

THE BLACK DEATH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN TÀRREGA: LESSONS FROM HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY*

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IN MARCH 2014, an exhibit opened at the Museu Comarcal de l'Urgell in Tàrrega, commemorating a tragedy that had occurred in that Catalan town nearly seven hundred years earlier.¹ This tragedy—the murder of a large number of the town's Jewish inhabitants—has been acknowledged for centuries. Reports of the events that transpired in the summer of 1348 reached the ruler of the Crown of Aragon almost immediately. Legal proceedings continued for several years thereafter, not so much to identify and prosecute the murderers as to restore property and financial instruments that had been destroyed or stolen in the rioting.² Meanwhile, contemporary reports of the events in Tàrrega circulated among the Jewish communities of Catalonia. Stories of the event were also handed down among subsequent generations of Jews when they emigrated to Italy after their general expulsion from Spain in 1492. All of this, too, has been known for some time.

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1 Museu Comarcal de l'Urgell-Tàrrega, "Tragèdia al Call. Tàrrega 1348" <<http://museutarrega.cat/exposicions-permanents/tragedia-al-call-tarrega-1348>> [accessed April 23, 2014]. A catalogue of the exhibition is available at <<http://museutarrega.cat/documents>>. All skeletal samples referenced in this study derive from the medieval Jewish cemetery of Les Roquetes and are curated at the Museu Comarcal de l'Urgell-Tàrrega. There is no identifying information associated with any of these individuals (i.e., there are no burial records for this cemetery or coffin plates that identify interred individuals by name), and thus this research does not constitute any risk to living descendants. All the research at the site has been conducted in accordance with the *Llei 9/1993, de 30 de setembre, del Patrimoni Cultural Català* and the *Decret 78/2002, de 5 de març, del Reglament de protecció del patrimoni arqueològic i Paleontològic*.

2 Much of this local documentation, created by Christian authorities, was assembled and published by López (1956); see below.

But written accounts tend to take on a certain abstraction, which is why the discovery of the Jewish cemetery in Tàrraga in 2007 occasioned such interest. Within it were found six communal graves that seemed to hold the victims of the 1348 uprisings (Muntané 2007b, 2009, 2012a).³ These graves are the only material evidence of the violent acts perpetrated against the town's Jewish minority. In the following essay, a team of archeologists, historians, and scientists lays out the evidence for the events of 1348 from a new perspective: first, we reassemble the historical documentation and examine it for evidence of the exact timing and circumstances of the events; then, we turn to the material evidence from the cemetery, examining it, too, to confirm the date of the events that produced these communal graves; and finally, in more detail, we look for evidence of the nature of the attack, the identities of the victims, and the circumstances in which they were laid to rest in this cemetery.

Part I: The Documentary Evidence

One of the acknowledged consequences of the plague epidemic of 1348–51 was an escalation in attacks on social minorities, including clerics, beggars, persons suffering from leprosy, and foreigners, who were blamed for the inexplicable mortality. In Catalonia, as in many other regions of Western Europe, Jews stood out as being the most powerful minority group and, as such, suffered disproportionately when the Black Death reached the area. What makes the Catalan case distinctive is that we now have an example of the documentary record being confirmed and extended by archeological data of an uprising against the Jewish community of Tàrraga in July 1348,⁴ making it one of the first communities to suffer such an assault directly related to the Black Death.⁵ The brutality of those uprisings is witnessed in various reports written by contemporary Jews.

3 Here and elsewhere, the Catalan term *fossa comuna* has usually been translated as “communal grave” rather than “mass grave.” As the evidence summarized in this article indicates, aspects of the burials discovered at Les Roquetes were carefully planned, if hasty. This was not a haphazard disposal of bodies. That said, the editors’ decision to render this ambiguous term as “communal grave” should not mask the fact that those buried in these graves were victims of a massacre.

4 In the original Catalan version of this essay, the authors used the term *avalot*, a “popular uprising” or “seditious tumult” (cf. *Diccionari de la llengua catalana de l’Institut d’Estudis Catalans*). The exact motivations behind these attacks may have been more complicated than the epithet “popular” can adequately capture, and yet the term *pogrom* seems too heavily freighted to be used unproblematically. Therefore, we have settled on the term “uprising.”

5 Earlier attacks in April of 1348 occurred in Toulon, Hyères, and several other

With respect to the uprising in Tàrrega, we have the testimony of a contemporary rabbi, Hayyim Galipapa (b. Montsó, c. 1310–d. Pamplona, c. 1380), then living in the town of Huesca, in Aragón. His account has survived due to its incorporation into the historical narrative of an Italian Jew, Joseph ha-Kohen (1496–1578), who commemorated the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Black Death in his *Emeq ha-Bakha* (*Valley of Grief*, 1557–58) (ha-Kohen 1557–58/1981: 27).⁶ Two points of information provided by Galipapa help to contextualize the attack on the Jews of Tàrrega and correlate it with the spread of the plague epidemic. The first has to do with the route connecting the three Catalan towns he mentions, in the following order: Barcelona, Cervera, Tàrrega. This same order is confirmed by several official documents from the royal chancery of Pere III (r. 1336–87) of Barcelona (Pere IV of Aragon), documents which also record attacks on Jews in each of these towns. Barcelona, Cervera, and Tàrrega were connected by the main east-west road, and the order thus reflects the direction that the plague took, moving westward from the coast toward the interior of the principality (López 1956, 1959a, 1959b). Galipapa's second informative contribution helps to establish the date of these three incidents. According to the rabbi, there was an uprising at Barcelona on a Saturday afternoon, followed by another at Cervera on an unspecified date, and by yet another at Tàrrega three days after the second. For this last, he assigns a specific date: the 10th of the month of Av.⁷

Establishing the link between the arrival of plague and the attacks on these three Jewish communities is not straightforward. First of all, we must accept that our sources will only record *human* cases of plague, and not the actual spread of the pathogen through rodent populations or contaminated foodstores. What we can see from the documented human cases is that plague seems to have arrived in Catalonia only recently, in the spring of 1348, having been reported first at Perpignan in April, and then by May at Girona, to the northeast of Barcelona. It also reached Tarragona and Valencia (other port cities to the southwest) as well as the

small towns in Provence. See Crémieux 1930–31; Shatzmiller 1974. The more widely known attacks in Savoy and the Rhineland did not start until later in the year 1348. On the latter, see most recently Cohn 2007.

6 Ha-Kohen also incorporated Galipapa's narrative into another work, *Dibre ha-Yamim le-Malke Zarfat we-'Otoman* (Chronicles of the Kings of France and Turkey), published in Venice in 1554: see Barzilay 2011. The authors thank Mr. Barzilay for sharing his work with them, and also Susan Einbinder for alerting them to this (and other) pertinent publications.

7 See ha-Kohen 1557–58/1981: p. מז line טו and p. מה line כה.

island of Mallorca in the month of May (López 1956: nos. 2 and 5; see also Guilleré 1984: 106).⁸ By mid-May, at the latest, deaths are documented in Barcelona (Gyug 1983; Guilleré 1993–94, 1:171–72). The uprising against the Barcelonan Jewish quarter (*call*) therefore took place shortly after the arrival of the plague, since it seems that Jewish-Christian relations remained stable up through May 15 (Nirenberg 1996: 237–38).⁹ According to the information we can extract from the royal chancery documents, the attack was vicious: “On Saturday last, some people incited by an evil temper, having set their fear of God and our dominion aside, gathered as a riotous mob and entered into the *call* of the Jews of Barcelona. And there they destroyed and despoiled many dwellings and they killed many Jews.” That was on May 17, 1348. Just five days later, Pere III ordered the capture of the perpetrators of the uprising and the strengthening of security around the Jewish quarter in Barcelona.¹⁰ A week later, on May 29—concerned lest there be further attacks – the king issued an order of protection to officers of the Jewish quarters in Montblanc, Tàrraga, Vilafranca del Penedès, and Cervera.¹¹ Almost two months after these precautions were taken, however, a document completed on 24 July shows their ineffectuality, as uprisings had already reached the towns of Cervera and Tàrraga.¹²

8 In Tarragona, the plague began the first of May: see Trenchs 1969.

9 The historian Esteve Gilabert Bruniquer (c. 1608/1915, 4: 319) claimed, confusingly, that there was “a great procession of many priests from the cathedral and parishes and monasteries and many other people” on May 2, but he then linked that ceremony to the great mortality in June.

