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The Account Books of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily (1500–1550) as a Source for the Study of Material Culture in a Mediterranean Country

NADIA ZELDES

This article attempts to use the account books of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily as a source for the study of material culture in a Mediterranean country at the beginning of the Modern Period. Situated on a crossroads between the world of Islam and Christian Europe, Sicily was a unique place of encounter. The articles found in Sicilian homes of the urban middle class carry the hallmark of this cross-cultural influence. The inquisitorial records, and especially the detailed inventories listing the property of the accused, most of them Jewish converts to Christianity, offer an unusual insight into everyday life at the time.

Although the Spanish Inquisition was introduced into Sicily as early as 1487, it succeeded in establishing a local branch on the island only by the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹ It was on 9 November 1500 that it published its first edict of faith for the Kingdom of Sicily.² In the years that followed, the organization grew, and its officials established a bureaucratic tradition which meticulously recorded its revenues and expenses in a series of detailed account books, including inventories of the property of the accused.³ Since the other records of the Inquisition in Sicily were burnt in 1783 when the institution was abolished,⁴ these account books are almost the only remaining source on inquisitorial practice and procedures in the island. At the same time, they offer unique insight into everyday life in Sicily at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The importance of the inquisitorial records for increasing our knowledge of social history was noted in 1956 by Pierre Chaunu,⁵ and several other studies based on this material have been published since. Among the better known are the works of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie on Montaillou and Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms.*⁶ These studies, as well as others, were based on records of inquisitorial trials and focused on the world

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² Ibid., p.161.
view of the accused, their customs and beliefs. A different kind of source material is the inventories made by the Spanish Inquisition. Some of them were published by historians studying the problem of the Marranos of Spain and accordingly concentrated on books and artifacts demonstrating the Judaizing tendencies of the owners of these inventories or at most tried to use them in order to investigate family relationships. The account books of the Spanish Inquisition of Sicily offer a wealth of statistical data concerning those accused, more than 2,000 individuals, according to the calculations of Francesco Renda. In his studies Renda provides important statistics as to the numbers of the accused, their socio-economic characteristics, family composition, types of sentences, and so on. These studies, however, with one exception do not concern themselves with specific inventories or analyze their content. But the inventories also offer a sort of travel through which we can catch a glimpse of everyday life in early modern Europe and especially in the Mediterranean countries. Sicily, being situated on a crossroads between the two great Mediterranean cultures — Islam and Christian Europe — was a unique place of encounter. The articles found in the Sicilian inventories carry the hallmark of this cross-cultural influence.

There are more than 20 surviving account books of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily written between 1500 and 1550. Most of these were written in the Sicilian dialect of the later Middle Ages, which is a mixture of late Latin and Italian with some Spanish influence as well as typical Sicilian words and terms. Two of the books were written in Spanish. The inventories recorded in the account books were made in cities all over Sicily, and therefore they represent a fairly comprehensive picture of material culture in the Kingdom of Sicily in the first half of the sixteenth century. They were made by the Inquisition's officials, who listed all the property owned by the accused, most of them Jewish conversos belonging mainly to the urban middle class. Although these lists bring out the details of the everyday life of former Jews, there is no reason to suppose that they differ in any way from those of the Old Christians (cristiani naturali). Moreover, since there are several inventories of Old Christians in the account books as well, it can be ascertained that there are no significant differences between them and those of conversos.

The inventories were made up as part of the inquisitorial procedure, which had several steps, starting with the sequestration of the property of the accused. Sequestration meant that the property was listed and recorded, and then placed in the care of a trustworthy person (fidejussore) until the conclusion of the trial. It was not confiscated unless the accused was found guilty and punished; if he was acquitted, it was returned to him after the deduction of the costs of keeping him in prison. Contrary to common belief, there were cases in which the property was indeed returned. When the inventories represent only the lists that were made before the trial, the items appear without their prices. If the accused was found guilty or if he escaped before the trial, the property was confiscated by the Holy Office and sold in a public auction. The auction lists then provide information as to the value and prices of various items, including real estate, domestic animals, and even slaves.

The inquisitorial records list hundreds of items, not all of them readily identifiable. Many of the articles and furnishings mentioned in these records are described in the 'La Casa del "Borgese"' (The Bourgeois Home), by Geneviève and Henri Bresc, which gives detailed information on the material culture of early modern Sicily based on a different sort of inventory found in the Sicilian archives (dowry lists, wills, bills of sale and so on). Others can be identified with the help of dictionaries, but some remain obscure.

BUILDINGS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

All of the buildings mentioned in the inquisitorial records are urban dwellings situated in various quarters of the city. Usually the description of a building includes details such as its immediate neighbours and its exact location in relation to the public way (via publica), the public square (plata publica) or some other special landmarks. Some houses were located in the former Jewish quarter of the city, the Giudeca, but many were not. This does not necessarily mean that conversos changed their addresses after their conversion, since many Sicilian Jews lived outside the Jewish quarter; there was no such thing as a ghetto in Sicily. The fact that the dwellings listed in the inquisitorial records were situated in different quarters of the city, poor as well as affluent, suggests that they can be considered a fairly representative sample of the housing of the urban middle class.

The most complete inventories start with a description of the house of the accused and its surroundings as well as other kinds of real estate belonging to him, such as shops, stores, vineyards, farms and fields. The house could be one of several types that were in use at that time in Sicily. The simplest dwellings were the casa terrana, a one story house of one room, and its smaller version, described as casetta or casalinu, which was little more than a hut. Larger and more expensive was the casa solerata, a house with an upper floor under the roof or solaio. Some buildings were composed of several parts and were described accordingly as tenimenti di casi or palazzi with apartments for rent, such as the following: una palazzotta existente in la dicta terra [Salem] in la quarteri di Santa Maria incantu la via publica di tri parti subeacto (an apartment building existing...
The inquisitorial records also list other kinds of real estate. In addition to a house and its adjacent courtyard and other property, many of the accused had vineyards. Their prices ranged from 1–2 ounces to 200 ounces. This is consistent with what we know about the involvement of Sicilian Jews in the wine trade in the later Middle Ages. Less frequent in the lists are mentions of fields and plots, which were common especially in the area of Trapani and Sciacca. A few of the conversos, such as the rich banker Geronimo Gallini of Sciacca, had farms (massaria), as well. Still, in spite of the relatively widespread ownership of farms and domestic animals, it seems that the converso population lived mainly in the cities and towns, since there are no descriptions of dwellings in which people lived in proximity to their livestock, such as could still be found in rural Italy and France even in the twentieth century.

