives us a picture of Jewish occupations at that time, though it is limited to those Jews who lived in houses owned by the cathedral. Most were artisans: some worked in textiles (dyers, weavers, tailors); others worked with leather goods (shoemakers and saddle makers); while still others worked with precious metals (silver and gold smiths.)¹¹⁹ It is notable that there is no mention of Jews involved in money lending or any other kind of financial business. However, these sorts of artisanal jobs were the same jobs that a large portion of the Christian population also performed.

Another tax register from 1483 provides further insight into Jewish occupations. Clearly the wool industry loomed large, no surprise as it was one of the largest industries in Castile-León in the medieval period. The sheep were so valuable that their pathways to and from grazing pastures were protected by royal decree. One of these "sheepwalks" (*cañadas*), the Segovian, passed through the province of Ávila and linked Burgos and Segovia, two important centers of the wool trade. As such, numerous Abulense *vecinos* – far more than the entire Jewish population – were employed in the wool trade in some form or another – whether as shepherds, weavers, dyers or tailors. Yet while a slim majority – 22% – of Jews were somehow involved in the wool trade, the leather working

¹¹⁸ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 142.

¹¹⁹ AHN cód... 484B

industry ran a close second – 21%. This would have included not only working in the tanneries to prepare the hides, but also in the manufacturing of both shoes and saddles.¹²⁰

Perhaps the interconnectedness that Belmonte refers to is the association of people working in the same trade. Jews and Christians would have had the same concerns, the same interests, and possibly a shared outlook on life. Certainly the majority of Abulense *vecinos* were of a similar economic standing, and it is highly likely that a Christian weaver would have had more in common with Jewish weaver than with his noble co-religionist.

Their living situation spoke to this: by the fourteenth century, the city was divided more along socio-economic lines than religious. The *caballeros* lived near the Alcázar, in the palaces adjacent to the southern wall of the city. The clergy were clustered around the cathedral, while most Muslims lived outside the walls, in the poorer districts of Santiago and San Martín. The streets which ran from the Plaza Mayor, to the main gates formed the nucleus of the urban center, where many artisanal workshops were located. And in the rest of the walled city, Christians and Jews lived side by side and intermixed.¹²¹

We have no documentation to provide us with an account of how the two groups felt about each other. What we do have, which will be explored further in Chapter Two, are strictures handed down by both the church and the *concejo*, concerning interreligious

¹²⁰ AM, c. 1, leg. 76. See also Serafin de Tapia Sánchez, “Los judíos de Ávila en vísperas de la expulsión,” *Sefarad*, 1997, 135–78.

¹²¹ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 49.

fellowship. It would appear that it was quite common in fifteenth century Ávila for Christians, Jews, and Muslims to not only work together, but also socialize and even attend each other's religious ceremonies and festivals. It is highly doubtful, to my mind, that neighbors who lived and worked together in this manner would not know each other, or take an interest in each other's lives, or feel what we might call tolerance towards each other, despite their religious differences.

This true *convivencia* continued in Ávila through much of the fifteenth century, while religious conflict festered and erupted elsewhere in the kingdom. It was not until the end of the century, mere decades before the entire Jewish population was forced to convert or be expelled, that the situation began to change in Ávila. How and why this happened is the topic for the next chapter.

Chapter Two

“For they receive much aggravation and harm”: the Jewish community in Ávila and the Catholic Monarchs

On January 24, 1480, Don Alfonso de Aragon, Conde de Ribargorza, Captain General of the *hermandad* of Castile wrote a letter to the *concejo* and *corregidor* (Crown appointed city magistrate) of Ávila.¹ Abraham Sevillana, one of the prominent members of the Jewish *aljama* there, had informed him that:

certain persons of the city . . . with hate and malice, causing pain and harm, have intruded to take from the Jews the clothes and garments that they have in their houses, by right of the law which was made by the *junta* in Madrigal, concerning the wearing of silk and jewelry [by Jews] . . . and that they disrupt [Jewish] weddings and enter the houses where the Jews dwell and look through their chests and houses and take their clothes and garments. And if they fail to find in [the houses] some fringes and ribbons and silk trim, they take with them the clothes and make other mischief and cause damage without reason and offend the stated law which neither orders nor permits this.²

The specified law had been promulgated during the meeting of the *Cortes* of Madrigal in 1476, but was concerned less with excessive ornamentation on the part of Jews and

¹ *Hermandad* translates as “brotherhood.” *Hermandades* had been created in the medieval period as an ad hoc municipal peace keeping force: they were meant to maintain local law and order, as well as protect the town’s interests in the face of abuse from local nobles, or even in some cases, the Crown. See Marvin Lunenfeld, *The Council of the Santa Hermandad: A Study of the Pacification Forces of Ferdinand and Isabella* (University of Miami Press, 1970) especially chapters 2-3.

² Archivo Histórico Provincial de Ávila, hereafter AHPAv, Sección Ayuntamiento, c. 1, leg. 1, núm 44. “don Abrahan Sevillano, judio, en nonbre de la aljama e judios e judías desa dicha cibdad, nos fizo relaçion por su petiçion, diciendo que algunas personas desa dicha cibdad e de otras partes, con odio e malquerencia e a fin de les fazer mal e dapno se an entremetido e entremeten a quitar a los judios e judías las ropas e vestidos que trahen e tyenen en sus casas por virtud de la ley que fue fecha en la junta de Madrigal cerca del traer de la seda e otras joyas en ella contenidas el ano que paso de mil e quatrocientos e setenta e nueve años, e que entran en sus bodas e en las casas donde moran los dichos judios e judías e les catan sus arcas e casas e les toman sus ropas e vestidos e sy les fallan en ellas algunos cayreles o cintas o ribetas de seda, ge los toman e llevan por ellos las dichas ropas e les fazen otros males e dapnos e syn razones e agravios que la dicha ley non manda nin permite.”

Muslims, and more with the need to mark religious minorities as different from

Christians:

we see that Jews and Muslims who live in these your kingdoms . . . do not wear the signs and walk, the one and the others, wearing clothes of fine cloth . . . so that we do not know if the Jews are Jews, or clerics or learned men of great estate or authority; or if the Muslims are Muslims, or gentlemen. . . . To that end, we ask your Highness that you command and order the Jews and Muslims . . . cannot use gold or silver or dress in silk or red cloth. . . . and that they wear their colored signs . . . according to the laws of your kingdoms.³

The law said nothing regarding entering and ransacking Jewish homes or invading their celebrations in order to find evidence that Jews were guilty of noncompliance. Don Alfonso's letter to the *concejo* ordered that such harassment of the Jewish community cease, and that the law be obeyed as it was written.⁴ That this was happening, that their fellow *vecinos* had now turned on the Abulense Jews and were deliberately searching for evidence of wrong doing, speaks to a violent shift in attitudes from the previous decades. What had happened to change the situation in Ávila so drastically?

To answer this question, we must look back to two matters of great consequence in fifteenth century Castilian history: the repercussions of the anti-Jewish violence and enforced conversions at the end of the previous century, and new policies implemented

³ Manuel Danvila y Collado, ed., *Cortes de Los Antiguos Reinos de León Y de Castilla.*, vol. 4 (Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1866), 101. "veemos que los judios e moros que viuen en vuestros rreynos o los mas dellos no traen las dichas sennales, ante andan los vnos e los otros vestidos de rropas de pannos finos e de rropas de tal fechura, que no se pueden conoscer si los judios son judios o si son clérigos, o letrados de grande estado o autoridad, o si los moros son moros, o gentiles honbres del palacio . . . Por ende, suplicamos a vuestra alteza que mande e ordene que los judios ni los moros no puedan vsar oto ni plata, ni vistan seda alguna ni panno de grana en las rropas . . . que los judios e judias trayan sus sennales coloradas . . . según lo disponen las dichas leyes de vuestros rreynos."

⁴ AHPAv Ayun, C. 1, leg... 1, núm 44. "mandamos . . . de partes del rey e de la reyna . . . que veades la dicha ley . . . la gaurdéys e cunpláys e fagades gaurdar e cumplir en todo e por todo. . . que de aquí adelante [nin] persona nin personas alugans entren en las bodas nin en las casas de los dichos judios e judias."

by the Crown, both to deal with those repercussions, but also to assert royal authority over the kingdom. This chapter will first examine significant events within the kingdom of Castile – most importantly, the takeover of the throne by the Trastámara dynasty. The takeover is key, not simply for the change in dynasties, but also because the struggle for the crown weakened regnal authority, and allowed for unruly magnates to jockey for position and power. The incessant warfare of the early fifteenth century meant the early death of several kings, and thus the minority rule of their heirs. Weak kings made concession after concession to the nobles, and the neighboring kingdom of Aragon took advantage of Castilian unrest to attempt to gain a foothold in that kingdom as well. But when Isabel I (r. 1474 – 1504) ascended to the throne of Castile, she, together with her husband, Ferdinand II of Aragon (r. 1479 – 1516), worked to firmly restore the authority of the Crown. Since Castile no longer had to worry about Aragon interfering in internal affairs – or rather, since Ferdinand, as Isabel’s consort, could do so openly – the monarchs were able to reestablish control over their nobles, and implement new policies regarding city governance. This will become very clear in the case of Ávila.

The Crown also took steps to deal with the other great social problem of the fifteenth century: that of the *conversos*. These Jewish converts to Catholicism – whether coerced or moved by genuine faith – created significant social complications. For one, *conversos* had access to local government posts, which unsettled many of their old Christian neighbors, as it dramatically shifted people’s positions in communities. *Conversos* were eligible to sit on the *concejo* in some towns, and to join the cathedral chapter. Social advancement was open to them in a way it had not been previously, and

many *conversos* took full advantage of these opportunities, to the dismay of some old Christians. Then, too, there was confusion about the type of Catholicism practiced by the *conversos*. Some of them continued to keep kosher, and bathe once a week. Many were woefully uneducated about Catholic doctrine and praxis, and literally did not know how to be a Catholic, save for attendance at mass. This behavior aroused suspicion on the part of neighbors and gave those who were jealous of the new convert's social advancement ammunition to use against the *conversos*.⁵

Isabel and Ferdinand took two important steps in an attempt to alleviate these social and religious concerns. One was increased separation between Jews and Catholics: this would ensure that new converts were not swayed by contact with their former co-religionists to “backslide” and continue Jewish practices. The other was to petition the Pope for his permission to set up an inquisition in Castile, under royal rather than clerical authority. The main purpose of the Spanish Inquisition, also known as the Holy Office, was to investigate those *conversos* who were thought to maintain Jewish practices, or *judaizers*.

Both of these measures, I maintain, were part of Isabel and Ferdinand's attempts to ameliorate social tensions and create a way for Jews and Catholics to live together in peace. Separate, and unequal, but in peace. Their efforts, unfortunately and

⁵ The literature on *conversos* is vast; several key texts include James S. Amelang, *Parallel Histories: Muslims and Jews in Inquisitorial Spain* (Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Miriam Bodian, *Dying in the Law of Moses: Crypto-Jewish Martyrdom in the Iberian World* (Indiana University Press, 2007); David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004); Renée Levine Melammed, *A Question of Identity: Iberian Conversos in Historical Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 2004); David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996).

catastrophically, failed. The case of Ávila serves as an exemplar of how change imposed from the top down only worked to increase social tensions, and allowed for residents of that city to regard their Jewish neighbors as objects of derision and scorn, which in turn allowed for increased harassment and violence towards Jewish residents.

Ávila also serves as evidence that Castilian Jews were not passive victims in this process. Time and again, the Jews of Ávila appealed to the Crown to counter the increased harassment they experienced, relying on this vertical alliance, to the detriment of any horizontal alliances with the local community. Thus a constant cycle was born: the Crown authorized new mandates regarding Jews, the *concejo* implemented – or attempted to implement – these mandates, and Jewish communities, unhappy, appealed to the sovereigns, who would then intervene and order the *concejo* to remedy the situation. Though the Crown might erode their rights, the Jewish community nevertheless saw them as their protector still, a role that Isabel certainly fulfilled. This also put the *concejo* in an increasingly impossible situation, which undoubtedly only served to increase tensions between them and the *aljama*.

Rise of the Trastámaras

On the night of March 23, 1369, Peter I of Castile (r.1350-1369), left his army's camp in the company of the French mercenary Bertrand du Guesclin, believing du Guesclin would lead him to safety following his defeat in battle at the hands of his half-brother, Henry de Trastámara. Instead, du Guesclin brought Peter straight to Henry's tent, who was waiting for him with a knife. Peter's death brought an almost twenty-year

struggle for the throne of Castile to an end, and marked the start of the Trastámara dynasty.⁶

Henry's (r. 1369-1379) first order of business was to solidify his position, and to that end he rewarded those nobles who had supported him. Most of these were lesser nobles, leading some historians to argue that because of the Trastámara takeover, the oldest noble Castilian families disappeared.⁷ Certainly this was true in Ávila. Though it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much the city or its nobles were involved in the conflict, the most notable noble families in the sixteenth century were Bracamonte, Bullón, Guiera, Guillamás and Cimbrón, all of whom settled in Ávila after coming from France to fight for Henry.⁸

Henry's second strategy to ensure his hold on the throne, and one which continued all throughout the Trastámara period, was to besmirch Peter's reputation. This "black legend" was so effective that even today, Peter is known by the sobriquet "the Cruel." Henry also emphasized Peter's connection to Jews. While it is true that Peter's royal treasurer was Samuel HaLevi, a Jewish resident of Toledo, it is also true that Henry himself appointed Jews to positions of importance once he was king: Yusef Pichon, who may have been aided by Samuel Abravanel, gained the post of *contador mayor* or tax

⁶ Henry's reasons to challenge his half-brother for the throne, aside from a probable personal lust for power, are numerous and intertwined with the Hundred Year's War. For an excellent summary of the civil war in thirteenth century Castile, see Teófilo F. Ruiz, *Spain's Centuries of Crisis: 1300 - 1474* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008) esp. Ch. 4.

⁷ J. N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 389. See also Ruiz, *Spain's Centuries of Crisis*, 81.

⁸ Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas* part 4, 25 r-v. Abelardo Merino Alvarez, *La sociedad abulense durante el siglo XVI* (Editorial MAXTOR, 2003), 34-37.

collector.⁹ (Samuel Abravanel had been Pedro's *contador mayor*, but had switched allegiance to Henry already in 1367.)¹⁰

Despite such prestigious appointments to a select few, most Castilian Jews became easy scapegoats to blame in the face of any suffering caused by the civil war. There had already been examples of this before Peter's death: Henry had demanded – and received – a million *maravedís* from the *aljama* in Burgos in 1366; while *juderías* (Jewish quarters) and synagogues were sacked in Briviesca and Valladolid the following year, all as punishment for aiding Peter, the rightful king.¹¹ A new outbreak of plague in the 1360s and 1370s did nothing to quell antiJewish sentiment, and in all likelihood made for very receptive ears by the time Ferrand Martinez began preaching against Jews in Sevilla in 1390.

Henry's son John (r. 1406 –1454) was only two years old when his father died, and his uncle, Ferdinand of Antequera, served as co-regent with John's mother, Catherine of Lancaster. In 1412, when Ferdinand's maternal uncle, Martín I of Aragon, died without issue, Ferdinand became king of Aragon and for several years, ruled both kingdoms capably. Unfortunately, John did not emulate his uncle and when he took the throne in 1418, he proved easily influenced by others, especially his favorite, Don Álvaro de Luna. At the same time, Ferdinand had granted large properties to his younger sons

⁹ Benzion Netanyahu, *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 113.

¹⁰ Baer, *A History of the Jews* vol. 1, 366. Netanyahu doubts this, and thinks Abranavel only moved to assist Pichon once Pedro was dead. Netanyahu, *Toward the Inquisition*, 239, n. 47. Regardless, the two men did work together for Henry.

¹¹ Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*, 40.

(also John and Henry, known as the Infantes of Aragon), John of Castile's cousins and brothers-in-law. They, together with John's wife, Isabel of Portugal, sought to discredit Don Álvaro to the king, with eventual success, and tried to make John their own puppet, without success, since John himself died soon after Don Álvaro was executed for treason. As Teofilo Ruiz explains, politics in Castile was very much a family affair during the first half of the fifteenth century, and an incestuous, dangerous family affair at that.¹²

Henry IV of Castile and the Farce of Ávila

Henry IV (r. 1454-1474), like his father, was greatly swayed by his favorite; the key difference was that he had not just one, but many favorites. Thus the nobles of Castile continued to squabble amongst themselves, and became even more problematic over the course of his reign. Stories maligning Henry began circulating from the first. Some members of his courts saw him as overly fond of Moorish clothing and culture, and he showed no interest in military conflict against Granada. There were rumors about his sexuality as well; he married Blanca of Navarre at the age of fifteen, but apparently fled the bedroom on his wedding night, and never did consummate the marriage. (They divorced three years later.) This, together with his overly close relationships with his favorites, lead to suspicions about his sexual proclivities and abilities. Though he did marry again, to Juana of Portugal in 1455, and she gave birth to a daughter, also called Juana, in 1462, rumors that he was impotent continued to swirl around the court.

¹² Ruiz, *Spain's Centuries of Crisis*, 88.

In 1464, a group of nobles and clerics gathered in Burgos to charge the king with a variety of crimes. In addition to his sympathy for Muslims, the group accused him of relinquishing his duties to his current favorite, Juan de Beltrán – including the duty of sleeping with his wife, as Beltrán was suspected to be the father of the queen's daughter. They also suspected Henry of plotting to murder his half brother and sister, Alfonso and Isabel. Though Henry submitted to the nobles enough to allow them to remove Beltrán from his position, and from court, it was not enough to satisfy them. The rebellious group ordered the king's supporters exiled and the Infante Alfonso recognized as Henry's legitimate heir. This proved the breaking point for Henry, and another civil war seemed a strong possibility.

On June 5, 1465, just outside the walls of Ávila, a league of nobles including the archbishop of Toledo, Alonso Carrillo, as well as the Marquis of Villena, Juan Pacheco and the Maestre of the military order of Alcántara, Gomez de Caceres de Paredes, caused a scaffold to be built, and placed an effigy of Henry on a mock throne, dressed in mourning, wearing a crown, and holding a sword and sceptre. A proclamation was read, stating that Henry deserved to lose "the Royal dignity," that he deserved to lose the administration of justice, that he deserved to lose the governance of the kingdom, and that he deserved to lose the throne. With each count, the Archbishop, the Marquis and the Maestre each stripped the effigy of its signs of power: crown, sword, scepter, and then, with the final count, they pushed the effigy out of the throne. They brought the Infante Alfonso up onto the scaffold, sat him in the throne and gave him the crown, sword and

scepter and “in loud voices, proclaimed ‘Castile for Don Rey Alfonso!’”¹³ That such a ceremony, generally known as the “farce of Ávila,” could have occurred speaks to the level of independence enjoyed by the nobility over the past century; how they felt free to exert their own authority in blatant disregard of regal power.

Though this event took place in Ávila, none of the local citizens were active participants. No member of the *concejo* or any nobles of Ávila took part in the ceremony, and in fact, chronicler Diego de Valera claimed the Abulense spectators watched the spectacle in tears.¹⁴ However, a *cedula real* (royal decree) issued by Alfonso the very day after the “farce” seemingly contradicts the ideological separation of the Abulense contingent from the rebels. Though city officials played no part in the ceremony, Alfonso’s *cedula* clearly acknowledges the city’s allegiance: “... because of the loyalty that the said city of Ávila and the citizens and residents of her and her territories have shown me ... it is my favor that from now and forever my city of Ávila ... will be exempt from all the requests and tributes ... they are now obligated to contribute and pay....”¹⁵

¹³ ernando del Pulgar, *Cronica del rey Don Enrique el Quarto de este nombre*, ed. Diego Enríquez del Castillo and Rodrigo Cota (Madrid: D. Antonio de Sancha, 1787), 129–130. ernando del Pulgar, *Cronica del rey Don Enrique el Quarto de este nombre*, ed. Diego Enríquez del Castillo and Rodrigo Cota (en la Imprenta de D. Antonio de Sancha, 1787), 129–130.

For an in-depth explication of the event, see Angus MacKay, “Ritual and Propaganda in Fifteenth-Century Castile,” *Past & Present* 107 (May 1985): 3–43.

¹⁴ Mosén Diego de Valera, *Memorial De Diversas Hazañas, Crónica De Enrique IV, Ordenada Por Mosén Diego De Valera*, Colección de crónicas españolas, dirigida por J. de M. Carriazo, v. 4 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1941), 145. See also Richard L. Kagan, *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 45–46.

¹⁵ Archivo Municipal de Ávila, hereafter AM, leg. 257, núm 27. “...a la razón de la lealtad que la dicha cibdad de Ávila e los vecinos e moradores della y sus arrabales conmigo ha mostrado ... es mi merçed que agora de aquí en adelante por siempre jamás dicha mi cibdad de Ávila ... sean ...exentos de todos los pedidos e monedas ... así que están e son obligados a dar e pagar...”

Not all cities and noble families accepted Alfonso as their king, and the next few years saw sporadic outbursts of fighting, as the great noble families of Castile jockeyed for position behind the putative king, while others supported Henry and Juana. Alfonso continued to issue decrees and bestow privileges on the cities which backed him.

Isabel as heir

In early July of 1468 the situation shifted once again, when Alfonso took seriously ill. Isabel, Alfonso Carrillo and Juan Pacheco gathered in Cardeñosa, about six miles from Ávila, to attend Alfonso on his deathbed. On July 4, Isabel wrote a letter to the city of Murcia, cosigned by Carrillo, informing them that Alfonso was gravely ill, and reminding them that in the event of his death, she was his heir.¹⁶ Alfonso died the next day, after which Isabel and her entourage moved to Ávila. Together with several notable Abulense officials, including *corregidor* of the city, they met quietly, in the chapel of San Bernabé in the cathedral there.¹⁷ Despite the letter to Murcia, and Isabel's obvious interest in the throne, the description of the meeting shows the participants proceeding much more cautiously than they had with Alfonso. Isabel refused to take the crown, but rather wanted to assert herself as Henry's heir. The men present assured her of their loyalty and pledged continuing service to her, and she in turn promised to speak on their

¹⁶ Archivo Municipal de Murcia, leg. 2, núm 1. Published in Juan Torres Fontes, "La Contratación de Guisando," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 2 (1965): 416. "... la subçesyon destos reynos e señorlos de Castilla e de León pretenesçen a mí como su legítyma heredera e subçesora que soy."

¹⁷ AM leg. 257, núm 4.

behalf to Henry, and to protect the privileges and rights that Alfonso had bestowed on the city by Alfonso.¹⁸

Isabel's position as Henry's heir was only strengthened when Henry's wife, Juana, who had been sent away from court, became pregnant by Pedro de Castilla y Fonseca, nephew of Alonso Carrillo.¹⁹ This bolstered support for Isabel, as the child Juana's legitimacy seemed far more in doubt given her mother's promiscuous behavior. Isabel and Henry negotiated a treaty, the Pact of the Toros de Guisando, under which Isabel was named Henry's heir, Juana removed from the line of succession, and Henry would have the final say in who Isabel was to marry. She must have kept her promise to the officials in Ávila, for Henry included the city in the number he granted her dominion over under the terms of the pact.

Who she would marry was of paramount interest to many in the kingdom. Prospects for Isabel included princes from Portugal, France or Aragon. Isabel, despite agreeing to abide by Henry's decision as to whom she should wed, allowed herself to be influenced by Carrillo, who strongly inclined towards a union with Aragon. He had already been promoting a marriage between Juan Pacheco's daughter, Beatriz, and Ferdinand, but within two weeks of Alfonso's death, Isabel replaced Beatriz in those negotiations. Carrillo was the only one in favor of this union, as many Castilian nobles recalled only too well the interference by the Infantes of Aragon during Henry's and Isabel's father's reign. As well, Ferdinand's father, Juan, had a reputation for attempting

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cristina Guardiola-Griffiths, *Legitimizing the Queen: Propaganda and Ideology in the Reign of Isabel I of Castile* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 30.

to interfere in Castilian affairs whenever it suited him. Isabel was not unsympathetic to these fears, and the extensive talks before the marriage agreement was signed focused on curtailing Ferdinand's role and the extent of his authority in Castile.²⁰ Ferdinand travelled disguised as a servant to Castile, and the two married in secret in Valladolid, on Oct 18, 1469.²¹ While many historians see this marriage as a watershed moment in peninsular political history, marking the beginning of a new, unified, proto-national entity, contemporaries did not see it that way at all and dreaded possible ensuing decades of civil war and chaos.²² Henry, furious about the marriage, regarded Isabel's disobedience as the perfect excuse to remove her from the line of succession and reinstate his putative daughter, Juana. This opened the door for more strife as different factions aligned themselves behind either Isabel and Ferdinand, or Henry and Juana.

When Henry died, on December 11, 1474, Isabel was in Segovia and Ferdinand in Zaragoza. Isabel acted immediately to take the throne in her own right, as "owner of these kingdoms."²³ Her dramatic procession through the streets on December 12 to proclaim herself Queen is well documented; of special significance is that she was preceded by Gutierre de Cárdenas, Maestre of the Order of Santiago, holding aloft a

²⁰ John Edwards, *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs 1474-1520* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 11. Among the stipulations was that Ferdinand would observe all Castilian laws, undertake no political or military action, nor appoint Aragonese "foreigners" to any posts without Isabel's permission, and would reside in Castile.

²¹ For an excellent overview of the politics surrounding this marriage, and its immediate aftermath, see J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (Penguin Books Limited, 2002) especially Chapter One.

²² Ruiz, *Spain's Centuries of Crisis*, 101.

²³ Hernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Señores Reyes Católicos Don Fernando y Doña Isabel de Castilla y de Aragón* (Valencia: Benito Monfort, 1780), 32. According to Pulgar, the crowd watching Isabel's procession through the city, cried out "Castilla, Castilla, por el Rey Don Fernando é por la Reyna Doña Isabel su muger, propietaria destes Reynos".

naked sword.²⁴ However, there were still those who backed Juana in her claim for the throne and the kingdom once again teetered on the edge of civil war.

As these events transpired, Ávila remained firmly in Isabel's camp. On the December 17, Juan Chacón, the city's *corregidor*, read a letter from Isabel to the *concejo* announcing Henry's death, and her ascension to the throne. The *concejo* subsequently ordered Juan González de Pajares, *procurador* (solicitor) of the city, to organize the funeral rites for the late king. These were performed in Ávila the following day: a procession wound its way through the city, ending in the cathedral where a mass was said for Henry. Jewish and Muslim citizens were allowed to enter and "make their lamentations" around the dais upon which a casket representing the dead king had been placed.²⁵ After the mass, Chacón formally acknowledged Isabel as the new queen. He then carried her standard throughout the city, accompanied by musicians playing trumpets and drums. The Muslims of the city performed a dance of swords and the Jews presented two Torah scrolls to be given to the new queen.²⁶ In January 1475,

²⁴ Andrés Bernáldez, *Historia de los reyes católicos D. Fernando y Doña Isabel* (Sevilla: J.M. Geofrin, 1870), 32; Pulgar, *Crónica de los Señores Reyes Católicos*, 32. For the description of the procession with Gutierre de Cárdenas, see Alfonso Fernández de Palencia, *Crónica de Enrique IV* (Madrid: Tip. de la Revista de archivos, 1905), 305.

²⁵ Manuel Foronda y Aguilera, "Honras por Enrique IV y proclamación de Isabel la Católica en la ciudad de Ávila," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 62 (1913): 431. "é todos los judíos é judías ó moros haciendo sus guayas á los enjergados á derredor del estrado." The BRAH published a number of documents from the personal archive of Don Foronda y Aguilera. An inventory of these documents can be found in Manuel Foronda y Aguilera, "Un Códice Titulado 'Crónica de Ávila,'" *Boletín de La Real Academia de La Historia* 62 (1913): 278–83.

²⁶ Foronda y Aguilera, "Honras por Enrique IV y proclamación de Isabel la Católica en la ciudad de Ávila," 432. "Juan de Chacón, Lugarteniente de Corregidor ... comenzó á decir el dicho alférez é todos los que allí estábamos á altas voces 'Castilla, Castilla por la muy alta é esclarecida Señora, nuestra Señora la Reina Doña Isabel' ... salieron con el pendón real por la puerta de los apóstoles donde estaban muchos momos que los moros desta ciudad tenían fechos é danzas de espadas, é allí dos toras de los judíos ... é así tocando

representatives from Ávila went to present themselves at court in person, to make obeisance to the new queen and her husband, and present her with gifts from the city.²⁷ Jews and Muslims at this time were still regarded as full participants in Abulense society and allowed to openly exhibit their religious culture within the city's rituals.

The Catholic Monarchs

Although most of the northern cities and noble families – including the Mendoza, the Manrique and Enríqueze – all openly acknowledged Isabel as their queen, there were others who were willing to back Juana. The south – Andalucía and Murcia – were eventually won over through adroit political compromise and the threat of war. Juana was supported mostly by the Portuguese, who saw this as a way to infiltrate Castilian politics. Portuguese troops under the command of their king, Afonso V (r. 1438 – 1481) entered Castile in May 1475, but found fewer supporters than they had hoped. Though they remained in Castile for almost a year, the Portuguese army met with little success and in February 1476, were soundly defeated at the battle of Toro and the bulk of their forces retreated back to Portugal. Nevertheless, the next three years saw continued skirmishes, especially along the border with Portugal, and Isabel's position on the throne was not guaranteed. She had to walk a very fine line, in order to assert control over the kingdom,

trompeta é tañendo tamboriles é faciendo grandes alegrías cabalgó el alférez en su caballo, é fueron por la calle ...”

²⁷ Ibid., 433–434.

yet continue to placate the nobles whose support she needed.²⁸ Already in 1476, at the meeting of the *cortes* in Madrigal, Isabel displayed her political acumen in establishing new institutions to help her maintain authority, while at the same time granting favors that would please her nobles and city councilmen.

The first significant outcome of the *Cortes* of Madrigal was the restoration of the medieval institution of the aforementioned *hermandad*, which had been defunct for some time. In previous centuries, they had been completely localized institutions, responding to the needs of each community in an ad hoc manner. The Crown saw the *hermandades* as a way to both keep the peace, but also to promote and watch over their interests. To that end, they centralized the institution, and created the *Santa Hermandad*, a *junta* or council, to oversee all local *hermandades*, presided over by a Crown representative.²⁹

Ferdinand and Isabel's other move was to reassert control over the military orders. The three orders – Santiago, Calatrava and Alcántara – possessed vast estates and generated huge revenues, a veritable “State within the State.”³⁰ When the Master of Santiago, Rodrigo Manrique, died in 1476, Isabel saw an opportunity. Rather than let the various noble families divide into factions and fight over the appointment (and also undoubtedly thinking of the monies the order controlled), she herself stepped in to claim the position for Ferdinand. Harking back to medieval precedent, when her ancestors had control over the order, and insinuating that royal authority was needed as the order had so

²⁸ J.H. Elliot maintains that Castile was more concerned with “the restoration of order than the preservation of liberty,” and thus Isabel's policies were received perhaps more favorably than might have happened in different circumstances. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, 94.

²⁹ Ibid., 86–87. See also Lunenfeld, *The Council of the Santa Hermandad*.

³⁰ Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, 88.

many fortresses along the Muslim frontier, she told the commanders that she had the Pope's support in the matter.³¹ Intimidated, they acceded to her request and Ferdinand was appointed Master of Santiago, though he quickly transferred the position to Alonso de Cárdenas (a loyal ally during the war with Portugal).

Despite these moves, the monarchs were careful not to impinge on the nobles where they would encounter the most resistance: finances. Noble revenues were not touched, yet the Crown needed to raise money, especially once the forthcoming war with Granada began. It was to the cities to which they turned for this. However, in order to appease their citizens, they made another move which proved very popular with Christians: outlawing the practice of usury. Ávila was the one city where this new law met with fierce resistance on the part of the *aljama*.

The Abulense Jewish *aljama* under the Catholic Monarchs

Usury

Previous monarchs had enacted laws regarding the practice of usury, but many Christians in the realm still chafed under the burden of what they called the “fraud” of usury. At the *cortes* of Madrigal, nobles took the opportunity to remind Isabel that previous monarchs had enacted laws against fraudulent contracts, laws which now were ignored:

³¹ Pulgar, *Crónica de los Señores Reyes Católicos*, 117–118. “que bien sabían como aquel Maestrado de Santiago era una de las mayores dignidades de toda España, é . . . había en el muchas fortalezas derramadas frontera de los Moros, é de los otros reynos comarcanos: é por esta causa los Reyes sus progenitores siempre pusieron la mano en esta dignidad é la tomaron en administracion, . . . por agora había deliberado que el Rey toviere aquel Maestrado en administración, lo qual había acordado de suplicar al Papa.”

Don Enrique the third, your grandfather, ordered certain laws which did not honor the contracts and obligations which were made between Christians and Jews, nor the oaths which were made between them. But seeing that the king your brother revoked all of the contracts between Christians and Jews which in many cases caused much inconvenience and damage to Christians, he took a middle path and made a law in the cortes of Toledo in 1472, which ordered that the Jews could freely receive those contracts which were licit, but not those made fraudulently and usuriously.... that law until here has not been used freely in your kingdoms, so that it seems the many laws made in opposition of usury have been revoked.³²

Interest charges within “legal” limits (33% was the norm) were not the issue. Christians were complaining that Jews were charging exorbitant amounts of interest, up to 100% in some cases, and were altering established contracts to change the terms. Isabel ordered that Jews were now required to take extra measures to ensure the validity of any contracts already established, and if they were deemed fraudulent, the debts were to be discharged.³³ The statute caused a fair amount of confusion, with some Christians believing – or choosing to believe – they no longer had to repay any loans.

The reaction of the Abulense *aljama* to the new statute was immediate and definitive. The details of this case come from a letter written by Isabel to the *concejo* in 1479, in which she outlines a summary of the situation as conveyed to her through

³² Danvila y Collado, *Cortes de Los Antiguos Reinos*, 4:103–104. “el sennor rey don Enrrique el tercero, vuestro aguelo, mandó e hordenó ciertas leyes que no valiesen los contratos e obligaciones que se ficiesen de christiano a judío ni las confesiones e sentencias que entre ellos interviniesen, pero veyendo el dicho sennor rrey vuestro hermano que de quitar del todo la contratación entre christianos e judios se seguían muchos ynconvenientes, e con danno a los christianos en muchos casos, tuvo una via mediana, e fizo una ley en las cortes de Toledo el anno de sesenta e dos, por la qual ordenó que los judios... puedan rrescebir libremente quales quier contratos licitos e permisos que non fuesen fechos en fraude de usura. ... e esta ley fasta aquí no ha sido usada libremente en vuestros rryenos, por que prescia derogar muchas leyes fechas en detestación de las usuras...”

³³ Manuel Danvila y Collado, ed., *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla*, vol. 4 (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1882), 104. “si la parte del christiano se opusiere en qualquier tiempo e alegare quel enprestido u otro qual quier contrato no pasó en fecho de verdad, quel judío ... sea tenido de prouar como el dicho enprestido o contrato pasó verdaderamente e sin ficion alguna ... e si el judío ... no prouare cumplidamente la rrealidad del dicho contrato o enprestido, que en tal caso el contrato ni sentencia ni otra escritura no sea executada contra el christiano.”

petitions from both the *aljama* and the *concejo*. She states that she is aware that the leaders of the *aljama* ordered a cessation to all loans to Christians, for fear that both new and established contracts would be negated and they would suffer great losses.³⁴ This came just at the moment when the *concejo* was relying on these loans in order to pay the higher taxes the Crown had levied to help *them* pay for the war with Portugal.³⁵ Juan del Campo, the *corregidor*, ordered the *aljama* to loan them the money, promising that they would get royal authorization to approve the contract and ensure its validity.³⁶ The *aljama* acquiesced and began the resumption of moneylending; however, borrowers immediately began refusing to repay their loans, claiming that the terms were usurious and therefore illegal.³⁷ All of this the Jews of Ávila had related to the queen in their petition.

The *concejo* had also written a petition, mentioning the “great harm” suffered by the citizens of the city, thanks to the usurious contracts forced upon them by the Jews.

Isabel responded, ordering that any contracts regarding any debts negotiated prior to 1476

³⁴ Archivo General de Simancas, Registro General de Sello, hereafter AGS RGS leg. 147909, núm 33. “E dis que como la dicha ley vino a su notiçia dellos ... la dicha aljama puso su sentencia descomunión que ningund judío diese a ganancia dineros nin otra cosa alguna.”

³⁵ Ibid. “...era en grand deservicio e danno de la dicha çibdad porque muchas veses nos el dicho consejo e omes buenos de la çibdad e su tierra e personas singulares della demandavamos e demandavades algunos enprestidos asi para la guerra del nuestro adversario de Portugal.”

³⁶ Ibid. “la dicha çibdad mando a la dicha aljama de los dichos judios so grandes penas e sin embargo de la dicha ley e excomunión prestase sus dineros a ganancia, ca ellos entendían enviarnos a suplicar que mandasemos dar nuestra carta para que sin embargo de la dicha ordenança e ley los dichos judios...pudiese dar e diese sus dineros a ganancia.”

³⁷ Ibid. “...la moradores de la dicha çibdad e su teirra, a fin de non pagar lo que les asipretaron queriendose ayudar e ayudandose de la dicha ley e ordenança por nos fecha en las dichas Cortes de Madrigal non solamente las ganancias mas aun el principal non les quieren pagar.”

be honored according to the terms agreed upon by the parties. Contracts for loans made after 1476 were subject to the laws of the *Cortes* of Madrigal.³⁸

The ruling did not have the desired effect of calming the situation: just six months later, in March 1480, Isabel sent another letter. This one was to Pedro and Gonzales Dávila, two local magistrates; in it, Isabel recounted yet another petition from the *aljama*, filled with complaints that once again debts were not being repaid. The problem this time concerned the *entregadores* – officials whose duty was to regulate transactions between lenders and borrowers. In Ávila, these officials were relatives and friends of those who had borrowed money, or were otherwise proving unreliable. Jews would come to the *entregadores* when it was time for an instalment on a loan to be repaid, but the officials would delay, or otherwise obfuscate the proceedings so that there were no consequences if a borrower did not repay his or her debt.³⁹ Isabel asked Pedro and Gonzalez Dávila to appoint new *entregadores*, and to make sure they were reliable, trustworthy people who would execute the duties of the office with justice.⁴⁰

Although Isabel sided with her Christian petitioners who wanted the practice of usury sharply curtailed, she upheld her end of the “royal alliance” by ensuring that the Jews of her kingdom were not taken advantage of. They may not have shared in all the

³⁸ AGS, RGS, leg. 147909, núm. 57.

³⁹ AGS, RGS, leg. 14800310, núm. 117. “agora aveys arendado los dichos oficios de entregadores a ciertas personas de la dicha tierra, los quales son los mismos deudores e sus parientes, e amigos e quando les van a pedir entregas de los tales contrabtos, non lo fassen segund deuen e ponon lo en dilacion de manera que non han podido ni pueden alcançar conplimiento de justicia e que en ello han rescebido e resciben grand agrauio e danno.” On *entregadores* see Manuel Danvila y Collado, ed., *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla. Publicadas por la Real academia de la historia*, vol. 1 (Madrid Impr. y estereotipia de M. Rivadeneyra, 1861), 111, 144, 191.