10 “Die sabbati proxime preterita, nonnulli maligno spiritu concitati, Dei timore postposito at in nostre dominationis conceptum per modum aualoti intrarunt in Callem Judaycum Barchinone et inibi, plura hospitia fregerunt et disraubarunt ac multos judeos inibi occiderunt”; see López 1956: no. 8 (May 22, 1348).

11 “The king ordered his officials that ‘you are to maintain and protect and defend each and every Jew of the Jewish quarter of the city and of his realm and their possessions and goods vigorously and earnestly from all disturbances, molestations, injuries, inconveniences and offenses’” (“El rei manava als seus oficials que ‘omnes et singulos Judeos aljame Judeorum ville eiusdem et collectorie sue ac res et bona eorum quecumque, manuteneatis, protegatis et deffendatis viriliter et potenter, ab infestationibus, molestiis, injuriis, grauaminibus et offensis indebitis quorumcumque nec ipsos uel eorum aliquos in personis et bonis ipsorum, per modos supra specificatos uel aliter, permittatis a quo quam contra jus et justitiam agrauari seu etiam molestari”); see López 1956: no. 9 (May 29, 1348).

12 “Hiis diebus proxime lapsis, propter rumores nobis subito venientes, qualiter per nonnullos civitatis Barchinone et villarum Cervarie, Tarrage, contra aljamas et singulares dictarum civitatum et villarum, casu fortuito et inopinato, concitato populo, extitit suscitata occasione cuius strages seu neces, percussiones et vulnera

Like Galipapa's Hebrew account, these official documents offer no precise date for the attack on the Jewish quarter of Cervera. For Tàrrega, however, we have Galipapa's date: 10 Av of the year 5108, which would fall in the first half of July, probably around 6 July.¹³ Since we have already seen that Pere III was reacting to the assaults on all three communities by 24 July, the date we can deduce from Galipapa's testimony seems credible.

This causal relationship between the occurrence of the epidemic and attacks on Jewish quarters is even clearer in a document of early 1362, during what is generally seen as the second wave of the plague in Western Europe (see Carmichael 2014, in this issue). Trying to pre-empt the alarm caused by the arrival of a new outbreak of the plague, the secretary of the Tàrrega Jewish community requested protection from the king. For "as in the time of deaths, by divine judgment, which took place long ago, the Jewish community and its members were despoiled and many of them put to a sword by some people of this town and others, so now [...] because of the deaths that have occurred and are still occurring in some parts of the kingdom, they fear that they will again be damned and plundered and killed as fiercely as before."¹⁴

Obviously, the same degree of alarm did not exist in the minds of Catalan Jews before 1348, so we find no documents (contemporaneous with the arrival of the plague) that indicate a fear of attack by Christians. However, understanding of this causal relationship was rapidly discerned by

varia et diversa rapinie ad destructiones domorum, adversas alias predictas et quampluribus singularibus ex ea fuerunt diversimode subsecuta"; see López 1959b: no. 5 (July 24, 1348). This document is addressed to the authorities of Lleida, who wanted to avoid an attack similar to the one in Cuirassa (one of the two Jewish neighborhoods of Lleida). It was of no use, as a document dated August 11, 1348 (included in one of July 18, 1349, no. 12) indicates that the wave of attacks spread elsewhere: "And especially recently, first in the city of Barcelona and now in the towns of Cervera, Tàrrega, and in the city of Lleida and other places" ("Et specialiter nuper primo in civitate Barchinone et nunc noviter in villis Cervarie et Tarrege et in civitate llerde et in aliis etiam locis").

13 See "Hebcal Jewish Calendar", online at <<http://www.hebcal.com>> [accessed March 1, 2014].

14 "Pro parte aljame Judeorum dicte uille, fuit nobis humiliter suplicatum ut cum tempore mortalitatum que, Dei iuditio temporibus preteritis viguerunt, aljama ipsa et eius singulares, per aliquas personas uille eiusdem et aliunde, fuerint disraubati et plures ex ipsis gladio trucidati, timeantque nunc occasione mortalitatum que jam viguerunt vigentque nunc in aliquibus partibus regni nostri iterato dampnificari, depredari et interfici et immaniter prout prius dignemur eisdem super hiis de nostri regia clementia subuenire"; see López 1956: no. 150 (January 12, 1362).

the survivors of that uprising. A few years later, the influential Tàrregan Jew Moixé Nathan wrote:

On the day that any plague or famine occurs which threatens the earth, the people cry 'All this happens because of the sins of Jacob! Destroy this nation, kill them!' And during the disaster [...] they undertake in a violently thoughtless way to destroy the unfortunate Jews.¹⁵

Pope Clement VI (1342–52) and his successor expressed similar views.¹⁶ So did Galipapa, who describes news of the plague spreading throughout Catalonia and Aragon, in conjunction with false accusations against Jews: “For the sin of Jacob all this has passed, because they have taken a deadly poison into the world. From them is the fault and it is the cause of the great misfortune that afflicts us now!” (ha-Kohen 1557–58/1981: 77). Whether Galipapa was accurately voicing contemporaneous concerns about well-poisoning or projecting later concerns back onto the past, he captures a sense of radical changes occurring in Catalonia and Aragon.¹⁷

One final point of information gleaned from Galipapa’s account (as reported by ha-Kohen) needs to be assessed here: his claim that the number of Jews killed in Tàrraga exceeded three hundred.¹⁸ The royal chancery’s references to the death toll are often vague.¹⁹ At one point, it is stated that almost all of Tàrraga’s Jewish citizens were exterminated:

15 Nathan, *Accords* § 1b, signed in the month of Tevet of the year 5115 (between December 16, 1354 and January 13, 1355). For an edition of the original Hebrew text, see Baer (1929: no. 253). For a Catalan translation and introduction, see Feliu and Riera i Sans (1987). See also Pieters (2006), which includes a photographic reproduction of the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 2237, fols. 270v–272v.

16 See Clement’s letter to prelates of the Church in Simonsohn 1998: no. 373 (November 26, 1348). See also a surviving Spanish translation of the papal bull issued by Innocent VI at Avignon on January 21, 1356 (Simonsohn 1998: no. 378).

17 Ha-Kohen 1557–58/1981: 77. Nirenberg (1996: 236–37) argues that there were no *contemporaneous* accusations of poisoning in Catalonia in 1348. In other words, Galipapa’s temporal distance from the events of 1348 may be significant.

18 See the excerpt from Galipapa’s testimony provided in the documentary appendix below.

19 E.g. (emphasis added) “ratione seu occasione necium in personis *plurium* judeorum ipsius ville nequiter perpetratarum et aliorum criminum et excessum”: López 1959b: no. 11 (June 26, 1249); “et *plures* ex ipsis glaudio trucidati”: López 1956: no. 150 (January 12, 1362). Compare (emphasis added) “*non pauci* Judei [de Tàrraga] crudeliter interfecti et disraubati fuerunt” with “*aliqui* Judei ville Cervarie interfecti et disrobati fuerunt”: López 1959b: no. 29 (May 31, 1352).

