

**Renaissance and Reformation**  
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**O'Banion, Patrick J., ed. This Happened in My Presence:  
Moriscos, Old Christians, and the Spanish Inquisition in the  
Town of Deza, 1569–1611**

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A few more qualifications are due. Readers would benefit from a more detailed introduction to the labyrinthine topics of the seven essays; the editing of the contributions should have been more careful; moreover, some of the texts do not directly address the topic announced by the book's title. This is true of John. A. Norris, who writes on the *Bermannus* (1530) by Georgius Agricola (1494–1500), and of Martin Žemla's contribution on Valentin Weigel (1533–88), who was not an alchemist. In this vein, one also has to insert Jakub Hlaváček's well-informed contribution on the modification of Paracelsian alchemical principles in Heinrich Kunrath's (1560–1605) *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae* (1609), a text that was published in Hanau, Germany, and Ivo Purš's interesting contribution on the meaning of central perspective in the *Amphitheatrum*. Yet the contributions explore an important aspect of early modern alchemy that otherwise is only implicitly on the agenda of this collection of essays: namely, the many and irregular overlaps, interferences, and shared territories between contemporary theosophy, Christian theology, Rosicrucianism, metallurgy, and the arts of distillation and mining. Viewed as a social (and hence political) practice, the boundaries of alchemy seem to have been as porous as the borders of the various European countries between which the protagonists of the volume seem to have moved quite freely and with great dexterity: Italy, France, England, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia. This reviewer believes that one should rather conceptualize early modern alchemy as a European movement; however, in spite of the caveats in this review, he does wish to congratulate the editors for their work.

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**O'Banion, Patrick J., ed.**

***This Happened in My Presence: Moriscos, Old Christians, and the Spanish Inquisition in the Town of Deza, 1569–1611.***

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pp. lxxx, 184 + 5 ill., 3 maps. ISBN 978-1-4426-3513-5 (paperback) \$26.95.

Patrick O'Banion's *This Happened in My Presence: Moriscos, Old Christians, and the Spanish Inquisition in the Town of Deza, 1569–1611* makes available

to English speakers a wealth of inquisitorial records from the early modern Spanish town of Deza. Deza was not a large town (in the 1590s it had just over 1,600 residents), but it was home to a significant community of moriscos—the descendants of Spanish Muslims who accepted Christian baptism rather than face expulsion from Castile and Aragon. The Spanish Inquisition's history with moriscos is less familiar to the average undergraduate student than its history with Judeoconversos, and this volume is an excellent source for those wishing to learn more. The documents O'Banion has translated—preceded by a comprehensive introduction and cast of characters with short biographies—showcase the Spanish Inquisition's activities in Deza over the forty years that preceded the expulsion of the moriscos and shed light on the beliefs, practices, and relationships of the residents of the Castilian town.

The majority of the ninety-two documents in the volume are the products of two inquisitorial visitations: the September-October 1569 visitation of Licentiate Alonso Jimenez de Reynoso and the summer 1581 visitation of Dr. Francisco de Arganda. The volume also includes a confession by the morisco Román Ramírez the Younger following the 1571 Edict of Grace, the sentence read at the 1600 *auto-da-fe* in which Ramírez was relaxed to the secular authorities and executed in effigy, and a series of 1611 letters from jailed moriscos and documents relating to several moriscos who attempted to avoid working in the galleys. For every document, O'Banion provides a focus question that highlights a particular element of the source, such as the attitudes of the speaker or scribe, the reliability of the document, or what the source reveals about religious belief and practice or other aspects of daily life and relationships in sixteenth-century Deza. He also provides, in an appendix, a set of fourteen discussion questions designed to help readers reflect on the broader themes present in the sources, including the judicial process of the Spanish Inquisition, community relationships (particularly between Old Christians—who claimed no Muslim or Jewish ancestry—and moriscos), and the interplay between local, regional, and national concerns.

Inquisitorial visitation records are a particular genre of primary source, and O'Banion expertly guides the reader through the process of engaging thoughtfully with these documents. The fact that the sources are presented in such a comprehensive collection rather than as isolated examples emphasizes the conventions of the genre; the very title of the book is drawn from a phrase that repeatedly preceded the signature of the notary who recorded inquisitorial

testimonies. O'Banion's focus questions remind the reader of the many parties who shaped the documents—the witnesses, the inquisitors, the scribes—and encourage them to consider how the limitations of the genre and the presence of intermediaries shaped the record of the witnesses' testimony. Perhaps the most difficult source in the volume, and one that might have benefitted from a bit more guidance from O'Banion, is the sentence of Román Ramírez the Younger. The document contained a list of the errors to which Ramírez, who had already died by the time the *auto-da-fe* in which the sentence was read took place, had confessed during his imprisonment. He confessed not only to Islamic practices but also to sorcery, including repeated interactions with a demon familiar named Liarde who taught him how to use various medicinal herbs. This is the most detailed description of witchcraft in the volume, and a bit more historical context on early modern accusations and confessions of witchcraft as well as a focus question that urged readers to consider the veracity of the account and Ramírez's possible motives for confessing would have been welcome.

Overall, however, the volume is a valuable teaching tool and an excellent complement to other English-language compilations of inquisitorial documents such as Lu Ann Homza's *The Spanish Inquisition, 1478–1614: An Anthology of Sources* and Richard Kagan and Abigail Dyer's *Inquisitorial Inquiries: Brief Lives of Secret Jews and Other Heretics*. The sources in this volume are important not only for courses on early modern Spain or inquisitorial history, but also for courses that focus on various aspects of early modern life and thought. The documents illuminate the minutiae of daily life, offer insight into how gender, religion, and social class affected relationships in early modern Deza, and elucidate the differences between Christian and Muslim religious observance in theory and in practice. *This Happened in My Presence* is both accessible and informative and provides students with an important set of sources and helpful guidance to facilitate their interpretation.

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