⁴⁰ Ibid. “...pongays en vuestro logar personas que siruan los dichos oficios de entregadores, cibdadanos fiables e tales que puedan dar cuenta e rason de todo lo que les fuere encomendado”

rights Christians enjoyed, but they were clearly under Isabel's protection, a position she made evident to the *concejo*. Christians did not have *carte blanche* to ignore contracts and debts legally undertaken. This did not mean, of course, that Jews were not to be used to the Crown's advantage when needed, and when it came time to finance the war with Granada, they were definitely needed.

Finances and the Granada war

Though the conquest of Granada has become one of the key defining events of Isabel and Ferdinand's reign, the war leading up to that conquest began almost by happenstance. From the time Isabel ascended to the throne until 1482, a "fluid and confused" state of truce existed between Castile and Granada. Certain Andalucian nobles were on very good terms with the emir of Granada, while others, such as Miguel Lucas de Iranzo of Jaén, conducted continuous raids against the emirate throughout the 1460s.⁴¹ The truce was officially renewed in 1475, 1476 and 1478, though under the terms, Granada owed tribute to Castile, which went unpaid during this period; Ferdinand and Isabel were too busy with the war with Portugal and consolidating their position in Castile to pursue the matter.

The emirate was no powerhouse: after the death of Yusuf III (r. 1408-1417), Granada had been in an almost constant state of civil war throughout the fifteenth century. In addition, severe economic decline and heavy taxation of the people made for a

⁴¹ Juan de Mata Carriazo, *Hechos del condestable don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo (crónica del siglo XV)* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940).

population unhappy with its emir, Abū l-Ḥasan.⁴² Nevertheless, Granada was not to be reckoned with lightly. A contemporary chronicler estimated that l-Ḥasan could easily maintain a standing army of 4,700 cavalry.⁴³ Granada was not poised to be conquered; Ferdinand and Isabel knew it would not be a quick and painless war.

Ignoring the terms of the truce, Abū l-Ḥasan attacked and captured the Christian city of Zahara in 1481, in reprisal for Christian raids in his territory. The following year, Rodrigo Ponce de León, marqués of Cádiz, retaliated by attacking the city of Alhama, and the war of Granada officially began.⁴⁴

The historiography of this war has been drenched in crusading rhetoric and earned Ferdinand and Isabel the sobriquet “the Catholic Monarchs,” yet at the start, it was no more than just another retaliatory strike. Ferdinand spoke strongly, claiming he would “make war on the Moors from every direction,” but the actual conquest of Granada was not the original aim.⁴⁵ Perhaps it was the capture of Muḥammed, l-Ḥasan’s son in 1483 that convinced Ferdinand the conquest of Granada was possible, by using Muḥammed (more famously known as Boabdil) as his puppet.

Wars cost a lot. The Crown had help from the papacy: Sixtus IV had levied a tax on Castilian, Aragonese and Sicilian clergy, a third of which went towards the crusade against Granada. Ferdinand and Isabel managed to convince his successor, Innocent VIII,

⁴² Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, 2:368.

⁴³ Hernando de Baeza, *Relaciones de algunos sucesos de los últimos tiempos del reino de Granada* (Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1868), 17.

⁴⁴ Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, 2:370.

⁴⁵ Ramón Carande and Juan de Mata Carriazo, eds., *El tumbo de los Reyes Católicos del concejo de Sevilla*, vol. 3 (Sevilla: Editorial Católica Española, 1929), 193 ff.

to do even more. He renounced his portion of the tax, another third, in their favor. This was not an insubstantial sum, estimated at 800,000,000 *maravedís*.⁴⁶ Cities were also required to contribute goods, and men, to the war effort. In 1482, Ávila and the villages in its bishopric were required to send wheat and barley to support the monarch's armies, while in 1486, and again in 1490, the king and queen asked that all knights and men at arms from Ávila join them in Córdoba, "to serve us in the war."⁴⁷

Loans and taxes were an important part of financing the war. Cities were "obliged" to contribute loans, but where they got the money from was up to each community. Taxes were the usual method, and there were new, especially heavy taxes on Jews and Muslims. In 1484, the Jewish communities of Castile together paid 16,000 *castellanos de oro* (almost 8,000,000 *maravedís*) in taxes for the war.⁴⁸ In the following two years, Jews from the bishoprics of Osma, Palencia, Córdoba and Sevilla were required to pay between 10,000 and 18,000 *castellanos de oro* each.⁴⁹

Taxes paid by Jewish communities before the war were startlingly less: although the *aljama* of Ávila paid more taxes than any other Castilian Jewish community in 1472 and 1474, it was never more than 14,000 *maravedís* (see table 1). The leap in the figures from 1464 to 1472 has perplexed scholars.⁵⁰ One possible explanation is that from 1465

⁴⁶ Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *Castilla y la conquista del reino de Granada* (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1988). A common laborer might earn 15 - 20 *maravedís* in a day; a skilled artisan, 40.

⁴⁷ AGS, RGS, leg.. 148205, núm 53; AGS, RGS, leg.. 148611, núm 60; AGS, RGS, leg.. 149012, núm 70.

⁴⁸ AGS, RGS, leg.. 14841202, núm 88.

⁴⁹ AGS, RGS, leg.. 148504, núm 279; AGS, RGS, leg.. 148504, núm 288; AGS, RGS, leg.. 148602, núm 154;

⁵⁰ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 75.

onward, Henry was in need of money to bolster his position *vis a vis* his rebellious nobles and the Isabelline faction.

***Table 1 - tax amount paid, in maravedis, per
aljama.***⁵¹

City	1464	1472	1474
Ávila	5,500	14,000	12,000
Segovia	11,000	11,000	11,000
Salamanca	2,500	2,500	4,800
León	3,000	1,400	2,600

In 1483, the Abulense *aljamas* of both Jews and Muslims were required to pay their taxes in “beasts, laborers, shovels, mattocks, axes and barley.”⁵² The amount to be paid by the Jewish *aljama* was almost double that of the Muslim *aljama*, likely a reflection of the respective population of each group. Pilar León Tello believed the Jewish population of Ávila to be close to 3,000 at this time; but this number is likely exaggerated. It would mean there had been a huge shift in religious demographics since 1303, when 70% of the town were identified as Christian. Serafín de Tapia has determined the number of Abulense Jews in 1483 to be approximately 1,000, a more probable figure.⁵³

⁵¹ Ladero Quesada, “Las juderías de Castilla según algunos ‘servicios’ fiscales del siglo XV.”

⁵² AM, sección histórico, leg.. 1, núm 74; AM, sección histórico, leg.. 1, núm 76.

⁵³ Pilar León Tello, *Judíos de Ávila* (Excm. Diputación Provincial de Ávila, Instituto Gran Duque de Alba, 1963), 30–31; Tapia Sánchez, “Los judíos,” 143.

Two years later, the Jews and Muslims of the bishopric of Ávila were required to pay 8,000 *castellanos de oro*.⁵⁴ The two communities came to the agreement that the Jewish *aljama* would pay two thirds of the required amount, and the Muslim *aljama* the other third. However, a year later, the Abulense *aljama* requested that Ferdinand and Isabel allow them to renegotiate the “concordia” they had agreed to. In another letter from Isabel to the *corregidor* of Ávila, she summarizes what the Jews had told her, that

at the time when they made the agreement between them and the Muslims, the *aljama* of the Jews had the advantage of people and property, but now the *aljama* of the Jews has diminished and those Jews who have remained are few and poor and without any properties or goods; and the *aljama* of the Muslims they say have so increased and are filled with rich people, more than the Jews, and that the excess that the Jews had at the time of the agreement is now that which the Muslims have.⁵⁵

Isabel asked the *corregidor* to determine whether this claim was true, and to carry out a survey to ascertain the relative wealth of each community, so she could act accordingly. The Jewish *aljama* had clearly learned how to best to negotiate with the Crown in order to promote their own interests. Far from passively submitting to these new laws, this group constantly took advantage of the “royal alliance” in order to ameliorate their position as much as possible. This practice continued through the coming years, in the face of even more restrictive legislation regarding the place of Jews in Castilian society.

⁵⁴ AGS, RGS, leg.. 148504, núm 280.

⁵⁵ AGS, RGS, leg.. 148604, núm 111. “E que al tiempo que se fizo el dicho asyento e concordia entrellos e los dichos moros, el aljama de los judios dis que estaua muy auentajada de pecheros e asy mismo de faziendas e que agora dis quel aljama de los dichos judios esta deminuida e despoblada e los judios que han quedado pocos e pobres e syn ningunas faziendas, e el aljama de los dichos moros dis que se ha tanto acrecentado e poblado de personas ricas ques on ya mas que los dichos judios, e que la demasia que les tenían los judios al tiempo que la dicha concordia se fizo.”

The *aljama* of Ávila was by no means the only one to assert the “royal alliance.” Archival evidence indicates that the Crown and its officials also protected the interests of Jews in other cities and towns. Nearby Segovia is one such example. There, in 1484, the Crown intervened when the Segovian *aljama* complained of being insulted by Christians publically with satirical songs and poems. The sovereigns responded by banning such utterances, although it remains uncertain how rigorously this prohibition was enforced.⁵⁶ Another occasion concerned the church of Santa Maria de Pareces, a converted synagogue. It had been the *aljama*’s the main synagogue until 1419, when Vicente Ferrer accused local Jewish authorities of attempting to destroy a consecrated host inside, whereupon it was taken over and converted into a church.⁵⁷ As a former synagogue, the church was physically proximate to the *judería*, and when parishioners caused a crucifix to be built just by the outer doors, and thus visible from the street, leaders of the *aljama* considered it offensive and petitioned the Crown for its removal. Isabel responded with an order requiring the church to remove the crucifix and place it within the courtyard, off of the street, and the *concejo* ordered that the door to the courtyard of the church be kept closed, and a crucifix back from the street.⁵⁸

The Crown continued to both protect and defend its Jewish subjects, nor did it hesitate to arbitrate in local affairs in order to ensure that Jewish legal rights were upheld. While on the one hand, Ferdinand and Isabel were imposing increased restrictions on Jews, on the other they showed a willingness to respond to complaints from Jews

⁵⁶ AGS, RGS, leg., 148409, 121

⁵⁷ Bartolomé Herrero, “The Jews and Conversos in Medieval Segovia,” 17.

⁵⁸ AGS, RGS, leg., 148506, 34

regarding those same restrictions. Isabel's intentions are opaque, but she readily mediated in the fraught situations between religious communities caused by her own mandates. The Jews in Ávila, having had success with this particular practice, only continued to petition her as more of her laws were enforced by the Abulense *concejo*, especially when those laws were manipulated in order to take advantage of the *aljama*.

Jurisdiction: *Corregidores*, judges and sumptuary laws

The office of the *corregidor* was first established in the medieval period as a method by which the Crown could assert control over cities. First conceived as itinerant administrators, by the mid-fourteenth century the position had evolved into brief – usually two year – appointments to a particular city. As part of their program to reassert tighter control over Castile, Isabel and Ferdinand revamped the position in 1476. The *corregidor*, or co-administrator, would act as a sort of liaison between town and Crown, ensuring that royal ordinances were carried out, while also protecting the rights of the citizens. Although royal officials, it was the responsibility of the cities to which they were posted to pay their salaries. Typically, Jewish communities contributed proportionally more than their Christian neighbors to both the salary and lodgings of the local *corregidor*.⁵⁹ The *corregidor* was expected to provide for his own lodgings, but from an early period, they took advantage of their positions and extorted household

⁵⁹ Marvin Lunenfeld, *Keepers of the City: The Corregidores of Isabella of Castile, 1474-1504* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 83ff.

goods and linens from the local communities.⁶⁰ Isabel was adamantly opposed to this behaviour, and in the new regulations for the post, she forbade any such “gifts.”⁶¹ Despite the prohibition, the practice continued. In Ávila, the *aljama* were expected – by both the *concejo* and the *corregidor* – to provide linens, candles, and other household goods for the *corregidor*. Abraham Sevillana, in his role as a leader of the *aljama*, wrote to Isabel in 1477 complaining that the practice was continuing. She responded with a letter to the *concejo*, informing its members that they were not only in direct violation of the new ordinance but causing “great aggravation and harm” to the *aljamas* of Ávila.⁶²

It seems the *concejo* ignored her letter, for the following year, Juan Flores, a *vecino* of Toledo, was sent to investigate then *corregidor*, Juan del Campo, charged with bribery, theft and murder. The results of his investigation are unknown, but Campo was relieved from the post, and it was given to Flores himself. However, he himself was soon under investigation for “wrongful things,” thanks to accusations both the Muslim and Jewish *aljamas*.

In this instance, it was Sento Aben Abyd and Hamad Herrador, both Muslim residents of Ávila, who wrote to Isabel. This time she bypassed the *concejo*, writing instead to Diego de Gamarra, captain of the provincial *hermandad* of Ávila. She ordered

⁶⁰ Ibid., 96.

⁶¹ Emilio Sáez Sánchez, “El libro del juramento del Ayuntamiento de Toledo,” *Anuario de historia del derecho español*, no. 16 (1945): 560.

⁶² AGS RGS leg.. 147706, 266. “los grandes males e fatigas e dapños quel aljama e omes buenos judios e moros desa dicha cibdad avia rescebido e resciben de cada día en la ropa de camas e otra ropa que daban e les tomavan para los corregidores y justicias desa dicha cibdad, e el grand agravio e synrason que en ellos se les fasia...”

him make sure her will was carried out, and gave him permission to constrain Juan Flores and to make sure that the goods he had coerced were returned.⁶³

Legal jurisdiction also became a thorny issue. New restrictions regarding juridical independence had been promulgated at the *cortes* in Madrigal. Jewish and Muslim judges no longer retained the right to try and judge their co-religionists in criminal cases.⁶⁴ In addition, the monarchy accorded municipal magistrates the power to force Jews to appear before Christian judges in civil cases.⁶⁵ The *concejo* of Ávila interpreted this to mean that they could interfere in what were generally considered to be “private” *aljama* matters, specifically with regard to Jewish *cofradías* – a sort of charitable institution, which took care of the sick, and ensured the prompt burial of the dead when the family could not. The *concejo* began stipulating how the Jewish *cofradía* should be run. It also began interfering in rental agreements, and (probably of greatest importance to Isabel) with the collection of tribute owed to the Crown. Sento Abenabibe, another member of the Jewish *aljama*, had written Isabel, informing her of the *concejo*’s

⁶³ AHPAv Ayun. C. 1, leg. 1 núm. 39. “Sepades que... las *aljamas* ... tienen cartas e sobrecartas ... para que no les tomedes sus casas nin saquen ropa de camas nin otras ropas asy de los judios y moros que moran en la dicha cibdad ...nos les mandamos dar nuestras sobrecartas selladas con nuestra sellos e libradas de los del nuestro consejo, por las quales mandamos al conçejo, corregidor, alcaldes... de la dicha cibdad e a los aposentadores della, que guardasen e cumpliesen las dichas nuestras cartas en todo.... y fesistes çiertos requerimientos a Juan Flores corregidor que fue desta dicha cibdad para que les restyuyese las dichas sus prendas e camas de ropa e gelas...”

⁶⁴ Danvila y Collado, *Cortes de Los Antiguos Reinos*, 4:94–95.

⁶⁵ From the midthirteenth century, it had been standard for individual cities to have a separate judge devoted solely to Jewish matters – the *alcalde apartado*. In 1286, the cortes of Palencia ruled that these men should be appointed locally, rather than be Crown appointees with no ties or connections to the community. The *fuero* of Cuenca, promulgated in the twelfth century and used as a template for other Castilian cities, stipulated that judges could be appointed ad hoc, and if a case involved both Christian and Jewish parties, two judges, one from each confessional group, could be appointed. James F. Powers, ed., *The Code of Cuenca: Municipal Law on the Twelfth-Century Castilian Frontier* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 160.

interference. Isabel once again ordered the *concejo* to cease this harassment, stating that for these Jewish matters, the *aljama* was well within its rights to exert its own governance.⁶⁶

It should be noted that although Jewish *aljamas* were theoretically self-governing, for practical purposes, Jews could and did appeal to Christian courts when it suited their personal interests. And in some cases, Jewish courts had to rely on Christian authorities to implement their rulings. Additionally, the Crown could intervene in any ruling at will.⁶⁷ The new ruling from the *Cortes* of Madrigal, then, may have been less concerned with discrimination or antiJewish legislation, and more an effort on the part of the sovereigns to bring regulations in line with practice. It did not mean, however, that a city *concejo* was allowed to interfere in *aljama* matters the way the Abulense *concejo* did.

Sumptuary laws were another topic discussed at the Madrigal *Cortes*, which can be taken as more evidence of antiJewish sentiment. Regulation of clothing items was not new in Castile; Muslim law had stipulated that Jews and Christians living in their territories were to wear distinctive markers on their clothes to easily distinguish them from Muslims.⁶⁸ The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 caused a shift in sumptuary laws and throughout Western Europe as new laws regarding the wearing of signs by Jews and Muslims were imposed. Imposition does not mean implementation, however, and

⁶⁶ AGS, RGS leg.. 147909, 93. “vos mando a todos e a cada uno de vos que vos non entremetades agora nin de aqui adelante en perturbar a la dicha aljama e omes Buenos judios della sus jugado ...”

⁶⁷ Ray, *The Sephardic Frontier*, 105. Ray offers numerous case studies of instances where Jews appealed to either local authorities or the Crown to intervene in Jewish cases; see p. 137ff.

⁶⁸ Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Brill, 1994), 166–167.

reiterations of sumptuary decrees occur through the fourteenth century in Castile.⁶⁹ There is no evidence that Jews or Muslims and the wearing of specific markers by those groups was a concern for any of the *cortes* that met prior to 1476 in the fifteenth century. This is curious; one might think that the presence of *conversos* in Castilian cities from 1391 onward might cause anxiety about social groups and require easy distinction between these new Christians and their former co-religionists, but that does not appear to be the case.

It is not until the *Cortes* of Madrigal that minorities were once again ordered to wear a distinctive sign which would identify them to all observers as to their religion. Jews were to wear a blue crescent on their right shoulder, while Muslims were to wear either a green cloak or green crescent. Jews were also forbidden from wearing some of these luxury items: silk, for one, and silver or gold jewellery.⁷⁰ The wearing of such goods had become even more prevalent since the days of John I, since Jews clearly had access to these extravagances. However, while Jews were forbidden to wear these items, the law did not say they were forbidden from owning them. It was this law in particular that caused the problems in Ávila cited in the opening of this chapter: Abulense Christians had taken it upon themselves to police the local Jews and search their homes for silks and jewellery. Clearly, the formerly harmonious and peaceful community was beginning to fracture. Though this was not the same sort of tension seen elsewhere in the kingdom – *anticonverso* violence occurred sporadically throughout the fifteenth century –

⁶⁹ See Juan Sempere y Guarinos, *Historia del lujo y de las leyes suntuarias de España* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, Diputació de València, 2000), 165, 200.

⁷⁰ Danvila y Collado, *Cortes de Los Antiguos Reinos*, 4:101.

the same method to alleviate matters was applied. Religious communities had to be separated.

The Cortes of Toledo, 1480

At the next meeting of the *Cortes*, in Toledo in 1480, Isabel and Ferdinand reinstituted an old law, hoping this would ease religious and social tensions such as those occurring in Ávila. This was the *ley de encerramiento*, or law of enclosure:

because of the continued conversation and mixed living of the Jews and Muslims with the Christians results in great damage and inconvenience, and the said *procuradores* concerning this have asked us to provide, order and command that all Jews and Muslims of all and whatever cities and villages and places of these our kingdoms....to have their *juderías* and *morerías* set aside and apart, and not return to dwell with the Christians, nor have neighborhoods with them. This we command to be done and completed within two years.⁷¹

This law dated from 1412, when then regent Queen Catherine had instituted it. At the time, Ávila's authorities made an attempt to obey it, but gave up shortly thereafter, when the cathedral chapter realized just how much money it stood to lose if Jews were no longer renting the houses it owned.⁷² Thus Jews and Christians remained physically integrated through most of the fifteenth century.

After the *Cortes* of Toledo, Ávila had no choice but to finally comply with the *ley de encerramiento*, and began taking steps to create a *judería*. At the beginning of the

⁷¹ Danvila y Collado, *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla*, 1882, 4:149. "Porque dela continua conuersacion e uiuenda mezclada delos judios e moros con los christianos resultan grandes dannos e inconuenientes e los dichos procuradores sobre esto nos han suplicado mandassemos porueer, ordenamos e mandamos que todos los judios e moros de todas e quales quier cibdades e uillas e lugares destos nuestros reynos ... tengan sus juderías e morerías destintas e apartadas sobre si, e no moren a vueltos con los christianos, ni ayan barrios con ellos, lo qual mandamos que se faga e cumpla dentro de dos annos primeros siguientes."

⁷² Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 81.

fifteenth century Abulense Jews were clustered in two areas, either in the Yuradero district, near the Basilica San Vicente (sometimes referred to in documents as the *judería*, though it was never an official Jewish quarter, and had no walls), or, in a rather poorer neighborhood, the *barrio* Santo Domingo in the southwestern corner of the city. By the closing quarter of the fifteenth century, Jewish families lived scattered throughout the city, though most lived near the cathedral.⁷³ Jews also lived along two streets which dissected the Plaza Mercado Chico, the Rua de los Zapateros and the calde Andrín.⁷⁴ (Map 2, p xi). Both the Yuradero district and this area around the Plaza Mercado Chico were highly desirable, central locations.

The situation began to change in the late 1470s, even before the *Cortes* of Toledo. In November 1478, the *concejo* and *corregidor* of Ávila sent a letter to the bishop of Ávila, Alonso de Fonseca, referencing an ecclesiastical decree ordering that Jews and Muslims were to live apart from Christians. However, the area designated to be the new and official *judería* – the *barrio* Santo Domingo – was not large, and there were not enough houses for the entire Jewish population. On the fourteenth of the month, the *concejo* wrote to the bishop of Ávila, explaining that although the Jews had been ordered to be removed to the *judería* by the seventeenth, the task cannot be accomplished in the time allotted, and they begged for an extension of the deadline. The letter assures the bishop that the city was complying with the decree, and that Jewish families have already

⁷³ For a summary of the documents pertaining to Jewish homes in the fifteenth century, see *Ibid.*, 82–90.

⁷⁴ Calde Andrin is today known as C/ de los Reyes Católicos, and the Capilla de Nuestra Señora de los Nieves now stands in the place where one of the town's main synagogues once stood. The chapel was built in the fifteenth century, after the Jews were expelled, by Doña Maria D' Ávila.

begun to be moved to the designated area, but there are just too many people and not enough houses. This letter also refers to a letter from the king and queen decreeing the removal of all Jews to a designated area, though it is the bishop who is appealed to for the extension.⁷⁵ The *concejo* wrote again on the twenty-fifth, reiterating that there simply were not enough houses for all the people, and that it would be “inhuman” to make them live in the streets.⁷⁶

In April 1481, Isabel and Ferdinand dispatched the *regidor* of Salamanca, Rodrigo Alvarez Maldonado, to Segovia and Ávila in order to ensure that the edict had been carried out.⁷⁷ Though Alvarez’s report is missing, we know that over the next two years Jews were moved to the *barrio* Santo Domingo, for by February, 1483, the Crown was once again dealing with complaints from the *aljama*.

⁷⁵ AM, sección Ayuntamiento, leg. 1, núm 53 “E después él lo ovo de alçar, porque el corregidor dio çiertos pregones por esta cibdad en que mandó que fasta tres días todos los judíos se fuesen a su judería, so çiertas penas. Los quales tres días se cunplen mañana domingo. E conmo el término es tan breve e por nuestros pecados esta cibdad es tan peligrosa, acordamos de recurrir a vuestra merçed para que lo mande remediar. A la qual suplicamos mande escribir al vicario manándole que en esto se sobresea, porque çertyfycamos a vuestra merçed que la voluntad de esta cibdad es que todavía se faga el dicho apartamiento. E aún sobre esto tenemos carta del rey e reyna, nuestros señores, en que mandan fazer el dicho apartamiento fasta çierto término en ella contenido, e aún se ha començado de poner en obra; ca asaz judíos se han pasado e pasan de cada día al sytio que les está señalado, que es el que Gómez Manrique, seyendo corregidor en esta cibdad, con çiertos diputados del conçejo les señalaron. El qual sytio agora el corregidor e çiertos diputados que nos señalamos, thenemos nonbrado. E porque muchos de los dichos judíos son personas cabdalosas e non han avido ansý tan pronto de fazer casas en la dicha judería para donde se pueden pasar, parésçenos que es muy grave en acelerar el tiempo más de lo que los reyes, nuestros señores, por su carta mandan.”

⁷⁶ AM, sección Ayuntamiento, leg. 1, núm 51. “Verdad es, sennor, que ay algunos judios pobres que non tienen casas en la dicha juderia nin donde al presente se puedan meter e estos son bien pocos e paresce grand inhumanidad averles de echar a ellos e a sus faziendas en la calle.”

⁷⁷ Fidel Fita Colomé, “La judería de Segovia. Documentos inéditos,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 9 (1886): 270–277. The original document was, in 1886, in the personal archive of the Duque de Sesto, who allowed Señor Fita to edit and publish it in the *Boletín*. This document includes a detailed report concerning the size and location of the *judería* in Segovia, but no further details of the *judería* in Ávila.

This was when Isaac Bechacho wrote to Isabel and Ferdinand detailing the *aljama*'s grievances. Santo Domingo was located at the bottom of the hill the city is built on, and was close to the tanneries located just outside the walls on the banks of the river Adaja.⁷⁸ The Jews were therefore inconvenienced by the "bad odors" and unsanitary effects of being so close to these workshops. A letter from the Crown to the *concejo* in response pressured the councilmen to remedy the situation: Isabel did not want any citizens to "have cause to make such complaints."⁷⁹

Another letter from the monarchs in March of the same year asks the *concejo* to look into the allegations that the townspeople were altering the signposts which delineated the limits of the *judería*. Rodrigo Alvarez had already determined where those limits should be; the council was not to allow them to be changed.⁸⁰ (Presumably, the signposts were being moved so as to make the *judería* even smaller, though this is not expressly stated in the letter.) This letter also was also written in response to a petition from Isaac Bechacho; it is unclear if he wrote a second petition or if this matter was part of the previous one.

Despite ordering the Jews to live in the new *judería*, Isabel and Ferdinand continued to maintain that they did not want the Abulense Jews to "receive any

⁷⁸ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 91.

⁷⁹ AHPAv, sección Ayuntamiento, leg. 1, núm 55. "la gentes non peuden conportar los malos olores e el danno que las casas e calles resciben porque dis que entran por los aluannares e cortdunbre e tinteria en la dicha judería dentro en sus casas ... mando a la dicha cibdad sobre lo suso dicho por tal manera que ningunos vesinos desa dicha cibdad non ayan raxon de se mas quexar sobrello."

⁸⁰ AHPAv, sección Ayuntamiento, leg. 1, núm 56. "vos mandamos ...de aqui adelante guardedes e fagades guardar en la dicha cibdad todo lo quel dicho Rodrigo Aluarez Maldonado sentencio sobre lo suso dicho e contra el thenor e forma dello non vayades nin pasedes nin consintades yr ni pasar en alguna manera porque los dichos judios non resciban agrauio."

aggravation or damage.”⁸¹ Yet things continued to worsen for the *aljama*. In 1486, Isaac Bechacho wrote yet again, complaining this time that the space allotted for the *judería* is “of great narrowness.” The letter states that there were two Jewish quarters, one near the Gate of Adaja (the *judería*) and the other an unnamed area outside the city walls.⁸² Both of these neighborhoods were small, with insufficient housing for the population. The door or gate to the *judería* was often closed for lengthy periods, which meant the Jews could not go about their businesses. In addition, the weavers and tailors complained that there was too little sunlight; they were not able to dry wet wool.⁸³ The Crown continued to respond to the complaints by the Abulense Jews, ordering that the *concejo* rectify the situation. The frustration for the *concejo* lay in that complying with the Crown’s original directive regarding the *encerramiento* of the Jews meant that the Jews would continue to be unhappy, though, it must be added that their unhappiness was largely due to the area the *concejo* had chosen for the new *judería*.

The atmosphere was different in neighboring Segovia, for several reasons. First, the city had complied with the directive of 1412 and already had created a *judería* by 1413. It ran along the street upon which the *sinagoga viejo* was located, between the cathedral and *alcazar*, but it was never, it seems, walled off or enclosed. Over the course

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² AGS RGS 148603,89 “... dos barrios, el uno que disen de la Puerta de Adaja y el otro el corral de [blank space], e dis que aun con los dichos dos barrios estauan en grande estrechura...” Pilar León Tello believes this second area, also called the Buhardo, was located on the northern side of the city, near the Puerta de Sol. However, the letter does not name the barrio, and it seems likely it may have been located on the southern side, nearer the *judería*. León Tello, *Judios*, 24.

⁸³ Ibid. “dis que aun con los dichos dos barrios estauan en grande estrechura, e dis que no tienen casas donde puedan byuir e morar, e dis que byuen e moran en casa dos o tres vecinos e aun dis que en medio de la dicha judería esta una puerta de la cibdad que esta cerrada ... de longos tiempos ... e falta sol para enxugar lanas e otras cosas necesarios...”

of the fifteenth century, however, as the population increased, Jews began living elsewhere in the city, and by the 1470s were clustered in several spots within the walled city: in the old *judería*; but also in several groups near the Plaza Mayor, on the other side of the cathedral. The new *judería* created in response to the law of enclosure was in an entirely different location, behind the cathedral and included two of the smaller synagogues, as well as the Jewish slaughterhouse/butcher shop and the communal oven. It was also walled off.⁸⁴ Documentation regarding the reaction of the Segovian *aljama* to this move is scant. It could well be that the Jews of Segovia were content with their new neighborhood: it was in a prime location next to the cathedral and near the Plaza Mayor.

In addition, relationships between Jews and Christians in Segovia had been tested previously, at the beginning of the century. Vicente Ferrer had visited Segovia in 1412, and had been successful in coercing a number of local Jews to convert to Christianity. Thus, unlike Ávila, Segovia had experienced assaults of their *aljama* and had also lived with a *converso* population almost a century.⁸⁵ The most notable example of any tension between the Jews of Segovia and the rest of the city comes from a dispute between the *converso* Juan de Talavera and Abraham Seneor, the powerful Segovian rabbi. Talavera accused Seneor of misappropriation of funds, and in expressing his complaint, he stated that he was unable to carry out his duty as senior scrivener to the court because the Jews would not allow him: “he had lost the right he had and used to have.” Further, his brother, Yuce (who was Jewish), expressed his fear for his brother’s life, worrying that certain

⁸⁴ J. Antonio Ruiz Hernando, *El barrio de la aljama hebrea de Segovia*, Conocer Segovia, no. 14 (Segovia: Caja Segovia, Obra Social y Cultural, 2008), 22–23; 25–26; 42–43.

⁸⁵ Bartolomé Herrero, “The Jews and Conversos in Medieval Segovia,” 17.

members of the *aljama* intended Juan harm.⁸⁶ Rather than stemming from Jews being marginalized and restricted, this clash clearly shows the power certain members of the Segovian *aljama* yet maintained. It also marks an uneasy relationship with their former coreligionists, and speaks not at all to any tension between Christians and Jews.

Nevertheless, there are flashes that highlight the friction between Segovian Christians and their Jewish neighbors: in describing the new *judería*, Rodrigo Alvares says that once the doors and windows on the outside of the *judería* are closed, “now Christendom is made.”⁸⁷

Yet Jewish space in medieval Spain was not necessarily an evil. The previous chapter described how many *juderías* in other cities developed organically, as both Jews and Christians moved into formerly Muslim regions. The *judería* in Ávila was a different entity altogether, created by royal decree, a decree interpreted by the town to mean that Jews were of lesser value or importance than Christians. The community of Ávila, which had until this point been united by common values, interests, and interdependence, now reached a turning point. Communities are not only formed by what unites them – those common interests and values – but also by what they reject.⁸⁸ The rejection of the Jews united the Christians of Ávila in new ways. Quickly the Jews became objects of contempt and hostility, marked as something other, something to be controlled and policed, as

⁸⁶ Ibid., 26–27. See also Yolanda Moreno Koch, “La comunidad judía de Segovia y las consecuencias de una conversión al judaísmo,” *Estudios Mirandeses* 8 (1988): 101–9.

⁸⁷ Fita Colomé, “La judería de Segovia. Documentos inéditos,” 279. “é quel dicho Rabí Salamon çierre las puertas y ventanas, que agora tiene fãsa la christiandad,”

⁸⁸ Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (MIT Press, 2001), 152.

evinced in the opening anecdote of this chapter.⁸⁹ The synod of 1481 would only serve to widen this new gap between Jews and Christians.

Synod of 1481

Diocesan synods were held fairly regularly in medieval Castile; the synod of Ávila of 1481 was not unusual, but its resulting constitutions are very detailed and give us a window into quotidian life in the late fifteenth century. It was convened by the then bishop of Ávila, Alonso de Fonseca, who had already instigated the creation of the *judería*, even before the *Cortes* of Toledo enacted the *ley de encerramiento*. Fonseca was from a family with a prestigious clerical pedigree. His cousin of the same name was the Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, and his uncle (also of the same name) had been Archbishop of Sevilla. Fonseca was born in Toro, in Zamora, near the Portuguese border, and rose from his post as prior of the monastery of San Román de Hornija in Toro to bishop of Ávila in 1469. When he arrived in Ávila, he was horrified by the harmony amongst Jews and Christians there, and therefore it is possible that the constitutions of the synod reflect his own feelings towards social life in the city, rather than being motivated by local sentiment.⁹⁰ Such a possibility would explain why it took over ten years for Fonseca to work to implement the reforms he felt were so badly needed. It

⁸⁹ This was something common outside of Spain: Rosa Alvarez Perez explicates the rather fraught relationship between Jews and Christians in northern France in “Next-Door Neighbors: Aspects of Judeo-Christian Cohabitation in Medieval France,” in *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 309–29.

⁹⁰ Nicolás González y González, *Historia del Monasterio de la Encarnación de Ávila* (Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1995), 30.

could also be that it took those ten years for local sentiment to change enough to the point where such policies were now welcome.

Part of the constitutions published by the synod dealt with clerical life: how mass should be celebrated (conformity amongst parishes seems to be the issue); what needed to be included on feast days; and how to arrange the church. The seven articles of faith, Ten Commandments, seven sacraments and the Acts of Mercy had to be prominently displayed in each church, where everyone could see and read it. However, since so few of the laity were literate, the priest was also required to read all of these, in Castilian, not Latin, and in a “loud and clear voice” each Sunday of Advent and of Lent, so that the lay people might be able to memorize them.⁹¹

A second section of the synod’s constitutions also dealt with the laity, mostly concerning how often they should attend mass, what doctrines they were expected to have memorized, and the like. There were also strictures about participating in holidays and feast days: all *vecinos* of the city, regardless of religion, were now prohibited from working on Sundays and feast days.⁹² This included an edict reinforcing that everyone, including Jews and Muslims, had to pay tithes of some sort. (The *diezmos* paid by Jews and Muslims stemmed from the twelfth century stricture from Pope Innocent III that stipulated any Jew or Muslim living or working on Christian property was subject to

⁹¹ Titulo 1, Capitulo 1. Antonio García, ed., *Synodicon Hispanum*, vol. 6 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1981), 58.

⁹² Titulo 1, Capitulo 5, 62.

tithes. Since most Jews in Ávila lived in properties belonging to the cathedral or other Christians, they were required to pay ten *maravedís* per quarter.)⁹³

Stringent limits on Jewish and Muslim life were laid out, especially in regards to interaction with Christians. Previous synods had been far more concerned with doctrine, with tithing, and with the life and behavior of clerics.⁹⁴ In 1481, however, an entire section (one of seven) was devoted to Jews and Muslims. The chapters are concerned with any aspect of social life in which Jews and Muslims interacted with Christians, and stipulated that these sorts of interactions must cease. The first chapter is concerned with Christians living with Jews or Muslims, whether they were sharing space as lodgers, servants, or other. The chapter condemns those Christians who:

in great insult to our Lord and dishonor of our holy Catholic faith, do not have shame, nor fear of their consciences nor the great penalties imposed by the Canonical and constitutional rights of the most reverend Cardinal de Sabina, [but] live with Muslims and Jews, serving them in their houses and sleeping and eating and drinking with them continually. And some Christian women give milk and care for the children of such Muslims and Jews.⁹⁵

The danger to the souls of these Christians, (*los coraçones de los simples*, the hearts of the simple) in living so closely to the customs of Jews and Muslims was very grave, and therefore no Christian could live with or care for the children of Jews or Muslims, on

⁹³ Título 4, Capítulo 20, 180.

⁹⁴ García, *Synodicon Hispanum*, 1981, 6:13–14. The Synod of 1384, for example, included sections articulating the Articles of Faith, Articles of Divinity, the seven Sacraments, and the like.

⁹⁵ Título 7, capítulo 1. Ibid., 6:202. . “algunos christianos y christianas, en grand contumelia de nuestro Señor y opporbrio de nuestra sancta fe catholica, no teniendo verguença a las gentes, ni temiendo a sus conciencias ni a las grandes penas impuestas por los derechos cononicos y constituciones del reverendissimo Cardenal de Sabina, biven con moros y judios , serviendolos en sus casas y dormiendo y comiendo y beviendo con ellos continuadamente, y algunas mugeres christianos dan leche y crian a los fijos de los dichos moros y judios.”

pain of excommunication.⁹⁶ They were not to light fires for Jews on Saturdays, or do “other similar things” either for wages, as a servant, or for free, as a neighborly act, which tells us Abulense Christians were, in fact, assisting Jews in obeying their religious doctrine regarding the Sabbath. Christians were also forbidden from attending weddings and funerals, and circumcisions of “the infidels” and in like manner, they were not to invite or admit Jews or Muslims to their own weddings, baptisms, or funerals.⁹⁷ Even further, Christians were not to eat food or “delicacies” of non-Christians, because it would be a thing “unworthy and sacrilegious that Christians use and eat the delicacies of the said unbelievers; for it would make the faithful appear inferior and lower than the unbelievers.”⁹⁸ Christians in the diocese were indiscriminately partaking of these items, including food, wine and fruit, either eating it, or taking it and cooking it themselves. In addition to being so ordered in the synod’s constitutions, clergy were instructed to denounce anyone guilty of disobeying on Lenten Sundays.⁹⁹

The constitutions also outlined exactly when Jews and Muslims were allowed to be in a church. Because divine offices were celebrated in the church, which was consecrated to the body of Christ, the church “had to be clean” and so when mass was

⁹⁶ Título 7, capítulo 1. Ibid. “en todo nuestro obispado ningún christiano o christiana viva con judío o con moro, a soldada o de gracia, serviendole ... ni los christianos les fagan otros officios serviles en su casa, asi como encenderles a lumbr e en sábado, o otras cosas semejantes.”

