

ISSN: 0213-2060

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14201/shhme.31950>

COMMUNITIES OF NON-VIOLENCE? JUSTICE AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION AMONG CONVERSOS AND OLD CHRISTIANS IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY VALENCIA: A PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

¿Comunidades de no violencia? Justicia e integración social entre conversos y cristianos viejos en la Valencia del siglo xv: una aproximación

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Recibido: 2024-12-15

Revisado: 2025-03-03

Aceptado: 2025-03-09

ABSTRACT: This article examines non-violent conflicts between Conversos and Old Christians in fifteenth-century Valencia, challenging the historiographical emphasis on violence and structural discrimination in interfaith relations. Drawing on judicial records, notarial protocols, and arbitration agreements, it explores the mechanisms of conflict resolution and their role in the gradual integration of conversos into Christian society following the mass conversions of 1391. The study highlights how disputes—rooted in familial, economic, and social interactions—were managed through civil courts and private arbitration, revealing a nuanced interplay between coexistence and inequality. By analyzing the socio-professional networks and endogamous tendencies of the converso community, the article argues that peaceful conflict management served as a vital tool for fostering social cohesion and enabling conversos' participation in economic and institutional frameworks. This integrative process, while paradoxically born of violence, demonstrates the complexities of rebuilding coexistence in late medieval Iberia.

Keywords: conversos; justice; Crown of Aragon; Iberia; social history; integration.

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza la conflictividad no violenta entre conversos y cristianos viejos en Valencia durante siglo xv, poniendo en cuestión el énfasis historiográfico en la violencia y la discriminación estructurales en las relaciones interconfesionales. A partir de registros judiciales, protocolos notariales y acuerdos de arbitraje, explora los mecanismos de resolución de disputas y su papel en la integración gradual de los conversos en la sociedad

cristiana tras las conversiones masivas de 1391. El estudio destaca cómo los conflictos, originados en interacciones familiares, económicas y sociales, fueron gestionados a través de tribunales civiles y arbitrajes privados, en el marco de una dinámica compleja de coexistencia y desigualdad entre colectivos confesionales. Analizando las redes socio-profesionales y las tendencias endogámicas de la comunidad conversa, el artículo sostiene que la gestión pacífica de los conflictos actuó como una herramienta vital para fomentar la cohesión social y permitir la participación de los conversos en los marcos económicos e institucionales coetáneos. Este proceso integrador, aunque paradójicamente nacido de la violencia, demuestra las complejidades de reconstruir la convivencia en la Península Ibérica bajomedieval.

Palabras clave: conversos; justicia; Corona de Aragón; Iberia; historia social; integración.

SUMARIO: 1 A (subtle) challenge to the usual analytical framework: finding peace amidst the clamour of violence. 2 Massive conversion as a juridical shift: non-violent conflict and social integration. 3 The documentary sources of non-violent conflict: civil claims, judicial sentences, and arbitration. 4 Endogamous versus exogamous conflict: nature of disputes and choices in management. 4.1 Resolution through public courts. 4.2 Private arbitration. 5 Conclusions. 6 Works cited.

1 A (SUBTLE) CHALLENGE TO THE USUAL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: FINDING PEACE AMIDST THE CLAMOUR OF VIOLENCE

The prevailing historiographical consensus holds that late medieval society was characterized by significant conflict, with violence being a common occurrence¹. This was mainly due to the social legitimacy of private violence, reinforced by the influence of chivalric ideals and the inadequacy of state mechanisms to maintain public order². Within this context, Jews—who constituted a discriminated numerical minority and were legally defined as the king's servants, inseparably bound to their religious identity³—have been primarily analysed through a lens of victimhood⁴. As central figures in Christian soteriological narratives, they were portrayed as the murderers of Christ, a belief that had permeated both elite and popular consciousness by the later Middle Ages. Saint

¹ On the pacification of medieval Europe, see: Malegam, *The Sleep of the Behemoth*.

² The glorification of violence and the practice of arms, inherent to the chivalric ethos, found fertile ground in the power fragmentation characteristic of the medieval period, especially during the second half of the eleventh century, marked in Catalonia and Aragon—which would later confederate—by the decline of the Carolingian legal order and judicial structure. See, respectively: Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*; Salrach, «L'administració de justícia».

³ The legal conceptualization of Jews as *servi camere nostrae* in Latin, or *nostre cofre e tresor* and *sclaus e còfrens nostres* in Catalan, appears for the first time, according to Shoal and Abulafia, in the Teruel Charter of 1176. See: Shoal, «Servi Regis»; Abulafia, «*Nam Iudei*». Jaume Riera disputes this assertion and finds the first absolute subjection of the Jews to the King of Aragon and Count of Barcelona in the *Usatges de Barcelona*, specifically in *Iudei cessi*. Riera i Sans, *Els poders públics*, 26-45.

⁴ The list of works that examine the systemic violence suffered by Jews in Europe is extensive. However, the most influential one—and documentarily focused on the Crown of Aragon—is likely: Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*.

Augustine's argument in *De civitate Dei* that Jews should remain dispersed among Christians as a living testament to their error justified their continued presence in society⁵, yet simultaneously underpinned polemics against them, resulting in segregation policies that sought to enforce a deliberate separation between Jewish and Christian communities⁶.

Prejudice rapidly permeated the fabric of daily life. Beginning in the twelfth century, blood libels first surfaced in England and spread across Western Europe, eventually reaching the Iberian Peninsula⁷. In the Crown of Aragon, traditions like the Easter *harques* reinforced the symbolic subordination of Jews through rituals such as the stoning of Jewish homes—a practice that, by the late thirteenth century, had become firmly established in the Kingdom of Valencia⁸. The violence inflicted upon Jews was systemic, manifesting itself in symbolic gestures, minor everyday confrontations, and, at times, large-scale outbreaks. Significant examples include the massacres perpetrated by the Pastoreaux (1320), attacks during the War of the Union in Morvedre (1347), persecutions following the Black Death (1348-1349), and the mass conversions of 1391⁹—. Consequently, scholars have scrutinized the oppression endured by Jews in late medieval Iberia, exploring its long-term effects and its role in their eventual expulsion¹⁰.

By the time of the converso period, catalysed by the forced baptisms that accompanied the revolts of 1391, attention allegedly shifted to the newly converted Christians. Regarded by some as an alien presence within the Old Christian majority, they initially endured daily discrimination from their new co-religionists, which then escalated into vehement literary polemics and, ultimately, outbreaks of violence and entrenched structural prejudice¹¹. It is worth questioning, however, the uneven weight of this systemic intolerance in Castile compared to the Crown of Aragon, where no significant attacks or serious episodes of rejection against the conversos occurred¹². By largely ignoring non-Castilian realities—that is, Portugal, Navarre, Aragon, and the king of Aragon's estates of Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands—, historians have termed this series of developments «the Spanish converso problem»¹³.

⁵ Cohen, *The Friars*, 19-22.

⁶ On the impact of anti-Jewish polemics in the Iberian Peninsula, with a particular focus on Castile, see: Nirenberg, «Figures of Thought».

