If so, the real "Jacob" was ignorant of an important detail, namely, that original language of the
Talmud was not just Hebrew but, as noted in section 9, parts are in Hebrew and parts are in Jewish
Aramaic. Being a rabbi who was of "noble rabbinical lineage" and the grandson of "the great rabbi
Israel of Florence," the fictitious "Jacob" would have known that and thus not written "all in Hebrew,"
whereas someone ignorant in Jewish matters could well have mistakenly thought that the entire
Talmud is in Hebrew. Who could that have been? Since Selbourne, in his "critical apparatus," did not
point out the "titan"'s blunder, he too must have believed that the Talmud is "all in Hebrew." What a
curious coincidence.\textsuperscript{106}

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Whoever the real "Jacob" was, much thought went into his enterprise, but the more elaborate a
hoax is, the harder it is to get every detail right, the harder it is to harmonize all its parts and thus avoid
contradictions, the harder it is to prevent the whole from collapsing once the experts start exposing the
shoddy workmanship.\textsuperscript{107} The real "Jacob" appears to have played for high stakes, his goals having
presumably been to:

A. Push as far into oblivion as possible the real Marco Polo, world-famous for hundreds of
years, and replace him with "Jacob of Ancona" (mentioned in no document available to us and in just
one document, probably imaginary, not available to us).

B. Possibly, substitute a Jewish hero for a Christian one (the alleged "Jacob"'s tale continually
sent the subtle message that it's wonderful to be a Jew and one chapter is full of anti-Christian
invective, both of which features suggest that the real "Jacob" was a Jew having a score to settle with
Christians -- Selbourne, a Jew, has published on hatred of Jews [see note 94], but that could be a
coincidence).

C. With Marco Polo knocked off his pedestal and "Jacob of Ancona" hoisted up in his place,
the new hero could be used (if the real "Jacob" decided on a roman à thèse, which he apparently did)
as a mouthpiece to broadcast whatever political, social, ethical, and philosophical ideas he wanted to.

D. The "translator" would be hailed as the new Rustichello, as someone who single-handedly
affected a Kuhnian revolution in not just one but many disciplines (an achievement all the more
remarkable in light of the fact that this was his first foray into all of them).

Apparently, the real "Jacob" was so naive that he did not realize that the ploy would be
transparent if he used a mere trader (to boot, a non-Chinese trader) on a business trip to China in
the thirteenth century as a mouthpiece for broadcasting what at the time would have been too
sophisticated thoughts on political, social, ethical, and philosophical issues that are nowhere
discussed in known thirteenth-century documents anywhere in the world but which were among the
central ethical, philosophical, political, and social issues in the West of the late twentieth
century; all the more transparent, if Selbourne himself had discussed those issues in the 1970s, 1980s,
and 1990s in easily available publications appearing under his own name; even more transparent if
his thoughts on the issues were more or less identical (see section 16) to those of the alleged
"Jacob."\textsuperscript{108}
The disciplines involved here were so many and so diverse (several branches of Chinese studies, Jewish studies, Italian studies, Christian studies, linguistics, and probably more) and the level of sophistication that most of those disciplines had reached by the last decade of the twentieth century was so high (to say nothing of sophisticated methods of determining the age and provenance of paper and ink) that a successful hoax at that time was next to impossible -- after all, we are not living in, say, the age of *The Donation of Constantine*, a document forged in the ninth century at the earliest, which only in 1440 was proved to be a fake, and which, even then, was not shown to everyone's satisfaction to be fabricated until more than three hundred years later.  

Indeed, smelling a rat even before Selbourne 1997a came out, the Scourges of Jacob went into action forthwith and, by the time the reviews of 1997 and 1998 came out, the communis opinio in the world of high-level research was that either the alleged "original manuscript" did not exist or, if it did, it was a nineteenth-century or, more probably, a twentieth-century fake.

