Isaac Cardoso, *Las excelencias de los hebreos* (Amsterdam, 1679)

*David A. Wacks, University of Oregon (2019)*
Introduction

Las excelencias de los hebreos (Amsterdam 1679) is a treatise describing the positive characteristics (excelencias) of the Jewish people and containing a refutation of common anti-Jewish calumnies (calunias) written by Isaac Cardoso (b. Fernando Cardoso, Trancoso, Portugal 1603 - d. Verona, Italy 1683). Cardoso was born in Portugal to a converso crypto-Jewish family. He was educated at the University of Salamanca (Spain), where he excelled in the sciences. He wrote a number of scientific treatises and served as chief physician at the court of Spanish king Philip IV (r. 1621-1665). Eventually he and his younger brother Abraham Miguel Cardoso (1630-1706) fled to Venice, where they were allowed to live openly as Jews. In Venice, Cardoso continued to work as a physician and scientist. There he published an ambitious liberal arts curriculum in Latin, a great compendium of science and philosophy in which he refutes the very popular Kabbalistic mysticism championed by the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi. However, Isaac Cardoso’s younger brother Abraham Miguel was a follower of Tzvi and accomplished kabbalist in his own right, and this sibling rivalry may well have fueled Isaac’s anti-Kabbalistic fervor.

Sephardic Jews, the Expulsions from Spain and Portugal, and the Sephardic Diaspora

There is an unbroken Jewish presence on the Iberian Peninsula going back to at least the Roman period and possibly before. Jewish culture famously flowered during the Andalusi period (711 CE - ca. 1200 CE), after which Jews served as a key colonial elite in the transition to Christian rule. Jewish fortunes on the Peninsula went, on the balance, gradually downhill from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, culminating in the infamous pogroms of 1391 that triggered a wave of mass conversions to Catholicism. This created a class of conversos or New Christians who were technically Christian, but whose spiritual beliefs and practices varied wildly and produced some very innovative hybrid forms of religious practice. The clandestine practice of Judaism was known as judaizing (Sp. judaizar) and was considered a Christian heresy by the Church.

The large numbers of conversos, who were often accused of judaizing, spurred the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478 and led to the eventual expulsion of Jews from the Spanish kingdoms in 1492, and Navarra in 1498, and the conversion of Portuguese Jews in 1497. Tens of thousands of Peninsular Jews chose conversion over exile. Some of these conversos, joining those who converted in the wake of 1391, now largely free of the social restrictions Jews experienced in Christian society, entered the Church, the royal administration, and other sectors of public life closed to them as Jews. They soon formed a powerful elite who attracted no little resentment and suspicion from their fellow Christians.

The annexation of Portugal by Spain in 1580 opened a floodgate of converso migration from Portugal and the Portuguese Empire to Spain and the Spanish Empire. Despite the fact that Portugal had established its

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1 Crypto-Jews were Jewish converts to Christianity (or their descendents) who continued to practice Judaism covertly, at the risk of being denounced to the Spanish or Portuguese Inquisition, institutions charged with policing heresy among the Christian community. The practice of Judaism (Judaizing) by a baptised Christian (and after 1492 in Spain and 1502 in Portugal all subjects were baptized Christians) was punishable by incarceration, confiscation of property, or even death. Crypto-Jews therefore ran tremendous risk in continuing to practice Judaism in this context.

2 Shabbetai Tzvi (1626-1676) was an influential and charismatic Sephardic rabbi and kabbalist active throughout the Ottoman Empire who portrayed himself as a messiah. His activities attracted the attention of the Ottoman authorities, and in 1666 the Sultan’s grand vizier gave him the choice of death by execution or conversion to Islam. He chose the latter.

3 Much of the Iberian Peninsula was under Muslim rule from the early 8th to the early 13th century CE, and the Arabic name for the Peninsula was al-Andalus. After Christian rulers took control of the last major cities Cordova (1236 CE) and Seville (1248 CE), only the Kingdom of Granada remained under Muslim rule until 1492 CE.
own Inquisition in 1536, the Spanish Inquisition did not prosecute crimes committed against the Church in Portugal, which meant that Portuguese conversos would not be persecuted for past Judaizing once they arrived in Spain. This incentive, together with Castile-Aragón’s superior economy, encouraged many Portuguese conversos to cross the border into Castile-Aragón and from there to many of the Spanish Empire’s territories such as the New World, where the Inquisition was less powerful than in Castile-Aragón proper. These migrants became bilingual in Portuguese and Castilian; many had been educated at Spanish universities and published works in Spanish. At this time many of Spain’s literary lights, such as the author of Celestina, Fernando de Rojas (ca. 1480-1541), and the famous poet Luis de Góngora (1561-1627), were born to converso families.

After the Netherlands fell under Spanish control in 1566, Spanish and Portuguese conversos formed a vibrant trading community whose collective wealth supported a good deal of rabbinical study and publications. Even after the northern provinces of the Spanish Netherlands gained independence from Spain some twenty years later, Spain’s continued presence in the southern provinces (today Belgium) provided a platform for the emigration of Spanish and Portuguese conversos to Amsterdam. Amsterdam’s Sephardic community was connected to communities in the Ottoman Empire via trade associations, but the more significant routes were North Africa/Amsterdam. Venice was an important center linking Amsterdam and Iberia with the Ottoman Empire. The rapidly expanding Portuguese empire was home to many Portuguese conversos who had connections with the Amsterdam community as well. The wealth generated by these Sephardic merchants provided for numerous influential religious academies or yeshivot and a rich artistic and spiritual life for Amsterdam’s Sephardic Jews.

