

Village Infernos and Witches' Advocates: Witch-Hunting in Navarre, 1608–1614. By Lu Ann Homza. Iberian Encounter and Exchange 475–1755 5. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022. vii + 248 pp. \$104.95 hardcover.

Village Infernos and Witches' Advocates: Witch-Hunting in Navarre, 1608–1614 nuances not only Inquisitional records but also correspondences between inquisitors at the Suprema in Madrid and the Tribunal in Logroño, notarial records from Pamplona, and various assorted files or *legajos* on the regional witch-hunts. While time is not always on historians' side considering the absence of surviving records and trial transcripts of many cases, this book does include discussion over some recently discovered material that just resurfaced in 2020. The goal of this book is to use the extant sources to demonstrate the complexity of these accusations and lived experiences in the small villages of Navarre considering the Inquisitorial discrepancies between local actions and orders from Madrid. In so doing, Lu Ann Homza contextualizes a specific instance of witch-hunting in Navarre as one of both accusation and advocacy during a fixed number of years—from 1608 to 1614.

That specificity allows Homza to truly paint a complex picture of Navarre, its presumed witches, and the inquisitors emphasizing the fractured and complex machinations of the Spanish Inquisition in line with the growing scholarly trend to put various sources in dialogue. In so doing, Homza is able to give voice to an under-represented player of these trials—children. At its core, Homza aims to offer a “portrait of dysfunctional inquisitors” and reveal the “emotional and social tumult in communities besieged by witchcraft accusations” (16). Understanding the specifics of the various Northern villages such as Bera, Olague, and Zugarramurdi lay groundwork for further networks she highlights throughout the book. These areas were both internal to the Peninsula, such as Madrid, but also external considering the promotion of certain witch beliefs or Protestantism from France and even the references to similar Inquisitional cases involving children in Germany. It is worth noting that Homza even briefly mentions the concern and alert inquisitors had for New Christian converts from Islam and Judaism—Moriscos and Conversos. Indeed, while I would have liked more discussion of these groups, this was not the focus of the book, and even their brief mention hints to further networks and future discussions, especially considering how the Morisco expulsion from 1609 to 1614 overlaps with the years Homza studies.

Overall the book is well-developed with five chapters, an introduction, epilogue, notes, bibliography, and index. Its opening pages include a handy map of the region in question, marking, in addition to Madrid and Valladolid in central Spain, all key witch-hunting spots in Navarre, as well as important sites in La Rioja, Araba, Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, and a small part of France. While chronology is a factor, the chapters are organized by theme. Something I particularly appreciated about this book is the way each chapter is subsequently divided into smaller subsections—each one not taking up more than a few pages. In accordance with the style guidelines, all primary sources are given in English translation, with the exception of a few key terms that also include the original in italics, such as legal terms or striking expressions. One of the most provocative images was the *sapos vestidos*, or dressed toads. Presumably, according to the extant material, these toads functioned as “diabolical guardian

angels” that vomited an ointment witches used to fly gifted by the Devil for children to safe-guard (26, 132).

The strongest asset of this book is the way Homza allows her source material to speak for itself with carefully selected quotations and summaries that walk the reader through close case studies and general patterns. In the first chapter, “Trauma,” Homza highlights the emotional and physical pain endured during these trials and their imprisonments alongside the linguistic limitations of the Spanish-speaking inquisitors and the Basque-speaking accusers and accused. This chapter also lays the groundwork for the presumed witchy activities, convenient scapegoatism or loopholes, and the role children played as both victims and accusers followed by the societal consequences of these allegations. Often times, during the absence of inquisitors in the smaller villages, the villagers auto-regulated themselves, further destabilizing the social fabric.

These tensions lead us into Homza’s second chapter, “Spiritual and Social Combat.” Here, the complexity of the witch-hunts continues, as it “never came down to single causes or explanations” (51). Homza weaves in discussion of the fear provoked by geographical and religious borders particularly in light of earlier Protestant Reformation and the accusations of witches’ inversion of Catholic practices. Such imagery and presumed perversions provided fuel for continued accusations as demonstrated through various case studies. Chapter 3, “Legal Decisions, Legal Errors,” showcases attempts of Madrid’s Suprema at micromanaging from afar, providing a context for the shifting regulation questions throughout the years. Money issues, honor codes, and confusions were born out of these policies as more and more villagers sued for defamation. All the case studies in these three chapters allow Homza to conclude that not only were children essential players as both victims and accusers but that villagers understood many aspects of the legal processes and felt a “communal responsibility” during the hunts (120).

Chapter 4, “Collaboration, Obedience, Resistance,” and chapter 5, “Transgressions and Solutions,” mark a shift in attitude towards the end of the witch-hunt in this area on the part of the inquisitors and their “alternating compliance and opposition,” as “some employees work[ed] to reconcile with suspects, while others sought to punish them” (121, 152). Both chapters give special attention to correspondences and actions of inquisitors and clergy members. In these letters, concerns over the authenticity of accusations were further discussed, often concluding that many were not. For instance, Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar began to reconcile some confessed witches after recognizing the social impacts and motivations of these accusations—demonstrating the ability of an inquisitor to change his mind and observe patterns in the spreading witch accusations.

In closing, *Village Infernos and Witches’ Advocates* has a scholarly and pedagogical appeal, which in turn gives the book a larger impact since, especially considering the shorter subsections throughout each chapter, it could easily be divided into digestible nuggets in religious studies, history, and Spanish upper-level culture or literature courses. It is easy to follow and does not presuppose any prior knowledge, while still diving deep into the primary material and relevant secondary sources; this work thus makes a wonderful addition to the scholarship not only on the witch-trails of Navarre but also witch-hunts throughout Europe and the Spanish Inquisition at large.

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