At least had the tale been historically accurate as far as was possible with the knowledge of 1997, the "translator" would have had to defend only his story, but both those components of his enterprise were ridiculous, so that researchers' reaction was not just negative but vehemently so. What Selbourne misperceived to be "cabal-like pressures" to suppress publication (see the fourth paragraph of note 4, the last paragraph of subsection I of section 22, and subsection K of that section) was actually independent voices reacting with identical ferocity to the same four stimuli:

a. Selbourne flouted the protocols of research (see, for example, the three stages mentioned in section 2 and the second paragraph of section 20).

b. His book was not what it was advertised to be.

c. Consequently, the public was being misinformed.

d. Certain *commercial* publishers, only too happy to throw scholarly standards to the winds if $$$$ stood to be gained from what must have looked to them like a blockbuster bestseller that would, inter alia, dethrone Marco Polo and hoist up "Jacob of Ancona" in his place (for example, see subsection C of section 22 for Matthew d’Ancona's cheerleaderish blurb appearing in the very first imprint of Selbourne's book, "One of the most important manuscripts ever discovered ... the extraordinary adventure of a merchant-scholar which will lead us into a city of the past once again blazing with light"), did nothing to question Selbourne's flouting the protocols of research and hence did not call in experts -- real experts, not the Mickey Mouse "experts" whom they may have asked for " authentications" (which we have never seen) -- to vet the book before agreeing to publish it (let us repeat that, to their credit, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A, Northeast University Press, and the American branch of Little, Brown and Company did have Selbourne's book properly evaluated as a result of which they rejected it for publication). That was the real cabal, between Selbourne and the money-hungry and fame-hungry *commercial* publishers, not the non-existent cabal of responsible reviewers which Selbourne imagined. Mark Hanna once said that "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money, and I can't remember what the second one is." The same is true of certain *commercial* publishers.

Let us close this section as Spence did his review: "But I, for one, do not believe this Jacob of
Ancona has the strength to wrestle the Venetian Marco from his niche" (Spence 1977:21). More than a
decade later, Marco Polo is still Marco Polo and "Jacob of Ancona" still exists only in the minds of
Selbourne and his cheerleaders.

19. Selbourne will not have the last word: again on "Baiciu" ~ "Banciu" ~ "Bae-Choo" and
Huang Chao

Consider this exchange:

Barrett: "At least one puzzle Selbourne should be able to explain himself: the rebel 'Baiciu',
who devastated Canton, is identified by an editorial note: 'This is accurate; the rebel Bae-Choo carried
out a massacre of settlers and those of minority religions in Guangzhou in AD 877.' Arabic and
Chinese materials in fact disagree as to whether this event occurred in 878 (which in the Muslim
calendar would include the end of our 877) or 879, but all agree that the city was sacked by the rebel
Huang Chao -- and I cannot find a 'Bae-Choo'; in any source at all" (Barrett 1997).

Barrett: "I am more convinced than ever by the paperback edition of the unreliability of City of
Light: not one of the dozen or so substantive charges against it made in my review has been answered
in the Afterword, while an expanded note on the puzzling 'Baiciu', evidently included by Selbourne to
allay my suspicions, proves that this garbled name of a famous rebel was only known to the narrator of
the account in a form which derived from an 18th-century misreading of an Arabic manuscript - as
good a proof as any that something is badly amiss" (Barrett 1998b).

Selbourne: "Barrett claims that 'Baiciu' - a transliterated approximation to the name of a
medieval rebel who beset southern China and which appears in my translation of Jacob's text - comes
from 'an 18th-century misreading of an Arabic manuscript' and is therefore an anachronism. I cannot
follow Professor Barrett far down the foxhole into which he has currently retreated. But it is a fact that
the Ancona manuscript contains many proper names of Chinese personages transliterated as Jacob of
Ancona heard them. Some of them I could neither decipher nor identify, as I admitted in the first
dition. Others I identified clearly. Others again I believe I had identified, but sometimes only by
imposing a reading on unclear orthography. (That is how translation of an ancient manuscript goes.). ¶
Among the names was one which looked in the MS like 'Baiciu' or 'Banciu'. When searching for
corroboration of Jacob's references (a lengthy and arduous process) I found a 'Bae-choo' referred to in
James Finn's The Jews of China (1843), who fitted, closely enough, the sparse details about him in the
Ancona MS. I took the view that Jacob's 'Baiciu' or 'Banciu' and Finn's 'Bae-choo' were the same
person. There are justifiable doubts about the correct spelling of this name and my editorial work here
may be in error, but this cannot be ground for arguing, conspiratorially, that 'something is badly amiss''
(Selbourne 1999).

"Unclear orthography"? Compare Selbourne's claim that he found the "original manuscript" to
be written in "a small but careful and usually clear running hand" (Selbourne 2000:6). Since he could
explain away the contradiction between the two statements by calling attention to the word "usually" (the "unclear orthography" of the name under scrutiny in this section could be one of the exceptions to the "usually clear running hand"), let us consider my noting the contradiction to be a quibble (see note 157) and turn to a smoking gun.