⁷ The most culturally significant case in the Peninsula was that of the Santo Niño de la Guardia, which also implicated conversos. Joseph Pérez attributes its emergence and popularization to a growing anti-Jewish and antisemitic sentiment in Castile. Pérez, *Los judíos*, 185.

⁸ Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 202-24.

⁹ To date, the most comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon in the Crown of Aragon corresponds to: Gampel, *Anti-Jewish Riots*.

¹⁰ For instance: Gampel, «Jews, Christians and Muslims»; Novikoff, «Between Tolerance and Intolerance»; Ray, «Beyond Tolerance and Persecution».

¹¹ A persecution that, according to José María Monsalvo, has its roots in the anti-Jewish propaganda of the Castilian Civil War (1351-1369), later extending into the fifteenth century due to the mass conversions of 1391, now targeting the conversos. Monsalvo, *Teoría y evolución*. A record of anti-converso outbreaks of violence, particularly prevalent during the second half of the fifteenth century, in: MacKay, «Popular Movements», 35.

¹² López Juan, *Viure entre dues fes*, 18-23.

¹³ In 1965, Francisco Márquez Villanueva considered «the converso problem» a class conflict, stemming from the suspicion of the Castilian crown and the popular classes toward a prosperous, bourgeois group

In 1478, Pope Sixtus IV's bull *Exigit sinceræ devotionis affectus* provided the legal foundation for the royal Inquisition. This paved the way for tribunals across the major cities of Castile and the Crown of Aragon, which were dynastically united under the Trastámara royal family. The establishment of the Holy Office marked the culmination of sustained violence and conflict in Castile, initiating a persecution that would persist into the early modern period, justified by accusations of the conversos' alleged «Judai-zing» practices¹⁴.

Critically examining the structural violence experienced by minorities in late medieval Iberia is undeniably valuable for constructing a coherent historical narrative: the often-volatile dynamics between majority and minority groups contributed to long-term historical processes that shaped much of premodern social history, some of which continue to resonate today. However, from a researcher's standpoint, this approach presents both significant challenges and inherent limitations. It is problematic because it assumes a simplistic dichotomy between victims and perpetrators, a perspective that introduces two major risks: it leads to a teleological or biased interpretation of conflict and reduces complex contingencies to predetermined narratives. Moreover, this framework also overlooks the multifaceted identities of Jews, conversos, Christians, Muslims, and *moriscos*, whose familial, social, political, and economic behaviours often transcended (though never entirely divorced from) their religious affiliations.

In contrast to deterministic readings of interfaith relations, several important clarifications are warranted; foremost among them, the recognition that not all interactions in a multireligious society inevitably led to friction. In fact, interpersonal relationships characterized by affection, friendship, or even peaceful indifference between Christians and Jews (and Muslims) were possible, especially in contexts of long-term cohabitation. Acknowledging this reality neither negates the reality of discrimination and structural violence against minorities in the Christian kingdoms, nor does it affirm the widely contested *convivencia* paradigm¹⁵. Rather, it serves as a reminder to avoid extreme perspectives that oversimplify the complexities of these relationships¹⁶.

Another issue with emphasizing violence in religious relations is the frequent neglect of non-violent conflicts. Given that Jewish presence on the Iberian Peninsula spanned

in a transitional situation between the Jewish and Christian faiths. Márquez Villanueva, «The Converso Problem». Benzion Netanyahu shares the notion of social conflict, caused by the rapid rise of this social group, but adds a perspective rooted in discrimination based first on religious origin and later on racial grounds. Netanyahu, *The Origins*. Eloy Benito, for his part, argues that Christians redirected a pre-existing animosity toward Jews onto the conversos, who were potentially more socially and economically threatening due to the increasing difficulty of distinguishing them from their new co-religionists. Benito, *Los orígenes*.

¹⁴ According to David Nirenberg, from the 1449 Toledo revolt onward, anti-converso prejudice took on a «genealogical» or biological dimension, which some authors link to contemporary antisemitism. Nirenberg, «Mass Conversion». By the Early Modern period, the selective enforcement of blood purity statutes, along with accusations of crypto-Judaism brought before the Inquisition due to family lineage, took on a distinctly identity-driven character. Hernández Franco, *Sangre Limpia*.

¹⁵ A critique of the paradigm proposed by Américo Castro, later widely popularized by María Rosa Menocal, in: Soifer Irish, «Beyond Convivencia».

¹⁶ On the complexity of relations among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Kingdom of Valencia, the reflections and case studies presented by: García-Oliver, «Jueus contra la norma».

centuries and that conversos eventually assimilated into the broader social fabric, it is essential to examine how disputes between individuals of different faiths arose and were resolved without recourse to physical violence. This is particularly important in cases where members of the dominant community could not or would not, in a peaceful context, fully assert their privileged position. Such an analysis is crucial for capturing a quieter yet significant aspect of societal dynamics.

Despite the ultimate breakdown of coexistence through massacres, forced baptisms, and expulsions, societies in Christian Iberia experienced periods of relative stability that lasted for decades¹⁷. Understanding the mechanisms that allowed for this stability requires moving beyond narratives centered on violence and examining how everyday disputes were handled in ways that prevented their escalation to physical aggression.

This article aims to explore non-violent conflicts involving conversos and Old Christians in fifteenth-century Valencia by analyzing how disputes were managed through both formal judicial institutions and alternative mechanisms, such as private arbitration. Rather than seeking instances of structural violence or religious discrimination, the study focuses on the dynamics of peaceful conflict resolution and the gradual legal and social integration of conversos into public judicial frameworks after the 1391 conversions. Drawing from a broad selection of notarial documents and judicial records, this preliminary examination seeks to identify those patterns of interaction and dispute management that shaped the incorporation of conversos into Valencian society.

2 MASSIVE CONVERSION AS A JURIDICAL SHIFT: NON-VIOLENT CONFLICT AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

It is thus essential to investigate how non-violent conflicts between New and Old Christians manifested and were managed on an everyday basis. In the case of Jews, a wealth of scholarship highlights the often-contentious nature of life within the *aljamas*. In Valencia, communal strife arose from various sources. At the elite level, dissension often emerged over the administrative control of the *aljamas*, the unequal distribution of fiscal responsibilities, and matters of symbolic or hierarchical importance¹⁸. Among the broader population, everyday quarrels typically involved family disputes, failed business dealings, poor neighbourly relations, and the routine frictions that accompany daily

¹⁷ One of the rare instances of scholarship that emphasizes not only the maintenance of peaceful relations between religious communities, but also their recovery after a moment of extreme threat of violence, is Mark Meyerson's work on the Jewish community of Morvedre in the fifteenth century. Following the forced baptisms of 1391 and the almost miraculous survival of the town's Jewish community, the local *aljama* not only endured, but thrived in the nine decades that elapsed between this traumatic event and the royal decree of expulsion. See: Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance*.

¹⁸ Generally, these conflicts are observed through documentation from the Royal Chancery, as the opposing parties appealed not only to the bailiff of the Jewish quarter but also directly to the king and queen. Ongoing disputes over control of the *aljama* led to the formation of factions from at least the early fourteenth century. Meyerson, «Accusation and Innuendo».

life¹⁹. Most of these conflicts were resolved without recourse to physical violence; in fact, judicial records demonstrate the capacity of the *aljamas* and the crown to pre-empt and contain aggression when it did arise²⁰. Only when tensions became deeply personal or intractable, aggression escalated²¹.

