

For my final paper, I chose three articles - "Seeking remission: Jewish conversion in the Crown of Aragon, c. 1378-1391" written by Alexandra Guerson, "Judeo-conversas and Moriscas in 16th century Spain: a study of parallels" written by Renee Levine Melammed and "Religious change, regionalism and royal power in the Spain of Fernando and Isabel" written by Mark Meyerson.

In the article "Judeo-conversas and Moriscas in 16th century Spain: a study of parallels" author said, that she wanted "to fill a lacuna" and compare the activities of judeo-conversas and moriscas in Iberia in 16th century. It means, that she wanted to find parallels in the lives of women in this two groups, and to define, which degree of influence inside of their religious group these women had.

At the end of his research, the author came to the conclusion that, despite certain and obvious differences in historical experience, social and economic status, and also despite the difference in acceptance by society of Old Christian, conversas and moriscas had a lot in common. First of all, it was an attempt to perpetuate their original religious inside their homes. While men, due to increased attention and active participation in the life of the society, were forced to try to adapt to the new religion, women retained the "privilege" of freedom within their homes. Both moriscas and conversas carried out a mission to preserve their former religion and its practices. But they did it not only at home, the author of the article provided several examples of certain women, both moriscas and conversas, who fulfilled the missionary mission and created even a certain kind of teachings, which helped spread their beliefs about the need to secretly observe the traditions and rituals of their old religion. For example, author referred to other study (Vincent, "Les mujeres moriscas", 593), where is written about two widows who were highly regarded teachers in their community (moriscos community), one of whom had her "hand was kissed with great respect". Also, inquisitional papers and files showed the evidences, that men, as well as women, "were taught by women, usually family members". And in case of crypto-Judaism, conclusions are the same. For example, there was one women, Beatriz Alonso of Ciudad Real, that taught her for daughters to Judaism and to observe "the law of Mosses". But a percentage of female influence from outside the family in the case of conversas were smaller, than in the case of moriscas.

But, still, in some stage these women created new rituals and practices (for example, the crypto-religious ritual of de-baptizing), and some of them (like hadas) continued to be observed for generations to come.

As an evidences in this article author used the document of inquisition, in which all of those women were "accused of being bad Chistians". More specifically, in most cases they were accused of «intentionally eating meat on Fridays and holy days, of displaying disrespect for the crucifix and other symbols of the Church, and of questioning Mary's virginity". And what is even

more interesting, quite often religious issues led to the disintegration of families - not always, when the wife secretly continued to observe the rituals of the former religion, the husband stuck to the same view. This again confirms the view that it was women in both group who played the role of "secret guardians" of Judaism and Islam, sometimes even promoting their propagation.

During our lessons we discussed some other cases, where women were accused in "being bad Christians". For example, inquisition trial of Marina Gonzalez, where she was accused, and her husband, Francisco de Toledo, a spice merchant, not. We talked, that it was not rare, that especially women were accused – because, in a case of moriscos, it was much easier to define women, who continued to observe Muslim's tradition and practices according to their clothes, for example. As the author of this article wrote, "women, with their distinctive rites, sometimes superstitions, and dress, a white mantle that reached down to her feet and that covered half of her face, were viewed as the more serious obstacles to assimilation". And, according to the evidences from inquisition's papers, the process of assimilation and adaptation to a new religion was much more difficult for women, mostly because of social reasons and status, and often did not happen at all. Such a tendency, pursuant to the arguments of Renee Levine Melammed, can be clearly traced both among judeo-conversas, and among moriscos.

Second article "Religious change, regionalism and royal power in the Spain of Fernando and Isabel" is dedicated to policy of Fernando and Isabel on ethno-religious minorities, and how the reason of faith informed that policy. The most discussion in the article have focused on Jews and Conversos, but author wrote, "it may be illuminating to broach the question with an emphasis on the Muslims".

So, the purpose of this study was to research, how the Catholic Monarchs' minority policy served to increase their authority. Author focused on two areas – Castille and Crown of Aragon, First of all, he assumed, that the one of the main goals of the Catholic Monarchs was to achieve a religious homogeneity in the society, but not for the reason of state. They tried to resolve a problem with Conversos and Moriscos, created earlier by Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros.

It can be inferred, that the main author's conclusion after all researches is next. He wrote< that it is difficult to see, how the minority policy of Isabel and Fernando served to strengthen their royal power and authorities. When they decided to expel the Jews, they "were depriving themselves of reliable royal servants and taxpayers". According to authors opinion, it is obvious, that this measures and the Inquisition's actions against conversos only damaged the local economy. Conversions the Muslim of Granada were the reason that the conquered population became more restive. In the Crown of Aragon, the actions of inquisition and it's disposition lead to new conflicts and opened new "wounds" on different levels of local society. Moreover, there are some evidences, that Monarchs hid some illusions about the faith of New Christian (moriscos and conversos, who

preferred conversion instead of exile in 1492).