⁹⁷ Título 7, capítulo 2. Ibid. “ningun christiano o christiana vaya a bodas o circuncisiones, mortuorios o otros semejables actos <de los infieles> ... y, asimismo, los dichos christianos o christianas no combiden o admitan a sus baptismos y de sus fijos o bodas o exequias y enterramientos de sus defuntos, o a qualesquier otros semejables actos y honras, a los dichos infieles.”

⁹⁸ Título 7, capítulo 3. Ibid., 6:203. “los dichos infieles no usan ni comen de los convivios y manjares y comeres de los christianos, pues cosa indigna y sacrilega seria que los christianos usen y coman de los manjares de los dichos infieles, que parecería los fieles ser inferiores y mas baxos que los infieles.”

⁹⁹ Ibid. “Y mandamus a los clerigos y curas que lo denuncien a sus parrochianos y feligreses los domingos de la Quaresma.”

celebrated, Jews and Muslims would not be permitted, and would be expelled if they were present. They were permitted to be there for “reasonable cause” and certainly they were allowed to be there to hear the sermon, but as soon as mass began, they had to leave until the priest had consumed the host.¹⁰⁰ Obviously it was not uncommon for Jews or Muslims to attend mass, though why they would is unknown. Perhaps they were moved by genuine religious curiosity; perhaps mass represented a social activity in which they felt drawn to partake. Perhaps they attended only on special occasions: those baptisms, weddings and funerals from which they were now prohibited. The synod records unfortunately do not tell us how often these situations occurred; the fact that they are mentioned in such detail, however, tells us that such occurrences were not rare.

Another key issue the synod attended to was the ability to differentiate between members of different religions. Jews and Muslims had to dress in a manner distinguishing them from Christians, because of “many and ugly errors that occur” when Christian men sleep with Jewish and Muslim women, and Jewish and Muslim men sleep with Christian women. Presumably, the thinking was that this was done accidentally, because Christians did not know their lover’s religion. In reality, in such a small community, this seems highly unlikely, and was doubtless used as a convenient excuse if caught. To avoid this, both groups had to wear identifying items on their person: Jews had to wear “colored signs according to the custom” on their clothes, and Muslim men had to wear yellow

¹⁰⁰ Título 7, capítulo 4. Ibid., 6:204. “La yglesia de Dios ... deve ser limpia, en tal manera que quando en ella se celebran los divinos officios no sean admitidos ni consientan estar en ella infieles... Pero si por la ventura, por alguna necesidad o causa razonable... devieren estar... los clérigos ... sean lançados y expulso de la dicha yglesia los tales infieles fasta que sea fenescida la misa.”

hoods or hats with a blue crescent, while Muslim women were to have a woolen blue crescent on their mantle. These markers had to be displayed openly, so that all who saw them on the streets would immediately be able to tell what religion they were.¹⁰¹

Jews and Muslims were also prohibited from walking and dancing in the processions that wound through the city on feast days, something that “we have seen in this city... but not in any other Christian place.” Specifically mentioned is Corpus Christi, but the mandate adds “and other general processions of religion and Christian joy.” To have the unbelievers participating in these processions would be to make the body of Christ “monstrous, yoking two species of infidelity to such a holy and true head of faith as ours, where, in place of honoring God, condemnation is reaped.” For Jews and Muslims to participate is like blasphemy against the name of Christ, for as Paul said, “What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or between light and darkness? Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.”¹⁰²

We know that Abulense Jews and Muslims participated in civic celebrations – the funeral processions for Henry, as well as the celebrations for Isabel’s coronation –

¹⁰¹ Título 7, capítulo 5. Ibid., 6:204–205. “Los judios y moros deven ser conosciodes entre los christianos en la diferencia del habito, por muchos y feos yerrors que acaescen, porque muchas de vezes los tales infieles, no seyendo conosciados por el habito ... acaesce que, por error, christianos conoscién judías y moras, y los moros y judios, christianas.... todos los judios y moros ... traygen señales, los judios coloradas, segun que es de costumbre, y los moros capuzes amarillos con lunas azules, y las moras lunas de paño azul en los mantos, publicmente.”

¹⁰² Título 7, capítulo 6. Ibid., 6:205. “Una abusion avemos visto fazer en esta ciudad de Ávila, la qual en ningun lugar de christianos vimos, que los judios y moros son compelidos a andar en procession y fazer danças y otras alegrías el día del Cuerpo de nuestro Señor y otras processiones generals de religiosa y christiana alegría... Y no sabemos por que razón... a fazer un cuerpo monstruoso, ayuntadas dos especies de infelidad a tan sancta y verdadera cabeça de fe como la nuestra, donde, en lugar de honor de Dios, se sigue vituperio...acordándonos de aquel dicho que el sanctissimo apóstol sant Pablo dize ‘¿que conveniencia puede ser de Dios e Belial, o de la luz a las tinieblas, o que yugo y parte puede ser al fiel y al infiel?’” The quote from Paul is from 2 Corinthians 6, 14-15.

obviously they felt welcome to join in Christian celebrations as well. This was not always the case elsewhere on the peninsula, but in this small community, where people worked together, shared meals and drink together, and were regular visitors in each other's homes, it is likely that any festival, no matter the reason, was a unifying event that all participated in.¹⁰³

The final stricture was that Christians had to stop all financial transactions with Jews and Muslims. They could no longer rent houses to them, nor borrow money from them, for that was putting "the inheritance of God" in the "hands of the enemies of the Cross."¹⁰⁴ This one is of particular interest, given the problems that arose in 1476 when the *aljama* ceased lending money. Equally important was the fact that the majority of Jews and Muslims did not own property, but rented from Christians; the cathedral chapter being the primary landlord for minority groups. And while it is true that Jews of Ávila had just been forcibly moved to the new *judería*, the few records we have regarding rentals of properties in the *judería* clearly show that they were owned almost entirely by Christians. Several were owned by the cathedral chapter, but not all: a house rented to Abraham Abenhazay, cantor of the *aljama*, was owned by the convent of Santa Maria de San Millán; Fernand Núñez, treasurer of the Crown, rented a house to Isaque Honen. In 1480, the *procurador* of the convent of Santa María del Carmen, instituted eviction

¹⁰³ For an explication of Holy Week festivities as a means of re-establishing interreligious divisions, see David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1996) especially Chapter 7.

¹⁰⁴ Título 7, capítulo 7. García, *Synodicon Hispanum*, 1981, 6:206. "muchas personas... ponen en manos de infieles la heredad de Dios ... los enemigos de la cruz."

proceedings against Abraham Aben Açen, for failure to pay the rent on his house.¹⁰⁵

These records date from the decade prior to the Synod, so we do not know if the Synod's mandate regarding this issue was obeyed. It is doubtful, however. It is also unknown what effect, if any, the same directive had on the Muslim population and their living situation.

In fact, it is impossible to ascertain just how many of these constitutions were obeyed, or even how the church thought to enforce them. What is clear that is that the Christian community of Ávila was receiving a message from the synod about their Jewish compatriots: that they were to be avoided, even shunned, at all costs. All fellowship – whether through work or through friendship – was intolerable. Jews were to live apart, both physically and socially, as if they were a contamination that had to be shunned. Yet, this message was diluted by the efforts of the Crown to alleviate the plight of the Jews, and by the *concejo* which continued to walk the thin line between the orders of the king and queen, and the complaints of the Jewish community. The mixed messages were only reinforced by the municipal ordinances issued shortly after the Synod of 1481, which did nothing to reinforce the vigorous antiJewish sentiment put forth by that Synod.

Municipal ordinances of 1485

In 1485, new city ordinances were drawn up. This was not uncommon; the first ever municipal ordinances had been published in 1346; with revised laws published in

¹⁰⁵ AHN cód.. 412B, fol 94, fol 105; AHN Clero Papeles, leg. 292.

1384, 1404, 1410, 1431 and 1477.¹⁰⁶ Primarily, the ordinances throughout the fifteenth century were concerned with the regulation of the sale of food, taxes, “health and sanitation” (street cleaning was a priority), and the maintenance of the walls and the city watch. The ordinances of 1485 (published in 1487) were no different. Surprisingly, given the virulent antiJewish sentiment of the synod’s constitutions, the revised ordinances were not at all prejudicial against the Jewish community. Instead, they upheld certain rights and privileges, and each religious group was subject to the same standards. All merchants had to pay the appropriate fees to sell in the markets, no matter what religion. Pricing and weights were standardized.¹⁰⁷ The ordinances even made certain that the local falcons and hawks were fed in turn by the butchers from each religious group, at the convenience of their respective religious decrees: Jews were to feed them on all Fridays, and during Lent, while the Muslims did so on Saturdays, and the Christians the other five days of the week.¹⁰⁸

Most significantly, the new ordinances included one forbidding Christians from “seizing Jews or Muslims in their *juderías* and *morerías*, even though they work openly on the days of Easter and Sundays and festivals which they should observe; neither

¹⁰⁶Barrios García, *Historia de Ávila*, 2:572–576.

¹⁰⁷ Manuel Foronda y Aguilera, “Las Ordenanzas de Ávila,” *Boletín de La Real Academia de La Historia* 71 (1917): 464–66.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 487. “hordenamos e mandamos que todos los carniceros ebaste cedores de las dichas carnerías xristianiegas ssean obligados de dar carne para las dichas aves caçadoras aquello que necesario fuere para cada ave e non mas, E que estos carniceros e bas; tecedores de las carnerías xristianiegas que den carne en toda la semana excetos los viernes e sábados de todo el anno e los días de la quaresma, que en estas los bastecedores de las carnerías judiegas lo ayan de dar e den aviendo bastecedores carniceros délias obligados, e non en otra, manera los días de los viernes de todo el año, e todos los días de quaresma, E los moros que ayan de dar e den la dicha carne para las dichas aves en los días de los sábados de todo el año teniendo carniceros e bastecedores obligados.”

should they arrest Jews or Muslims in other places, even though they are not wearing their identifying signs.”¹⁰⁹ Obviously Christians were very proactive in policing the Jews and Muslims; the anecdote related in the opening pages of this chapter about Christians invading Jewish homes to make sure they were obeying sumptuary laws is more evidence speaking to this.

These ordinances are evidence of the local vertical alliance between the Jews and the *concejo*. While usually the vertical alliance was between Jews and the Crown, at times communities could, and did, appeal to local authorities for protection as well. But once again, such appeals clearly came at the expense of horizontal alliances.

Both the Crown and the Church continued to send messages restricting interactions between Jews and Christians. Their desire to segregate the Jews stemmed not from any antiJewish sentiment, but rather from a belief that Jews needed to be kept away from the *converso* population, to keep them from backsliding. This may have had the desired effect elsewhere, but in Ávila, which lacked a significant *converso* population, the result was increased inter-religious friction. This friction was only exacerbated with the arrival of the Inquisition, the topic for the next chapter.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 483–484.” Hordenamos e mandamos que de aqui adelante los fieles de la dicha cibdat non se entremetan en manera alguna a prender a los judios e moros en sus juderyas e moreryas de los sitios adentro, avnque labren e fagan sus lauores a puertas abiertas los clias de las pasquas e domyngos e fiestas que son de guardar, ni en otros algunos dentro de las dichas moreryas e juderyas, avnque dentro dé ellas anden syn señales.”

Chapter Three

The Inquisition and Ávila: Witnessing *autos da fe*

“Lo que tú y Fernando hicistes (sic)
renovando nuestra santa
Inquisición, fabricando
tribunal para sus causas,
fue tan agradable a Dios
que, fuera de que os aguarda
tan alto premio en el cielo,
acá en la tierra os señala
larga vida, triunfos, glorias,
vitorias, estados, famas,
católicos descendientes...”¹

Spain’s famous dramatist, Felix Lope de Vega y Carpio, wrote these lines over a century after the establishment of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Castile. The speaker is Saint Dominic, who visits Queen Isabel in a dream and reveals to her that the establishment of this institution is so pleasing to God, that she will reap the rewards both in this life as well as in the world to come. The play in which these lines occur, *El Niño Inocente de la Guardia*, offers a dramatic retelling of the events leading up to one of the most infamous inquisitorial trials in Castilian history. In this trial five *conversos* and three Jews were accused of kidnapping a Christian boy, torturing him, taking his blood to use in an elaborate ceremony of sorcery, and finally crucifying him in a bizarre plot to overthrow the Catholic religion and establish a Jewish republic in Castile. The evidence

¹ Anthony J. Farrell, ed., *El Niño inocente de La Guardia: a critical and annotated edition, with an introductory study* (Martlesham, Suffolk: Tamesis, 1985) Act 1, lines 134-144. “As you and Ferdinand have renewed our holy Inquisition, making a tribunal for its cases, this was so pleasing to God that, outside of that which awaits you in heaven, here on earth you are marked with long life, triumphs, victories, estates, fame, Catholic descendants....”

the prosecutors provided to substantiate these charges was thin. They failed, for example, to produce the body of the deceased, nor could they even manage to identify the child who had allegedly gone missing. Despite these holes in the prosecutors' arguments, the accused were still found guilty and condemned to death during an *auto da fe* or "act of faith" – the public administering of penance to heretics – held in the large plaza just outside the city walls of Ávila on November 16, 1491.

Lope's play, published in 1617 – almost 150 years after the event took place – speaks to the resonance this particular story had in public sphere of early modern Castile.² Indeed, one of the sources for these play, a history published in 1583 by Fray Rodrigo de Yepes, *Historia de la muerte y glorioso martirio del Sancto Inocente, que llaman de La Guardia*, was part of the popular genre of "histories-cum-miraclebooks." And although not canonized until 1805, a shrine dedicated to the child martyr was already set up near the village of La Guardia in 1560.³ A century later, the story of the *Santo Niño de la Guardia* had permeated the popular imagination to such an extent that its veracity was unquestioned. This is not surprising: from the first, the inquisitors who tried the case did not question the truth of the murder, despite the lack of evidence and inconsistent testimony of the supposed authors of the crime.

² Lope de Vega was far from the only Spanish writer to write the story of the *Niño de la Guardia*. Almost contemporaneously, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra wrote *Los Baños de Argel*, a similarly themed play, though he changed the villainous characters to Muslims rather than Jews. Approximately a century later, the playwright José de Cañizares published *La viva imagen de Cristo: El Santo Niño de la Villa de la Guardia*, yet another dramatic composition of the trial.

³ William A. Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton University Press, 1981), 103, 193.

Lope also subscribed to the veracity of the story. He filled his play with medieval tropes about Jews, easily recognizable to a contemporary audience, and depicted the supposed culprits as enemies of Christ, vengeful schemers intent on overthrowing the Catholic Church, while the child was portrayed as a saintly, joyful, Christ-like martyr.⁴ These tropes easily tallied with prejudices about what Jews – absent from Castile by this point for over a hundred years – had been like, and reinforced the belief that the expulsion of the Jews was both a necessary and warranted act. In this regard, realism is not obligatory; the protagonists are caricatures, closer to images on a *retablo* rather than lifelike actors.⁵

Then, too, as Anthony Farrell notes, Lope did not have the freedom to deviate from these tropes, due to the “unquestioned credence” of the events. Indeed, Farrell suggests that Lope himself was equally unquestioning, that “the essential nature of the antagonists as incarnations of evil, obsessed with plans for the destruction of Christianity, was beyond dispute for the dramatist.”⁶ A contemporary audience would thus have seen the play as a “hagiographic legend [that reads as]...a duplication of reality.”⁷ In much the same way, the audience present at the *auto* in Ávila also witnessed a “duplication of reality,” a mimesis of God’s judgment which awaited those who sought to undermine the Catholic Church.

⁴ Farrell, *El Niño inocente de La Guardia*, 16–18.

⁵ Maria Rosa Lida de Malkiel, “Lope de Vega Y Los Judíos,” *Bulletin Hispanique* 75, no. 1 (1973): 98.

⁶ Farrell, *El Niño inocente de La Guardia*, 20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

The similarities between Lope's audience and the people who witnessed the *auto* in 1491 continue. None of the protagonists participating in the *auto da fe* were from Ávila. With no personal connection to any of the individuals involved, the audience could easily have viewed the ceremony as a theatrical performance; that is, until the men were taken away to be executed and the audience fully realized the reality of their "crime." We know that the *auto* had a definitive impact on the people of Ávila, for violent anti-Jewish outbursts took place in the days and weeks following the sentencing. Thus as witnesses to the trial and its outcome, the citizens of Ávila learned an important lesson in the dangers inherent in social relations with *conversos*: since *conversos* were little more than secret Jews, and as such were nefarious, manipulative, and bent on the destruction of the Catholic Church, innocent activities, such as sharing a meal, were fraught with the possibility of the seduction of Christians into Judaism. The public condemnation of these men, therefore, served to mark *conversos* – and also Jews – as "carriers" of the infection of heresy, exacerbating the tensions seen in the previous chapter.

The threat was explicit: association with heretics such as the ones here on trial could easily lead good Christians (both old and new) into the seductive realm of heresy themselves. The safest alternative was to destroy heresy where it was found, and to expunge the Jews responsible for leading *conversos* along the path of deviation from the true faith. The public performance of the *auto da fe*, with its "fourth wall" between participants and witnesses, served as another step in solidifying social barriers between religious groups, a process that culminated with the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

In this chapter I will survey the early history of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Castile, starting with a brief discussion of the motives underlying its creation, its *modus operandi*, and the significance of the *auto da fe*.⁸ The *auto da fe* was crucial not only for the accused, but also – perhaps more importantly – for the witnesses. From the first, *autos* were public events, and penance for the crime of heresy was not a private matter. Thus the audience was a vital element, exactly how vital will be explored when I later shift focus to the trial and *auto da fe* of those men accused of murdering the *Santo Niño de la Guardia*. The chapter will conclude with a close analysis of how the institution of the Holy Office, and in particular this trial, though not of Ávila, nevertheless had a profound and disturbing impact on the people who lived there, as well as much wider, and graver, repercussions for the Jewish population of Castile and Aragon as a whole.

Establishment of the Holy Office of the Spanish Inquisition

Over the course of the fifteenth century, the position of *conversos* in Castilian society had become increasingly precarious, owing to rising tensions between “old” and “new Christians.” In the first decades immediately following the mass conversions of 1391, there is little documented evidence of popular friction between the converts and their new co-religionists, despite the church facing the unique and difficult task of

⁸ I am concerned solely with the operations of the Holy Office in Castile; although established almost contemporaneously in the Crown of Aragon, the two institutions did not operate in tandem. On the establishment of the Holy Office in Aragon, see Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition : A Historical Revision* (Yale University Press, 1998), 48–56.

incorporating thousands of neophytes into the body of the faithful. This lack of evidence does not prove relation between “old” and “new Christians” were completely harmonious, of course. Tensions may well have manifested in other ways. It could also be that for the early decades of the fifteenth century, Christian focus remained fixed on Jews, applying pressure to convert them in various ways.

Dominican Vincent Ferrer was one whose focus remained fixed on Jews. He not only embarked on a preaching campaign throughout Castile and Aragon from 1412-1416, he also was involved in assisting Queen Catherine in drafting new legislation curtailing Jewish economic and social activities in 1412. As well, he helped organize the Disputation of Tortosa, held in Catalonia in 1413-1414, a formal debate with leaders of the Aragonese and Catalan Jewish communities over the merits each faith – the Christian side proclaiming their victory at the meeting’s end.⁹ Which side won may be debatable; the new wave of Jewish conversions following the Disputation is not.

The first half of the fifteenth century thus saw what James Amelang has called a “slow but inexorable shift” in Christian attention, away from Jews and towards *conversos*.¹⁰ Evidence for this shift may be found in the Papal bulls issued in 1442 (by Eugenius IV) and reiterated in 1451 (by Nicholas V). The bulls, both entitled *Super Gregem Dominicum*, primarily served to reinforce the need for physical and social

⁹ Amelang, *Parallel Histories*, 72. On the Disputation of Tortosa, see Gemma Escribà and Raquel Ibáñez-Sperber, eds., *The Tortosa Disputation: Regesta of Documents from the Archivo de La Corona de Aragón, Fernando I, 1412-1416* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998); Hyam Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982).

¹⁰ Amelang, *Parallel Histories*, 72.

separation between Jews and Christians, but also address the issue of “false converts” in Castile. To that end, they authorized the investigation of the same by “normal inquisitorial procedures,” that is, with a diocesan tribunal headed by the local bishop, though if such a tribunal was established at this time, the evidence has been lost.

Not until 1449, and the *anticonverso* (and anti-tax) riots in Toledo, do we start to see the establishment of a decided *anticonverso* sentiment, which accelerated the creation of the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) laws barring *conversos* from municipal office. Scholars could – and have – argued that this exclusionary move was rooted more in jealousy of the social upward mobility many *conversos* now enjoyed, rather than by religious feeling: the first *limpieza de sangre* statute barred anyone of Jewish origin from holding public office in Toledo.¹¹

Starting in the 1460s, hardliner theologians such as Franciscan Fray Alonso de Espina (author of the polemic *Fortalitium Fidei*) lobbied to persuade Henry IV to seek papal authorization to establish a new inquisition in Castile specifically designed to investigate heresy among that kingdom’s large and still growing *converso* population. In 1463, Espina, with a delegation of other Franciscans, met with the king in Madrid, claiming that *conversos* were continuing to circumcise their sons. One of the delegates, Fernando de la Plaza, claimed he had access to one hundred foreskins, although he was

¹¹ The statute barring those of Jewish origin from holding public office in Toledo was enacted again in 1468, proving its ineffectiveness. On *limpieza de sangre* statutes see Albert A. Sicroff, *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII* (Madrid: Taurus, 1985). See also Linda Martz, “Pure Blood Statutes in Sixteenth Century Toledo: Implementation as Opposed to Adoption,” *Sefarad* 54, no. 1 (1994): 83–108.

not able to produce a single one when asked to do so by the king.¹² Despite the absence of alleged foreskins, the meeting convinced Henry of the need for an inquisition. The king subsequently submitted a petition to Pope Pius II requesting the establishment of such an institution albeit one directly under the authority of the monarchy in contrast to existing inquisitorial tribunals, which were subject to episcopal and ultimately papal control. Perhaps in order to placate the pope, he requested that the papal nuncio, Antonio Giacomo de Venier, be placed in charge of this new institution.¹³ There is no extant documentation to prove whether anything came of this endeavor.

The matter became less important to Henry as he soon became embroiled in the burgeoning civil wars which erupted during the closing years of his reign. Consequently, efforts to create an inquisition to deal with the *converso* “problem” were temporarily halted, but began anew following the accession of Isabel to the throne in 1474. The monarchs, as noted in Chapter Two, were determined to increase royal supremacy, and consequently proved receptive to the idea of an inquisition under royal control.

The king and queen spent much of the winter of 1477-78 in Andalucía, seeking to restore their authority over various noble factions there.¹⁴ While in Sevilla, Isabel met with the prior of the Dominican convent of San Pablo, Fray Alonso de Hojeda, who maintained that defiance of royal authority in the region stemmed less from the nobility, than from religious dissidence. Hojeda referred specifically to converts or descendants of

¹² Ana Echevarría, *The Fortress of Faith: The Attitude Towards Muslims in Fifteenth Century Spain* (Brill, 1999), 54.

¹³ V. Beltrán de Heredia, “Las bulas de Nicolás V acerca de los conversos de Castilla,” *Sefarad* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 1961): 35; 44–45.

¹⁴ Edwards, *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs 1474-1520*, 68–69.

converts from Judaism, who had reverted to Judaism and were “threatening not only [the] regime but the very fabric of Castilian society.”¹⁵ Convinced by his argument, Isabel immediately requested a bull from Pope Sixtus IV permitting the Crown to form an inquisition; that bull, *Exigit sinceræ devotionis*, Sixtus granted in November, 1478.¹⁶ Yet it was not until September 27 1480, that the Crown issued the first commissions, naming Dominicans Juan de San Martín and Miguel de Morillo as the first inquisitors, with Juan Ruiz de Medina overseeing their work.¹⁷

Some historians, such as Bartolomé Bennassar, Henry Kamen, and Joseph Perez have speculated that the Crown – Ferdinand in particular – envisioned this new tribunal as primarily a tool with which to consolidate royal power, and that concern for the spiritual health of the kingdoms was not at all a motivation for the establishment of the Holy Office.¹⁸ This argument rests on the fact that the monarchs showed no hesitation in appointing *conversos* to key positions at court. Fernando Álvarez and Alfonso de Ávila were *conversos* who served as royal secretaries, as did Fernando de Pulgar, also the royal chronicler.¹⁹ Official chroniclers Diego de Valera and Alonso de Palencia were both

¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶ On Alonso de Hojeda and his role in the founding of the Spanish Inquisition see: Bernáldez, *Historia de los reyes católicos D. Fernando y Doña Isabel*, 97. See also Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, A Mentor Book, MY 817 (New York: New American Library, 1968), 43–44; Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (University of California Press, 1989), 85; Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 244. Bernáldez, *Historia de los reyes católicos D. Fernando y Doña Isabel*, 97.

¹⁷ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 45.

¹⁸ Bartolomé Bennassar, “L’inquisition espagnole au service de l’Etat,” *L’Histoire* XV, no. 9 (1979): 35–46; Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 45; 168; Joseph Pérez, *The Spanish Inquisition* (London: Profile Books, 2006), esp ch 6.

¹⁹ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 30; Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 126. On Pulgar, see Kagan, *Clio and the Crown*, 50.

conversos.²⁰ In Aragon, Luis de Santángel, member of a large *converso* family, served as Ferdinand's finance minister at this time, while Gabriel Sánchez, another *converso*, was his treasurer.²¹

Obviously, for Isabel and Ferdinand, it was not *conversos* in general which were the problem, but specific *conversos*. To suggest, as the historians above have done, that genuine concern for the spiritual health of the Church had little to do with the Crown's decision to establish the Holy Office is troubling. Rather, since the first years of operations saw trials occur solely in Andalucía – centered in Sevilla and Córdoba – and culminated with the expulsion of Jews from that region in 1483, is almost certain that Ferdinand and Isabel saw the problem of *judaizing* as a local issue. Establishing a tribunal in Andalucía would hopefully contain the “infection” of heresy.

It quickly became apparent that the “infection” was not contained. In the first two years of operations, the tribunal in Seville had only held one documented *auto da fe*, condemning just six people to death for heresy.²² However, early accounts of the Holy Office's activity in Seville are somewhat vague; chronicler Andres Bernáldez suggests that in the first six years, 700 people were executed by the tribunal in Seville.²³ It is highly probable there were more *autos da fe* in the first years of operations, but there are no documents to verify that. We do know, however, that already by 1482, Sixtus IV

²⁰ Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 159.

²¹ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 30.

²² Ibid., 48; Helen Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 57–58.

²³ Bernáldez, *Historia de los reyes católicos D. Fernando y Doña Isabel*, 102.

issued the bull, *Ad Perpetuam Rei memoriam*, criticizing the ferocity and cruelty of inquisitors in Seville.

The Crown authorized the Holy Office to expand its sphere of operations, and, also in 1482, it appointed seven more Dominican friars, Tomás de Torquemada among them, as inquisitors. In addition, inquisitors established new tribunals in Jaén and Ciudad Real (moved to Toledo by 1485), and by 1492, additional ones in Medina del Campo, Segovia, Sigüenza, Valladolid and Ávila. What began as a local institution now encompassed almost the entirety of the kingdom of Castile, and within a few short years, also that of Aragon.

Despite its swift spread, the establishment of the Holy Office sparked controversy from the first. Some officials welcomed and defended the need for the tribunal. The aforementioned Andrés Bernáldez, in his history of the reign of Isabel and Ferdinand, saw the elimination of heresy as crucial to maintaining the health of the body of believers. Bernáldez took this quite literally, believing that the presence of heretics in Sevilla had brought on the plague that devastated Sevilla in the 1480s. Purging them from society was the only way in which to maintain both physical and spiritual health.²⁴

But not all officials or members of the clergy agreed with Bernáldez' assessment, even though the issue of conversion and the place of *conversos* in Castilian society had become an increasingly imperative concern since the mid-fifteenth century. Some questioned the Holy Office's brutal methods and the prospect of their success in ridding the kingdom of heresy. Fernando del Pulgar (mentioned above), in *Crónica de los reyes*

²⁴ Ibid., 100–102.

católicos, his history of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabel, described the foundation of the Holy Office, and included a thinly veiled critique of its early methods:

Some relatives of the prisoners and condemned complained, saying that the inquisition and execution were harsh, beyond that which they should be, and that on the manner in which the trials were conducted, and in the execution of the sentence, the ministers and executors showed their hatred of those people (*conversos*).²⁵

He was more overt in private. In a letter to Don Diego de Mendoza, archbishop of Seville, written ca. 1486, he boldly stated that inquisitors were acting with malice towards not just those arrested by the Holy Office, but towards all *conversos*, simply by virtue of their lineage. Pulgar wished that inquisitors would “consider the mercy of God and what the Holy Mother Church ordered to use in this case: that with sweet reasoning and soft reprimands, and with good doctrines and examples should bring to the faith those who err.”²⁶

Talavera and Torquemada

Bernaldez and Pulgar were not the only ones who differed in their assessment of the Holy Office. The two opposing views were embodied in two very prominent men, both intimately connected with the Crown, and with Ávila. Hernando de Talavera was not only Isabel’s confessor from 1475 on; he also served as the Bishop of Ávila from

²⁵ Fernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los reyes católicos* (Espasa-Colpe s.a., 1943), 337. Algunos parientes de los presos e condenados reclamaron, diciendo que aquella inquisición y execución era rigurosa, allende de lo que debía ser; e que en la manera que se tenía en el facer de los procese, y en la execución de las sentencias, los ministros y executores mostraban tener odio a aquellas gentes.

²⁶ Francisco Cantera y Burgos, “Fernando de Pulgar y los conversos,” *Sefarad* 4, no. 2 (1944): 340. “E que considerada la piedad de Dios e lo que la Santa Madre Iglesia manda vsar en este caso, con dulces racones e blandas amonestaciones, e con buenas doctrinas e enxenplos se devían traer a la Fé aquellos errados.”

1485 to 1493, and was a vocal opponent of the Holy Office's methods. Tomás de Torquemada – who had been Isabel's confessor before she was crowned – not only served as the first Inquisitor General from 1483 until his death in 1498, he also helped bring the Holy Office to Ávila in 1491, and event which will be discussed below.

Talavera was less publically reticent than Pulgar: in a work entitled *Católica impugnación*, published in 1487, he unabashedly criticized the Holy Office. Written at the behest of Isabel, who wanted a public response to a now lost treatise denouncing Catholicism by a *converso* from Sevilla, the book delineated Talavera's ideas about a better way to lead *conversos* away from their heretical Jewish tendencies.

Firstly, Talavera did not disparage Judaism. He saw it as an important precursor to Catholic doctrine, and believed that what was immature or incomplete in Judaism became fulfilled and perfected through Christ. In the same way, *conversos* matured in their faith as they converted. They moved from the servitude or tyranny of the Jewish republic to the most perfect of policies and laws, the Catholic republic.²⁷ Talavera wanted to convince the monarchs and the church that the creation of a “new time and new spaces” was possible, a territory united not only geographically but also a homogenous society united in their beliefs and faith.²⁸ Force was not the tool by which to achieve such unity of faith; as well, Talavera had a particular abhorrence of the misuse of the sacrament of baptism. Forced baptisms made a mockery of this most important sacrament, undermining its credibility, and in turn, undermining the authority of the

²⁷ Talavera, *Católica impugnación*, 101.

²⁸ Isabella Iannuzzi, *El poder de la palabra en el siglo XV: fray Hernando de Talavera* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, 2009), 342.

Church.²⁹ The Holy Office and its determination to force orthodox faith on *conversos* would only undermine the Catholic republic that Talavera believed Castile could become.

The Holy Office would only serve to increase *anticonverso* sentiments, which in turn would create dramatic divisions in what should be a homogenous society. Punishing *conversos* for their errors, or attempting to frighten them into practicing Catholicism would backfire, as he wrote, “that which is done in fear or by force rather than by one’s own will is not lasting; in order to endure it must be done with love and with charity.”³⁰ What he sought most to do in *Católica impugnación* was set for a plan for the education of *conversos*, teaching them as a father teaches a child or a king his people, all in an effort to strengthen and affirm their belief in Christ, for the sake of their souls.³¹

If one compares Pulgar with Talavera, both agreed on several key points. To begin with, the two authors recognized that Judaizing among *conversos* was not a matter of “blood.” Rather, it stemmed from ignorance and lack of instruction in the basic practices and tenets of the Church. Secondly, both argued that the best and perhaps the only way to prevent *judiaizing* was through proper education and teaching as opposed to torture and humiliation. Finally, both Pulgar and Talavera looked upon the Holy Office as a divisive and disruptive institution to that extent that it fostered sharp cleavages in Castilian society as opposed to helping create one whose members were united by faith.

²⁹ Ibid., 344.

³⁰ Talavera, *Católica impugnación*, 106. ... lo que se hace por miedo y como por fuerza más que por voluntad, no puede mucho durar, como dura y es perpétuo (sic) lo que se hace por amor y por caridad.

³¹ Ibid., 105.

Tomás de Torquemada's views on how to best achieve Christian unity in the Spanish kingdoms could not be more different from Talavera's. In essence, he concurred with Bernáldez that cutting out the "cancer" of heresy was the only way to put the Christian community on its true path of right belief. Few figures have left such an indelible stamp on Castilian history as Torquemada. His name has become synonymous with rabid orthodoxy manifested in sadistic cruelty and he appears as a vicious caricature in works by non-experts.³² It is easy to see why this popular opinion prevails; early twentieth century histories paint the man as "full of pitiless zeal"; "devoutly encompassing evil in the perfervid quest of good"; and an "insolent fanatic."³³ Yet his character is difficult to parse. Other than being prone to asceticism (but he was not the only Dominican to wear a hair shirt) and blessed with exceptional organizational skills, we know very little about the person.

Torquemada was born near Valladolid. His uncle was Juan de Torquemada, Dominican theologian who rose through the clerical ranks to become a cardinal in 1439. The young Tomás entered the Dominican monastery of San Pablo in Valladolid, and by 1452, he was already the prior of the monastery of Santa Cruz in Segovia. There he met Isabel in 1474, and began to serve as her confessor. After she married and became queen,

³² See, for example, Enid A. Goldberg and Norman Itzkowitz, *Tomás De Torquemada: Architect of Torture During the Spanish Inquisition* (New York: Scholastic Library Publishing, 2009); Simon Whitechapel, *Flesh Inferno: Atrocities of Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition* (London: Creation Books, 2003).

³³ Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, vol. 1 (The Macmillan company, 1907), 174; Rafael Sabatini, *Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition: A History* (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 5; Juan Antonio Llorente, *The History of the Inquisition of Spain, from the Time of Its Establishment to the Reign of Ferdinand VII: Composed from the Original Documents of the Archives of the Supreme Council and from Those of Subordinate Tribunals of the Holy Office* (G.B. Whittaker, 1826), 55.

the two remained close, and Torquemada, though not permanently at court, served as an adviser to both Ferdinand and Isabel.

In 1482, Isabel and Ferdinand appointed him Inquisitor General. That same year he founded the Dominican monastery of Santo Tomás in Ávila, an endeavor in which the monarchs also supported him, this time financially. The monastery would be the future home of the Abulense tribunal of the Holy Office, which began operating in 1490. He never wrote a treatise or polemic defending the Holy Office, but he had no need: his actions and work continually proved his support for the institution.³⁴ In addition, Torquemada was responsible for defining its methodology and wrote several versions of a manual for inquisitors. He drafted the first version in 1484, and followed it with addenda in 1485, 1488 and 1498; though the entire work was not published until 1536.³⁵

It is difficult to determine how local Abulenses perceived the Holy Office as it commenced operations in their city. On the one hand, Talavera, their former bishop, was sharply critical of the institution; however, he spent much of his tenure as bishop *in absentia*, and in 1490, was with the king and queen as they campaigned against Granada. Thus there was no one in the city in a prominent position able to oppose Torquemada. If any local clergy or members of the *concejo* – none of whom were likely to be *conversos* – were not in favor of the Holy Office's arrival in the city, they probably protested in

³⁴ He did, however write a treatise to Isabel, likely in 1490, concerning “the things which the Catholic Queen must remedy.” In it, he reasserted the need for physical and social separation between Jews and Christians, but made no mention of the danger posed by *conversos*. AGS, Cámara de Castilla, *diversos*, 1,78. “Memorial del Prior de Santa Cruz sobre las cosas que la Reina Católica debía remediar.” See also Haim Beinart, “The Expulsion from Spain: The Memorandum of Torquemada to Queen Isabella,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. Avigdor Shin'an (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1976), 3–26.

³⁵ Pérez, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 135.

silence. Torquemada represented an intimidating figure in the city, and locals may well have practiced strategic self-censorship, believing it unwise to voice their opinions publically.

Historiography of the Inquisition

The silence from the people of Ávila regarding the installation of the Holy Office in their city was not unusual. Obviously certain theologians such as Hernando de Talavera felt able to express their reservations regarding the efficacy of the institution, but for much of the population of Castile, this was not the case. Certain places in Aragon resisted the Holy Office – most notably in the form of the murder of the Inquisitor, Pedro Arbués in Zaragoza in 1485.³⁶ Much later, when the Holy Office began operations in Naples, there were outbursts of popular protests there as well.³⁷ Within Castile, however, there was little to no popular protest against the Holy Office.

Historians have often taken that silence to equal tacit support on the part of Castilians. Henry Kamen, for example, maintained that “old Christians” supported the prosecution of *conversos* in the first decades of the Holy Office’s operations because it suited their own interests.³⁸ Helen Rawlings agreed, claiming that the Holy Office reinforced the values of the Old Christian community.³⁹ Such arguments can be read as supporting the so-called Black Legend, created almost contemporaneously to the

³⁶ E. William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11–12. See also Angel Alcalá, *Los orígenes de la Inquisición en Aragón: S. Pedro Arbués, mártir de la autonomía aragonesa* (Diputación General de Aragón, Departamento de Cultura y Educación, 1984).

³⁷ Peter Akawie Mazur, *The Roman Inquisition and the Crypto-Jews of Spanish Naples, 1569--1582* (ProQuest, 2008), 51.

³⁸ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 80.

