



Juggling Identities: Identity and Authenticity Among the Crypto-Jews

Seth D. Kunin

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Juggling Identities is an extensive ethnography of the crypto-Jews who live deep within the Hispanic communities of the American Southwest. Critiquing scholars who challenge the cultural authenticity of these individuals, Seth D. Kunin builds a solid link between the crypto-Jews of New Mexico and their Spanish ancestors who secretly maintained their Jewish identity after converting to Catholicism, offering the strongest evidence yet of their ethnic and religious origins.

Kunin adopts a unique approach to the lives of modern crypto-Jews, concentrating primarily on their understanding of Jewish tradition and the meaning they ascribe to ritual. He illuminates the complexity of this community, in which individuals and groups perform the same practice in diverse ways. Kunin supplements his ethnographic research with broader theories concerning the nature of identity and memory, which is especially applicable to crypto-Jews, whose culture resides mainly in memory.

Kunin's work has wider implications, not only for other forms of crypto-Judaism (such as that found in the former Soviet Union) but also for the study of Judaism's fluid nature, which helps adherents adapt to new circumstances and knowledge. Kunin draws fascinating comparisons between the intricate ancestry of crypto-Jews and those of other ethnic communities living in the United States.

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