Conversos, Power and the Intermediate Groups in Golden Age Spain

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Edited by

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Archaeopress

Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
First and Second Floors
13-14 Market Square
Bicester
OX26 6AD

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-971-8
ISBN 978-1-80327-972-5 (e-Pdf)

Cover: Heraldic images on Juan Sigler de Espinoa's chapel grille, sixteenth century. Source: Clara Sánchez Merino.

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Introduction

Enrique Soria Mesa and Luis Salas Almela

This volume has been conceived as a collective reflection on certain historiographical concepts which, for various reasons that we will explain below, have been somehow overlooked in recent years. Our aim is to offer the scientific community and interested readers a proposal for renewing the approach to the social category which, for several decades, historians referred to as bourgeoisie. In a first negative approach, we would say that the term bourgeoisie applied to the 15th to 18th centuries would be that which is neither noble nor plebeian. However, reflecting on a term so commonly used, so loaded with specific meanings, and so debated from the fields of politics and ideology, represents a challenge for researchers, requiring a historiographical exercise to trace the evolution of the term itself, its uses, and the debates to which its interpretation has given rise. Therefore, our proposal for a re-reading of the concept of bourgeoisie aims to encompass a wide range of terms associated with the semantic field of that social category in the Modern Age, including terms related to the Economy -such as middle classes or social middle class- or to terms associated with access to power -such as mesocracy-.

It is therefore important to begin by reflecting, at least briefly, on the history of the concept itself in its historiographical use in recent decades, particularly in European historical studies.

The historiographical debate since the mid-20th century

In the middle of the last century, Fernand Braudel spoke of a 'betrayal of the bourgeoisie', an expression that alluded to the withdrawal of an entire social category from its supposed historical destiny, which obviously carries a heavy teleological charge. The idea can be summed up by saying that the bourgeoisie had ceased to fulfil its economic and therefore social function, having invested its wealth in imitation of the nobility. Braudel was following the social characterisation accepted in the European West since the mid-19th century, when Smith's categories according to which nobility equalled passivity and rentierism, while the bourgeoisie was the only social class capable of generating wealth and progress. He also admitted that the sixteenth century had been a century of expansion of European wealth precisely because of the drive of those bourgeoisie who were no longer properly third estate or simple plebeians, but whose aspirations ended up deriving in an imitation of nobiliary customs and ways of life. Almost at the same time, on the other side of the English Channel, John Hexter published a famous essay in which he denied the usefulness of the conceptual division into classes applied to the Modern Age and even the existence of groups that could

even be included in what the 20th century had come to understand as the middle classes, a deeply entrenched cliché in historiography a century ago, a tradition that accepted the emergence of a sort of middle classes in the Tudor period. Thus, began a debate in the Anglo-Saxon sphere whose development could not fail to connect on many points with the discussion initiated by Braudel's work.

British Marxist historiography, with Maurice Dobb at the frontline, accepted the schema in its basic dimensions to begin to study the process by which the transition from the feudal mode of production to capitalism had taken place. That debate went to the heart of Karl Marx's own thought, whose description of Western history was articulated precisely around the explanation of the processes of consolidation of bourgeois capitalism, which was a way of constructing the historical narrative from the point of arrival backwards. Largely because of this, in 1963 the Soviet historian Boris Porshnev proposed an explanation of the rise of the absolutist state as a response to the long chain of popular revolts and rebellions in the first half of the 17th century. In this context, the middle or bourgeois classes would have chosen to support the state in the face of popular demands, an ideological movement that would have been fundamental in the triumph of absolutism. Thus, the rise of monarchical absolutism and the transition from feudalism to capitalism found a coherent link in social stratification. Porshnev's study shifted the debate on a 17th century which did not entirely align with the Marxist scheme, since the bourgeois revolutions should have taken place at the end of that century, at least in England, where by then the middle classes had accumulated sufficient economic power to deal with it and, in fact, revolutionary political movements had already taken place.