“the greater part of the Jews, men and women both, of the said town were ferociously slaughtered in the invasion of the Jewish quarter.”²⁰ Another report mentions “uprisings, murders, and despoiling done and perpetrated against the Jews of Barcelona and Cervera and especially those in the town of Tàrrega, of whom more than three hundred were viciously murdered.”²¹ The stress placed on Tàrrega (*specialiter ville Tarrage*) suggests that most of the deaths occurred there. This accords closely with Galipapa’s account, which gives specific mortality figures for each of the uprisings: twenty dead in Barcelona, eighteen in Cervera, and three hundred in Tàrrega. Although, as we will see, the archeological evidence cannot fully support this large number, we must remember that the cemetery in Tàrrega has not been fully excavated.

Archival research is also allowing us to refine and understand another side effect of the plague that is often forgotten, because it almost exclusively affected the economic status of a social minority. In Catalonia, an ongoing crisis was already being felt some decades before the arrival of the plague. By the time the Black Death struck, the region had suffered a long period of famine and economic instability starting in 1333 (“the first bad year”). This crisis, in turn, led to a substantial growth in loans made by Jews, with borrowers increasingly drowning in debt while trying to overcome their continued losses (Abad 1999). In other words, the disease struck at a time when the population was already weakened, both physically and financially. It is therefore significant that Jewish sources, as well as the official records of the chancery, corroborate the fact that assaults on local Jewish communities were accompanied by the looting of their homes and property and the extensive destruction of documentation relating to these debts. In all three of the cases noted above, the violence was not only focused to greater or lesser degree on the Jewish population, but also on the financial instruments in Jewish archives.

For the summer of 1349, furthermore, there is extensive notarial evidence of Jewish citizens filing claims to recover debts that remained

20 López 1959: no. 18 (15 April 1350): “judeos et iudeas aljame ville pretacte in *maxima ipsorum parte* atrociter trucidarunt in quorum Judeorum invasione” (emphasis added). The magnitude of this number depends on the number of people living in Tàrrega at the time, which we cannot know with any certainty according to Riera i Sans (1987).

21 López 1959b: no. 10 (document of March 23, 1349 found in one of June 13, 1349): “in facto concitationum, necium et raubariorum factarum et perpetratarum contra judeos Barchinone et Cervarie et specialiter ville Tarrage, ex quibus ultra trecentos fuerint nequiter interempti.”

unpaid after the plague and the attack on the Jewish quarter of Barcelona.²² The fact that most of these claims specify the amount to be repaid without factoring in accrued interest suggests that these are references to debt instruments that were destroyed or lost, the intention being to recover at least the capital that had been initially invested. Among these we can also find instruments held by Jews from Cervera and Tàrraga, who were trying to recover investments they had made while living in these towns, but who were registering their claims in Barcelona—probably because they did not yet dare to do so at home.²³ (Among them was Moixé Nathan, who moved to Barcelona after the attacks.) Indeed, the claims that begin to appear in mid-1349 are supported by a royal mandate (dated September of the same year) that absolves Jews from fines or possible errors incurred in collecting debts for which they do not possess the original instruments (López 1959a: 335). By contrast, references to debt instruments do not appear in the documentation for Tàrraga until the years 1352–54 (López 1959a: 354). The atmosphere in Barcelona and Tàrraga could not have been more different: while the attack on the Jewish community in Barcelona was not as brutal, and there was clear legal recourse for the recovery of Jewish property, the magnitude and memory of the Tàrraga massacre may have continued to frighten survivors for many years, delaying any such claims to what was their own.

22 Arxiu Capítular de Barcelona (hereinafter ACB), Notaris de la ciutat, Jordi de Vilarrubia, vol. 221 (1347–51). In this volume, between pages 97 and 128, there are over sixty debt instruments which allow us to glimpse legal actions undertaken by survivors of the attacks on the *call* of Barcelona. Other similar documents (although not so many) can be found at ACB, Notaris de la ciutat, Francesc de Puig, vol. 233 (1348–49).

23 ACB, Notaris de la ciutat, Jordi de Vilarrubia, vol. 221 (1347–51), fols. 99r, fol. 128v, and fol. 166v.

DOCUMENTARY APPENDIX

Description of the Uprising according to the Secretaries of the Tàrrega Jewish Community, as Documented by the Crown of Aragon

The following is an excerpt from a longer document created in the chancery of Pere III which lays out the formal complaints of the Jewish community of Tàrrega, whose survivors were seeking restoration of property seized or destroyed in the attack of 1348. This passage summarizes the events as reported to royal officials. Arxiu Reial de Barcelona (ARB), reg. 658, fol. 52r–v (December 2, 1349); excerpted from López 1959b: no. 14.²⁴

Anno proxime lapso, nonnulli ipsius ville, populum eiusdem fortiter concitando, Dei timore et nostre correctionis postposito, nostram magestatem offendere non verentes, diabolico spiritu incitati, manu armata et mente deliberata ad callum ipsius aljame hostiliter accesserunt et ausibus indebitis violenter ostias ipsius callis tamen securibus et allis [sic] armorum generibus fregerunt et etiam destruxerunt ipsumque callum intrarunt unanimiter et potenter clamoris vocibus emittentes “Muyren los traydors” et, hiis non contenti, sed mala peyoribus comulantes, hospitia ipsorum judeorum nequiter dimitarunt lanceis, lapidibus et sagitis et demum in eis intrantes, res et bona omnia eorumdem tamquam raptores secum perperam asportarunt et plura instrumenta ac scripturas ipsorum judeorum diversorum contractuum laniarunt et etiam conburserunt et plures judeos ipsius aljame inaniter occiderunt et quosdam alios atrociter percusserunt et etiam vulnerarunt et plura alia dampna gravia et immensa, injurias, ofensas, raubarías molestias et violentias ipsis judeis fecerunt.

(In the year just passed [i.e. 1348], some individuals of this town strongly aroused its people to put aside the fear of God and our authority, not hesitating to offend our majesty. Incited by a diabolical spirit, with armed hand and deliberate intent, they came maliciously to the *call* of the Jewish community [*aljama*] and with unwarranted recklessness they violently broke down and destroyed the gates of this *call* with axes and other types of weapons, and they even destroyed the *call* itself, entering into it all together and shouting loudly with raised voices, “Kill the traitors” [*Muyren los traydors*]. And not satisfied with that, but rivaling terrible acts with even worse things, they ruthlessly raided Jewish homes with spears, stones, and arrows. And, finally entering the said houses, they took away all the goods and property of the Jews, just as if they were

24 The quoted passage is couched as a reported speech clause (introduced with *quod*), which explains the verb forms used here. Note that the incendiary cry “Kill the traitors” is quoted in Catalan, not in Latin. A different English translation of a longer selection from this document can be found in Aberth (2005: 142–43).

thieves, and lawlessly they tore and burned many legal instruments and various written contracts of the Jews and they senselessly murdered many Jews in this community, and others were beaten mercilessly and were wounded, and they inflicted many terrible evils, grave injuries, offenses, robberies, harms, and atrocities and on these Jews.)

Description of the Uprisings of Barcelona, Cervera, and Tàrraga by Hayyim Galipapa, as Preserved in the Chronicle of Joseph ha-Cohen

Excerpted from ha-Kohen 1557–58/1981: מזח–מז.

ויהי ביום השבת לעת ערב ויקומו על עם ה' אשר בבארצילונה ויהרגו מהם כעשרים נפש ובביזה שלחו את ידם ואין אומר השב עודם נלחמים וח' נתן קולות ומטר וגשם שוטף ואש מתלקחת וית' בהלו הקמים עליהם כלל ה' שפתם וילכו גם שרי העיר וגדוליה ויצלו הנשואים מידם ולא עצרו כח להצילם בטרם היות הקולות והמטר כי רבו הקמים עליהם האומרים נכחידם מגוי ולא יזכר שם ישראל עוד ייטיב ה' לטובים והמטים עקלקלותם יוליכם את פועלי האון אמן ואמן. ויהי לימים עוד ויקומו על היהודים אשר בעיר צירבירה וירגו כשמנה עשרה נפש ובביזה שלחו את ידם והנשואים רים ברחו לנפשם ויענו בצום חיתם ושק ואפר הציקו לרבים ויהי לימים עוד שלשה ביום העשירי לחדש אב ביום ענות נפשם ויקומו גם יושבי טאריגה ויכו ביהודים ואבדו יותר משלש מאות נפש ויסחבום אל בור רק ובביזה שלחו את ידם ודנשואים ברחו לנפשם אל בית מכריהם במתן בסתר עד עבור הזעם וישארו ערומים מכל קנינם ולא יתבוששו ביום הנמחה ההוא.

