CONVERSOS AND COMUNEROS. THE TRIAL OF JUAN RODRÍGUEZ DE BAEZA, SALAMANCA, 1520

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Resumen: Este artículo analiza, desde una perspectiva de historia social, los documentos emanantes de un proceso que tuvo lugar en Salamanca en el verano de 1520, en el que tres estudiantes fueron acusados de haber agredido y herido a otro universitario. Según la defensa, habían estado defendiendo su honor contra abusos, tanto verbales como escritos, que les tachaban de judíos. El proceso tuvo lugar en el contexto de la rebelión comunera en Castilla y participaron en él algunos de los activistas rebeldes. Al ser condenados, los estudiantes hicieron recurso a la Santa Junta, el gobierno revolucionario que funcionaba brevemente desde Tordesillas, donde estaba la Reina Juana I. La documentación del proceso alumbra un aspecto poco conocido de la Santa Junta, y su interconexión con personas particulares e instituciones públicas. Podemos identificar al acusado principal como el Licenciado Juan Rodríguez de Baeza quien, después de una carrera como juez, fue clérigo beneficiado en Carmona (Sevilla) y en Mengíbar (Jaén), acumulando una riqueza considerable que le permitió dotar la Iglesia de Santiago de Montilla. La investigación archivística confirma que efectivamente tuvo antepasados judíos y que varios miembros de su familia fueron condenados por la Inquisición.

Palabras claves: Comuneros, conversos, Santa Junta, justicia, difamación.

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Abstract: This article analyses, from a social history perspective, the record of a trial held in Salamanca during the summer of 1520 in which three university students were accused of having attacked and seriously wounded an older student. The defence claimed that they had been defending their honour against verbal and written abuse calling them Jews. The trial took place against the backdrop of the *comunero* rebellion in Castile and actually involved several of those who took an active role in the uprising. After being found guilty, the students appealed to the *Santa Junta* which briefly operated as a rebel government alongside Queen Juana from Tordesillas between September and December 1520. The case documentation therefore sheds a rare light on the operations of the *Santa Junta* and the interface of its members with private citizens and public institutions during the brief period of its existence. The article identifies the principal accused as *Licenciado* Juan Rodríguez de Baeza who, after a career as a judge, held church benefices in Carmona (Sevilla) and Menjíbar (Jaén), amassing considerable wealth with which he was able to endow the church of Santiago in Montilla. Archival research shows that he did in fact have Jewish forebears and that members of his family had been condemned by the Inquisition.

Key words: Comuneros, conversos, Santa Junta, justice, defamation.

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The purpose of this article is to bring to light a bundle of documents held in the Archivo General de Simancas relating to criminal proceedings against three students brought by the University of Salamanca authorities. The trial documents contain significant material to add to our understanding of the experiences of *conversos* in the early part of the sixteenth century and it is the analysis of these social and genealogical implications which are the focus of the article. The source, which appears not so far to have been the subject of academic scrutiny, will no doubt also be of interest to legal historians, though I do not touch on these aspects here, since they can be addressed much more effectively by specialists in that field.

The three students on trial, Juan Rodríguez de Baeza, Pedro Ruiz and Gonzalo de Ribera, faced accusations of having attacked and wounded a fourth student, Diego Rodríguez, who was acting as their academic tutor and who had called them Jews¹. Crucial to understanding the implications of the case is the identity of the principal accused, Juan Rodríguez de Baeza, who I contend is the *Licenciado* Juan Rodríguez de Baeza who drew up his will as an old man in Montilla in 1574 and died in 1583².

The trial documents tell us that the Juan Rodríguez de Baeza accused of the crime was a student of law, a minor in 1520³ who had already taken first clerical orders. Witnesses say he is from Cordoba, and sometimes call him by the alternative surname of *Alvarez de Baeza*. The fact that he had suffered the abuse of being called a Jew suggests he was very probably from a *converso* background. All this fits very closely with a man whose family history was a major focus of my doctoral research. This man was born in Montilla, the son of Pedro de Baeza, who was in the service of the *Gran Capitán*, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba and his wife, María Manrique⁴. His mother was Leonor Alvarez de Córdoba, daughter of Alonso de Aguilar's *contador* Alfonso [Fernández] de Córdoba and his brother Alonso used the surname Alvarez⁵. It is more than likely that he would have been a student in Salamanca during the 1520s. His family background is as follows.

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⁵ Testamento.

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¹ Archivo General de Simancas [AGS]*, PTR, LEG. 6, DOC. 18 ['Proceso'].* The accused are described passim as pupils of Diego Rodríguez.

² Archivo de Protocolos Notariales de Montilla [APNM]* Escribanías S.XVI. Legajo 32 ['Testamento'*– the pages are not numbered].

They are referred to as 'menores' and a *curador adlites* was appointed as their legal representative, which would make them under 25: COOLIDGE, G., *Guardianship, gender and the nobility in Early Modern Spain*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2011. However, it is clear that they are not children, and Juan Rodríguez de Baeza must have been at least 16, since his father was already dead in 1504: Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli, Leg. 199. Letter from Hernando de Baeza to Don Pedro Fernández de Córdoba, 25 September 1504, published as an annex to my thesis: TINSLEY, T., *Hernando de Baeza and the making of Catholic Spain*, University of Exeter, 2018.

⁴ Testamento. Archivo Histórico Nacional [AHN]*. Diversos-Colecciones, 18, N.1613; Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza [AHNOB]*, Luque, C.144, D.41.