³⁹ Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 61.

establishment of the Holy Office, and written in large part by anti-Catholic polemicists in Protestant Europe. This writing painted a picture of early modern Castilian society as fanatically orthodox, consisting of a Catholic population enthusiastically participating in the persecution of Jews and *conversos*.⁴⁰ Yet Kamen goes on to assert that the interests and values of the “old Christian” community were rooted more in the ideology of political and religious unity than in prejudice towards *conversos*.⁴¹ In this he is building on the work of historians such as José Amador de los Rios and Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, both of whom maintained that the Holy Office was used to help create an essential “Spanish” identity, an identity which served Spain beneficially through its imperial days.⁴²

It was not until the late twentieth century, after the death of Francisco Franco, that previously unexamined archival material became available to historians, and a new school of Inquisitorial scholarship could begin. This new school tacked to the middle: the practices of the Holy Office were neither as beneficial as apologists would suggest,

⁴⁰ For an overview of how early modern Spain was viewed throughout Europe, see J. N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700: The Formation of a Myth* (University of Michigan, 2000). The historiography on the Black Legend is vast, some of the key works include Sverker Arnoldsson, *La Leyenda Negra: Estudios Sobre Sus Orígenes* (Göteborg: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1960); Ricardo García Cárcel, *La leyenda negra: historia y opinión* (Madrid: Alianza, 1998); Luis Español, *Leyendas negras: vida y obra de Julián Juderías (1877-1918) : la leyenda negra antiamericana* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, 2007); Charles Gibson, *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York: Knopf, 1971); Julián Juderías, *La leyenda negra y la verdad histórica* (Madrid: Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos, 1914); William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660* (Duke University Press, 1971).

⁴¹ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 81.

⁴² José Amador de los Rios, *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos de España* (Madrid: D.M. Díaz y Comp., 1848), 148; Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Librería católica de San José, 1880), I, 894.

nor as cruel and bloody as the Black Legend would argue.⁴³ One of the most important works from this period was that of Jaime Contreras and Gustav Henningsen, who showed that the Holy Office did not limit its scope to only *conversos* or later, *moriscos*. In fact, much of its work in the sixteenth century concerned itself with the religious praxis of “old” Christians who were discovered to be sorely lacking in understanding key tenets of their own faith, and prone to blasphemy and adultery.⁴⁴

New scholarship also emphasized that the Holy Office was an institution, and institutional intolerance did not necessarily translate into popular intolerance.⁴⁵ Groundbreaking studies in the late twentieth century revealed that many Castilians did not share the same beliefs about heresy and sin as the Holy Office.⁴⁶ Early twenty-first century studies continued in that same vein, proving that nowhere in the Spanish empire did the Church or the Holy Office exert the sort of monopolizing control over popular belief that had been assumed by the authors of the Black Legend.⁴⁷

Such studies, though not focused on Ávila, offer a glimpse of what might have been. If scholars have found evidence of heterodox belief elsewhere in Castile and the

⁴³ A key example of this type of scholarship is Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Jaime Contreras and Gustav Henningsen, “Forty-Four Thousand Cases of the Spanish Inquisition,” in *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods*, ed. Gustav Henningsen, John A. Tedeschi, and Charles Amiel (Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 100–130; Jean-Pierre Dedieu, *L’administration de la foi: l’Inquisition de Tolède, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1992); Sarah T. Nalle, *God in La Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca, 1500-1650* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ Bartolomé Bennassar, *Inquisición española: poder político y control social* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1981).

⁴⁶ Bartolomé Escandell Bonet and Joaquín Pérez Villanueva, eds., *Historia de la inquisición en España y América* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos Centro de Estudios Inquisitoriales, 1984).

⁴⁷ Schwartz., *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*. See also Kimberly Lynn Hossain, “Unraveling the Spanish Inquisition: Inquisitorial Studies in the Twenty-First Century,” *History Compass* 5, no. 4 (June 2007): 1280–93.

Spanish empire, why would it not be present in a place such as Ávila? This thought becomes even more credible when considering the close social ties between religious communities experienced prior to 1480. Consider too, that the tribunal of the Holy Office operated in Ávila for only a decade, and that many of those tried there were not *vecinos* of the city. Thus, the impact of such an institution and its supposed culture of suspicion and fear would be even more dampened. Indeed, as will be outlined in the next chapter, following the expulsion of the Jews, Abulenses became less concerned with religious differences.

The *auto da fe*

The *auto da fe* which took place in Ávila that November day in 1491 was both typical and atypical. *Autos* in the first decade of the Holy Office's operations varied in both size and scope. More "minor" heresies such as *judaizing* – especially if the heretic was penitent – were dealt with in large scale *autos* which lacked much of the pomp and ceremony of later *autos*. Unrepentant heretics, or those accused of more heinous crimes such as ritual murder, were smaller affairs, which culminated in executions. The one commonality of these *autos* were the public aspect. They were all performances, and as such, the audience was as crucial a participant as the heretics. The *auto* in Ávila was characteristic in that it adhered to the format of these smaller *autos* held elsewhere. It was uncharacteristic in terms of the breadth of publicity it engendered; other *autos* were completely local affairs, while the verdict and sentence of this *auto* were widely – and quickly – published so that residents of cities throughout Castile and Aragon were made

aware of the crimes. Further, the verdict rendered at this *auto* served to bolster arguments in favor of expelling the Jews.

The Inquisition in Castile and Aragon was not the first institution to use public penancing to extirpate heresy. Papal inquisitions established in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries dealt with specific heretical movements, notably the Cathars in Languedoc and the Waldensians in northern Italy.⁴⁸ While shorter lived than the Inquisition in Castile and Aragon, and local in scope, there is a significant commonality in these institutions: trials always culminated with a public sentencing. For the medieval inquisitions, this occurred during a *sermo generalis*, or general sermon preached by an inquisitor in the cathedral, attended by both condemned heretics and the local community. Karen Sullivan explicated one such performance, a sermon given by Bernard Gui in the cathedral of Toulouse on October 23, 1309, stating that it was “a performance in which Gui directed his attention, not to the condemned man who was about to be consigned to the flames, but to the audience of the sermon who might be tempted to sympathize with him.”⁴⁹ Gui’s purpose is three-fold: first he establishes the guilt of the heretic, then he clearly explains how the inquisitors have done all they could to correct the heretic’s error and bring him back to the fold of orthodoxy, and finally he “demonstrates the inexorable justice of the

⁴⁸ On the Cathars and Waldensians, see Edward Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

⁴⁹ Karen Sullivan, *The Inner Lives of Medieval Inquisitors* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 137. See also Henry Charles Lea, *A History of The Inquisition of The Middle Ages; Volume I* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), 391–394.

Inquisition and in doing so persuades the common people to remain faithful to the Church.”⁵⁰

This *sermo generalis* is comparable to the *auto da fe* of the Holy Office in the Spanish dominions. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries especially, the *auto* became an elaborate ritual, and an “exemplary act of public penitence for a committed crime...an act of public exaltation of triumphant Catholicism, a collective expression of the social rejection of heresy.”⁵¹ The public aspect was significant. Though recent historiography on the Holy Office has shown, as discussed above, that the institution was not able to control popular thought to the extent that earlier historians had thought, this is not to say that it had no effect on society. Bartolomé Bennassar has argued that the Holy Office inculcated a “pedagogy of fear” among Castilians through a combination of methods: the secrecy in which it operated, the memory of infamy, and the threat of misery which accompanied that infamy.⁵² Penance, as we shall see, could involve both public parades through city streets while wearing placards detailing one’s crimes, as well as restrictions on one’s way of life – either through sumptuary laws or the closure of certain professions and offices to the condemned. While not being physically harmed, public shame could cause a great deal of anxiety, and it was understood that the main purpose of the *auto da fe* was to administer that shame.

⁵⁰ Sullivan, *The Inner Lives of Medieval Inquisitors*, 145.

⁵¹ María Victoria González de Caldas, “New Images of the Holy Office in Seville: The Auto de Fe,” in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá (Boulder, Co.: Social Science Monographs; Highland Lakes, N.J.: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1987), 267.

⁵² Bartolomé Bennassar, “Patterns of the Inquisitorial Mind as the Basis for a Pedagogy of Fear,” in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá (New York: Columbia University, 1987), 177–84.

Thus an *auto* was not only important for the participants, as it left a marked impression of the repercussions of heretical behavior; it was also important for the rest of the community. While it is true that some, very minor crimes, warranted what was called *auto particular*, or private *auto da fe*, the vast majority of penitents participated in an *auto publico general*, or public *auto*.⁵³ Witnessing both the pronouncement of and punishment for transgressions was an indelible way for the community to understand and abjure heresy.

The historiography of the *auto da fe* has painted it with the same brush as the Holy Office: a sadistic spectacle, where thousands would come to watch heretics be judged and burned in some sort of anachronistic revival meeting, brimming with emotion and inspiring further hatred towards Jews, Muslims, Protestants and the like. This viewpoint was already established while the Holy Office was still active. Voltaire, in *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*, published in 1756, described *autos da fe* thus:

But these melancholy effects of the inquisition are a trifle in comparison to those public sacrifices called *Auto da Fe*, or acts of faith, and to the shocking barbarities that precede them.

A priest in a white surplice, or a monk who has vowed meekness and humility, causes his fellow creatures to be put to the torture in a dismal dungeon. A stage is erected in the public market-place, where the condemned prisoners are conducted to the stake, attended with a train of monks and religious confraternities. They sing psalms, say mass, and butcher mankind. Were a native of Asia to come to Madrid upon the day of an execution of this sort, it would be impossible for him to tell whether it was a rejoicing, a religious feast, a sacrifice, or a massacre; and yet it is all this together.... The Spaniard reproached Montezuma with immolating his captives to his gods; what would he have said had he beheld an *Auto da Fe*?⁵⁴

⁵³ Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1964), 108–109.

⁵⁴ Voltaire, *An Essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of Nations, from the Reign of Charlemaign to the Age of Lewis XIV. Written in French by M. de Voltaire. Translated into English, with*

Certainly this viewpoint was still prominent during much of the twentieth century, before more nuanced studies on the Holy Office provided a less histrionic view of its workings. Henry Charles Lea, writing the first comprehensive history of the Holy Office in English just after the turn of the century, described the *auto* as “an elaborate public solemnity, carefully devised to inspire awe for the mysterious authority of the Inquisition, and to impress the population with a wholesome abhorrence of heresy . . . It was regarded as an eminently pious duty . . . [which] would greatly edify the people.”⁵⁵ Italian novelist and part-time historian Rafael Sabatini, in 1913, referred to the “dread ceremonial, the ghastly, almost theatrical solemnities that went to compose the greatest horror that has sprung from the womb of Christianity: the Auto de Fé.”⁵⁶

We have not entirely left this view behind; a recent publication by journalist James Reston, Jr. uses similarly florid and evocative language to describe the first *auto da fe* in Seville: the “grisly spectacle” involved a procession seven condemned heretics, led by Fray Alonso de Hojeda, “radiant in the realization of his life’s passion.” The “grim procession snaked through the narrow streets, so that all could see and taunt. A frenzied mob quickly gathered, eager for blood and the smell of burning flesh.”⁵⁷ This is complete speculation on the author’s part, as there is no documentary evidence to support such a florid description of the crowd’s mood.

Additional Notes and Chronological Tables, by Mr. Nugent., 2nd ed., vol. Volume 3 (London, 1759), 177–178.

⁵⁵ Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in Spain*, vol. 3 (New York: The Macmillan company, 1907), 209.

⁵⁶ Sabatini, *Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition*, 201.

⁵⁷ James Reston, Jr., *Dogs of God: Columbus, the Inquisition, and the Defeat of the Moors* (New York: Random House, 2006), 76–77.

Certainly by the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *autos* were highly ritualized, lavish spectacles, generally performed on a feast day, or a Sunday, so that more people could attend. The ceremony evolved to mimic the Day of Judgment, replete with symbolic messages that are possibly “incomprehensible” to a modern audience, but fully understandable to a medieval one: messages about medieval eschatological beliefs designed to edify spectators, not whip them into a frenzy of bloodlust.⁵⁸ As Robert Potter explains, an *auto* was a “formal and highly dramatic public ceremony”; public, because it conveyed a message to the audience.

Beginning in suspicion and ending in justice and forgiveness, its motives were deeply religious and political, and its message to its audience strongly penitential. As such, it is perhaps best understood not as a wanton spectacle of persecution, but as a carefully – scripted and deeply serious – if in some respects highly insidious – ritual drama.⁵⁹

But in the first decades of the Holy Office’s operations, *autos* were not nearly so formal, theatrical, or ritualized. While the messages conveyed by an *auto* were clear, the ceremony itself was popular not so much for its dramatic appeal to something inherent in Iberian society, but rather because of its very foreignness. As Henry Kamen describes, it was a “premeditated imposition of a ritual that had no roots whatever in the community. People flocked to see it because it was a strange phenomenon that did not form part of their normal faith, religion, and everyday existence.”⁶⁰ In addition, the sheer volume of

⁵⁸ Maureen Flynn, “Mimesis of the Last Judgment: The Spanish Auto de Fe,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 22, no. 2 (July 1, 1991): 282; 294–296.

⁵⁹ Robert Potter, “The Auto Da Fé as Medieval Drama,” in *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre*, ed. Meg Twycross (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), 111.

⁶⁰ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 204.

people tried in the first decades of operations was somewhat staggering, making *autos* stark events, focused primarily on procedure, rather than the elaborate spectacle they would become in later centuries.⁶¹

To demonstrate, we can examine *autos* held in Toledo, in the 1480s and 1490s, the first decades of the Holy Office's operations. The first *auto* in that city occurred on February 12, 1486, a date which coincided with the first Sunday in Lent. Seven hundred and fifty condemned heretics walked, heads uncovered, barefoot, each holding a candle, and following the same route used in that city's Corpus Christi processions. That route began at the convent of San Pedro Mártir, and wound through Toledo's narrow streets, ending at the main entrance – the imposing Puerta del Perdón or Door of Forgiveness – of the city's Gothic cathedral. One by one the penitents entered the church, walking past two priests who greeted them with the phrase: "receive the sign of the cross, which you, badly deceived, denied and lost" while making the sign of the cross above each of their bowed heads. Once inside the cathedral, the condemned were marched towards a scaffold especially erected for the occasion adjacent to the cathedral's *puerta nueva*, also known as the Puerta de la Alegoria, or Door of Happiness. This scaffold, occupied by the inquisitors and various officials attached to the cathedrals, faced another scaffold upon which an altar had been built. A mass was sung; a sermon delivered; and then a notary stood up, and called each penitent by name, asking, "Is such and such present?" If the

⁶¹ Potter, "The Auto Da Fé as Medieval Drama," 116. See also Dale Shuger, "A Curious Relación: Event and Account of the Auto de Fe," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (1475-3839) 90, no. 4 (June 2013): 403–23.

penitent was and responded in the affirmative the notary then read the list of his (or her) crimes and described in detail the manner in which they had *judaized*.

In view of the number of penitents who participated in this auto, the ritual dragged on for several hours and concluded when the notary announced the collective penance for the group. In this instance, the penance imposed seemed relatively mild: over the following six Lenten Fridays, the repentant heretics were required to fast and then gather together to march, barefoot and bareheaded, through the streets of the city while flagellating themselves with cords of hemp. Though we do not know at what time the procession began, it was likely quite early, as the entire process concluded by two in the afternoon.

This may appear a harmless enough penalty, but again, the public shaming cut deeply. As the guilty walked through the cold winter streets, eyewitnesses reported that they cried, shrieked, and pulled their hair because of the dishonor the experience brought on them. Especially significant was that many people from towns and villages outside of Toledo proper had come to watch them walk.⁶²

This act of public humiliation, however, marked only the beginning of the penance imposed on these judaizers. After they had fulfilled their penance of marches, the heretic's garments they wore, called *san benitos*, were hung in their parish churches, together with the placard which described their crime, so that all in the parish would see and remember. The men involved were barred from holding public office, from acting as

⁶² Fidel Fita Colomé, "La inquisición toledana. Relación contemporánea de los autos y autillos que celebró desde el año 1485 hasta el de 1501," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 11 (1887): 295.

witnesses in official transaction, and also from owning any property or land. In addition, they were forbidden to practice a number of trades, among them that of moneylender, pharmacist, jeweler or spice seller, presumably because each of these occupations were traditionally associated with Jews. The penitents also learned that if they relapsed and *judaized* again, they would be executed by burning at the stake.⁶³

Autos similar in size and procedure took place in Toledo throughout the following years.⁶⁴ However, the *auto* which occurred on August 16, 1486, was noticeably different. On that day, the first executions occurred. The condemned included twenty men and five women, all of whom were marched through the streets wearing yellow *san benitos*,

⁶³ Ibid., 294 ff. “Los quales eran fasta setecientas y çinquenta personas, hombres é mugeres. É salieron de sant pedro mártir en proçesión en esta manera. Los hombres en qüerpo, las cabeças descubiertas é descalços sin calças; é por el gran frio que hazía les mandaron llevar unas soletas debaxo de los pies por encima descubiertos, con candelas en las manos no ardiendo; é las mugeres en cuerpo sin cobertura ninguna, las caras descubiertas é descalças como los hombres é con sus candelas. En la qual gente yvan muchos hombres prinçipales de ellos y hombres de honra. Y con el gran frio que hazía, y de la desonra y mengua que reçebian por la gran gente que los mirava, porque *vino mucha gente de las comarcas á los mirar*, yvan dando muy grandes alaridos, y llorando algunos se mesavan; créese más por la desonra que reçebían que no por la ofensa que á dios hizieron; y así, yvan muy atribulados por toda la çibdad por donde va la proçesión el dia de *Corpus christi*; é fasta llegar á la iglesia mayor. É á la puerta de la iglesia estavan dos capellanes, los quales fazían la señal de la cruz á cada uno en la frente, diziendo estas palabras: *Recibe la señal de la cruz, la qual negaste é mal engañado perdiste*. Y entraron en la iglesia fasta llegar á un cadahalso, que estava fecho junto á la puerta nueva, en el qual cadahalso estavan los padres inquisidores sabidos; é ay çerca otro cadahalso en que estava un altar, donde les dixerón missa é les predicaron. É después levantóse un notario, y empeçó de llamar á cada uno por su nombre ó diziendo así: *Está ay fulano? Y el reconciliado alçava la candela, y dezía: Sí*. É allí públicamente leya todas las cosas en que avía judayzado. E así mesmo fizieron á las mugeres. É de que esto fue acabado, allí públicamente les dieron la penitencia, en que les mandaron seis viernes en proçesión disçiplinándose las espaldas de fuera con cordeles de cáñamo, fechos nudos, é sin calças é sin bonetes, é que ayunassen los dichos seis viernes; é les mandaron que en todos los dias de su vida no tuviesen ofiçio público, así commo alcalde, alguazil, regidor ó jurado, ó escrivano público, ó portero, é los que los tales oficios tenían los perdieron; é que no fuesen cambiadores, ni boticarios, ni especieros, ni toviesen ofiçio de sos pecha ninguno, é que no truxesen seda ni grana ni paño de color, ni oro ni plata, nin perlas nin aljófar, nin coral, nin ninguna joya; e que no pudiesen valer por testigos, ni arrendasen estas cosas, les mandaron so pena de relapsos, que quiere dezir de ser tornados á caer en el mesmo hierro pasado, que en usando cualquiera cosa de las sobredichas quedasen *condenados al fuego*. É quando todos estos actos fueron acabados, salieron de allí á las dos despues de medio dia.”

⁶⁴ Ibid., 296–299; 301–303.

inscribed with their names and the words “condemned heretic.” Like the *auto* that would later take place in Ávila, the sentencing took place in a plaza, where each case was read out loud, listing, in graphic detail, specifics about the different ways in which each of the condemned had *judaized*. Once all the charges were read and the sentences announced, the condemned were “relaxed” to the secular arm for execution, paraded outside the city to stakes erected in an open field, and it was there that each was burnt.⁶⁵ These *autos* took place in plazas rather than churches because no “blood sentence” could be rendered in a church.⁶⁶ But further, these *autos* were not concerned with the public shame of the guilty, but rather with impressing upon the audience the very seriousness of the crime of heresy.

Thus most of these first *autos* were significant less for the drama or ritual of the event, than for the volume of people who participated. For those individuals who were reconciled, it was the public shame that was difficult to endure. Those who came to observe the events were not there out of bloodlust – executions took place outside of the city.⁶⁷ They were there, undoubtedly, to witness the shaming of a portion of their community with whom they had a long and rather turbulent history. Unlike Ávila, Toledo had a significant *converso* population. As well, Toledo had experienced friction – at times fatal friction – between the “old” Christian and *converso* communities on several occasions through the latter half of the fifteenth century; in contrast, Ávila’s people had lived in relative harmony through the same period.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 300.

⁶⁶ Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in Spain*, 3:222.

⁶⁷ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 210; Pérez, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 166–167.

The people of Ávila did not witness an *auto da fe* until 1491, and what they witnessed was not on the large scale of most of the Toledan *autos*. The *auto* in Ávila was an event meant to expose the heinous lengths Jews were willing to go to in order to destroy the Catholic church, as well as the apparent devious manipulation inherent in all Jews and *conversos*. The language used during the *auto* – describing the crimes committed and the sentencing – speaks to this manipulation and deviousness, a blatant warning to Abulense Christians about their Jewish neighbors. Since the crimes and sentence of the accused men were disseminated throughout both Castile and Aragon, it is clear that the warning was not only meant for the citizens of Ávila, it was a warning for all Christians in the kingdoms.

El Santo Niño de la Guardia

The *auto da fe* associated with the *Niño de la Guardia* in Ávila begins with a pilgrimage. Benito García, a *converso* from the small town of La Guardia near Toledo, undertook the pilgrimage to the shrine of St James the Apostle in Santiago de Compostela sometime during the spring of 1490. While returning home, Benito stopped at an inn in Astorga on the 1st of June. There he joined the other lodgers in the common room for the evening meal and some wine. In the course of that evening, someone in the inn discovered that García was travelling with a bag that contained a host (communion wafer). This discovery raised questions as to what he intended to do with the wafer as laymen were not supposed to have such objects in their possession. As a result, Benito soon found himself standing before Doctor Pedro de Villada, the city's *vicario general*,

the official in charge of the legal tribunal responsible for investigating infractions relating to matters of canon law.

Villada was not an inquisitor, nor did Astorga have a formal inquisitorial tribunal. But according to Henry Charles Lea, he “was zealous and experienced in such matters,” that is, issues involving both heresy and the canon law. The documents also indicate that Villada suspected some kind of wrongdoing, some “important mystery” as there was no justification for Benito to be travelling with a host.⁶⁸ Villada promptly ordered his arrest and imprisonment, and a trial soon ensued.

Unfortunately, documents pertaining to Benito’s trial are lost, but the records of Yucé Franco, one of his alleged co-conspirators survive.⁶⁹ At one point during their long imprisonment, Yucé and Benito were placed in adjoining cells with a discreet but deliberate hole in the wall, so they might talk and hopefully, by so doing implicate themselves.⁷⁰ During this period Benito was able to tell Yucé about his arrest. According to Yucé, Villada, as the presiding judge, subjected Benito to tortures of various kinds, including whipping, the fifteenth-century equivalent of today’s waterboarding, and the “garrote,” whereby cords were twisted so as to dig deeply into his arms and legs. After five days of such torments, Benito “confessed” to an elaborate conspiracy that, in addition to Yucé, supposedly involved other individuals from La Guardia, and other

⁶⁸ Henry Charles Lea, “El Santo Niño de La Guardia,” *English Historical Review*, April 1, 1889, 236.

⁶⁹ Yucé Franco’s *proceso de fé*, or trial record, has been edited and published by Fidel Fita, in Fidel Fita Colomé, “La verdad sobre el martirio del santo niño de la guardia, ó sea el proceso y quema (16 Noviembre, 1491) del judío Jucé Franco en Ávila,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 11 (1887): 7–134.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

nearby towns. He also explained that he and friends set out to overthrow the Catholic Church by means of sorcery involving a human child's heart and a consecrated host.

Apparently shocked by what he heard, Villada realized that the case before him was best tried in one of Castile's new inquisitorial courts and apparently took it upon himself to ensure the information reached the ears of Tomás de Torquemada, who promptly ordered the arrest of all of the accomplices Benito had named in the course of his confession. These men were imprisoned not in Toledo, which was the closest tribunal, but in Segovia, where Torquemada himself was at the time. It appears that from the first, Torquemada evinced a personal interest in this case, which may explain why the men were not tried in Toledo.

The conspirators included several *conversos*, among them Juan de Ocaña, Alonso Franco, Lope Franco, García Franco and Juan Franco, all from La Guardia. Also implicated were several Jews — the aforementioned Yucé Franco, from the town of Tembleque, along with his eighty-year-old father, Don Ça Franco, and Mosé Abenamías, who lived in the city of Zamora. Benito had also named three other Jew — Mosé Franco, Juçá Tazarte and David de Perejón — but they were all recently deceased, and were tried *in absentia*.⁷¹

Why these Jews found themselves in the clutches of the Holy Office deserves comment. Technically, the Inquisition's jurisdiction extended only to baptized Catholics, whereas Jews, as the king's personal vassals, were only subject to royal justice. However, the *Fuero Real*, the compilation of royal law instituted by King Alfonso X in 1255,

⁷¹ Ibid., 10. 40.

stipulated that any Jew who “insulted the faith” was subject to punishment of varying kinds, and this proviso may have served as a pretext for the inquisitors to arrest Yucé Franco, his father, and the other Jews Benito had identified as co-conspirators.⁷²

The charges levied against these conspirators bordered on the ludicrous. They included that of kidnapping a young Christian boy from the town of La Guardia during the previous winter, and then imprisoning him in a cave until Easter. At that time, the malefactors reportedly crucified the child and then proceeded to cut out his heart and use it, together with his blood, to perform a bizarre ritual ceremony. The aim of the ritual was to induce madness among all practicing Christians. This in turn would precipitate the end of Christianity and the triumph of Judaism.⁷³

The charges – reminiscent of the blood libel cases in late medieval Germany – were farfetched, and the Inquisition’s prosecution demonstrably weak.⁷⁴ Documents describing the trial indicate a series of inconsistencies among the confessions of the accused (pointed out by Yucé in his own defense), and the failure of the Inquisition to

⁷² Dwayne E. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition of and Commentary on Siete Partidas 7.24 “De Los Judíos”* (University of California Press, 1986), 63; *Fuero Real del Rey Don Alonso el Sabio* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1863), 118–119. Lib. 4, title 2, law 3

⁷³ Fita Colomé, “La verdad,” 14. “Item contrató é fizo contrato é monipodio, como principal, juntamente con otros, para aver una ostia consagrada por la ultrajar ó escarnecer en vituperio é menosprecio de nuestra santa fe católica, é porque entre los otros judíos, consortes en el delicto é concierto susodicho, avía ciertos hechizeros, é en un día de su pascua de pan cenceño avía de comulgar con la dicha ostia é con un corazón de un niño christiano; é así fecho en la forma é manera que dicho es, todos los christianos avían de morir raviando. É la intención, que para haser esto al dicho yucé franco é á sus secaces é cómplices en el dicho monipodio los movió, fue porque la ley de moyén más honrrada é guardada fuese, é sus ritos é preceptos é cirimonias por ellos más libremente fuesen solenizados, é porque toda la Religión christiana pereziese é fuese subvertida, é ellos poseyesen todos los bienes que los católicos é fieles christianos han é posehen, é no viniese quien contradixiese á sus maldades é perversos errores, é su generación creciese é multiplicase sobre la tierra, estirpada en todo la de los fieles christianos.”

⁷⁴ On blood libel cases in Germany, see R. Po-chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (Yale University Press, 1992).

produce any physical evidence such as a body of the deceased and supposedly missing Christian boy. Yet after eighteen months of imprisonment, interrogation, and torture, in November 1491, the inquisitors announced their sentence: all of individuals involved in the alleged conspiracy, Jews and *conversos* alike, were judged guilty of various crimes, murder among them, and sentenced to death.

Ávila's *auto da fe*

This sentence serves as the backdrop of Ávila's first *auto da fe*. The setting was the city's Plaza Mercado Grande where local authorities constructed a scaffold immediately adjacent to the parish church of San Pedro. The auto took place on Wednesday, November 16 1491, and crowds gathered in the plaza to witness a ritual they probably did not know much about. The inquisitors who presided over the trial assembled on the scaffold, along with notables from the Abulense community, including the *corregidor* Don Álvaro de San Esteban. Present too were several notaries to keep an account of the proceedings, and *bachiller* Alonso de Guevara, *promotor fiscal* (public prosecutor) of the Holy Office in Ávila.

Facing that scaffold was another reserved for prisoners – Benito Garcia, Yucé Franco and the others implicated in the conspiracy. (There is no mention of a procession through the streets of the guilty prior to the *auto*). The crowd which filled the plaza,

watching the *auto* as it unfolded were “the entire city, or the larger part of it, and other people from neighboring places, and many people, both ecclesiastic and secular.”⁷⁵

One of the inquisitors read out the accusations against the prisoners. Again, we only have the records for Yucé Franco, and in his case, he was accused and sentenced singly. It is very probable, then, that the inquisitor read out the same accusations and sentence for each prisoner, one by one. As the men involved were all accused of the same crime, this process was repeated ten times over and the *auto* itself lasted most of the day.

High on Yucé Franco’s list of crimes was the act of seducing Christians and persuading them to convert and adopt the law of Moses, teaching them to believe that the law of Jesus Christ was false and a sham. Further, he taught Christians Hebrew prayers and “Jewish things,” such as the different times to fast; how to celebrate Passover; and why Jews do not eat certain meat and “other mysteries of his religion.” He also gave them food and wine prepared in his own home, and ate and drank with them, “the better to seduce and ratify them in the law of Moses, and gave them to understand and believe that God could not be born in this world, as was our Savior Jesus Christ.” He wanted to engender doubt in their hearts towards their Catholic faith, and make them an enemy of the faith, “like he and all the other Jews.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Fita Colomé, “La verdad,” 101. “...seyendo presente todo el pueblo ó la mayor parte dél, é otras gentes de fuera parte, é muchas personas eclesiásticas é seglares.”

⁷⁶ Ibid., 102–103. Yucé Franco judío aver induzido é atraído algunos christianos á los ritos é cerimonias de la ley de moysén ya dañada é sepultada, enseñándoles oraciones ebraycas é judiegas, rezando é orando en ebrayco al criador por los christianos que en las dichas sus oraciones se recomendavan deziendo que la ley de moysén era la verdadera, é la de ihesu christo era ley fingida, enseñando asimismo informando é avisando de los tienpos de sus ayunos judiegos é pascuas, é la cabsa porque los judíos non comían carne *trefe*, participando é comunicando con los dichos christianos los otros misterios de su ley, dándoles á comer é beber de sus viandas é vino *caser*, é juntamente comiendo é beviendo con ellos por más los induzir

His major crime was, of course, the murder of the Christian child. After crucifying the child,

the aforementioned Yucé Franco, Jew, and all the other Jews and Christians, accomplices in this sin, together went secretly to the cave for some days, where they contracted to cast certain spells and experimental enchantments with the heart of the child and a consecrated host. And those spells and experimental enchantments were made with perverse thinking, diabolical intention and radical enmity to the purpose and the effect that the inquisitors of perverse heresy and all the other Christians would go mad and die raving, and the law and Catholic faith of Jesus Christ our Savior of all would perish and be subverted and destroyed, and the Jews would take over and the law of Moses would be whitewashed.⁷⁷

When the spells failed to work, the group made plans to try again, needing only another consecrated host. Yucé and the other Jews in the group enticed their Christian accomplices and made them swear, according to a Jewish rite, never to reveal the crimes they had committed. It was only through the painstaking work and diligence of those trustworthy Inquisitors working on the case that they were successful in uncovering the truth and able to close the case.⁷⁸

é ratificar en la dicha ley de moysén; é dándoles á entender é creer que non era posible que fuese nin oviese en el mundo dios parido, lo qual desía por nuestro Redemptor ihesu christo, queriendo poner á los dichos christianos en descreencia de su ley é fee cathólica, é enemiga della, commo él é los otros judíos la tienen.
⁷⁷ Ibid., 104–105. Y después de lo susodicho, por él así cruelmente fecho é perpetrado, el dicho yucé franco judío é todos los otros judíos é christianos susodichos, cómplices en el dicho delicto, se juntaron dende á algunos días secretamente en la dicha cueva, donde concertaron de faser é fesieron cierto conjuro é esperimento de fechisos con el dicho corazón del dicho niño é una hostia consagrada. El qual conjuro e esperimento fesieron con perverso pensamiento, diabólica intención é radical enemiga á fin y efecto que los inquisidores de la herética pravedad é todos los otros christianos ravianen e moriesen raviando, é la ley y fee cathólica de ihesu christo nuestro Redemptor del todo peresciese é fuese subvertida é destruida, é los judíos se enseñoreasen, é la ley de moysén fuese enxalçada.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 105. “É después viendo que el dicho esperimento non obraría lo que el dicho yucé franco é los otros dichos sus cómplices é participantes con tan depravada é diabólica intención así esperavan, dende á tiempo el dicho yucé franco é todos los otros susodichos se ayuntaron otra vegada en otro cierto lugar, é de comun acuerdo é consentimiento dé todos enbiaron á uno dellos mismos con el dicho corazón del dicho niño é con otra hostia consagrada á ciertos judíos, aquellos tenían por sabios para que con aquello fesiesen de tal manera el dicho esperimento é los dichos fechisos que los dichos inquisidores é todos los otros christianos moriesen raviando, é dende se les siguiese el diabólico fin y efecto susodicho por ellos tan cruelmente deseado. É asimismo el dicho yucé franco é los otros judíos fezieron juramento judiego é

Finally, Alonso de Guevara read out the sentence. Yucé Franco, “as an agent and participant in the crime and offence of heresy and apostasy, and impeder of the Holy Office of the Inquisition and subverter of the faith and Christian law and seducer of Christians” as well as a participant in the murder and mutilation of the Christian child, was to forfeit all his goods and possessions, which would be given to the royal treasury. As well, he was to be “relaxed” to the secular arm of the law, in the care of the *corregidor* of Ávila, Don Álvaro de San Esteban.⁷⁹ Yuce’s *converso* co-conspirators were excommunicated before their execution; Yucé, being Jewish, was obviously exempt from this.

Immediately the reading of the sentences, the authorities led the prisoners away to their place of execution in a field outside the city. The notary’s account is brief and devoid of emotion:

The aforementioned Reverend Inquisitors sent me, Antón Gonçales, notary to go to the place where the *licenciado* Álvaro de Sanistevan(sic) would make the execution, as *corregidor* in this city, of the heretics that their Reverences had

induxieron é persuadieron á los dichos christianos sus cómplices, que asimismo lo fesieron en mano de uno de los mismos judíos segund rito judayco, de non descubrir nin revelar el secreto de los dichos delitos por ellos así perpetrados. É visto otrosí la diligente é laboriosa información, que de nuestro oficio sobre el presente negocio, en diversos lugares, de personas fidedignas, zelosas de nuestra santa fee cathólica podimos aver é ovimos, é commo las dichas partes sobre todo concluyeron é non quisieron más dezir nin allegar, é nos concluimos con ellas é ovimos el proceso é cabsa por cerrado é concluso.”

⁷⁹ Ibid., 106. “Por ende que le devemos declarar é declaramos por fautor factor é participador del crimen é delicto de la heregía é apostasía é inpididor del santo oficio de la inquisición é subvertedor de la fee é ley christiana é indusidor de christianos á negar la dicha ley de ihesu christo nuestro Redemptor é recibir la de moysén; seyendo participante en los dichos crímenes é delitos juntamente con christianos; é por tanto aver caido é incorrido en todas las penas tenporales é confiscación é perdimiento de todos sus bienes, contra los tales en los derechos canónicos é ceviles establecidas é inpuestas; é que por tal le debemos relaxar é relaxamos á la justicia é braço seglar, al honrrado é noble varón, el licenciado álvaro de santistevan corregidor en esta cibdad de ávila é su tierra por los Serenísimos Rey é Reyna nuestro Señores. é á sus alcaldes alguasiles é oficiales, para que del dicho yucé franco judío fagan lo que con derecho devan, aplicando los dichos sus bienes, los quales declaramos ser confiscados é aplicados de derecho á la cámara é fisco de los dichos serenísimos Rey é Reyna nuestros Señores.”

declared and relaxed to the aforementioned *Señor corregidor*. At that place, where the execution occurred, was I, the notary. And I saw how Yucé Franco, Jew, was fastened to the pole where he was to be burned. He said and confessed all to be true that was contained in the confessions and depositions, that previously their Reverences had made, and he affirmed all that they had said. I testify that they were present, the *Señor corregidor* Álvaro de Sanistevan and Iohán de León, notary of the Inquisition.⁸⁰

The others were executed at the same time: Benito Garcia, Juan de Ocaña and Juan Franco all confessed and repented first so that they might be garroted before the fires were lit. Yucé Franco, however, died in torment, “denying his cruel errors, without calling to God or to Holy Mary, not even making the sign of the cross: do not pray for [him]” wrote the notary in a letter to the *concejo* of La Guardia, “for he is buried in hell.”⁸¹

Why Ávila?

This letter raises several questions relating to why Ávila was chosen as the venue for this *auto da fe*. Most of individuals in the conspiracy were from La Guardia, a town located near Toledo. We can surmise that Torquemada’s personal interest in the case was the reason they were brought first to Segovia and not imprisoned in Toledo. Yet just a

⁸⁰ Ibid., 107–108. los dichos Reverendos Señores inquisidores mandaron á mí el dicho antón gonçales notario que fuese al lugar, donde el licenciado álvaro de santistevan fasía execución, commo corregidor en esta cibdad, de los herejes que por sus Reverencias avían seido declarados é relaxados al dicho Señor corregidor. Al qual dicho lugar, donde se fasía la dicha execución, yo el dicho notario fué, y ví commo públicamente el dicho yucé franco judío estando atado al palo donde le quemaron, dixo é confesó ser verdad todo lo contenido en las confesiones é deposiciones, qué delante sus Reverencias tenía fechas, é que se afirmava é afirmó en ellas é en todo lo otro que dicho tenía. Testigos que fueron presentes, el Señor corregidor álvaro de Santistevan é iohán de león notario de la dicha inquisición.

⁸¹ Ibid., 113. “Los otros murieron *atenazados* y buenos judíos, negando sus crueles errores, sin llamar á Dios ni á Santa María, ni hacer solamente un signo de la cruz: no rogueis á Dios por ellos, que *sepultados están en el infierno*.”

month or so after their arrival in Segovia, the men were all transferred to Ávila. Why Ávila?

The surviving trial record fails to provide an answer. It merely provides a copy of the letter Torquemada wrote authorizing the prisoner's removal from Segovia to Ávila. This letter alludes to Torquemada's interest in the case, but since, as he wrote, "at present we are occupied with many other arduous business... and cannot personally try these said cases... we trust ... that you are such persons who execute that which is charged to you well and faithfully."⁸² The men he entrusted with this case were Don Pedro de Villada, the Astorgan vicar who originally investigated Benito and who was soon after appointed an inquisitor, and *licenciado* Juan López de Cigales, inquisitor in Valencia since 1487, who had been brought to Ávila specifically for the case.⁸³ A third, Fray Fernando de Santo Domingo, was a member of Torquemada's Segovian monastery, Santa Cruz and had dedicated a treatise entitled "Censure and Confutation of the Talmud" to Torquemada.⁸⁴ Torquemada's letter does not explain why the trial did not take place in Toledo in the first place, though it does speak to his personal interest in the case. The prisoners were moved in July 1490 to the monastery Santo Tomás in Ávila.