From another point of view, the discussion to which this reformulation of Marxist ideas gave rise had particular characteristics when the younger generation of British Marxists offered their contribution. Given that several of its members -especially Thomson, Hobsbawm and Hill- were interested in the processes of social class formation from the point of view of the subaltern classes -the so-called motto 'history from below'-, the debate on the treachery of the bourgeoisie acquired in their contribution a much more political than social or economic connotation, a nuance which it lacked in its French formulation: bourgeois treachery was for them class treachery. In other words, the bourgeoisie had not only and primarily betrayed its economic destiny, but also its unprivileged, underprivileged third-state co-religionists, whose possible alliance they despised. We cannot fail to recall that the integration of the political dimension in this context is a characteristic of British Marxism, whose contributions were integrated quite naturally into previous historiographical debates of both Tory and Whig origin, debates in which political history did not cease to have a preferential place, quite the opposite of what was happening in France with the growing predominance of the Annales School and its emphasis on the collective and on the long duration. Be that as it may, the British Marxists' scheme came to explain the gap that, in Marxist terms, the 17th century represented in the process of overcoming feudalism.

However, the 17th century was also, in the same scheme of things, a century of more or less generalised economic crisis in Europe, a debate presented and summarised by Christopher Hill in a famous collective volume. The very concept of the existence of a generalised crisis in the 17th century was subjected to criticism by A.D. Lublinskaya. For this author, the 17th century was not necessarily a century of economic crisis and bourgeois socio-political betrayal in the process of evolution of capitalism, but a particular stage in the development of feudal manufacturing production. Parallel to all this, a debate centred on the origins of capitalism emerged from Immanuel Wallerstein's proposal. In his work, Wallerstein advocated emphasising the decisive importance of the surplus value generated by world trade as a determining factor in the consolidation of a world capitalist economic system. At the same time, in the same year, Robert Brenner published an article that had the virtue of reopening the debate on the origins of capitalism, in which he presented a thesis contrary to that of Wallerstein. In fact, Brenner was more inclined to look for the beginnings of capitalism in the accumulation of agrarian capital.

Such a wide-ranging debate -spanning several centuries and an entire continent, if not the world as a whole- logically had multiple offshoots. One of them was promoted by L. Stone, who proposed a particular concept of crisis that would have affected the British aristocracy. His crisis of the aristocracy posed the betrayal of the bourgeoisie in terms of social ascent, although looking at the process in reverse, that is, from the perspective of the upper strata of society. For Stone, therefore, the crisis of the aristocracy was largely a consequence of the dissolution of its values and personality by the unstoppable rise of a gentry which, while seeking to imitate its ways of life, brought with its new blood and new values. The discussion to which these works gave rise was integrated back into the traditional debates of British historiography, most particularly with regard to the revolutions of the 17th century and their social and political causes. If the British aristocracy had gone into crisis in the first half of the 17th century, as Stone argued, because of a rapid rise of the lower classes, it was logical to conceive of the revolutions of 1640 and 1688 as the consequence of a realignment of power in which the emerging middle classes would have been in a position to contest power against the decadent aristocracy in crisis. However, the class schema did not quite fit the picture of an English revolution -especially that of 1640- whose main characteristic was the heterogeneity of the conflicting sides. It is no coincidence that the so-called New Political History arose largely out of dissatisfaction with the class schema applied to 17th century English politics. Conrad Russell went so far as to deny any class implication in this political movement, proposing instead a fundamental autonomy of the political dimension from the socio-economic conditioning factors that were at that time the hallmark of Western historiography in its two most influential schools: Marxism and the followers of the French Annales school.

In a similar vein but for the case study of seventeenth-century France, a few years earlier, William Beik had posited the need to understand absolutism in France in the

context of the political ties between the elites and the power centre of the late feudal system, formalised through the extension of the civil service administration of the state. In a way, this implied bringing back Roland Mousnier's suggestion of vertical affective ties rather than horizontal class ties as a central element in the emergence of absolutism, although Beik's re-reading was done from a very different point of view. If that proposal was accepted, it was therefore necessary to reconstruct and analyse the political and social links that led to the mobilisation of the population to the point of producing some kind of armed confrontation, whether it was the Fronde or the Glorious Revolution. To this end, a methodology that other social sciences -particularly sociology and political science- were beginning to use on a massive and very successful scale, namely the reconstruction of social networks, was used. The links between individuals no longer responded fundamentally to class or group typologies, but rather to vertical links between individuals and families that made it possible to explain political alignments and social promotions. This methodology was enthusiastically embraced in the 1980s and 1990s by both Anglo-Saxon and French historiography, whose eagerness to reconstruct networks of sociability has had such an influence on Spanish historiography.