The Baezas provide a classic example of the experiences of the upper stratum of conversos in Andalusia during the 15th century, as described by contemporary chroniclers⁶ and later dealt with in detail by recent historians⁷, although these writers have not dealt specifically with the Baezas. The family rose to prominence in Cordoba under Juan II [1406-1454], occupying public offices in the city under the patronage of the Fernández de Córdoba family⁸. They were expelled from these after the anti-converso riots of 1473, but had them restored by Isabel I and Fernando II of Aragón in 1478⁹. This left them in the front line of fire from the Inquisition, which condemned our subject's grandfather, Juan [Rodríguez] de Baeza, in 1488, and other members of his family. 10 His maternal grandmother had also been called to account by the Inquisition and all her possessions seized, but she died before she could be tried. 11 Our subject's father Pedro and three uncles were reconciled to the Catholic Church and *rehabilitated* by Pope Alexander VI in 1496¹². This provided a basis from which the family could rebuild their social status, maintaining a close relationship with the Fernández de Córdoba family. Juan Rodríguez de Baeza's brother Alonso Alvarez was secretary to the Marquesa de Priego¹³ and accompanied her son, the young Conde de Feria in the court of Charles V.¹⁴ Both his sisters made good marriages, one to a man who became *alcalde* of Mérida. 15 Our subject's university studies were clearly part of the family's strategy to reestablish their position in society and it is easy to see how important it would have been to maintain a clean slate at a time when social mobility meant being able to obviate the obstacles of limpieza de sangre statutes. 16 A cousin, also named Juan Rodríguez de Baeza, had already narrowly escaped being barred from his post at Seville cathedral on the grounds that he was the son of parents who had been reconciled and the grandson of condemned heretics¹⁷.

The broad facts of the case are these: on 19 May 1520, the constable [alguacil] Pedro Marcos reported to his master the *maestrescuela* that three students had attacked and badly wounded Diego Rodríguez. The post of *maestrescuela*, a prestigious position attached to the

⁶ DE PALENCIA, A., *Crónica de Enrique IV*, Tip de la Revista de Archivos, Madrid, 1905. DE VALERA, D., *Memorial de diversas hazañas: Crónica de Enrique IV*, Espasa-Calpe, 1941. In common with much current historiographical practice, I use 'converso' to mean 'a Christian of Jewish heritage'. However, I am aware of the problematic nature of the word, which I discuss below.

⁷ MARQUEZ VILLANUEVA, F., "Conversos y cargos concejiles en el siglo XV", Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, LXIII (1957), pp. 504-540; EDWARDS, J., "Religious belief and social conformity: the 'Converso' problem in late-Medieval Cordoba", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 31 (1981), pp. 115-128; EDWARDS, J., Religion and society in Spain c. 1492, Variorum, Aldershot, 1996; CABRERA SANCHEZ, M., Nobleza, oligarquía y poder en Córdoba al final de la Edad Media, Cajasur, Córdoba, 1998.

⁸ NIETO CUMPLIDO, M., Miembros del Concejo de Córdoba, 1300-1475, Archivo de la Catedral de Córdoba, Córdoba, 2012.

⁹ AGS, RGS, LEG. 147801,85; AGS, RGS, LEG, 147801,4; RGS, LEG, 147711,295 y 299.

¹⁰ AGS, RGS, LEG. 148803,6; AHN, Inquisición, 1515, Exp. 2, f. 604 r.; AGS, RGS, LEG. 148507,45; AGS. EMR-Mercedes, 116.

¹¹ AHN, Inquisición, 1515, Exp. 2, f. 102r.

¹² Archivo de la Catedral de Sevilla, Actas Capitulares, 0758 (L.10) 0002. Discussed in GIL, J., *Los conversos y la Inquisición sevillana*, Vol. 2, Universidad de Sevilla/Fundación El Monte, Sevilla, 2001, p. 110.

la Inquisición sevillana, Vol. 2, Universidad de Sevilla/Fundación El Monte, Sevilla, 2001, p. 110.

13 Catalina Fernández de Córdoba, granddaughter of Alonso de Aguilar, inherited the title when her father died in 1517 and lived until 1569. VARO, A., et al., *Montillanos en la Memoria*, Casino Montillano, Montilla, 2013.

¹⁴ Fundación Biblioteca Manuel Ruiz Luque. Ms. 80. This document is an investigation into the origin of relics donated by Licenciado Juan Rodríguez de Baeza to the church of Santiago in Montilla: see my article "Recuerdos de Colonia: las once mil vírgenes y la procedencia de las reliquias de la Iglesia de Santiago de Montilla", *Carolus. Homenaje a José María Ruiz Povedano*, Ayuntamiento de Alcalá la Real, Alcalá la Real, 2019, pp. 481-490.

¹⁵ Testamento.

¹⁶ SICROFF, A., *Los Estatutos de Limpieza de Sangre. Controversías entre los siglos XV y XVII*, Newark, Juan de la Cuesta, 2010.

¹⁷ See account in GIL, J., Los conversos...op. cit., p. 110.

Cathedral, was at that time occupied by Sancho de Castilla, a man who had previously been a canon and Inquisitor in Córdoba. He duly appointed the university judge – *Licenciado* Cristóbal Albendea – to look into the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The students had taken sanctuary in the Monastery of San Francisco, having first taken the precaution of removing their books from their lodgings and giving them to friends for safe keeping. Juan Rodríguez de Baeza was the first to be questioned by the judge. He said briefly that he and the others had had a disagreement with Diego Rodríguez and had given him a 'couple of thwacks' 19. Gonzalo de Ribera was more forthcoming. He said that as a law student, he and the others frequently went to Diego Rodríguez's house to receive tutoring, but the latter was persistently insulting towards them both in his house and in the street, calling them Jews. 20 Knowing this was a provocation, Rodríguez had got in the habit of going out with a young bodyguard armed with a sword, and this had led to a fight. The judge then had the boys' property sequestered and demanded that the Monastery hand the three over to justice.

Because they were not yet of legal age, the accused were represented by a *curador adlites*²¹ in the person of Pedro de Aldeaseca. On 23 June the investigation took on the character of a legal trial as Diego Rodríguez made a formal accusation of attempted murder against the three, represented by his legal counsel Salvador González. It appears that Judge Albendea had visited Rodríguez and demanded, at his bedside, that he should prosecute the case. His accusation rested on the allegation that it was an unprovoked and vicious attack which had left him with wounds on his right hand and left arm which were likely to leave him permanently disabled. This would affect his ability to earn money and marry well in the future and moreover, he was being treated by expensive doctors. He therefore asked for substantial damages as well as costs. A series of witnesses for the prosecution backed up his story.