If we shift our focus to non-violent conflicts, substantial evidence demonstrates their amicable resolution both between individuals of different faiths and within the same religious community. Contention was commonly addressed through an intricate judicial system marked by overlapping jurisdictions²². A close examination of judicial records from the *justicia de tres-centos sous* —the official in charge for minor civil causes— for the years 1382 and 1388 reveals 102 transactions involving Jews and Christians. Of these, 20 cases —nearly one-fifth— concerned penalties for non-payment of goods and services in minor business transactions. The average fine imposed was 82 sueldos, and the distribution of offenders —12 Jews and 8 Christians— indicates a relative balance. Importantly, these disputes stemmed from routine exchanges, such as the purchase of wine, grain, or cloth, or the hiring of Jewish tailors for sewing services. The disagreements emerged in a peaceful manner, were handled as civil lawsuits, and were ultimately resolved before a judicial authority²³.

The Jewish bailiwick in Valencia, though, has left few archival records, making it difficult to explore intra-community conflict before 1391. As a result, researchers have turned to notarial protocols and chancery records. However, these sources have their limitations because they tend to overrepresent elite perspectives and focus primarily on business transactions involving Christians. This dearth of documentation presents challenges for studying conflict management both within the Jewish community and in interactions with other religious groups.

¹⁹ Due to the destruction of the books of the bailiff of the Jewish quarter of Valencia, the judicial records available before 1391 are fragmentary. Rabbinic responsa help address this gap, at least qualitatively. As Ferrán Garcia-Oliver asserts, «the consultations addressed by Yisshaq ben Seset Perfet (1326-1406) covered a wide range of issues, including economic transactions (fourteen cases), dietary matters (nine), marital disputes (eight), inheritances (three), judicial procedures (two), urban planning (one), collective debt and taxation (two), sexual altercations (two), brawls (one), funeral rites (one), and liturgy (one)». Garcia-Oliver, *Els murs fràgils*, 117. This author's data was inferred from the documentation provided by: Magdalena Nom de Déu, «Aspectes de la vida».

²⁰ Between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and on a broader level, the judicialization of interpersonal violence was the norm in the Crown of Aragon. Although society granted individuals a certain latitude to exercise private violence, the reactions of judicial authorities and the communities to which both victims and perpetrators belonged systematically aimed to curtail it. The intervention of royal and seigneurial officials to prevent the escalation of violence was particularly steadfast in cycles of vengeance, regardless of the religious affiliation of those involved. López Juan, «Three Religious Communities».

²¹ Aggression almost always materialized through insults and slander, verbal or armed threats, and brawls; only exceptionally did these disputes culminate in homicide. For the second half of the fourteenth century, based on fragmentary records from Lleida and Valencia, Garcia-Oliver records only two deaths among a total of 305 criminal incidents. Garcia-Oliver, *Els murs fràgils*, 119.

²² In Valencia, as in the rest of late medieval Europe, the jurisdictional landscape was complex, which led to numerous disagreements over authority. See: López Juan, *Viure entre dues fes*, 96-100.

²³ The obligations and sentences in both volumes cover from the end of December of the previous year to the 25th of the following year, as dates were governed by the Year of the Nativity. They can be consulted in: Archivo del Reino de Valencia (henceforth, ARV), Justicia de trescientos sueldos, 18 (1382) and 15 (1388).

Still, it is reasonable to infer that the majority of disputes between Old Christians and Jews, as well as intra-community frictions, were often resolved harmoniously, following patterns that contemporary sociology observes in human relations²⁴. Nonetheless, the mass conversions marked a pivotal moment in Valencian history that permanently altered this dynamic: on July 9, 1391, nearly all Jews in the city were forcibly baptised. An unprecedented episode of violence shattered the coexistence between communities, which until then had lived in a relatively peaceful manner, within the framework of a peninsula-wide phenomenon that still requires a comprehensive analysis. As a consequence, the recently baptised Jews transitioned from the special intra-community jurisdiction of the Jewish community to the ordinary jurisdiction of Christian vassals²⁵.

The subsequent social integration of conversos into Christian society was gradual and marked by hardship. New Christians remained a distinct group, identifiable by their socio-professional profiles and continued residence in the former Jewish quarter. They also maintained endogamous familial ties²⁶, and possibly heterodox religious practices²⁷. But because their jurisdictional separation no longer persisted, disputes within the group increasingly appeared in the royal courts of the city. This newfound visibility brought to light both intra- and extra-community contentions, as the former Jewish community navigated an uneasy transition into the broader Christian society.

In subsequent sections, we will delve into these questions through a varied selection of documents. First, we will examine the sources for analysing non-violent interpersonal conflict in fifteenth century Valencia, critically assessing them for both their revelations and omissions. We will then examine the nature of everyday disputes among communities, with the aim of identifying patterns of social behaviour that characterized their interactions and how they managed disagreements. Finally, we will conclude the article with a reflection on how this handling of dissensions may have contributed to the gradual integration of the conversos—who, from a legal standpoint, were Christians in all respects—into the social fabric of the city of Valencia, reaching a level of inclusion that had been unattainable during the Jewish period.

²⁴ For instance, in his study on the recourse to justice and judicial effectiveness in Caldes de Malavella during the second half of the fourteenth century, Lluís Sales observes that the Jews of Girona, who frequently lent money in the region, often sued their debtors to recover outstanding loans. Beyond the animosity that these legal actions and the lending business itself may have generated among their predominantly peasant clientele, disputes between the parties were resolved peacefully. Sales i Favà, «Suings», 56, and 60, 71 for examples of the intervention of Jews and plaintiffs in civil disputes. On the precarious balance between the necessity of Jewish lending in late medieval Europe and its rejection by both the Church and the lower classes, see: Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered*.

²⁵ The incorporation of conversos into ordinary jurisdiction occurred de facto from August 1391. De iure, Juan I explicitly recognized the legal equalization of the new Christians in a Chancery order dated June 20, 1393. By then, the regular recourse of Valencia's conversos to the royal courts in disputes among themselves—cases that would previously have been settled initially before the now-defunct bailiff of the Jewish quarter—had become a well-established reality. López Juan, «La igualación jurídica».

²⁶ As outlined in: López Juan, «The Conversos of Valencia», 283-6.

²⁷ On the uncertain and gradual integration of Valencia's conversos into the Christian religious sphere, overseen by the Crown and the Church, see: López Juan, «Converso Evangelisation».

3 THE DOCUMENTARY SOURCES OF NON-VIOLENT CONFLICT: CIVIL CLAIMS, JUDICIAL SENTENCES, AND ARBITRATION

In every society, contention seldom emerges between strangers; rather, it tends to manifest among individuals engaged in sustained social interaction, such as within familial or occupational settings. Prior to escalation into physical violence—which, although rare today, was likely more frequent during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—these conflicts commonly unfold through a series of verbal exchanges, emotional strains, and strategic efforts to address underlying grievances. At the heart of many of these disagreements are moral tensions, often driven by perceived breaches of social norms, with the aggrieved party grounding their position in prevailing ethical frameworks²⁸.