THE INTERIORS

After a general description of the house and its location there usually follows a detailed account of the contents of each room. The main room or entrance usually had several benches and seats, a table or tables, various chests, and sometimes weapons and pictures hanging on the wall. The most useful item listed in all the inventories was the tripod (trispi, trispedis), a three-legged stand usually made of wood. Almost every piece of furniture was propped on this sort of stand, whether it was a table, a board, a nightstand or a basin. The tripods were sometimes listed separately from the tabletops. In the main room (camara principale) there was usually a dining table propped on a tripod (tavula di manjari cum sov trispidi), several benches and seats (banca, bancaleto, sega), and various carpets and mattresses (mattara). Against the walls usually stood wooden chests, such as the (casa de nuchi) which held linens and other cloths. Caza is the Sicilian word for ‘chest’ or ‘case’, and casa de nuchi may mean either a dowry or wedding chest (cassia di noce), or a chest made of nut wood. Sometimes the chest functioned as a bench as well (unu bancu incaxatu was a boxed bench, a chest that served as a seat). Another sort of container was the coffa, a box or basket. What strikes one is that the furnishings consist mainly of textiles: carpets, cushions and pillows, wall hangings (gassira di muro), mattresses, and the like. This fits well with the description of the ‘bourgeois home’, although the material on which that study is based dates from a later period (the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries).

When recording the contents of a large house consisting of more than one room, a description of the bedroom usually follows. First and foremost was the bed with all its furnishings, which almost always included two side tables propped on tripods. The bed itself was a complicated structure
composed of a mattress (matarazo) and a stuffed linen bag described as un sacco plino di paglia (a bag stuffed with straw). This bag could also be stuffed with wool. The bed had a coverlet, sometimes made of expensive cloth and decorated. The following description is an example: una lictera consistenti in tri tavuli et due trispidi, un sacco plino di paglia, unu matarazu usau cum la facili plina di lana, dui cuxini lunu russu latrhu blanc plini di lana, unu paru di linzola grossuti usati, una cultrera minata lavurata a scarche (one bed consisting of three boards and two tripods, a sack stuffed with straw, a used mattress with wool-stuffed cover, two wool stuffed cushions, one red and the other white, a used pair of coarse sheets, a decorated blanket, sewed in stripes). In addition to the above, in many inventories the bed's furnishings included a variety of cushions. The biggest and most important of these were the travisierium, a stuffed headboard, or a long cushion which lay across the bed. This item usually appears with the added description purpurigno, made of coloured silk. Also on the bed or on part of it was the sponsera (its purpose is unclear), which was frequently embroidered and decorated like the one described as raccamiatuda di sita nigra embroidered in black silk. Another frequently mentioned item is the avantilecto, a wool carpet spread on the floor beside the bed. The bedrooms of the well-to-do sometimes had additional luxury items such as copper flasks for rose water or a gilded mirror. The poor had simpler arrangements, as can be attested by the inventory of Angelo di Andria of Naro, who did not have a bed at all: one sack filled with straw, two pairs of used sheets, an old patched coverlet (una chilona vecha arripaleata) sold for 4 tari and another set of straw sacks with an old pair of sheets which the Inquisition's officials left for the family to sleep on.

Except for the chests, there were few heavy items, and most furnishings could be easily moved around. This type of home reminds one of the way of life prevalent in the Muslim world, as it is depicted in earlier centuries in the Cairo Geniza. The fact that Sicily was under Muslim rule for almost 300 years makes this comparison relevant, but where, as in the Mediterranean region, wood is scarce and the climate is mild or hot, it is more convenient to use easily moveable furniture.

The inventories give a detailed description of all the rooms in the house, including the kitchen (cuchina). Whereas the modern reader may take the existence of a separate kitchen for granted, it was not necessarily so in earlier times. In France up to the modern period different rooms of the house were not reserved exclusively for specific purposes, and even in middle class homes the cooking was done in the main room of the house, on the hearth. The mention of a separate room intended for cooking shows a degree of sophistication in the lifestyle of Sicilian urban society, in accordance with the norms prevalent in other cities of Renaissance Italy.

In poorer homes the equipment of the kitchen was very rudimentary, but the homes of the better-off had a variety of cooking vessels and utensils: a pan (padella), a cauldron (caldaio), an iron griddle (gradiglia di ferro), a sieve for sifting flour (citra di cerniri farina), a kettle (concilina), a pot (piglata or pignata), a basin (bachelo), a mortar, usually made of marble, and two items that invariably go together: una maylla and una sbriga, the necessary utensils for mixing dough and kneading it. In some of the richer homes the kitchen's ‘equipment’ included a slave who was employed as a cook.

SHOPS AND CRAFTS

Shops, smithies, and other workshops were usually part of the house or attached to it. Only a few had a shop or shops in a separate section of the town, for example, Pietro de Bononia of Palermo owned three blacksmith's shops in the Cassaro, the old citadel in the inner city. The inventory of a smith's shop contained the tools necessary for the exercise of his trade: a pair of bellows for the forge (unu para di mantichi di forgia), an anvil (incuyna or incudina), pincers (tinagli), a table and tripods, scissors, a mortar, hammers of various sizes, and so on. These tools fetched 7 ounces, 10 tari and 15 grana when sold at auction. A shoemaker's shop in Salemi held several pieces of leather, three different knives, 18 pairs of furmi (forms), probably wooden models, and a cutting table. The shop of the Palermitan merchant Manfredo La Muta is a good example of the stock of a cloth merchant. Other inventories list spindles and distaffs for spinning, spoons of thread, combs for carding wool and flax, and looms. This evidence points to the manufacture of homespun cloth of different types.

The inventories sometimes reveal the existence and extent of special crafts such as the delicate work on coral typical of Trapani. The harvesting of coral was for local use as well as for export, an old Sicilian commercial activity. Coral figures mainly as the preferred material for rosary beads, which appear in most inventories. The prevalence of these articles means that there was a significant coral industry in Sicily in this period, as can also be deduced from the large stock of coral paternosters (rosaries) owned by the merchant Francesco di Yona of Trapani. This stock covers several pages in the registers. In fact, coral craftsmanship had been a Jewish profession for a long time and had remained so after their conversion. Indeed, the pronounced presence of coral articles in the inquisitorial registries indicates that this industry continued to play a role in the Sicilian economy even after the expulsion because it survived in the hands of the conversos. A different type of artisan skill is represented in a Palermitan inventory which lists 29 pairs of spectacles (occhiiali).
Although inventories are rich in information concerning the possessions of the people investigated by the Holy Office, they do not always reveal their professions. These can sometimes be inferred, but in most cases one can only conclude that this or that person owned a shop (putiga or potica), practised some craft, or had no identifiable occupation. Still, it should be kept in mind that the differentiation of trades and professions was not as clear as it is nowadays. Thus a banker such as Geronimo Galioni of Sciacca also owned cattle and fields, a physician such as Gabriel Zavateri of Bibona owned a farm, and another physician, Ferrante Moncata of Paterno, was also a tax farmer (gabelotto).\(^7\)

**LIGHTING IMPLEMENTS**

Scholars of medieval culture have remarked on the darkness of the nights during the Middle Ages. Braudel maintained that the general use of candles came late, about 1527, and that ‘they paid dearly for this victory over the night’\(^8\). But according to the inquisitorial inventories composed at the beginning of the sixteenth century almost every family had candlesticks made of iron or bronze. One of the most interesting pieces of information is the detailed description of a candle-making industry in one inventory from Messina. The family of Angelo de Cusenza used part of its house for the manufacture of tallow (siu) for candles. For this they kept 34 barrels of animal fat (usually bovine) and large cauldrons for melting, molds and wicks for the candles, etc. The quantities are astounding: 19 qintars (1,500 kilograms) and 73 rotoli (58 kilograms), more than a ton of tallow. The whole amount was sold to the city of Messina for 1 ounce 10 grana a qintar. There is no doubt that this converso family manufactured candles on a large scale.