In defence of his charges, Aldeaseca said that they had been defending their honour against provocation, that the attack had not been as serious as had been alleged and that Rodríguez would surely recover from his injuries. He asked that the judge should take into account the students' young age and either acquit them or give them a light sentence. In describing the extent of the provocation, he said that they had received 'diversas infamias e desonrras e falsos testimonyos'. 22 The questions put to the defence witnesses drew out the exact nature of the abuse to which the students had been subjected, which we shall discuss below. The defence also argued that the prosecution witnesses were biased, since one of them was a servant of Rodríguez and the other a young and stupid boy ['un moço menor de catorze años o casi de aquella hedad e de poco saber']²³. Two doctors were then called to examine Rodríguez and to report on his condition. Meanwhile, the students continued to be held fettered in the university jail. On 9 August one of the accused, Gonzalo de Ribera, made a 'confession' which was then retracted. The prosecution then demanded that the students be put to torture in order to extract the truth. Their representative Aldeaseca protested strongly against the threat of torture, saying that they were 'clerigos de primeros ordenes' and that the judge had not given them a fair trial, but rather had been 'muy odioso y sospecho' against his wards²⁴.

¹⁸ BELTRAN DE HEREDIA, V., *Cartulario de la Universidad de Salamanca*, Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad, Salamanca, 1970, p. 361.

¹⁹ 'dos paldarazos' Proceso, f.391 r. I have left quotations in the original on the assumption that readers interested in this paper will be able to understand Spanish.

²⁰ 'diziendo que feran judios e otras palabras ynuriosas' Proceso, f. 391.r.

²¹ COOLIDGE, G., Guardianship..., op. cit.

²² Proceso. f. 396.r.

²³ Proceso. f. 414.r.

²⁴ Proceso. f. 420.r.

On 2 October, the maestrescuela Sancho de Castilla pronounced a guilty sentence against the three and ordered them to pay a total of 250,000 maravedies in damages, plus medical and legal costs. On failure to pay, the students were to be publicly flogged and receive 100 lashes apiece. They were also suspended from the university and from Salamanca for an unspecified period. The defence announced that they would appeal to Pope Leo X, but Sancho de Castilla refused to allow them permission to do so and continued to hold them in prison. In mid-October, a letter arrived, issued by the Junta Santa on behalf of Queen Juana on 13 October, ordering Sancho de Castilla to grant their appeal, but he refused. On 21 October, another letter was issued in her name demanding that he either grant the appeal or refer the case to the Santa Junta. It appears that he opted for the latter since on 9 November a cleric named Francisco Fernández de Reguera presented the students' case to 'los señores diputados de la justicia' – in effect the Santa Junta's justice sub-committee – in Tordesillas. On 10 November, the case papers were received by the Santa Junta's notary Antonio Rodríguez, and on 13 November Francisco Fernández was notified that the case was being dealt with and had been passed to 'Bachiller Diego'. The case file ends here, so we do not know how the case was resolved except that, if we accept my contention that the Juan Rodríguez de Baeza in question is the same man who set out his will in 1574, he managed to obtain his degree, become ordained and have a very successful career.

From a 21st century perspective, the proposition that three students should be brought to justice for attacking someone in the street with a sword seems entirely reasonable. We need to understand therefore why the defendants and their legal advisers thought their actions were justifiable, and why they were so convinced that injustice that had been done in sentencing them to harsh penalties that they sought to appeal to the Pope and took their case to the highest court in the land in pursuit of their right to do so. In attempting to explain this, I have investigated two contextual factors: I have looked firstly at the nature of the defamation and why it provoked such a violent reaction and secondly at the political backdrop of revolt and struggle for justice against which the attack and trial took place.

During the trial the full extent of the defamation the students had received gradually became apparent and the court was witness to the unveiling of insults they would surely have preferred to have been kept secret.

The first witness to go into further detail was the student Alonso de Baeza, who was also a pupil of Diego Rodríguez and was called both by the prosecution and the defence. When he was asked whether he agreed that Diego Rodríguez was someone who made a habit of defaming others ['hombre de mala lengua e maldiziente e que suele deshonrar a las personas con quien trata e dezir muchas cosas dellas']²⁵, he replied that the tutor had vilified his pupils by implying that they were Jews, saying: 'juro a tal que les tengo faser conoçer esta algamia, dando a entender que feran judios...'²⁶.

The next witness, Francisco de Puebla, also a student at the university, said that he had heard Diego Rodríguez say of the three boys 'estos judios piensan que lo an con la aljama'²⁷. He said that Diego Rodríguez had also said similar things against him – indicating that he too was identified as having a *converso* background. He then went on to explain that he had seen a notice which had been pinned up in the street which read 'señor bachiller Diego Rodríguez muy bien feziestes en fechar festos judios de casa'. He said that afterwards he had

²⁵ Proceso. f. 400 r.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Proceso. f. 406 v.

heard that the notice had also said that the boys 'escondian la leña e guardavan el agua'[sic]²⁸ and that the handwriting was Diego Rodríguez's.

A third student witness, Juan de Gumiel, confirmed that Diego Rodríguez had called them 'Jews from the *aljama*'. He said that he too had seen the notice which said that he had done well to throw them out of his house and that they kept the Sabbath and hid the firewood so as not to burn ['guardavan el sabado y escondían la leña por que no quemasen'].²⁹ Another witness, Sebastián de Rojas, confirmed that Diego Rodríguez had called the boys Jews behind their backs. The aspersions cast on the boys therefore fall into three categories of abuse:

- 1. That they were Jews. A reference to their ethnic origins would have been extremely damaging in the context of the growing number of *limpieza de sangre* statutes designed to discriminate against those of Jewish heritage in the allocation of public and ecclesiastical positions³⁰.
- 2. That they kept the Sabbath. This accusation goes one step further in suggesting that they were not only Jews by ethnicity but that they practised articles of Jewish faith. This was tantamount to saying that they were judaisers enough to have them arrested and tried by the Inquisition. This would have been not only damaging but dangerous
- 3. That their forebears had been heretics. The sarcastic comment about hiding their firewood is surely a reference to heretics being burnt at the stake a truly shocking piece of abuse given the significance and transcendence of the *auto de fe*³¹.

Juan Rodríguez de Baeza must have feared that this was a specific reference to his grandparents and that the actual details of his family's experiences at the hands of the Inquisition had been discovered and were about to be made public. This would be the greatest infamy of all and would set back the efforts his family had made over more than 30 years to recover from the ignominy of having been condemned by the Inquisition.

