

Forbidden Passages: Muslims and Moriscos in Colonial Spanish America.

Karoline P. Cook.

The Early Modern Americas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. 262 pp. \$45.

In 1502 all Castilian Muslims were given the choice of conversion to Christianity or expulsion. The vast majority chose conversion, and thus overnight a quarter of a million Muslims became Moriscos, or Christians from Muslim backgrounds. These Moriscos, like their counterparts the conversos, or Christians from Jewish backgrounds, were increasingly restricted in their social and physical movements on the grounds that their blood and still-problematic presence would corrupt the purity of Catholic Spain. This prejudice was embodied in Spain's *limpieza de sangre* laws, restricting access to positions in government, church, the universities, and settlement in the Spanish Americas.

In *Forbidden Passages* Karoline P. Cook examines the Moriscos of Central and Latin America, using the Indies archive in Seville and several other archives in the Americas in an attempt to present a picture of these illicit émigrés whose presence in the Spanish Indies was officially prohibited by royal order in 1508. Despite the prohibition, however, it is clear that the Moriscos soon began to infiltrate early settlements. Some came legally, under royal license, as builders and agricultural workers. Others were used as interpreters, the belief being that their ability to speak both Arabic and Spanish would give them a greater facility for understanding the native tongues. However, most of the first émigrés came as slaves in the entourage of Old Christian traders and bureaucrats. How many Moriscos arrived in the sixteenth century is impossible to know, and Cook's study, understandably, makes no attempt to estimate numbers. It is nevertheless evident that the royal prohibitions and *limpieza de sangre* legislation were not particularly effective in controlling either Morisco or converso immigration—although the latter was much greater than the former, stimulated by Spain's prominent converso trading networks.

Both Moriscos and conversos could reasonably and easily sidestep travel prohibition, especially if they had money to bribe local officials or members of their home towns into suppressing information on suspect ancestry. Many Moriscos and conversos avoided *limpieza* problems altogether by traveling to the Canary Islands, where passengers to the Indies were subject to less rigorous vetting. Once in the New World, the Moriscos behaved in a similar fashion to their counterparts in Spain, often changing their names and genealogies to feign an Old Christian past, while maintaining elements of their Muslim culture, as Cook's archival anecdotes and case studies demonstrate. Meanwhile, the Spanish authorities used the concept of "just conquest" of the Moorish infidel in Spain as a model for conquering and subduing Native Americans. Thus the natives became sort of quasi-Muslims to be trampled by Saint James the Moor Slayer's white horse, now transported to the New World as a standard-bearer for imperial conquest. While this information is interesting enough, Cook's study does

not advance our knowledge of the transatlantic Moriscos a great deal; nor does it shed much light on the Muslim specter in the Spanish colonies, despite Cook's protests that she is contributing to an imperial discourse, illuminating liminal space, negotiated status, and passing and crossing in colonial society. These heuristic buzzwords apart, the study remains fairly pedestrian.

The problem for Cook is that the New World Moriscos were not members of large, homogeneous communities, like their Spanish counterparts, but individuals who crossed the Atlantic to make better lives for themselves. We have no idea of the size of this population, but it was probably quite small and isolated. There is no evidence here to suggest the kind of Morisco networks that were present in sixteenth-century Spain, and which scholars are now investigating with such interesting results. Cook tells us that there was an increase in Morisco settlement in the New World in the late sixteenth century, in a period when the Spanish government was considering forced expulsion of the Morisco community from the peninsula. But her archival research provides no information on this influx or its effects on the Americas. It merely confirms that the Moriscos were present in small numbers and remained religiously discreet throughout the period.

Cook's account of Moriscos in Spain and the New World is clearly told and interesting enough for the casual reader. But there is nothing historiographically innovative here, and thus little to detain the informed scholar.

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Promettre, confesser, s'obliger: Devant Pierre Christofle, notaire royal à Orléans (1437). Kouky Fianu.

Mémoires et documents de l'École des chartes 103. Paris: École des chartes, 2016. 466 pp. €29.50.

This book offers an edition of the 1437 register of the royal notary Pierre Christofle, with a lengthy introduction, photographs and transcriptions of selected documents, an extensive bibliography, and indexes of the types of acts, subjects, and proper names. Given the significant numbers of notarial registers in archival collections of Europe, there are few editions, relatively speaking. The present modern edition reveals the extraordinary wealth of information contained in just one notarial register, presenting in a sense a slice of life and a window on the world of the French royal town of Orléans in 1437. This is a labor-intensive work, dependent on expert paleography, and reflecting the state of the art in editions of medieval works. In addition to the hard copy, it is featured as number twenty-seven of the electronic editions of the École des chartes.

The Mediterranean notarial tradition dates from the twelfth century, due to the strong influence of a written-law / Roman-law tradition. Royal notaries were introduced later in the north of France, and notarial registers multiplied at Orléans from the late