**TEXTILES**

The prevalence of textiles in the inquisitorial lists allows one to analyze the provenance of the cloths, their types, and even the colours that were most popular at the time. In addition to carpets, cushions and linens, the account books describe in detail various items of clothing. Many textiles were imports, such as Perpignan cloth, Cambray cloth (a fine cloth suitable for shirts and underwear), tele de Landa (= Olanda), cloths from Holland, panni de Londra (English cloths) and one painted wall hanging from Flanders.\(^9\) This proves that at the beginning of the sixteenth century even middle-class residents of Sicilian towns could afford to buy imports and expensive textiles.\(^9\) The cloths were woollens, cottons, or linen, but not infrequently the lists also include silk (siti, seta) and velvet (viluti).\(^6\) Clothing for men and women is composed of the usual items suitable to the fashion of the period. The item most in use was the shirt (camisa, camicha), which had different designs for men and for women. The poor or old people wore used ones, while the rich had them decorated with silk. Men and women wore the doublet, in all likelihood the same as the ‘doublet’, a kind of short coat; the original word derives from ‘double’, the cloth being made from a mixture of cotton and linen. Men and women wore shirts with attached sleeves,\(^6\) as can be gathered from their separate mention: una paru di manichi di donna di panno nigriguardini cum carmixino (one pair of woman’s sleeves made of black cloth garnished with carmine).\(^6\) Women wore gonne (skirts) made of various materials and sometimes decorated; men wore canzoni (trousers). Headgear was indispensable. Men wore birrecti, whose shape can be seen in paintings of the period. Gasparo Russo, a converso from Messina, made his living manufacturing berets. In his shop there were several kinds: three dozen red berets of Mantua with two folds, fifteen dozen black berets of Neapolitan style decorated with red and shaped with two folds, two dozen grey berets, and so on.\(^6\) The women wore a variety of veils made of thin cotton or silk. The fashion of the day is also represented in the inventories by pleated collars for men and for women. In one case the collar was quite lavish: una concerto di donna di cuchiuni usato di tili cum uno friozo di oro (a pleated [collar] for women made of woven cotton, used, with a gold fringe).\(^6\) A good example of the wardrobe of a well-to-do woman is the inventory of Caterina Samma, a converso woman from Trapani. She had managed to hide her best clothes and pieces of jewellery, but they were revealed to the Inquisition’s officials by a neighbour. The list includes a long doublet with inlaid silk ribbons (cum li listi di serichi lavorati), which was sold for 9 tari, and two sleeves made of silk described as sita cammixina, which could either be mixed silk or carmine (red) silk, sold for 8 tari 3 grana. A beautiful item in this list is una fasa di villato circundato di oro filato cum li curduni di sita et oro filato infrachato di tila chilestra (a long cloth or cover made of velvet edged with gold thread with a silk cord and gold thread mounted with sky-blue woven cloth). She also owned a belt with a silver buckle and five silver buttons on blue silk.\(^9\) Another frequently mentioned garment was the cutetto (dress). In an inventory from Naro this garment appears to be quite elaborate: una cutetto di purpurigna incanelato cum li manichi et bustu guarnuto di sita nigra (a dress made of ribbed coloured silk with the sleeves and the bust trimmed with black silk); it was sold for 1 ounce 13 tari, a very large sum for a dress. A similar garment was also in the possession of Flori de Vignuzo, a woman from Polizzi, who had a used one made of red English cloth (di Londres) with narrow sleeves and black velvet trimming. Flori de Vignuzo also had several veils (one made of silk and another of light cotton), a hood
trimmed with black silk, another hood (cagula) made of green
silk in antique style, and a tocca morisca (a Moorish headgear) of red silk
and other colours. A man had among other things a red gippuni, a sort of
cloth. Sometimes the lists mention also children’s clothes, such as a girl’s
sleeveless coat (dubietto di pichirilla senza manichi) and a child’s silk-
embroidered hood (una cappuletta di pichotto lavurata intira di sita) –
both in the inventory of Francisco de Gigli of Polizzi.  

In addition to ‘professionally’ manufactured textiles, whether imported
or produced locally, many homes possessed a hand loom on which the
woman of the house wove cloth. Looms appear in several inventories, such
as that of a poor woman, Rosa La Vestina of Polizzi. Bartholo Ferruni, a
blacksmith of the same town, had a loom with partially woven cloth. A poor
widow, Antonia Romano of Mazzara, also had one. Still, looms and home-
woven cloth seem to be found usually in poor people’s homes, while the
well-to-do could afford better types of cloth.

The favourite colours were black (especially black silk), green, blue
(chilastri), red, and a sort of pink called leonato, ‘lion-coloured’. Many
garments had fringes (frinci) of contrasting colours (and sometimes even of
gold thread). The choice of colours is of course a question of fashion and
personal taste, but sometimes it can indicate cultural trends. Bresc, in
his monumental book focusing on economy and society in Sicily, tried to
distinguish patterns of preferred colours in different periods. Thus he found
that the preferred colours of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, blues
and reds, gave way by the end of the fifteenth century to dark ones, with
black becoming the colour of choice. Bresc attributes this to increasing
Aragonese and Catalan influence on the island. While it is true that black
silk was used for decoration and there are indeed many black pieces of
clothing, other colours are not absent from the inventories. The furnishings
were even more colourful than the clothes, and there were many striped
carpets with alternating yellow and blue stripes, reds and whites, or simple
whites, yellows and blues. Among the textiles intended for household use
we find a variety of tablecloths, napkins and towels, invariably called
tuvaglia. Tablecloths are tuvagli di tavula, face towels tuvaglia di faci,
hand towels tuvaglia di mani, and so on. They were occasionally trimmed
with silk: una tuvaglia intagliata ali capi com frinci di sita azoli (a cloth
trimmed at both ends with blue silk fringes). These were kept in the cata
(chest) in the bedroom or in the main room. A middle-class home also had
a variety of carpets, usually coloured or striped. In well-to-do homes there
were wall hangings (gassira) as well. These were decorate with painted or
woven figures. In addition to these there was a profusion of mattresses,
pillows and cushions filled with wool, cotton or straw. This arrangement
complements the lack of solid and heavy furniture.