It is interesting that the words reportedly used by Diego Rodríguez do not explicitly mention the students' parents or grandparents, but their meaning was clearly apparent to all. Three of the questions put to defence witnesses (questions 4, 5 and 9) probe the alleged insult to 'sus padres e madres e avuelos'³². The reference to firewood is the most damaging and vicious comment of all since it manages to combine a public reference to the terrible fate suffered by previous generations with a threat that the boys too might meet the same end.

It appears that the students – and others – were targeted with taunting of this nature in a sustained way over a period of time, but it was at the point it was written down in the form of a public notice that the boys were impelled to act to prevent further *deshonra*. The act of bringing something which, although perhaps known privately, out into the public sphere is seen to have broken a significant taboo. We have already seen how the witness Alonso de Baeza described the abuse as 'cosas que no feran de desir'³³. Juan de Gumiel also highlighted the transgressive nature of Rodríguez's behaviour in saying things that 'ought not to be said'

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²⁸ Given that the next witness refers to 'keeping the Sabbath' I think the word 'agua' is a mis-transcription or mishearing of 'sabado' by the court scribe, possibly because the words were so shocking they were mumbled by the witness.

²⁹ Proceso, f. 407 r.

³⁰ 'The beginnings of a scientific theory of race?' in EDWARDS, J., *Religion and society....*

Maureen Flynn has how the carrying of firewood to the place of execution formed part of the ritual. FLYNN, M., "Mimesis of the Last Judgement. The Spanish Auto de Fe", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22.2 (1991), pp. 281-297.

³² Proceso, f. 400 r. and v.

³³ Proceso, f. 400 r.

['dezir algunas palabras que no se devian de dezir']³⁴. The students knew that they could hardly appeal to the university authorities without revealing and publicising further the content of the abuse, and so took matters into their own hands. The irony is, of course, that once the matter came to the trial their defence case hung on making the nature of the abuse public.

There is no doubt then, that the defamation was anti-Semitic in nature. It has been argued that the persecution and discrimination suffered by descendants of Iberian Jews created and perpetuated a *converso* consciousness and served to strengthen their group identity.³⁵ But it is questionable whether this is what is seen here.

In interpreting the trial, we are privileged in having some external corroboration of Juan Rodríguez de Baeza's family background. We do not know whether the others accused with him were also *conversos* and whether there was also a history of heresy within their families. According to the witness Alonso de Baeza, Gonzalo de Ribera and Pedro Ruiz were both from Granada³⁶. It certainly seems that all three were Andalusian, since they mention they left their books with the *mayordomo de los andaluces*.³⁷ It is possible that Gonzalo de Ribera was a member of the Rivera clan who occupied notaryships and other public positions in Granada in the sixteenth century³⁸. I think it is likely that they were also from a *converso* background.

Of their accuser, Diego Rodríguez, we know very little – there is no second surname recorded. One of his prosecution witnesses, Francisco González, said that Rodríguez was an honourable man and that his father was very rich, but gave no further details: 'es honbre onrrado e de buenos parientes e rico e letrado e sabe que estando sano e libre hallara buen casamiento e le pudiera dar en casamiento dos cuentos porque su padre es muy rico'.³⁹ We cannot assume that Diego Rodríguez was not also a *converso*, or say whether the trial represented old Christians against new Christians, or *conversos* against *conversos*⁴⁰ or indeed other divisions which are not evident to us. There was clearly competition among the students for the honours and public positions which having a university degree would have provided access to and some witnesses said the quarrel was about money.⁴¹ It is perhaps significant that Rodríguez was wounded in the right hand and left arm, not only the means of production of the libellous notice, but also the means by which he expected to earn his living in future.

The word *converso* is not used at all during the trial. The accused would certainly not have used it about themselves, since the whole case was about the right to be respected as honourable citizens and future clerics. Juan Rodríguez de Baeza – and probably also the others - were not 'new Christians' like those Jews who converted after the edict of expulsion in 1492 or the Muslims whose conversion was demanded in 1499-1500.⁴² The key elements

³⁴ Proceso, f. 407 r.

³⁵ MELAMMED, R.L., A question of identity: Iberian conversos in historical perspective, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.

³⁶ Proceso, f. 406 r.

³⁷ Proceso, f. 392 r.

³⁸ SORIA MESA, E., "Burocracia y conversos. La Real Chancillería de Granada en los siglos XVI y XVII", EN ARANDA PÉREZ, F. J. (Coord.), *Letrados, juristas y burócratas en la España moderna*, Cuenca, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2005, pp. 107-144.

³⁹ Proceso, f. 403 v.

⁴⁰ For evidence of *conversos* incriminating other *conversos*, see for example CARRETE PARRONDO, C., "La integración de los judeoconversos en la sociedad castellana", *Cuadernos Salamantinos de Filosofía*, 13, (1986) pp. 173-178.

For example, the witness García Gómez says that '...no vio ny sabe que fenemystad oviese entre ellos salvo syno fuese a cabsa de unos dineros que les pedia que le devian...' Proceso, f. 402 r.

⁴² For a discussion on the problems surrounding the awarding of degrees to *conversos*, which was banned in 1509: BELTRAN DE HEREDIA, V., *Cartulario...*, op. cit., pp. 329-339. However, the documents published

of the students' identities, as described by their colleagues acting as witnesses in the trial, are: where they are from, whether they are rich and whether they are from an 'honourable' family. The trial documents lay bare the ongoing struggle over the meaning of this word. On the one hand it is being used as shorthand to mean 'not of Jewish heritage' and on the other as a moral value irrespective of the individual's family origin.

But to what extent did they have a group identity or form a subculture as has been suggested⁴³? The three appear to have formed a friendship group in advance of the attack, but this could have been based on sharing similar socio-economic backgrounds, being Andalusian or simply sharing the same tutor. For one reason or another, Diego Rodríguez appears to have identified them as *conversos* – this could be as a result of their physical appearance or small clues in their behaviour, or through information that he was privy to – we do not know. Perhaps he simply suspected they had Jewish ancestry and taunted them to see how they would respond. When they acted to defend their honour, they certainly acted jointly, but it is not possible to derive from that evidence of a '*converso* consciousness': they acted in defence of their identities as fully integrated members of Christian society.

