

# Out of Seville: Three Collections on Confraternities and Religiosity in Iberia and Beyond

## Review Article

BRIAN CATLOS

*University of Toronto*

---

*Las Cofradías de la Santa Vera-Cruz*. Ed. José Sánchez Herrero. Seville: Centro de Estudios e Investigación de la Religiosidad Andaluza, 1995. 808 pp.; *Las fiestas de Sevilla en el siglo XV. Otros estudios*. Ed. José Sánchez Herrero. Madrid: Editorial Deimos, 1991. 463 pp. *Guía de los Archivos de las Cofradías de Semana Santa de Sevilla. Otros Estudios*. Ed. José Sánchez Herrero. Madrid: Editorial Deimos, 1990. 471 pp.

The *Centro de Estudios e Investigación de la Religiosidad Andaluza* of the University of Seville was founded in 1988 as an interdisciplinary body dedicated to the study of the "many religious manifestations which exist in Andalucía, especially in Seville," (*Guia*, p. 9) but with the expressed intention of avoiding a "dangerous regionalism" (*ibid.*, p. 9) by embracing studies from the rest of Spain and elsewhere. Under the direction of José Sanchez Herrero, an impressive array of scholars with a wide range of academic specialization came together to form this group and its associated archive and resource centre. Their energetic work, in recent years, is testified to by the recent publication of three substantial collections of essays and studies relating to confraternities in Seville, around Spain, and abroad beyond the Pyrenees and across the Atlantic.

The first in the series of the Centro's publications is entitled *Guia de los archivos de las cofradías de Semana Santa de Sevilla* (1990). The Guide to the Archives, the flag-ship study, comprises almost half of the nearly five hundred pages of this volume. It is a general survey of the surviving documentary materials pertaining to fifty-seven confraternities and brotherhoods associated with the Semana Santa in Seville. The bulk of the material dates from the last three hundred years, with some of the remaining stretching as far back as the sixteenth century. The brief introduction to the Guide recounts the difficulties which the researchers faced gaining access to the materials, which are scattered about in a number of parish collections in varied states of conservation and care.

The Guide itself is arranged by confraternity. After a useful listing of the addresses, archivists and opening hours of all of the various archives, a section is devoted to each in turn. Here, as much as the material allows, a standard schema is adhered to: noted are Inventories and Catalogues, Books of Rules and Ordinances, Acts of Council, papers of the Secretary and of the Major-domo, Acts of Charity and Miscellany. The entries themselves are spare and there are generally few observations

or comments regarding either the archives or collections, nor are secondary works noted either within the entries or in a separate bibliography. Despite this shortcoming, the Guide, which the introduction cautions us is not a detailed catalogue (*Guia*, p. 14), will no doubt prove an indispensable tool for the student and researcher of popular religion in Seville.

The balance of this substantial volume is given over to fourteen essays of varying length regarding "Religiousness in Andalucía, Spain, Europe and America." Ladero Quesada's "La primera regla de la Casa de la Misericordia de Sevilla" traces this confraternity from its origins in 1476 through the following century, showing the development of an elitism which rendered the group the domain of a social elite to the exclusion of the middle classes. Salas Delgado's brief "Formación cristiana y práctica sacramental de la feligresía de San Andrés en la Sevilla de los siglos XV y XVI" uses the sacramental records of the confraternity as a window to the mores of the parishioners. Baptismal records in particular are shown to be a useful tool for investigating issues such as illegitimate birth, clerical and lay concubinage and slavery. In "Cofradías medievales cordobeses," Sanz Sancho sees the large number of confraternities which sprang up in Cordoba from 1236 to the end of the thirteenth century as evidence of both the force of the confraternity movement throughout the social spectrum and of its importance as a factor of social intercourse and integration. Ruiz Domínguez' "Religiosidad Popular en la Andalucía de las Cantigas" represents a diversion both in topic and approach. This study does not address the matter of confraternities in particular, and takes as its starting point Alfonso el Sabio's famous artistic legacy. While it starts out on promising ground, the rich terrain of Christian-Muslim contact, its conclusions are less than earth-shattering. In "Parentesco artificial/ parentesco natural en la vertebración de las cofradías devocionales," Muñoz Fernández takes an interesting look at the familial framework upon which Madrileñan confraternities were organised, and draws our attention to their specialization in certain aspects of devotion as evidence of the practice of plurality of membership in confraternities with complimentary sacramental functions. The final three essays of the collection deal with confraternities in Venezuela, France and Italy. On the whole this volume of studies is interesting and usable. Given the emphasis on Seville, students of the confraternities of that city will find it particularly helpful.