The role of Spanish in this environment was significant, and the Sephardic press at Amsterdam produced a robust corpus of works in Spanish, and to a lesser extent in Portuguese, written by and for Sephardic Jews, many of whom were raised as Christians and educated in Spanish universities.

**Excelencias y calunias de los hebreos**

*Excelencias* is an apology or pro-Jewish treatise meant to educate its readers on Jewish history and practice, and to combat typical anti-Jewish ideas that were very widespread in Europe since the Middle Ages, and that persist to this day. Together with the *Historia degli riti ebraici* (History of the Jewish Religion) (Paris, 1637) of the Italian Jewish author Leone da Modena (1571-1648), it is one of few works of Jewish interest directed at non-Jewish readers. As the title suggests, *Excelencias y calunias* is comprised of two parts. The first details the positive characteristics and history of the Jewish people and the second is dedicated to refuting common calumnies or accusations made against them. In the work, Cardoso draws from both Jewish and non-Jewish sources, and displays the full measure of the classical education he received at the University of Salamanca.

In this excerpt, the tenth and last of the calumnies leveled at Jews that he addresses in the work, Cardoso refutes the blood libel often aimed at Jewish communities living in majority Christian societies from the Middle ages to the present day. This is the accusation that Jews murder Christian children and use their blood to make the unleavened bread that is eaten ritually on the holiday of Passover. This holiday coincides with Easter, and so historically preachers and other rabble rousers have taken advantage of the popular religious sentiment associated with the crucifixtion of Jesus to focus blame on the Jews, and foment violence against the Jewish communities in the name of vengeance for the death of Jesus. As Cardoso explains in this text, these accusations are in contradiction to Jewish law, which forbids the consumption of blood of any sort, and condemns murder and human sacrifice in no uncertain terms. It is also worth pointing out that the accusation of drinking the blood and eating the flesh of a human sacrifice is structurally similar to the sacrament of communion, in which believing Catholics drink wine that according to the doctrine of transubstantiation has become the blood of Christ, and eat a wafer that according to the same doctrine has become his flesh. No such parallel is to be found, however, in Jewish ritual.

The local Jewish communities applauded Cardoso’s effort to defend them, and a certain Rabbi Judah Briel of Verona (ca. 1643-1722), where Cardoso lived at the end of his life, wrote the following Hebrew sonnet in honor of *Las excelencias*:

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*Open Iberia/América: Teaching Anthology*

[https://openiberiaamerica.hcommons.org/](https://openiberiaamerica.hcommons.org/)
A Poem in Praise of Isaac Cardoso

Trans. Liran Yadgar, UCLA (2018)

1. Isaac, in recounting the excellencies of our people you progressed along the path of celestial knowledge, eclipsed the light of adversaries, and with your eminence defeated our foes.

2. Upright as a thorn hedge around our vineyard, stepping, sorely, over enemies as in prickles, in your words you uphold those who fall and crush our rivals.

3. I observe the brilliance of your words as opponents proceed to attack you and to pour out their wrath, like fire, upon you.

4. Your might and splendor adorn your attire because like the burning bush you are, unconsumed by the flames of fire!

Decima Calunia de los Hebreos: Que matan niños Christianos para valerse de su sangre en sus Ritos.

Este testimonio abominable de matar niños ó moços Christianos levantán ás Judíos, y dizen que hazen la Pascua con su sangre, y amassan con el, pan azimo en su Pascua celebrada, otros dizen que para valerse de la sangre, y del corazón para haver sus hechizos, y encantos; y fue tan introducida esta falsedad en las Naciones, que en muchas edades se ha continuado con gran esparcimiento de la sangre Judayca, y destrucción de sus haziendas, haziendo en ellos enormes crueldades por estas execrandas mentiras,

Tenth calumny, that they Kill Christians in order to use their blood in their rites

They bring this abominable testimony of killing children or Christian young people against the Jews, and say that they make the Passover sacrifice with their blood, and use it to make the dough for the unleavened bread in their Passover celebration, while others say that they do so in order to use their blood and heart to make witchcraft; this accusation is so entrenched among the non-Jews, that across the ages it has furthered the spilling of Jewish blood, destruction of their homes, committing against them great cruelty because of these

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5 Pesach, or Passover, is a Jewish holiday that coincides with Easter and upon which Easter is modeled liturgically. The word pesach, from which the Spanish Pascua derives etymologically, means ‘sacrifice,’ referring to the lamb that the Biblical Hebrews were ordered to sacrifice in Exodus 12:1-28. Historically Jews have slaughtered and eaten lamb on the first evening of Passover to commemorate this sacrifice.
6 Pan azimo (matza in Hebrew) is an unleavened bread that Jews eat during Passover to commemorate the unleavened bread that the Biblical Hebrews ate in their hasty exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:39). This ritual is commanded in the Bible itself (12:18).
7 In the original text Cardoso uses the word naciones a literal translation of the Hebrew goyim (‘nations’), used to refer to non-Hebrew or non-Jewish people. We should read it as ‘non-Jews’ or perhaps ‘gentiles.’
que les levantan sus enemigos, y con el odio entrañable que le tienen solicitan con diligencia testigos, que afirman ser ellos los autores desta maldad todos los años, con que miserablemente llevados al suplicio se cumplen en ellos lo del Propheta Isayea. Apretado y afligido no abrirá su boca como cordero al degollio es llevado, y como oveja delante sus trasquiladores emmudeció, y no abrió su boca, entregó á muerte su alma, y con rebeldores fue contado. (Isayes. Cap. 53)

Si un Niño, un Joven falta en las Ciudades, si le roban, los Judios le hurtaron, si hombres impios, y perversos le matan, los Judios fueron los omicidas, no ay maldad tan atroz, ni impiedad tan fiera, que no les imputen, ellos siempre llevan la pena de los delitos, que cometieron los depravados, de qualquier suerte aunque sea patente su inocencia ellos son los culpados, y los punidos, muy semejantes al cordero del Apologo de Esopo, que hallandolo el lobo su enemigo, y queriendo ensangrentar en el sus manos le inió de palabras, y le acusó que havia tres meses, que le havia comido la yerva de su campo, respondió el cordero, que aun entonces no era nacido, que mal podia destroçarle su heredad, replicole el lobo que por que le enturbia el agua del arroyo en que le estaba bebiendo, respondiole el cordero, como te puedo yo enturbiar el agua, si tu bebes arriba de la corriente, y yo abaxo, y aunque vió el cruel lobo la verdad de sus razones, le dixo de cualquier modo yo tengo de comer, y has de ser alimento de mis carnes, y luego le despedaçó, y tragó rabioso.