(He arrived Saturday evening, which was when the Lord rose against the people who were in Barcelona. About twenty people were killed and despoiled^a and nobody said “Hold back!”^b The uprising was continuing when a storm broke out^c and then, before the rain fell and lightning struck, those who had risen up against the Jews took fright. The Lord confused their speech.^d Then came the elders of the city and the leading men and they rescued the survivors. Before the thunder and the rain had scared them, there were many who were rioting against the Jews and saying “Exterminate them from among the nations! Let the name of Israel be remembered no more.”^e May the Lord reward the good and may he torment those who turned themselves into malefactors.^f Amen, Amen.

After some days, people in the town of Cervera rose up against the Jews, killing about eighteen of them and despoiling them.^g The survivors fled, mortifying their souls with fasting and sack cloth and ashes and suffering greatly.^h

And after three more days, in the tenth day of the month of Av, which is a day of mortification, the inhabitants of Tàrraga also rose up against the Jews. They killed more than three hundred people and dragged them to an empty cistern, and despoiled them.ⁱ The survivors fled to the homes of acquaintances and remained hidden until the fury subsided.^j On that rash day, they remained naked of all their possessions but without shame.^k)

^a Esther 9. 10, 15, 16

^b Isaiah 42. 22

^c 1 Samuel 12. 11

^d Genesis 11. 7

^e Psalms 83. 4

^f Psalms 125. 4

^g Esther 9. 10, 15, 16

^h Esther 4. 1, 2

ⁱ Esther 9. 10, 15, 16

^j Isaiah 26. 20

^k Genesis 2. 25



Figure 1. Overview of the Communal Graves

Part II: The Material Evidence

The Site

In 2007, in preparation for the construction of a housing development in an area classified as an historic site, excavations began at the Maset hill in the town of Tàrrega. It had already been reported that skeletons had been found in the area, during prior work on the street leading to the development, so an anthropologist was present when the archeological dig began. In conjunction with this investigation, historian J. X. Muntané (2007b) conducted an assessment of the *Llibres d'estimes* for the year 1501,²⁵ from

²⁵ In medieval Catalan municipalities, the property registers called *llibres d'estimes* (books also known as *del manifest* or *de valies*) were used to assess taxes on their



Figure 2. Communal Grave (FS) 161

which he deduced the possible location of a medieval Jewish cemetery on that same site, which is known as “Les Roquetes.” This hypothesis was confirmed by the discovery of two rings bearing Hebrew inscriptions and other remains indicative of Jewish burial customs (Colet et al. 2009; Colet and Ruíz 2014), as evinced by similar findings in the Jewish cemeteries of Valladolid (Moreda and Serrano 2009), Barcelona (Duran and Millas 1947), and the street of Nové Město in Prague (Wallisová 2011).

The archeological excavations in the western sector of the cemetery revealed a concentration of anthropomorphic tombs, of a kind resembling sunken baths, covered with slabs of rock. This may be considered the oldest part of the cemetery, based on the typology of similar tombs found on Montjuïc in Barcelona and in Girona (Casanovas Miró 2003). Also uncovered were six communal graves containing the remains of at least sixty-nine individuals (**Figure 1**). The total number of individuals interred in all of these graves cannot be determined at the present time, because the graves clearly extend to the south, beyond the excavated area.

The Graves

The communal grave shown in **Figure 2** (designated FS [fossa comuna] 161) is located furthest to the west of the excavated area. Its shape, like that of the other graves, is roughly rectangular. The north and south walls of this particular pit have been lost, perhaps due to erosion of the hillside’s steep northern slope; erosion could also account for the destruction of the

inhabitants’ property (houses, gardens, mills, fields, vineyards, etc.). Each owner made a detailed declaration, under oath, of real estate held in the municipality, and a value was then established as the basis for calculating the tax owed.



Figure 3.
Communal Grave
(FS) 163

south wall. However, there is another possible explanation for the absence of the grave's north wall: it could be that this grave and FS 163 (situated immediately to north: see below) formed a single pit, and that there was originally an empty space between the groups of bodies interred here.

One feature evident in this comunal grave is the limited breadth of the east-west axis. (This is the case in all of the graves except for FS 54: see below.) In this grave, the shaft is only about 1.5 meters wide, constraining the bodies contained within it. Placement of the bodies in the pits therefore involved either bending the legs or forcing the heads downward, to adapt them to this narrow space. The position of these bodies is suggestive of the speed with which they were buried.

In this particular grave, at least ten individuals were interred, among them a child aged between seven and twelve, an individual of indeterminate sex between seventeen and twenty-five years old, three men and a woman all aged between twenty-five and thirty-five years, two men aged forty and fifty, and one adult individual of indeterminate sex. One of the bodies (EU²⁶ 1173) was found with a set of five buttons located under the right collarbone. (See the further discussion of this evidence below.)

The grave shown in **Figure 3** (FS 163) is unusual when compared to the others. In the first place, a wooden cover was found beneath the landfill. This cover was made of pine,²⁷ in accordance with Jewish burial prac-

²⁶ In Catalan, EU is the acronym for the stratigraphic unit associated with every individual in a communal grave (FS).

²⁷ Dr. Raquel Piqué, of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, has made a study of these remains.



Figure 4. Communal Grave (FS) 54

tices (de Vries 1929/2001: 253). Another special feature of this grave is the degree of anatomical disarticulation exhibited by the human remains within it. Of the (at least eight) distinct individuals whose remains have been found in this grave,²⁸ only one has remained partially articulated. Analysis of the skulls yields the following information about the victims: one child aged three or four, two young women between twenty and thirty years of age, a man and a woman between the ages of thirty and forty, a woman aged between forty and forty-four years, a woman aged between fifty and sixty years, and an adult woman of undetermined age.

Also found in this grave were artifacts that might constitute the pieces of a necklace associated with the child buried here (EU 1185). Such artifacts might be considered amulets, either on the basis of the material from which they are made or the manner of their production (Colet et al. 2010). The child in question appears to have suffered from a slight malformation of the lower limbs, which may account for the necklace of protective charms, meant to safeguard or heal the child.

The communal grave shown in **Figure 4** (FS 54) has retained only its west wall. Unlike the rest of the graves, the breadth of its east-west axis suited the heights of the individuals buried there, since their legs

²⁸ In Catalan, the NMI or minimum number of individuals.

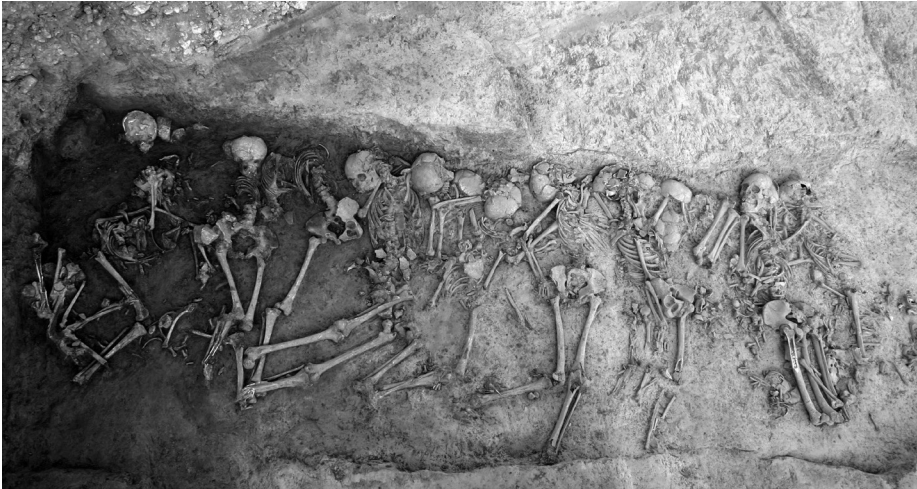


Figure 5. Communal Grave (FS) 162

are unbent and their skulls intact. It contains the remains of at least five individuals whose bodies were carefully prepared for burial. However, the bodies of individuals EU 1051 and 1053 appear to have been moved, causing disarticulation of the skeletons and depositing some remains atop the right leg of the individual EU 1052. Individual EU 1055 also appears to have been moved slightly. All of these movements could be interpreted as the result of successive burials or the later reopening of the graves, actions which (voluntarily or involuntarily) displaced the remains.

