



## Tráfico de saberes. Agencia femenina, hechicería e Inquisición en Cartagena de Indias (1610–1614)

by Ana María Díaz Burgos, Madrid: Iberoamericana – Vervuert, 2020, 264 pp. (ISBN 9788491921202)

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**Tráfico de saberes. Agencia femenina, hechicería e Inquisición en Cartagena de Indias (1610–1614)**, by Ana María Díaz Burgos, Madrid: Iberoamericana – Vervuert, 2020, 264 pp. (ISBN 9788491921202)


In *Tráfico de saberes*, Ana María Díaz Burgos offers an interdisciplinary close reading of the only trial for sorcery in Cartagena de Indias known to have survived in the Inquisition archives. The trial—which took place between 1611 and 1614—was among the very first *procesos de fe* that the Cartagena tribunal launched soon after its arrival in the city in 1610. The suspect was doña Lorenzana de Acereto, a member of the local criollo elite. She was accused of engaging in sorcery and superstitious rituals by which she hoped to get rid of her husband, a royal scribe, and to sustain a relationship with an alleged lover, the *sargento mayor* of Cartagena. The author centers the analysis of the trial in doña Lorenzana de Acereto herself through the lens of ‘agencia femenina,’ which includes Acereto’s everyday actions as well as her strategies to interact with social and institutional frameworks and norms. This approach allows the author to examine the ways in which elite women such as Acereto ‘cumplían con la ortodoxia Católica mientras que continuaban recurriendo a prácticas preexistentes, que el recién llegado Tribunal del Santo Oficio catalogaba como heréticas o como amenazas para la ortodoxia Católica’ (15).

Each chapter approaches a different moment or theme within the extensive faith trial. Chapter one provides indispensable context to understand the dynamics by which the newly established Tribunal of the Inquisition adjusted its operations to the local context of Cartagena between 1610 and 1614. It examines the extant evidence (which consists of summaries rather than full-length trial records) of the six trials for sorcery that inquisitors launched during this period, analyzing how the sentences in these trials varied according to factors such as

class and race. By showing how doña Lorenzana de Acereto received the lightest sentence of the six trials, it argues that the first inquisitors of Cartagena rearranged existing categories of heterodox practices and applied punishments that took suspects' gender, class, and race into account in the process of adjusting Iberian frameworks to the new colonial territory.

Chapter two examines Acereto's voluntary confessions and the declarations that witnesses made at the convent of Santa Teresa, where Acereto had sought temporary refuge from a marital crisis right before the arrival of the Inquisition in the city. Having learned of the imminent approach of the inquisitors, Acereto moved into a space associated with Catholic orthodoxy from which she recruited the help and advice of powerful allies, including local priests and nuns. The nuns' testimonies, which the author complements with documents from the Archivo General de la Nación in Bogotá, also offer a glimpse of the internal dynamics of the convent during its early years, a subject that is not well known in the historiography of Cartagena during this period. The third chapter traces the components of the 'economy of sorcery' that Acereto had access to as it emerged from her confessions and witness testimony. It shows how sorcery operated through local networks of knowledge about words, rituals, and materials that Inquisitors sought to identify and dismantle. The chapter explains some practices in detail, including the fascinating 'suerte del agua,' a divination ritual geared towards obtaining knowledge about the *flotas* that were about to dock in Cartagena. In chapter four, 'Cartografías de la hechicería,' the author examines uses of space as they appear in the testimonies and confession in order to reveal heterodox knowledge about flora, fauna, geography, and local architecture. It shows how elite women with limited mobility accessed distant places or ingredients by forming networks across race and class hierarchies in order to obtain them. It pays special attention to the uses of architectural thresholds for sorcery. For example, it shows how the 'oración del señor de la calle,' a practice for invoking the presence of a lover, required access to a balcony from which the practitioner threw pieces of paper onto the street while reciting a prayer.

The fifth chapter explains the institutionalization and construction of the Inquisition's secret jails in Cartagena and how Acereto negotiated her defense while she was incarcerated during her trial. It provides a striking analysis of the built spaces of the Inquisition headquarters in Cartagena, especially its jails, and shows how they were designed for the purpose of shielding the inner workings of the tribunal from the public eye. This chapter also analyzes Acereto's initial sentence, the subsequent appeal that her husband initiated on her behalf, and the process by which she was finally absolved by the Inquisition high court in Madrid. The book concludes with a fascinating epilogue about echoes of Acereto's story in Colombian literature and telenovelas. Overall, *Tráfico de saberes* shows how a close reading of faith trials can reveal the social, religious, and material complexities behind elite women's strategies to respond to charges of religious deviance. This kind of approach to judicial sources also provides readers with key explanations of the legal aspects behind Inquisition procedures. It is an impressively researched and written monograph that scholars and students in both History and Spanish will find compelling.

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