The success of those *conversos* who survived the Inquisition in (re)integrating into mainstream Christian society and has been called a 'silent' process, since it involved drawing a deliberate veil over their origins which can now make it hard to trace them⁴⁴. The burning of a heretic in an *auto* was not just a brutal form of execution, but the total annihilation of the individual concerned, intended to leave no trace 'on the face of the earth'.⁴⁵ For the family members that remained, the creation of a new identity was therefore not simply expedient, but a necessity⁴⁶.

Among the strategies adopted by *conversos* to hide their origins were moving to another town and altering surnames, along with in some cases, changing occupation⁴⁷. We can see these strategies at work here. The university environment, then as today, brought together people who had not previously known each other, providing opportunities not only to create new friendship networks but also to put forward new or amended identities. The use of alternative surnames by the protagonist of this trial is very probably evidence of an attempt to create a new identity and present himself to best advantage in his new environment where people were not aware of his family background. Juan Rodríguez de Baeza was the name by which he was known to the university authorities. He was named as such in the original enquiry⁴⁸ and in the judge's sentence⁴⁹. The letter issued by the *Santa Junta* also referred to him by this name⁵⁰. However, his accuser, Diego Rodríguez and a number of witnesses referred to him as *Juan Alvarez de Baeza* and he was named as such by the counsel for the

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refer to 'personas nuevamente convertidas del judaísmo' or to 'nuevos conversos' and clearly Baeza did not fall into this category. This highlights some of the problems with the term.

⁴³ MELAMMED, R. L., A question of identity, op. cit.

⁴⁴ LADERO QUESADA, M. A., "Judeoconversos andaluces en el siglo XV", in *La sociedad medieval andaluza, grupos no privilegiados: Actas del III Coloquio de Historia Medieval Andaluza*, Diputación de Jaén, Jaén, 1984, p. 42.

⁴⁵ A typical formula used in Inquisition sentences when condemning victims to death: FERNANDEZ GIMENEZ, M., La sentencia inquisitorial, Editorial Complutense, Madrid, 2000.

⁴⁶ RABADE OBRADO, M.P., "La invención como necesidad: geneología y judeoconversos", En la España Medieval, 1, Extra (2006) pp. 183-202; SALINERO, G AND TESTON, I., *Un juego de engaños: movilidad, nombres y apellidos en los signos XV a XVIII*, Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 2010.

⁴⁷ PORRAS ARBOLEDAS, P. A., "Nobles y conversos, una relación histórica difícil de ser entendida aún hoy: el caso de los Palomino, conversos giennenses", *En la España Medieval*, 1, Extra, (2006) pp. 203-224.

⁴⁸ Proceso, f. 390 r. and f. 391 r.

⁴⁹ Proceso, f. 421 r.

⁵⁰ Proceso, f. 423 r.

prosecution and by his defence.⁵¹ His curador used both surnames at different times and at other times referred to him simply as $Baeza^{52}$.

It seems likely then, that the student adopted his mother's surname in order to disguise or enhance his identity. Given that the maestrescuela had been an Inquisitor in Cordoba, I think it is most likely to have been to disguise his identity from Sancho de Castilla. His time there would have coincided with that of the infamous Inquisitor Diego Rodríguez de Lucero⁵³, who had targeted members of the Baeza family including our subject's uncle and aunt.⁵⁴ Indeed, Castilla was delayed from taking up his appointment to Salamanca in 1505 because of unfinished Inquisition business in Cordoba⁵⁵. He seems to have relished the opportunity to bring the three boys to trial.

Witnesses were either ignorant of Baeza's family background, or prevaricated when they were asked. Alonso de Baeza, a student with a shared surname who might have been well-placed to be aware of the family and indeed could have been a relative, said that although he knew that 'Juan Alvarez' was from Cordoba, he said he had not known him before coming to Salamanca⁵⁶.

Another witness, Francisco de Puebla, said that he knew some of Juan Alvarez's [sic] relatives who were honourable people, and that one was called Alonso Yañez de Avila and the other Bachiller Baeza. My research has not uncovered any connection between Juan Rodríguez de Baeza and the latter man, though there is possibly some connection with the former. There was an Alonso Yáñez de Avila associated with the Fernández de Córdoba family: recorded as mayordomo of the Gran Capitán in 1511 and as regidor of Baena under the protection of Luis Fernández de Córdoba from 1521.⁵⁷ Two of this man's sons married the sisters Maria and Isabel de Baeza who are connected to a Licenciado Juan Rodríguez de Baeza who is "realtor de la audiencia de Granada". This is not the man who is the subject of this article, but probably another cousin with the same name⁵⁸. There are numerous archival records of a person or persons referred to as 'Bachiller Baeza'. One of these is named Manuel and was a court lawyer in 1495. In 1501 he was pardoned for having exercised the role of court lawyer without a licence despite being the grandson of a condemned heretic⁵⁹. Perhaps Puebla was trying to mislead the court in naming these people. If so, the attempt may have misfired or possibly may not even have been entirely benign. I conclude that we are seeing on the part of Juan Rodríguez de Baeza is prevarication about his family history in order to safeguard the investment made in his university education. His predicament is that he is

⁵¹ Proceso, f. 394 r.; f. 406 r. and v.; f. 398 r. and f. 400 r.

⁵² Proceso, f. 396 r. (Álvarez); f. 412 r. (Rodríguez); f. 413 r. ('Baeça'). NB. There are some mistakes with names in the trial document. The curador Aldeaseca is recorded as referring to Gonzalo de Ribera both as Hernando de Ribera and as Pedro de Ribera and in the document presented by the cleric Francisco Fernández he is named as Alonso de Ribera. However, these appear to be clerical errors rather than alternative names. In the case of our protagonist, the names appear as formal records of witness statements and are much more

systematic. ⁵³ LEA, H.C., "Lucero de Inquisitor", *The American Historical Review*, 2, (1897), pp. 611-626; EDWARDS, J., "Trial of an Inquisitor: the dismissal of Diego Rodríguez Lucero, Inquisitor of Cordoba in 1508", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 37 (1986), pp. 240-257. There is of course a possibility that the Diego Rodríguez in the trial is a relation, although as noted above we have no second surname and it is a very common name.

⁵⁴ AHN, Inquisición, 1515. Exp. 2, ff. 101 v. and 102 r.

⁵⁵ BELTRAN DE HEREDIA, V., Cartulario..., op. cit., p. 361.