This grave contains two individuals of indeterminate sex, one between ten and twelve years old and the other around seventeen, a young woman aged between seventeen and twenty-five, a man aged between twenty-five and thirty-five years, and a woman aged between thirty-three and forty-five years.

The grave shown in **Figure 5** (FS 162) has a north-south axis measuring 5.4 meters, while the east-west axis ranges between 1.3 and 1.51 meters. Due to the limited breadth of the latter axis, those burying the individuals contained in it had to force their bodies into the grave. Yet these burials do not fill the entire grave, which extends about a meter and a half further to the north. Noteworthy features of this grave are the discoveries of a white glazed ceramic jar, buried near the bottom and almost intact, and also part of a white glazed ceramic lid, found on the north side. Interestingly, a fragment of the same lid was discovered in the landfill of another grave (FS 166: see below). This proves that both graves were covered over at the same time, but the unusual presence of these ceramic materials in the graves has not yet been explained.



Figure 6. Communal Grave (FS) 164

This grave, FS 162, contains the remains of at least twenty individuals. As in the case of FS 161 (see Figure 2 above), the mangled positions of the bodies indicate the speed with which burial was performed. Identifiable remains include those of a perinatal or newborn child of indeterminate sex, a child who was about six months old, two children aged between two and three years, a child of five to six years, two children of indeterminate sex between the ages of six and seven, a boy and a girl between thirteen and fifteen years of age, two young men and two young women between eighteen and twenty-five years old, two men and a woman between twenty-five and thirty years of age, and four adult individuals of indeterminate sex.

The communal grave shown in **Figure 6** (FS 164) has yielded, so far, the largest number of remains. However, it has not been excavated in its entirety, because it extends to the south of the area that could be accessed in 2007. Moreover, the north side has been destroyed, possibly by erosion. The excavated length of the north-south axis measures 7.74 meters in length. The east-west axis measures approximately 1.56 meters. The most obvious of this grave's noteworthy features is the fact that the bodies placed further to the south display a lower degree of anatomical articulation than those to the north. While the latter are clearly individualized, those in the southern edge of the grave have been jumbled together, although they maintain a certain uniform orientation, with the heads placed toward the west.

In this grave, buttons have been recovered among the remains of two individuals: a female of undetermined age (EU 1201) and an adult male (EU 1211). A number of coins and the key to a chest have also been found (designated MCUT²⁹ 4653). A minimum of twenty-five individuals can be

29 The acronym denoting the artifact's number in the inventory of the Museu Comarcal de l'Urgell-Tàrraga.



Figure 7. Communal Grave (FS) 166

identified. Among them are a child aged approximately six years, six children aged between seven and twelve, a girl between thirteen and fifteen years of age, three young women and two young men between twenty and thirty years of age, a woman and two men aged between thirty and forty years, two women and three men aged between forty and sixty years, a man in his sixties, and three individuals of indeterminate age (two men and an individual of indeterminate sex).

The grave shown in **Figure 7** (FS 166) is located farthest to the east of the area excavated at Les Roquetes. As with FS 164, the southern arm of the grave extends beyond the range of the archaeological dig and was not fully excavated. The north wall has been destroyed, either due to erosion or previous human efforts to prevent water from leaking into the area (a problem that persists today). The breadth of the grave's east-west axis varies between 1.42 and 1.57 meters. In addition to the fragment of pottery noted above, identified as part of the lid to the ceramic jar found in FS 162, another set of coins was also found.

FS 166 contains the remains of at least twelve individuals of both sexes, as in FS 161 and 162. Among them are a child aged five to six years, two children between the ages of seven and twelve, two adolescents between twelve and twenty years of age, three individuals aged between twenty and thirty, and four aged between thirty to forty.

Summary Analysis of the Archeological Evidence

The excavation of these communal graves and the findings described above have allowed us to draw up the following hypotheses.

The fact that one of the skeletons in FS 161 (Figure 2) has retained a set of five buttons (located under the right collarbone), and the discovery of additional buttons in FS 164 (Figure 6), indicates that these bodies may have been clothed at the time burial. This possibility is reinforced by the discovery of sets of coins in two graves (FS 164 and FS 166: Figures 6 and 7). The way these coins were found, clustered together, indicates that they were contained in receptacles of perishable material, such as purses, that could have been hidden within outer garments.

All of the burials in these communal graves conform to the orientation characteristic of Jewish ritual, with the heads to the west and the feet to the east. We wish to highlight that this was so in all cases, even in those graves where decomposition has caused the skeletons to fall apart. Certain care can also be discerned in the placing of individuals' remains: efforts were taken to avoid piling them up. We believe that the careful orientation and disposition of the bodies indicates that they were buried by the surviving members of the Jewish community.

In one of the graves (FS 164: Figure 6), the bones show evidence of violent trauma visible to the naked eye. The later anthropological study of the remains (summarized below) showed that over half the bodies in the six communal graves show signs of violent trauma as the cause of death, which occurred either immediately or in the hours following the attack.

The demographic distribution of the people buried in these communal graves reveals that they include all age groups—from a newborn to adults over the age of sixty—and that both sexes are equally represented: evidence that suggests an indiscriminate attack on those interred in this section of Les Roquetes.

A numismatic study of the two sets of coins found in graves FS 166 and FS 164 proposes a date no later than the mid-fourteenth century (Clua 2009). This chronology is backed by the Carbon-14 dating of one of the skeletons (EU 1220) found in grave FS 164, which is datable to the years 1280–1391 CE (CNA1644 cal $2\sigma^{30}$). The dating obtained from these assessments accords with what is known about the uprising in Tàrraga.

30 This has been established by the Centro Nacional de Aceleradores attached to the Universidad de Sevilla–Junta de Andalucía and the Spanish *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC)*.

All of these indications lead us to propose that the 1348 uprising against the Jewish community of Tàrrega, which is well documented in written sources, is now documented, too, in the communal graves found in Tàrrega's Jewish cemetery. The survivors of the uprising—who, as the historical documentation implies, were almost all from the Jewish community—had to bury their dead. But the magnitude of the violence must have generated considerable fear among the survivors, making it difficult to lay the slain members of their community to rest immediately. At the same time, the massacre had occurred at high summer and in the context of the plague epidemic, which means that the survivors would have worked quickly once it seemed safe to do so. All of this explains the decision to bury a large number of bodies in communal graves that were not always of a suitable size.

Communal burial is not common in Jewish burial rites, under most documented conditions. There are, however, notable exceptions.³¹ In the medieval Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula, a contemporary example can be found in Valencia, where the Jewish community was also the target of violence (Calvo Gálvez 2003). But in this case, the shape of the mass grave was roughly polygonal and it contained forty bodies, heaped up and mixed together. As can be inferred from the disposition of those bodies that have retained anatomical articulation, the dead were gathered and buried within a brief period of time, since rigor mortis had not yet set in, in the majority of cases. A significant percentage of the individuals buried in the Valencia gravesite (30%) also display traumatic lesions. These lesions are especially discernible in skeletons of ten male adults, and were caused by fatal and intentional wounds. The other individuals in this grave may have died of plague, as their bodies show no signs of violence. The majority were adult males, and only one child and one adolescent have been identified.