The influence of neo-conservative and post-Marxist ideologies in the last decade of the last century brought with it an overvaluation of the concepts of economic merit and individualism that implicitly led to the rejection of the idea of human collectivities as relevant historical agents. The panorama of social history at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st showed a clear aversion to the categorisation of social groups whose main virtue was its aversion to generalisations, but whose greatest weakness was the atomisation of studies to the point of making comparisons between national realities very complex. It was not by chance that a crumbly history began to focus on highly specific and heterogeneous cultural themes. As far as the categorisation of the middle classes is concerned, it is not surprising that it was in 1989 that Peter Earle published his influential study on the cultural identity of the middle groups of society in the Modern Age based on an analysis of the lifestyle of the great London merchants in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The historiographical landscape in France and England in recent years continues to be burdened, on the one hand, by a revanchist revisionism in the face of the last members of Marxist historiography, while on the other hand it remains highly fragmented. The search for elements of the cultural identity of groups is probably one of the most suggestive historiographical movements of these years, a trend that continues to produce interesting results. For example, French's study of the middle classes -middle sort, in a way conceived as an antecedent of the classes that already clearly existed in the 19th century- proposes a study of the forms of sociability and consumption of the middle classes as a formula for understanding their characteristics and cultural idiosyncrasies. Other interesting examples of contributions in recent years have come from the study of individual cases, even biographies, which seek to outline in greater

detail major processes based on individual experiences, such as the enclosures and the wool trade in early 16th century England.

In Italy, there are not many studies on the mesocracy or 'middle class' in the Modern Age in a specific way. The work that focuses most on this subject is that of Melissa Calaresu and her perception of the possible search for a middle class by the Neapolitan enlightened of the 18th century, based on the work of Francesco Maria Pagano. There are, however, authors, mostly women authors, who have been interested in the 'stratification' of society in general, especially for the last century of the Modern Age and in pre-industrial urban settings, generating some interesting results. Almost all of them focus on the Po Valley region -with the cities of Turin, Venice and Padua standing out- and a good number of them have been approached from a gender perspective. Thus, we find that authors such as Anna Bellavitis, Simona Cerutti and Beatriz Zucca-Micheletto have studied the role of inheritance or dowry from legal perspectives in the development of pre-capitalist society or the role of women in the labour market. Sandra Cavallo considers the extent to which charity played a catalytic role in shaping Italian society in the Modern Age. More general works on Italian society, such as those by C. Black, or those focusing on artisan work and its relationship with the guilds, such as those by Andrea Caracausi, may also be of interest in order to define the limits of the mesocracy or 'middle class' in Early Modern Italy.

In the Portuguese case, it was not until the 21st century that modernist historiography began to take an interest in the definition and socio-economic analysis of the so-called 'estado do meio' by contemporaries. As in other respects, the interest of Portuguese historiography has tended more towards the chronological extremes of the modern period than towards its core, so that we tend to know far more about the 15th and the 18th centuries than about the two hundred years in between. Already in the last third of the 20th century, some authors touched on the question in a more or less tangential way, when dealing generically with Portuguese society in the *Ancien Régime*. They were interested in the legal categorisation of the social hierarchy, its reflection in the imaginary of mobility, decision-making power, the mechanisms of legitimisation or access to honour. All these were fields in which, in one way or another, a social middle class made up of merchants, scholars, well-positioned master craftsmen or wealthy farmers came to the fore. In this sense, the contributions of Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, António Manuel Hespanha from the perspective of the History of Law, Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho or Joaquim Romero Magalhães, more focused on the socio-economic sphere and the powers of the councils, should be underlined. In no case were these works aimed at understanding the mesocracy *per se*, first of all because there had not even been any discussion of its delimitation as a group. For the most part, our knowledge of it came from studies on merchants and local elites in modern Portugal. Suffice it to cite theses such as those of David Grant Smith and Jorge Miguel Pedreira. The city of Porto was, in this sense, a paradigmatic case due to the greater weight of the non-nobiliary component. In 1997, Pedro de Brito's *patriciado urbano*