JEWELLERY

Only a few inventories have lists of jewellery. This is not because the
conversos of Sicily did not possess such items but because they were the
first to be hidden from the greedy hands of the Inquisition’s officials.
Moreover, it is likely that in many cases the officials themselves chose to
steal jewellery instead of listing it. Still, the few remaining items give us
some idea of the usual items possessed by the middle class. There are many
rings of gold as well as silver, some with semiprecious stones and others
with decorations. Some gold rings functioned as seals bearing the name of
the owner. But the most common pieces of jewellery were the rosary beads
or paternostri. They were usually made of coral, jet, silver, or (rarely)
amber. A full list of jewellery is displayed in the inventory of Antonella de
Sansono of Trapani, which had been hidden with another person and was
discovered by the Inquisition’s officials. Antonella, a widow, had four
silver spoons, three silver belts, a pair of paternoster made of coral beads
alternating with silver pieces, a silver brooch, a silver thimble, several silver
bells, a crystal vase decorated with silver and a choker (xamaca) of four
rows of pearls. She also had another choker made of pearls and joyoto (jet)
beads and various pieces of coral, pearl and silver. What is striking is that
even in this impressive collection there are no gold items. Whenever jewels
are mentioned, they are mostly made of silver, and only rings were
sometimes made of gold. Nowhere are there precious stones. The most
likely reason for this omission is the fact that even the richer conversos in
fact belonged to the middle class; gold and precious stones were probably a
privilege of the nobility.

FOOD

The inventories almost invariably mention the essential food staples of
Sicily: wine, oil and grain. The wine was stored in vuetti, barrili,_visible
barrels of different capacities (it is not clear how much each of them held).
Almost everyone had a barrel of wine, even the poor. Viticulture was well
developed, and the picture emerging from the inquisitorial account books
reflects this. Many of the inventories include vineyards. The widespread
ownership of vineyards as well as the prevalence of wine barrels in the
inventories reflect a culture in which wine played a major role in the diet of
the population, as has been already attested by other studies.

Olive groves appear in many inventories together with vineyards.
Francisco Moncata of Caltanissetta had an olive grove which fetched 2
ounces 4 tari when it was sold at auction. A woman from Castrogiovanni
claimed an olive grove as part of her dowry. One inventory from
Caltagirone lists an olive press (trappeto, in this case for pressing olives, rather than sugarcane).\textsuperscript{11} Paris Damiano, a rich merchant from Sciacca, was owed 86 ounces for a transaction involving oil, which means that the quantity must have been large.\textsuperscript{82} It goes without saying that the oil in question was the most expensive kind, olive oil. Other sorts of fat, usually of bovine origin, were used for frying and for lighting and were far cheaper.\textsuperscript{83}

The most important staple was grain – wheat and other cereals. Some of the well-to-do had their own grain stores underground in a fossa or pit. Bresc mentions the fossa for grain storage in the ports prior to exportation,\textsuperscript{84} but from the inquisitorial account books it appears that grain was stored in this way also by private persons.\textsuperscript{85} Some hoarded great quantities; Francisco La Padula of Salemi, for example, kept 20 salmas of grain in his fossa.\textsuperscript{86}

Still, this is not much compared with the dealings of the richest conversos of Sicily: Antonio Balbo paid part of his debts with 500 salmas of wheat, whereas Antonio Gatto was owed 50 ounces for 100 salmas of wheat that he had sold to the city of Chimina.\textsuperscript{87} There is no need to expound on the importance of grain to the Sicilian economy, as the island had been a great exporter of wheat from ancient times to the beginning of the modern period.\textsuperscript{88} The fact that grain appears in many of the inventories, especially those of rich people, proves its importance and its value, even as a means of exchange. But its importance lies mostly in the fact that cereals, and especially grain, were the main food staple. The Sicilians ate a lot of bread, and a poor harvest threatened immediate famine. Grain – or, to be exact, flour – was not used solely for bread making. The Later Middle Ages witness a slow change in eating habits: a gradual transition from plain bread to cooked dishes made of grain such as pasta and couscous.\textsuperscript{89} Evidence from the account books supports this. In one inventory there is a special spoon for macaroni and in another a cloth for pasta (una tavaglia di pasta).\textsuperscript{90} In another inventory appears a basket, coffa, containing three mondelli (approximately 4 kilograms) of semolina sold for 7 grana.\textsuperscript{91} One wonders if it was indeed intended for making couscous, which by this time together with pasta was considered to be a dish for festive occasions and cost about triple the price of regular bread.\textsuperscript{92}

Cheese also figures as a staple. Sicily was famous for the cheese it produced and exported. Cheese was a major component of the diet of the common people and played an important role during Lent.\textsuperscript{93} The inquisitorial books mention several conversos who were involved in the production and sale of cheese, among them Andrea Cuxino of Trapani, whose profession is described as empor caseorum (buyer of cheese).\textsuperscript{94} Giovanni Actuni of Marsala was probably manufacturing cheese, since in his inventory there were several moulds and other implements for cheese-making. Another converso had in his possession 40 pieces of cheese for sale.\textsuperscript{95} Still, this is nothing compared with the impressive quantity of 11 qintars of cheese sold by Francisco Casacho of Mineo (who was a sheep owner).\textsuperscript{96} This is not surprising, as it is well known that Sicilian Jews were making cheese and exporting it long before the expulsion; in the Cairo Geniza there is even mention of exports of kosher Sicilian cheese to Egypt.\textsuperscript{97} The conversos probably continued to practise the same trade they had learned before as Jews. The pieces of cheese mentioned in the inventories were likely to be a type of hard salted cheese such as the famous cacioricotta or pecorino;\textsuperscript{98} since they are sometimes described as frachiti (broken), they were in all likelihood fashioned in large solid wheels. In any case, it seems that this type of cheese was suitable for lengthy storage and would keep without refrigeration.

Strangely, the inventories are completely silent about a major food industry of the island: sugar. Many Jews worked in the sugar plantations and the cane-processing plants,\textsuperscript{99} and many continued to do this work after their conversion.\textsuperscript{100} Why is this not mentioned in the Inquisition’s registers? Only one converso, Angelo de Amato of Ragusa, is designated as the owner of a sugar press.\textsuperscript{101} Even more intriguing is the omission of sugar itself from these lists. A possible explanation lies in the decline of the sugar industry of Sicily at the beginning of the sixteenth century. According to Trasselli, this decline was due to a deterioration of the water supply in the sugar-producing region around Palermo. Trasselli also quotes a physician from the middle of the sixteenth century complaining about the scarcity of sugar.\textsuperscript{102} Epstein, however, maintains that there was a continued production of Sicilian sugar until the seventeenth century, mainly in the eastern parts of the island.\textsuperscript{103} In any case, sugar may have been too expensive for daily consumption by the middle class, which could explain its omission.\textsuperscript{104} Unlike sugar, honey does appear in these sources. One inventory from Salemi includes 11 beehives, and one Stephano Raffaeli of Trapani had honey in such quantity that it was sold for 5 ounces 28 tari.\textsuperscript{105}

As no Mediterranean food list should end without spices, it is appropriate to mention a sack of pepper and unknown quantities of cinnamon, cloves and saffron listed in the inventory of Matteo Porco, a merchant from Messina.\textsuperscript{106}