Unlike the uprising in Tàrrega, the attack on the Jews in Valencia is not documented in either Christian or Jewish sources. However, the discovery of two coins among a pile of materials dumped into the upper part of the grave suggests that the most feasible date for this mass burial is 1348 (Calvo Gálvez and Lerma 1998). Comparing the Valencian grave with those at Les Roquetes highlights several important differences between them. In Tàrrega, the attack on the Jewish community was indiscriminate, since representatives of the entire Jewish population (men and women of all ages) are found in the communal graves. In Valencia, the attack was

31 Multiple burials have been found at Córdoba: see Larrea and Hiedra 2010. See also the study of the medieval Jewish cemetery in Prague by Wallisová (2011).

selective and most of the individuals in the grave were adult men, some of whom may have been victims of the plague and not of violence. The differences between the distribution of the bodies in the two sites also shows that the Jewish burial customs were observed (to at least a certain extent) at the Tàrrega site, where it is highly likely that survivors of the attack there buried their own dead.

Elsewhere in Europe, evidence for the mass or communal burial of Jews also tends to confirm that such burials result from violence. In 2004, a well containing seventeen skeletons was discovered in Norwich, England: the remains of eleven children (between the ages of two and fifteen) and six adults, all dated between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although the initial identification of these individuals as Jews was controversial, and the results of ancient DNA testing generated much debate, subsequent analyses suggest that they were indeed the victims of violence, and they have since been given a Jewish burial.³² Excavations at the Jewish cemetery of Jewbury (York, England) have revealed contemporaneous evidence of communal burials: in this case, a series of tombs hold more than one body, and this may be interpreted as a solution to the burial of family members who died at the same time, or of people who died on the same day. Although it is unclear whether such unusual measures were taken as a result of an attack on the Jews of York, it is undeniable that there was a marked increase in violence there during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Lilley et al. 1994: 338–39 and 380–81).³³

Other communal and mass burials dating from the fourteenth century have been found in the lands of Christian Europe, mostly connected (as shown by aDNA analysis) with the arrival of plague. The fact that no signs of violence are discernible on the remains of those buried in these graves makes it plausible (in cases where DNA studies have not been carried out) that they died from infectious disease (Ollich 2012; Kacki and Castex 2012). Yet attacks on Jewish communities occurred in places other than Tàrrega and Valencia during 1348. The first documented assaults

32 See the summary “Bodies in Norwich Well Buried in Jewish Cemetary, published online at *The History Blog* <<http://www.thehistoryblog.com/archives/24175>> [accessed May 13, 2014].

33 Violence against the Jewish communities of both Norwich and York (in particular) has been very well documented, and this violence escalated toward the end of the twelfth century. On the slaughter of the Jewish community at York in the pogrom of 1190, see Jones and Watson (2013). It should be noted that violent attacks on the Jews of England did not occur during the Black Death; Jews had already been expelled from the realm in 1290.

occurred in Toulon, in April, and then in other places in Provence.³⁴ The wave of attacks later spread to Swiss and German cities (Cohn 2007). The archeological evidence from Tàrrega thus helps to substantiate the documentary records of all these events.

Anthropological Field Analysis

This section will focus on the particular features of the bodies buried in the six communal graves at Les Roquetes. As noted above, the archeological excavation uncovered the remains of at least sixty-nine individuals interred in this section of the Jewish cemetery and revealed the careful arrangement of the bodies in these graves. The bodies were oriented with the heads to the west and the feet to the east, in accordance with Jewish burial practices. The individuality of the bodies was maintained insofar as was possible, by avoiding the piling of corpses. These facts, again, make it likely that the surviving members of the Jewish community took charge of the burial, despite the tense atmosphere that no doubt prevailed in Tàrrega after the uprising. However, the condition of those human remains which do not maintain anatomical articulation suggests that the period between the time of death and final burial must have been long. This evidence allows for differentiation among the graves, depending on the degree of articulation displayed by certain bodies. This field study accordingly offers some hypotheses about events that occurred at the time of death and burial, based on this data.

Graves containing primary deposits—that is, bodies that have remained intact up to the time of excavation (e.g., FS 54: Figure 4)—indicate that the decomposition process took place entirely on site, after burial. Once deposited, these bodies would not have been shifted, aside from the normal movement caused by natural taphonomic processes. If there had been any outside intervention, these displacements would be reflected in the excavated skeletal material, which would then be considered secondary deposits.

Graves that contain bodies displaying significant joint disarticulation suggest that these bodies had started to decompose prior to burial, probably in a different place, before they were brought to the site. The graves FS 163 and FS 166 (Figures 3 and 7) contain remains with little or no discernible anatomical articulations. The burial of these remains would therefore have taken place some time after the death of the victims. This period would have been long enough to allow the process of decompo-

34 See note 5.

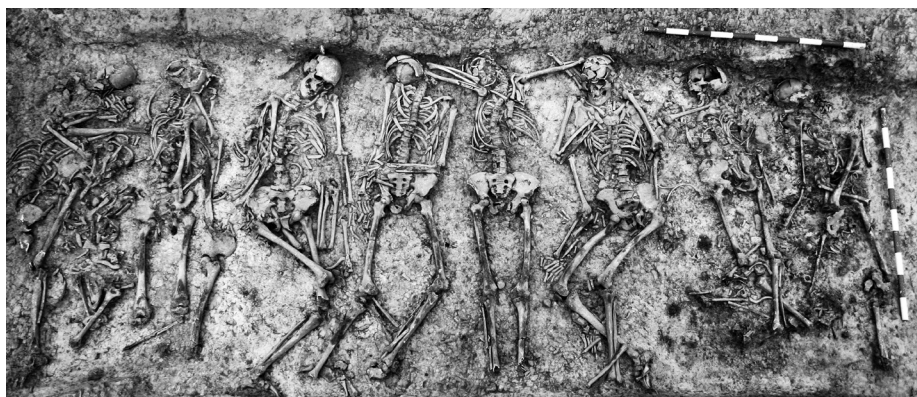


Figure 8. Detail of a Communal Grave Containing Primary and Secondary Deposits

sition to begin, thus explaining the loosened joints leading to disarticulation. Despite the difficulty of establishing the amount of time that had elapsed before burial, it is important to note that the remains found in this secondary state were still carefully disposed. Special care was taken to arrange the skulls of the victims, and to align all heads and feet on the west-east axis. This further demonstrates the intention to follow the precepts of Jewish burial in laying out these remains, as well as the intention to avoid overcrowding.

Graves of a mixed type, containing the remains of both primary and secondary deposits, are represented by FS 161, FS 162, and FS 164 (**Figure 8**). These graves are characterized by the burial of a core group of individuals whose remains display relatively good anatomical articulation (primary deposits), accompanied on one side or both ends of the grave by secondary deposits of bones. Although skulls and limbs have often become disconnected, the disposition of these remains still adheres to Jewish burial customs. As already noted, the differing degrees of joint articulation exhibited in all cases is remarkable and provides information that allows for study of the time elapsed between the death of an individual and his or her final burial.

Although the reasons for this variety in the burial pattern are still unknown, the two decisive variables are the location of an individual corpse during the interval between death and burial as well as the amount of time elapsed during that interval. During the time of chaos and insecurity immediately following the uprising and the assault on the Jews of Tàrraga, it is difficult to imagine that survivors would have dared to bury the victims. They would have had to wait for a certain degree of security to be re-established by royal authorities before preparations for ritual



Figure 9. Bodies Lacking Feet
(Detail of Figure 4)

burial could begin. During this period, the bodies of victims could have been kept in a secluded place away from the town, so as to prevent the spread of disease and also to protect the bodies. In fact, Galipapa's testimony refers to a cistern where bodies might possibly have been stored until the moment of the burial (Muntané 2009: 175). Thus, both the time between death and final burial, and the conditions in which bodies were preserved during this period, are likely to explain the different degrees of anatomical articulation found in the bodies of several graves.