⁵⁶ Proceso, f. 406 r.

⁵⁷ ESPINAR MORENO, M., "Pleito entre el alfaqui Bernadino de Segura y el Gran Capitán por los habices de Busquistar (1500-1511)", Anaquel de Estudios Árabes, 26 (2015), pp. 69-91); SORIA MESA., E., and OTERO MONDEJAR, S., "Los judeoconversos de Baena, siglos XV a XVII. Del rechazo a la integración social", ITVCI, 4, (2014), 95-106.

⁵⁸ This man's father was Diego de Baeza, probably the brother of Pedro, our subject's father: AHNOB, Baena, C. 276, D1, f. 10 r. and v. ⁵⁹ AGS, CCA, CED, 5, 328,4.

neither an old nor a new Christian. Many generations of his family – at least four to my knowledge – had been professing the Christian faith for at least a century⁶⁰. Here is a young Christian of Jewish descent trying to emerge from the shadow of the Inquisition and manage the contradictions of a society which is defined as exclusively Christian while at the same time harbouring beliefs that Judaism is handed down in the bloodline from father to son⁶¹. Inquisition trials have provided an important source of evidence on the pressures faced by *conversos* within this context. This trial recapitulates the same themes; however, here the question is not about whether the defendants are heretics, but whether they are justified in resorting to violence to defend their honour against the implication that they are.

The political context in which the trial and the events it describes took place is a unique moment in the history of Spain. In common with other cities on the *Meseta*, Salamanca was a key site for the developing resistance to the government of the Emperor Charles V which culminated in what has been called 'the first modern revolution'⁶². As disquiet grew about Charles V's intentions regarding the place of Castile in his new empire, it was in Salamanca where the thinking behind the *comunero* rebellion was developed. A leading figure in this was a friar named Juan de Bilbao, regarded as one of the intellectual theorists of the movement, who with a number of Augustin and Domincan colleagues, drafted a programme of demands for representatives of Castilian cities to make in the Cortes which were held in Galicia starting in March 1520⁶³. This highlighted the concerns of the city councils [*comunidades*] that their interests would be side lined within the new empire run by foreigners and that taxes raised in Castile would be spent elsewhere in the empire. This is very significant for understanding our trial because Juan de Bilbao was warden of the Monastery of San Francisco where the boys first took refuge, and it was he who was required by Judge Albendea to hand them over to justice⁶⁴.

In the period leading up to the Cortes the cities of Castile were in a state of turmoil and unrest with outbreaks of public disorder⁶⁵. In the months before Diego Rodríguez was attacked in Salamanca, the judge, Cristobal de Albendea, along with the *maestrescuela* Sancho de Castilla, had been involved in clashes with members of the university authority. As a result of a petition to the high court in the second half of 1519, a certificate had been issued protecting the university's Rector and Council members [*conciliarios*] from attacks which they feared would be perpetrated upon them by Sancho de Castilla and Albendea⁶⁶. The certificate explicitly prevented the two from arresting, injuring or killing the Rector or members of the Council, or allowing any of their followers to do so. It was clear that the two had a reputation as uncompromising hard-liners: in October 1519, the crown wrote to the university authorities asking them to take action against Albendea to prevent him continuing to 'hacer agravios e otras extorsiones e vejaciones e impeder el bien publico de la dicha universidad'⁶⁷. The fact that Albendea and Castilla had a history of threatening behaviour lends weight to the assertion by the defence that the trial had not been a fair one.

⁶⁰ It is most likely that the family converted to Christianity after the pogroms against Jews in 1391, as I discuss in RODRIGUEZ ARGENTE DEL CASTILLO, Juan Pablo, *Relación de Hernando de Baeza sobre el Reino de Granada*, El Ojo de Poe, Alcalá la Real, 2018, pp. 31-40, online: https://www.academia.edu/37712875/Relaci%C3%B3 de Hernando de Baeza sobre el Reino de Granaa.

⁶¹ "The beginnings of a scientific theory of race?" in EDWARDS, J., Religion and society..., op. cit.

MARAVALL, J.A., Las Comunidades de Castilla: una primera revolución moderna, Alianza, Madrid, 1979.
 PEREZ, J., La revolución de las Comunidades de Castilla (1520-1521), Siglo Veintiuno de España, Madrid, 1985.

⁶⁴ Proceso, f. 391 v.

⁶⁵ PEREZ, J., *La revolución*..., op. cit.

⁶⁶ BELTRAN DE HEREDIA, V., Cartulario..., op. cit., p. 410.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 410-411.

These clashes involving the academic community within the heated political context no doubt contributed to the situation in which the tensions between the students and their tutor came to a head. The attack on Diego Rodríguez happened on 19 May, just as the Cortes were closing and Charles V was about to leave the country, having pushed through his new tax regime against the protests of the Castilian representatives. The Salamanca representatives had not been allowed to take part in the Cortes and in Segovia the returning representative was lynched⁶⁸.

We do not know whether, when the boys fled to the Monastery of San Francisco after the incident, they already knew the warden Juan de Bilbao personally, but it is clear that they thought he was someone who was likely to be sympathetic to their plight and could protect them. Although he was forced to hand them over, it is possible he arranged their legal representation, for the man who prepared the case for their defence was *Licenciado Maldonado*, a man who may also be connected with the rebel movement⁶⁹. There were at least three Maldonados from Salamanca amongst the leading *comuneros* including Pedro, Francisco, and a *Licenciado* Lorenzo Maldonado⁷⁰. There is a signature on two of the early trial documents – the initial case for the defence and a list of questions to be put to the defence witnesses - presented in person by the *curador* Pedro de Aldeaseca which reads simply '*Licenciado* Maldonado'. It is likely to have been either the same man who took part in the rebellion or at least a member of the same family network, further linking the students' case to the *comunero* movement.

The trial got going during June 1520, the month of revolts throughout Castile as city after city rebelled against the authority of the crown. Five towns including Salamanca were represented at a meeting in Avila in late July/early August at which the *Santa Junta* was formed Following meetings with Queen Juana, who was being held a virtual prisoner in Tordesillas, and with her as their figurehead and legitimation, the *comuneros* set up their government there on 20 September, where they held out until early December. Sentence in the students trial was passed on 2 October and their appeal to Tordesillas took place sometime between then and 13 October. It is possible that the appeal was simply a matter of the students and their advisers taking advantage of a moment during which there appeared to be a window for justice. However, given their previous involvement with individuals linked to the rebels, the appeal to the *Santa Junta* appears to be more a question of logical progression rather than of opportunism.