Semejante à otra fabula, que trae de la raposa, y del gallo en que no bastaron sus disculpas para librarse de su rapiña, y tiranía: assi son los hijos de Ysrael en esta captividad, corderos con los lobos, y gallos con raposas de sus enemigos, que deseosos de tragarlos, y consumirlos ninguna razón les vale para librarselos de sus manos, sedientos de su sangre, y tiranos de sus vidas los despedaçan.

If a child, or young person goes missing in a city, if they kidnap him, it was the Jews who took him. If evil, perverse men kill him, the Jews were the killers. There is no crime too atrocious, no cruelty too savage, for which they do not blame the Jews. They always carry the blame for the crimes committed by the depraved, no matter how obvious their innocence they are the guilty, the punished, very much like the lamb in Aesop’s fable, meeting with his enemy the wolf who, wanting to bloody his hands with the lamb, insulted him with words and accused him of eating the grasses of his pasture three months ago. The lamb replied that three months ago he had not yet been born, and so it would have been impossible for him to destroy the wolf’s property. The wolf said that the lamb had muddied the water the wolf had been drinking; the lamb responded: ‘how could I have muddied your water, when you drink upstream from me?’ Although the cruel wolf understood the lamb’s arguments, he said to him ‘in any event, I have to eat, and you must be the food for my flesh.’ Then he tore him apart and ate him ferociously.

This is similar to another fable, about the fox and the rooster, in which his excuses did not spare him from being savaged and suffering tyranny: such are the Children of Israel in this captivity, lambs among wolves, and roosters among their enemies the foxes, who are so desirous of eating them and consuming them that no argument serves to free them from their hands; they

8 The Wolf and the Lamb is one of Aesop’s fables, attributed to the African storyteller Aesop, who is said to have lived in Greece in the sixth century BCE. In the tale, the wolf accuses the lamb of a series of transgressions in order to justify killing and eating him. The lamb refutes all of the wolf’s accusations, proving them impossible, but the wolf replies by saying that another lamb must have committed the crimes and proceeds to kill the lamb. The lesson is that the tyrant will justify his cruelty by any means, the truth notwithstanding.

9 Cardoso here seems to be referring to another tale of Aesop, “The Fox and the Crow,” (and not a gallo or rooster as Cardoso writes) in which the fox distracts the crow by flattering him, after which the fox eats the crow, the lesson being that a predator is never to be trusted.
No basta para desvanecer tan enorme testimonio, y
dissuadir esta mal concebida opinion de la sangre, los
breves de los Pontifices, los decretos de los
Emperadores, y mandatos de los Principes, que dan
por falsa, y por mala esta persuasion, no bastan todos
estos motivos para desengaño de las malas
intenciones, sino que con escritos, con libros, con
semebrar essa fama vulgar estan en una firme
creencia, levantandole, que son homicidas para matar
à ellos, que derraman su sangre para derramar la
suya, con que estas dos calunias, y testimonios de la
sangre, y de las hostias, ó imagenes son dos blancos,
y dos fitos, que exponen, y publican para tirar à
nuestras vidas, con un furor barbaro, y nuestros
adversarios ellos son los testigos, y los juezes contra
nuestra innocencia como dize la Escritura. No como
nuestro Fuerte su fuerte, y nuestros enemigos juezes
(Deut. Cap. 32).

Nuestro Dios es el verdadero Señor, Criador de los
cielos, y la tierra, ni hay otro Dios, como el, pero
nuestros enemigos son los jueces, que sentencian no
segun la justicia, sino segun la passion, no es la
verdad la que investigan, sino el odio, que abraçan, y
el rigor con que persiguen, no atienden al verso del
mismo Cantico, que sangre de sus siervos vengará, y
vengança tomará à sus angustiadores.

Nunca la gentilidad ignorante de nuestras ceremonias
nos levantó estos testimonios, y los Christianos, que
ó por mas sabios, ó por mas proximos, y que saben
mejor de nuestros ritos, y leen tambien nuestros
libros Sagrados devian reprobar estas falsedades,
ellos mismos nos atribuyen acciones tan crueles, y
tan contrarias de nuestra Ley Santisima. Es verdad
que algunos varones sabios, y Príncipes prudentes
abominan estas calunias, y tienen por malevolencia
thirst for their blood and tyrannize them as they rip
them apart.

Papal briefs, imperial decrees, and the orders of princes
are not enough to dispel this great testimony, and
dissuade this misconceived opinion concerning the
blood, this argument is made falsely and with ill intent.
All of these motives are insufficient to give the lie to
these ill intentions. Rather, with a firm conscience they
sow this vulgar reputation, alleging that they are
murderers in order to have them killed, that they spill
blood in order to spill theirs, that these two calumnies,
and testimonies regarding the blood, and the hosts or
images\textsuperscript{10} are two targets, and two milestones that they
promote and publicize in order to tear down our lives,
with a barbaric furor, and the witnesses are our enemies,
and the judges are against our innocence, as the
Scripture says: \textit{For their rock is not as our Rock, / Even our
enemies themselves being judges} (Deuteronomy 32:31).