**LIVESTOCK**

Although the inventories reflect an undoubtedly urban society, several of them include livestock. In the western part of Sicily – in Trapani, Salemi, Sciacca and Agrigento – several of the accused had large herds of cattle. Geronimo de Galioni of Sciacca, a banker, also owned at least 70 head of...
cattle, Niccolo Antonio de Tudisco of Mazara had 140 head of cattle, and Giovanni Hectar of Giuliana had 97 cows and 20 calves. A bill of sale from 1490 can give us an idea of the value of such numbers of cattle: the Jew Chaim de Yona of Trapani (who later converted and became Giovanni Battista Yona) bought 100 head of cattle for 35 ounces 14 tari. In other areas, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the island, there were several owners of large flocks of sheep and goats. It seems that many inhabitants of Mineo, in eastern Sicily, had flocks numbering hundreds of sheep: Raphaelo Buccherti of Mineo had 450, Francesco Casacho of the same town had 420 and Giovanni Casacho had 300, to name just a few. There were also owners of great flocks in Caltabellotta and Mazzerino. Many inventories list a donkey, one or two mules, a horse, a cow or two, and the like. These were kept in the courtyard or in an adjacent shed and served the needs of the family either as suppliers of milk or as pack or riding animals; they do not constitute a major part of their property. A few chickens kept in the courtyard appear in many lists and were in all likelihood kept in order to supply fresh eggs and meat. Perhaps it is not surprising that none of the inventories include pigs, although it would have been normal for Old Christians to have one.

Still, the inventories cannot supply us with a full picture of the diet of the time, because they obviously include only non-perishable items. Staples such as tunny fish do not figure in these records.

SLAVES

Sicily functioned as a major slave market in the Mediterranean throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Many Jews owned slaves, mainly for household work. This is attested by acts of sale dealing in black and white slaves. The Church as well as Roman law forbade Jews to own Christian slaves, yet allowed them to own pagans and infidels. These too were frequently subject to attempts at conversion and baptism, but it was still more convenient for Jews to buy slaves than to engage Christian servants. All this is to say that in many cases the slaves that appear in the inquisitorial records had probably belonged to their masters long before they were converted. The slaves are described in the inventories as black, white or Moorish. In one case a woman slave is designated as a Christian. They were employed as cooks or house servants and in no inventory are there more than two or three slaves. The picture emerging from the inquisitorial registers is one of private ownership of a few slaves, and there is no question of large numbers of slaves working on the sugar plantations or elsewhere.

CULTURAL TRAITS

Assessing aspects of cultural life on the basis of the inquisitorial records is not an easy task. While there is no doubt that the inventories faithfully represent the prevailing fashion and customs of the Sicilian middle class when they list furnishings, clothes or kitchen implements, there are other manifestations of material culture to be found in the inquisitorial registers which may differ from the norm of everyday life of the general population. The obvious items of this sort would be religious artifacts such as icons, rosaries, prayer books and secular books and the like. Since all the inventories belong to people accused of heretical tendencies, the prevalence of such items (or the lack of them) might reflect the customs of this particular social group, and because of this it would be incorrect to use the inventories as a source of information on the customs of the rest of the population. At the same time, the occurrence of certain liturgical books, icons and rosaries in many lists might prove that they were indispensable in any Sicilian house and even the Judaizing conversos had to have them in their homes in order to conform to the norms of Christian society.

Many inventories list icons, usually of the Virgin (described as una cona di nostra donna), hanging on a wall. A picture of the Virgin also figures in the only surviving protocol of an inquisitorial trial held in Sicily. In a trial of faith conducted in the city of Mazara in 1494, a converso woman was accused of throwing orange peels at the icon of the Virgin after her husband brought it home and hung it on the wall above the hearth. The woman claimed that she had thrown the peels into the hearth and not at the picture. The evidence presented at the trial shows that bringing the image of the Virgin into the house was considered a necessary act of devotion. For this reason it is no wonder that these icons figure in many of the inventories; omitting them was probably considered in itself proof of heresy. But what strikes one is the representation and appearance of these pictures. In more than one list the icon is described as una cona di nostra donna alla greca cum una avanti cona murisca (an icon of our lady in Greek style in a Moorish frame). The 'Greek style' here probably means a Byzantine representation, and what was then perceived as Moorish frame reflects more than anything the cultural syncretism of Sicily, drawing from its historical past. Some inventories have wall hangings decorated with figures of saints (gassira di muro affigurata di sancti). Others mention crosses. The common denominator of all these religious artifacts is that they are displayed on the wall, in plain view. One can only conclude that they were the kind of furnishings that were part of any Christian home. Still, in an inventory made of the belongings of a mixed couple – an Old Christian (cristiano di natura) and a converso woman – there are more devotional objects than in other
inventories. Pandolfo and Flori di Vignuzo had a small copper vessel for keeping holy water (aqua benedicta) not present in other inventories, a figure of the Virgin painted on a wall hanging, an icon of the Virgin in the Greek style, an old breviary, a missal, and another breviary described as di mano.198 This couple also possessed several rosaries made of coral and other materials. Rosaries appear in many inventories and are frequently listed with the jewellery, which may exclude them from being considered true religious artifacts and put them somewhere in between the devotional and the aesthetic.

The prayer books – breviers, missals and the like – reflect the pious behaviour expected of a good Christian. Many conversos had books of Christian liturgy. They were needed for prayer but they also functioned as aesthetic objects, since it was customary for them to be beautifully decorated and illuminated.199 Other books reflect the personal interests of their owners, professional or other. Francisco Patella di Sciaccia, a physician, had 37 books of medicine listed in his inventory;121 and Matteo Sansono of Palermo, a musician, owned 28 books of music and several pieces of books.122 Flori and Pandolfo di Vignuzo, mentioned above, had a copy of Terence’s Comedies. Matteo Sansono had, in addition to the music books, works by Ovid, Virgil, and Petrarch and an unnamed book in the Tuscan dialect. Not all the books mentioned in these inventories are easy to identify. What are we to make of the description uno libro in lo quali chi e li miracoli di nostra donna e distruezioni di hierosalem (a book in which are the Miracles of Our Lady and the Destruction of Jerusalem)?123 The owner was one Paulo de Santa Fide (an appropriate name for a converso), a tailor from Trapani. This description means in all probability that these were two different compilations bound together in one book. The first poses no particular problem: stories of miracles and especially of the Virgin were very popular in the Later Middle Ages.124 The second is more difficult to identify. It might be an Italian or Sicilian version of the well-known legend of the Holy Grail which appeared in French, Provencal and Spanish under the title La destruction de Jerusalem, dating from the fourteenth century onwards.125 But keeping in mind that the owner of this compilation was a converso, there is also a possibility that the ‘Destruction of Jerusalem’ was in fact the biblical Scroll of Lamentations. No less of a problem is posed by a book called La Serafino, found in the inventory of a basket maker or basket seller (corbisero). It may be either a book of sermons of the monk Cherubino of Spoleto, edited by Seraphinus Mantuanus, or a collection of poems and literary pieces by the poet Serafino de Ciminelli Aquilano, entitled Poema di Serafino, both printed in the early years of the sixteenth century.126 If the identification of these titles with the above-mentioned compilations is correct, this might constitute evidence for the spread of the Renaissance literature among the Sicilian middle class. Still, the books are few, and they appear only in a small number of inventories, and this makes it difficult to draw any general conclusions. At the same time, the very existence of books in the inventories of a basket weaver or a tailor127 is proof of an unexpected level of literacy among these people. One wonders if it was characteristic of the converso population or of the urban middle class in general. Moreover, it seems that these former Jews could read Latin or the vernacular without any trouble.