The *comunero Junta* sacked the royal council and set out to replace all its agencies with its own government departments, producing documents 'which were quite plausible imitations of those produced by the royal chancellery'⁷⁴. The order to Sancho de Castilla issued on 21 October to hand over the trial documents constitutes one of these. Because the *Junta* operated as a revolutionary government for such as short period, the documentation it has left is quite sparse. Filemón Arribas Arranz, who made an analysis of it in 1950, identified just three documents relating to the provision of justice issued from Tordesillas, the

⁶⁸ PEREZ, J., La revolución..., op. cit.

⁶⁹ Proceso, f. 400 v.

⁷⁰ As listed in MALDONADO, J., *El movimiento de España. Historia de la revolución conocida con el nombre de las Comunidades de Castilla*, Imprenta de D. E. Aguado, Madrid, 1840.

⁷¹ However, after his initial involvement, his name disappears sometime between 26 June and 7 July and does not appear again. This would be consistent with him being in Avila on 31 July when the Santa Junta was formed.

⁷² PEREZ, J., *La revolución*..., op. cit.

⁷³ FERNANDEZ ALVAREZ, M., Juana la Loca. La cautiva de Tordesillas, Austral, Madrid, 2008.

⁷⁴ HALICZER, S., *The Comuneros of Castile: the forging of a revolution, 1475-1521*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1981, p. 169.

first of which was dated 29 October 1520.⁷⁵ The document issued in relation to Juan Rodríguez de Baeza and his companions appears therefore to be the earliest extant example of the workings of the *Santa Junta's* justice committee.

The document is issued in the joint names of 'Doña Juana e don Carlos su hijo' and rehearses the usual long list of their dominions. It starts by recapitulating an earlier document issued from Tordesillas on 13 October, which Sancho de Castilla had evidently ignored⁷⁶. It said that case had been considered by the Santa Junta's justice committee ['...visto en nuestras cortes e santa junta por las personas nonbradas por el Reyno para las cosas tocantes a la justiçia...'⁷⁷] and set out what the defence saw as the injustices of the case, requiring the *maestrescuela* to allow the students to appeal to the Pope.

The letter was authorised by *Comendador* Alcaraz, who was one of the representatives of Salamanca in the *Junta*, *Bachiller* Alonso de Guadalajara [Segovia] and *Licenciado* Bartolomé de Santiago [Soria], and it was drawn up by the notary Antonio Rodríguez, who was one of the secretaries to the *Junta*⁷⁸. The members of the justice committee are named as Rodrigo Estrada, Juan de Salzedo and Pedro Ortiga, who is identified as chancellor.

Despite the official look and feel of the document, it is easy to see how, in the first few weeks after the formation of the *Junta*, Sancho de Castilla felt more than justified in ignoring it – hence the second letter eight days later giving him a deadline of ten days either to grant the boys leave to appeal, or to hand over the whole trial documentation. The second letter was presented to the *maestrescuela* on 23 October by Gonzalo de Pedrosa, 'escribano publico de sus Altezas'. Three days later, the notary appended a note to the effect that he had been back to see the *maestrescuela* to see what his decision was, but had not received an answer: 'fui a el sy queria responder el qual dixo que no queria responder'⁷⁹. Castilla seems to have been playing for time weighing up the legitimacy of the Junta and whether they had the power to enforce their order. The sanction they had, as set out in the letter, was to remove him from his post: 'so pena de la nuestra merced y perder las temporalidades que en estos reynos tengais'. ⁸⁰ Castilla would have been aware that this was exactly what had happened to the members of Charles V's Council of the Realm. By 10 November, when Junta's secretary Antonio Rodríguez signed a receipt for the trial documents, he had decided to hand the case over to the rebel government.

It perhaps seems rather odd that a revolutionary movement dealing with the huge strategic issues of trying to establish itself as a legitimate national government should concern itself with the petty details of a case like Baeza's. Certainly, this gives weight to the notion that the students were closely involved with members of the rebel movement, rather than simply taking advantage of events. Stephen Haliczer argues that the *comuneros* were extremely concerned to provide the good government which they felt was lacking and wanted to establish and broaden civil rights such as the right not to be subjected to excessive and cruel punishment⁸¹. This case provides further evidence in support of that view. The *Santa Junta's* letter sets out very clearly what are seen as the injustices of the case:

⁷⁵ ARRIBAS ARRANZ, F., "La organización de la cancillería durante las Comunidades de Castilla", *Hispania*, 10, (1950), pp. 61-84.

⁷⁶ Proceso, f. 423 r.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ These names appear on a list of individuals excluded from Charles V's general pardon in relation to the uprising, published in MALDONADO, J., *El movimiento*..., op. cit.

⁷⁹ Proceso, f. 423 v.

⁸⁰ Proceso, f. 423 r.

⁸¹ HALICZER, S., The Comuneros...op. cit., p. 177.

- imprisonment of the students without just cause;
- the size of the fine⁸², and the short time required to pay;
- the threat of public and excessive corporal punishment to be inflicted on future clergymen;
- failure to allow an appeal to the Pope.

This latter grievance reflected practice which had become common during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs and in particular among *conversos* after the establishment of the Inquisition in 1480: namely, to seek justice over the heads of the monarchy or church authorities based in Spain⁸³. There was at this time a sizeable Spanish community in Rome with some influential individuals closely linked to the papal court⁸⁴. Members of the Baeza family are known to have been been part of these circles and no doubt Juan Rodríguez de Baeza and his co-accused hoped to that they would be able to influence the outcome of any appeal through their contacts there⁸⁵. Some of the *comuneros* themselves had been involved in lobbying in Rome the previous year in relation to reforming the Inquisition⁸⁶ and there is no doubt that Leo X was seen as a Pope who would be open to such appeals and willing to use his authority to rein in what could be demonstrated as abuses of power.

