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Paola Tartakoff. *Between Christian and Jew: Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250-1391.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. x + 209 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-4421-2.

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Negotiating Allegiances: Jewish Apostates and Converts in the Medieval Crown of Aragon

The issue of Jewish conversion to Christianity has always loomed large in the history of Christian-Jewish relations. No history of the Jews in medieval Europe is complete without some allusion to Christian missionary work among Jews and the forced conversions that often followed anti-Jewish violence such as the riots in the Rhineland in the wake of the First Crusade and in Castile and the Crown of Aragon in 1391. Paola Tartakoff's *Between Christian and Jews: Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250-1391* is a welcome addition to this historiography precisely for tackling one of its remaining gaps. In terms of Iberian history, while we know much about conversos–as Jews who converted to Christianity are known–this history often begins in 1391, with the transformative violence that engulfed many Jewish communities and led to the forced conversion of more than a third of the Jews in Castile and the Crown of Aragon. Yet, there was a steady stream of conversions prior to 1391 and no one had yet dedicated an entire monograph to this important history. Tartakoff's masterful study is timely and will hopefully encourage others to carry this topic forward.

Tartakoff's book is based on painstaking archival research that requires impressive paleographic and linguistic skills. She combs inquisitorial records, royal and episcopal letters, Christian and Jewish literature, and rabbinic responsa, written in Latin, Catalan, and Hebrew, from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in order to uncover the history of converts and apostates between 1250-1391. Her choice of terms is significant–the individuals she tracks are at times referred to as converts and at other times apostates–since her objective is to look at them from the perspective of both the Jewish and Christian communities. One of Tartakoff's main contributions is in fact to highlight that Christians and Jews saw converts in remarkably similar ways: both were suspicious of their motivations and had disdain for the converts' behavior. Furthermore, both Christians and Jews saw converts as an opportunity to prove the validity of their own faith–Christians by the fact that Jews had chosen to convert and Jews when those converts chose to re-Judaize.

The book is structured around the case of Alatzar/Pere, an Aragonese Jew from the town of Calatayud who converted to Christianity in 1341 and sought martyrdom, encouraged by local Jews, by openly returning to Judaism in front of Christian authorities in order to get the death penalty. The case involved a Jewish couple in the nearby town of La Almunia de Dona Godina, Janto Almulli and his wife Jamila, and a preeminent member of the Jewish community of Calatayud, Jucef de Quatorze. Divided in three parts, each containing two chapters sandwiched between highlights from Pere's case, the book begins with a look at the medieval inquisition (not to be confused with the Spanish Inquisition) and its relations with the Jews, before turning in parts 2 and 3 respectively to a close look at the lives of converts after conversion and the attitude of the Jewish community towards their former coreligionists.

Although Jews were outside of inquisitorial jurisdiction since they could not be found guilty of Christian heresy, Tartakoff found they were no strangers to inquisitorial prosecution. In the Crown of Aragon inquisitors prosecuted Jews for three types of offenses: blasphemy, helping those who converted to continue to follow Jewish laws (that is, Judaize), and bringing converts back into Judaism. In analyzing Jewish response to inquisitorial activity, Tartakoff shows that the Jews under investigation became "key actors" in the proceedings, attempting to shape their outcome by employing various strategies and showing themselves familiar with the institution of the inquisition.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Christian attitudes towards conversion, Jewish motivation for converting, and what

happened to conversos after they made the leap. While Christians in principle encouraged conversion, they were also aware that many Jews sought conversion as a way out of problems such as debt and conflicts within the Jewish community. Conversion, therefore, was a way of starting a new life, often far away from communities of origin. Whatever their motivation, conversos often found that life after baptism was not easy. As Tartakoff shows, most converts lost or gave up their goods upon conversion, many becoming beggars in the process, depending on the charity of Christians who often looked at them suspiciously. Tartakoff argues that "as a result of poverty, Christian rejection, and personal grievances against Jews, many converts continued to interact with Jews, often in antagonist ways" (p. 82). Some even sought a return to Judaism. This is perhaps one of the most important sections of the book. Historians have for long argued that the forced conversions of 1391 led to a disintegration of Christian-Jewish relations since, having converted under duress, the new Christians could not be trusted. Tartakoff argues that even before the forced conversion of 1391, Jewish converts were perceived as suspect and not embraced by the Christian community. She gives a few reasons for this phenomenon, including "Christian concerns about the immutability of Jewishness" and also because Christians were well aware of the circumstances behind baptism, not always done for religious reasons (p. 94).

After looking at the motivation behind conversion and what happened to converts, Tartakoff turns her attention to the Jewish community's attitude towards those who left it in favor of Christianity. She finds that most Jews rejected converts and she highlights both a philosophical and more practical basis for Jewish rejection of apostasy: not only was apostasy a sin, but also by choosing Christianity specifically, apostates were seen as traitors. They were also shunned because converts often harassed their former communities both as a way of proving their allegiance to Christianity but also in order to extort money. Nevertheless, while many Jews shunned converts, others helped, at great risk, to return apostates to Judaism. In this, she finds no contradiction in the response of the Jewish community–both the Jewish repudiation and the efforts to re-Judaize converts "reflected Jewish disdain for Christianity and resentment of Christian abuses of Jews" (p. 118).

In the end, Tartakoff returns to the inquisitorial case with which she began and whose thread holds her book together. She does an exemplary job in uncovering the local context of Pere's case, situating it in the souring relations between Christians and Jews in Calatayud in the first half of the fourteenth century. While it is tempting to see Pere's case, as she does, as "striking evidence of the vigor of mutual hostility between Christians and Jews in the Crown of Aragon" (p. 131), it is worth remembering that while Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia were ruled by the same monarch, social, political, and economic contexts varied greatly among the constituent states that formed the Crown of Aragon. We know, for example, that the violence that accompanied the Black Death in Valencia was not in fact based on Christian-Jewish hostility but rather resulted from a civil war in which the local nobility revolted against its king. Much remains to be understood about Christian-Jewish relations in the Kingdom of Aragon proper, where Calatayud was located. Interestingly enough, the kingdom was not affected by the riots of 1391. These comments, however, in no way detract from this masterful book, which will be of interest not only to anyone working on Jewish history or even Iberian history but also to those studying majority-minority relations elsewhere in the medieval world.

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