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## A Heroine's Journey to South America

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Publishers, 2013, 19–30). El mismo autor incluyó sendas versiones en inglés de ambos textos en otra obra posterior, *Islamic Law and the Crisis of the Reconquista. The Debate on the Status of Muslim Communities in Christendom* (Brill, 2015). La afirmación de la autora en la Introducción (5) de que su obra representa el primer análisis amplio de las respuestas legales islámicas a las conquistas cristianas en la península ibérica y el Norte de África a finales del siglo XV y comienzos del XVI debe, por lo tanto, ser matizada.

Como puede comprobarse, el contenido del libro reseñado se refiere tanto a la Iberia medieval

como al ámbito magrebí moderno y contemporáneo. Llama por ello la atención que el título principal haga referencia solo a la Península, pese a que, como la autora propone, algunas de las fetas más célebres relativas a la inmigración de musulmanes peninsulares deban leerse a la luz de los acontecimientos norteafricanos, y a pesar de que el Magreb fuera el destino de muchas de las comunidades de musulmanes peninsulares que se vieron obligadas a abandonar su territorio.



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## A Heroine's Journey to South America\*

Liliana Pérez Miguel uses the biography of the *conquistadora* and *encomendera* Inés Muñoz from Seville to present this history of 16th-century female *encomenderos* in the Viceroyalty of Peru, especially in the *audiencia de Lima*. This volume, abundant in sources, is also a contribution to the history of the *encomienda* as such, in which the author explicitly takes up José de la Puente Brunke's work *Encomienda y encomenderos en el Perú* (1991), a text that covers three centuries and has gained the status of a classic. Liliana Pérez builds on, and adds specifics to, Puente Brunke's work to create a database with information on a total of 137 *encomenderas* between 1540 and 1600, which she researched for her prize-winning dissertation defended at the University of Burgos in 2014. With this work, the author fills a gap in the research literature about the history of women and their agency in the Spanish-American colonial system of the 16th century.

The 16th century saw the first encounters between indigenous and European actors during the setting up of a new colonial society; the historical processes in the »contact zone« (Pratt) during this

period in particular call for an innovative conceptualisation that includes interdisciplinary approaches and methods. It is well known that the *encomienda* was an important, if not the most significant, intersection between the two populations. Giving an account of these historical encounters from a gender perspective seems highly appropriate.

Pérez Miguel examines the *encomenderas* as a social group in 16th-century Peru by looking at the life of Inés Muñoz, who was – as the author emphasises – the first married Spanish woman to arrive in Peru. Based on Muñoz' biography, which is rich in detail and embedded in historical contexts and their legal, economic and social dimensions, the author develops historical categories that can also be applied to other women in this group.

The book is divided into two parts and five chapters. Part I, which only consists of Chapter 1, provides an overview of the women among the *encomenderos* in Peru in the 16th century. In addition to summarising prior studies on the institution of the *encomienda*, the sections on the different bases for women of diverse origins and population

\* LILIANA PÉREZ MIGUEL, »Mujeres ricas y libres«. *Mujer y poder: Inés Muñoz y las encomenderas en el Perú* (s. XVI), Sevilla: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Editorial Universidad de Sevilla 2020, 477 p., ISBN 978-84-472-2944-4

categories to become *encomenderas*, together with the new data organised in diagrams, provide valuable information on many previously unknown *encomenderas*. In Chapters 2–5, Part II chronologically maps the biography of Inés Muñoz in her various capacities and functions – as a *pobladora*, i. e. one of the first *vecinos* (a legal category referring to the holders of a town’s citizenship), as an *encomendera* and administrator of her *encomiendas*, and as the founder of the Concepción convent in Lima and its first abbess.

It is certainly a complex undertaking for a female researcher and author to write about such a paradigmatic female protagonist of the history of conquest and colonisation, in which women have often remained invisible. The challenge was to do justice to Inés Muñoz in her highly ambivalent role as a very active shaper of relationships, networks and policies during a period when the economic and social foundations of the colonial, expanding and globally embedded exploitation system were laid.

However, unfortunately the author uses the undoubtedly rich source material, often drawn for the first time from a variety of archives, as a mere collection of data or as purely historical facts, largely neglecting to take into account the discursivity and narrativity of the sources and the range of possible interpretations. The attributes extended in these sources towards the female population – such as when poor women are accused of using *trucos y hechizos* (86), or women in general are characterised as *inconstantes y poco calladas* (74), to name just two examples – are not productively explored in their multiple levels of meaning. The terminology documented in the sources is carefully explained in the footnotes, but categories like »race« and »ethnic« are simply used as terms whose meaning is assumed to be definite. Terms such as *mestizas*, *indias*, *negras*, *mulatas*, *criollas*, and *inca* are used as »race« categories and are reflected neither in their relationality with regard to time and space nor in their fluidity, which has been discussed in many historical studies. The reference to the 17th-century jurisconsult Juan de Solórzano Pereira, who defines *mestizo* as *sangre mezclada* (see 56), is anachronistic with regard to the 16th century, but also shows a lack of conceptual separation between the contemporary discourse of the colonial epoch and present-day analysis. It also gives the impression that the author is trying to distil a reality with regard to »race« that goes beyond the reality depicted in the sources, for example when

she refers to the summarising term »Spanish women« and the »race« categories that might be covered by this term, including the *españolas de nacimiento además caucásicas* (64). This the author does at her own peril. Works like that of Tamar Herzog, who operates with completely different categories by applying the concept of *vecindad* or the community-building *hacer vecindad* (to make vicinity), in which an important task of the *encomenderas* and *encomenderos* lay, are missing from the present study.

Part II hints at alternative approaches to a biography of Inés Muñoz, showing how her life was interlinked with the developing economic structures of the system of colonial exploitation. However, the author does not actually use these potential approaches, e.g. by including indigenous society in the analysis or by establishing a link between the economic activities taking place in the *encomienda* and the religious activities of the later abbess. Just one example of this is the so-called »crisis of restitution« (301), which in the 16th century led to numerous *encomenderos* and *encomenderas* attempting to make amends to »their« *indios* by returning, by way of legacies, some of the economic resources that had been expropriated. This rarely studied »crisis of restitution« bundled the socio-economic, legal-political, cultural-historical and religious processes and relationships as if in an optical lens; unfortunately, Liliana Pérez does not seize the opportunity to use this or similar phenomena as a starting point for her biography of Inés Muñoz. This approach would have offered the option of looking at the indigenous population as more than just a passive resource that was being exploited by the *encomienda*, the textile manufacturers, and the cattle herding that was linked to both. Rather, these *indios*, *tributarios*, *mitayos* and *yanaconas*, which here are not further differentiated from one another, could have been shown as active participants in the changing social and economic structures of a colonial situation – this, however, is not covered in this study.

In this »women’s history«, which does not apply any gender categories, Inés Muñoz is portrayed rather one-sidedly as a heroine. Her biography appears as a heroine’s journey (as is reflected in the title of the book) and as a history of the *encomienda* as a story of successful civilisation, even if there is a woman at its centre. ■