Before we move to assess evidence for the circumstances of the victims' deaths, it is important to emphasize that the feet of many individual bodies were missing at the time of their interment (see **Figure 9**). Of the seventy-one recovered legs displaying good overall anatomical preservation and articulation, only thirty-six retain the foot connected with the rest of the limb. The explanation for this phenomenon is not related to the attack itself, since the affected limbs do not show any evidence of violence: that is, the missing feet were not amputated during the assault on the *call*. On the contrary, the disappearance of the feet occurred after death and probably before the corpses' final disposal in the graves. The distal regions of the legs in question do not show signs that would lead us to infer that the feet were removed by a cutting tool. Rather, the perfectly preserved state of anatomical articulation could suggest that the feet were accidentally pulled off when those preparing the corpses for burial attempted to remove shoes by tugging at them: an action that would not have severed the connective tissues, were they still intact. Moreover, the fact that no isolated foot bones were recovered during the excavation indicates that feet were removed when the bodies were already skeletonized, and that this occurred before the time of burial.

We can offer possible hypotheses that relate this phenomenon to the time elapsed between death and burial. As previously mentioned, this period must have been relatively long, and some of the bodies were clearly affected by advanced decomposition. It may well be, then, that some of these individual bodies lost their feet in the course of their transfer to the grave. We might also consider the possibility that it was necessary to reuse footwear in a time of crisis, such as that which prevailed after the uprising, provided that the removal of shoes from severely decomposed bodies did not affect the rest of the skeleton. Alternatively, the removal of shoes (and feet) could be interpreted as a posthumous act of revenge by Christians of the town,³⁵ but performed so skillfully so as to leave no anatomical evidence of damage to the distal part of the legs. In any case, no separate foot skeletons were retrieved, and we await further evidence that might lead to the resolution of this mystery.

Anthropological Laboratory Analysis

This section summarizes the results of the laboratory analysis of human remains recovered from the Tàrrega cemetery at Les Roquetes, data that helps to reconstruct the events that occurred during the assault on the Jewish *call* in July of 1348. This study accounts for all of the individuals—at least sixty-nine in number—whose remains have been recovered so far and from which a demographic reconstruction could be made (with the proviso that the cemetery has still not yet been completely excavated). Those individuals represent all age groups and both sexes, and present a demographic profile very similar to that of the people buried in other parts of the cemetery. Therefore, it seems clear that the attack was perpetrated against the Jewish population as a whole, without any apparent intentional selection of victims.

Focusing on the age of the victims, we find that 32% are subadult individuals (i.e., individuals below the age of approximately twenty years) and 67% are individuals of adult age, leaving a remainder of 1% whose age has not yet been determined due to the poor preservation of those remains. The pattern of mortality shows that young adults (aged twenty to thirty) are in the majority, making up 30% of the people buried in the communal graves.

35 For example, the narrative account of the pogrom against the Jews in the Provençal town of Toulon, an event which occurred during April 1348, notes that the massacred Jews, who had been left dead in the streets, were stripped of their clothes (“et suis vestibis spoliatis proressiaverunt”). See Cremieux 1931: 59.

Figure 11. Example of Skeletal Injury



Figure 10. Example of Cranial Injury



Regarding the distribution of sexes, we should highlight the imbalance found between the proportion of males (31%) and females (50%). Perhaps the 19% of individuals whose sex could not be determined figures in this disparity, but poor preservation of some remains and the difficulty of diagnosing the sex of subadult individuals prevent further identifications at this time. Indeed, individuals for whom it was not possible to determine either age or sex constitute 32% of the total number of buried in the communal graves. This means that we cannot establish whether individuals of a particular sex or age group were targeted during the uprising. However, the evidence overall suggests that the attack was perpetrated against the community at large, with no discrimination as to age or sex.

Laboratory analysis strengthens this hypothesis because it shows that the majority of individuals buried in the graves (at least thirty-seven out of sixty-nine) suffered injuries traumatic enough to mark the bone. We counted 155 injuries in total, both cranial (105 cases: see **Figure 10**) and skeletal (fifty cases: see **Figure 11**). The characteristics of these lesions and the number of injuries identified in each case (up to twenty-two injuries were afflicted on a single individual) further establishes the brutality of the attack, which seems to have been intended to eradicate the Jewish community of Tàrrega. As for the thirty-two individuals for whom no injury of this type can be discerned, this lack of evidence may be due (on the one

hand) to the poor state of preservation of some remains or (on the other) to cases where the fatal injury occurred in soft tissue without penetrating to the bone, thus leaving no visible traces on the skeleton. Moreover, this hypothesis is supported by the fact that individuals who exhibit no such markings were buried simultaneously and alongside those whose wounds are evident, thus indicating that all those buried in the communal graves died within the same period of time. In addition, some of those without evident wounds could have died of plague or other infectious diseases during that time, and would then have been buried with the rest of the victims. Unfortunately, no aDNA tests have been performed, but comparison of the paleodemography of Les Roquetes with other cemeteries bearing witness to catastrophic episodes may hint at the effects of plague on the pattern of mortality here (Margerison and Knüsel 2002; Gowland and Chamberlain 2005). The demographic profile of a community's plague victims is often closely aligned with that of the population at large, because all the individuals have an approximately equal probability of dying, irrespective of age or sex (Keckler 1997). However, the simultaneity of the uprising in Tàrraga and the plague epidemic masks the effects of each.

Of the thirty-seven individuals who were detected to have injuries caused by violence, ten are children and the remaining twenty-seven are adults. As for the distribution by gender, twelve female and fifteen male individuals could be identified with this type of injury, maintaining the same equity mentioned in the demographics of those buried in the mass graves. Thus, there is no discernible difference between the injuries inflicted on any age group or sex, demonstrating once again the indiscriminate attack that the Jewish inhabitants of Tàrraga suffered. It is important also to acknowledge the evidence of cruelty towards the defenseless, such as the male individual EU 1215, found in grave FS 164. This man sustained at least twenty-two injuries, twelve inflicted on the skull and ten on the rest of the body (**Figure 12**). A careful study of the remains revealed that this individual had an old fracture in his right leg that had healed poorly, with osteomyelitis in the right tibia and fibula. This old injury would have made escape difficult, since the victim would not have been able to run and thus would have been an easy target. This is further evidenced by the extensive leg injuries that he apparently suffered during the attack. The detailed study of such trauma and speculation about the weapons and tools used during the attack enable us to fill an important gap in the existing scholarship and to begin reconstructing the events that occurred. Examining the types of imprints left on the bones—cuts, fractures, fissures, and so forth—allows us to extrapolate information about the types of weapon that were used during the assaults on each individual, pro-