Our God is the true Lord, Creator of the heavens and
the earth; nor is there any other God like him, but our
enemies are the judges, who pass sentence not according
to justice, but rather according to passion. It is not the
truth they investigate, but rather hate that they embrace,
and in the rigor with which they prosecute they ignore
the verses of the very same Song.\textsuperscript{11} The blood of their
servants will be avenged; they will take vengeance upon
their oppressors.

Those who bring such testimonies against us are not
ignorant of our ceremonies. Indeed those Christians
most familiar with our religion, either because they are
learned or because they are our neighbors, and who read
our Sacred books,\textsuperscript{12} should reprove these falsehoods;
but it is they themselves who attribute to us such cruel
acts, and so contrary to our most Holy Law. It is true
that some learned men and judicious princes abhor
these calumnies, and regard these lies as evil, but the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{10}] \textit{Hostia} (lit. ‘host’) refers to the consecrated host or communion wafer. The Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation
holds that once the host has been consecrated it becomes the actual body of Christ; therefore its abuse is the abuse of
Christ himself. \textit{Imagenes} (lit. ‘images’) refers to sculpted images of Jesus used in Church art and ritual.
\item[\textsuperscript{11}] Deuteronomy 32 is traditionally referred to as the “Song of Moses.”
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] The Tanakh or Hebrew Bible (referred to as the Old Testament in Christian tradition), is considered part of the
canonical Christian Bible, together with the New Testament, a collection of later books considered sacred in Christian
tradition.
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esta falsedad, mas ni la plebe cré à los sabios, ni el vulgo obedece à los Príncipes, quando el odio domina sobre la razon, y el furor cierra la puerta à la disculpa. Pero vamos refiriendo los succesos, y despues descubriremos la falsedad.

En el año de 1183 cuenta el Vicencio en su Espejo Historial, que en Francia los Judios todos los años matavan à un Christiano en sacrificio la semana de la Pascua, y que hallados en este crimen fueron quemados por vezes, y que esto havian cometido contra un Ricardo, que despues fue tenido por santo, al qual crucificaron, y que el Rey Philipo luego que tomó la Corona del Reyno mandó prender los Judios en todos sus Estados estando en sus Sinagogas en Sabado, y los despojó del oro, plata, y joyas que tenian, los desterró de su Reyno, aplicó sus possessiones al fisco Real, y sus Sinagogas convirtió en Iglesias, imputavanles tambien usuras demasiadas con que agravavan los vezinos, y que los banqueros, y usuarios sus hijos se servian de los calizes, y vasos empeñados bebiendo en ellos, y haziendo la sopa en vino.

Este es el Rey que murió despues despeñando una montaña yendo siguiendo un ciervo en la caça, y cuenta el mismo Vicencio, que mandó quemar ochenta Judios en Paris acusados de que havian muerto à un Christiano. En Viena de Austria imperando Federico a los frios grandes de aquella tierra un gran charco de agua fueron como es costumbre, à holgarse y correr por el tres moços pequeños, y rompiéndose el yelo se hundieron, buscandolos por toda la Ciudad, y no pareciendo levantó el pueblo, que los Judios los people do not believe the sages, nor does the rabble obey the princes, when hate dominates reason, and fury closes the door on pardon. However, we shall here narrate the events, and then uncover the lies.

In the year of 1183 Vincent, in his Mirror of History relates that in France every year the Jews would kill a Christian in their sacrifice the week of Passover, and those accused of this crime were often burned, and that they had done this to a certain Richard, who was later believed to be a saint, whom they crucified. Then when Philip became King, one Saturday when the Jews were in their synagogues he ordered them to be arrested, and they robbed them of their gold, silver and jewels that they had, expelled them from the kingdom, transferred their belongings to the royal treasury and converted their synagogues into churches. They also accused them of excessive usury by which they aggravated their neighbors, and that the [Jewish] bankers used the chalices and vessels [of the churches], drank wine from them, and used them to make soup.

This is the king who later fell to his death from a mountaintop as he chased a deer on a hunt, and the same Vincent relates that he ordered 84 Jews, accused of having murdered a Christian, burned in Paris. In Vienna, Austria, during the reign of Frederick, once the great cold of that land had frozen a lake, three young boys went to play and run on it, as they normally did. While they were playing, the ice broke and they drowned. The people looked all over the city for them and they could not find them; they alleged, bringing witnesses, that the Jews had killed them to make a sacrifice of their blood.

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13 Vincent of Beauvais (c.1190-c.1264) was a French Dominican friar and author of the Speculum Maius (Great Mirror), an encyclopedic treatise consisting of the Speculum Naturale (Mirror of Nature, on natural sciences), the Speculum Doctrinale (Mirror of Doctrine, on theology), and the Speculum Historiale (Mirror of History, on world history).

14 Philip IV of France (r. 1285-1314) expelled French Jews from his kingdom in 1306. In the following year he abolished the crusading order the Knights Templar, fearing they had become too powerful.

15 Durante el reinado de Federico II de Hohenstaufen, Emperador del Sacro Imperio (r. 1220-1250), un libelo de sangre fue perpetrado en la ciudad de Fulda en el año 1235. Las acusaciones dieron lugar a un levantamiento popular y una matanza de judíos. Para dar por terminado el caso, Federico convocó un concilio de conversos en el año 1243 para determinar si el sacrificio humano ritual realmente era permitido por la ley judía. La conclusión fue que no.