* 

As elsewhere, a Scourge of Jacob put the truth in front of Selbourne's face yet he had the brazenness to look beyond it and see only his fantasy. Let us put the matter in the simplest terms possible:

**A.** One of the accurate romanizations of the rebel's name is Huang Chao.

**B.** Other accurate romanizations are possible, but whatever they may be, none implies /b/ as the first phoneme of the name or, in fact, /b/ anywhere else in the name. The undeniable fact is thus that the name does not contain /b/.

**C.** Consequently, any romanization of the name with /b/, like Selbourne's "Baiciu," "Banciu," and "Bae-Choo" (which, pace Selbourne, are not transliterations) is wrong and the presence of that letter requires an explanation, which now follows.

**D.** A certain Arabic manuscript mentions the rebel.

**E.** Someone in the eighteenth century (not the imaginary thirteenth-century "Jacob" or the real nineteenth- or twentieth-century "Jacob") misread the name of the rebel as it appears in that Arabic manuscript as beginning with /b/.

**F.** Selbourne 1997a has "Baiciu" in the "translation" and "Bae-Choo" in the "critical apparatus."

**G.** The possibilities are thus:

i. The alleged thirteenth-century "Jacob" misromanized the name by writing B. Consequently, the eighteenth-century misromanizer did not influence him and we want to know how he (the thirteenth-century "Jacob") came to misromanize the name.

ii. The real "Jacob," in the nineteenth or twentieth century, unknowingly copied the eighteenth-century misromanizer's mistake into The City of Light, either directly (the eighteenth-century misromanizer --> the real "Jacob") or indirectly (the eighteenth-century misromanizer --> one or more miscopiers --> the real "Jacob").

Of the two possibilities (tertium non datur), Selbourne and his followers will presumably pick Possibility **G.i**, but if they do, they will have to explain the presence of the letter B in the alleged "original manuscript." So far as I can see, no reasonable explanation is possible (even Selbourne's few supporters knowing Chinese will tell him, if he ever cares to ascertain the facts, that Huang Chao's name is not known ever to have contained /b/ or any sound which a speaker of Higher Macaronic could so interpret).
The Scourges of Jacob choose Possibility G.ii. In so doing, we have to explain the presence of that letter in the eighteenth-century misromanizer's text. It is easy to do so, as we will now see.

Misromanization of Huang Chao's name with B could have come about only through someone's confusion of one letter of the Arabic alphabet for another:

i. The Chinese name Huang Chao begins with /w/, which in Arabic is represented by the word-initial allograph of the grapheme w_w (that is, the twenty-seventh letter of the Arabic alphabet).

ii. Someone lacking a firm grip on the Arabic alphabet could easily mistake the word-initial allograph of the grapheme w_w and the word-initial allograph of the grapheme b_’ (that is, the second letter of the Arabic alphabet, which stands for /b/) because the two are almost identical in form: respectively mmmm and nnnn.

iii. Thus, misreading of the twenty-seventh letter as the second could result in misromanization with B. That indeed happened when, in the eighteenth century, someone romanized Huang Chao's name in an Arabic text with B instead of with W (Wang = Huang).

iv. In the nineteenth century, James Finn, either copying uncritically from the eighteenth-century misromanizer (the eighteenth-century misromanizer --> Finn?) or indirectly leaning on him (the eighteenth-century misromanizer --> one or more uncritical copiers --> Finn), used the misromanization "Bae-choo" in The Jews of China.\textsuperscript{113}

v. Since Selbourne admitted to being familiar with the relevant passage in Finn's book ("I found a 'Bae-choo' referred to in James Finn's The Jews of China"), we assume that he proceeded in this way:

a. Selbourne learned of "Bae-choo" from Finn's book.

b. Knowing that if he called that person "Bae-choo" in his alleged "translation" of the alleged "original manuscript," he was likely to be discovered as having copied from Finn, he modified the spelling to "Baiciu" in an attempt to cover his tracks (see section 14 on how the spelling "Toutson" seems to have come about in the same way).

vi. Implicitly, then, Selbourne told us what we already know: he knew neither Chinese nor Arabic, in particular that Huang Chao's name does not begin with /b/ and that Finn's spelling with B was a misromanization due to confusion of two Arabic letters.

vii. How ironic that Selbourne believed that by mentioning Finn's The Jews of China he was successfully deflecting criticism when in fact he was revealing to us what was presumably the source of that dramatically anachronistic blunder. See paragraph A of the dissection in note 96 for a possibly second example of how Selbourne's attempt to defend himself put us on the scent of the raw material with which the real "Jacob" presumably fashioned his tale.

