



The Trial of Floreta d'Ays (1403): Jews, Christians, and Obstetrics in Later Medieval Marseille

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McCune Conference Room, HSSB 6020

In 1403, a Jewish midwife, Floreta, widow of Aquinon d'Ays, was brought before the criminal court of Marseille to answer for the death in childbirth of a Christian woman. Floreta was charged with having performed maneuvers that precipitated the patient's hemorrhaging and death. Aside from Floreta's statements in her own defense, all the recorded testimony comes from Christian women who were present in the birth room (including another midwife), giving us a rare glimpse inside that female preserve. The extant portion of the trial record also shows an element of anti-Judaic sentiment, both from the dying patient and from the judges in the case.

Although the final outcome of the case is not known, Floreta vigorously appealed the ruling that she be tortured to elicit a confession. This talk will examine the extant portion of the trial record - the first known case of a malpractice trial against a midwife - setting it into the context of Marseille legal procedure, medical knowledge of the time, and what is known about relations among medieval Jewish and Christian women.



Monica H. Green is Professor of History at Arizona State University. She has published *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Premodern Gynecology* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press) and *The "Trotula": An English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).



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