16 During the reign of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1220-1250) a blood libel was perpetrated in the city of Fulda in the year 1235. The accusations resulted in a popular uprising and killings of Jews. To settle the matter definitively, Frederick convened a council of Christian converts in the year 1243 to determine if human ritual sacrifice was, in fact, allowed according to Jewish law. They concluded it was not.
havían muerto para Pascua con su sangre dando testigos, que havian visto entrar los tres moços en casa de los Hebreos, y añadian que una Christiana havia vendido una hostia à un Judío, y que la maltratava, amotinando el pueblo mandó el Emperador quemar trezientos Judíos, y después de ejecutado el castigo se desyeló el charco, y parecieron sobre el agua los tres moços muertos, que se havian hundido, tan perniciosos son los juysios precipitados, que anticipan la execucion al examen, y el condenar al inquirir.

El Simon de Trento en Ytalía, y el Niño de la Guardia en España son dos funestas tragedias inventadas contra los Judíos. El Bergonense en su suplemento de las Coronicas, y el Surio cuentan, que los Judíos de Trento el año de 1475 Hurtaron un niño de dos años para celebrar la Pascua con su sangre mesclada con el pan azimo, y el Viernes de la passion le llevaron à la Sinagoga, le pusieron en cruz, le taparon la boca, le hirieron, y mataron, y con su sangre celebraron su Pascua con grande alegria, el cuerpo echaron en el rio, que después fue hallado, los Judíos puestos a tormento, todos ellos, ó muertos, ó desterrados, y confiscados sus bienes, lo mismo dize el Bergomense, que succedió en la Mota en los confines del Friuli dalli à cinco años matando un niño del mismo modo, y que presos tres Judíos fueron llevadas à Venecia, y con atroz Suplicios quemados.

Iacob de Valencia en su Tratado contra los Judíos refiere que por los años de 1174 cuando lo de Ricardo en Paris succedió lo mismo en Saragoça de España, sacrificando un niño y despues le echaron en un poço para que no pareciesse, y que por milagro subia el agua sangrienta hasta el bocal del poço. Otro semejante pone el Sepulveda por los años de 1468 y que el Obispo Don Juan Arias los hizo prender, y justiciar. Del Ricardo son Autores Emilio, Roberto Simon of Trent in Italy and the Boy of La Guardia in Spain are two dark tragedies invented against the Jews. The Bergomense,17 in his supplement to the Chronicles, and the Surio both relate that the Jews of Trent in the year 1475 abducted a two-year old child to celebrate the Passover by mixing his blood into the unleavened bread, and on Good Friday they brought him to the synagogue, put him on a cross, gagged him, wounded him, and killed him, joyously celebrating the Passover with his blood. Then they threw his body in the river; later it was found. The Jews were tortured and all of them were either killed or expelled, and their belongings confiscated. The Bergomense says that five years later, the same thing happened in Mota, in the region of Friuli. According to him, Jews killed a child in the same way, and three Jews were imprisoned in Venice, where they were brutally burned.

Jacob of Valencia, in his Treatise against the Jews,18 tells that around the year 1174, when the case of Richard happened in Paris, the same thing happened in Zaragoza, Spain. Jews sacrificed a child and later threw him into a well so that his body would not be seen, and by a miracle the bloody water rose to the opening of the well. Sepulveda19 relates another similar case around the year 1468 that Bishop Don Juan Arias arrested the

17 “El Bergomense” is Giacomo Filippo Foresti da Bergamo (1434–1520), an Augustinian friar and author of Suplementum chronicarum (Supplement to the Universal Chronicle, Venice, 1483). “El Surio” is Laurentius Surius (Lorenz Sauer, 1523–1578), a German Carthusian monk and historian, author of Commentarius brevis rerum in orbe gestarum ab a. 1500 ad a. 1564 (Brief Commentary on World History from 1500-1564, Cologne, 1566).
18 Jaime Pérez (1408-1490) was Bishop of Valencia and author of Tratado contra los Judíos (Treatise Against the Jews, 1484).
19 Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (ca. 1490-1573) was a Spanish priest who argued against Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and for Holy War against the indigenous peoples of the Americas. He was author of a number of books of history.
Gaguinio, y Vicencio, el cual dice que lo tenían de costumbre degollar en el día de la cena, o semana santa a un niño, como por sacrificio, y prosigue el Valencia que todos los años curcifican algún Christiano, y no lo pudiendo haver curcifican en su lugar un animal por sacrificio.

El otro decantado successo, y memorable historia tragica es el niño de la Guardia lugar nueve leguas de Toledo, la qual escrivió Fray Rodrigo de Yepes, y después del, Sebastián de Nieva Commissario de la Inquisicion. Dizen que el año 1491 unos Judíos del Quintanar, la Guardia, y Tembleque del Reyno de Toledo se acordaron para hazer un hechizo de una hostita, y un corazón de un niño de tres, ó cuatro años con que pudiessen matar a los Inquisidores, y Christianos, huyeronlo, llevaronlo a una cueva junto a la Guardia donde le açotaron, lo maltrataron con empellones, y bofetadas, que le dieron 6000 açotes, y que a Xro. le dieron 5490 segun revelaciones de hombres pios, y lo refiere Ludolpho el Cartuxano en la Vita Cristi segunda parte Cap. 58 y al fin le crucificaron, y mataron, y le sacaron el corazón, y esto todo en Pascua del cordero de los Judíos.

Despues le llevaron a enterrar un quarto de legua dela cueva en una viña. Compran una hostia del sacristan de la Guardia, y juntamente con el corazon del niño hazen su hechizo para morir rabiando los Inquisidores, y Christianos, y haziendo la consulta determinaron de mandar a la Sinagoga celebre de Samora a Benito de las Mesuras Cardador, con el corazón, y la hostia la qual llevava metida entre las

accused Jews and put them on trial. Emilio,20 Robert Gaguinio,21 and Vincent all write about Richard, and Vincent says that the Jews customarily would behead a child on the first day of Passover, during Holy Week as a sacrifice, and Jacob of Valencia adds that every year they would sacrifice a Christian, and when they could not find one they would instead crucify an animal.