It seems clear that Torquemada, though unable to oversee the case himself, was determined to keep a close eye on the trial. Historians have offered several alternate

⁸² Ibid., 10. "É por quanto al presente somos ocupado en otros muchos é árdusos negocios, e de las dichas causas, ni de algunos dellas, non podemos por nuestra presona conocer, confiando de la legalidad sciencia speriencia é sana consciencia de vos, los dichos Reverendos padres Inquisidores, é de qualquier de vos, é que sois tales presonas que bien é fielmente farés lo que por nos vos fuere encomendado..."

⁸³ AGS, RGS, leg. 149008,166.

⁸⁴ Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa, *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics Between Christians and Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 236.

explanations for the move. Speculation began with Henry Charles Lea – for whom the Holy Office was never more than an instrument of pain. Unsurprisingly, he thought perhaps Torquemada was eager to try out his new *casa del tormento*, or torture chamber, housed within the walls of Santo Tomás.⁸⁵ Yitzhak Baer dismissed Lea’s suggestion, and, trusting in the documentation, attributed the change of venue to Torquemada’s determination to stage the trial in a place where he could control it, even though he himself was too busy himself to conduct it and to interrogate the prisoners involved.⁸⁶ More recently, José Belmonte offered other possible explanations for the trial’s move from Segovia to Ávila. One involved Abraham Seneor, a native of Segovia and the powerful leader of the Castilian Jewish communities. Belmonte credited Seneor with persuading Torquemada to transfer the trial to Ávila in order to spare Segovia’s *aljama* the trauma of witnessing a blood libel trial similar to that of 1468. Belmonte also pushed the matter further by suggesting that Torquemada chose Ávila since the city was the “renowned center of Hebrew spirituality,” and holding the trial there would serve as a demonstration of inquisitorial power and supposedly inculcate the “pedagogy of fear.”⁸⁷

Belmonte went on to suggest that Torquemada opted for Ávila as opposed to Segovia owing to what he described as the latter’s potential “explosive social situation” resulting from tensions between that city’s population of *conversos*, “old” Christians, and

⁸⁵ Lea, “El Santo Niño de La Guardia,” 288; Fita Colomé, “La verdad,” 91. There is some discussion about where exactly the prisoners were kept and interrogated. Eduardo Ruiz Ayúcar believed the “Casa del Tormento” was in a building next to the cathedral, and Fita himself does make mention of a “casa donde sus Reverencias acostunbran dar los tormentos” without specifying where it was. Ibid., 81; Eduardo Ruiz Ayúcar, *Sepulcros artísticos de Ávila* (Excma. Diputacion Provincial de Ávila, Institución “Gran Duque de Alba,” 1964).

⁸⁶ Baer, *A History of the Jews*, 401; Fita Colomé, “La verdad,” 10.

⁸⁷ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 129–130.

Jews. Those tensions were evident from 1468, when Segovia hosted a similar blood libel trial in which sixteen Jews were accused of murdering a Christian child. The *converso* bishop, Juan Arias Dávila, ordered their arrest and presided over the trial: of the sixteen, only one escaped punishment by accepting baptism. The others were either imprisoned for life, or executed.⁸⁸ Whether the bishop's actions in this trial increased friction between the Jewish and *conversos* communities in Segovia accounts for the “explosive” social situation Belmonte Díaz described is not altogether clear. What is certain is that by 1490, the Holy Office had initiated an investigation of Bishop Dávila on charges of heresy. Davila was subsequently ordered to Rome for trial and forced to relinquish his episcopal see during the course of the proceedings. The connection between Davila's trial and Segovia's fractious social situation requires investigation, but the bishop's absence may have factored in Torquemada's decision to select Ávila as the place where the *Niño de la Guardia* trial could best proceed.⁸⁹

Ana Alonso Blanco's interpretation of the change of venue followed along similar lines. She argued that the trial took place in Ávila owing to a larger strategy designed to speed the conversion of that the city's Jews. As she saw it, Ávila not only had one of the largest Jewish populations in Castile at this time, but one of the unhappiest, as suggested by the wave of complaints relating to the creation of the new *judería* and other laws. For Alonso, therefore, the trial and *auto* were deliberately held in Ávila in order to send a

⁸⁸ Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, 2nd:733; Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 123–124.

⁸⁹ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 129–130.

message to the Jews (and Christians) living there.⁹⁰ It is also of note that the few instances of Abulenses arrested for *judaizing* in the 1480s were all tried in Toledo, as opposed to Ávila.⁹¹ While it is true that the *aljama* in Ávila had been vocal in their unhappiness over the changes imposed on their life in the 1480s, there is no evidence to show that the Crown would willingly allow Torquemada to run roughshod over the city, especially as they continued to proffer their protection to the Jews of Ávila.

Alonso pushed this line of argument as far as suggesting that Torquemada deliberately selected Ávila as part of a larger strategy designed to fulfill his ultimate goal of orchestrating the expulsion of the Jews. Moving the trial and *auto* to Ávila, she claimed, was designed to stir up social tensions within the city with an eye towards provoking an uprising within the *aljama*, and thus providing the monarchy with justification for removing Jews not only from Ávila but the kingdom as a whole.⁹²

In contrast to Alonso, Francisco Ruiz de Pablos argued the choice of Ávila had nothing to do with Torquemada. He suggested that the decision came from Isabel and Ferdinand and their determination to use the Inquisition as way to abate what he calls the “anti-Jewish storm swelling in the kingdom” and to quell unruly, popular agitation against Jews.⁹³ This argument rests on Ruiz’s contention that the methods and authority

⁹⁰ Ana Alonso Blanco, “Judíos y conversos en Ávila en el siglo XV: los albores de la Santa Inquisición,” in *Iglesia y religiosidad en España: historia y archivos: actas de las V Jornadas de Castilla-La Mancha sobre investigación en archivos*, vol. 3 (Guadalajara: Anabad Castilla-La Mancha: Asociación de Amigos del Archivo Histórico Provincial de Guadalajara, 2002), 1411.

⁹¹ AHN, Inq, 143, exp. 3; AHN, Inq 187, exp. 2

⁹² Alonso Blanco, “Judíos y conversos en Ávila en el siglo XV,” 1412.

⁹³ Francisco Ruiz de Pablos, *Ávila y su provincia en documentos del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición: (homenaje a Isabel I de Castilla en su V centenario)*, 1a. ed, Aula abierta (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2005), 39.

of the Holy Office would serve to allay “old” Christian fears of both *conversos* and Jews, and in doing so demonstrate that matters of heresy were best managed by specially trained officials appointed by the Crown. Ruiz’s argument, however, fails to explain why the monarchs opted for Ávila as opposed to Toledo or Segovia as the city best positioned to demonstrate royal authority in this particular way.

In the end, we may never know the exact reason why this trial and *auto* took place in Ávila. More than likely, it resulted from a combination of several factors, and the desire to read ulterior motives and long-planned conspiracies on the part of those in charge – Torquemada, especially – while tempting, imbues him with an unlikely level of prescience. At the time the trial began, Torquemada simply could not have known the end result. Once the result became known, I grant, he realized the importance of the case and saw to it that it became tantamount to a *cause célèbre*. Evidence for this comes from the notary’s letter – written at the behest of Torquemada – which communicated the sentence to authorities in La Guardia and probably Zamora and other cities as well. Note too that the transcript was soon translated into Catalan and forwarded to Barcelona, Valencia, and other major cities in the kingdom of Aragon.⁹⁴

What makes this case so different, therefore, is that few other cases dating from this era in the history of the Holy Office were publicized in this particular way. It was, in this respect, unique and probably part of a plan by Torquemada to enhance the power and prestige of the institution then under his direction. Though there is no evidence that Torquemada felt any specific animosity towards the *aljama* in Ávila, it could well be that

⁹⁴ Fita Colomé, “La verdad,” 132.

he also saw this as an opportunity to apply pressure on the community to convert, thus ridding the city of a vocal – and at this point, somewhat hostile – minority group.

In the short run, it certainly had this effect as a letter drafted by Ferdinand and Isabel and sent to Ávila's city council a month after the *auto* was held readily suggests. Dated December 16, 1491, this letter indicates that the rulers had from Ávila's *aljama* a missive

saying that the execution of the justice of the Inquisition of the city of Ávila of certain heretics and two Jews, citizens of la Guardia, so roused the people that they stoned a Jew of this city and now they [the *aljama*] mistrust and fear that the community of the city of Ávila ... will wound, or kill, or maim, or take them, or their women or children or servants or goods....⁹⁵

If Torquemada's design had been to stir up antagonism towards the city's Jews, the *auto* had worked. However, it backfired to the extent that it prompted the monarchy to warn Ávila's authorities that the city's Jews were still under royal protection and to punish anyone who harmed either their persons or property.⁹⁶

Such protection was soon to disappear. Less than four months after Ávila's *auto* took place, the monarchy promulgated an edict announcing that all Jews in the kingdoms

⁹⁵ AHPAv c. 1, núm 74. "Sepades que por parte del aljama de judios de la cibdad de Auila nos fue fecha relacion por su peticion que a nuestros en el nuestro consejo fue presentada disiendo que por cierta esecucion de justicia que se hizo por la ynquisiçion de la cibdad de auila de ciertos erejes e de dos judios vezinos de la Guardia diz que se escandalo el pueblo de tal manera que apedrearon un judio de la dicha cibdad e que ellos se temen e resçelen que la comunidad de la dicha cibdad de Auila o otras personas que ante vos las dichas nuestras justicias entienden nonbrar e declarar, los feriran o mataran o lisiaran o prenderan a ellos o a sus mugeres o fijos e criados o a sus bienes por cabsa e razon e de lo suso derecho contra razon e derecho como non deuan."

⁹⁶ Ibid. It should also be noted that although there was obvious antiJewish violence in Ávila in the weeks following this trial, this does not mean it that *all* "old" Christians expressed or felt such antipathy towards Jews. This is evidenced by examples of Christians assisting Jews in the disposal of property after the edict of expulsion was promulgated, discussed in Chapter Five.

of Castile and Aragon were to either convert or leave forever. The close proximity of these two events – the *auto* and the expulsion order – has allowed some scholars, starting with Fidel Fita in the nineteenth century, to suggest that the *auto* was instrumental in getting Isabel and Ferdinand to rescind the monarch's longstanding policy of protecting Jews and to order their wholesale expulsion from the kingdom instead.⁹⁷ These scholars point to the language of the expulsion decree, which in the view of Fita, and more recently both Kamen and Amelang, alludes directly to some of the issues raised in the course of *Niño de la Guardia* trial and subsequently publicized in the transcripts distributed to various cities and towns, makes it clear: the king and queen had tried keeping Jews and Christians separate; they had tried expelling Jews from Andalucía; they had established the Holy Office to extirpate heresy, all to no avail. The expulsion decree explained:

we are informed ... that great injury has resulted and still results, since the Christians have engaged in and continue to engage in social interaction and communication ... they [Jews] have had means and ways they can to subvert and to steal faithful Christians from our holy Catholic faith and to separate them from it. ... This proved by many statements and confessions, both from these same Jews and from those who have been perverted and enticed by them, which has redounded to the great injury, detriment, and opprobrium of our holy Catholic faith.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Fita Colomé, "La verdad," 131; Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 22. Amelang, *Parallel Histories*, 76–77.

⁹⁸ Luis Suárez Fernández, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los Judíos: 1479-1499. Edición preparada y anotada por Luis Suárez Fernández* (Madrid: CSIC, 1964), 392. "estamos informados por la Inquisición y otros el gran daño que persiste a los cristianos al relacionarse con los judíos, y a su vez estos judíos tratan de todas maneras a subvertir la Santa Fe Católica y están tratando de obstaculizar cristianos creyentes de acercarse a sus creencias....Y así lo hace claro basados en sus confesiones de estos judíos lo mismo a los cuales han pervertido que ha sido resultado en un gran daño y detrimento a la santa fe Católica."

The language is clear: so long as Jews remained in their kingdoms, Christian souls were in peril of being seduced by “agents of heresy” similar to Yuce Franco and Benito Garçia and enticed to return to “the old law.” Once announced, the Jews had until August 2 of that same year to sell their belongings and leave. Some converted and stayed; others chose to leave. What happened to the Jews of Ávila, and how their Christian neighbors reacted to their departure, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Pious Cruelty: The Expulsion of the Jews in 1492

At the end of April in 1492, a messenger from Ferdinand and Isabel arrived in the city of Ávila and immediately summoned the *concejo*, the justices of the city, and the magistrate of the local *hermandad* to a meeting. At that meeting, he presented them with an edict from the Crown, and informed the dignitaries of their obligation, by notarial act, to publicize that edict.¹ Accordingly, on May 1 public couriers went out to “all the customary places” – the main plazas of the city – to read out the following:

We order all Jews, male and female, of whatever age they may be, who live, reside, and are in our said kingdoms and lordships, those who are natives as well as those who are not, who by whatever manner or whatever cause have come to live and reside therein, that by the end of the month of July next of the present year, they depart from all of these our said kingdoms and lordships, along with their sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants, and members of their household, those who are great as well as the lesser folk, of whatever age they may be, and they shall not dare to return to those places, nor to reside in them, nor to live in any part of them, neither temporarily on the way to somewhere else nor in any other manner, under pain that if they do not act on and comply with this command and should be found in our said kingdoms and lordships or come to them in any manner, they incur the penalty of death and the confiscation of all their possessions by our treasury, incurring these penalties by the act itself, without further trial, sentence, or declaration.²

¹ The edict was read out in Ávila on May 1, 1492. When exactly the herald arrived in the city is unknown. The only extant instructions regarding the proclamation of the edict are from Zaragoza, and are published in Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, *La expulsión de los judíos de Zaragoza* (Diputación General de Aragón, Departamento de Cultura y Educación, 1985), 22–24.

² AM c. 1, núm. 77. “...mandamos a todos los judios e judías de qualquier hedad que sean que biuen e moran e están en los dichos nustos reynos e sennorios, asy los naturales dellos commo los non naturales que en qualquier manera e por qualquier cabsa ayan venido e están en ellos que fasta en fin del mes de julio primero que viene deste presente anno, salgan de todos los dichos nuestros reynos e sennorios con sus fijos e fijas e criados e criadas familiares judios, asy grandes commo pequennos de qualquier hedad que sean e non sean osados de tornar a ellos ni estar en ellos ni en parte alguna dellos, de biuienda ni de paso ni en otra manera alguna so pena que sy lo non fisyeren e cunplieren asy, e fueren hallados estar en los dichos

The edict of expulsion, or Alhambra decree, would bring to a final end the presence of Jews in Castile and Aragon. Now the Jews of Ávila, together with their coreligionists throughout the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, had a life-changing decision to make. They could either abandon both their religion and cultural heritage, or they could remain true to that heritage, surrender most of their worldly possessions, and depart their native land, presumably forever.³

Such a decision was not easy to make, as both options were fraught with dangers and uncertainties of different types. Exiting Spain meant difficult, often dangerous travel to distant lands and a search for a new home and livelihood. Conversion, however, did not promise an easy life either. As Christians, *conversos* would now be subject to the jurisdiction of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. That institution had been operating for over a decade, and new Christians, as *conversos* were also known, would fully understand that they and their religious practices would be of paramount interest to inquisitors. Nor did *conversos* have any guarantee of social advancement; institutions such as universities, religious orders and *concejos* were implementing *limpieza de sangre* statutes, ostensibly barring access to anyone with Jewish ancestry.⁴ Jewish communities had witnessed, over the fifteenth century, rising anti-*converso* sentiments which their former co-religionists faced. Yet the alternative to conversion was equally frightening. To

nuestros reynos e sennorios o venir a ellos en qualquier manera, incurran en pena de muerte e confiscación de todos sus bienes para la nuestra camara e fisco, en las quales penas incurran por ese mismo fecho e derecho syn otro proceso sentencia ni declaración.”

³ The edict of expulsion did not explicitly mention conversion as an alternative, but it was seen as an implicit option, which will be discussed below.

⁴ Sicroff, *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII*.

leave their homes, their livelihoods, their communities, and quite possibly their family members, was undoubtedly a heart wrenching decision to make.

Viewed through twenty-first century sensibilities the expulsion of the Jews is one of those events which seems inherently intolerant and an obvious precursor to modern anti-Semitic atrocities, as some historians have argued.⁵ But an event of this magnitude is never so simplistic, and I maintain that the expulsion was but one part of a multi-faceted policy by the monarchy to strengthen the Catholic Church. From the monarchy's perspective, Jews represented, as the last chapter has argued, a danger to the faith of the *conversos*. Their continued presence ensured that Catholicism would continually be undermined; that *conversos* would never become truly Catholic but would be tempted to "back-slide" into their former faith via cultural links which would remain so long as Jews did.

Abulense Jews had already experienced, to their detriment, the policies by which Isabel and Ferdinand had attempted to solve this problem. Jews had been physically separated from Christians and moved to the crowded and unpleasant *judería*; social relations between the religious groups had been restricted; and most recently, the city had borne witness to the *auto da fe* of the *Santo Niño* trial. All of these strategies had already caused pronounced disruption and turmoil within Ávila. And now, finally, the Jews were to leave.

This chapter will examine the expulsion in Ávila in close detail. My purpose here is twofold. First, while the expulsion, momentous and disruptive in many parts of the

⁵ Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*.

peninsula, in Ávila seemingly took place with only a minimum of upheaval, essentially leaving the city much as it was prior to 1492. Those Jews who left apparently did so with little difficulty, whereas those who converted and remained in the city as *conversos* integrated more or less seamlessly into Christian society.⁶ While the previous decade had been rife with tensions between “old” Christians and Jews, the expulsion did not exacerbate those tensions, and in many ways, once the Jews had left, the city reverted to its former, more peaceable atmosphere.

There was one notable difference: the absence of an *aljama*. An underlying feature of the expulsion was the erasure of the very memory of Jews: their synagogues were transformed into churches or otherwise dismantled, their cemeteries became sites for new religious institutions, the spaces they left largely filled in by Catholics. Such an erasure would only serve to bolster the Crown’s endeavor to create a spiritually united realm. Yet it was not a complete erasure. Concrete reminders were easily sold, torn down, or otherwise transformed. Intangible reminders were less easily disposed of. Certainly in Ávila, in the years immediately following the expulsion, efforts to settle unresolved Jewish affairs, particularly financial matters, only served to keep them in mind.

While Ávila may have experienced the expulsion with a greater degree of ease, other cities and towns required the Crown to intervene to ensure the safety of Jews exiting the kingdoms, as well as to prevent Christians from taking advantage of them as they left. This leads to the second purpose of this chapter: to demonstrate that historians

⁶ Certain tensions between wealthy *conversos* and “old” Christian nobles became more overt after the expulsion; these will be discussed in Chapter Five.

who have written about this chapter in Spain's history have exaggerated the extent to which such factors as proto anti-Semitism, religious bigotry, intolerance, or a desire for financial gain figured in the monarchy's motivations for ordering the expulsion.⁷ Rather, as this chapter will argue, Ferdinand and Isabel saw the expulsion as the only option left which would eradicate the *judaizing* heresy within the Catholic Church in Castile and Aragon.

Niccolò Machiavelli, when considering the expulsion of Iberia's other religious minority – the Muslims – from Aragon in 1502, said this of Ferdinand: "Further, always using religion as a plea, so as to undertake greater schemes, he devoted himself with a pious cruelty to driving out and clearing his kingdom of the Moors."⁸ This statement can equally pertain to Isabel, the kingdom of Castile, and the expulsion of the Jews. But while Machiavelli sought to find ulterior motives in the actions of the monarchs, I maintain that rather than focusing on any nefarious motives, the key words in this sentence are "pious" and "cruelty."

This was not cruelty for cruelty's sake. Isabel and Ferdinand ordered the expulsion for reasons of piety – but not a merciful piety. Their piety, in my view, had become

⁷ The historiography on the expulsion is vast. While major schools of thought will be discussed below, see also Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002); Jaime Contreras, "Judios, judaizantes y conversos en la península Ibérica en los tiempos de la expulsión," in *Judios, Sefarditas, Conversos: la expulsión de 1492 y sus consecuencias* (Valladolid: Ámbito, 1995), 457–77; Henry Kamen, "The Expulsion: Purpose and Consequence," in *Spain and the Jews: The Sephardi Experience, 1492 and after* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 74–91; Henry Kamen, "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492," *Past & Present*, no. 119 (May 1, 1988): 30–55; Moshe Lazar and Stephen Haliczer, eds., *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, The Henry J. Leir Library of Sephardica. Text and Studies 1 (Lancaster, CA: Labyrinthos, 1997); E. William Monter, "The Death of Coexistence: Jews and Moslems in Christian Spain, 1480-1502," in *The Expulsion of the Jews: 1492 and after* (New York: Garland, 1994); Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*; Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*.

⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), 88.

centered in the deep desire to create a unified and doctrinally orthodox Catholic community within their kingdoms. After nearly two decades of increasing concern over the state of Catholicism in the kingdoms, especially the Catholicism of the *conversos*, it is clear they felt there was no alternative. Conversion was desirable, even solicited, but the Jewish religion could no longer be tolerated. As seen in the previous chapter, if Jews remained there would be those who continually sought to overthrow the Catholic Church, and to seduce their former co-religionists back into the Jewish faith. Thus, for Ferdinand and Isabel, the absence of the Jews would leave the *conversos* better able to truly embrace Catholic doctrine and rituals.

I also maintain that the king and queen understood the cruelty of their actions, and, since the expulsion was not located in antipathy towards Jews, they did all they could to assist the deportees as they left, fulfilling one last time their part of the royal alliance before it disintegrated entirely. In their eyes, this was a situation where the ends – which indeed caused a great deal of suffering – would justify the means. The timing is key: with the defeat of Granada, Iberian soil was now completely under Catholic rule, and a spiritually united realm was, for the first time in 800 years, not only possible but achievable.

This chapter begins with an examination of the various explanations for the expulsion; I seek to explicate this notion of “pious cruelty” and how it has been interpreted by scholars who have trod this ground before me. This is followed by a brief discussion of the Alhambra decree itself, as its language is crucial in determining the monarchs’ thinking leading up to the promulgation of the edict. My focus then will move

to the impact of the expulsion in Ávila itself, concentrating first on the sale or disposal of Jewish goods and property (both private and communal), which will demonstrate the relative ease of the operation, as well as the attempts to erase the physical remnants of a Jewish presence in the city. Following that, I will discuss the resolution of – or attempts to resolve – outstanding loans and debts between Jews and Christians prior to the expulsion. Finally, an examination of post-expulsion finances – and returnees – will elucidate the inability to fully erase the memory of the Jews.

Though it is not accurate to state that any city or community was representative of the experience of the expulsion in Castile or Aragon – and obviously I am arguing for Abulense exceptionalism here – yet the closer focus on Ávila will allow us a greater understanding the impact of this event on those who lived through, both the ones who had to leave, and those who stayed.

The expulsion explained

As noted in the previous chapter, during the violent aftermath of the *Santo Niño* trial, Ferdinand and Isabel responded quickly in December 1491 to ensure the safety of the Jews in Ávila by ordering the *corregidor* to guard and protect them.⁹ Yet only four months later, the two monarchs announced the edict of expulsion, forcing all Jews to convert or leave the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. What do we know about the motives that led to this eventful decree? Scholars have attempted to answer this question from the moment the event occurred. My conception of “pious cruelty” echoes

⁹ AM c. 1, núm. 74

throughout the many interpretations. Some have emphasized the desire for a spiritually united realm, which is where I locate the monarch's piety; others have contended the expulsion is proof of cruelty – that is, born of Spanish Catholic hatred of Jews, evinced sometimes on the part of the monarchs, sometimes by the Holy Office (in the person of Tomás de Torquemada), and sometimes as a popular movement.

From the start, this contrast was present in accounts of the expulsion. Contemporary explanations for the expulsion were, unsurprisingly, influenced by the faith of the writer. Andrés Bernáldez, an “old” Christian cleric with ties to the Holy Office in Seville (he was close to Diego de Daza, who later became Inquisitor General), was an eyewitness to the expulsion, and included an account of the event in his chronicle of the reign of Isabel and Ferdinand. I maintain that his view of the expulsion mirrors precisely the thinking of the king and queen: it was an act born of necessity. Like the monarchs, Bernáldez believed Jews constituted a source of heresy, and their continuing presence within the kingdom served only to contaminate the faith of Christians, especially that of thousands who had only recently converted to Christianity. It follows that in his chronicle he alluded to the “very great harm” caused by the presence of the Jews in the kingdom, a presence which served to “nourish heresy.” Jews, as he saw it, had had ample opportunities to listen to preachers and to embrace the teachings of what he considered the true faith. But, just as “their ancestors had with malice ignored our savior Jesus Christ,” he wrote, so the Jews of Castile and Aragon “never wanted to hear

the truth, but were deceived by the false book, the Talmud.”¹⁰ Such arguments had only become more prevalent in the latter half of the fifteenth century, surfacing again during the *Santo Niño* trial, and echoed in the edict of expulsion itself.

In contrast, Jewish accounts of the expulsion painted the monarchs in a much harsher light, and offered completely different explanations of the rationale leading up to the fateful decree; explanations which point to the cruel nature of Ferdinand and Isabel. One anonymous chronicle, written in the Ottoman empire in the decades immediately following the expulsion, drew upon the Bible and compared Ferdinand with Nebuchadnezzar, arguing that the expulsion was a repeat of the Jewish exile into Babylon. Ferdinand, he wrote, was “a fierce king who showed no favour (sic) to young or old, and did not pardon ... and scattered the Jews across the earth.” The chronicler portrays Ferdinand as a tool of God’s will, acting on His behalf to punish the Jews of Castile and Aragon for the ways in which they had displeased Him (the chronicle does not give details). That punishment was an act of complete cruelty, as the expulsion destroyed “the glory” of Sephardim.¹¹

Other Jewish accounts focused on Isabel, singling her out as the chief architect of the expulsion. Rabbi Elijah Capsali, head of the Cretan Jewish community, did much to

¹⁰ Bernáldez, *Historia de los reyes católicos D. Fernando y Doña Isabel*, 251. “En el nombre del muy alto Dios Ntro. Señor visto por los cristianísimos rey é reyna el muy gran daño procedido de la endurecida opinión, e perpetua opinión, é seguridad de los judíos ... [P]or los sabios varones de España, les fue predicado el Santo Evangelio, e Doctrina de Ntra. Sta. Madre Iglesia, é les fue predicado, é probado por sus mismas escrituras, como el Mesías que aguardaban era Ntro. Redentor J. C. que vino en el tiempo convenible, el que sus antepasados con malicia ignoraron, é todos los otros que después de ellos vinieron nunca quisieron dar el oído á la verdad, antes engaña dos por el falso libro del Talmud ...”

¹¹ M. Benayahu, “A Source for the History of the Expulsion from Spain” *Sinai*, 88, (1981), 46-47, quoted in Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 521. On the exile of the Israelites, see 2 Kings 24.

aid the Iberian Jews who came to and through Crete. He believed Isabel had always hated the Jews, and had been begging Ferdinand to allow her to expel them since their marriage began. He continually refused, until she, “spurred on by her priests...told him: ‘You no doubt love the Jews, and the reason is that you are of their flesh and blood.’” Ferdinand left her in a rage, but later thought “‘I do not want the queen to gloat that I am of Jewish descent. God will surely listen to me after I return to His fold a large number of people.’”¹² Thus Capsali believed that the monarchs, for very personal and hateful reasons, were the sole impetus behind the expulsion.

Later accounts and interpretations of the expulsion continue to explore the theme of pious cruelty, some more overtly than others. French jurist and political philosopher, Jean Bodin, commented on the expulsion in his 1588 *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*. He directly echoed Machiavelli’s notion of “cruel piety,” claiming that Ferdinand was moved to act “from a certain wicked piety or rather from an insatiable greed for money.”¹³ “Wicked piety,” extrapolated to infer fanatical, orthodox religiosity, was a value that non-Iberian writers often imbued Ferdinand and Isabel with, along with insatiable greed, as motives for the expulsion.

It practically goes without saying that piety, both wicked and cruel, figured in the writings of authors associated with the Black Legend that emerged in the course of late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the last chapter I explained how writers associated

¹² Elijah Capsali, “The Minor Order of Elijah (Seder Eliyahu Zuta),” in *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles: An Anthology of Medieval Chronicles Relating to the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal*, ed. David T Raphael (North Hollywood: Carmi House Press, 1992), 13.

¹³ Jean Bodin and Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Colloquium of the seven about secrets of the sublime* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 470.

with this school of thought interpreted the establishment of the Holy Office in wholly negative terms. No surprise then that same writers had little positive to say about the expulsion; Spain for them was a land of intolerant Catholics, who were all secretly Jewish. Catholic cruelty towards heretics, then was necessary, wrote William of Orange (main leader of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish, officially begun in 1568), so that Spaniards might prove themselves good Catholics. For, as all of Europe knew, the expulsion notwithstanding, “the greatest part of the Spaniards, and principally those who call themselves noblemen, are of the blood of the Moors and Jews.”¹⁴ In this he echoed Erasmus, with his famous statement: “non placet Hispania,” as it was a land filled with Jews.¹⁵

In the nineteenth century, as Spain sought to define itself as a modern nation-state, scholars such as José Amador de los Ríos relied on history as a tool with which to construct Spanish national identity. Amador’s *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos de España*, first published in 1848, put forward the teleological view that the expulsion of the Jews was the necessary off-shoot of Spain’s centuries-long march towards a unified *patria* and the birth the world’s first global empire. In this he echoed Ferdinand and Isabel’s desire for a spiritually united polity, for, as he saw it, the two had inherited independent kingdoms, each with disparate laws, customs and “even religious beliefs.” Both, moreover, understood that it was their “sacred duty” to create a cohesive

¹⁴ Willem I prins van Oranje, *Apologie contre l’édit de proscription publié en 1580 par Philippe II, Roi d’Espagne ...* (Brussels: Flatau, 1858), 147–148.

¹⁵ Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*, ed. P.S. and H. M. Allen, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1913), 597. See also Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700: The Formation of a Myth*, 160–161.

realm, a Spain that was unified, both politically and religiously. This thinking, argued Amador, rendered the expulsion of the Jews almost inevitable, a final, albeit tragic, step towards a stronger Spain, thus preparing the proto-nation to carry its institutions, laws, and religion to distant lands.¹⁶

Conservative nineteenth-century scholar, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, took a slightly different tack. One of his priorities was correcting a holdover from the Black Legend, the idea that Spanish Catholicism, bolstered by the Holy Office, had stifled Spanish intellectualism. He thus championed the policies of “the Catholic Monarchs” and argued that converted Jews were consistently able to rise to achieve high honors in Spanish universities.¹⁷ His explanation of the expulsion was one which defended Ferdinand and Isabel. While in his *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (published in 1880), he concurred with Amador that the expulsion was necessary, he did not blame it on the king and queen. Continued communication between Catholics and Jews had only exacerbated Catholic antipathy towards the latter, an antipathy which had been on the rise throughout the fifteenth century. By 1492, the edict to expel the Jews had become necessary in order to “protect that unhappy race.”¹⁸ Ferdinand and Isabel did not want a repeat of the antiJewish riots of 1391, and the expulsion, Menéndez y Pelayo asserted,

¹⁶ Amador de los Rios, *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos de España*, 161–162.

¹⁷ Francis Graham Wilson and H. Lee Cheek Jr, *Order and Legitimacy: Political Thought in National Spain* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 71.

¹⁸ Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 1:635.

“was neither good nor bad, it was the only possibility.”¹⁹ He alluded specifically to the *Santo Niño* trial and its aftermath as proof of Christian violence towards Jews.

Twentieth-century historians – those writing in the aftermath of the rise of Nazi Germany, World War II and the Holocaust – have offered interpretations of the expulsion informed by those events. Yitzhak Baer, the eminent historian who left Germany in 1930 (at the age of 42) for what was then Palestine, was particularly sensitive to the role of “exile” in Jewish history. (His book on the subject, entitled *Galut*, or *Exile*, was published in 1936.) Understandably then, Baer discounted the notion of any sort of pious rationale on the part of Ferdinand and Isabel. In *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, first published in German in 1929, he stressed that the dynamic behind the expulsion was burgeoning intolerance towards Jews. Baer, moreover, argued that the expulsion was the culmination of 1500 years of struggle between Christians and Jews and precipitated by a “Church Militant ... nourished by the sinister forces of rampant anti-Semitism and foul suspicion.”²⁰ In the end, however, Baer conceded, that while the monarchy did what it could to facilitate conversion, the expulsion resulted from “a curious blend of racial and religious motives” together with the inability of Catholic Spain to assimilate this “foreign racial element.”²¹

The other great Israeli historian of Spain, Benzion Netanyahu, was politically very active during the formation of the modern state of Israel. He subscribed to the idea of “Greater Israel” and saw the Holocaust and later, the aggression of Arab states against

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:636.

²⁰ Baer, *A History of the Jews*, v. 2, 425.

²¹ Ibid., v. 2, 435.

Israel, as examples of unchecked persistent anti-Semitism. Without a secure homeland, Jews would always be at risk of annihilation. It is no surprise, then, that Netanyahu's *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, published in 1995, posited that that Holy Office was an exemplar of that same unchecked anti-Semitism. Netanyahu in particular singled out Tomás de Torquemada, arguing that he alone convinced Ferdinand and Isabel to proceed with the expulsion. Netanyahu allowed that while responsibility for the decree lay wholly with the king and queen, Torquemada, then Inquisitor General, evinced "granitelike hardness and relentless ferocity [which] made him virtually indomitable."²² Evidence to support Netanyahu's contention that Torquemada was directly involved in the writing of the edict of Expulsion is found in several letters explaining the edict that Ferdinand sent to various nobles (see below).

Comparable to Menéndez y Pelayo, Netanyahu saw the Holy Office as representative of the growing popular hatred of Jews implicit in Spanish Catholicism and believed the monarchs succumbed to that opinion in making their decision. He suggested that they came to realize, given the events of the past two decades (the discovery of *judaizers*, the establishment of the Holy Office, the trial of the *Santo Niño*) that their continuing support of the Jews was no longer tenable in the face of "a movement too strong to ignore and a popular sentiment too deep to trifle with."²³ With the conquest of Granada, the king and queen were at the height of their prestige and had no wish to lose

²² Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, 2nd:1089.

²³ Ibid., 2nd:1091–1092.

that popularity. Thus, for Netanyahu, the expulsion was motivated entirely by outside pressure on the Crown.

Spanish historian Luis Suarez Fernandez's work was informed by his politics as well. Politically right leaning, he has been criticized for his strong ties to Francisco Franco – he served as the Director General of Universities and Investigation during Franco's last years.²⁴ Unsurprisingly, Suarez, like Amador, and indeed, like Ferdinand and Isabel themselves, argued that ultimately the goal of the expulsion, coming as it did on the heels of the conquest of Granada, was "Catholic unity." However, he did not see this as limited to religious unity. He further agreed with Amador when he stated that the Jews were "victims of a maturing political power" and that Ferdinand and Isabel were simply continuing the process they had been working towards their entire reign: solidifying their God-given authority over their kingdoms. The religious diversity of the medieval period, manifested by the relationship between the Crown and the Jews, had to give way to social cohesion, easily solidified through religious identity.²⁵

All of these historians, in their own way, and informed by their own ideologies, have offered their interpretations of how the expulsion was an expression of "pious cruelty." Historians often interpret the past through the lens of their own experience, and as such, when explaining an event as significant as the expulsion of the Jews, are wont to place differing weights on "piety" and "cruelty." I am attempting to chart a middle course. As I will argue while examining the language of the edict, it is clear that for

²⁴ P. Corroto, B. García Jaén, and J.M. Marcos, "Los Historiadores Se Alarman Ante La Hagiografía de Franco," *Público.es*, May 30, 2011.

²⁵ Luis Suárez Fernández, *La expulsión de los judíos de España* (Editorial MAPFRE, 1991), 305–306.

Ferdinand and Isabel, the *Santo Niño* trial had fully revealed the supposed perfidy of Jewish behavior towards Christians. It was apparent to the king and queen that their attempts to keep Jews and Christians separate were failing abysmally, and that expulsion was inevitable if they were to ensure that converts would remain faithful to the Christian faith. And as I will further argue, while examining the expulsion itself, the two monarchs fully understood that the decision they had made was unspeakably cruel. Unwilling to let that deter or dissuade them, they instead did all they could to facilitate the departure of the Jews. This, I believe, stems not only from their desire to render Castile and Aragon spiritually united, but also from the reciprocal relationship between the Crown and Jews that had existed up to this point.

The Edict of Expulsion

Three versions of the edict are extant. The first is in the form of a letter, dated March 20th 1492 that Torquemada sent to the bishop of Gerona.²⁶ This letter undoubtedly served as a kind of draft, used to compose the two later versions, as the similarities among them are many. The official Alhambra decrees, signed by the king and queen just eleven days after Torquemada's letter, were promulgated throughout Castile. The final draft, signed by Ferdinand alone, went out to cities and towns in Aragon.²⁷

What these three drafts have in common is language outlining the many ways in which Jews "seduce" Christians into practicing Judaism, echoing the language used when

²⁶ Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Real Patrimonio, Apéndice General, v. 88, f. 9-13.

²⁷ Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*, 84-85.

sentencing the men condemned in the *Santo Niño* trial. All three also refer to previous measures taken to prevent Jews from “contaminating” *conversos*, and lament the fact that those measures have failed. The official edict states:

We were informed that in our kingdoms there have been bad Christians who judaized and apostatized from our holy Catholic faith, of which the cause was communication between Jews and Christians; in the Cortes which we held in the city of Toledo in the past year of 1480, we ordered that Jews should be set apart in all the cities, towns and places in our kingdoms, and to give them Jewish quarters and places set apart where they might live, hoping that this separation would remedy the problem. In addition we have procured and given order to hold an inquisition in these our kingdoms and lands, which, as you know, has been done for more than twelve years.... We are informed by the inquisitors... of the great damage done to Christians due to participation, conversation and communication which they have had and have with Jews, of whom it is proven that they always by various ways and means try to subvert faithful Christians from our holy Catholic faith.²⁸

Clearly, the monarchs envisioned expulsion as something of a last resort, possibly understanding it as a cruel measure to be instigated only after all other efforts at protecting the faith of the “new” Christians had failed. The language plainly indicates that the final decision was that of the king and queen acting in concert, albeit “with the counsel and advice of certain prelates and grandees and caballeros of our realms, and other learned persons of conscience in our council.”²⁹

Though the Crown did not publicize their intentions for a month, they did inform certain nobles, leading clergy, and the heads of the military orders. While it is not clear why the delay (various historians have offered theories), we know that these people, all in

²⁸ AM C. 1, núm 77. The Archivo Municipal de Ávila has the extant copy of the Alhambra decree sent to that city.

²⁹ AM C. 1, núm 77

positions of authority, were told in order that they might better oversee the expulsion in the regions under their jurisdiction.³⁰

Although the edict does not offer conversion as an alternative, it was clearly something which the king and queen welcomed. Henry Kamen argued it was not mentioned because it was implicit in the decree: only Jews had to depart, therefore conversion meant the right to stay.³¹ Certainly this was made clear in June of that year when Abraham Seneor, *rab mayor* of Castile and an obvious exemplar to the Jewish communities, converted along with his entire family. Ferdinand and Isabel made the most of the conversion by agreeing to serve as his godparents, and then by naming him, days after, *regidor* of Segovia, and appointing him to the royal *consejo*.³² Seneor became an obvious exemplar: conversion could bring many benefits.