quinhentista also opened up an interesting line of approach to the mesocracy using the tools of genealogy, with an in-depth reconstruction of families, chaplaincies, entailed estates, investments... which highlighted the conformation of the same endogamic network made up of a bourgeoisie (to use the author's term) with the presence of *fidalga* and, above all, *Cristã-nova* blood. The Judeo-converted origins of these middle groups in Portugal and its territories of expansion is, perhaps, the best-known point and the one that has been most reflected upon in the last third of the 20th century, from the pages dedicated to *La bourgeoisie portugaise au XVIIe siècle* by Frédéric Mauro in 1970 to other more recent ones such as those of Leonor Freire Costa or João de Figueirôa-Rêgo.

It should be reiterated, however, that the real historiographical interest in the middle sectors only gained momentum in Portugal, and only slowly, in the last twenty years. Indirectly, even in the 2000s, when the existence of ways of ennobling and channelling the social mobility of these groups was highlighted, until then a little-recognised phenomenon. The role of the military orders, the clerical career and the Holy Office, studied by scholars such as Fernanda Olival, Nuno Monteiro, José Damião Rodrigues, and Torres. At the same time, the strong presence of these middle groups had become evident when examining the manorial courts and the local ecclesiastical administrations. Such conclusions were reached, for example, by Mafalda Soares da Cunha in her study on the House of Bragança, published in 2000, and she specifically addressed the question of social extraction and the patrimonialisation of minor offices.

In the sphere of public offices dependent on the Portuguese crown, venality has also proved to be a factor of social mobility to a certain extent. These relationships between the performance of trades, mercantilisation and the weight of social and ethno-religious origin have also been addressed for the extra-peninsular Portuguese territories. Nandini Chaturvedula and Susana Münch Miranda have dealt with it for the State of Índia and José Damião Rodrigues for the Azores. The gradual accumulation of works on Brazil's more or less enriched social middle class has had a great impact, apart from some previous studies carried out in North American universities, such as Stuart Schwartz's study on the magistrates of Bahia, among others. Today, the lack of foundation of a dichotomous social vision (elites and poor/slaves) and the fundamental role of these emerging mesocracies in the urban structuring of Portuguese America have at least been demonstrated in books such as those by Martinho and Gorestein, Blaj and Furtado. Previously, the article published in 2011 by Figueirôa-Rêgo and Olival was an excellent global and diachronic approach (1570-1773) on the flexible solutions of the Portuguese crown to the problems of access to the dignities of the middle strata, in the face of theoretical obstacles such as the cleansing of blood.

This type of research has continued to advance along the path already opened up by studies on elites and social mobility, but adapting the gaze to the new object of

study and its own dynamics of dignification and legitimisation. The work of Aldair Carlos Rodrigues, Fernanda Olival, Nuno Camarinhas, Bruno Feitler, Leonor García and Ana Isabel López-Salazar on the sociological function of certain ecclesiastical offices, magistracies and honorary or salaried positions in the Holy Office are part of this line. In parallel, Antonio J. Díaz Rodríguez has analysed the intermediation market between Portugal and the Holy See, structured as a response to the social needs of a mesocratic clientele and controlled in turn by highly specialised individuals from this social middle class. Finally, a second type of research aims to define this social category in itself, based on the works we have just discussed, on the cross-referencing of theoretical sources and, especially, on the analysis of the material -goods, interiors, consumption patterns, signs of distinction, patrimonial projection...-. We must highlight the works of Andreia Durães, Bruno Lopes and Fernanda Olival for Portugal, together with the comparative study between Castile and Portugal published by Máximo García Fernández, or those of Maria Aparecida Borrego and Rogério Félix.