The documentation of these situations is typically limited to those that reached the judicial system. Legal proceedings required a substantiated cause of action, which in civil cases meant demonstrable harm. This harm could be economic, moral, physical, or contractual, and had to affect the claimant's legitimate interests. In criminal cases, the right to initiate a complaint was contingent upon the occurrence of a legally defined offense, whether brought forward by the victim or reported by a third party. As a result, surviving records predominantly capture the most severe disputes, with minor altercations often being resolved informally, leaving only ephemeral traces in the historical record.

The Crown of Aragon presents a singular environment for examining interpersonal conflicts—both civil and criminal—given its extensive archival resources and the early establishment of judicial structures distinct from the Carolingian model, which had diminished by the late eleventh century²⁹. This period of transition saw an intensification of feudalization, with dispute resolution increasingly managed through lordly intervention and private arbitration. Yet, in the thirteenth century, the resurgence of Roman legal principles spurred a restoration of public authority, marked by the establishment of courts throughout the Crown's territories and the integration of legal principles derived from the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*³⁰.

This institutional development did not wholly replace feudal jurisprudence. Informal mediation and private arbitration continued to play a pivotal role and could even attain legal recognition within the Crown. Our analysis utilizes civil court records, specifically the *Requestes* and *Condemnacions i obligacions series*, to scrutinize judicial procedures, supplemented by notarial documents that shed light on the private resolution of conflicts.

²⁸ Michalski, «An Integrated Theoretical Framework».

²⁹ And for which, nonetheless, a flood of documentation has been preserved, scarcely comparable to that of other European territories. As an example, the formidable documentary edition directed by: Salrach *et al.*, *Justícia i resolució de conflictes*.

³⁰ The Furs of Valencia, established as a kingdom from territories conquered in the thirteenth century, perhaps represent the clearest example of the straightforward implementation of feudal-free legislation—less easily circumvented in Catalonia due to the Usatges—rooted in Roman legal traditions. In Tortosa, a territory conquered in the mid-twelfth century, the progressive integration of Roman law, contemporaneously revived in Bologna, had already taken place through successive modifications. See: Barrero García, «El Derecho Romano».

Each collection of documents carries distinctive historiographic value, offering both pronounced insights and inherent constraints. *Requestes* —civil claims— records are invaluable for investigating the origins and intricate contexts of interpersonal conflict. An initial survey of 48 cases from 1401-1413 involving conversos reveals that legal grievances emerged within familial or economic frameworks. While certain lawsuits addressed procedural or administrative issues —such as disagreements over the issuance of official documents, recognition of legal adulthood, or petitions to replace a judge— the majority were driven by personal affairs. These typically involved creditor-debtor relationships, business partners, spouses, or heirs. Within family dynamics, disputes frequently centered on inheritance matters, dowry restitution, or the accounting of guardianship, often necessitating third-party intervention. In contrast, contentions outside familial bounds largely concerned debt obligations or the prioritization of claims within commercial transactions.

However, the *Requestes* collections present limitations shaped by the practices of medieval scribes; particularly, the absence of recorded resolutions. Due to the significant volume of claims, cases were inscribed in *mans* (handwritten booklets of approximately 50-60 folios), then consolidated into *principis* (beginnings) and *salts* (jumps) volumes to preserve chronological order. The *principis* contained cases up to a certain point before directing them to a different folio in the *salts*, allowing them to resume economically, without reserving unnecessary folio space. This system —designed to conserve paper and facilitate orderly filing— often renders modern attempts at historical reconstruction fragmentary and inconclusive. Missing volumes and deteriorated pages further complicate efforts, resulting in gaps that present considerable obstacles to a full analysis of these cases and their outcomes. The frequent absence of judgments in many disputes, which often conclude abruptly without resolution, proves especially frustrating.

Not every lawsuit ended without recorded outcomes. In certain instances, the *justicia* or designated judges rendered clear verdicts, with several cases concluding in entries marked with a definitive ruling³¹. Nonetheless, the majority of them lack subsequent entries or continuations in related volumes, suggesting that these may have been transferred to different jurisdictions or managed through private arbitration —a process challenging to trace within the archival structure³²—.

Another complementary record series, *Condemnacions i obligacions*, contains verdicts enforcing payments, restitution of goods, services, or rights between opposing parties. These records hint that some claims may have culminated in condemnations rather than extended litigation, but a consistent procedural connection between the two series remains unclear. From these sources, 128 documents involving at least one converso have been identified. The verdicts issued by the *justicia civil*, organized in annual volumes, predominantly address debt-related conflicts. The cases they contain capture various commercial transactions, including goods exchanges, unpaid wages, real estate sales, and

³¹ A rare instance in: ARV, Justicia Civil, *quarta mà*, 3r.-3v., 34r.-37v., 843, 21-II-1407.

³² In August 1403, during a dispute over a debt between a converso couple and the heirs of an Old Christian, the executors of the latter attempted to move the case to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The proceedings, in fact, were abruptly halted without resolution; did they achieve their objective? ARV, Justicia Civil, 837, *mà vint-i-cinquena*, 4r.-9r., 27-VIII-1403.

loans, supported by personal receipts, notarial entries, judicial obligations, or third-party confirmations³³.

Unlike the *Requestes*, which occasionally detail family clashes, *Condemnacions* scarcely touch on these matters, nor do they refer back to previous lawsuits, indicating a distinct procedural trajectory³⁴. These volumes also reflect a judicial procedure that could be described as expedited: the lawsuit was initiated, evidence was presented, the plaintiff and defendant—or their representatives—were summoned, and a verdict was issued. In 96,77 % of cases (125 out of 128), the verdict was condemnatory, hence the partial name of the books.

An alternative avenue for conflict resolution in the period was private arbitration, where contending sides would sign an agreement and appoint negotiators or adjudicators to resolve their differences. Often, these agreements were framed with the intent of *pro evitando laboribus et expensis*; that is, aiming to minimize judicial costs for both parties, as each appearance by court-appointed representatives incurred fees³⁵. Consequently, many disagreements likely concluded with private agreements validated by a justice official³⁶, sometimes explicitly acknowledging an initial court filing³⁷.

³³ In July 1443, Nicolau Pujades, a converso broker, acknowledged in a handwritten receipt that he had purchased 50 *càrregues* (loads) of woad from Joan de Curçà, agreeing to exchange it for wool at a rate of 8 *sous* per *arrova*, with payment due in August of the same year. After failing to fulfill the agreement, Pujades was ordered to pay 16 pounds to Francesc Pérez, Curçà's legal representative, for the price of two loads of undelivered woad. The judgment granted him ten days to make the payment, under penalty of the quart. The evidence in this case consisted of the receipt itself and Pujades' confession, in which he admitted to not delivering part of the goods within the agreed timeframe. ARV, Justicia Civil, 1500, *mà primera*, non-foliated, 16-I-1444.