The Expulsion in Ávila

A close reading of events connected with the expulsion of the Jews from Ávila highlights both the relative ease in which Abulense Jews experienced this “cruel” event, and offers comparisons of how it was a more wrenching experience elsewhere. In those cases, Ferdinand and Isabel were willing to mitigate the cruelty of their edict, by intervening on behalf of the very people they were banishing from their kingdoms. First,

³⁰ Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 45. On the various reasons for the delay, see Ibid., 43–44; John Edwards, *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs, 1474-1520*, A History of Spain (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 229; Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, 2:447.

³¹ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 22.

³² AGS, RGS, leg., 149207,55. Conversion campaigns were also waged in various towns throughout Castile and Aragon, notably in Maqueda and Torrijos (Castile) and Teruel (Aragon). Antonio C. Floriano, *La aljama de judíos de Teruel y el hallazgo de su necrópolis: memoria de excavaciones núm. 1* (Teruel: La Voz de Teruel, 1926), 17; Suárez Fernández, *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los Judíos*, 454.

a brief overview of the population of Ávila in 1492 offers an idea of how many people the community lost in the expulsion. Then I will discuss the transfer of property records, before moving to explore the resolution of debts. It is in these latter issues that the Crown was called on to mediate.

Population

It is difficult to ascertain exactly the size of the Jewish population of Ávila in the spring of 1492. Using various documents dating between the years 1475 to 1492, Pilar León Tello has determined that the *aljama* then included 107 “heads of families.” At an average of five members per household, this figure translates to a total population of approximately 535 men, women, and children. The actual figure may have been somewhat larger as the *aljama* undoubtedly included individuals who never appeared in those documents. For this reason León Tello accepted at face value a casual statement made by Gonzalo Chacón in 1479 that “the largest part of the population of Ávila are Jewish.” She therefore estimated the number of Abulense Jews at 3,000 on the eve of the expulsion.³³

This figure is undoubtedly far too high. To begin with, the accuracy of Chacón’s statement is doubtful, since, as I noted in Chapter Two, in 1483 Ávila’s population stood at around 7,000. Of that figure, Jews represented no more than approximately 17%, or in the neighborhood of 1000 persons. Corroboration for this estimate may be found in the

³³ Pilar León Tello, “La judería de Ávila durante el reinado de los Reyes Católicos,” *Sefarad* 23, no. 1 (1963): 44.

research of Serafín de Tapia, who has calculated the number of Jews in Ávila in 1482 to be between 977 and 1,058.³⁴ That number would not have changed significantly over the next decade.

If, as Leon has suggested, 3,000 equaled 17% of the population, then the entire populace would be near 18,000. A census taken in 1528 tells us that the number of *vecinos* in Ávila at that time was 1,525, which, when using the same calculation as before – five family members per each head of household – amounts to a total population of 7,625, less than half of 18,000.³⁵ The departure of the entire Jewish population – even at an inflated number of 3,000 people – simply does not make up the difference.

All this suggests that the number of Jews in Ávila in 1492 hovered around 1000 souls. But if it is difficult to calculate the total size of that population, it is even more problematic to calculate the proportion of that population who opted for conversion during the months immediately following publication of the expulsion order. Some have suggested that conditions in Ávila favored expulsion. As José Belmonte Díaz put it, such events as the establishment of the *judería* and the violence following the *Santo Niño* trial “had created in the Jews a state of inquietude and fear” making it easy for them to opt for expulsion as opposed to conversion.³⁶ The Abulense historian Eduardo Ruiz Ayúcar

³⁴ Serafín de Tapia Sánchez has done extensive work on this issue, and puts the number of Jews in Ávila in 1482 between 977 and 1,058. See Tapia Sánchez, “Los judíos,” 139–143.

³⁵ Serafín de Tapia Sánchez, “Las fuentes demográficas y el potencial humano de Ávila en el siglo XVI,” no. 2 (1984): 39. The census Professor Tapia Sánchez uses is found in AGS, DGT, Inventario 24, leg.. 1,036, fol. 35.

³⁶ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 143.

concurred: he suspected that “all the Jews of Ávila chose not to abandon their faith and departed.”³⁷

Jodi Bilinkoff disagreed with both Belmonte and Ruiz, and argued that the majority of Abulense Jews opted for conversion. However, the chronology of conversion that she offers is somewhat vague. The conversions, she wrote, took place “in the years after the expulsion.”³⁸ A further complication stems from the fact that there is evidence that some of the Abulenses who elected conversion at the time of expulsion later recanted, converted, and subsequently found their way back to their native city (see below). Although the *converso* population in Ávila at this time was small, there is no evidence of the explicit *anticonverso* violence seen elsewhere, such as in Toledo. While Belmonte is correct to state that relations between Christian and Jews at the time of the expulsion were heated, we cannot discount the lengthy history of amicable relations between the religious groups. Then, too, the presence of a small but notable *converso* population in the city in the early sixteenth century (which will be discussed in Chapter Five) further bolster Bilinkoff’s conclusions.

Ultimately, though the documents do not provide concrete evidence, it is clear that a sizable number of Abulense Jews did indeed choose conversion over exile. Estimates about the number of Jews leaving the kingdoms vary wildly. Henry Kamen estimates that at the time of the expulsion, there were only 80,000 Jews in all of Castile and Aragon, which renders some of the higher figures (Jesuit historian Juan de Mariana,

³⁷ Ayúcar, *Sepulcros*.

³⁸ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 14.

writing over a century after the event, put the figure at 170,000 families expelled) improbable.³⁹ The number of those who converted and stayed is estimated to be in the range of 25,000-50,000.⁴⁰ To this figure can be added the returnees whose number has been estimated at somewhere between 5,000 and 8,000.⁴¹ On average, therefore, it appears that circa 30%- 50% of pre-1492 Jewish population opted for conversion. This estimate is extremely rough, but it appears to apply to Ávila and means that roughly 500 of the Jews residing in the city in 1492 joined the ranks of the “new” Christians. The other half found their way either to Portugal or to one of the ports – that of Valencia on Spain’s Levant coast would have been the closest – from which Jews exiting the kingdom are known to have left.

Jewish Goods and Property

The edict of expulsion clearly states that Jews exiting the kingdom would be allowed to take with them *bienes muebles*, which translates to mean household goods, clothing and other personal effects. On the other hand, it expressly prohibited them with leaving with any gold or silver or any kind of minted coins.⁴² This prohibition was an

³⁹ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 23.

⁴⁰ Henry Kamen believed the “majority” of Jews converted, suggesting that only 30% chose exile. Ibid., 24.

⁴¹ For a clear overview of variety of the figures surrounding the expulsion, see Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews*, 74–75.

⁴² Ibid. “E porque los dichos judíos e judías puedan durante el dicho tiempo fasta en fin del dicho mes de julio mejor disponer de sy e de sus bienes e hacienda, por la presente los tomamos e recibimos so nuestro seguro e anparo e defendimiento real, e los aseguramos a ellos o a sus bienes para que durante el dicho teinpo fasta el dicho dia fin del dicho mes de julio, puedan andar e estar seguros e puedan entrar e vender e trocar e enagenar todos sus bienes muebles...E ... los judios e judías que puedan sacar fuera de todos los dichos nuestros reynos e sennorios, sus bienes e hacienda por mar e tierra con tanto que non saquen oro ni plata ni monedo amonedada...”

obvious blow, seeming to resonate with Machiavelli's notion of cruelty, as coins would have been the easiest way to transport whatever money they might have earned from household belongings too big or too cumbersome to take with them. On the other hand, coins could be easily hidden and although strict border searches are said to have been in place, one imagines that port officials could be bribed and that smuggling of both coins and specie occurred.⁴³

Within days of the publication of the expulsion edict, Jews across Castile began the process of attempting to sell property and goods. Yet difficulties arose, and, as the monarchy desired to expedite the departure of the Jews, in the course of the following month they issued a series of new edicts designed to accelerate those sales. On May 14, for example, the town council of Ávila, together with those in other cities and towns, received a royal letter of instruction ordering local officials to make certain that the Jews had the liberty to sell or dispose of their personal property, real estate, and livestock freely, in any matter they chose, and that those who bought or received these goods could do so without any impediment.⁴⁴ These instructions were evidently designed to remove existing restrictions meant to limit commerce between Jews and Christians, and thus enable the Jews to get the money they needed to get out of the kingdom as quickly and expeditiously as they were able. As the following section will show, a number of Abulense Jews did just this.

⁴³ See Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* chapter 6.

⁴⁴ AM c. 1, núm. 79. "Por quanto al tienpo que nos mandamus que los judios moradores e estantes en estos nuestros reynos salgan dellos dentro de çierto termino...por ellas les dimos liçençia e facultad para que pudiesen vender e trocar e cambiar sus bienes muebles e rayçes e disponer dellos librement a su voluntad."

Private Property

The documentation regarding the sale of private property of the Jews in Ávila at the time of the expulsion is relatively scant. There are only two records concerning arable land: Yuce Abencan sold his vineyard, located on the edge of the city, to Juan de Rebelte, and Rabinico Tamaño sold his field, which bordered the cemetery of Santo Domingo.⁴⁵ The majority of the nineteen property transactions involving Jews, recorded between May 4 and June 20, concern long term leases, or *censos*, between Jews and the actual owners of the properties – mostly religious institutions such as the cathedral chapter.⁴⁶ As discussed in Chapter Two, Jews maintained these contracts after they had moved to the *judería*. Now, however, they had to abandon both the contract and the home.

Tellingly, all of the houses involved in these nineteen transactions were located outside the *judería*. They were to be found in the more central and prosperous neighborhoods. Six transactions were for properties in what was called the *judería vieja*, or old *judería*, the neighborhood near the Basilica San Vicente, where many Jews formerly lived.⁴⁷ Four properties were in the *calle* Andrín, and others were located near the Mercado Chico, both locations near the center of the walled city.⁴⁸ (See Map 2, p xi). Of these nineteen, fourteen of the transactions refer to houses in the plural: obviously the

⁴⁵ AHN, cód.... 405 B, fol. 322; AHN Clero, lib. 815, fol. 36.

⁴⁶ The Convent of San Millán also rented property to Jews; there may have been others. AHN, Clero, papeles, leg. 262

⁴⁷ AHN, Clero, lib. 815, fol. 38, 39, 40; AHN, cód.... 402 B, fol 59. See also León Tello, *Judios*, 159–160.

⁴⁸ AHN, Clero, lib. 815, fol. 36, 38,39, 40; AHN cód... 406B, fols 30-39, 82-87.

ability to retain leases on more than one property meant these fourteen families were likely the wealthiest of those who chose exile over conversion.

Some Christians bought more than one property. Yucef Aceror sold the leases of “some houses in the *judería vieja*, which are next to the houses of don Ca Falcon, with the houses of the heirs of Sento Cohen . . . to Inés González, mother of Alfonso González, priest of Ávila.”⁴⁹ Likewise, Pedro Ximénez took over the leases of the houses of Abraham Tamaño and Yuce Cohen on the *calle* Andrín, as well as a *corral* or yard from the property of Pedro de San Martin.⁵⁰

This last transaction was brokered by Isaque Tamaño, and is one of two examples where Jews worked to assist other Jews with the sale of their homes. Benamyn Merino, working on behalf of Mosé Vadano and Abraham Churciel (all Jewish residents of Ávila), sold “some houses which they had in the Rua de los Zapateros.” to Juan Ferrador.⁵¹ The documents do not explain why certain transactions were conducted in this manner; perhaps these were simple cases of Jews attempting to assist their co-religionists.

The existing records suggest that all of these nineteen contract terminations proceeded without incident and without any complaint on the part of the Jewish sellers that they were being cheated, short-changed or otherwise defrauded by the Christians with whom they had to deal. Whether the Christian buyers were motivated by sympathy, or whether they regarded these purchases as sound business transactions is unknown.

What is known is that there were no petitions to the Crown to intervene in any

⁴⁹ AHN, cód. 402B, fol. 59.

⁵⁰ AHN, cód., 406, fol 82-87.

⁵¹ AHN, Clero, lib. 815, fol. 35.

transactions – a stark contrast to the tensions of the previous decade, when the Abulense *aljama* did not hesitate to voice their grievances about the ways in which they were mistreated by their Christian neighbors. While it is difficult to interpret what this lack of petitions may mean, it suggests that sales took place without much in the way of disagreement or rancor. The Abulense documents unfortunately do not list prices, thus there is no way to ascertain just what sort of prices Jews received for their properties.⁵² Henry Kamen has examined the embarkation registers from several port cities in Andalucía, and suggested that more than a few Jews made “substantial sums” from the sale of their property.⁵³

Additional evidence suggesting a relative conflict-free disposition of Jewish property in Ávila comes from the fact that a number of Christians stepped forward to help the Jews dispose of their property. One example of this occurred when a Jew named Abraham Alvo gave Ferrand López Beato power of attorney to act in his name and to oversee the transfer of certain properties to Christian buyers.⁵⁴ A nephew of Ferrand González, a canon in Ávila’s cathedral, López Beato was likely a member of Ávila’s prestigious “old” Christian González Davila family.⁵⁵ López Beato’s willingness to assist Alvo suggests a close relationship between the two and stands in the face of suggestions by Jose Belmonte and others about the supposed breakdown in Christian-Jewish relations

⁵² Andrés Bernaldez suggests that Christians bought “rich houses and landed properties [from the Jews] for a small amount of money” yet later in his account he mentions the vast sums (10,000 ducats, or 374,000 *maravedís*) Jews were able to pay for their passage on ships to take them to Italy or Morocco. Raphael, *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 73; 75–76. On monetary values circa 1500, see Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 1:v. 1, p 560.

⁵³ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 25.

⁵⁴ AHN, Clero, lib. 815, fol. 36.

⁵⁵ AGS, RGS, leg., 149507, 366

in Ávila following the *Santo Niño* trial. More, of course, needs to be learned about the relationship between Alvo and Lopez Beato, but they were not the only members of their two respective religious groups to enter into what appears to be a close, rather cooperative working relationship in the months following the expulsion order.

Another example of this kind of relationship involved Juan Alvarez de Palomares, also a canon of the cathedral. Isaque Tamaño was the owner of several houses located on the *calle* Andrín, which he entrusted to Palomares to dispose of.⁵⁶ Interestingly, this was not the first time Palomares had acted as a real estate broker for Tamaño; in May 1491, he had also “transferred some houses, in the name of Isaque Tamaño, to Pedro Xuarez.”⁵⁷ Such transactions point to cooperation between Ávila’s Christians and Jews at this challenging moment in the city’s history, a cooperation not at all unprecedented.

Yet for all these transactions suggest about cooperation between Christian and Jew, not every one of the recorded transactions went smoothly. One instance of Jews who wanted to sell property but could not, involved the family of Rabi Çuleman Daça, who owned several houses in the *judería vieja*. Failing to find a buyer, or at least one willing to pay the price they asked, they appear to have abandoned the property before they left the city claiming in one document that they were no longer able to maintain the houses in question. Furthermore, in a sign that they were through with Ávila, and everything that it come to represent, they also informed the municipal authorities that they “did not want to

⁵⁶ AHN, cód. 406, fol 88-93.

⁵⁷ AHN Clero, lib. 815, fol. 35.

have anything more to do with the said houses.”⁵⁸ As this family’s experience suggest, the expulsion did not always proceed smoothly, and some Abulenses carried bitter memories with them as they left.

Communal property

By June 1492, Ferdinand and Isabel were alarmed to realize that Jews in certain cities were selling communal properties together with their private holdings. To prevent such sales, on June 25 they issued another royal edict prohibiting further sale of such properties. The edict reads:

[as] now we are informed that the Jews, in order to leave, are selling the synagogues, and cemeteries and ...common possessions which they have and belong to the *aljamas*, and not of a particular person. This we say they cannot do for the synagogues have been and are dedicated to the service of God, and the cemeteries are religious places....And the possessions of the *aljamas* are reserved for our rights and uses.⁵⁹

Since the Jews belonged to the Crown, so too did their communal property. Thus, the monarchs instructed the *corregidor* of Ávila, Pero Sánchez de Farias, to ensure that neither the synagogues or any other communal properties that had once belonged to the *aljama* be sold without express royal permission. It soon became clear that the monarchs’

⁵⁸ AHN, Clero, Papeles, leg.. 264.”por quanto dixerón que ellos non las podían sustentar ny querían ny entendían mas tener las dichas casas.” It could very well be that the family changed their mind about leaving when faced with the difficulties selling their property. In the mid-sixteenth century, a local cleric by the name of Gaspar Daza gained prominence as a religious reformer in Ávila. See Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 84.

⁵⁹The original document is in the Archivo Municipal of Toledo. It is also published in León Tello, *Judíos de Toledo*, 1:541–543. “et agora somos informados que los dichos judíos para se yr, venden las dichas synogas e onsarios ... e otras cosas comunes que tyenen e son de las aljamas e non de personas particulares, lo qual diz que non pueden faser por las dichas synogas aver seydo ya diputadas por el seruicio de Dios e los dichos honsarios por ser lugares religiosos. . . . e [las] posesiones de las aljamas por estar obligados a nuestros derechos e algunos usos.”

plan for these properties was to convert them into Catholic religious sites, thus expunging the memory of Jews.

By far the most important piece of communal property for Jewish communities was the synagogue, especially the main synagogue with its attendant school and bathhouse. Cities with larger *aljamas* had more than one synagogue. Ávila, as noted in Chapter One, traditionally had at least three, and with the creation of the *judería* (that is, in 1483) added a fourth, built inside that enclosed space, along the wall of the city near the southwestern gate. Whether the Jews were restricted to the use of this one new synagogue in the years between 1483 and 1492 remains unknown. However, the *aljama*'s communal property at the time of expulsion included those three older synagogues.

What is known about the fate of these buildings following the expulsion order suggests that each became a physical representation of Catholicism. Ávila's main synagogue was located on the *calle* Lomo, near the central Plaza Mercado Chico. Its next-door neighbor was the newly founded Carmelite convent Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación. The condition of the synagogue at the time of the expulsion is not entirely clear, but on November 22, 1493, local authorities saw fit to sell part of the building – bricks, tiles, and the like – at a public auction. The buyer was one Francisco de Ávila, about whom almost nothing is known except that he also took advantage of that same auction to purchase pieces of the city's newest synagogue,

The sale set the stage for what happened next. While the monarchy may not have had explicit plans for the site, it is clear from the edict of June 25 that the land would be reserved for “religious places.” Former Jewish religious sites were being transformed into

Catholic sites, marking the triumph of Christianity and further asserting the spiritual unity (or piety) of the kingdoms. Thus, when Doña Catalina de Águila, Mother Superior of the adjacent convent, put in a request to the monarchy for use of the site – her convent being too cramped and crowded for its inhabitants – the Crown acquiesced. In 1495, they gave the convent the site of the former synagogue, together with what, if anything, remained of the building.⁶⁰

As for Ávila's other synagogues, they too passed, seemingly without incident, into Christian hands.⁶¹ This process may already have begun in the 1480s, when the courtyard of the synagogue on the *calle* Andrín, was sold to Fernán Sánchez Pareja, a notary public of the city. In September 1492, worried that this part of his property might be yet be considered part of the communal property of the *aljama*, and thus reserved for the Crown's use, he appealed to Ferdinand and Isabel for clarification on the matter, and a writ of protection. The monarchs, anxious to retain control of *aljama* properties, responded by referring the matter to Ávila's *corregidor* and ordered him to determine who had title to the property in question.⁶² While Sánchez Pareja may have retained title to the courtyard, the synagogue itself was converted into the Capilla de Nuestra Señora de Las Nieves in the sixteenth century, again asserting Christian supremacy over former Jewish religious sites.

⁶⁰ A copy of the document is published in Enrique Ballesteros, *Estudio histórico de Ávila* (Valladolid: Editorial Maxtor, 1896), 411–412.

⁶¹ AHN, Clero, lib. 815, fol 59.

⁶² AGS, RGS, leg., 149209,1

Another key part of the *aljama*'s communal property was the cemetery. Jewish cemeteries were not only communal property, but also "religious places" according to the June edict, and thus, like synagogues, were set aside for the use of religious institutions. Ávila's *aljama* had two cemeteries, both outside the walls (cemeteries often doubled as common pastureland for stock.) In March 1494, the land and headstones of the eastern cemetery were granted to the adjacent monastery of Santo Tomás. The monastery was given *carte blanche* to do what they wished with the land, that is, it no longer had to be reserved for common pastureland. Nor could the current or future *corregidor* interfere with any plan the Dominicans might have to build on the land.⁶³ Records do not tell us whether the prior of the monastery, Tomás de Torquemada, had requested the donation from the king and queen. According to Haim Beinart, however, the Dominicans had no real need of the land at the time, for in 1500, they gave control of the land back to the city council for grazing purposes.⁶⁴

The other cemetery, north of the city, remained pastureland for the first decade after the expulsion. But in 1511, the convent of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación – which had already taken over the land of the main synagogue – was again in need of enlargement. This time the entire institution moved outside of the walled city, and a new building was built on or near the cemetery.⁶⁵ It is unclear if the convent – which still stands today – is actually situated directly on top of the medieval cemetery. In September 2012, the city began excavations behind the convent in order to lay in new water pipes,

⁶³ AM c. 1, núm. 92.

⁶⁴ Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 112.

⁶⁵ Nicolás González y González, *San Juan de la Cruz en Ávila* (Ávila: Caja de Ahorros de Ávila, 1973), 11.

but the digging was halted when the workers found remnants of Jewish graves.⁶⁶ These remains were disinterred and subsequently reburied in July 2013 in a space alongside the convent.⁶⁷ In August 2013, the city opened a new park, *el Jardín de Sefarad*, the Sephardic Garden, to commemorate the site.⁶⁸

In some cities, cemeteries, despite being “religious places” according to the edict of June 1492, were not reserved for the use of Catholic institutions. In Toledo, for example, city officials allowed the actual burial site to be used as common pasture, while the tombstones and monuments were given to the cathedral chapter. The chapter sold these off and used the proceeds to build the Hospital Santa Cruz and the Franciscan Monasterio San Juan de los Reyes.⁶⁹ In Segovia, on the other hand, while the Hieronymite Monasterio de Santa María del Parral was given the land of the former cemetery, the tombstones were used to build a new city gate.⁷⁰ No documents record the reaction of Segovia’s *conversos* to these building projects, but it is not difficult to imagine that would have considered it a sacrilege, perhaps even another kind of cruel expulsion, although in this instance one that involved the remnants of their deceased ancestors. Such silences are understandable, yet also served to erase the memory of Segovia’s Jewish past.

⁶⁶ Diario de Ávila, 28 de septiembre de 2012. For a thorough analysis of the excavation, see Blas Cabrera González, Jesús Caballero Arribas, and Jorge Díaz de la Torre, “El cementerio judío medieval de ‘la Encarnación’ en Ávila,” *Sefarad* 73, no. 2 (January 22, 2014): 309–38.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 22 de julio de 2013

⁶⁸ Carlos de Miguel, “El Jardín de Sefarad Sobre El Cementerio Judío,” *El Diario Digital de Ávila*, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://avilared.com/not/6047/el-jardin-de-sefarad-sobre-el-cementerio-judio/>.

⁶⁹ Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 115.

⁷⁰ AGS, RGS, leg., 149301,27

Credit

The sale of physical property was by and large straightforward. Far more intricate an issue to resolve as the Jews prepared to leave were any debts and loans still outstanding. Then, too, Christians attempted to take advantage of the time limits by refusing to repay debts to Jews that were not yet due. Therefore, on May 16, the monarchs responded to a petition brought to them by various *aljamas* concerning any promissory notes which fell due after July 31. These were to be repaid before that date.⁷¹ On May 30, Ferdinand and Isabel issued an additional edict, acknowledging that some Jewish borrowers were in difficulty regarding the repayment of debts, since they themselves were unable to collect on monies owed them. The Crown, not wanting any “impediments” to the departure of the Jews, ordered the *alcaldes* and other officials in each town to bring before them all local debtors and creditors, no matter their religious faith, in order to resolve these transactions.⁷² According to Haim Beinart, these local decisions were often influenced by “personal connections” leaving many parties dissatisfied, thus necessitating appeals to the *consejo real*.⁷³ Unfortunately, it is somewhat difficult to ascertain to what extent such personal connections impacted the decisions of local magistrates; what is certain is that throughout June and July, numerous Jews appealed to the Crown on these matters.⁷⁴

⁷¹ AM c. 1, núm. 81

⁷² León Tello, *Judíos de Toledo*, 1:539–541.

⁷³ Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 143.

⁷⁴ Haim Beinart documents a sampling of these cases. See *Ibid.*, 118–206.

One such case involved Rabi Yose, a *vecino* of Ávila. In June 1492, Rabi Yose called in a loan from certain Christians to whom he previously lent money. The debtors' response was to launch a criminal charge against Rabi Yose, claiming he had demanded "some *maravedís* and other things in the form of usury." Interest payments of more than 33% were considered usurious, and had been illegal since the Cortes of Madrigal in 1476, discussed in Chapter Two. Accusing Rabi Yose of usury meant a protracted court case, which would take time – time Rabi Yose did not have. Indeed, the *corregidor*, Alvaro de Santesteban, upon learning of the accusations, threw Rabi Yose, his wife, Doña Lediçia and three children, Ysaque, Salamon and Reyna, into the municipal jail and ordered the seizure and embargo of the family's property.⁷⁵

Rather than wait for his case to be heard in the local court, Rabi Yose petitioned the monarchy for assistance. The text of the petition is lost, but presumably, he claimed that the charges of usury were unwarranted and that Santesteban has been wrong to imprison both him and his family and to embargo his property. Ferdinand and Isabel's response responded on June 26, instructing the *corregidor* to verify the date of the original loan agreement to determine if it had been drawn up prior to the *cortes* of Madrigal. If that had indeed occurred, the monarchs ordered Santesteban to free the prisoners and return their goods. Unfortunately, the records of Santesteban's investigation do not survive, but the lack of further documentation pertaining to the case suggests that

⁷⁵ AGS, RGS, leg. 149206,82. "...los aveys fecho prender e enbargar e teneys presos e enbargados sus bienes a peticion de algunos caualleros e personas syngulares, disyendo averles leuado alguons marauedis e otras cosas en forma de usuras."

the loan agreement was found to be valid and therefore not usurious, and that Yose and his family were ultimately set free.

Appealing to laws regarding moneylending and Jews – specifically usury – as in this case, was a common tactic employed by Christians to avoid paying their debts to Jewish lenders. Segovian *corregidor* Día Sánchez de Quesada was ordered by the Crown to “quickly attend” to all the complaints in that city regarding usurious loan contracts. Just as Santesteban had, Quesada’s task was to determine whether each contract was made before or after the laws of the Cortes of Madrigal.⁷⁶ It is clear that Jews were appealing directly to the Crown rather than waiting for local authorities to judge their cases, fully expecting that Ferdinand and Isabel would come to their assistance. And, as they had before, the monarchs intervened on behalf of their Jewish subjects.

These are but two examples of the complex financial aspect of the expulsion. Indeed, the issue of credit between Jews and Christians proved so intricate that many cases could not be resolved before the expulsion deadline. Thus on September 9, the royal council froze all debts.⁷⁷ *Corregidores* were to compile lists of all remaining debts owed to Jews by Christians, and transfer those debts to the Crown, which used the money from these loans to pay any outstanding tax debts owed by the Jews. Christians still had to repay these debts, but to the Crown rather than the Jews who had been the original lenders.⁷⁸

⁷⁶AGS, RGS, leg.,149207,87

⁷⁷AGS, RGS, leg.,149212,148

⁷⁸AGS, RGS, leg.,149211,54. Haim Beinart also suggested that money from these loans could yet somehow be transferred to creditors, who presumably were in other countries by this point, or more likely, that the

Christians were also compelled to repay private debts when there was someone – usually a relative – present to receive the money. As not all transactions could be resolved prior to the expulsion deadline, some Jews left their financial affairs in the hands of relatives who opted to stay in the kingdoms and convert, as in the case of Alfonso Perez Coronel of Ávila. He chose conversion while his mother and sister opted to leave the kingdom. Before they left, however, they turned certain promissory notes over to Alfonso. These notes entailed loans to Christians, and were entrusted to him since, as a “new” Christian, he would be staying in Ávila and had the luxury of time to collect the monies owed. In the instance, however, Alfonso was unable to collect on those debts; his debtors maintained that since the Crown had frozen all debts in September, they were not required to repay anything. Once again, the monarchs intervened, and in February 1493, ordered the *corregidor* to assist Alfonso in this matter, and to make sure that he was repaid his money.⁷⁹

Leaving

After disposing of their property and settling accounts in whatever way they could, Jews still had to travel to either a border crossing or port, and then make arrangements to travel onward. Neither was an easy task. The destinations of the Jews were varied: many Castilian Jews went to Portugal, as it was closest and easiest to reach.

creditors left the kingdom assuming that the king and queen would relent and they would be permitted to return home at some future point. p 124, n 24.

⁷⁹ AGS, RGS, leg.,149302,36

Others went to Navarre, while some wound up in Italy, the Maghreb, even Ottoman Turkey and the Middle East.

Abulense Jews likely went to Portugal, first travelling through one of the three cities designated as exit points – Zamora, due west of Valladolid; Ciudad Rodrigo, west of Salamanca; or Badajoz in the south (see Map 1, p x) – where their goods were inspected, and where they would pay the *portazgo*, or leaving tax (12 *maravedís* per family, along with 1 *real* per individual). Documentation on departing Abulenses is thin; the one example extant is that of Arnate Chacón, who traveled through one of these cities into Portugal, whereupon he ran into trouble. He had liquidated all his goods, worth 55,000 *maravedís*, and together with his son was attempting to smuggle this amount, in *cuartos* (coins, worth 4 *maravedís* each) out of the kingdom. Juan Chiquito, one of the border guards, discovered the money and promptly confiscated it. This was not outright robbery, however, as Chiquito gave Arnate Chacón a receipt (*carta de pago*) for the money, along with the promise that if he returned, he could collect his money. Chacón, as we shall see presently, did just that.⁸⁰

Other deportees were less fortunate. Officials in Ciudad Rodrigo were discovered to be coercing a *portazgo nuevo*, or extra funds in addition to the leaving tax from departing Jews. Officials were sent to look into the matter and was given broad powers to arrest tax collectors and bring them to trial; if found guilty, their property would be seized and transferred to the Crown.⁸¹ A similar situation involving coercive officials occurred

⁸⁰ AGS, RGS, leg., 149310,222

⁸¹ AGS, RGS, leg., 149207,119

in Aragon. Don Martín de Gurrea was to oversee the departure of the Jews, charged with their protection as they traveled to the border crossings and port cities where they could board boats. Yet Astruc Aninay from Zaragoza was robbed in the port city of Tarragona. His son, Martín García, who had converted to Christianity, pressed the Crown to investigate, whereupon it was discovered that Martín de Gurrea himself was responsible. The stolen money was confiscated, and used to pay any outstanding debts Jews had left.⁸²

Contemporary accounts of the actual departure of the Jews paint a vivid picture of suffering and lamentation. According to these chronicles, some departing Jews fell sick on the road, some died, others wept and begged God for mercy.⁸³ These accounts, in large part, were written for effect rather than accuracy but have been accepted as truth by some historians.⁸⁴ While not discounting the suffering of those who left, nor the cruelty of the event, we must remember that not all Christians were intent on harming Jews – the “old” Christians of Ávila prove that. Nor were all officials overseeing the expulsion corrupt, as evinced by the case of Arnate Chacón. The forced departure of the Jews and the ensuing campaign to erase their presence from memory seem overt expressions of antiJewish sentiment, yet I maintain that for the king and queen, as well as many of their subjects, it was an expression of uncompromising piety.

⁸² Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 227–228.

⁸³ Raphael, *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, 74–76.

⁸⁴ Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 308–309. On the accuracy of these accounts, see Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 22–23.

Jewish finances, post-expulsion

Abulense Jews who left Castile became part of what is known as the Sephardic diaspora whose identity was in part formed by the memory of their former home.⁸⁵ What of those who remained behind? For both “old” and “new” Christians in Ávila, the years immediately following the expulsion proved that the memory of their former neighbors would not so easily be erased. While their physical presence, in the form of homes, synagogues and cemeteries was fairly straightforward to transform, far more intricate – and thus time consuming – were the attempts to resolve leftover financial transactions. Abulense Jews were gone, but their presence was yet felt through their account books, loans, and business activities.

One case provides an example of both the difficulty in settling these transactions, as well as shedding light on the interconnectedness of Christian-Jewish finances before the expulsion. The case – which took until 1497 to resolve – centered around the accounts of Yuda Caro, a tax farmer, money lender and “known usurer” (*publico usurario*) from Ávila.⁸⁶ (By the time this case was settled, Yuda Caro was dead; it is not known if he died before or after the expulsion.) An “old” Christian, González del Lomo, worked with Yuda Caro and acted as an intermediary for him in those transactions forbidden to Jews by the Cortes of Madrigal.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Jonathan S. Ray, *After Expulsion: 1492 and the Making of Sephardic Jewry* (New York University Press, 2013), chap. 7. See also Henry Kamen, *The Disinherited: Exile and the Making of Spanish Culture, 1492-1975* (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 2007).

⁸⁶ AGS, RGS, leg., 149701, 176

After the expulsion Juan de Madrid, receiver for Jewish property in the diocese of Ávila, lodged a petition on behalf of the monarchs with Lope de Vera. Juan de Madrid brought two claims to Lope de Vera's attention, both against the *concejo* of Cebreros, a small town some 50 kilometers southeast of Ávila. These claims were for debts that the *concejo* had incurred with Yuda Caro, one amounting to 215,050 *maravedis*, and another of 210,215 *maravedis*, enormous sums of money for the time. The *concejo* alleged that Yuda Caro's wife, Reyna, and their sons, all of whom had left the kingdom in 1492, had smuggled out gold, silver, and coins.⁸⁷ Because of the smuggling, legally the Crown had the right to any property which might have remained in their name, and any outstanding debts owed to them. The *concejo*'s debts were thus now owed to the Crown and Juan de Madrid was attempting to collect.

Lope de Vera, as *juez comisario de los bienes de judíos* or commissioner of the property of the Jews of the diocese, was responsible for resolving issues of leftover debts. He ruled that the *concejo* would have to pay one third less of the amounts listed, or 150,026 *maravedis* for the first debt and 141,210 *maravedis* for the second. He made this calculation on the assumption that one third of this debt was *el tercio*, 33% interest.⁸⁸ The Cebreros *concejo*, however, were not pleased with Lope de Vera's decision, and appealed to the Crown, claiming that the debts had been cancelled before Yuda Caro's death, and that Lope de Vera should have consulted with the town's *corregidor* about the matter

⁸⁷ AGS, RGS, leg., 149701, 186 "la dicha doña Reyna e sus hijos se avian ydo e absentado destos nuestros reynos e avian sacado e mandado sacar mucho oro e plata e moneda amonedada e otras cosas provydas e vedadas por leyes e premáticas de nuestros reynos e que por aquello los dichos judios avian perdido todos sus bienes e debdas que dexaron en estos nuestros reynos."

⁸⁸ AGS, RGS, 149701, 176.

before ruling on the matter, as was customary.⁸⁹ The *procurador* who argued the *concejo*'s case also stated that since Yuda Caro was a known usurer, his account books, upon which Lope de Vera's judgment was based, were not reliable.⁹⁰ Despite the fact that these were significant sums of money which ostensibly were destined for the Crown's treasury, the court found in favor of the *concejo* of Cebreros and ruled that all debts were null, including court costs, which Lope de Vera had added to the debt.⁹¹ In such a small town as Cebreros, this protracted case – especially the specter of possibly having to repay this debt – would have kept the absent Jews fresh in the town's collective memory.

This Lope de Vera was more than willing to take advantage of these protracted cases and the lingering memories of Jewish finances. Upon finding the fifty year old account book which had belonged to an Abulense money lender, he, together with the *corregidor* of Ávila, Juan Pérez de la Fuente hatched a scheme to collect on these old debts, even going so far as to annex certain properties in the name of the Crown. As the account book was in Hebrew, it was difficult for Christians to prove whether they had paid their debt. The *consejo real* interceded and ordered that someone who knew Hebrew inspect the account book, and clarify that the debts were, in fact, resolved.⁹²

One forcible and repetitive reminder of Ávila's former Jewish population occurred when the Crown ordered the city council to make its annual contribution to support the *hermandad*. Created by Ferdinand and Isabel early in their reign, the

⁸⁹ Ibid. "que por una nuestra çedula le fue mandado que las sentençias que ouiesen de dar e pronunciar lo fisyesen con consejo del corregidor de la dicha cibdad de Ávila."

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ AGS, RGS, leg. 149701, 186

⁹² AGS, RGS, leg., 149510, 285

hermandad was a quasi-police force charged with the maintenance of law and order in royal parts of Castile. Ávila's annual payments hovered around 72,000 *maravedís*, a part of which, roughly 10-15%, came from a tax the city levied on the *aljama*. Once the Jews left, however the *concejo* was forced to come up with the money to pay the entire bill. Starting, therefore, in 1493, the *concejo* informed local officials connected to the *hermandad* that it was only willing to pay 62,000 *maravedís*. Diego Flores, the tax collector in charge of collecting these payments, pressured the *concejo* to come up with entire sum. What followed was an extended period of haggling, which ended when two officials attached to the *hermandad*, Rodrigo Diaz and Diego Ruyz, informed Flores that the city was in the clear in as much as they determined that the 10,000 *maravedís* could come out previous payments made by the *aljama*.⁹³ Quite possibly, this money came out the loans that had been frozen by royal order in September 1492.