The other unfortunate event, and memorable tragic story is the Boy of La Guardia, a place nine leagues from Toledo, related by Fray Rodrigo de Yepes22 and later, Sebastián de Nieva,23 Commissioner of the Inquisition. They say that in the year 1491 some Jews of Quintanar, La Guardia, and Tembleque in the Kingdom of Toledo agreed to enchant a host and a heart of a three- or four-year old child in order to kill the Inquisitors and the Christians. They abducted the child and brought him to a cave near La Guardia where they whipped him, brutally abused him and beat him, whipped him 6,000 times (according to pious men Christ was whipped 5,490 times, and this we find in the Vita Christi of Ludolf the Carthusian,24 in the second part of ch. 58), and in the end they crucified him, killed him, cut out his heart, all on the day of the Jews’ Passover of the Lamb.

Then they brought him to be buried a quarter of a league from the cave in a vineyard. They bought a host from the Sacristan of La Guardia, and together with the boy’s heart performed their witchcraft in order to kill the Inquisitors and Christians by driving them insane. They got together and decided to send Benito the Carder of Las Mesuras25 to the Great Synagogue of Zamora with the host and the heart between the pages

20 Paulus Aemilius Veronensis (Paolo Emilio da Verona) (c.1455-1529) was an Italian historian and author of De Rebus gestis Francorum (History of France, printed in 1543).
21 Robert Gaguin (1434-1501) was a French Trinitarian friar and Master of that order, author of Rerum gallicarum annales, (History of France, printed in 1577).
22 Fray Rodrigo de Yepes was a monk and historian of the Monastery of San Jerónimo el Real in Madrid and author of a number of moral and historical treatises written in the last third of the sixteenth century, including a history of the ‘martyrdom’ of El Niño de la Guardia, Historia de la muerte y glorioso martirio del santo inocente que llaman de La Guardia (History of the Death and glorious martyrdom of the saintly innocent named de la Guardia,1583).
23 Sebastián de Nieva was an Inquisition official in Toledo and author of El Niño Inocente, hijo de Toledo y Martir de la Guardia (The Innocent Child, son of Toledo and Martyr of La Guardia, Toledo, 1628).
24 Ludolf von Sachsen (d. 1377) was a Dominican friar and author of one of the first lives of Jesus, the Vita Christi.
25 A carder (Sp. cardador) is a specialized laborer who prepares raw wool to be spun into thread. In many cases occupation names were used to distinguish people with same first name who lived in the same community: Benito Cardador (‘Benito the Carder’); Benito Zapatero (‘Benito the Cobbler’).
hojas de las oras, ó oficio en que rezava, y puesto en oracion un día en la Iglesia, acercándose á él acaso un hombre vió, que de las hojas del libro salía un gran resplandor, y claridad, como arreboles, y colores del cielo, dió aviso á los Inquisidores, y visitandole sus ministros confessó luego la maraña, y el trato que tenian pensado yendo con aquellas reliquias de Samora, que como gran sabio era muy diestro en los hechizos y le prendieron en Avila, prendieron tambien los cumplices de la Villa de la Guardia, que al principio estuvieron negativos, despues confessaron con los tormentos, y fueron justiciados, y quemados en Avila estaba entonces la Inquisicion, antes que se pasase á Toledo.

El coraçon del niño no lo hallaron, la ostia sí, que despues llevaron en processión al monasterio de Tomás, que está en la misma Ciudad, el cuerpo nunca pareció, aunque le fueron buscar á la cueva donde le enteraron. En la sentencia, que se pronunció contra el Benito de las Mesuras confessó haverse baptizado, y torner despues a ser Judio, guardando los Sabados, y Fiestas Judaycas, y observando sus ayunos, y que creya que por haverle hecho Christiano, y haver una vez comulgado, junto con las maldiciones de su padre la havia succedido aquella misería, y prision en que estava, dizia que la hostia no es mas que un poco de harina, y agua batida, añadidas las palabras del Clerigo, que rezava las oraciones en Hebrayco, y que solo le pesava de dexar sus hijos en la feé Christiana.

Era tambien en esta compañia un Fernando de Ribera de Tembleque contador del Prior de San Juan Christiano viejo, que entonces no prendieron, sino treinta años despues de cometido el delito, el año de 1521 que confessó haverse hecho Judio, y seguido la Ley de Moseh, y le quemaron, acusaronle que en la sentencia del niño inocente muerto el havia hecho el oficio de Pilato, y juez, quando los otros lo hazian de Sayones, mas escriven estos autores que negó la acusacion impjuesta aunque confessò ser Judio.

They did not find the heart of the boy, but did find the host, that they later brought in a procession to the Monastery of Thomas, which is in the same city. They never found the body, although they went to look for it in the cave where they had buried him. In the sentence passed upon Benito of Las Mesuras he confessed to having been baptized, and later having returned to Judaism, keeping the Sabbath and observing the Jewish holidays, and fasting. He believed that all this had happened to him because he had become Christian and taken communion, and because his father had cursed him. In prison, he said that the host is nothing more than a bit of flour mixed with water and blessed by a priest, that he said his prayers in Hebrew, and his only regret was that his children would remain Christians.