³⁴ The *Condemnacions i obligacions* books are particularly valuable for mapping commercial dynamics within and beyond the converso community, because they shed light on extensive networks of business interactions involving both New and Old Christians, as well as the conflicts these engagements generated. However, rather than serving as direct continuations of the initial claims, these volumes document resolutions that primarily reflect the economic dimensions of community life in the late medieval city. Valencian historiography has frequently relied on these records to reconstruct not only the judicial functioning of local courts but, more importantly, the interconnection between the credit market and productive and commercial activities. See, for instance: Llibrer, «Artesanos ante la justicia»; and, specially, Furió, «Rents Instead of Land».

³⁵ For instance, the converso notary Pere Castellar, who frequently acted as a legal representative in numerous lawsuits, issued a receipt for 100 sueldos to Caterina de Vilanova, heir to the noblewoman Elsa de Pròixida, as payment for his labour as her lawyer. Archivo del Real Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia (henceforth, ACCV), Bartomeu Tovia, 24536, 20-VI-1428.

³⁶ Sometimes, the civil justice official himself was responsible for granting legal validity to judgments. In May 1408, Manuel Salvador, acting on his own behalf and as guardian of his son Joan, resolved a dispute with the notary Pere Llätzer through the intervention of an arbitrator, the doctor of law Bartomeu Sist. Subsequently, the parties approached the justice official to bestow *la vostra auctoritat* (your authority) upon the jurist's decision. ARV, Justicia Civil, 847, *mà tretzena*, 47r.-47v., 4-V-1408.

³⁷ Some cases involving exclusively converso parties: an arbitration agreement between Pere and Gilbert d'Artés, uncle and nephew, concerning the administration of the former's guardianship, was initiated before the civil justice official a few months prior to the parties deciding to resort to private arbitration (ACCV, Bartomeu de la Mata, 21910, 4-IX-1398); similarly, Pau Berçós and Pere Sánchez de Luna had previously litigated before the justice official over 300 sueldos (ACCV, Domènec Llibià, 26154, 22-IX-1417); meanwhile, the doublet-makers Diego de León and Alfonso Rodríguez, embroiled in a dispute over a dowry that the former had promised the latter, had even obtained a judgment in the ordinary civil court, which proved unsatisfactory for both parties (ACCV, Martí Coll, 14402, 22-XI-1429).

Private dispute settlement enjoyed widespread popularity due to several advantages. It provided a faster and more economical alternative to the often-protracted judicial process, enabled parties to select arbitrators, and promoted a less adversarial, negotiated approach that was often less financially burdensome than court judgments. Additionally, unlike ordinary legal proceedings, this approach held the potential for a swift finality in conflict resolution—a particularly attractive option given the inefficiencies in late-medieval judicial practices, where cases could be delayed by counterclaims, non-appearances, jurisdictional disputes, and appeals—. However, it also required initial consensus: litigants had to agree on third-party facilitators, timelines, and penalties for non-compliance.

Despite its appeal, arbitration was not without its complications. Deadline extensions and additional agreements were sometimes required. Nevertheless, legally recognized agreements in the Kingdom of Valencia likely settled a significant number of disagreements³⁸. In total, from a sample of over 900 notarial protocols dated between 1391 and 1450, we have documented 131 para-judicial agreements in which one of the parties, both, or at least one of the arbitrators was a converso.

On the other hand, it is likely that a significant portion of these agreements, especially those resolving minor disputes or occurring among the lower tiers of the subordinate strata, were not officially recorded but instead formalized verbally. For the historian, documents formalizing arbitrations present an additional challenge: in a substantial number of cases, 55 (41,98 %), they do not explicitly state the cause of the litigation between plaintiff and defendant. Furthermore, only in 24 cases (18,32 %) is the arbitral ruling available, which means that, much like civil lawsuits, the end of many disagreements remains unclear from our perspective. What, then, can this heterogeneous, fragmentary, and complex body of documents offer?

4 ENDOGAMOUS VERSUS EXOGAMOUS CONFLICT: NATURE OF DISPUTES AND CHOICES IN MANAGEMENT

4.1 *Resolution through public courts*

The most striking insight revealed by contemporary documentary sources is the clear division between the private and public management of non-violent disputes involving conversos. While disagreements with Old Christians were predominantly resolved through formal mechanisms, arbitral mediation played a more prominent role in intra-community conflicts. Throughout the century, New Christians remained a distinct community, partially segregated from the Old Christian majority, as reflected in their social behavior: of the 283 recorded conflicts, 86 (30,39 %) occurred within the community, highlighting a significant degree of endogamy. Nonetheless, non-violent confrontations

³⁸ To date, the most comprehensive study on the subject focuses on a rural observatory and examines the private resolution of conflicts in the *longue durée*: Royo, *Vilafranca*.

Documentary series	Conflicts between conversos	Conflicts between conversos and Old Christians	Non-converso party, but converso arbiter	Total
<i>Requestes</i> (civil lawsuits)	10 (20,813 %)	38 (79,17 %)	X	48
<i>Condemnacions</i>	25 (19,53 %)	103 (80,47 %)	X	128
Arbitrations	51 (39,93 %)	56 (42,75 %)	24 (18,32 %)	131

Table 1. distribution of disputes involving conversos and Old Christians by resolution mechanism (first half of the fifteenth century).

with Old Christians —the primary focus of this article— predominate across all three documentary series. Why is this the case?

An analysis of public court data focusing on the socio-religious status of plaintiffs and defendants reveals a clear predominance of Old Christians in the role of plaintiffs. One possible —albeit unlikely— explanation is judicial discrimination against newly baptized individuals in royal courts, driven by their relative social marginalization and economic vulnerability in the decades immediately following the mass baptisms. In a different context —fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Bologna— Trevor Dean documented systemic judicial discrimination against the Jewish minority, who were treated inequitably by the local legal system³⁹. Beyond these considerations, however, we believe that other factors may better explain this phenomenon in Valencia.

Although reliable demographic data for contemporary Valencia is unavailable, it is estimated that conversos constituted approximately 5 % —and certainly no more than 10 %— of the urban population⁴⁰. This minority status limited their pool of potential business counterparts within their own community, necessitating extensive economic interactions with Old Christians —an inherent characteristic of many late medieval and early modern settings with significant minority populations—. From an economic

³⁹ Dean, «A Protected Minority?»

⁴⁰ There are no uncontested demographic data for Valencia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In fact, population estimates for the period, along with the methodological critiques they have sparked, led to an engaging debate within local historiography at the end of the last century. See, for instance: Rubio Vela, «La población de Valencia»; Cruselles Gómez, «La población de la ciudad de Valencia». Nevertheless, it is possible to gauge the relative population weight of the conversos through an exercise in abstraction. Using a judicial source similar to the *Condemnacions* books employed in this study —the equivalent in the *justicia de 300 sous* series— Juan Vicente García Marsilla published a painstakingly exhaustive list of 2171 individuals registered between 1409 and 1412, whose places of residence were indicated. Comparing this list with our own prosopographical study of Valencia's conversos (which records 2017 men and women between 1391 and 1450), we found that García Marsilla's roster includes a total of 209 New Christians, slightly less than 10 %. They are likely somewhat overrepresented, given the repetition of some names in this author's list (which essentially distinguishes individuals by place of residence) and the urban and artisanal nature of the community, which would have prompted them to turn to royal courts within the city walls. García Marsilla's register, accompanied by an insightful study on the distribution of the urban population in the early fifteenth century, can be found in: García Marsilla, «Las calles y los hombres». Our own on *conversos*, still unpublished, in: López Juan, *Entre la endogamia y la integración*, annexes: male and female prosopographical lists.

theory perspective, this interaction aligns with the concept of ethno-religious market segmentation, whereby minority groups often develop specialized roles within broader economic systems, fostering interdependence between distinct social or confessional groups.