The Centro's second publication, *Las fiestas de Sevilla en el siglo XV*, (1991) follows the same basic format as the first. It begins with a substantial article from which the book takes its title. Del Rocío Romero Abao's detailed study of the religious festivals of the city in the first third of the fifteenth century takes as its point of departure the communal aspect of public religious observance, the *fiesta humana* (*Fiestas*, p. 15). This is traced in the first three chapters, "Fiestas de la vida y de la muerte," "El año litúrgico," and "La fiesta del Corpus Cristi." Consciously superimposed upon this human component of the festival, del Rocío perceives a political element, that of the *fiestas reales*, to which he devotes a chapter. Following this he examines the *fiesta profana*: the games, bull-fights and tournaments which for the crowds were without a doubt the most popular components; and he devotes his final chapter to the financial administration of these celebrations. Detailed and well-documented, this study succeeds in its professed aim, which the author notes is "predom-

inantly descriptive" (*Fiestas*, p. 16); thus its conclusions represent a summing up rather than an attempt to relate the findings to a broader context.

The thirteen essays which comprise the second part of this volume are also firmly anchored in the ambit of Seville and the south of the Iberian peninsula. Sections on Sevilla, Cordoba, the Canaries and "mentalities" present two more short archival guides (both Sevillian) and a collection of historical essays with an emphasis on popular and clerical religiosity from the twelfth through the nineteenth centuries. "La doctrina social católica en Andalucía" of Domínguez León investigates the apparent disengagement of the nineteenth-century Sevillian Church from both its constituents and its own hierarchy. Evidence from the local Catholic press, which attributed to the Pope doctrines which were manifestly contradictory to the actual policies of Leo XIII, lends support to the author's portrayal of an under-developed and ineffective Andalusian Church. Salas Delgado's "Aproximación a la vida y cultura de los clérigos sevillanos durante los siglos XV y XVI" concerns a potentially fascinating aspect of clerical culture in early modern Seville, but fails to rise above curt description. More satisfying is Hernández González' "El culto isleño a la Candelaria en Canarias y América: de proceso sincrético a símbolo de identidad étnica," which examines this Marian cult as a medium for the acculturation of the indigenous people of the archipelago and, subsequently, as a means of maintaining their own identity as settlers in the New World. The volume concludes with three essays grouped under the rubric of "Mentalidades," which seems here to indicate art and literature. These include a look at didacticism in the *Libro de Buen Amor*, iconographic developments of the eighteenth-century, and "Hagiografía y mentalidades en el siglo XII: los «Milagros de San Isidoro de León»." Again, the Centro de Estudios has brought together a useful collection of essays which, despite a more narrow geographical scope, embodies a greater variety of academic perspectives and will be of interest to those whose fields of enquiry lie beyond the Iberian south.

The most recent collection which the Centro has produced, *Las cofradías de la Santa Vera-Cruz*, (1995), is also the lengthiest. In lay-out it represents a departure from the previous format, in that the forty-eight papers constitute the proceedings of the *I Congreso Internacional de Cofradías de la Santa Vera-Cruz*, (Seville, 19–22 March, 1992). There is certainly less emphasis here on Sevillian and Andalusian studies than in the previous volumes, as the cult of the Holy Cross is studied in its various incarnations and expressions across Spain, in the Americas, and in Western and Southern Europe. Few of the papers are more than twenty pages long and there is no flag-ship essay at the beginning. Instead, several introductory essays treat generally on the confraternities, their past and their future. The historical studies, again grouped together by region, examine for the most part local chapters of the confraternity and their activities, situating them in regional landscapes of evangelization, communal worship and sacramental observance. Notable departures from this format include "Del Árbol de la Vida al Árbol de la Cruz," by Sebastián López, "O santuário do Bom Jesus do Monte em Braga: ensaio sobre os santuários cristológicos em Portugal," by Marinho-Alves and Ferreira-Alves and "La Santa Cruz en la liturgia de las Horas," by Garrido Bonaño. If this volume suffers in any respect it is from a certain narrowness of approach. Art history, for example, is represented here by only

two contributions, those of Jesús Sanz (“Reliquias y relicarios del ‘Lignum Crucis’”) and Galeno (“Aspetti dell’iconografia confraternale del Crocifisso in Calabria”). As well, more diversions from traditional documentary history would have led to appreciation from a wider readership.

Together these three publications bear witness to the tremendous energy of the *Centro de Estudios e Investigación de la Religiosidad Andaluza*, and there is much of value here for those interested in Sevillian history and the history of popular religious observance in general. Each of the volumes would benefit from a greater balance of both regional and methodological orientation but, this having been said, each subsequent publication bears a net improvement over its predecessor in this respect. If the attitude of the Centro remains that of maintaining itself open to every type of outside current (*Guia*, p. 9), then it will certainly succeed in avoiding the shoals of localism and we can look forward to more and richer publications from it in the future.

Brian Catlos  
Centre for Medieval Studies  
University of Toronto

