

Women and Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia

Allyson M. Poska



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Women and Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia Allyson M. Poska While scholars have marvelled at how accused witches, mystical nuns, and aristocratic women understood and used their wealth, power, and authority to manipulate both men and institutions, most early modern women were not privileged by money or supernatural contacts. They led the routine and often difficult lives of peasant women and wives of soldiers and tradesmen. However, a lack of connections to the typical sources of authority did not mean that the majority of early modern women were completely disempowered.

Women nd Authority in Early Modern Spain explores how peasant women in Galicia in north-western Spain came to have significant social and economic authority in a region characterized by extremely high rates of male migration. Using a wide array of archival documentation, including Inquisition records, wills, dowry contracts, folklore, and court cases, Poska examines how peasant women asserted and perceived their authority within the family and the community and how the large numbers of female-headed households in the region functioned in the absence of men. From sexual norms to property acquisition, Galician peasant women consistently defied traditional expectations of women's behaviour.

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