In contrast, if you try to explain how the imaginary thirteenth-century "Jacob" could have made the mistake (Subpossibility G.i), you paint yourself into a corner:

viii. We assume that even Selbourne would agree that the alleged thirteenth-century "Jacob"
The Chinese name of the rebel in China rather than saw it in an Arabic manuscript (or a manuscript in any other language). Consequently, he could not have misread anything (as the eighteenth-century misreader of the Arabic manuscript in fact did). At most he could have misheard the name in China.

**ix.** If so, we run into this problem: no one with the alleged thirteenth-century "Jacob"'s alleged linguistic repertory (= the components of Higher Macaronic) would hear word-initial /b/ in the Chinese name Huang Chao. Consequently, he would not have picked the letter B in his romanization of the name.

**x.** In fact, we have evidence that the imaginary "Jacob" was capable of hearing word-initial Chinese /w/ correctly, that is, as /w/: Selbourne told us that the "original manuscript" contains the word ouasu (1997a:120), where ou can stand only /w/ because the word in question can be none other than the Chinese word wazi 'pleasure quarter [of an urban area]', which indeed begins with /w/.

*Notice too that Selbourne's wording "Among the names was one which looked in the MS like 'Baiciu' or 'Banciu'" implies uncertainty on his part only with regard to the fourth letter of the name, not to the first one. Thus, Selbourne could not claim that the first letter in the alleged "original manuscript" was not clear and, consequently, he interpreted it to be B solely on the basis of Finn's spelling "Bae-choo."

However, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that Selbourne now claimed that the first letter or digraph in the "original manuscript" was unclear and that he chose to interpret it as B solely on the basis of Finn's spelling. If so, we would ask him what capital letter or capital digraph of the Higher Macaronic alphabet in word-initial position standing for /w/ could by any stretch of the imagination be taken to be B? There is none. Ou, for instance, could not possibly be mistaken for B.

Had Selbourne said in defense "Among the names was one which looked in the MS like '[...]aiciu' or '[...]anciu'" (that is, the first letter or digraph was so unclear as to be completely uninterpretable), he could claim Finn as his basis for assuming it to be B. But he did not say so. Rather, as noted above, he was unsure only about the third letter.

It thus seems impossible for Selbourne to deny that he saw B -- and saw it clearly -- in the alleged "original manuscript." If so, the source of that letter can be only a romanizer's mistaking the word-initial allograph of the twenty-seventh letter of the Arabic alphabet for the word-initial allograph of the second one. And thus we are back at our original argument.

*As often in this tragicomedy, the net result of an attempt by Selbourne to defend himself or an attempt by a member of his tiny band of supporters to defend him was to put more ammunition into our hands. And we again have another anticipatory anachronism: misromanization of Huang Chao's name with B should not appear in any "original manuscript" written before that eighteenth-century misromanization of the Arabic manuscript.
After the foregoing was written, I found that in the French version of Selbourne's book Huang Chao's name was nowhere spelled with B (whether in the imaginary "Jacob"'s tale or Selbourne's "critical apparatus"). Instead, Selbourne now used the spelling Ianciu throughout and his remark on this name was "probablement Yang Zhu, figure chinoise légendaire" (p. 540). The chronology of events is revealing:

1. Selbourne tells us that the "original manuscript" was written in a "usually clear running hand."

2. Barrett points out that the spelling "Baiciu" resulted from an eighteenth-century misromanization of an Arabic manuscript.

3. Selbourne tries to defend the appearance of the letter B by noting that Finn in 1843 wrote Bae-choo.

4. Selbourne claims that he "cannot follow Professor Barrett far down the foxhole into which he has currently retreated" (Barrett did not "retreat" down any "foxhole"; rather, he pointed out a smoking gun).

5. Lo and behold, by the time the French version appears, all instances of B have disappeared. Which is to say that, whereas earlier Selbourne had ostensibly refused to follow Barrett down what he (Selbourne) alleged to be a "foxhole" (because, had Selbourne followed Barrett, he would have been acknowledging the justness of Barrett's criticism), later he quietly did follow him (by removing the smoking guns, namely all instances of B).

