

spaces in the community until the Spanish erected mission churches near them. Pueblo plazas were associated with kivas, chambers partly or entirely underground, where the men prayed and prepared themselves to become the masked spirits who dance in the plaza. Today some pueblo plazas apparently have no defining characteristics. Others feature a *sipapu*, a small hole in the plaza floor, most of the time so discreetly covered by rock that it passes unrecognized by the unknowing eye. It indicates that one or more kivas are nearby.

Just as the cruciform plan and vast vertical spaces of the Gothic cathedrals are architectural metaphors for the Christian mystery of death and resurrection, so also do the kiva and sipapu represent a mystery, for the Puebloan peoples believe they emerged from the womb of Mother Earth into the daylight of the Sun Father. Origin, life, power and history emerge on a vertical axis linking sun and earth, just as the thirty or so masked spirit dancers emerge from the darkness of the kiva into the light of the plaza on a ladder through the kiva roof. Their emergence consecrates the space they occupy.

A blending of Pueblo and Hispanic traditions occurs at El Santuario de Chimayó. The original site was a Tewa Indian shrine: when the Twin Gods slew the Great Monster, fire burst from the earth and hot springs bubbled up; when they receded only mud was left, which had curative powers. Later this Native belief in the healing powers of the local earth merged with a Hispanic belief in cures attributed to *Nuestro Señor de Esquipula*. The figure appeared to a prominent Hispanic landowner, some say out of the ground itself, others say as an image of clay, and the man was healed. Later the *Santo Niño de Atocha* came to replace *Nuestra Señor de Esquipula* as the patron of the shrine. The chapel of the Santuario was built at the beginning of the 19th century and is adjacent to a room in which pilgrims collect the sacred earth. In this belief in the restorative powers of the earth, Hispanic and Pueblo traditions are powerfully fused.

For both the Catholic and the Pueblo believer, the plaza is a focal point in a larger sacred landscape sustained by rituals, narratives and shrines. Sacred places anchor cultural worlds and are collectively tended. Attendance at sacred events and access to consecrated spaces has always required more than simply good intentions. Participation requires knowledge and responsibility, not self-assumed but conferred by a community of believers. Respectful visitors

THE SEPHARDIC LEGACY IN NEW MEXICO:

The Story of the Crypto-Jews

Stanley M. Hordes

After 500 years of secrecy, groups of Hispanic crypto-Jews, or hidden Jews, are now beginning to emerge from the shadows in New Mexico and other parts of the southwestern United States.

These crypto-Jews descend from Sephardic Jews forced to convert from Judaism to Catholicism in Spain and Portugal in the 14th and 15th centuries. While some sincerely converted, many others secretly held on to their ancestral faith. To escape persecution by the Holy Office of the Inquisition, many of these *conversos* migrated to the Spanish colonies in the 16th and 17th centuries, settling in metropolitan centers such as Lima and Mexico City. Once the Inquisition established itself in these New World capitals, however, it became necessary for the crypto-Jews to seek refuge in more remote parts of the Spanish colonial frontier, including New Mexico.

Secret Jews came with the first colonizing expeditions to New Mexico of Gaspar Castaño and Juan de Oñate in the 1590s, as well as with the later trading ventures in the 17th and 18th centuries. Many of these families passed on their Jewish consciousness from generation to generation down to the present day; others eventually lost their Jewish identity but continued to practice vestiges of their ancestral faith without knowing why.

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should be aware of a dismal history of cultural depredation. It was only this past year, for example, that the Zuni tribe was able to recover the last of its War God images. These had marked sacred space on Zuni land for centuries until they were stolen from their shrines and scattered across the globe to serve the wishes of social scientists, art collectors and aficionados. The annals of such abuse grow longer every time a shrine is disturbed or the value of a ceremony is discounted, or the right of a community of faith to define its own practice is ignored.