For Valencian conversos, such roles were primarily concentrated in the final stages of textile manufacturing, particularly tailoring and the silk industry, as well as silversmithing. These professions formed the backbone of the community's craftsmanship and were complemented by their participation in financial services, including moneylending through *mutua* loans, annuities (*censales* and *violarios*), and pawn-broking. Commerce and brokerage, which involved a significant number of professionals, could operate independently but were often combined with other trades⁴¹. Financial and commercial relationships, while mutually beneficial and essential for the system's functioning, also gave rise to conflicts. These disputes, in turn, may have been exacerbated by asymmetries in power, trust, and social capital.

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Converso plaintiff	10	20,83
Old Christian plaintiff	14	29,17
Intra-communal dispute	24	50

Table 2. distribution of Old Christians and conversos as plaintiffs
in *Requestes* (civil lawsuits), 1404-1413.

Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Converso plaintiff	39	30,47
Old Christian plaintiff	64	50
Intra-communal dispute	25	19,53

Table 3. distribution of Old Christians and conversos as plaintiffs
in *Condemnacions* (civil court verdicts), 1407-1446.

It should be noted that, due to their professional specializations, conversos were particularly vulnerable to legal claims —especially in a context where, as García Marsilla observed, society largely operated on credit⁴²—. Their businesses in Valencia, typically situated at the final stages of the productive and redistributive chain, could be characterized as an enclave economy but also relied heavily on a steady supply of materials⁴³.

⁴¹ An initial analysis of the economic activities of the conversos, as well as the socio-professional structure of the community, in: López Juan, «The Conversos of Valencia», 286-96.

⁴² As this autor notes, practices such as purchasing on credit, installment payments, debt transfers, and settling debts in kind were commonplace in late medieval Valencia. García Marsilla, *Vivir a crédito*, 71-83.

⁴³ Given that the majority of conversos were connected by familial ties, resided in the same neighborhood —the old Jewish Quarter— and participated in specific economic and commercial sectors, it is

Securing this supply depended on meeting payment deadlines, an area where delays or defaults often became significant issues. By contrast, cases where New Christians might have been expected to appear more frequently as plaintiffs —such as executive orders for the non-payment of interest-bearing loans— are notably underrepresented in the records. Consequently, the imbalance in percentages may not solely result from power asymmetries, though these may have played a role. Instead, it likely reflects a symbiotic dynamic shaped by the conversos' position within the economic system and the inherent biases of the documentary series under analysis⁴⁴.

Referring specifically to the *Condemnacions* series —the more extensive of the two datasets— half of the claims made by Old Christians against conversos (32 out of 64) arose from debts linked to the exchange of goods or raw materials. Wool cloth and silk fabrics (both skeins and threads) dominate these records, although dyes (such as woad), wine, Sardinian cheese, and even paper also appear. The other half of these inter-community condemnations are likewise tied to the economic and labor sphere, involving the non-payment of bills of exchange, wages for work or services, or, occasionally, the failure to settle a debt for a parcel of land. When considering condemnations obtained by conversos against Old Christians, the range of cases is narrower but similar: out of 39 instances, 25 involve non-payment for goods, 7 concern the failure to settle compensation for services, and the remainder address various other matters.

When examining civil lawsuits, where New and Old Christians appear in comparable proportions as plaintiffs and defendants, it becomes clear that the nature of these disputes was less mercantile or, at the very least, significantly more nuanced. This is likely because cases rooted in straightforward commercial or productive disagreements were often resolved expeditiously through *Condemnacions* or in other courts of the city. Instead, the majority of these lawsuits involve a diverse range of issues related to the collection of debts not necessarily tied to the productive or commercial economy: non-payment of annuities, disputes over priority in claims against a third party, and even claims against creditors regarding the judicial inventorying of assets. When conflicts arose over

reasonable to consider that they formed an enclave: a space —both physical and figurative— where a particular religious or ethnic community benefits from the socioeconomic opportunities provided by belonging to it. The counterpart to the enclave, however, is its inherent risk: the ghetto, whose conceptualization Peter Marcuse models on the Venetian example, which in turn was brought about by the concentration of socio-religious minorities in the late medieval Mediterranean. Consequently, the isolation and distinction that conversos experienced —challenged by their slow and fragile integration into the Christian community— represented both a risk and a competitive advantage, depending on the circumstances. Marcuse, «The Enclave».

⁴⁴ The underrepresentation of conversos in credit-related claims can be explained by two factors. The first is the decline of Jewish lending following the emergence and consolidation of the censal and violario as the predominant credit mechanisms in the Crown of Aragon from the mid-fourteenth century onward. By the early fifteenth century, the bulk of investment in lending —channeled through annuities with interest rates fluctuating between 6 % and 15 %— was controlled by Old Christians. In the Kingdom of Valencia, Jews were relegated to mutuum loans and pawn broking, unless they chose to restructure their businesses according to the Christian model; conversos, by contrast, overwhelmingly opted for the latter. A synthesis of this transformation can be found in: García Marsilla, *Vivir a crédito*, 356-61. On the persistence of a Jewish credit market, shaped by new broader dynamics, see: Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance*, 119-29.

exchanges, civil lawsuits tended to address more complex cases that could not be resolved through expedited justice.

For example, in May 1401, the Old Christian notary Antoni Jover filed a lawsuit against the conversos Bernat March, his wife Ramoneta, and the tailor Guillem de Reig over the sale of an ill slave. The young man, baptized as Nicolau, suffered from serious health conditions that limited his ability to work, as certified by medical examiners. The case was complex because Jover had acquired the slave verbally through brokers for 1005 sous, without a written contract. The lack of documentation, combined with the need to assess medical evidence and the involvement of multiple intermediaries, made this dispute unsuitable for expedited justice⁴⁵. This case represents a clear complaint about defective merchandise, however ethically troubling it nowadays may be to regard a person as such. Yet, due to the specifics of the claim, including the lack of a notarized contract, the involvement of brokers and physicians who had assessed the slave prior to the sale, and other complications—the matter could not be resolved as straightforwardly as, for instance, a failed delivery of a shipment of dyestuff—.

Another example highlights a different type of commercial dispute, this time between associates rather than a buyer and seller. In July 1407, the Old Christian carpenter Jaume Estopinyà accused his former business partner, the converso merchant Pere Carbonell, of falsifying accounts. Following the dissolution of their wood-trading partnership, Carbonell claimed higher profits, asserting that he had contributed more capital than Estopinyà acknowledged receiving. The need to examine account books and verify the authenticity of financial records rendered this case too complex for expedited justice procedures⁴⁶. Notably, this dispute was also far more intricate than those typically addressed in *Condemnacions*.