In this company there was also a certain Fernando de Ribera from Tembleque, accountant of the Priory of San Juan, an Old Christian, whom they did not arrest at that time, but rather thirty years after the crime was committed, in 1521. He then confessed that he had converted to Judaism and followed the law of Moses. They burned him, having accused him of playing Pilate and judge in the case of the dead innocent boy, while

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26 The libro de horas or book of hours is a book containing the Latin prayers meant to be recited at the canonical hours of prayer services in the Roman Catholic Church. Books of Hours produced for churches were often illuminated with colorful illustrations and ornamentation.

27 The Real Monasterio de Santo Tomás was founded in 1480 in Ávila, Spain, by Hernán Núñez de Arnalte, treasurer of the Catholic Monarchs Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, for the use of the Inquisitor General Tomás de Torquemada (1420-1498), who was responsible for fierce persecution of conversos.
Bien se ve claramente de los que escriben estos Autores lo improbable de la narración, y la ficción de la historia, pues que en Pascua ni podían prender ni matar, ni hacer sacrificio de hombre, cosa abominable, ni pareció el cuerpo muerto enterrado, ni se vió el corazón sacado, ni los Judíos uzan de hechizos para matar hombres tan poco juicio tenían el Cardador Benito de Mesuras, que llevaba la hostia en el oficio, ó libro en que rezaba exponiéndose a tan gran peligro en cosa que tan poco le importaba, como le dieron 6000 azotes si la Ley no manda passar de quarenta, que Ley de Moseh manda matar hombres para sacrificio, ni aun los animales fuera de tierra Santa, quando aquella Ley toda es piadad, y misericordia.

Es donosa la digresión que hacen en asemejar aquel territorio de la Guardia al de Yerushalayim, y sus contornos para simbolizar con ella en los sacrificios no advirtiendo que fuera de ella no se podía sacrificar y solo eran allí encomendados los sacrificios de carneros, bueyes, y cabras, no de hombres racionales.

[... ] En esta calumnia se encierran tres pecados: homicidio, comer sangre, y magia o hechizo, y encanto, pecados tan abominables en la ley, y que Dios los prohibe severamente. Es el homicidio un pecado detestable, que con el adulterio, y idolatria, son los tres por quien tienen los Judíos obligación de dexarse matar por no cometerlos aunque los obliguen por fuerça a ello, porque son los destruyedores del mundo, de la paz, y de la religion.

El primer preceto de la segunda tablet la Ley es no matar, y no solo en la Ley de Moseh execrable, sino tambien en la natural dictada a Noah, y a sus hijos. _Verdad sangre del hombre en el hombre su sangre sera_... 

The others played the Sayones. However, these authors write that he denied the accusation although he did confess to being a Jew.

We can see clearly from what these authors have written that their narratives are improbable and their stories fictional. On Passover Jews cannot have abducted, murdered, nor sacrificed humans. The body never appeared, neither did anyone see the heart taken from it. Neither do Jews use witchcraft to kill people. Are we to believe that the carder Benito of Las Mesuras had so little sense as to carry around a consecrated host, or the book of hours, exposing himself to such great risk for something about which he cared so little; that they gave him 6,000 lashings, if the law commands us to give no more than 40; that the law of Moses commands us to kill people for sacrifice, when we are not even allowed to kill animals for sacrifice outside of the Holy Land, the entirety of that Law is piety and lovingkindness.

Their digression in comparing the land of La Guardia to Yerushalayim and the contortions they go through in order to symbolize the sacrifices made there without mentioning that outside of Yerushalayim it was forbidden to make sacrifices, and in any event the only ones made were those of calves, oxen, and goats, not rational humans, is really quite charming.

[... ] The calumny combines three sins: murder, the consumption of blood, and magic, or witchcraft, and enchantment, all such abominable sins in our law, that God has severely prohibited them. Murder is such a detestable sin, together with adultery and idolatry, that they are the three sins for which Jews are obliged to let themselves be killed before they might commit them, even though they be forced to commit them by someone else. They are the scourges of the world, of peace, and of religion.

The first precept of the second tablet of the Law is _Thou Shalt Not Kill, and not only is it execrable according to the Law of Moses, but also in the Natural Law given to Noah and to his children:_ Whoever sheds the...
vertido, que con figura del Dío hizo al hombre. Genes. Cap. 21. Y aun antes al mismo Adam se le havia dado ese precepto en su mismo entendimiento, aunque la Escritura no hace prohibicion sino del arbol de saber el mal, y el bien, que à no ser precepto Divino, y tan ajustado à la razon por ser semejanza de Dios el hombre, no seria pecado en Cain la muerte del hermano Hebel, de suerte que en la ley natural, en la Divina y en todas las humanas fue siempre gravissimo pecado alguno del homicidio, sino que constando con pruebas evident es el agressor la pena del talion vida por vida.

Siendo el natural de los Judios piadosos, como lo enseña la Escritura, lo muestra la experiencia, y lo hemos probado en estos discursos, como havian de tirar la vida cruëles donde Dios la pusos piadoso, que ley se lo manda que precepto los obliga, que fin les mueve à tan henorme pecado, que influencia les incita contraria de su natural sobre todas las naciones clemente, y compassiva. Es tanta la piadad de Ysrael que para matar à una gallina, à un pollo, à una avezilla para su alimento no basta qualquer Judio tiene necesidad de que haga este officio el pratico, y particular maestro dedicado para esta funcion, que sepa los juyzios de degollar, del cuchullo agudo, de las bendiciones, que sin estos requisitos ni es lícito el degollar, ni el comer la carne. Los mismos Sabios tienen por grave pecado matar por gusto las aves y los animales, y el andar à caça de fiers, ó asestar à los paxaros, por ser todas obras de inhumanidad contra los vivientes, que el Señor creó en el mundo, solo la necesidad, y el intento los hase lícitos, no la recreacion, ni el gusto, que embuelve la crueldad en el divertimiento, y la impiedad en el regalo.