Rome provides a further link between the *comuneros* and the Baezas, in the person of Cardinal Bernardino López de Carvajal. Carvajal, who was a very prominent member of the papal court and had acted both as papal *nuncio* and as Spanish Ambassador, can be linked to the Baezas from 1503 (during the election of Pope Julius II) to his death in 1523⁸⁷. He was a fervent reformist, leading the 'schism of Pisa' against Pope Julius in 1511,⁸⁸ but by 1520 he had been pardoned by the new Pope Leo X and had regained his ascendency in Rome. It is significant then that he was appointed temporary overseer of the see of Plasencia when the *comuneros* moved to block the appointment of a royalist candidate⁸⁹.

It is clear then that the *comunero* rebellion is not simply a backdrop to the trial of Juan Rodríguez de Baeza but is key to understanding the significance of the case. All participants in the trial would have been intensely aware of the developments unfolding across Castile, and where each of them stood in relation to the uncertain balance of power. The case also provides further evidence of the involvement of *conversos* in the rebellion. In the nineteen sixties, Juan Ignacio Gutiérrez Nieto drew attention to the role of the *conversos* in the movement and concluded that, even accepting that contemporary accounts of *converso* involvement were over-exaggerated for propaganda reasons, it had been an important one⁹⁰.

⁸² See note 32 above. Given the sum involved, it would have been very difficult for the students to raise the money in the time available, making the threat of corporal punishment a very real one.

⁸³ LLORENTE, J.A., Historia crítica de la Inquisición, Tomo I, Juan Pons, Barcelona, 1870.

⁸⁴ See the classic study: CROCE, B., *España en la vida italiana durante el Renacimiento*, Sánchez Rojas, Madrid, 1925 and more recently the work of historians such Alvaro Fernández de Córdova Miralles, Manuel Vaqueiro Piñeiro and Carlos José Hernando Sánchez.

⁸⁵ Our subject's cousin and namesake had been a protonotary in Rome and a 'familiar' of Pope Julius's household from around 1506, only returning to Spain in 1517: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, REG. LAT. 1199, 287r-289r; Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli, Historico, Leg. 53, ramo 1: Letter of recommendation from Cardinal Bernardino López de Carvajal to Catalina Fernández de Córdoba, Marquesa de Priego, Rome, 7 September 1517.

⁸⁶ FITA COLOMÉ, F., "Los judaizantes españoles en los cinco primeros años (1516-1526) del reinado de Carlos I", *BRAH*, 33, (1898), pp. 307-348.

⁸⁷ Carvajal was instrumental in obtaining Juan Rodríguez de Baeza's namesake and cousin's position as *chantre* of Seville cathedral, as a reward for his father's role in swinging the election of Pope Julius II, discussed in TINSLEY, T., *Hernando de Baeza*..., op. cit.

⁸⁸ FRAGNITO, G., Dizionario biografico degli Italiani, 21, Rome, 1978, pp. 28-34.

⁸⁹ HALICZER, S., The Comuneros..., op. cit., p. 172.

⁹⁰ GUTIERREZ NIETO, J.I., "Los conversos y el movimiento comunero", *Hispania*, 34 (1964), pp. 237-261.

In particular, Gutiérrez Nieto highlighted attempts by the *comuneros* to reform the Inquisition and argued that the *Junta* had started to do this in October 1520. He also noted that the Maldonados were among the rebel leaders motivated by interests related to the *conversos*⁹¹. More recent appraisals have shied away from such a close association of the *comunero* movement with the interests of *conversos*, pointing out that the *conversos* were not a single group and that there is also evidence of *converso* support for the royalists⁹². However, the trial documentation shows that in this case at least, there were people of Jewish heritage looking towards the *comunero* leaders to provide a level of justice which had hitherto been denied them.

This makes the trial much more than a personal settling of scores – a 'riña con dos estudiantes' as one archivist has written on the case notes⁹³ – but rather a symbolic enactment of the ideological struggle taking place on a wider front, with all the implications that involved. Crucially, it provides a rare example of the *Santa Junta* functioning as a high court of appeal.

The Santa Junta was dislodged from Tordesillas in early December 1520 but continued to function from Valladolid until April 1521. The file which I have examined in this paper contains no further documentation after 13 November, at which point Juan Rodríguez de Baeza and his companions were still in jail. We do not know how they managed to extricate themselves given that Sancho de Castilla remained in his post as maestrescuela until his death in 1525⁹⁴. The Simancas Archive contains a 'libro de conocimientos' which records documentation from various trials handed over to a certain Licenciado Oviedo during the period, but does not mention the one relating to Juan Rodríguez de Baeza⁹⁵. There is also a minute book recording some of the Santa Junta's general decisions but there is no further record of the students' case there⁹⁶. Exploration of the Vatican archives might provide evidence that the students did appeal to Rome, however I think it is more likely that the case was resolved in Spain, probably through some sort of out of court settlement.

However, despite his Jewish forebears, his association with the *comuneros* and a spell in jail early in his university career, Juan Rodríguez de Baeza was able to complete his studies and take his place as an 'honourable' member of 16th century society. As well as having successful legal and ecclesiastical careers, he was a shrewd manager of the family finances and had business interests and property all over Andalucía⁹⁷. In endowing the church of Santiago in Montilla he sought to be recognised as a leading exponent of counter-reformation Catholicism, providing it with the relics of saints obtained in Cologne by his brother in 1531⁹⁸. In his will he asked to be buried with his father in the church of Santiago, dressed as a priest, accompanied by the town's priests and clergy bearing lighted candles⁹⁹. This is the image that Juan Rodríguez de Baeza would have us remember of him, having left behind the shadow of the Inquisition, and having used every opportunity, including that provided by the *comunero* rebellion, to achieve an honourable place in society.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 245.

⁹² For example, KAMEN, H., *The Spanish Inquisition. A historical revision*, Phoenix, London, 1997.

⁹³ Proceso, f. 390 r.

⁹⁴ RODRIGUEZ-SAN PEDRO BEZARES, L. E., and POLO RODRIGUEZ, J. L., *Salamanca y su universidad en el primer Renacimiento: Siglo XV*, Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, 2011.

⁹⁵ AGS, PTR, LEG. 6, DOC. 25.

⁹⁶ AGS, PTR, LEG. 4, DOC. 51.

⁹⁷ Testamento.

⁹⁸ TINSLEY, T., "Recuerdos...", op. cit.

⁹⁹ Testamento.