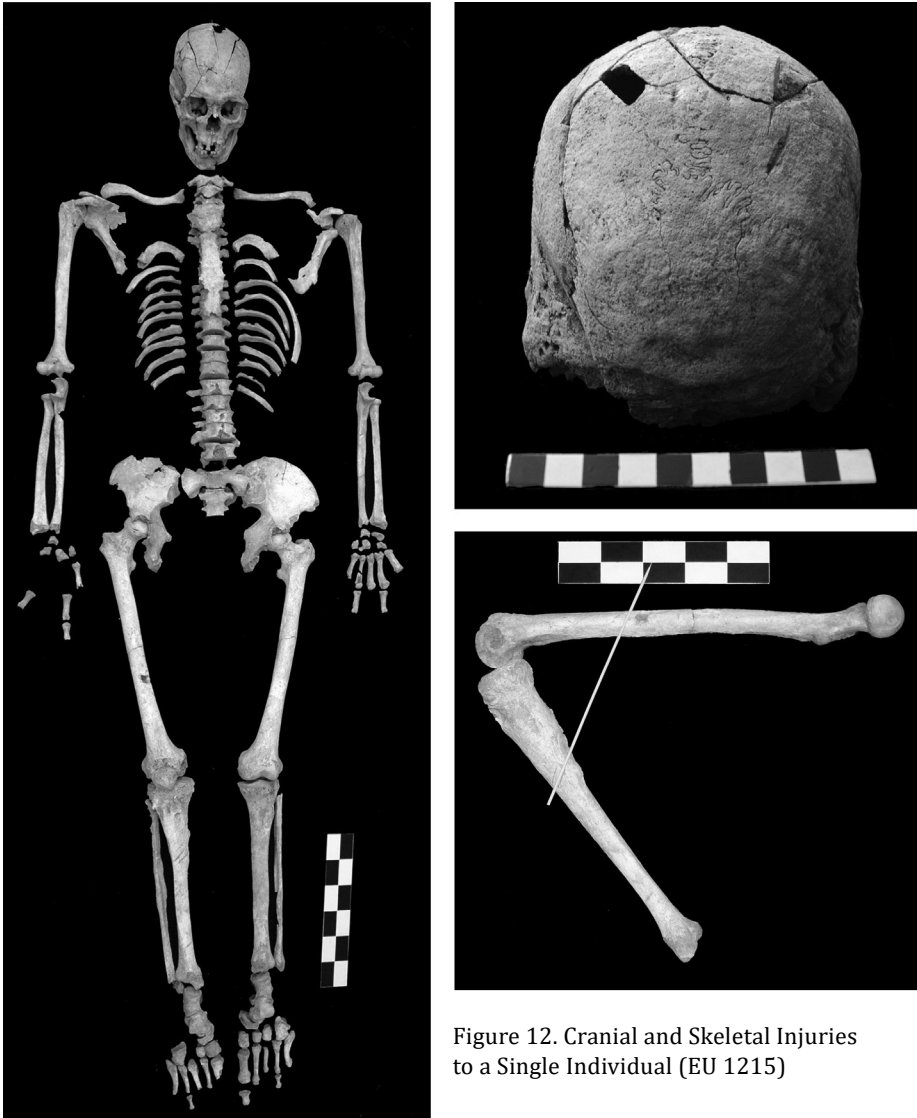


Figure 12. Cranial and Skeletal Injuries to a Single Individual (EU 1215)

vided that the mark has not been degraded by the passage of time and the conditions of burial. Thus, in the case of perimortem trauma (i.e., injuries sustained around the time of death that could be the cause of death), the most common injuries are those made by sharp objects such as swords, axes, and sickles, all of which produced a clean cut to the bone. These appear in 153 cases (out of 155 visible injuries), representing 98.7% of all the injuries documented. In these cases, the cut is seen to follow a more or less straight line, indicating the energy and skill behind the blow. Based on the cuts observed both on the skull and the rest of the skeleton, it can

be determined that such injuries were incurred by sharp blows inflicted with a lot of energy, using tools that were quite sharp. In some cases, the force of the blows was so great that all the bone was sectioned, amputating a limb. We also find crush injuries or fractures. These are caused by the impact of a blunt instrument, again with considerable weight behind the blow, but made at a slower speed that fails to penetrate the bone. These objects could be stones or heavy objects that were thrown, causing injury that radiated widely and resulted in contusions. In the graves of Les Roquetes, there is only one such case: an injury to the skull. There was also a unique case of a skull injury caused by the impact of a rectangular object wielded with so much strength and energy that it penetrated the bone, leaving a characteristic mark. This injury can be seen in the skull of the individual EU 1215 (Figure 12) and was dealt with a force sufficient to shatter the skull. The shape and position of the lesion (just on the cranial vault) allows us to surmise that the weapon could have been an ax handle or the handle of a sword. In this case, the bone fragment resulting from the impact was recovered inside the skull.

In conclusion, therefore, we can say that laboratory analysis has allowed us to clarify and confirm the archeological evidence and the results of the anthropological analysis undertaken on site. It also corroborates the existing documentary narratives of the events that occurred during the uprising and proves that many of those buried at Les Roquetes lost their lives during that bloody attack.

Part III: Conclusions

The significance of the Tàrrrega site is clear. It is an exceptional archeological record of events previously documented only by written accounts. To date, the attack against the Jewish citizens of Tàrrrega is the first for which both documentary and archeological evidence have been found, helping to substantiate reports that many Jewish communities suffered atrocities between 1348 and 1349.

The excavation of the communal graves has enabled us to reconstruct, in part, the events that occurred during the attack on the Jewish quarter and to compare archeological evidence with that of the documentary sources. As the remains show and the sources explain, not all of the victims were buried immediately after the uprising. The sources mention that some of the dead were tossed into a cistern—a fact that the archeology and anthropology cannot substantiate, but that is consistent with the varying degrees of anatomical articulation exhibited by the bodies recovered so far. We think that all of the individuals found in the com-

munal graves were victims of the attack on the Jewish quarter in 1348, but those whose remains exhibit a higher degree articulation were buried first, while those whose remains are disarticulated remained unburied for a period of time, long enough for the process of decomposition to advance.

During the archeological excavation, it was not possible to document the different phases of the burial process. However, the evidence of graves FS 161 and 163 (Figures 2 and 3) is suggestive in this regard. During the initial excavations, these were interpreted as two different structures; but given the fact that they are adjacent—and the fact that field work did not uncover the north wall of FS 161 or the south wall of FS 163—they could correspond to two different initiatives. The first of these would have been the burial of the bodies in FS 161. Having been partially filled with earth, this grave was then used to bury the bodies we initially assigned to FS 163. This suggests that a prudent gap was left between the first set of burials and the second set. (The space between the individuals in FS 161 and FS 163 is 1.5 meters.)

The same hypothesis is plausible for the grave FS 164 (Figure 6): here, the remains displaying a high degree of anatomical articulation are separated by 50 cm from those that had begun to decompose. The former group of bodies could have been placed in the grave and covered with earth. The rest of the bodies were then added, towards the southern end of the structure, when they had already begun to decompose.

In general, the care with which all of these individuals were originally interred leads us to surmise that they were buried by the surviving members of the Jewish community in Tàrrega. Although full observance of all funeral rites was impossible, bodies were arranged with the heads to the west and care was taken not to heap the bodies on top of one another.

Study of the written sources referring to the medieval Jewish community of Tàrrega reveals evidence that could not be gleaned from archaeology or anthropology (Muntané 2007a and 2012b; Ruíz and Subirà 2009). The study of the documentation also enabled the location of the Jewish quarter and its cemetery to be determined (Muntané 2014a). The latter has now been confirmed by the excavation in Les Roquetes, and archeological evidence and anthropological analysis have supplied further information about aspects of Jewish funeral rites and beliefs (Colet 2014; Colet and Ruíz 2014). Perhaps most importantly, our combined efforts have made it possible to confirm both the occurrence of the uprising, its connection with the Black Death and the ongoing economic crisis within the Crown of Aragon (Garcia Biosca 2014), and the resulting severity of the attack on Tàrrega's Jews in 1348.

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Abstract In 2007, excavations in a suburb of the Catalan town of Tàrraga identified the possible location of the medieval Jewish cemetery. Subsequent excavations confirmed that multiple individuals buried in six communal graves had suffered violent deaths. The present study argues that these communal graves can be connected to a well-documented assault on the Jews of Tàrraga that occurred in 1348: long known as one of the earliest episodes of anti-Jewish violence related to the Black Death, but never before corroborated by physical remains. This study places textual sources, both Christian and Jewish, alongside the recently discovered archeological evidence of the violence.

Keywords Pogrom, anti-Jewish violence, Catalonia, Jewish cemeteries, communal graves, bioarcheology, Black Death.
