

The Crypto Jews of the American Southwest 2012-04-27

"Things are not the way they seem"

□ In a recent interview, Dolores Sloan, author of "The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal: Survival of an Imperiled Culture in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", relates how Hispanics in Northern Mexico would come up to her and share confidences about the secret Jewish past of their community or family.

She became so fascinated with the subject that she proceeded to write a book that traces the history of the Sephardic Jews from their golden age to their post-Columbian diaspora. Her work highlights achievements in science, medicine, philosophy, arts, and the economy in both the land they left behind and in the lands they later settled.

Several significant Sephardic Jews are profiled in detail, and later chapters explore the increasing restrictions on Jews prior to expulsion, the divergent fates of two diaspora communities (in Brazil and the Ottoman Empire), and the enduring legacy of Sephardic history.

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