In the Spanish case, the existing panorama can be defined as very polarised in terms of chronology and relatively neglected by current historiography. The trajectory of this historiography during the second half of the 20th century explains the late and insufficient incorporation of Spanish historians into this scientific debate. It is true that we have relevant contributions in this respect, but without obtaining sufficient critical mass to generate a dominant current of thought or at least an intense polemic that could have unveiled the main questions of the phenomenon. Another problem is the enormous bias towards the eighteenth century, the century in which the vast majority of publications are concentrated, with few exceptions. The very valuable studies by Molas Ribalta, García-Baquero, González Enciso, Bustos Rodríguez, Franch Benavent, etc., have all suggested the existence of bourgeois or parabourgeois groups in certain areas during the Age of Enlightenment, especially Cadiz, Valencia, Catalonia and Madrid. In other cases, the obvious importance of foreigners in the formation of these socio-economic groups has been highlighted (Villar-Pezzi, Bustos, Maixé...).

Among the few exceptions in terms of chronology, we should mention some studies by Gómez Zorraquino, generally very well documented, including a valuable book on the commercial bourgeoisie of Saragossa between the 16th and 17th centuries, which we believe has not been sufficiently valued. For these centuries, the subject of our project, and without wishing to be exhaustive, we can also turn to Pike's pioneering studies on the Seville area; to Lohmann Villena's book on the Espinosa family, which is of great interest for its analysis of a very important family that moved comfortably on both sides of the Atlantic; or Lapeyre's classic analysis of Simón Ruiz. Finally, we cannot pass up the opportunity to mention the results of the important congress which was published at the University of Valladolid in three volumes and coordinated by Professor Enciso Recio. The contributions focused on documentary collection as

well as historiographical and conceptual studies, the great majority of which were of a high level. The introductory paper by Professor Alberto Marcos is particularly noteworthy, very revealing and useful.

In recent years, fortunately, other variables have been introduced on the subject, which address it directly or at least touch on it tangentially. Consumption and the relationship with the aristocracy and international mercantile networks (Yun Casalilla), inventories of goods and everyday life (García Fernández, Bartolomé Bartolomé), among others, mark very interesting derivations towards the immediate future.

A renovating proposal in seven case studies

With these considerations in mind, this volume brings together a series of works arising from a research project whose main objective has been to place the discussion, fundamental throughout the most of the 20th century, on the intermediate strata in European societies of the Ancien Régime, back at the centre of the historiographical debate.[1]

Starting from the historiographical overcoming of the myth of the social immobility of Early Modern Europe, José Manuel Triano Milán analyses these same dynamic realities applied to the last century of what we know as the Middle Ages, i.e. the 15th century. Although the processes of social rise and fall were not unknown among medievalists – through, for example, court dynamics or the study of urban oligarchies – the author proposes to place these dynamics at the centre of his analysis in order to illuminate not only the processes of rise and fall, but also to study the mechanisms and even the very categories that marked such processes. In particular, Triano focuses his attention on the concept of tax privilege or tax exemption as a revealing marker of changing social realities that were even linked to the emergence of political identities. However, given that the boundaries between classes were much more diffuse than historiography assumed a few decades ago, and that the tax exemption itself was not exclusive to the nobility and clergy but was, on the other hand, very dynamic, the author opens up a whole range of possibilities for a much more refined hierarchisation. Focusing on the realities of Seville in the 15th century – whose documentary collections are exceptionally rich for the study of these issues – Triano Milán analyses the fundamental role those fiscal realities played in the social dynamics of the city. A city that was still a frontier town and one of the most important and thriving in the Crown of Castile in the last decades of the 15th century.