6. Selbourne cannot eat his cake and have it too: either he must recognize the Bs as smoking guns or he must prove that their appearance in the alleged "original manuscript" is legitimate.

7. Let's not hold our breath and wait for Selbourne's attempt to prove their legitimacy, for the very fact that he removed the Bs tells us that he recognized -- just to himself though -- their illegitimacy.

8. Selbourne thus shifted gears silently. Instead of telling his readers forthrightly, "Yes, Barrett is right; B shows the influence of that eighteenth-century misromanization of the Arabic manuscript; we consequently have a smoking gun here; and the entire original manuscript is thus suspect," he merely replaced "Baiciu" by Ianciu and tiptoed away from the smoking gun. Since Selbourne was trained in the law, we would like to know whether he does not believe that his replacement of "Baiciu" by Ianciu without explaining the import of the B would in a court of law be considered an attempted tampering with evidence or an attempted cover-up.

Fortunately, however, the abundant evidence of B at least in Selbourne 1997a remains, so that Selbourne is still on the hook. If he tries to defend himself again, claiming this time that he misread Ianciu as "Baiciu," let us say forthwith that it is unlikely that I, however badly written, could be misinterpreted as B, though we will keep an open mind and are therefore ready to hear how that could have happened -- but only on condition that Selbourne consider just thirteenth-century Italian
handwriting.

20. Wang Lianmao's "Remarks on The City of Light"

Selbourne 2000:451-473 contains Wang Lianmao's "Remarks on The City of Light," which is an English translation by Michael Szonyi of an article that appeared in June 1999 in Chinese. Like Chun-shu Chang (see section 2), Wang took the existence of the alleged "original manuscript" for granted. He did, however, recognize that its authenticity had been questioned, doubted, or denied. That is a bit of progress, but not much, for we cannot jump to stage 3 (evaluating the alleged document as a possible source of "new knowledge") without first going through stages 1 and 2 (producing the alleged "manuscript" and authenticating it).

Since Wang never mentioned stages 1 and 2, he was presumably unfamiliar with the protocol in textual criticism which the best researchers follow: textual criticism "may be divided into (A) statement showing what is the 'transmitted text' (recensio); (B) examination of this text concerning its genuineness (examinatio); (C) conjectural restoration, as far as possible, of the original text, where the transmitted text is insufficient. ¶ A. Recensio may be divided into: (i) collection of witnesses (including extracts, translations, quotations, imitations, etc.); and (ii) statement of the interrelationship between these witnesses (stemmatics'). [...]" (Maas 1949:888-889). We are therefore not surprised that Wang wrote that "the discoverer and translator of the manuscript [was] Prof. David Selbourne" (p. 452)."Manuscript"? What manuscript?

Because the following discussion involves the distinction between information of types A and B, we repeat here the definitions in note 35 to make reading easier:

Type A: correct information that is available in reliable sources.

Type B: information that is not available in reliable sources but is found in sources the reliability of which we are trying to determine, like Selbourne 1997a. It consists of two subtypes:

Subtype B.1: information which we know is wrong.

Subtype B.2: information the factualness of which is still undetermined and may never be determinable.

* Quotation A from Wang 2000: "I believe that actual lived historical experience is much richer, and much more complex, than the history we read in written texts. The sources of the latter are limited, in particular because the documents which are recorded and preserved of any age are only a tiny fragment of the whole, and reflect the history of the ruling class. As a result, we should not be misled into thinking that we can construct a complete and accurate image of the past purely of the
basis of the limited records, or that this image can then be used as the decisive criterion of historical accuracy" (p. 653).

**My comment:** We all agree with the truism that known reliable sources do not paint a full and detailed picture, so that when new sources come to light, we welcome them as possible helps in filling in the gaps. But that truism does not apply to fiction and it does not apply to an alleged text which we have every reason to believe has never existed. Or is it that Wang was ready to accept that Huang Chao was in the thirteenth century pronounced with /b/, that the Jewish custom is to circumcize newborn males before their eighth day after birth, that the word "mellah" was used in thirteenth-century Persia, that twelfth-century Florence had such a large Jewish community that "the great rabbi Israel of Florence" (not mentioned anywhere but in Selbourne's book) was living there, that the Jews of Cochin had an all-Hebrew version of the Talmud, and so on? In a nutshell: all the "new information" in Selbourne's book is either wrong information or right information that we will know is right because factual sources prove its veracity (in which case we do not need "Jacob"'s fiction to tell us that it is right). Wang should have taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the protocols of research (which is to say, become a first-rate researcher) and read and understand all the negative reviews and letters to the editor (which is to say, do his homework).