The registers also teach us something about leisure activities. The musician Matteo Sansono of Palermo had several musical instruments: five violas to be played by hand (like guitars), four violas to be played with a bow, and a cavidio. But even ordinary people had musical instruments such as violas or a hunting horn.128 The hunting horn and the existence of crossbows in several inventories may suggest that in Sicily hunting was not restricted only to the nobility but enjoyed also by the affluent middle class. In fact, other studies relating to an earlier period point in this direction.129 As to other leisure activities, one can easily imagine the use these people made of the chess set which appears in one inventory or of the pack of 11 paired cards – para XI di carti di jocu – mentioned in another.130

Many inventories include weapons: swords, daggers, crossbows and pieces of armour such as cuirasses and mail shirts, helmets and buckles. This seems strange, since all inventories list property which belonged to the urban middle class, most of them merchants or artisans. What is even more striking is the attitude towards weapons and the warlike behaviour reflected in these registers. Thus, several entries from the 1530s prove that reconciliated conversos continued to bear arms and ride horses in spite of being forbidden to do so; as a consequence, they had to pay fines ranging from 6 to 12 ounces to the Holy Office.131 Now, the reconciliation of persons found guilty of heresy included various restrictions on their behaviour and outward appearance in addition to the confiscation of property. They were not allowed to wear silk and gilded cloth, they could not practise honorable professions such as that of a magistrate or a physician, and they were forbidden to ride horses or bear arms.132 That many of the Sicilian conversos stubbornly chose to pay fines (or bribes) rather than give up riding horses and bearing arms may be explained in terms of their social environment. Sicilian society was at that time (and in fact for a long time thereafter) a very violent one.133 By behaving the way they did, they were no more than echoing the norms of the surrounding society.

CONCLUSIONS

The account books present a faithful picture of the material life of those investigated by the Holy Office. The accused belonged mainly to the urban
middle class, and the inventories accordingly reflect the way of life of this particular segment of the population. Although the majority of the accused were former Jews, there is no reason to suppose that the particulars of their everyday life differed in any significant way from those of the Old Christians of the same social class. Moreover, a few inventories that list the property of Old Christians or mixed couples prove that in fact there were no real differences. The houses described in the inquisitorial registers are the types of houses that were common in Sicilian cities at the time. The furnishings are also typical of the Sicilian house, as can be demonstrated through comparison with other sources, such as dowry lists, testaments or bills of sale. These other sources, however, have their limitations, since they usually list only the most valuable items. The Inquisition’s records, in contrast, list everything, large or small, regardless of value, and describe it exactly the way it was. Thus, the most important contribution of these documents to the study of material culture is the fact that they bring us inside homes of the distant past and enable us to enter them room by room, observe the exact position and function of various articles that were in use, and obtain a glimpse of daily life in a Mediterranean country at the beginning of the modern period.

APPENDIX I
INVENTORY OF ANDREA CUXINO OF TRAPANI
ASP Ricevitoria Reg. 8 c 2 r - 3 v

Die Il septembrit prime Ind. 1512. Bona inventa in domo Andrea Cuxino noephtii per saum absenziun et fugunt inventariato per Officium Sancte Inquisitionis et vendita per nobilum Diecum Martines de Cabrera locuntentientem mei Dieci De Obregon receptoris dicti Sancti Officii ad publicum incantum in Civitate Drapani cum interventum magnifici Francisco de Pace loco magnifici alcozii cum nota egregii notario Andrei de Sexta pro absenzi magnifici Affonso de Moya magistri notarii sequestorum per mani Micael de Policio publici, preciso que furent venditos die ultimo marci II Ind. 1514

In primis uno tenimento di casi di alto et da baxio in la contra di la Judeca cum certo carico di inchentzo di pagari a lu noble Lanuzzi Fardella

2 September at first indictment, 1512. The goods found in the house of Andrea Cuxino the noepht, listed by the Holy Office in his absence because of his escape and sold in public auction in the city of Trapani by the noble Diego Martin de Cabrera as my proxy, Diego de Obregon, receiver for the said Holy Office, by the intervention of the magnificent Francisco de Pace, in place of the alcoz, written down by the notary Andrea Sexta because of the absence of the magnificent Affonso de Moya the notary of sequestrations, sold by the public crier Micael de Policio on the last day of March, second indictment, 1514.

First, a tenement house, with upper and lower floors in the Jewish quarter which pays certain taxes to the noble Lanuzzi Fardella.