But this arrangement only proved temporary, and in 1494, the amount the *concejo* owed to the *hermandad* once again was the subject of dispute. On this occasion, however the *concejo* petitioned the monarchy, claiming that it could pay no more than about 32,000 *maravedís* what it owed in view of the fact that the Jews were now gone and whatever money left over from the *aljama* already expended. The *concejo* claimed that it had tried to make up the difference by increasing sales taxes on bread as well as manufactured goods, such as wooden furnishings, roofing shingles, and cloth, but still failed to come up with the necessary funds, as these levies were too much for the

⁹³ AM, leg. 1, núm 89. "...fallamos que sy es asy que los dichos judíos pagaron este dicho anno los dichos diez mil en cuenta de la dicha contribución, e vos u otro por vos los rescibistes dellos que non los debes pedir ni demandar otra ves a la dicha cibdad."

community to bear. The petition succeeded to the extent that Ferdinand and Isabel, explicitly acknowledging that shortfall resulted the city's loss of its Jewish population, ordered the *corregidor* to investigate the city's finances to reassess the amount the city would be required to pay.⁹⁴

The loss of the Jews also put pressure on the finances of some of Ávila's other institutions, such as the cathedral chapter. Thanks to a privilege granted long before 1492, the chapter was accustomed to receiving an annual payment from the *aljama* that amounted to some 3,000 *maravedís*. The money in question came from the *cabeça de pecho*, or head tax, paid by each of the *aljama*'s residents. With this money now gone, the chapter's dean petitioned the monarchy for some kind of substitute grant, claiming that the money was needed to help pay for the cathedral's annual expenses. Ferdinand and Isabel responded by ordering the commissioner of the property of the Jews to determine whether he could come up with 3,000 *maravedís* from other sources. If impossible, they in turn ordered him to sell what remained of Jewish communal property, and give the proceeds to the chapter together with a one-time grant of 9,000 *maravedís*, a sum equivalent to what the now absent *aljama* would have paid the chapter over the

⁹⁴ AGS, RGS, leg., 149404, 127 "E diz que la dicha çibdad nos hiso relaçon que por la yda de los judyos les faltava treynta mil maravedis, e que la dicha çibdad no los podia repartyr, porque diz que les seria dyfycultoso... Por virtud de la qual diz que la dicha sysa se echo asy en el pan que en la dicha çibdad se vende e en la madera e ripias e artesas e telas e syllas e en otras cosas... Por que vos mandamos que luego veays lo suso dicho e lo proveays por tal manera que los vesinos e pueblos de la dicha tierra non reçiban ni les sea fechaagravio ni tengan cabsa ni razon de se nos venir a quexar ante nos."

course of three years.⁹⁵ The decision to expel the “poisonous” Jews may have benefited the Church – and Crown – spiritually, but financially it was proving costly indeed.

In one last example of the financial ripples created by the expulsion involves the *juros*, or bonds that the *concejo* had sold to help pay its annual running expenses. As with most bonds, the purchasers of *juros* expected an annual interest payment and in the case of Ávila, the *concejo* met these payments with money collected from taxes levied on the *aljama*. But with the Jews gone, where was this money to be found?

One dispute related to *juro* payment came to the monarchy’s attention in February 1495. Doña Ynes de la Serna was the owner of *juro* attached to the nearby hamlet of Bonilla de la Sierra. The *concejo*, however, had failed to pay her the interest due, and in a petition to the monarchs she claimed she owed a total of 3,314 *maravedís*. The monarchs responded by ordering the *corregidor* of Ávila to investigate and determine whether there was any Jewish property such as a synagogue or a cemetery in the hamlet. If any were found, he was instructed to put it up for auction and use the proceeds to pay Doña Ynes de la Serna together with anyone else who had also bought *juros* and was owed money.⁹⁶

Physically, the Jews were gone. Their synagogues were now churches or religious houses, their cemeteries vanished, the *judería* no longer existed. No overt trace of their presence remained. Yet the need to fill the financial gap created by their departure was a vivid reminder of the significant role Jews formerly played in their part of the city’s

⁹⁵ AGS, RGS, leg., 149412, 6

⁹⁶ AGS, RGS, leg., 149502, 150 “a la dicha doña Ynes de la Serna e a las otras personas que asy tovieren juros por rata...”

financial network. In this regard, their absence became even more powerful than their presence.

Returnees

Arnate Chacón, the Abulense Jew who had attempted to smuggle his fortune with him as he left Castile (see above), lasted just over a year in Portugal. In October 1493, determined to recover his money, he converted to Christianity and returned to the town where he had crossed the border. There, he located the guard, Juan Chiquito, who had taken his money, presented him with the receipt Chiquito had given him and asked that the money be returned. Chiquito refused, at which point Chacón, made his way to the university city of Salamanca and petitioned the monarchs from there, requesting that since he was now a Christian, his money be returned. The chances of his being able to recover the money must have been slim, but in this instance, Chacón, surprisingly, got what he wanted. No matter that as a Jew, he had violated the terms of the Alhambra decree by attempting to smuggle coins out of the kingdom; the monarchs decided that in this case, Chacón had been done an injustice and unnecessarily “aggrieved and harmed.” They subsequently instructed Salamanca’s *corregidor* to ensure that his money was returned.⁹⁷

Arnate Chacón was far from the only Jew who decided it was better to convert and return than live in exile. He may have been motivated by the money he left behind.

⁹⁷ AGS, RGS, leg., 149310, 222 “por que non los avia dado ni pagado la parte que diz que les perteneçia de los dichos çinquenta e çinco mil maravedis e que a esta cabsa le enbargauan la dicha hasyenda, en lo qual diz que el a resçebido e resçibe grande agruio e dagno.”

Other returnees are likely to have other motives – the desire to see family members who had converted and whom they had left behind; the hardship and weariness of travel; and the uncertainty of their future in foreign lands.⁹⁸ As Haim Beinart has determined, most returnees were Jews who had gone to Portugal, although others, apparently a much smaller number, came back from North Africa, or even Italy and the Ottoman east.⁹⁹

Return – so long as one converted – was possible from as early as November 1492. It was then that three Jewish physicians who had left Barcelona and were residing in Portugal requested the right to return to their homes. They did so by claiming they had “recognized the error in which they were situated and that it was their wish to return... in order to convert to the holy religion, to remain and die as Catholic Christians.”¹⁰⁰ Their request met with a favorable response from the monarchs. It also established a precedent, and led to a royal edict, promulgated on November 10, 1492, which began as follows:

They [the Jews who had departed] have made it known that, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, understand that they were in error, and want to return to these our kingdoms so that they might convert to our Holy Catholic Faith and remain and die as Catholic Christians.¹⁰¹

In addition, the edict promised Jew who had left could return providing that they had proof that they have been baptized. Alternatively they were asked to return via the same town through which they had left – Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz or Zamora, all designated

⁹⁸ King Manuel I of Portugal (r. 1495 –1521), for example, agreed to expel all Jews from his kingdom as a condition to his marriage in 1497 to the *Infanta* Isabel, Ferdinand and Isabel’s oldest daughter

⁹⁹ Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 329. See also Richard L. Kagan and Abigail Dyer, *Inquisitorial Inquiries: Brief Lives of Secret Jews and Other Heretics* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), ch 1.

¹⁰⁰ RGS, LEG, 149211, 40, published and translated in Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 330.

¹⁰¹ AGS, RGS, LEG, 149211, 40 “...ellos, alumbrados del Espiritu Santo conociendo el horror en que estaban se querian bolber a estos nustos reynos para se convertir a nuestro Santa Fe catolica e permanescer e morir en ella como catolicos cristianos.”

border crossings – where they were to be escorted to the local bishop in order to be baptized.¹⁰² Once the sacrament was administered, these newly-minted converts were entitled to the return of whatever property had been lost, confiscated, or sold under duress. As the edict stated, they were to be allowed back

“to live and die in the same places where they lived and died at the time when they were Jews... the houses and goods and property which they sold and left must be returned by the people who now possess them, for the same amount which they were sold for.”¹⁰³

The language in this edict is telling. Jews who decided to convert had been “enlightened by the Holy Spirit” and now understood the error of their former religious creed. Further, Isabel and Ferdinand enacted this decree so that they might be “of service to our Lord and to glorify our holy Catholic faith.”¹⁰⁴ Clearly, conversion was the will of God: *conversos* were not only welcomed back into the kingdoms, but also regarded as full members of the Catholic church, *not* potential heretics. The return of their goods and property negated any financial gain Christians might have enjoyed due to the expulsion, another expression of piety on the part of the Crown. As far as Ferdinand and Isabel were concerned, converted Jews were not to be discriminated against on the basis of their former religion; they were full members of this new, unified, Catholic polity.

¹⁰² Ibid. “E que qualesquier de las dichas çybdades que se batysaren seyendo presente el obispo o provysor e el corregidor o alcaldes de la tal çybdad e que traygan fe avtentyca como reçebyeron bautysmo en la forma susodycha.”

¹⁰³ Ibid. “Y asi mismo porque su voluntad era de bebir e morar en los mismos logares donde bebian e moraban al tiempo que eran judios mandsemos que las casas e bienes y raizes que ellos vendieron e dexaron les fuesen bueltas e tornadas por las personas que agora las tenian por las quantias de mrs que ellos las vendieron.”

¹⁰⁴ AGS, RGS, LEG, 149211, 40. “E nos acatando lo susodicho e por esto ser servyçio de nuestro señor e ensalçamiento de nuestra santa fe catolyca tovymoslo por byen e mandamos dar dimos esta nuestra carta sobre ello.”

A second edict regarding returnees, issued in April 1493, reinforced the monarch's position. This one addressed Jews who had gone to Navarre, opening to them the possibility of return, again, so long as they converted. There was one key difference between the two edicts: this one referred to those who either dared not return, or returned and left again, being "worried and fearful that they and their property would be harmed and injured, as they have been threatened and accused of taking prohibited things from these kingdoms, and of having made some insults in the time that they were Jews."¹⁰⁵ While the Crown welcomed converted returnees, local communities did not necessarily share the monarchs' attitude. Disputes over goods and property the "new" Christians sought to reclaim became a point of friction, and thus there was no guarantee of a warm welcome once returnees reached their former homes and attempted to pick up the threads of their old lives.

Despite the potential for conflict, over the next decade Jews from many communities, including Ávila, took advantage of this option and returned to their homes.¹⁰⁶ Gyomar de Toledo was one Abulense who returned, and she became involved in just such a legal dispute to reclaim her former home. Together with her mother and young siblings, Maria de Toledo and Fernando Alvarez, Gyomar had gone to Portugal. Upon arrival, their mother had died and the children became the concern of a relative, Jacob Galhon from Segovia. Galhon, along with his entire household (wife, children,

¹⁰⁵ AGS, RGS, leg., 149307, 51 "e algunos dellos eran ya convertydos e non osauan bolver a estos nuestros reynos. E algunos de los que sonbuelos estan en intençion de yr e bevyr a otros reynos por se reçelauan e temian que serian fatygados e nojados en sus personas e fasyendas por razon que les amenazarían aver sacado algunas cosas vedadas del reyno e aver fecho algunos ynsultos en los tienpos que fueron judios."

¹⁰⁶ See Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* ch. 7.

siblings, nephews, nieces, and servants) converted and returned to Castile in November 1492. Gyomar and her siblings wanted to return to Ávila and sought to reclaim their property, sold to “old” Christian Alonso de Vargas for 20,000 *maravedís*. Whether he refused to sell the property outright, or was asking for more than he had paid is unclear; the Crown, however, ordered him to obey their edict stipulating the return of property to the returnees.¹⁰⁷

Gyomar de Toledo and Arnate Chacón are only two cases among the many who decided to return to their homes. The only reason we know of these cases is because there were difficulties regarding the repossession of their properties. Haim Beinart has catalogued numerous examples of such cases, where the monarchs intervened, either to find in favor of the returnee, or to insist that the case be tried justly, and quickly.¹⁰⁸ Any returnees who reintegrated seamlessly into their communities are unknown, making it is impossible to say which instance – resentment or acceptance – was the normal response to returnees. At the same time, it must be noted that in some instances the Crown was forced to issue edicts regarding the treatment of returnees: in October 1493, the communities of Cuenca, Osma and Sigüenza were warned that harassment of returnees – in particular yelling at them in the streets and calling them *tornadizos*, or turncoats, would not be tolerated.¹⁰⁹ The response to returnees varied just as much from community to community as had Christian-Jewish relationships before the expulsion.

¹⁰⁷ AGS, RGS, leg., 149304, 211

¹⁰⁸ Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, ch 7.

¹⁰⁹ AGS, RGS, leg., 149310, 146

Clearly on an institutional level (the Crown and the Church) returnees only served to strengthen the newly spiritually united kingdoms. Without Jews present to lure them into “backsliding,” the new converts presented no heretical threat. Nor did either institution express concern about ways in which returnees would remind “old” Christians of their former Jewish status. Despite returning to their former homes, it was as if these “new” Christians constituted no link to the Jewish past. Baptism was indeed was the beginning of a new life.

Using Ávila as its focus, this chapter has explored effects of the monarchy’s policy of “pious cruelty” upon the Jewish community in one city in Castile. That the expulsion edict caused considerable suffering, and tremendous upheaval in the lives of many Jews in Castile and Aragon cannot be denied. And while Ávila weathered the expulsion with relative equanimity, other cities experienced far greater disruptions, which did not end overnight. Rather, its aftershocks continued for many years as the Crown joined with local officials in an protracted effort to transform former Jewish sites into places of Catholicism, and otherwise to extinguish all traces of the Jewish presence in Ávila. The idea, in short, was to permanently to erase all memory of the Jews in Ávila in the hope of purifying the realm of the sacred in Castile, protecting the community of believers from a potential source of contagion, and ultimately, building a stronger, more unified Church.

Yet a completely orthodox Catholic kingdom proved elusive. Over the coming decades, the Holy Office prosecuted thousands of cases of what it judged to be practices

of “crypto-Judaism” within the kingdom. These trials created more in the way of suffering and upheaval, and in some cities, Murcia for example, led to factional divisions and feuds, with “old” Christians one side and “new” Christians on the other.¹¹⁰ Ávila, in contrast, seemingly remained untouched by such factionalism together with the political in-fighting and squabbles over access to offices, both clerical and legal, to which it gave rise.

In many ways the city quickly returned to that tranquil town it had been prior to 1480. In fact, the opening decades of the new century saw the city begin to flourish in every aspect: physical, economically, spiritually. True, the presence of the Holy Office had tragic implications for some Abulense *conversos*. Also true, certain wealthy *conversos* found themselves frustrated by being excluded from local political power. Yet at the same times, *conversos* were in-migrating to Ávila, taking advantage of the relatively prosperity and peace.

¹¹⁰ Jaime Contreras, *Sotos contra Riquelmes: regidores, inquisidores y criptojudíos* (Madrid: Anaya, 1992).

Chapter Five

Ávila after the Expulsion

Last, but by no means least, was the clericalism which developed in Spain the ferocious spirit of intolerance; which in 1492 drove out the unhappy Jews, and in 1610 the Moriscos, thus striking at the root of the commercial prosperity and industry of the land; and which surrendered the nation to the Inquisition, paralyzing all intellectual movement, crippling trade, and keeping the people so completely in leading- strings that the three generations since the Napoleonic upheaval have not sufficed for their training in the arts of self-government.¹

Henry Charles Lea wrote these words during the Spanish-American War of 1898, a conflict which marked the end of Spain's empire in the New World. Lea's Quaker background made him a sworn enemy of clericalism, a term he equated with the excessive influence of the Roman Catholic Church in everyday life. In linking clericalism to Spain, Lea repeats here what had been, starting already in the seventeenth century, the pervasive idea that the economic and political decline of the world's first global empire was the direct consequence of its hyper-orthodox religious ideology, manifested in the Holy Office of the Inquisition, and in the decision of its monarchy to order the expulsion of the kingdoms' Jews. Lea, moreover, subscribed to the notion that the expulsion doomed the empire to failure, as it stripped Spain of the industrious, financially-astute, and hard-working segment of its population.

Writing slightly earlier than Lea, nineteenth century historian William Hickling Prescott argued that Spain's fatal flaw was its rigid adherence to Catholicism and subservience to the Holy Office. Prescott thought that the reign of Ferdinand and Isabel,

¹ Henry Charles Lea, "The Decadence of Spain," *The Atlantic Monthly* 82, no. 489 (July 1898): 37.

saw the “seeds of its most degrading vice, religious bigotry... implanted,” seeds which came to fruition during the reign of Phillip II. Even more than his predecessors, Phillip, driven by his fanatical and uncompromising Catholicism, relied more heavily on that muffler of freedom, the Holy Office of the Spanish Inquisition, thus forcing the kingdom into “a state of paralytic torpor.”² Though his thinking did not directly link the expulsion to this torpor, Prescott certainly believed the same type of slavish devotion to religion, which prompted the expulsion, was a contributing factor to Spain’s lack of liberty. The Holy Office dominated society, and robbed Spaniards of both freedom of expression and freedom of worship, both of which were necessary for “energy,” “enthusiasm” and a “bold commercial spirit”³ – the latter may sound like code words for Jewish economic activity, but more likely referred to the idea of the Protestant work ethic.

In part, Prescott’s perception of Spain was a holdover from the “Black Legend.” In his view, Spaniards as a people had imbued the spirit of the “pious cruelty” of Ferdinand and Isabel, and in doing so laid the foundations for the eventual decline and downfall of the Spanish empire.⁴ This perception lingered on into the twentieth century, when Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz wrote that the timing of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain could not have been worse, for the loss of artisans, merchants and moneylenders on the eve of the “American adventure” – where such talents would be sorely needed – injured Spain both psychologically and economically. He went on to argue that if the expulsions had happened a century sooner, then Christians would have had time to learn

² William Hickling Prescott, *The Literary Memoranda* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 1:140; William Hickling Prescott, *The Complete Works of William Hickling Prescott*, ed. John Foster Kirk, vol. 12 (Gibbings, 1897), 98. See also Richard L. Kagan, “Prescott’s Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (April 1996): 429.

³ Kagan, “Prescott’s Paradigm,” 429.

⁴ Joseph P. Sánchez, *The Spanish Black Legend :origins of Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1990), 7.

those artisanal skills – metalworking, leather working, et cetera – that would be so beneficial to an expanding, far-flung empire.⁵ This was clearly not the case in Ávila, as “old” Christians had been working in such industries throughout the fifteenth century.

This chapter draws upon Ávila to refute the notion that the expulsion of the Jews immediately sparked an economic tailspin which, when coupled with fanatical religiosity, set Spain on the road to decline. My focus here, however, is limited chronologically to the years immediately following the expulsion as it not my intention to examine the city’s trajectory over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is no doubt that over the long term both Ávila’s economy and population, in keeping with that of other towns and cities in Castile, experienced a down- turn starting towards the *end* of the sixteenth century. However, as this chapter will argue, surviving evidence suggests the expulsion of the Jews did not have any markedly deleterious repercussions for either the city or its citizens. In fact, there are signs of just the opposite, among them, an upturn in the local economy, a growing population, and even the equivalent of a building boom marked by the construction of new religious houses, and numerous private palaces and homes.

My secondary concern here is to demonstrate that while the citizens of Ávila experienced some political upheaval related to their participation in the so-called *Comunero* revolt of 1519-1521, these upheavals appear to have less to do with religious fissures between “old” and “new” Christians, and more to do with access to local political power. And while it is true the Holy Office was active in Ávila until 1503, and that an inquisitorial trial could taint a family for generations, its presence did not lead to anything

⁵ Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, *España, un enigma histórico* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1975) II, 295.

comparable to the religious tensions it sparked in Toledo or Segovia.⁶ In fact, the city acted as a magnet, attracting *converso* families drawn by the opportunities offered by local industry. Post-expulsion Ávila was no utopia, but in many ways it resembled the nearly peaceable community it had been prior to the tumults associated with the events of the late fifteenth century.

The economy and population

Abulense historian José Belmonte, in his 1997 history of the city, offered a curious and puzzling analysis of Ávila's economy in the post-expulsion years. In his view, "[a]t the start of [the sixteenth] century, Ávila experienced unusual economic activity," unusual because the city "missed the [economic] ambition of the Jews." However, he noted that much of this "ambition" was assumed by the *conversos*.⁷ Following both Lea and Prescott, along with Sánchez Albornoz, Belmonte subscribed to the idea that the expulsion of the Jews inevitably planted the seeds for the city's economic stagnation.

On the other hand, Belmonte's approach to Ávila's history during this period is somewhat contradictory. His own findings suggest, for example, that Ávila's economy thrived through most of the sixteenth century, a trend that continued into the seventeenth

⁶ Bonifacio Bartolomé Herrero, "The Jews and Conversos in Medieval Segovia," in *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond: Volume Two: The Morisco Issue* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012); Linda Martz, *A Network of Converso Families in Early Modern Toledo: Assimilating a Minority*, History, Languages, and Cultures of the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), esp. Ch. 1 and 2.

⁷ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 283.

century when, as part of the general downturn in the broader Castilian economy, the city finally entered a protracted era of what he called “decline.”⁸

What is clear is that in the decades immediately following the expulsion, signs of economic disruption and downturn are few. In the period following the expulsion, much of the city’s population was active in the same types of artisanal jobs as they had been pre-1492. The wool trade, in all its aspects, remained the most predominant industry in Ávila. Leatherwork and metalwork – both iron and silversmiths – were almost equally important.

Serafín de Tapia has examined censuses taken for taxation purposes during the early part of the sixteenth century. Figures derived from these censuses are by no mean complete, but they do begin to record the city’s total population. They do not, however, include women, especially those engaged in part-time work, nor children working as helpers, apprentices and the like. But whatever their shortcomings, these figures (see Table 1) underscore one important development: despite the loss of the Jews, Ávila’s working population experienced steady growth in the decades following 1492, from over 1000 to 1658, an increase of well over 50% between 1514 and 1530. Nor did this upward trend end in 1530. A later census, dating from 1571, indicates that Ávila’s working population peaked at 2604, or approximately twice of what it had been at the

⁸ Ibid. For recent work on the economy and population in seventeenth century Castile, see I. A. A. Thompson and Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *The Castilian Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: New Perspectives on the Economic and Social History of Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). On the wider reaches of crises in the seventeenth century, see Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*. (Yale University, 2013).

Table 1⁹

Industry	1514	1518	1530
Textiles	20.3(%)	23.7(%)	29(%)
Dressmaking	8.2	8.1	7.1
Construction	8.2	10.3	10
Leather goods	17.5	15.2	14
Artisans (metalwork)	14.9	19.2	9.4
Hospitality	4.6	5.1	3.7
Transportation	5.7	4	2.7
Sanitation	2.5	2.4	3.2
Bureaucracy	0.3	1	2.9
Domestic servants	5.7	7.3	6.9
Total working pop.	1,043	1,366	1,658

start of the century. Presumably, the city's total population increased at a similar pace. As far these figures are concerned, therefore, the expulsion had no demonstrable negative impact upon the city or its economy.

This especially true if one separates out of these figures the city's textile industry, one sector of the local economy where Jews, prior to 1492, traditionally played an important role. While the data in Table 1 point to a drop off in the number of metalworkers, the number of workers engaged in textiles more than doubled, growing by almost 10% from 1514 in 1530. The increasing percentage of workers engaged in the textile production also underscores growth, especially in what was traditionally the most important sector of that industry: the production of both raw wool, intended for export, and finished woolen cloth. Here it must be remembered that woolens employed workers engaged in a number of different activities. The most highly skilled were weavers, dyers,

⁹ Serafín de Tapia Sánchez, "Estructura ocupacional de Ávila en el siglo XVI," *El pasado histórico de Castilla y León : actas del I Congreso de Historia de Castilla y León 2* (1983): 201–23. The exact numbers Tapia supplies only account for a small portion – a mere 280 workers out of 1,043 for 1517, for example. Tapia surmises that the rest of the group could include those taxpayers who were unemployed – widows, perhaps, or landlords – but acknowledges that it is likely most of those 763 were involved in some kind of industry. This group would include apprentices, as well as occasional workers employed in different aspects of the wool industry, depending on the season – i.e. sheep shearers, etc. See p.203.

and tailors, but the industry also employed the sheep-shearers and the workers who washed, dried, then sorted the wool, and then prepared it to be turned into yarn. Shearers were typically unskilled laborers hired on a seasonal basis. Wool washing, however, took place on a year-round basis, in part because Ávila was well-supplied with water from several nearby rivers – the Adajo and the Chico. For this reason, Ávila's *lavadero* ranked as one of the most important in northern Castile.¹⁰

The importance of Ávila's woolen industry is related in part to the city's location along one of Castile's major *cañadas*, or sheepwalks along with thousands of transhumant sheep moved on a regular, albeit seasonal basis. As Carla and William Phillips have argued, Ferdinand and Isabel instituted policies that fostered the growth of transhumance in Castile in part because they were able to tax access to the *cañadas* and in doing increase royal revenues.¹¹ What is certain is that, owing to royal policy, the transhumant industry in Castile expanded steadily at the close of the fifteenth century: from 2.7 million sheep in 1477, to 3.5 million in 1526, an increase mirrored in the expansion of Ávila's woolen industry. Whatever dislocations resulted from the expulsion, its effects are not recorded here.

The same appears to hold for the city's leather industry, which was second in importance to wool, and, as shown in Chapter One, employed just slightly fewer Jews than the wool trade.¹² In 1514, leather workers accounted for almost as many as those engaged in the wool trade: 17.5% of the overall working population as opposed to the

¹⁰ Carla Rahn Phillips and William D. Phillips, *Spain's Golden Fleece: Wool Production and the Wool Trade from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 144–147.

¹¹ Edwards, *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs 1474-1520*, 148.

¹² A tax register from 1483 shows 22% of Abulense Jews worked in the wool trade, while 21% were involved in some aspect of the leather industry. AM Caja 1, leg 76. See also Chapter One, p X

20% then employed in textiles. Although these figures experienced a slight drop off in subsequent, the decrease cannot be directly attributed to the Expulsion. Part of this industry was the production of leather hides themselves, in tanneries located along the River Adajo.¹³

More information is needed for other sectors of the city's economy but what little there indicate that the exodus of the city's Jewish population did little to undermine or otherwise weaken the one industry which employed the largest portion of the city's working population, and by extension, the one that sustained the city's *concejo*, its bishopric, together with many of its churches and convents as well.

Physical transformations

1492 marked the beginning of important changes in Ávila's physical space. Starting that year, as the previous chapter has indicated, ownership and control of Jewish sites throughout the city – synagogues, cemeteries, bath houses, butcher shops, houses, etc. changed hands. In addition, many of these sites, especially the synagogues, were converted into Catholic monasteries and convents. The city's physical transformation did not end, however, with disappearance of properties once controlled by Jews. In the early sixteenth century, new religious institutions were built, private palaces constructed, and the *concejo* embarked on a campaign of new public works, most notably in the former *judería*. Added together, these activities constituted something of a building boom partially reflected in the figures in Table 1. Construction workers were never as many as those engaged in textiles or in the manufacture of leather, but they amounted to 10% of

¹³ Phillips and Phillips, *Spain's Golden Fleece*, 176–178; Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 285.

the total working population and their overall number continued to grow. Once again, therefore, records point to expansion as opposed to recession in the decades immediately following 1492.

Religious houses

As part of the campaign to erase the physical presence of the Jews, the Crown had given permission for various religious foundations to make use of former Jewish sites. One was the Carmelite house of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación, established in 1495, as noted in the previous chapter, on the site of the former main synagogue. Its founder was Doña Elvira González de Medina, the long-time consort of the wealthy cathedral canon Don Nuño González del Aguila, and the mother of his four children. After his death, she established the convent – perhaps, as suggested by Nicolás González, in expiation of her “sins.”¹⁴

The establishment of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación marked the beginning of a trend. Aided by the city’s expanding economy, and responding to the monarchy’s program of religious reforms, other new religious foundations soon came into being.¹⁵ In 1502, one of Ávila’s wealthiest and most prestigious widows, Doña Maria Dávila, established a new convent of Poor Clares on her family estate, Las Gordillas, twenty kilometers outside of Ávila.¹⁶ The nuns subsequently moved into new quarters located

¹⁴ González, *Historia del Monasterio de la Encarnación de Ávila*, 31–32. See also Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 42.

¹⁵ Andrew W. Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred: Imposture, Inquisition, And the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Brill, 2005); Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 35–52.

¹⁶ Manuel de Castro, *Fundación de “Las Gordillas”: (convento de clarisas de Santa Ma. de Jesús de Ávila)* (Obra Social y Cultural de la Caja Central de Ahorros y Préstamos, 1976).

within the walls of the city in 1552, and that convent, Santa María de Jesus – known familiarly as Las Gordillas – still stands.

Doña Mencía López, a member of an “old” Christian family, had married the wealthy silversmith Jorge de Nájera. On his death, she founded the Augustinian convent Nuestra Señora de Grace in her own home. The order first consisted solely of her (as abbess), her two daughters and a family friend. Later, the order received permission to take over a shrine dedicated to the saints Justo and Pastor, likely a former mosque, and convert it into a convent.¹⁷

And lastly, in 1512, Doña María de Herrera, widow of the *regidor* Andrés Vázquez, founded the chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Anunciación (although the building, still standing today, is more a rather imposing church than a chapel). The chapel was to provide livings for six priests, as well as oversee a hospital, or care facility, with room for up to twenty of the city’s elderly poor.¹⁸

While there is no corresponding flurry of establishing male religious houses in this period, records do indicate a vigorous renovation campaign among existing Abulense monasteries. Monastic houses appear prominently in the *actas* of the first half of the century, requesting wood and other building materials.¹⁹ And while no new religious houses for men were founded until 1553 when the Jesuit order established the monastery San Gil in Ávila, it must be remembered that between 1483 and 1510, the number of

¹⁷ AHN Clero leg. 230. See also Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 43; Efrén de la Madre de Dios Montalva, *Santa Teresa y su tiempo* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1982), 149–154.

¹⁸ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 43, 45–46.

¹⁹ AHPAv Actas, libro 9, 1536-1540; libro 11, 1558-1562.

religious houses in the city had doubled – and had redressed the previous imbalance of four male religious houses to one female.²⁰

Private palaces

The nobility joined in this building boom as well, with various elite families showcasing their wealth and position by the construction of at least five new palaces in the first half of the sixteenth century. These projects, more ornate and impressive than the religious houses, took much longer to complete.²¹

The *licenciado* Garcibáñez de Mújica built the Palace de los Mújica (known today as the Tower of the Guzmans) near the center of the walled city in 1513. Little is known about him, other than he came from the Basque region, somehow found his way to Ávila, and married Aldonza de Bracamonte. To marry Aldonza, he must have brought with him considerable personal wealth, as the Bracamontes were one of the oldest and wealthiest families in Ávila, tracing their ancestry to the time of the “reconquest.”²² Then, too, he was obviously able to afford the construction of a statuesque new palace.

There were more palaces: the Dávila family – of which Doña Maria was part – built the Valderrábanos Palacio in the plaza in front of the cathedral. The palace of the Contreras family was built just west of the central Plaza Mercado Chico. It became known as the Palacio de Polentinos in the eighteenth century, when Don Sebastián de Colmenares y Vega, the second Conde de Polentinos, married into the Contreras family.

²⁰ The one female religious house was the Cistercian convent of Santa Ana, which had merged with the city’s two smaller Cistercian convents in 1502. Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 38. The male houses were the Franciscan monastery San Francisco, the Benedictine monastery La Antigua, the Premonstratensian monastery of Sancti Spiritus, and the Carmelite monastery Nuestra Señora del Carmen.

²¹ Many of these palaces were built in the rather ornate plateresque style, unsurprising for a city where one of the local industries was silver-smithing.

²² Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid, Registro de Ejecutorias, caja 400,52

Near the Puerta Vicente, Don Diego del Aguila, a knight in the military order of Santiago built the Palacio de los Verdugo.²³ Finally, Alonso Blasco Núñez Vela, first viceroy of Peru, built a new palace in Ávila in 1541, located next to the Puerta Montenegro, though he was not able to enjoy it for long: he departed for Peru in 1542, dying there in 1545.²⁴

All of these palaces, built to display wealth, status, were also meant to leave a physical legacy of the family that built them. In this latter motivation, they were incredibly successful: all the buildings still stand today, some converted to hotels, others appropriated for government offices. The Palacio de Polentinos has housed the Archivo General Militar de Ávila since 1994, while the Archivo Municipal is located in the Palacio de Los Verdugo. Despite their new names and functions, the palaces remain linked to those influential and wealthy sixteenth century families.

Public works

Public investment in the city kept pace with private construction, as the city had the wherewithal to invest in physical improvements. The town council enacted new city ordinances regarding the cleanliness of the city and the condition of its streets. In October 1499, they stipulated that any citizen who lived on a paved street – and paved streets were fast becoming the norm (see below) – had to ensure their section of the street was cleaned every Saturday. Further, the pouring out of the dregs of wine out into the streets and plazas was expressly forbidden; the penalty for such a transgression was half a *real* per offence.²⁵

²³ Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas*, Quarta parte.

²⁴ Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 306.

²⁵ AM, caja 1, leg. 146

The *concejo* was equally set on the widening and paving of the city's streets.²⁶ Some of these works came at the behest of residents: Garcibáñez de Mújica, after building his impressive new palace in 1519, petitioned the *concejo* to pave the street onto which it faced.²⁷ Paving the streets was not merely an aesthetic decision; it also benefited commerce. Heavily laden horse-drawn carts moved more easily on cobblestones, especially when weighed down with building materials or other commercial goods.

The *concejo* devoted particular attention to the streets in the former Jewish quarter. There, the paving took several years. The first orders to do so dated from April 1500; others followed in July 1501 and again the following December.²⁸ As well, in January 1502, the *concejo* specifically commissioned Esteban Cantero, a local stonemason, to pave the street in the “*judería vieja*.”²⁹ Presumably, this street was the one alongside the Basilica of San Vicente and site of many Jewish homes prior to the creation of the new *judería* in 1480.

As for the new, or post-1480 *judería*, this area, having also been emptied of its Jews, was now open for Christian resettlement. Surviving municipal records, however, do not indicate that there was any rush on the part of Christians, “old” or “new” to fill the spaces left vacant by Jews. Did Abulenses think that the Jewish presence there had “contaminated” the quarter and its houses in ways that were impossible to eradicate? Or was the simply the memory of their presence something that kept Christians away?

The answers to both questions is probably no. As Chapter Four explained, Ávila's Christians were more than willing to take over the houses formerly occupied by Jews so

²⁶AM legajo 166, 21 mayo de 1501; 22 mayo de 1501; 12 junio de 1501; AM legajo 169 1 febrero de 1502.

²⁷Belmonte Díaz, *La ciudad de Ávila*, 305–306.

²⁸AM caja 1, Legajo 158, 7 abril de 1500; AM caja 1, Legajo 166, 3 julio de 1501; 4 diciembre de 1501.

²⁹AM caja 1, Legajo 171, 22 enero de 1502.

long as they were located in the better, more salubrious neighborhoods of the city, such as those adjacent to the central plazas. What this suggests is that chief reason Christians did not flock to the former *judería* was its proximity to the city's odoriferous tanneries. Even before the Jews moved there, this part of Ávila had a reputation for being noisy, busy, and smelly, owing to the kinds of industries concentrated there – dye shops, fulling shops, foundries and the like. In his history of the city, published in 1607, Luis Ariz observed that the part of the city where the *judería* was located was traditionally occupied by “men who performed the mechanical arts, dyers, tanners, millers, fullers and halberd-makers.”³⁰

Then, too, dye-shops located within the former *judería* did little to entice Christians to move into houses previously occupied by Jews. Late medieval dye-works relied on ammonia to set the dyes, and the most common source of ammonia was stale urine. The entire process was notorious for the noxious odors it produced.³¹ For this reason the *concejo* had previously attempted to impose certain restrictions on the dye shops located within the *judería* prior to 1492, and would do again in 1501 when it endeavored to prevent “el Sevillan[o],” the owner of one dye-shop known for its “great stench” from dumping contaminated wastewater into the street.”³²

The *concejo*'s efforts to attract new residents to that part of the city fell short. Perhaps unsurprising, as it also failed to do anything to re-locate the many *casas de la*

³⁰ Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas* pt 2, 20. See also Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 6.

³¹ Urine would also have been used in the process of cleaning the wool before spinning or fulling. Eric Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester University Press, 1988), 165–167; Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, *Science and Technology in Medieval European Life* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 4–5.

³² AM caja 1, Legajo 166, 3 abril de 1501.

mancebía, or brothels, located within its precincts.³³ The neighborhood remained poor and undesirable – one document called it “incommodious” – through the centuries: a map of the city, drawn in 1864, shows the main street of the former *judería* bearing the name *la cuesta de gitanos*, or the hill of Gypsies.³⁴

Despite the lingering problems with the *judería*, available evidence suggests that Ávila at the start of the sixteenth century was in the process of a physical transformation that included new religious houses, new palaces, and newly-paved, and presumably cleaner and more manageable streets. These physical improvements combined with city’s economic growth continued to attract newcomers to Ávila, at least some of whom were *conversos* from other cities in Castile.³⁵ Why they migrated to Ávila is not entirely clear. The city’s thriving textile industry was a definite lure, and, as will be discussed shortly, offered ambitious *conversos* coming to the city ample opportunities to acquire both property and wealth. Yet for the first decade following the expulsion, *conversos* – whether native to the city or newcomers – had to live alongside the presence of the Holy Office. Those who found themselves on trial in Ávila experienced vastly divergent outcomes, from escaping relatively unscathed, to the tragic loss of both homes and loved ones.

³³ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 7.

³⁴ Gil Gonzalez Davila, *Teatro eclesiástico de las ciudades e iglesias catedrales de España: vidas de sus obispos y cosas memorables de sus obispados*, vol. 1 (Salamanca: Antonio Ramirez, 1618), 162. Jesús Sanchidrián Gallego, ed., *Ávila dibujada: la ciudad ilustrada en el siglo XIX* (Ávila: Ayuntamiento de Ávila, 2005), 68–69.

³⁵ The most famous example being the family of St Teresa of Ávila, discussed below.

The Holy Office of the Inquisition in Ávila

The Holy Office did not operate for very long in Ávila. In order to make the institution more efficient, in 1503, smaller tribunals such as the one in Ávila were combined with others – such as from Burgos, León, Salamanca and other nearby cities – and consolidated in a larger tribunal in Valladolid.³⁶ Most of the documentation pertaining to the cases tried in Ávila in the 1490s has been lost, although late in the nineteenth century, historian and philologist Fidel Fita Colomé discovered a box in the Archivo del Monasterio de Santo Tomás that contained a list of names of individuals accused of *judiaizing* and sentenced by the Holy Office during its tenure in Ávila. All of these individuals had had their *san benito* caps displayed in the monastery's church, together with a placard displaying their crime. This public display preserved the memory of their “crimes,” and enabled the community to easily remember which families were “tainted” by their *judaizing*.

Abulense *vecinos* comprised 102 of the 184 individuals on this list. Of these twenty were already deceased by the time of their trial, yet still sentenced, and *quemado [en] su memoria y fama*, burned in memory and reputation.³⁷ The other cases offer a range of accounts, such as Alonso Jiménez de Ávila, “dishonored” for the crime and sin of heresy, his possessions seized by the Holy Office. Despite his dishonor, in 1493, responding to a petition from his wife, Maria de Santamaría, the Crown intervened and

³⁶ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 142.

³⁷ Some scholars see this as an example of extreme fanaticism – not even death cannot save you from the fires of the Holy Offices – or solely motivated by profit, as the Holy Office had a policy of confiscating the goods of those it condemned. But this practice was not limited to the Spanish Inquisition; it was also common practice in Languedoc and other medieval inquisitions. See James Buchanan Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (Cornell University Press, 2001), 71–90; Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 48; Juan Antonio Llorente and Léonard Gallois, *History of the Spanish Inquisition: Abridged from the Original Work of M. Llorente, Late Secretary of That Institution* (New York: G. C. Morgan, 1826), 97.

ordered the official in charge of the goods confiscated from her husband to be returned to her.³⁸ These authorities were in no hurry to fulfill this request; a year later, María lodged another appeal with the *consejo de la Inquisición* on the issue and a further appeal the following year.³⁹ This is only one glimpse into Abulense experiences with the Holy Office; others experienced markedly different outcomes.