Enrique Soria Mesa, for his part, claims the importance that the social category of the Judeo-converts had in the History of Spain, articulated around the discrimination

[1] Project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, called "The middle class in Andalusia (16th and 17 centuries): power, family and the heritage", reference PID2019-109168GB-I00.

suffered by those who were considered to be of impure blood. A harsh social reality whose long shadow is clearly perceptible throughout the Golden Age in almost all manifestations of art, literature and thought. Being aware of the relative abundance of studies on the Inquisition, this work argues that many of these studies have remained in the epidermis of a much more complex phenomenon than its most institutionalised manifestation. That is to say, the Holy Office and the converse condition, being close realities, are certainly not identical, since suffering an inquisitorial procedure was something exceptional. The vast majority of Judeo-Converso families were able to escape and some managed to rise up the social ladder, largely thanks to forgetting their origins. In his contribution to this volume, Soria Mesa focuses on several of these families settled in the city of Baeza, in the kingdom of Jaén, where they accumulated a great deal of wealth. Not only that, but they were also protagonists in the creation of one of the most representative institutions of the city of Baeza, its university -so closely linked in some of its stages to the figure of San Juan de Ávila- an institution that became a centre of converse sociability. This work, therefore, analyses the process of the creation of the university and the fundamental importance of the converso element in it.

The following text, by Rafael Girón Pascual, takes as its starting point the relationship between institutions of power, both civil and ecclesiastical, in the ancient kingdoms that make up what is now Andalusia -the kingdoms of Seville, Cordoba, Jaen and Granada- and places it within the framework of a complex and stratified society, despite the rigid classifications that theoretically separated the estates and their access to power. In particular, he focuses on those who formed the upper stratum of the plebeian order, the mesocracy, in their multiple professional status, where we find doctors, lawyers, apothecaries, notaries, great artisans and merchants. In particular, Girón focuses on those merchants who were so successful that they became jurors in the quarters or parishes of some of the main Andalusian cities. Theoretically far removed from the positions of power -reserved for the descendants of the families who had played a leading role in the conquest of Andalusia against the Muslims- access to the privilege of these pecheros had to begin with proof, real or invented, of their cleanliness of blood, i.e. the absence of Judeo-converted ancestors. On this basis and with a very healthy patrimony, some large merchants in particular were able to begin to enter the institutions. However, the perspective proposed by the author focuses on studying those individuals and families who, having been denied access to higher-ranking positions -regidores or twenty-fourth councillors- formed a middle stratum of municipal power, the mesocracy. Focusing on the case studies of Cordoba, Seville and Granada, Girón analyses the configuration of society on the basis of the economic activities of those pechero elites -merchants specialising in wool, silk and leather, above all, with a vocation to participate in long-distance trade, including that of the Indies- and their insertion or otherwise in the mesocratic groups. The result is that in Cordoba a true mesocracy was formed, as access to the municipal elite itself was completely closed, while in Seville and

Granada access to the mesocracy was only the springboard to reach the pinnacle of municipal power, the regidurias.

For his part, Luis Salas Almela analyses the years immediately prior and after to the creation of the Seville Consulate of the Indies and the first decades of the institution from the human base -the merchants who joined the Consulate- both those who were most committed to its creation and those who first took control of it. Firstly, he has carried out a prosopographical study of a large group of merchants who were active in those years. Secondly, the text analyses the grouping of those individuals within the consular institution and their access to the posts of prior and consuls at a time when practically nothing was known about the consular institution. It is important to point out that, on the whole, in this text the Consulate is considered first and foremost as a means of access to privilege for its members. Therefore, based on the analysis of the profile and trajectory of several listed individuals, as well as the repetitions and absences of these same individuals in some ways of representation of the Consulate, this contribution offers an interpretative hypothesis on the evolution of the institution in its first quarter of a century of existence.

The work of José María García Ríos focuses on another social group that can be included in the term mesocracy, namely the servants and administrators of the nobility, based on the study of the extensive list of servants of the Counts of Tendilla in Granada in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Counts of Tendilla, a branch of the Castilian house of Mendoza, were undoubtedly the most influential lineage of those who settled in the City of Darro after its incorporation into the Crown of Castile, quickly becoming Marquises of Mondéjar, captains general of the Kingdom and commanders of the fortress of the Alhambra, positions which they held for most of the century of the 16th century. García Ríos proposes an interpretative model to analyse the role played by the servants of the Marquises of Mondéjar within the municipal power of 16th century Granada. Sometimes as solicitors and notaries, sometimes as jurors, some of these individuals came to enjoy, on the one hand, offices as knights twenty-four, that is, to reach the pinnacle of local power, while, on the other hand, others of these noble servants held important positions in the sphere of the Church, the Chancery or the Holy Office.