THE ACCOUNT BOOKS OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION IN SICILY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In la camera dalto sunt</th>
<th>In the upper room are</th>
<th>Buyer</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>una cauza di abito</td>
<td>One chest of clothes</td>
<td>to magistro Jacobo San Marco</td>
<td>2 tr. 11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una stagnata</td>
<td>One tin plated utensil</td>
<td>to notary Jacobo Iansera Giovanni Bianco</td>
<td>1 tr. 12 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno strapuntino</td>
<td>One small old seat</td>
<td>to Palmieri Canalca</td>
<td>7 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picchulo vecho</td>
<td>One old mail shirt</td>
<td>to notary Jacobo Iansera Bastiano Pipi</td>
<td>10 tr. 1 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una maylla vecha</td>
<td>One big canister</td>
<td>to Vito Coppula</td>
<td>5 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno cannistro grandi</td>
<td>Another chest of clothes</td>
<td>to magistro Vito di Chaza</td>
<td>10 tr. 1 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cauza di abito</td>
<td>One small used chest</td>
<td>to Antonio di Tisa</td>
<td>3 tr. 16 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cauza isusita</td>
<td>One cuirass</td>
<td>to Vito Coppula</td>
<td>2 tr. 6 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cuyriza</td>
<td>One helmet</td>
<td>to Don Francisco Jani di Trapani</td>
<td>10 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una chilata</td>
<td>Eight spoons of coarse lines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item octo mazzani di lino grossu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In la camera grandi</th>
<th>In the big room</th>
<th>Buyer</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item una cauza di suchi</td>
<td>One wedding / nut chest</td>
<td>to Giovanni Bonjardino</td>
<td>6 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno strapuntino di tila jala chino di lana</td>
<td>One seat of yellow cloth stuffed with wool</td>
<td>to Julio d’Alaymo</td>
<td>5 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cauza grandi muselata</td>
<td>One large decorated chest</td>
<td>to Guglermo Suser</td>
<td>1oz. 9 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item dua scrigni russi pinteri</td>
<td>Two red painted boxes</td>
<td>to the same</td>
<td>18 tr. 11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno travisori purpurigino</td>
<td>One large coloured silk pillow (lying across the bed)</td>
<td>to Giovanni Jacobo Bianco</td>
<td>10 tr. 5 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cauza grandi</td>
<td>One large chest</td>
<td>to Bartolo Cartunno Cola d’Ajut</td>
<td>20 tr. 10 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item un drappu pintu</td>
<td>One painted cloth</td>
<td>to Cola d’Ajut</td>
<td>3 tr. 2 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cultura vecha</td>
<td>One old blanket</td>
<td>to Francisco le Buriu</td>
<td>2 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una cona</td>
<td>One icon</td>
<td>to Antonio Vuturo</td>
<td>6 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno lamperi</td>
<td>One lamp</td>
<td>to Ginas</td>
<td>11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una tavula di manjari cum li trispi</td>
<td>One dining table with its tripod</td>
<td>to Jacobo Blanco</td>
<td>1 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item tri seggi</td>
<td>Three seats</td>
<td>to Cola d’Ajut</td>
<td>1 tr. 15 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una gassira</td>
<td>One wall hanging</td>
<td>to Cola d’Ajut</td>
<td>1 tr. 1 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una finestra intagliata di petra</td>
<td>One copper jug</td>
<td>to Andrea Fardella</td>
<td>4 tr. 11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno bachi di rano</td>
<td>One copper basin</td>
<td>to notorio Jacobo Jansera</td>
<td>1 tr. 10 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una tavula di campo</td>
<td>One camp table</td>
<td>to Jacobo Lombardo</td>
<td>5 tr. 5 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno saccuni di paglia</td>
<td>One sack of straw</td>
<td>to Jacobo Rizuul</td>
<td>3 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una finestra in pietra</td>
<td>One window cut of stone</td>
<td>to notorio Jacobo Jansera</td>
<td>6 tr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno banco di salla</td>
<td>One bench for a hall</td>
<td>to Antonio Filechiu</td>
<td>2 tr. 11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una caildara</td>
<td>One cauldron</td>
<td>to notorio Andrea Fardella</td>
<td>2 tr. 3 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una caidara grandi et neut</td>
<td>One big broken cauldron</td>
<td>to the same</td>
<td>3 tr. 12 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una sartania</td>
<td>One pan</td>
<td>to Guglerino Suser</td>
<td>1 tr. 1 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una spitu</td>
<td>One skewer</td>
<td>to Micheli di Pulizi</td>
<td>10 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item una gravolara</td>
<td>One grater</td>
<td>to notorio Jacobo Jansera</td>
<td>5 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item uno mortaro di mitalo picchuto</td>
<td>One small metal mortar</td>
<td>to Vito Coppula</td>
<td>2 tr. 1 gr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The Account Books of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Buyer</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>A debt of approximately 60 oz. owed him by Georgi Bofoni [crossed out in the original, marked 'taken by the Treasury']</td>
<td>passato in conto ali</td>
<td>F X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>Divisi nobilo Francesco di Pachi di oz. 50 in circa chi li appi per caparo di li formaggi chi divi di li anno presenti</td>
<td>Antonio Corsetto</td>
<td>11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>Il deo di li caradi che vindo a scimento noble Simoni San Climento</td>
<td>Antonio Corsetto</td>
<td>11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>A rent that he used to pay to Antonio di Nicola for a piece of land at</td>
<td>Andria Rizzo</td>
<td>15 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>The part that he held in the ship of the patron Antonio di Catania</td>
<td>Antonio di Catania</td>
<td>11 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>San Giulano quarter</td>
<td>Antonio di Risso</td>
<td>15 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>The same</td>
<td>Antonio Corsetto</td>
<td>15 gr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>A small empty box and a saddle and a ladder</td>
<td>Antonio di Risso</td>
<td>15 gr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

CONTENTS OF A KITCHEN IN A WELL-TO-DO HOME

ASP Ricetoria reg. 8bis c. 247v

Inventario bonorum magistri Angeli de Cosenza neophiti, apud Messanam die XI octobris 1512

Intrin la cucina

Inprinis una tavola di tavola de tina grossa minata
Item item quatro quatro scutelli et due platti et dui saucers vechi
Item una coppa de ramo cum fucularu

Item una padella de rano
Item una gradiglia de ferro
Item una pioglie de rano mezana
Item una cannara de rano picha vechia
Item una concalina de rano picha vechia
Item una bacchil de lattini usatu
Item una abriga
Item uno fornello de ferri
Item una spitu
Item una cassa vechia intu la quali et una plancheta grandi de piueto et una gratallera
Item una scavagia nomine Pina spiana (sestitiana)
Item una quartara de rami

In the kitchen

First, a tablecover made of decorated thick cloth
Four tin bowls, two plates, and two old saucers
One copper bowl with a wick for lighting a fire
One copper pan
One iron griddle
One middle-sized copper pot
One small old copper cauldron
One small old copper kettle
One used tin basin
One kneading board
One iron stove
One skimmer
One old box containing a large tin board and a grater
A black woman slave named Pina, a Christian
One copper jug

Abbreviations: oz. = ounces  tr. = tari  gr. = grana

NOTES


2. La Mantia, Origine e vicende, p.28, n.10; Renda, L’Inquisizione, pp.34–5.


8. In his first study Renda published 1.890 names listed by city and town of origin (La fine del giudizio, appendix); in a further study he increased this number to 2,121 (‘I marranni’, p.685).


10. For a detailed history of the first years of the Spanish Inquisition in Sicily and a description
of the account books see Burgarella, Diego de Obregon, pp. 257–66; Renda, La fine del guadagno, pp. 120–67. I became familiar with these records while working on my Ph.D. thesis: N. Zeldes, The Converted Jews of Sicily, Before and After the Expulsion (1460–1550) (Tel-Aviv, 1997). They provided an important source for the study of the conversos’ fate from the expulsion of the Sicilian Jews in 1492 until 1550. From the middle of the sixteenth century onward, the Inquisition ceased looking for Judaizers and concentrated on Protestants, witches, and other offenders. This article focuses on the records of the first 50 years of activity in Sicily.

11. Confiscation was the standard punishment for those who were either reconciliated (i.e., confessed their guilt and were returned to the fold of the church) or condemned to the stake. For a more detailed discussion of inquisitorial procedures and punishments, see H. Kamen, Inquisition and Society in Spain (London, 1985), pp. 161–97.

12. The Sicilian account books provide a detailed description of the procedure of the public auction. The various items were put on sale by the highest official of the town, the Capitano, and the public citizen (publico precio) announced the sale (see appendix 1). Although there are several studies on the subject of inquisitorial finance and the policy of confiscations, the exact procedure for disposing of the property is not noted: Kamen, Inquisition, p.170. Idem, 'Confiscations in the Economy of the Spanish Inquisition', Economic History Review 18 (1965), pp.111–25; J. Martínez Millán, ‘Structures of Inquisitorial Finance’, in A. Alcalá (ed.), The Spanish Inquisition and the Spanish Mind (New York, 1987), pp. 160–61.


14. One house was situated near the salt mill of Trapani: Archivio di Stato di Palermo (hereafter ASP), La Ricevitoria dell’Uffizio (hereafter Ricevitoria) reg. 16 c 9v.