Thus, there was not homogeneity in the Spain of Isabel and Fernando - “historical arguments to the effect that the subordination of all subjects to one Catholic faith enhanced the authority of the emerging modern state simply bear little relation to the realities of the Catholic Monarchs' reign”. In addition, if reason of faith was indeed central to the minority policy of Fernando and Isabel, then it is more appropriate to view their actions in context of their desire to reform Catholic Church and society, and not to review it in the context of state-building.

But also, author emphasized, that situations in Castille and Aragon were different, in both cases – moriscos and conversos. However, as the article is more focused on Jews and conversos, it is important to stress the difference, that occurred in this two areas.

Society in Castille, not only in a case of conversos, was not flexible, and was not happy to let in inside elite circle new members. And Jews played more visible and important role in this realm during 14-15th centuries. As a result, anti-Jews, and latter anti-conversos, thoughts spread easily through all territory. And it doesn't mean, that in the Crown of Aragon more loved Jews and conversos, but before inquisition anti-Jews and anti- conversos thoughts were less obvious, mostly because of the smaller influence of political elites on society and greater flexibility in the adoption of new members, in spite of their lineage and origins of their capitals.

Isabel and Fernando, as a creators of inquisition, were more than once discussed during our lessons. It was said, that they established the inquisition in attempts to solve so called “conversos problem”. But, as written in the article, this measures didn't succeed in creation of religious homogeneity in the realm, and “to Fernando and Isabel's Hbsburg successors would be left the task of creating some unity out of the congeries of cultures, institutions, regional particularities, and religions. Their efforts for the most part would bear bitter fruit”.

The third article “Seeking remission: Jewish conversion in the Crown of Aragon, c. 1378-1391” author focused on the question of the conversion of the Jews in the Crown of Aragon in the decade before 1391. Author considered so called “voluntary conversions”, and the reasons, why Jews became conversos in this period at all.

She provided an example of Isaac Xam and his son Vidal, two jews from Barcelona, who on november 2nd 1385 sent a letter to king Pere the Ceremonious, in which they wrote their willing to convert to Christianity. According to other evidences, Isaac Xam was than in troubles, even in troubles, because of the depth to his relative Jaya Xam. King promised to Isaac protection and revealing from the prison after the conversion, at the end he was on Jaya's side. Thus, what can this case say to the situation in the whole region?

The argumentation of the author in this article is very clear – the economic crises and wars in this periods have especially damaged on Jews, because of additional taxes which they had to pay

to the crown. Many Jews found themselves in a difficult and vulnerable economic situation. And here came king's promises to protect and to reveal them from the depths after conversion to the Christianity.

Author concluded, that for some people there was the only solution. All this crises and higher taxes lead to many conflicts inside of the Jewish society. As in the case of Isaac Xam, there were depths and imprisoned, but this case was definitely not the only one.

Author also considered the politic of two kings – Pere III and his son Joan I – whose impact on “voluntary” conversions was pretty obvious. Acting in accordance to official politic of the Catholic Church, they promised to Jews protection and help after their conversion. And many people agreed to this decision, in attempts to avoid disgrace and poverty. However, the whole situation was not so easy, and there are evidences, that royal power also showed some support to Jews, for example with a king's decree which limited the propaganda of the conversos, directed on the Jews. Also, there were situations, and many situations, in which king acted on behave of the Jews.

In addition, as it was said before according to previous article, in the Crown of Aragon was not so big prejudice against Jews, and they lived mostly in peace with their christian neighbors. So, it was not so terrifying and scary, to convert to Christianity.

As a main source of information in this article author used royal chancery records. Despite the fact, that for Jews was internal court, many cases considered in royal court, even if problems were inside the Jewish community. Author stressed, that in spite of richness and value of this source, it's impossible to know an exact number of Jewish conversion during this period. But it was many of them, and author provided several examples, including Isaac Xam's cases.

So, as a conclusion, it can be assumed, that not all Jewish conversion were caused by Christian violence. Sometimes it were internal problems of Jewish society, sometimes it were family matters. Sometimes Jews used the opportunity to convert also as a way to achieved their goals (one young man black mailed and promised to convert if the Rabin did not let him to marry with beloved girl). Also it is necessary to specify, that conversion lead to even more conflicts between Jews and conversos, and that conversos found themselves in very difficult situations – Christians society not always was agreed to let him in completely, and Jews definitely did not consider conversos as a part of their community.

The question of the status of conversos and the reasons why Jews wanted to convert to Christianity discussed during our class more than once. For example, the article "Testing Boundaries: Jewish Conversion and Cultural Fluidity in Medieval Europe, c.1200-1391" written by Paola Tarkoff, considered similar problem, which concerns Jews who converted before the mass and violent conversion, and also their motives. And, definitely, economics problems, and desire to

achieve success in Christian realm, were very important reasons and motives. But not always these motives and the privations associated with them were justified in the future, because life of conversos was very difficult, and every case individual.