Clara Sánchez Merina, on the other hand, focuses on the study of the foundation of funerary chapels in Cordoba Cathedral in the modern period, as well as on the decorative programmes displayed in them. The author extracts from this analysis valuable information on the complicated social network that was woven in the cathedral chapter in the Modern Age. Given that the decorative programmes were created to decode a series of interpretative clues that were not visible, but which undoubtedly formed part of the horizon of expectations of the time. We have detected that there are certain spaces of 'justification' in the Cordoban cathedral, basically private chapels founded by canons of possible Judeo-Converse origin,

where the iconographic and decorative programmes attached to their walls become visual discourses of justification, legitimisation and social promotion. In particular, there are two spaces founded in the 16th century where the use of a visual rhetoric at the service of social ascent and the concealment and/or justification of Jewish-conversion ancestry is very present through certain iconographic themes and local devotions that have their expression in the plastic images in their different artistic formats. Such spaces would be the chapel of the Holy Spirit, founded by the Simancas brothers, and the chapel dedicated to San Juan Bautista, refounded by Canon Juan Sigler de Espinosa. The author argues that the presence of the converso in these sacralised spaces can be revealed by analysing the predilection for certain iconographic themes in the 'decorative' programmes that adorn the aforementioned chapels. It is, therefore, an analysis based on conceiving the image as a historical document and a hermeneutic bridge that allows us to delve deeper into the horizon of expectations and the symbolic capital at stake in this type of foundation. To close the volume, Herreros Moya focuses on the study of the city of Cordoba.

From its incorporation into the Crown of Castile in the 13th century, Cordoba was a strongly nobiliary city, in which the great families held all the positions of power, social influence and wealth. Both symbolically and economically, the city soon became one of the major aristocratic centres of Castile. Lineages such as Fernández de Córdoba, Gutiérrez de los Ríos, Argote, Cabrera, Pérez de Guzmán, Carrillo, Hoces, Aguayo, Cárdenas, Valenzuela, Díaz de Morales, Muñiz de Godoy and Saavedra, among others, formed a social network that accumulated considerable prestige and property for generations. However, throughout the Modern Age, other family groups of much less eminent birth gradually rose to positions in this city, some of mercantile and Judeo-Converso origin, others with a rural and agrarian profile, and even others from bureaucratic and administrative circles, which gave rise to a much more complex social variety. In fact, some of these families managed to rise at a still early stage to slip, with greater or lesser dissimulation, among the oldest and most consolidated families in the city, such as the Corral, the Bañuelos and the Villalón families, which by the 17th century was on a par with the aforementioned families without any differences. Other lineages, although they ended up obtaining the habits of military orders and the posts of knight aldermen in the town council, had a much later rise, in the 17th century, and remained to some extent isolated in their own mesocratic group, as was the case with the Vera, Montesinos, Guiral, Concha, Gómez de Figueroa, Torralbo, de la Corte and Muñoz de Velasco families. Only some of the members of that mesocracy were able, at a certain point in the 18th century, to make the leap to the oligarchy and even to some noble title. In any case, their status as careerists was, in a way, never entirely forgotten, as evidenced by the fact that they barely pretended to be married to them. Therefore, starting from this chronology of closure and relative oligarchic opening of the Cordoban elite, Herreros analyses the concern of those lineages for the afterlife and for the fate of their estates after death. It is not only a question, therefore, of

worrying about inheritance or salvation, but also of designing what particular and familiar image was to be given to those who were still alive. The author focuses above all on the aspect, much more visible to posterity than the wills, which represents the funerary aspect of death: where to bury, how to bury, with whom and under what conditions. Chapels, churches, convents and pantheons therefore play a key role in this contribution.

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