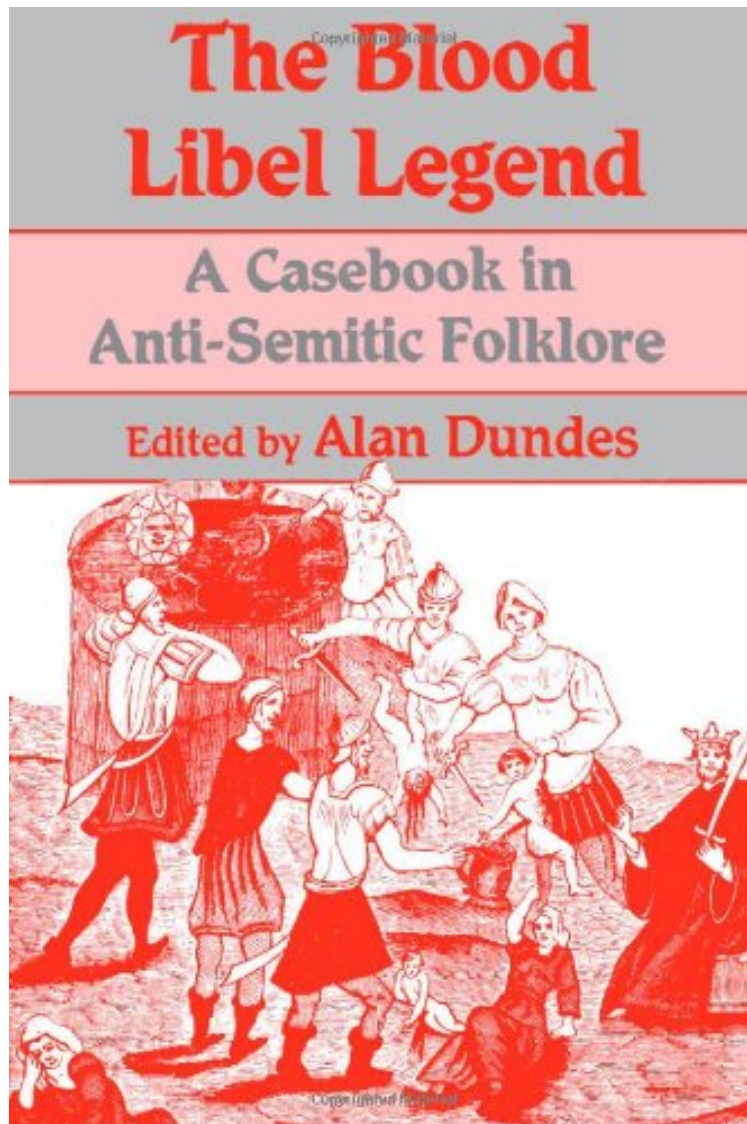


(Download pdf) The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore

The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore

Alan Dundes

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Alan Dundes : The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore:

1 of 7 people found the following review helpful. DelightedBy James Stuart TobiasonThis book was written by someone who was in graduate school with me in the early 1960's and deals with a subject I researched and wrote on during that time. I am more than happy to get the book (of which I only recently became aware) in such good

condition, at such a reasonable price and within such a short time after ordering.

Alan Dundes, in this casebook of an anti-Semitic legend, demonstrates the power of folklore to influence thought and history. According to the blood libel legend, Jews murdered Christian infants to obtain blood to make matzah. Dundes has gathered here the work of leading scholars who examine the varied sources and elaborations of the legend. Collectively, their essays constitute a forceful statement against this false accusation. The legend is traced from the murder of William of Norwich in 1144, one of the first reported cases of ritualized murder attributed to Jews, through nineteenth-century Egyptian reports, Spanish examples, Catholic periodicals, modern English instances, and twentieth-century American cases. The essays deal not only with historical cases and surveys of blood libel in different locales, but also with literary renditions of the legend, including the ballad *Sir Hugh*, or, *the Jews Daughter* and Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale*. These case studies provide a comprehensive view of the complex nature of the blood libel legend. The concluding section of the volume includes an analysis of the legend that focuses on Christian misunderstanding of the Jewish feast of Purim and the child abuse component of the legend and that attempts to bring psychoanalytic theory to bear on the content of the blood libel legend. The final essay by Alan Dundes takes a distinctly folkloristic approach, examining the legend as part of the belief system that Christians developed about Jews. This study of the blood libel legend will interest folklorists, scholars of Catholicism and Judaism, and many general readers, for it is both the literature and the history of anti-Semitism.

From Publishers Weekly
Easter Saturday, 1144: a 12-year-old boy named William is found murdered in the woods outside Norwich, England. Several years later, Thomas of Monmouth, a monk, learns of William's death and becomes obsessed by it. He hears rumors that Jews crucified William in a bizarre ritual. A Jew converted to Catholicism named Theobald confides that Jews annually sacrifice a Christian child "to show contempt for Christ." Based on this and other hearsay, Thomas writes a re-creation of William's murder implicating Jews, and the blood libel is born. Dundes (*Cinderella: A Casebook*) collects 14 essays analyzing this tale and tracing its metastasis throughout Europe, the Middle East and the U.S. Manifesting itself in cultural contexts as different as Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale," Spain during the Inquisition and Nazi Germany, the legend has had consistently deadly consequences. Several essays substantially repeat information; one, by Ernest A. Rappaport, is allusive to the point of distraction. Nevertheless, they make a fascinating detective story in which the culprit is the human desire for narrative itself when it serves the goals of racism. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
The "blood libel" legend, which perpetuates the falsehood that Jews engaged in ritualistic child murder, was born more than nine centuries ago and has corrupted the history of various religions and caused much violence since. Dundes (anthropology and folklore, Univ. of California, Berkeley) assembles various versions of blood libel tales starting in England in 1144, and follows their emergence in Europe and the Near East. Scholarly essays from various contributors examine the origin and psychology of these horrible lies, and the reasons why people believed them. This attempt to vanquish a persistent and damaging legend by bringing it into the light of reason is recommended. (Index not seen.)-- Gerda Haas, Holocaust Human Rights Ctr. of Maine
Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. What do we know of the power of legend? How do we put to rest a vicious story, born more than nine centuries ago yet surfacing even today on American television talkshows? The infamous blood libel legend was partly responsible for the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, the basis of persecutions and actual courtroom trials throughout Europe, and exploited in Nazi propaganda.