By the first half of the fifteenth century, it is evident that conversos' recourse to Valencia's royal courts—at least the two examined here—and their appearance as defendants were already an established practice. The mass conversions of 1391 had ushered in a period of relative stability, and structural violence against the group—this time carried out by the state through the royal Inquisition—would not resurface for another ninety years. During this interval, the former Jews, now converted to Christianity, resumed their activities—and, with them, their previous roles within the local economic system—. At the same time, they maintained direct ties with their new co-religionists and managed disputes without significant disturbance, even though economic disagreements could occasionally take on a bitter or even violent tone⁴⁷.

It is important to note, however, that Jewish recourse to royal justice was not a new phenomenon. Turning to public authorities to resolve tensions had been integral to the judicial order since its re-establishment in the thirteenth century, well before the forced

⁴⁵ ARV, Justicia Civil, 831, *mà catozena*, 21r.-21v., 25-V-1401.

⁴⁶ ARV, Justicia Civil, 860, *mà quinzena*, 37r.-41r., 31-VII-1413.

⁴⁷ For instance, in June 1397, the converso Pere de Ripoll accused the Florentine merchant Simone d'Estagio of repeatedly insulting and assaulting him. The violent dispute, which included highly charged insults such as «all of you New Christians are dogs», stemmed from Ripoll's failure to pay the Italian merchant 133 sueldos, a debt that d'Estagio had previously pursued before a royal court of justice. ARV, Justicia Criminal, 43, 7-VI-1397, *mà segona*, 22r.-23r.

conversions to Christianity. Where a greater degree of integration between New and Old Christians is most apparent, however, is in the realm of arbitration, which steadily gained prominence over the subsequent decades.

4.2 *Private arbitration*

Beyond the recourse to royal courts, the significance of settling disputes privately between these two groups must not be understated. In fact, as previously asserted, private and public conflict management were not two antithetical spheres, but rather complementary ones. The existence of 56 arbitrations across religious lines does not only attest to this phenomenon but also provides key evidence of the social dynamics at play. Mixed arbitration is the main proof of the ability of these communities—one of which had been forcibly converted by the other, lest we forget—to resolve contention by their own means; that is, with little to no intervention from public authorities. This capacity for collaborative resolution suggests a degree of social harmony and practical coexistence that challenges narratives of unmitigated division.

Arbitration, or any form of private dispute resolution within a closed community, is far from uncommon, particularly in a legal framework that explicitly recognized the legitimacy of such practices⁴⁸. The prevalence of negotiated resolutions among conversos can be attributed to two primary factors. The first is the aforementioned interconnect- edness within their community, whether directly—through familial ties, friendships, or business partnerships— or indirectly, as conceptualized by Granovetter's theory of «the strength of weak ties»⁴⁹. This framework posits that «weak ties», characterized by less intimate or infrequent relationships, are instrumental in facilitating the dissemination of information and opportunities within communities, as well as in shaping broader social networks. In contrast to «strong ties», such as those based on kinship or close friendships, weak ties—such as those arising from shared membership in a community, religious group, or neighborhood— function as critical bridges between individuals, ultimately reinforcing collective cohesion.

In cases of sharp disagreement between two conversos, these weak ties, grounded in a shared sense of group identity, may have acted as a powerful incentive to avoid public litigation in favor of negotiated resolution. Furthermore, the community itself often played a pivotal role as a catalyst, actively working to de-escalate tensions and encourage the disputing parties toward a less adversarial outcome.

The second factor lies in the differing nature of intra- and extra-community conflicts. While disputes with Old Christians almost invariably constituted public matters, conflicts within the converso community, shaped by its distinctly endogamous social dynamics, were situated between public domains and the more private realms of familial

⁴⁸ On the legality of private arbitration in the kingdom of Valencia, see: Royo, «El arbitraje», 144-7.

⁴⁹ Granovetter, «The Strength of Weak Ties». It is very likely that this phenomenon can be observed not only among socio-religious groups but also in virtually any relatively small community—for example, a village or small town— where the limited population and the consequent daily coexistence of all members contribute both to the development of frictions and to the intervention of third parties

and neighborhood disagreements. The inherently «personal» character of internal disputes likely incentivized private resolution, given their potential repercussions for the community as a whole. In a group that likely did not exceed three thousand individuals at any point during the fifteenth century, every significant friction risked becoming a source of disruption to communal cohesion, thereby prompting collective efforts to address and resolve such tensions.

Why did New and Old Christians turn to private arbitration in such cases? The driving force behind the recurrence of this system was, without a doubt, its existence and social prevalence. Its use was so widespread that it not only represented a viable option but also a perfectly normal avenue. As we emphasize elsewhere⁵⁰, the history of interfaith relations — communities large or small, within local or regional frameworks— has predominantly focused on their differences. Their similarities, though, also deserve consideration. Old Christians and conversos, alongside Jews and Muslims, constituted a society that could not have sustained itself for centuries without the existence of shared social values. The ability to effectively manage conflict was, with very notable and socially transformative exceptions, a value common to religious communities within the Crown of Aragon. When it came to resolving issues like those examined in civil lawsuits, which could be critical from a financial standpoint but had a non-violent origin, resorting to third-party mediation was likely practical, affordable, and swift.

Beyond its practical advantages and social «normality», arbitration revealed another important aspect. Even in conflicts managed within community boundaries, there was no complete isolation between groups. In fact, many conversos turned to Old Christian arbitrators to resolve their intra-community clashes. One could even argue that resorting to arbitrators unaffiliated with the community might have been regarded as an advantage or a merit: conflict within Jewish communities before 1391 had been extraordinarily intense, and turning to Old Christians as adjudicators could help avert potential biases⁵¹. Notaries and jurists, valued for their legal expertise, were the most sought-after profiles, though other specialized figures also played a role. A paradigmatic case is that of Daniel Cornet, one of the city's leading merchants of the first half of the fifteenth century. In February 1443, he acted as the sole adjudicator in a dispute between Bonanat de Bellpuig and Bonanat Ferrer, two prominent converso businessmen, who contended over the accounts of a joint company for the sale of cloth⁵². The following year, he intervened in a disagreement between two other conversos, Joan Salvador and Joan Castellar, over a maritime insurance claim⁵³.

⁵⁰ López Juan, «Three Religious Communities», 44-5.

⁵¹ For the case of Valencia, the aforementioned work by Mark Meyerson constitutes an essential bibliographic reference. This author also conducted an in-depth analysis of conflict within the functioning of the Jewish *aljama* of Morvedre, from its founding to the expulsion of the Jews from the Crown of Aragon. See, respectively: Meyerson, «Accusation and Innuendo»; Meyerson, *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom*; Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance*. For the case of Castile, one of the most well-supported works in theoretical terms is that of Javier Castaño, who addressed the issue of factionalism in: Castaño, «Subordinación y parcialidades».

⁵² ACCV, Joan Peres, 22118, 24-II-1443.