Con los perros manda el Señor usar de piedad, y que se les de la carne terefá que no puede comer el Jew donde Dios la pusos piadoso, que ley se lo manda que precepto los obliga, que fin les mueve à tan henorme pecado, que influencia les incita contraria de su natural sobre todas las naciones clemente, y compassiva. Even with dogs, the Lord commands compassion in their treatment, that we give them the unkosher meat that Jews cannot eat, rather than sell it to non-Jews. One should note that this commandment puts the animal and not the human first, for the animal has more need of sustenance, not being able to seek it without the aid of

31 The “law of talion” (Lat. lex talionis) is the doctrine of an eye for an eye, or that the punishment should be proportional to the crime committed. It was first codified in the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1750 BCE), and then further refined in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 21:22-25; Deuteronomy 19:16-21; Leviticus 24:19-21).

32 In the original text, the Hebrew word terēfá refers to food that is non-kosher, or not in compliance with the Biblical laws of kashrut as specified in Exodus 22:30.
El comer la sangre los Judios es un pecado grande, y que dize Dios sea el alma tajada del que lo comiere, como havian de mesclar sangre en el massó, ò pan azimo de la Pascua, si estan vedada su comida, la pureza de la Fiesta, y la simplicidad de aquel pan sin sal, y sin levadura requiere gran perfeccion en hazerle, y no contaminarle, fuera de que el comer la sangre causa un horror à la vista un asco al estomago, y un daño à la salud, quiso Dios afuera el secreto que encierra el preceto en lo literal de no comerlo, desviarnos de la cruelidad, y que no acustombrassemos à derramar sangre, no solo la humana, que es abominacion, sino tambien la del animal vertiendola por gusto, y no por necessidad: quiere la gentes comer nuestra sangre, y nos achacan que comemos la suya, y por ellos dize el Psalmo. Comientes mi pueblo, como si comiessen pan. Psal. 14. Y dos vezes lo repite en dos Psalmos diferentes, como que las gentes uzan estas violencias repetidas de comer la sustancia de los Judios frecuentemente como si comiessen pan.

Dizan lo tercero nuestros contrarios, que los Judios se valen desta sangre para sus hechizos, y encantos, cosa tan prohibida, y nefanda en nuestra Ley que dice: A la hechizera no des vida, y pone mas hechizera, que hechizero, por ser dadas mas à este pecad por su liviandad, y codicia las mugeres, que los hombres; y en otra parte dize No ay aguero en Iahacob, ni adevinacion en Israel. Nume. Cap. 23. Estos sacrificios humanos, y diabolicas supersticiones uzaron entre los Christianos los Gnostos ciertos herejes, de quien cuenta Porfirio, que el Viernes de la passion à la tarde se juntavan en un lugar destinado con donzellas, y mugeres sus conocidas,

It is a great sin for Jews to eat blood, and God says that the soul of one who does so is stained. How then, would they mix blood in with the matzah, or unleavened bread of the Passover, if it is forbidden for them to eat it? The purity of that Holiday, and the simplicity of that bread without salt and without leavening requires that it be made with great attention to detail, so that it not be contaminated. Blood causes horror to the eye, disgust to the stomach, and great harm to one’s health. We cannot presume to know God’s intention in forbidding us from literally eating it, but apart from this, he intended to guide us away from cruelty, that we not become accustomed to shedding blood, not only that of humans, which is an abomination, but also that of animals, spilling it for sport, and not for necessity. The gentiles33 want to eat our blood, and blame us for eating theirs. Because of them the Psalm says: ‘[they] eat up My people as they eat bread’ (Psalm 14).34 This is repeated twice in two different Psalms, like the gentiles who repeatedly use this violence to destroy the Jews as frequently as they eat bread.

The third thing our enemies say is that the Jews use this blood in their enchantments and spells, something so forbidden and nefarious in our Law that it is written: Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live (Exodus 22:18). What’s more, it says sorceress, not sorcerer, for women are more given to this sin because of their foolishness and greed than men. Elsewhere it says: there is no enchantment with Jacob, Neither is there any divination with Israel (Numbers 23:21). The Christians used these accusations of human sacrifice and diabolic superstitions against the

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33 Like the use of Naciones above, in the original text the word gentes (lit. ‘peoples’) is a literal translation of the Hebrew goyim (lit. ‘nations’), meant to refer to nations other than the Biblical Israelites and later the Jews of the Diaspora.

34 The full text of the verse is “Shall not all the workers of iniquity know it, who eat up My people as they eat bread, and call not upon HaShem?” (Psalm 14: 4)

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y que hechas sus devociones matavan las luzes, y se juntavan con ellas indiferentemente hijas, madres, y hermanas según cabía la suerte, y las criaturas que nacían en este incestuoso, y nefando ajuntamiento las cogían de los pechos de sus madres, y mataván abriendoles las venas, recogían la sangre en vasos, y quemaban los cuerpos, cuyas cenizas mescladas con la sangre bebían, y les servían de manjares, entendiendo, que con esto se disponían para un furor prophetico y un animo elevado para cometer grandes empresas.

Bibliography


35 Gnosticism refers to a number of religious sects that flourished in the Mediterranean in the second century CE. The gnostics were influenced by early Christianity and by the ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato (fifth-fourth century BCE). Later Christian writers, upon whom Cardoso is likely drawing, accused the Gnostics of a wide range of barbaric practices, including human sacrifice.

36 Porphyry of Tyre (c. 234 – c. 305 CE) was a Greek philosopher who lived in the Roman Empire. His book *Isagoge* (in Arabic or Latin translation) became a standard logic textbook in the middle ages.

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