

# Agents of Orthodoxy: Honor, Status, and the Inquisition in Colonial Pernambuco, Brazil

James E. Wadsworth

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## AGENTS OF ORTHODOXY

HONOR, STATUS, AND THE INQUISITION  
IN COLONIAL PERNAMBUCO, BRAZIL

JAMES E. WADSWORTH



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**James E. Wadsworth : Agents of Orthodoxy: Honor, Status, and the Inquisition in Colonial Pernambuco, Brazil** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Agents of Orthodoxy: Honor, Status, and the Inquisition in Colonial Pernambuco, Brazil:

The Portuguese Inquisition is often portrayed as a tyrannical institution that imposed itself on an impotent society. Drawing on extensive archival research, the book challenges this myth by arguing that the Inquisition was integral to colonial society, reinforcing European social and religious values that were recreated in colonial Brazil.

This is a valuable book based on a significant research effort. . . . [that] expands our knowledge of the Iberian Inquisition and its workings in Brazil. It is an important guide to the internal structure of the Inquisition and its bureaucrats. Wadsworth's analysis of those Pernambucan agents of orthodoxy is an important contribution to the literature. (Hispanic American Historical )James Wadsworth has undertaken wide-ranging archival research in order to produce this new perspective on the Portuguese Inquisition by focusing on the lay and clerical officials of the Inquisition in wealthy and well-populated Pernambuco. (British Bulletin of Publications on Latin America, the Caribbean, Portugal and Spain)James E. Wadsworth's *Agents of Orthodoxy* is an engaging and well-documented book, one that makes a truly important contribution to the history of the Inquisition in Brazil, and more broadly, throughout the entire Iberian world. It also offers new insights into the complex array of social and political factors that contributed to the abolition of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1821. Original in approach and revisionist in its findings, this book is one of the best studies on New World inquisitions currently in print. (Richard L. Kagan, Johns Hopkins University)*Agents of Orthodoxy* is an innovative contribution to the still imperfectly known history of the Portuguese Inquisition. It argues that the Holy Office was an active institution in colonial society whose role wasn't confined to the persecution of religious and moral deviants. In fact, Wadsworth's extensive research and sharp analysis shows how deeply the Inquisition, by its system of appointment and local structure, could pervade society, even in distant Pernambuco. It worked as a strong instrument of social exclusion and promotion until the final decades of the eighteenth century. (Bruno Feitler, Universidade Federal de So Paulo)About the AuthorJames E. Wadsworth is professor of history at Stonehill College. He is the author of *In Defence of the Faith: Joaquim Marques de Arajo, a Comissrio in the Age of Inquisitional Decline*, *Columbus's First Voyage: A History in Documents*, and *The World of Credit in Colonial Massachusetts: James Richards and His Day Book, 1692-1711*.