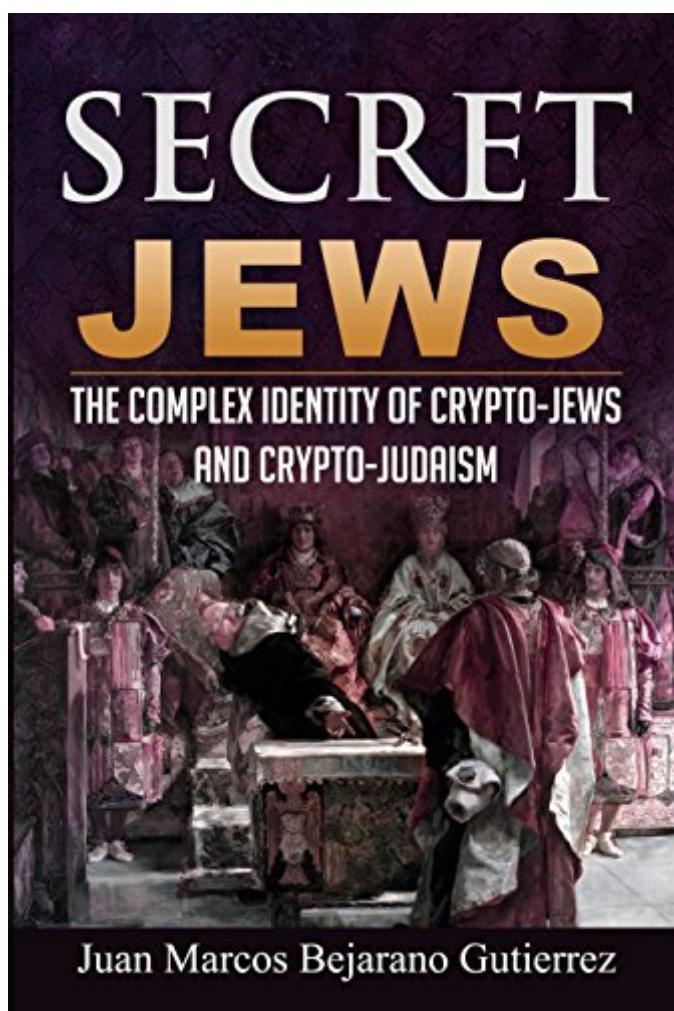


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Secret Jews: The Complex Identity Of Crypto-Jews And Crypto-Judaism



Synopsis

This book reviews types of Iberian Conversos (i.e. primarily forced but also voluntary Jewish converts to Christianity) from the late 14th to the 17th centuries and surveys the Christian and Jewish attitudes towards them. The book begins with a brief history of Jewish life in the Iberian Peninsula noting critical events such as the forced conversions of Jews under the Visigoths and the Almohades. The direct events leading to mass conversions of Jews in the late 14th century and the aftermath in the 15th century are reviewed. This study examines texts and decrees that reveal that many Christians doubted the sincerity of these Jewish conversions to Christianity, and how they still regarded and treated Conversos as Jews. Different types of Conversos are then discussed. The challenges and situations each Converso faced were unique and produced different outlooks towards Jewish identity and faith in general. Various Jewish sources, including rabbinic responsa, sermons, and other documents are also analyzed. These sources reveal the positive attitudes of Jews towards Conversos and the Jewish community's desire for them to return to Judaism openly. Other studies suggest that as a whole, Conversos either fully retained their Jewish identity or sincerely embraced Christianity. This study argues that the Jewish identity of Conversos was complicated and existed along a broad spectrum ranging from complete abandonment to ardent Judaizing. The book concludes by exploring the stories of descendants of Conversos in the United States, Latin America, and in Spain and Portugal, who are searching and often embracing a Jewish identity once thought lost.

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Customer Reviews

1492 was recorded as one of the most disastrous for the Jewish people residing in Spain. The three choices were simple conversion, death or leave Spain. In reality, though, their terror began in 1391, the Visigoths forced all the Jews to convert or die. Many Jews chose to convert. Some Jews survived by fleeing to another kingdom but as the years rolled by the antisemitism would catch up and they would face pogroms. Between the years 1391 to 1492 the Jews would face several outbursts of antisemitism. Much of the antisemitism was Church inspired and the peasantry were the ones who carried out the violence. Sometimes the nobility would try to protect them but to no avail, the mob rules. Jews who converted to Catholicism were known by several names Marrano (pigs), conversos and Anusim. Once converted they went to church and outwardly tried to be the best Christians possible. Inwardly though many Anusim continued to practice whatever Judaism they could at home and practice Christianity on the outside. Conversos were never fully accepted. The neighboring Christians regarded them with suspicion. In fact conversos never got much of a Christian education any wonder they practiced their Judaism. Many were accused of Judaizing. The book examines rabbinical attitudes toward the Anusim and how the other Jews interacted with them. Never quite fitting in once they left many would make an open return while others would hide. The hiding continues to this day with many in Latin American countries claiming descent from Anusim. Gaining acceptance into the Jewish community has many challenges and the Jewish community has a variety of ways it responds.

Excellent work by the author, I read it without any interruption.

This Book keeps the reader's interest from beginning to end. It is written in an easy to read format, very informative, is a must have in every home library.

I found this to be a very good read and recommend it to anyone wishing to learn about the vast history and complex life of Secret Jews.

As advertised!

Dr. Bejarano Gutierrez book addresses the history of the many Jewish communities in the Iberian Peninsula that encountered much religious persecution and were part of a massive exodus from Spain. This book relevance is great since it is little known in non-academic circles that there was a thriving Jewish community in Iberian Peninsula for centuries. The time period discussed in the book starts around the 14th century as Jews of that time were forcibly baptized bringing about the phenomenon of Crypto-Judaism. These Catholic converts practiced Judaism in secret as the religion that their conquerors practiced overtook their lives. Dr. Bejarano Gutierrez describes the struggles of the Anusim or Conversos (forced converts) and shows through historical sources that these converts and their children were, more often than not, treated as Jews by the Rabbis of that period. This book shows, through the well researched sources, that the current tendency of some authorities to reject the descendants of the Anusim is more driven by political reasons than based on religious, legal or historical precedence. This resource for both scholars and laymen alike demonstrates that the Conversos in Spain, Portugal, and the New Spain continued to uphold Jewish Law, religious practices and traditions held by their forefathers well after and during the reign of the Inquisition. They communities, holding services in homes of Old Christians who were sympathetic to Jews, and having their own leaders and prayer books.

First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to R'Juan for writing a topic that is arguably relevant and sensitive to all Jewish communities in our day and age. In my view, R'Juan provides the reader a fair and just outlook of the various arguments amongst the Jewish communities from different points, angles, and views. As for me being a crypto Jew it has deepened my understanding and much appreciation for the complexities of this subject matter. Importantly, R'Juan provides scripture verses from the Tanach and Halachic perspectives. Furthermore, he inclusively notes the various Jewish sects and highlights the Medieval Sephardic Sages commentaries on their positions and opinions in this book.

This is definitely a book that every library should have, every historian, Jew, Christian should read. The author will captivate you and draw you through different perspectives/views during the Spanish Inquisition. The book teaches about the Emperor views, the Rabbis views and even with that group there were many views, Jewish Law, forced converts and even regular Jewish people's views on the inquisition and those who converted forcibly to Christianity. I have watched documentaries regarding the Spanish Inquisition but they don't come close with the recorded evidence shown in

this book. Juan Bejarano thank you for the time in studying and research you have spent writting this book.

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