⁵³ ACCV, 22120, 12-VIII-1444.

Needless to say, selection of these arbitrators was not only determined by their socio-religious affiliation, but also by their technical prowess and their social prestige; something as intangible and difficult to quantify as the gravitas of the arbitrator must have played a fundamental role in ensuring compliance with the agreement. Over time, Old Christians also began to turn to their new co-religionists to intervene in their disputes, for the very same reasons: for instance, Lluís and Daniel Vives, well-to-do converso merchants and brokers, both were chosen as third-party facilitators by Old Christian fellows⁵⁴.

Among the mediation agreements between New and Old Christians, only 12 out of 56 (approximately 21,43 %) involved a converso as one of the arbitrators. This means that nearly 80 % of the members of this community agreed to private settlement without having a fellow converso among the adjudicators. As in previous cases, asymmetries of power—in these particular instances, the possibility of Old Christians refusing to respect the mediation of individuals of Jewish origin—and the initial lack of converso professionals within the typical mediator profiles could be cited as contributing factors. Nevertheless, this does not undermine the community's willingness to engage in parajudicial agreements where decision-making power rested with an Old Christian. This dynamic, incidentally, also characterized royal courts of justice—albeit without affording plaintiffs or defendants any agency in selecting their judge.

The proliferation of mixed arbitrations can be seen as a testament to the advancing social integration of conversos. Although paradoxically rooted in the ferocious violence that triggered the mass baptisms of Jews, this process flourished throughout the fifteenth century as weak ties began to form between Old and New Christians. Connections between communities were nurtured, at the same time, by various processes: the evangelization efforts that deepened their Christian identity, their gradual entry into institutions that anchored civil society—such as the City Council, trade guilds, devotional associations, and parishes—their steady acculturation, and their active, equitable participation in economic ventures alongside Old Christians. The peaceful management of conflict, therefore, was both an integrative tool and a reflection of a broader systemic transformation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In early 1402, a group of converso resellers petitioned the civil court to ensure that the ordinances governing the sale of clothing, which applied to their Old Christian colleagues organized under the protection of the guild of secondhand cloth dealers, would not be applied to them. For these men, «recently arrived from the perfidious Jewish faith to the Christian faith», this was a matter of justice. Their new co-religionists were expelling them from the street of the Pelleria (literally, «the second-hand dealing street») on

⁵⁴ Lluís' intervention between Joan Eiximènez and Edoardo Italia, an Italian merchant, can be found in: ACCV, Jaume Venrell, 14406, 21-VI-1430. Daniel's, who acted on behalf of Antoni Maians and Gabriel Palau, in: ACCV, Pere Castellar, 25969, 11-X-1445.

certain days of the week, had only admitted one of them into their ranks, an individual likely baptized voluntarily before 1391, and they were also leveraging the *mostassaf*, the municipal official responsible for market regulation. Their goal was, needless to say, to deprive conversos from the trade's associated benefits.

Their complaint was twofold: on the one hand, they sought to benefit from not belonging to the guild to avoid restrictions detrimental to their business; on the other, they highlighted their exclusion from the profession, which was undoubtedly rooted in their former Jewish status; a protest, in short. As is regrettably often the case, the lawsuit's resolution remains unclear, but it is known that they soon gained access to the guild. Nadal Saranyana, a converso, would go on to represent second-hand dealers in 1413, 1416 and 1419⁵⁵. A New Christian would also go on to hold the position of *mostassaf* in 1443, forty-one years after the lawsuit—the very official to whom the Old Christian secondhand dealers had turned to block competition from conversos on their street⁵⁶—.

Did this lawsuit—and others that may have gone unnoticed, along with pressures, petitions, and negotiations that have vanished from the historical record—mark a turning point in the matter? In addition to resolving disputes between individuals, it seems that the royal justice system also facilitated through litigation the incorporation of conversos into areas, institutions, and sectors that had been off-limits to them as Jews. This final case represents an extreme example of how justice, and specifically the peaceful handling of disagreements, paved the way for the integration of conversos into late medieval Valencia. In this instance, they had to assert their new legal status, push for change, and wait for it to consolidate.

Conflict management, a highly specific domain within a broader process, presents an interesting paradox. On one hand, Jews had been turning to royal courts to resolve their disagreements with Christians and Muslims for two centuries. By the Late Middle Ages, the populace—regardless of religious affiliation—was juridically acculturated and accustomed to using judicial mechanisms. However, the violence of 1391 had fundamentally altered this dynamic in Valencia and other cities with large converso populations. The mass conversions shattered existing patterns of coexistence—as limited as these were within a context of systemic discrimination—. In this new framework, conflict management had to be rebuilt: it emerged as a regulated mechanism mediated by third parties, whether justice officials or chosen arbitrators, in response to an extraordinary event whose impact on the socio-religious landscape extended well beyond Valencia.

The historiographical focus on instances of violence, systemic discrimination, and the progressive deterioration of interfaith relationships is, to some extent, understandable. It reflects the undeniable reality that the history of religious minorities on the Iberian Peninsula is, for the most part, a history marked by tragedy. However, focusing on violence and inter-faith strife risks overshadowing other important, but much silent dynamics. The analysis of non-violent conflict management should not be seen as an idealized portrayal of these relationships. Rather, it reveals how communities and

⁵⁵ Narbona y Bernabeu, *Prohoms i cavallers*, 925.

⁵⁶ Álvaro Pérez de Conca, who appears in his wife's last will, dated in July 1443. ACCV, Tomàs Argent, 25478, 1-VII-1443.

the premodern state negotiated coexistence despite structural inequalities and inevitable frictions. Failing to recognize how interfaith communities achieved relative stability for relatively long periods of time creates a dangerous blind spot in our understanding of these historical interactions.

Among the socio-religious communities of the Iberian Peninsula, conversos were unique in achieving what might be termed «successful» integration —though this «success» is best understood not as a positive outcome, but as their eventual dissolution within Christian society, driven by the relentless threat posed by the Inquisition—. This integration followed a trajectory of systemic coercion: it began with violent baptisms, continued with the partial perpetuation of the discrimination they had endured as Jews, and culminated in the establishment of a state institution explicitly dedicated to eradicating Jewish beliefs and practices —whether these were preserved fully, residually, or in syncretic forms with Christianity—. Significantly, this persecution was carried out primarily through judicial mechanisms, embedding systemic control into the very fabric of law and governance.

By the establishment of the Holy Office in the 1480s, the inclusion of conversos into the broader Christian community —at least in Valencia— had advanced considerably. This process was facilitated by their gradual acceptance within the institutions and networks that formed the backbone of civil society, as well as by a shared willingness among Old Christians and New Christians to coexist peacefully and engage across social, economic, and institutional spheres. A crucial element in the development of social cohesion between previously antagonistic communities was the existence of procedures —either through royal courts or private arbitration— that allowed for the resolution of disputes. These procedures addressed not only conflicts arising from everyday interactions but also those stemming from the challenges of the long process of assimilation. These mechanisms, if studied further in other contexts, could deepen our understanding of how coexistence was rebuilt through extraordinarily complex, but often overlooked social dynamics.

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