

**Remaking Spain's Jews:  
Conversos and the Carvajal Family of Early Modern Spain and Colonial Spanish America**

This grant application seeks funding for research that reconciles how the Carvajal family transformed itself from a singularly Jewish family into separate arms of model Castilian Catholics and crypto-Jews in early modern Spain and colonial Spanish America.

What is lacking from the scholarly meta-narrative about early modern Spanish and colonial Spanish American *conversos* (Jewish converts to Christianity) is the diversified familial survival strategies employed by mixed-faith families like the Carvajals. With the implementation of the Spanish Inquisition in 1480, the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, and the discovery of the New World in 1492, this unique confluence of events generated new challenges for the mixed-faith Carvajals. The Carvajals were typical of *conversos* who had, in essence, two options. They could mask their Jewish ancestry and solidify their positions as Castilian Catholic exemplars, or two, could leave Spain for the New World and other European destinations. My research evaluates the Carvajals' difficult family and confessional choices as they negotiated a changing world.

Their story, representative of the thousands of *conversos* that immigrated to the colonial Spanish America, is one that can resolve how families pursued multiple confessional, vocational, and geographic initiatives in order to endure Spain's vehement pursuit of those with ancestral Jewish blood. During the 16th and 17th centuries the Carvajals flowed back-and-forth across the Atlantic Ocean and within those familial currents were not only hidden Jews, but also exemplary Castilian Catholics, and other religious hybrids. Yes, Carvajals publicly staffed the Catholic

clergy, Christian military orders, and royal bureaucracy—but they privately held disparate religious identities.

While scholarly literature on the Spanish Imperial project focuses on its idealized Castilian Catholics, such as Juan de Victoria Carvajal who served with the 16th century Oñate expedition in New Mexico, the folklore of colonial San Antonio de Béxar, Monterrey, and Santa Fe, is peppered with accounts of crypto-Jewish *converso* families. Included in these tales is the case of Don Luis de Carvajal “The Younger.” Luis, the nephew of the powerful provincial Governor Luis de Carvajal de la Cueva, found his way to the Monterrey, Mexico, with many other *conversos* of Portuguese and Spanish descent in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately for Luis de Carvajal “The Younger,” in 1596 the Mexican Inquisition tried and condemned him, his mother, and many of his siblings for their persistent crypto-Jewish beliefs.

My own initial investigations at the Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid) and reviews of the indexes of the Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico) suggest that Luis’ case was not an isolated one. The Carvajals were “the pursued” and “the pursuers” of lapsed *conversos* in Spain and colonial Mexico. I have identified eight Inquisitorial cases of the Carvajal family in Spain and over 60 unique Mexican Inquisition *expedientes* relating to the family.

My research will reconcile how the Carvajal family, an emblematic *converso* family, generated both the model ardent Catholic and the condemned Jew. My research will innovate by unifying two differing trajectories of scholarly thought on the *conversos* of Spain, Portugal, and Mexico. On one hand, scholars such as D. Gitlitz and B. Netanyahu, have superbly explored the lives of Sephardic Jews and Jewish conversos, yet they neglect their Christian *converso* familial and kin relations. Other scholars (I. Altman, R. Kagan, and C. and W. Phillips) have focused on the early modern Spanish imperial project with particular attention to its agents in the military

orders, clergy, and royal administration. However, they rarely allude to the *converso* and Jewish ancestries of many of these agents.

As of yet, there is no reconciliation of these two diametrically opposed scholarly visions of the Carvajals—model Castilian Catholics and crypto-Jews. If historians are to flesh out the seismic social and religious shifts in this family, emblematic of early modern Spanish and colonial Spanish American families, additional research must amalgamate these seemingly inconsistent portrayals of the Carvajal family.

This proposal requests \$1,000 in funding for one month of research in fall 2005 to review the previously discussed *expedientes* at the Archivo General de la Nación. I have secured an additional \$1,000 from my department to fully fund this initiative. My project involves significant original field research since few primary documents are published. I have already fully exploited two significant archives in Texas, including the Benson Latin American Collection and the Center for American History. With the funds provided by the grant, I will commence one month of research at the Archivo General de la Nación to review the complete 1596 Inquisition case against Luis de Carvajal “The Younger” and his immediate family, as well as the other Inquisition files I previously discussed. The purpose of this review is to more thoroughly chart the transatlantic relationship of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Mexican Carvajals. Additionally, using my genealogical database of 400+ Carvajals (15th-17th centuries) and the passenger lists of Spanish immigrants to Mexico (produced by the Archivo de las Indias in Sevilla, Spain), I expect to reconnect multiple, interrelated Carvajal *converso* lineages.

My work on the Carvajal family is important to the field of early modern Spanish, colonial Spanish American, and religious history because it unifies Jewish-focused *converso* scholarship with research on the Spanish imperial project in Europe and the Americas by

rejuvenating the bonds of family relations. Unifying the contradictory perspectives of the Carvajals—model Castilian Catholics and crypto-Jews—will allow historians to comprehend how the momentous religious shifts in early modern Spain and colonial Spanish America pressured religious minorities to alter their identities to negotiate a transforming world.

### Research Schedule

- October 10, 2005 · Depart for Mexico City, Mexico
- October 11, 2005
- Secure research investigation credentials at the Archivo General de la Nación.
  - Place reproduction (microfilm) order for the six Inquisition cases for Luis de Carvajal “The Younger” and his immediate family members. (References: *Clave de Registro* 171456, *Grupo documental* 61, *Vol.* 125, *Expediente* 12 (171456.61.125.12); 171851.61.142.67; 206495.61.1549.15; 207429.61.1487.2; 207430.61.1487.3; 207435.61.1489.1)
  - Begin review of Luis de Carvajal files for genealogical and familial data and to identify new leads for other AGN *grupos documentales*.
- October 17, 2005
- Begin recall and expedited review of the 57 other related Inquisition *expedientes* for the Carvajals from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
  - Place reproduction orders for pertinent cases.
- October 24, 2005
- Begin recall and expedited review of the 10 most promising Carvajal candidates to reconstruct transatlantic relationships, vocations, and governmental and economic activities. This search will focus on those *grupos documentales* that I previously reviewed using the AGN’s ARGENA II record search database and includes the following groups: *bienes nacionales*, *capellaniás*, *general de parte*, *indios*, *judicial*, *matrimonios*, *minería*, *reales cédulas*, and *tierras*.
  - Place reproduction orders for pertinent *expedientes*.
- November 7, 2005 · Return to Austin, Texas