16. On types of houses in use in Sicily in the later Middle Ages, see D. Ventura, Edifizi urbani medicie ed ephemer di vita economica e sociale a Catania nel ‘400 (Catania, 1984); on the apartment see ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 66v.

17. A house composed of 5 corpi, ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 235v; 14 corpi, ASP Ricevitoria reg. 13 c 30v.

18. The first property belonged to Andrea de Rizo alias Xachitano from Caccamo (in the northern part of Sicily, inland from Terrasini); this converso was reconciliated and as a consequence his property was confiscated by the Holy Office (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 170v); the second is the house of Venentea de Lione di Marsala (reg. 8bis c 330v).

19. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 2r–3v, the location of the Jewish quarter in Trapani, see Ashor, Trapani, pp.13–14.


21. A tenimento from the city of Ragusa was sold for 45 ounces (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 37r); a tenimento of four parts was sold for 19 ounces and 7 lire (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 184r); another tenimento sold for 60 ounces (Ventura, Edifizi, p. 85).

22. Castrogiovanni, ASP Ricevitoria reg. 13 c 19r; Palagonia, ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 110v, 267v; doroncalo in Messina, ASP Ricevitoria reg. 7 c 9v.

23. The house sold for 52 ounces was that of a cloth merchant named Manfredo La Muta, who was burned at the stake (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 6 c 4r); for the Inn: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 255v.

24. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 152r–v.

25. Vineyards: Jacobello Stagi of Messina had a vineyard sold for 21 ounces (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 6 c 60v); Marino Crisimano of Piazza had a vineyard sold for 3 ounces (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 234v); Cayoloro da Cona of Catagnire had a vineyard sold for 6 ounces (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 259v); Jewish involvement in wine growing and wine trade: D. Abulafia, ‘The Jews of Erice, Sicily, 1298–1307’ (in Hebrew), Zion 51 (1986), pp.309–10; Ashor, Trapani, p.19; Brese, Un Monde, pp.192–3.

26. Galini had 20 oxen on this farm (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 79v).

27. Brese and Brese, ‘Carra’, p.112.

28. Dui tavoli et uno paro di tripodi (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 91v).


30. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 226v.


33. This description appears in the inventory of Angelo de Cusenza di Messina (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 243v).

34. This item is described as traversale sive capitallia lecti: P. Sella, Glossario latino italiano: Stato della Chiesa–Veneto–Abruzzi (Vatican city, 1940, reprint 1963): Mortillaro, Dizionario.

35. Sella's glossary gives the explanation: tessuto in seta di vari colori. This may be the same as the sponda di leco, 'the side of the bed.'


37. These items appear in the inventory of Angelo de Cusenza di Messina (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 247v).

38. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 350v.


40. There is some confusion as to the extent of deforestation in Sicily during the Later Middle Ages: Brese, the forest was disappearing and only royal decrees intended to preserve some areas for hunting saved it from total destruction: H. Brese, ‘La chasse en Sicile XIIIe–XVe siècles’, in La chasse au Moyen-Age (Actes du colloque de Nice, 22–24 juin 1979) (Nice, 1981), p.201, Epstein, however, believes that the wooded area grew during the demographic decline of the fourteenth century: S.R. Epstein, An Island for Itself (Cambridge, 1992), p.29.


43. See appendixes 1 and 2.

44. Brese and Brese, ‘Carra’, p.117.

45. See appendix 2.

46. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 92v; reg. 6 c 117v.

47. All these tools appear in the inventory of Pietro de Bologna of Palermo (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 352–353v).

48. The inventory of Carlo di Constanzo di Salemi (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 66v–67v).

49. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 22v–23r.

50. Distuffs in an inventory from Alcamo: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 37v; ASP Ricevitoria reg. 13 c 6r, carding flax and cotton: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 245v; spoons in an inventory from Palermo: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 327v; a loom, almost the only property of a poor woman, Rosa La Vestini: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 31r.


52. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 337r–360v.


Cappello of Caltagirone had two slaves, a man and a woman (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 13 c 12a). Angelo de Bonanno, a blacksmith from Messina, had an old Moorish slave (ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 296v). See also appendix 2.


117. 

118. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 245v.

119. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 48r – 49v.


121. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 9 c 93r.


123. ASP Ricevitoria reg. 13 c 17v.


127. The registers also list calendars (libri lunarii) and account books.

128. Matteo Porco, a cloth merchant from Messina, had a viola and a hunting horn: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 251v; another viola: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 168v.


130. Chess set: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8 c 54r; pack of cards: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 304v.

131. Weapons in inventories: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 8bis c 59v, 74r, 249r, 338v; fines: ASP Ricevitoria reg. 19 c 333v, 335r, 339v.


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**Book Reviews**


It is generally acknowledged that the eighth century BC was a period of great transformation during which the foundations of the later Greek city-state were laid. This book investigates the roles of economy and poetry in this process. It combines textual data and information from archaeological sources and draws extensively upon theories and models developed in sociology and (economic) anthropology, especially upon the work of Karl Polanyi and Morton Fried.

What according to the author happened during this period was that the redistributive institutions of the Dark Age *oikos* system broke down and were replaced by a disembodied market economy. The catalyst for this shift was a cyclical process of strong demographic growth and changes in agricultural practices at the beginning of the eighth century. Because of this population boom, ranking became more strict. As a consequence, a smaller number of community leaders could collect from the expanded population larger quantities of goods, which they used for overseas trade activities. The new 'unobiligated wealth' that the emerging élite extracted from external sources was withheld from the rest of the community. This resulted in the introduction of private property, land alienation and debts on the part of those who failed to cope with the rules of the new system. Moreover, members of the new élite started to acquire 'luxury goods' at (peripheral) markets and in commercial colonies that developed along new trade routes all around the Mediterranean. At home, this meant that the centre became increasingly dissociated from its periphery, which until then had fulfilled an important role in the conversion of agricultural surplus into prestige items. According to Tandy, it was this institution of new political and economic centres trying to exclude the peripheral members of the community from the economic mainstream that constituted the rise of the polis. In his opinion, this was a catastrophe of the same order as the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system (p.2).

The new élite introduced various strategies of display and exclusion, such as gift giving, restricted participation in councils and fests, warrior burials, and hero cults. But it was especially heroic poetry that helped to obfuscate the distinction between the heroic past, when wealth followed status, and the élite present, with status following wealth and market forces dictating social relationships. Tandy finds a different and critical response to the newly emergent system in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. In his view, the poet pleads for a new solidarity of community as a replacement for the protective mechanisms once provided by the redistributive structure of the pre-polis *Gemeinschaft*. In this manner, Hesiod can be considered the voice of the politically and economically excluded peasants struggling on the periphery of the new polis centres.

Tandy aims to arrive at 'a new understanding of the economy and society of the eighth-century Aegean' (p.15). To accomplish this, he has assembled and integrated into his reconstructions an impressive quantity and variety of data. A 45-page bibliography may serve as testimony to this. However, it should be pointed out that the argument compounds a number of issues that are still the subject of scholarly debate.