

Gunnar W. Knutsen. *Servants of Satan and Masters of Demons: The Spanish Inquisition's Trials for Superstition, Valencia and Barcelona, 1478–1700.*

Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies 17. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009. xviii + 230 pp. append. tbls. map. gloss. bibl. €60. ISBN: 978–2–503–52861–8.

The phenomenon of witchcraft is one of the most attractive and interesting themes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history, fascinating scholars from various disciplines in recent decades. Conceptual and methodological changes are shedding new light on the subject, debunking topics and falsehoods that have been detrimental to the study of witchcraft. Gunnar W. Knutsen's text can be put into this framework for its main objective focuses on the systematic study of inquisitorial tribunal trials for superstition held in Valencia and Barcelona from 1478 to 1700.

The author opportunely specifies that in the northern half of Spain there was a large number of witchcraft trials in which defendants were collectively convicted for devil worship, causing injury to humans and animals, and damaging crops, property, and other objects. In the southern portion of the country, on the other hand, such charges were not made, despite the hundreds of trials conducted against suspected witches and wizards. To prove this hypothesis, Knutsen has opted for analyzing the inquisitorial trials held in two courts of the Spanish Holy Office: he has chosen Barcelona from the north, and Valencia from the south.

It is surprising to discover that it was in the Principality of Catalonia where demonic witchcraft was tenaciously pursued while in the Kingdom of Valencia the concept was rejected. This was precisely because Valencia escaped the European witchhunts while Barcelona did not. The Moorish minority settled in the Levante area exercised a strong influence on Valencian Christian society transmitting their knowledge of the magical religious world which was incompatible with the demonological. On the other hand, Barcelona's population was almost totally made up of old Christians and French immigrants who brought fear of witches and witchcraft, greatly repressing any occultist practice which for them had clear satanic connections. The author follows developments from the establishment of the Inquisition until 1700; he stops here because at this point case briefs began to be carried out monthly, instead of annually, which considerably increases the quantity of sources available.

The book is structured in three parts. The first provides an overview of the Tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition in Valencia and Barcelona, and a brief survey of the Moorish population and its interaction with the old Christians in these two areas. Afterwards, he presents a general overview of the critical essays themselves by means of a statistical approach and presentation of its most outstanding characteristics. The second part includes a study of the dynamics of Inquisitorial witchcraft trials in Barcelona with special emphasis on French influence, witch hunters, and the different jurisdictions involved in the courts. The third part deals with superstition trials in Valencia and displays a limited number of witch trials that were begun but never terminated. It ends with a conclusion, followed by two appendices and a bibliography.

Knutsen has provided us with a serious, profound, yet concise and detailed, examination of the study of witchcraft in the Iberian Mediterranean area. Comparing the trials concluded by the Inquisitorial courts in Barcelona and Valencia, Knutsen provides us with new data about this phenomenon in his attempt to explain why there were no demonic witchcraft trials in southern Spain. The information presented in Appendix 2 especially stands out because he has listed the number of cases, the names, years, and call numbers of the registers on which he has based his study. The text includes a fairly complete bibliography although Knutsen overlooks specialists such as Eufemià Fort, Martí Gelabertó, Àngel Gari, among others. One hopes that, in a short while, there will be a sequel to this study examining the eighteenth century.

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