Being tainted with the stain of a brush with the Inquisition was a very real fear. The *san benito* caps hanging in the church were a constant reminder of that blemish. Yet for a very few Abulenses, close association with a known heretic appears to have had no long lasting detrimental effects. Pedro de Lomo is one such case. Although his wife, Catalina de Lucena, was reconciled by the Holy Office for *judaizing* in 1491, this did not hinder Pedro de Lomo's career in any way.⁴⁰ He was appointed *procurador del común* in 1496, and publically commended for his service three years later.⁴¹ The very next year, his position expanded, and he became involved in tax collection for the city.⁴² While by no means a meteoric rise to power, Pedro del Lomo enjoyed a comfortable existence and there is nothing to suggest that he experienced disparagement due to his wife's past encounter with the Holy Office.

Diego de Burnuy's experience is unusual, charting the fall of a family once well connected, who subsequently was able to regain their former status after an inquisitorial trial. Born and raised in Ávila, Burnuy's name appears on a roster of *caballero hidalgos*

³⁸ AGS, RGS, Leg 149305,240

³⁹ AGS, RGS, Leg,149405,151; AGS, RGS, Leg 149504,409.

⁴⁰ Catalina de Lucena's name appears on the list of those whose *sambenitos* were displayed in the church of Santo Tomas. Fidel Fita Colomé, "Nuevos datos para escribir la historia de los judíos españoles," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 15 (1889): 343.

⁴¹ AM Sección Históricas, Legajo 1, núm. 118, 29 diciembre, 1496; AM Sección Históricas, Leg 1, núm. 139.

⁴² AM Caja 1, Legajo 158, 1 agosto, 1500.

called to serve the crown in 1480.⁴³ Socially, he had impeccable connections: his first wife was Catalina Gonzalez de Ávila, a member of the *hidalgo* Zabarcos family; Doña María Dávila was also a Zabarcos. Catalina had died in 1470, and in 1473, Diego married again. Shortly after this second marriage, Burnuy emancipated his children from his first marriage, essentially cutting all ties with them. Hilario Casado Alonso suspects that there may have been a motive to his actions, suggesting that Burnuy felt the “winds of intolerance” which were beginning to drift across Castile and that his separation from his children was a prescient action which later protected them.⁴⁴ Perhaps this is reading too much into a (happy) coincidence: in 1479, the year in which Burnuy emancipated his children; there was no sign of the looming change in religious sentiment or attitudes that would sweep through Ávila in the next decade. Indeed, through the 1480s, his business only continued to prosper.

A wool merchant, he probably was one of the wealthier men in Ávila with far-flung connections. His brother conducted business for the family in Toulouse and Flanders, and Burnuy had signed business accords with merchants in Valladolid and Seville. By 1490, his business was worth close to 1,500,000 *maravedís*.⁴⁵

Despite his commercial success, at some point before 1492, for reasons unknown, his family origins came under suspicion, and he became designated a *judío de señal*, and thus required wear a distinctive mark on his clothing signaling his Jewish origins.⁴⁶ His

⁴³ AHPAv, Caja 109, Libro 347.

⁴⁴ Hilario Casado Alonso, “De la judería a la grandeza de España: la trayectoria de la familia de mercaderes de los Bernuy (siglos XIV-XV),” *Bulletin of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* 27, no. 2 (1997): 12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶ Typically, *judíos de señal* were Jews, not converts. Burnuy’s situation is unclear, as he had been included in the 1480 list of *hidalgos*, and yet was clearly of Jewish origins. It is likely he had converted at some point, perhaps just prior to 1480. His is the only name on the list compiled by Fita with this designation.

fortunes continued to fall, and in 1492, he was condemned for *judaizing*. We only know he was condemned; there is no mention of his being relaxed to the secular authorities or burned at the stake.⁴⁷ However, the following year, the crown issued a grant to Peregrina Carnero, “wife that was” to Burnuy, returning all his confiscated goods, including a 250 *maravedís* repayment of a loan.⁴⁸ The language suggests then that the Holy Office had indeed sentenced him to death.

Yet the family fortune remained more or less intact, as the *merced* noted that much of Burnuy’s wealth had already been sent to “other places” where his children from his first marriage were living. One son divided his time between London and the Low Countries in the 1490s, another lived in Seville, while a third was in Toulouse.⁴⁹ Most of the family left Ávila in the early sixteenth century; only one daughter remained. The family ended up in Burgos, where they continued to expand their wealth.

A Diego de Burnuy found in the records there was likely a son from the second marriage, or possibly a grandson.⁵⁰ By 1547, this Diego was involved in the insurance business, and underwrote several voyages to Canada.⁵¹ Charles appointed him *regidor* of Burgos in 1548, and Phillip II named him Mariscal de Alcalá in 1566. He married the daughter of the Duke of Francavilla, and his great-great grandson became the Marques of

⁴⁷ Fita Colomé, “Nuevos datos para escribir la historia de los judíos españoles,” 335.

⁴⁸ AGS, RGS, Legajo 149302, 236

⁴⁹ Casado Alonso, “De la judería,” 13.

⁵⁰ Montero de Espinosa, Baltasar Cuartero y Huerta, and Antonio de Vargas-Zúñiga, *Índice de la colección de don Luis de Salazar y Castro. Tomo XIV*. (Real Academia de la Historia, 1956), 144; Remedios Morán Martín, *El señorío de Benamejí (su origen y evolución en el siglo XVI)* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 1986), 81.

⁵¹ Selma Huxley Barkham, “The Mentality of the Men behind the Sixteenth-Century Spanish Voyages to Terranova,” in *Decentering the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700*, ed. Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny (University of Toronto Press, 2001), 117.

Benamejí in 1675.⁵² Burnuy's story indicates just how long lasting the effect of an inquisitorial trial could be: it took several generations, and a move to another city before the family managed to regain their former social position.

While the Burnuy family managed to hold on to their wealth, and eventually regain their social standing, other families were not so successful in retaining either standing or wealth. The Holy Office posthumously tried and convicted the parents of Francisco Rodriguez Daza for heresy in 1493. As a result, he lost his position as a public scribe; he and his siblings were declared *inhábiles e incapaces* – ineligible and unfit – to hold public office.⁵³ The same fate awaited Alonso Alvarez, who lost his position as an *escribano publico* after his wife and parents were all convicted of *judaizing*. Alonso's father was executed, also likely posthumously. The fate of his wife and mother is more obscure, the records only tell us they were both reconciled.⁵⁴

Other families experienced mixed fortunes. Almost the entirety of the López family faced the Holy Office in 1491. Sisters Mencía, Inés, Catalina and María are all on the list of those whose *sambenitos* were hung in the church of Santo Tomás.⁵⁵ Two years later, their parents, Ruy López Beato and Elvira López – both already deceased – were condemned for heresy and burned in effigy. Their possessions, therefore, were to go to the Holy Office, rather than to their heirs. However, since the four women had already

⁵² Oscar Barea López, *Heráldica y genealogía de Cabra de Córdoba, Doña Mencía y Monturque y de sus enlaces (ss. XV-XIX)* (Madrid: Bubok, 2012), 86.

⁵³ AGS, RGS, Leg 149307, 38 and 39

⁵⁴ AGS, RGS, Legajo, 149403, 29; Fita Colomé, "Nuevos datos para escribir la historia de los judíos españoles," 339, 341.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 341–343.

“paid their penalties” when they themselves were tried, the Inquisition allowed them to receive their inheritances.⁵⁶

After 1503, all cases of heretical behavior were tried in Valladolid. The documentation from only a handful of these cases is extant. Of the eighteen files that exist from the first half of the sixteenth century, six people were arrested for blasphemy, five for uttering “scandalous words,” five others for offering “insults,” one for failing to observe a fast, and only one for *judaizing*.⁵⁷ While it is tempting to read the limited documentation – especially the lack of cases of *judaizing* – as evidence that there was little overt cryptoJudaism in Ávila, and that therefore relations between “old” and “new” Christians were relatively genial, this would be pure speculation.

What we do know is that in the years immediately following the expulsion, newcomers continued to arrive in the city, and some of those new arrivals were *conversos* from other cities in Castile.⁵⁸ Why they migrated to Ávila is not entirely clear. Again, we cannot read the lack of inquisitorial activity as evidence that the city offered a haven for *conversos* hoping to evade that institution. Undoubtedly, commercial opportunities were a lure, and *conversos* from other parts of the country may have formed business connections in the city which would have been an added attraction. Some *converso* families became very prosperous. Yet, as we shall also see, prosperity for the *conversos* did not necessarily translate into political power. Closed, rigid organizations such as the *concejo* only frustrated the attempts of some of the most successful *converso* families

⁵⁶ AGS, RGS, Leg 149309,161

⁵⁷ AHN, Inq. 31, Exp. 52; Inq.31,Exp.53; Inq. 33,Exp.18; Inq. 34, Exp.37; Inq. 39, Exp.21; Inq. 42, Exp.1; Inq. 43, Exp.38; Inq. 48, Exp.5a; Inq. 121,Exp.4; Inq. 121, Exp.14; Inq. 201, Exp.212; Inq. 203 ,Exp.16; Inq. 204, Exp.51; Inq. 208, Exp.41; Inq. 209, Exp.26; Inq. 210, Exp.16; Inq. 210, Exp.26.

⁵⁸ The most famous example being the family of St Teresa of Ávila, discussed below.

from accessing that institution. In this sense, the city posed something of a conundrum for *conversos*. On the one hand, it was open; on the other, it was closed.

Elite *conversos* in Ávila: *pleitos of hidalguía*

Owing to the lack of documents, the exact size of Ávila's *converso* population is difficult to determine. Records produced by a 1513 *visita*, or inspection of houses owned by the cathedral chapter indicates that a number of the city residences had names associated with those of city's former Jewish residents. These include the del Barco, de Bonilla, de las Navas. In addition, the *visita* indicates that some of these families lived in houses located in areas of the city where Jews had resided prior to the creation of the *judería* in 1480. These include the *calde* Andrín, the Mercado Chico and the Yuradero.⁵⁹

Many of these names can also be associated with a group of Abulense *converso* families known to have acquired considerable wealth. One of these families was the del Barco. In 1523, one of its members, Francisco del Barco, a cloth merchant, had acquired sufficient wealth to purchase land owned by Rodrigo de Ávila, one of the cathedral's prebendaries, for the sizeable sum of 96,000 *maravedís*.⁶⁰ Other records suggest that this same Francisco del Barco had sufficient capital to engage in money lending. In 1536, for example, he lent 15,000 *maravedís* to Alonso Navarro, a member of the *concejo*, albeit for reasons left unexplained.

But if Francisco del Barco, as a *converso*, continued to engage in activities such as money lending traditionally associated with Jews, his brother, Gregorio, managed to go a step further. In addition to acquiring considerable wealth and owning a home in the

⁵⁹ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 14, n. 34. The *visita* is recorded in AHN, Cód L.466.

⁶⁰ ACA Actas, tomo 4, fol 81

city's central plaza, the Mercado Chico, Gregorio was appointed to a prebendary in the cathedral, a position of prestige. As a sign of Gregorio's importance, and in recognition of his well-situated home, the Emperor Charles V, while visiting Ávila in 1534, honored Gregorio and his family by choosing to watch a bull run from the balcony of his house.⁶¹

While Gregorio del Barco, in his position affiliated with the cathedral, was able to entertain royalty, other prominent Abulense *conversos* sought different pathways to achieve a modicum of social recognition and prestige. One key to membership in the city's Christian community was membership in a *cofradía*, or brotherhood, of which Ávila had many. One of these was the *cofradía* San Sebastian, located in the working class, artisanal neighborhood of San Esteban, adjacent next to the former *judería*. Its records indicate many of its *cofradías* in the early sixteenth century were *conversos*, among them Cristóbal del Barco, likely a relative of both Francisco and Gregorio. The others included Lope and Silvestre Fernández Gallego, as well as Cristóbal Alvarez, all important cloth merchants.⁶² Another was Pedro de las Navas, but unlike the other *conversos* in San Esteban, he was a butcher, and probably of rather more modest means.⁶³

An alternative route to social prestige for these men was a *pleito de hidalguía*, or patent of nobility. To gain *hidalgo* status, a person had to prove that one's ancestors – all four grandparents – were also *hidalgos*. If, however, one could not prove their status as a *hidalgo de sangre*, as it was called, it was possible to purchase a *carta de ejecutoria de*

⁶¹ Manuel de Foronda y Aguilera, *Estancias y viajes del Emperador Carlos V... por Don Manuel de Foronda y Aguilera* (Madrid, 1914). Bull runs were fairly common spectacles in fifteenth and sixteenth century Ávila, held to mark special occasions and some holidays. On bull runs in the city, see Abelardo Merino Alvarez, *La sociedad abulense durante el siglo XVI: la nobleza* (Madrid: Patronato de Huérfanos de los Cuerpos de Intendencia é Intervención Militares, 1926), 164–165.

⁶² Sabe Andreu, *Las cofradías de Ávila en la edad moderna*, 132.

⁶³ Ibid. See also ACA tomo 6, fol 50

hidalguía.⁶⁴ The patent had financial implications, as *hidalgos* were tax-exempt, but was also a way for *conversos* to “erase” their Jewish past and present themselves from here on in as members of the “old” Christian community. There are no extant *pleitos* for Abulense *conversos* earlier than 1497, when, on January 1, when Rodrigo Gallego and his brother Vicente both were awarded *hidalgo* status.⁶⁵ Other Abulense *conversos* who were successful in their applications were Leonardo de Crespos, in 1514; Juan González de las Fraguas, in 1518; Juan Nieto, in 1521; Pedro López in 1523 and Gil López del Barco in 1532.⁶⁶ Although likely motivated primarily by economics, there was an added benefit, for as “gentlemen,” the men of these families might now be able to enter into strategic marriages with the upper echelons of society.

The Sánchez de Cepeda family

I now turn to what is arguably the most well-known *converso* family in Ávila at this time: the Sánchez de Cepeda family, the family of St Teresa of Ávila. They too were able to take advantage of the continuing growth in Ávila’s economy to increase their wealth, and in doing so, improve their social position. Teresa’s grandfather, Juan Sánchez de Toledo, a cloth merchant, was a “new” Christian in Toledo.⁶⁷ In 1485, however, the

⁶⁴ Though primarily concerned with a later period, see I. A. A. Thompson, “The Purchase of Nobility in Castile, 1552-1700,” *The Journal of European Economic History*.- 8, no. 2 (1979): 313–60. Thompson argued that the purchase of patents of nobility occurred less than has been assumed, as the costs involved were so severe that they often negated any benefits earned by gaining tax free status.

⁶⁵ Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid, (hereafter ARCV), Registro de Ejecutorias, Caja 108, 26; Caja 108, 7

⁶⁶ ARCV, Registro de Ejecutorias, Caja 298,22; ARCV, Pergaminos, Caja 44,6; ARCV Registro de Ejecutorias, Caja 349, 5; Caja 364, 49; CAJA 442,62 Little else is known about these men, other than they were successful in their applications for *hidalgo* status.

⁶⁷ There is some confusion as to Juan Sánchez’s full name. His parents were both connected to the Cepeda family, as was his wife, however he is consistently referred to as Juan Sánchez de Toledo in the *pleito de hidalguía* of his son, Alfonso, Teresa’s father. ARCV, Sala de Hijosdalgo, Caja 45,5

Holy Office arrested him on charges of *judaizing* and subsequently sentenced him to march in a series of seven penitential processions – one of the many of such processions discussed in Chapter Three. While this was a relatively light sentence, compared to those in Toledo who were condemned to death, his brush with the Holy Office apparently convinced him to leave the city, and by 1493, Juan Sánchez, together with his wife and sons, was already settled in Ávila.⁶⁸ The date is important as it indicates that as early as one year after the expulsion, *conversos* elected to migrate to Ávila. Why Juan Sánchez chose Ávila remains unknown, but inferences can be made. As a cloth merchant in Toledo, he is likely to have had business connections in Ávila, thus making the move that much easier. Indeed, upon his arrival in Ávila, he was able to take advantage of the city's expanding woolen industry and continue to work in the cloth trade. Over time, he became moderately wealthy, and in the process established close links with many members of Ávila's elite. However, as a *converso*, certain doors remained closed. In addition – perhaps more importantly – as a *pechero* or commoner, he was subject to taxes from which *hidalgos* were exempt.

In 1500, therefore, Juan Sánchez did what many *conversos* across Castile were doing: he submitted a *pleito de hidalguía* to the Royal Chancellery in nearby Valladolid, and won.⁶⁹ His sons did the same, also successfully, in 1519 (though it took some time for the petition to succeed, they were not granted their *cartas de ejecutoria de hidalguía* until 1523.)⁷⁰ In addition, all the Cepeda sons made marriages to prestigious “old” Christian Abulense families. Alonso, Teresa's father, first married Catalina del Peso y

⁶⁸ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 110.

⁶⁹ Narciso Alonso Cortes, “Pleitos de Los Cepedas,” *Boletín de La Real Academia Española* 25 (1946): 85–110.

⁷⁰ ARCV Sala de Hijosdalgo, Caja 45,5

Henao, daughter of “old” Christian and *concejo* member Pedro del Peso. His second marriage was to a woman from another “old” Christian family, Beatriz de Ahumada; his younger brother Francisco married Beatriz’s cousin, María de Ahumada. Teresa’s uncles, Ruy and Pedro both married into the wealthy “old” Christian Aguila family. Pedro’s new brother in law was Francisco de Pajares, also a member of the *concejo*.⁷¹

The success of the Sánchez de Cepeda family lay in part in their ability to convince Abulenses to testify to their noble status. Some of these *testigos* may have felt solidarity with the Cepeda family, as fellow *conversos* Lope Gallego appears on the witness list, as do Gómez Daza and Juan Nieto.⁷² Not content to rely solely on the word these men, however, as the court might view their testimony untrustworthy due to their religious background, the Cepeda men took other steps. Four “old” Christian men of Ávila, on the verge of testifying *against* the brothers abruptly changed their minds and agreed to testify on their behalf. When questioned, they admitted that Francisco de Pajares, Pedro’s brother in law and a member of the town council, had offered them 300 *maravedís* each to alter their testimony. The judge in the case refused to allow them to proceed with their testimony.⁷³ Obviously, the wealth of the Cepeda family garnered them *some* allies among the “old” Christians of Ávila.

Exclusionary tendencies in Ávila

Yet it would be an exaggeration to think that all “old” Christians in Ávila welcomed wealthy *conversos* such as the Cepedas with open arms. Diego Alvarez de

⁷¹ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 65–66. See also Teófanés Egido, *El linaje judeoconverso de Santa Teresa: pleito de hidalguía de los Cepeda* (Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1986), 15–16.

⁷² Egido, *El linaje judeoconverso*, 155, 158, 161.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 15–17, 112–116.

Bracamonte, a city councilor in 1519 and member of one of the older *hidalgo* families in Ávila, claimed his descent from French knights who had come to Castile to fight for Henry II in the fourteenth century. In his will, he stipulated that none of his heirs – and presumably, their heirs – could inherit any part of his family’s fortune if they married a *converso* or *conversa*.

Don Diego’s thinking presages a phenomenon that had already taken hold elsewhere in Castile but which was slow to arrive in Ávila: the notion of *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood. As Jews converted throughout the fifteenth century – often changing their names to appear more Christian – they became ostensibly indistinguishable from “old” Christians. In the small communities of Castilian cities, memories ran long and a person’s past could not be so easily hid. As we have seen with the Sánchez de Cepeda family, moving to another city was one way to hide one’s background, as was applying for *hidalgo* status. Yet mistrust about lineage remained, and adopting the practice of having to prove one’s non-Jewish ancestry in order to be eligible for certain offices or for admittance to certain institutions spread throughout the latter half of the fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth.⁷⁴

Many institutions adopted the practice only nominally, however. Following an anti-*converso* riot in 1449, the *concejo* in Toledo implemented *limpieza de sangre* statutes barring *conversos* from holding municipal office. However, on three separate

⁷⁴ Sicroff, *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII*. See also David Nirenberg, “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth Century Spain,” *Past and Present*, no. 174 (2002): 3–41.

occasions between the 1450s and the end of the century, the *concejo* had to re-establish those statutes, the implication being that they were repeatedly ignored.⁷⁵

Much the same occurred in other cities – *limpieza* statutes were implemented, but unevenly, and generally unsuccessfully enforced.⁷⁶ As for Ávila, such statutes were few. In 1496, Tomás de Torquemada requested and received a papal bull to implement a *limpieza de sangre* statute for the Dominican monastery of Santo Tomás. It was the only religious house in the city to implement such a statute until 1580, when the cathedral of Ávila belatedly implemented one of its own.

In contrast, nothing in Ávila's archives indicates that the *concejo* ever instituted any kind of *limpieza* statute.⁷⁷ One reason for this was the manner in which members of the *concejo* were selected. Although ostensibly an "open council" (*concejo abierto*), meaning that any (male) taxpayer was eligible to sit on the *concejo*, the reality was that most *regidores* simply passed on their post to a son or other family member when they resigned.⁷⁸ And while at the *Cortes* of Toledo (1480) Ferdinand and Isabel expressed concern over this custom, claiming, "it would be a great error in thought to suppose that the gift or grace of good governance is passed from father to son," they did nothing to change the practice.⁷⁹

Of course, the monarchs could have involved themselves in the selection of office holders. Since the thirteenth century it had been law that the king could appoint any man

⁷⁵ Martz, "Pure Blood Statutes in Sixteenth Century Toledo: Implementation as Opposed to Adoption". 85.

⁷⁶ Stephen Haliczzer, "The Castilian Urban Patriciate and the Jewish Expulsions of 1480-92," *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 1 (February 1, 1973): 41-42.

⁷⁷ Belmonte Díaz, *Judíos e inquisición*, 166-167.

⁷⁸ Edwards, *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs 1474-1520*, 51.

⁷⁹ Danvila y Collado, *Cortes de Los Antiguos Reinos*, 4:161. "...sería muy errado pensamiento pensar que don o gracia de bein gouernar se deriue de padre en fijo... porque naturalmente la experiencia del galardón despierta a los hombres ... por ser buenos e virtuosos."

he chose as one of the *regidores* who sat on the town council.⁸⁰ This law was still in place during Isabel and Ferdinand's reign, though, as Linda Martz observed in the case of fifteenth century Toledo, rarely did the Crown take advantage of the law, "barring any major transgressions or political upheaval."⁸¹ It seems doubtful that the king and queen availed themselves of this right in the case of Ávila; the extant documentation makes no mention of such an event.

Offices could, of course be sold instead of inherited, as happened elsewhere.⁸² *Conversos* in other cities successfully made inroads into local government.⁸³ This was not the case in Ávila. The *regidores* of Ávila, while willing to form marriage alliances with wealthy *conversos*, and assist them in obtaining *hidalgo* status, were not yet ready to give up their control of the town council. Other families, no matter how wealthy or well connected, found access to the *concejo* difficult, if not necessarily impossible.⁸⁴

Over time, this lack of political access began to rankle. Frustration only mounted among *conversos* and other taxpayers as the only access to political power for this group lay in the position of *procurador del común*, a kind of public defender. In Ávila, rather than being elected by his peers, the holder of this post was "hand-picked" by the councilors themselves. Interestingly, Ávila's *procurador del común* in the 1490s was, in fact, a *converso* – the aforementioned Pedro de Lomo whose wife was reconciled by the

⁸⁰ In Ávila, this was part of the city's *fuero* or charter. See Javier, "El régimen jurídico abulense medieval."

⁸¹ Martz, *A Network of Converso Families in Early Modern Toledo*, 15.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Haliczer, "Castilian Urban Patriciate."

⁸⁴ Ariz, *Historia de las grandezas*, 4, 36v.

Holy Office for *judaizing*. Appointed in 1496, the *concejo* commended him in 1499 for his service to the city.⁸⁵

Never the less, just three years later, Antonio Pérez, *juez de residencia* in Ávila in 1502, wrote to the Crown, noting that the taxpayers of Ávila – all of them, not just the *conversos* – “have many suspicions, and have complained to your majesties of the wrongs done to them in the assessment of taxes.” Clearly, the taxpayers did not trust the *concejo* – or Pedro de Lomo – to have their best interests at heart. Pérez suggested that the crown insist that two *procuradores* sit on the council, one to represent the *hidalgos* and the other the *pecheros*.⁸⁶

Although discrimination on the basis of religious lineage was not absent from Abulense “old” Christian society, it is unclear if this was the reason for the unwillingness to allow *conversos* onto the *concejo*. It seems likely that, in large part, it was more an adherence to traditional customs and the practices of bequeathing one’s position on the council to one’s heirs. Even if not rooted in religious prejudices, the exclusion from political power was very real and would become a deadly factor when it came to the events surrounding the revolt of the *Comuneros*.

The revolt of the *Comuneros*

The revolt of the *Comuneros* was a Castilian uprising in response to the rule of Charles, grandson of Isabel and Ferdinand, who had been raised in the Low Countries and was essentially a foreigner when he took the throne. That foreignness and his

⁸⁵ AM Sección Históricas, Legajo 1, núm. 118, 29 diciembre, 1496; AM Sección Históricas, Leg 1, núm. 139.

⁸⁶ *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España*, vol. 36 (Real Academia de la Historia, 1860), 448–449.

seemingly divided loyalties (he became Holy Roman Emperor in 1519) fostered mistrust amongst the citizens of Castile. Most of the rebels were non-noble, and many of their complaints centered on the fiscal policies of the crown.⁸⁷ Joseph Pérez has argued that *conversos* made up a disproportionate number of *Comuneros*, although he is (rightly) unwilling to say the rebellion was *converso* in origin.⁸⁸ “Old” Christians also were part of the revolt, such as Segovia’s *Comunero* leader, Juan Bravo.⁸⁹

The entire rebellion, as John Elliott explains, was more a movement *against* something, rather than a movement *for* something. Its goals and aims were confused and never unified.⁹⁰ The spark that lit the rebellious flame came when Charles proposed new tax levies, in order to cover both the costs incurred by his court, and his travels to Germany to take up the imperial throne. The *Cortes* had to approve all new taxes, and Charles barely succeeded in gaining that approval. Indeed, the *concejo* in Ávila’s had instructed its attendees to the *Cortes* to vote against the tax; for some reason, they ignored their mandate and gave Charles their support. It is possible attendees received bribes, or were otherwise somehow coerced.⁹¹ The fact is that the *Cortes* approved this wildly unpopular tax, and rioting erupted in several central Castilian cities such as Segovia, Burgos, and León.

⁸⁷ On the *Comunero* revolt, see Aurelio Espinosa, *The Empire of the Cities: Emperor Charles V, the Comunero Revolt, and the Transformation of the Spanish System* (Brill, 2009); Stephen Haliczer, *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475-1521* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); Joseph Pérez, *La revolución de las comunidades de Castilla (1520-1521)* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1998).

⁸⁸ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 1998, 79.

⁸⁹ Kevin Ingram, “Introduction,” in *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond: Volume Two: The Morisco Issue*, ed. Kevin Ingram (Brill, 2012), 5–6.

⁹⁰ Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, 151.

⁹¹ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 71; Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, 150–151; John Lynch, *Spain Under the Habsburgs: Empire and Absolutism, 1516-1598* (Oxford University Press, 1964), 38.

The situation in Ávila was almost equally tense. At first, the *concejo* felt it had no choice but to remain loyal to the king, but at what was likely a tempestuous meeting on June 19, 1520, Diego de Bracamonte vociferously expressed his displeasure with the *Cortes* and its decision. He claimed that the Abulense representatives to the *Cortes* had acted against the wishes of the city, should not have voted for the tax, and that an investigation into what had happened was necessary.⁹² Several other members of the council, including the influential Francisco de Pajares, agreed. The *concejo* then chose to renege on the initial approval of the tax, and refused to pay.⁹³

These members of the *concejo* were reinforced by several wealthy – and not so wealthy – *conversos* who joined them in opposing the tax. Notably wealthy *conversos* such as Lope Gallego, Pedro de las Navas and Cristóbal Alvarez, are all on the list of Abulense participants, as well as several undoubtedly less affluent men, listed only by their first name and their occupation.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, members of the *pechero* populace took this opportunity to express their frustration with their lack of political influence – a frustration evinced in Antonio Pérez’s letter above. In July 1520, an angry mob sacked and looted the houses of the two councilors who had voted for the hated tax, Diego Fernández Quiñones and Juan de Henao; the same happened to the homes of Antonio Ponce and Pedro de Ávila, who refused to join the rebels.⁹⁵ As Jodi Bilinkoff explained, the fervor of the *pecheros* caused

⁹² AHPAv, Actas, Caja 3, Leg 4, 19 junio 1520.

⁹³ AHPAv, Actas, Caja 3, Leg 4, 3 julio 1520.

⁹⁴ Manuel Danvila y Collado, “Historia crítica y documentada de las comunidades de Castilla,” in *Memorial histórico español: colección de documentos, opúsculos y antigüedades que publica la Real Academia de la Historia* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1894), 35: 454–455. See also Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 72.

⁹⁵ Danvila y Collado, “Historia crítica y documentada de las comunidades de Castilla,” 35: 409; 38: 123–126; Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 73–74.

the elite members of the rebellion some unease, especially as they saw their peers in other cities – Segovia, Medina del Campo – murdered by mobs. After the defeat of rebel forces at Tordesillas in December 1520, several of Ávila's elite, captured by the royalist forces, gained their freedom by agreeing to serve as mediators between the Crown and the *Comuneros*. By the end of February 1521, the city's involvement in the revolt was at an end.⁹⁶

Many local Abulense suffered for their participation in the revolt. Those with money paid huge fines, or saw their property confiscated. Some spent well over the next decade paying off those fines, despite repeated appeals for clemency. They were, nonetheless, more fortunate than some of the rebels who lacked such means. The cooper Juan de Osma; the spinner Tomé Hernández; and the shearer known only as Cohote, were all executed for their part in the rebellion.⁹⁷

In the aftermath of the revolt, the *concejo* realized that perhaps, as a political entity, it ought to rethink its position *vis a vis* the *pechero* community. To that end, it created two new positions – essentially public defenders – with a mandate to assist the poor in their affairs as needed.⁹⁸ Further, it implemented a public granary, or *alhóndiga*. In large part, the *alhóndiga* was a response to food shortages in the 1520s, following several years of poor harvests. Rather than collecting and distributing aid on an *ad hoc* basis, a committee made up of both *concejo* members and clergy distributed food through the auspices of the *alhóndiga*, to which affluent Abulenses could donate.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 74–75.

⁹⁷ AGS Cam Castilla, leg 143-175, 142-157.

⁹⁸ Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 61.

⁹⁹ AHN Cód 458b. See also *Ibid.*, 61–62.

However, the revolt did nothing to change the inability of wealthy *conversos* to gain access to positions on the *concejo*. Councilors simply continued to hand their positions off to sons or other relatives when they stepped down. Throughout the sixteenth century, affluent *conversos* continued to be excluded from local political power, and had to find other ways to involve themselves in civic life – most notably through religion, whether as clerics, or in the foundation of new religious houses, or taking part in the religious reforms the city became known for during the lifetime of St Teresa.¹⁰⁰

If there had been significant detriments to the city of Ávila due of the expulsion of the Jews, surely they would be evident in the years immediately following that event. On the contrary, Ávila prospered in the post-expulsion decades: the economy thrived; the city underwent a physical transformation; newcomers steadily moved to Ávila. Most people continued to work in the artisanal industries they, or their family, had before. For most Abulenses, life went on in much the same way as it had before 1492.

Of course, the presence of the Holy Office of the Inquisition – whether in Ávila itself or from Valladolid – and the lack of access to political power were serious detriments to life for Abulense *conversos*. After the violence of the *Comunero* revolt, however, Ávila saw no more overt popular uprisings. It seems as though the social friction first wrought in the last years before the Jews were expelled finally began to subside.

The expulsion of the Jews was by no means something insignificant – certainly not for the Jews who were forced to leave their homes, nor for those who stayed behind.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 77.

Yet for those who experienced the expulsion first hand, the event was not unlike similar events which had preceded it: the creation of the *judería* or the establishment of the Holy Office. Those events, too, had wrought significant change, not only in the community of Ávila, but throughout the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. As the Jews packed up their goods and left, as their neighbors bought their properties and watched them go, there was no prescient glimpse of just how much historical weight would be brought to bear on this particular event, and this particular year.

Epilogue

On February 7, 2014, the Spanish parliamentary cabinet approved a law allowing descendants of those Jews expelled in 1492 the right to seek Spanish nationality.¹ Whatever the motivations behind the law, it was definitely couched in terms of redressing a centuries old wrong. Justice Minister Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón was recorded as describing the law as a “real historic reparation of, I dare say, the biggest mistake in Spanish history.”² The Spanish foreign ministry issued a statement saying the government of Spain “wishes to acknowledge the relevance of the Sephardic legacy in its history and culture.”³ And Santiago Palomero, director of the Sephardic Museum in Toledo, commented that the new law is akin to pulling off the “veil of silence over this part of our history,” adding that the expulsion “...forms part of the collective memory.”⁴

Events do matter, and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain is one which has resonated both within and without that country for centuries. Spaniards have sought to justify the expulsion by linking it to the formation of a national identity, as though these very cruel means justified a unifying end. Non-Spaniards used the expulsion to bolster anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish rhetoric, seeing it as an overt sign of rabid intolerance and slavish clericalism. Only in recent years have scholars begun to reconsider the meaning of this sorry chapter in Spain’s complex religious history.

¹ Though approved by the cabinet, the law, as of writing, has yet to be approved by the Spanish parliament.

² Rick Gladstone, “Many Seek Spanish Citizenship Offered to Sephardic Jews,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2014.

³ Isabel Kershner and Raphael Minder, “Prospect of Spanish Citizenship Appeals to Descendants of Jews Expelled in 1492,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2014.

⁴ Henry Chu and Batsheva Sobelman, “After Expelling Jews in 1492, Spain Considers Inviting Them Back,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 2014.

That chapter includes more than just 1492 and the expulsion, however. Other dates are equally weighted within the context of the Spanish historical record. It could be argued that without the creation of the *converso* group in 1391, none of the signal events of the fifteenth century would have occurred. There would have been no *anticonverso* riots in Toledo in 1449. There would have been no need for the installation of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1478. And perhaps, there would have been no move to expel the Jews in 1492. Then, too, for those Castilians and Aragonese who watched the Jews leave their homes in 1492, the year signaled no momentous shift in how they understood their world, no more of a shift than did these earlier years, these earlier events.

This dissertation was inspired by the question of how people “on the ground” understood the significance such complex historical events such as those outlined above; how those experiences shaped their way of thinking about their community, their neighbors, their religious identity. It has provided answers as to how the people of Ávila were marked by change caused by outside influences. Both the Crown and the Church imposed restrictions on Jewish-Christian relations, in an effort to spiritually “protect” Christians from contamination from Jews. In Ávila, rather than easing any social tensions, these restrictions only served to destroy those horizontal alliances which had kept the community peaceable for centuries. While the “royal alliance” ensured Jewish safety for a time, even that alliance broke down, and Ferdinand and Isabel turned their back on their Jewish subjects. This project has explicated these occurrences in the Abulense context.

More could yet be done. Micro-histories such as this one provide a glimpse into how the events leading up to the expulsion were experienced by the ordinary citizens of

Ávila, but Ávila is not representative of the entirety of the experience. Similar monographic studies for other cities would broaden our knowledge of the expulsion, and indeed, of other significant events concerning the breakdown of Christian-Jewish relationships in medieval Castile and Aragon. Further, comparisons with other cities – currently a small portion of this study – could be deepened in a revised version of this work in order to situate Ávila in a wider context, and offer additional insights into the experience of the expulsion and the developments leading up to it.

The decade between 1482 and 1492 bore witness to the disintegration of any horizontal alliances Abulense Jews had with their neighbors, due to their dependence on the “royal alliance.” This collapse of horizontal alliances occurred elsewhere in the peninsula, at different moments. Although hinted at in various studies already published, more scholarly work on the consequences of adhering to vertical alliances at the expense of horizontal ones could also shed new light on Christian-Jewish relationships on the pre-modern Iberian peninsula.

This dissertation has shown that the intricacies of historical social relationships do not so neatly conform to periodizations such as “before 1492” and “after 1492.” It has offered a new perspective of that date: the view of the people of Ávila who lived through that year, in the hopes of allowing us, at this distant remove, to reconsider the meaning of the year, and the event of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

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Carolyn Salomons - Curriculum Vitae

Education

PhD Candidate, Johns Hopkins University, 2007-present

M.A., History, University of Alberta, 2007

M.A., English, Carleton University, 1996

B.A., English, Simon Fraser University, 1994

Publications

- Hybrid Historiography: Pre- and Post-conquest Latin America and Perceptions of the Past, *Past Imperfect*, University of Alberta, 2006.

<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~pastimpe/Volume%2012/Hybrid%20Historiography.pdf>

- What the Age Demanded: Power and Resistance in Pre-modern and Post-modern Texts, *Illumine*, University of Victoria, 2006

Conference Presentations

- *A fazer un cuerpo monstruoso: Inter-religious relations in Ávila and the synod of 1481*, Sixteenth Century Society Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2013.
- “*Por amor y por caridad*”: *The conversion of conversos into la masa silenciosa*, Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, 43rd Annual Meeting, Tufts University, 2012.
- “*We would have the church*”: *The Conversion of Sacred Space in Medieval Spain*, Codices and Communities: Material, Book and Print Culture and their Medieval and Early Modern Contexts, Medieval and Early Modern Institute, University of Alberta, 2008.
- *What the Age Demanded: Power and Resistance in Pre-modern and Post-modern texts*, “Present(ing) the Past: Knowledge, Power and the Practice of History and Classics, History and Classics Graduate Students Conference, University of Alberta, 2005

Awards Received

- 2010-2011 – Fulbright Scholarship
- 2010 – Program for Cultural Cooperation Between Spain's Ministry of Culture & United States' Universities Research Grant
- 2009 – Singleton Research Grant, The Johns Hopkins University
- 2008 – Stulman Jewish Studies Research Grant, The Johns Hopkins University
- 2007-2013 – Graduate Student Fellowship, The Johns Hopkins University
- 2006 – Graduate Student Scholarship, Ministry of Advanced Education, Government of Alberta

Teaching

- 2013 – World History to 1500CE, University of Baltimore
- 2009 – Teaching Assistant, Colonial Latin America, The Johns Hopkins University
- 2008 – Teaching Assistant, Golden Age Spain, The Johns Hopkins University
- 2003 – Instructor, English and Communication, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
- 2002-2003 – Lecturer, Foreign Language Department, Cheongju University
- 1999-2002 – Lecturer, Foreign Language Department, Korea University

Professional Service

- 2010-2013 – Coordinator, European Seminar, Johns Hopkins University
- 2006-2007 – Executive Member, University of Alberta History and Classics Graduate Student Association
- 2005-2006 – Vice President, Finance, University of Alberta History and Classics Graduate Student Association

Professional Memberships

- American Historical Association
- Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies
- Sixteenth Century Society
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Languages

- Spanish
- Reading knowledge of French, Portuguese, Italian, Latin