As things now stand, Selbourne 1997a therefore contains:

A. already known facts, like the tenth of Tishre as a Jewish fast day. We do not need Selbourne's book to tell us what we already know to be right.

B. old mistakes, like misromanization of Huang Chao's name with B (see section 19).

C. new mistakes, like a Jewish circumcision before the eighth day after birth (see section 17).

D. possibly, some right information not now known to be right (because we have not found it in reliable factual sources). If that turned out to be the case, the real "Jacob" was now and then lucky enough to guess right (as Cicero says in *De Divinatione* 2.121, "quis est enim qui totum diem iaculans non aliquando collineet?" he that shoots oft shall at last hit the mark', literally, 'is anyone who throws the javelin all day long not bound to hit the target once in a while?).

**Quotation B:** "I also believe that even if there are matters recorded in the manuscript which cannot be proven at this time, and even if there may be some omissions and errors, we cannot without thorough discussion recklessly conclude that the work is a forgery, and deny the work's accuracy and scholarly value" (p. 455).

**Comment:** Wang was right about the need to avoid being reckless. He rightly recognized subtype B.2 here (for the sake of balance, he should have said "proven or disproven"), but he did not realize, presumably because he had not read the negative reviews and letters to the editor pointing out absurdities of both Chinese and non-Chinese interest, that the damning evidence is far more weighty than just "some omissions and errors [in Chinese aspects]" and he was still taking the existence of the alleged "original manuscript" for granted ("the manuscript"? what manuscript? "the work"? what work?) when his guideline should have been: the alleged document is considered not to exist until it is proven to exist; if it is proven to exist, it is not considered authentic until it is proven authentic; and if it is proven authentic, its degree of factualness remains to be determined.
"Thorough discussion"? Has Wang read all of the negative reviews and letters to the editor? How many more dissections do we need?

"Reckless"? Yes, Selbourne and his supporters, including Wang, were reckless -- the only reckless ones in this case.

**Quotation C:** "How can we insist that ancient authors should write in a certain way, or about certain subjects?" (p. 456).

**Comment:** Did Wang never come across or hear of any texts of doubtful or proven inauthenticity because of their form, content, and/or provenance? Was he not aware of entire disciplines that go by names like **codicology**, **paleography**, **textology**, and **textual analysis**? Was he not aware that researchers the world over often deal with out-and-out fakes, partial fakes, probable fakes, possible fakes, and so on? Was he not aware that since the choices open to fakers are limited, they are likely to take the same tacks, so that their behavior generally follows patterns (see notes 133, 151, and 156), as a consequence of which it is not hard to pick up their trail? Trevor-Roper 1976 and Moody 2002 are good introductions to the subject of Chinese fakes. Moody in fact mentions Selbourne 1997a (p. 151).

As for "writ[ing] in a certain way," what's the Chinese for 'style'? Just as we do not expect someone in the 1270s to paint like Marc Chagall, sculpt like Louise Nevelson, compose like Leonard Bernstein, or write like Franz Kafka, we do not expect the alleged thirteenth-century "Jacob" to write in a way that would result in Selbourne's alleged "translation."

As for how we allow ourselves to insist, I can speak only of my two fields of interest: become proficient in Jewish studies, including the relevant Jewish languages; learn about the traditional Jewish world; read Jewish-and non-Jewish-language Western literature of the period, including polemical literature (all the thirteenth-century Italian Jewish anti-Christian polemical literature that has come down to us is in Hebrew-Aramaic [Lasker 1997]) and travel literature (all the little Jewish travel literature of the Middle Ages that has come down to us is in Hebrew-Aramaic, all of it is relatively short, and all of it is superficial, unreflective, and often naive, in any case far from sophisticated, the chief examples of the genre being the accounts of Benjamin of Tudela [Benjamin of Tudela 1907], Moshe ben-Mordechay Bassola, Ovadya Bertinoro, and Petachya of Regensburg [Benisch 1861])\(^{115}\); become proficient in linguistics; improve your ability to think logically, to examine all the possibilities, to examine all the implications and all the consequences of all the possibilities, to read between the lines, to spot telling details, to recognize half-truths ("There are no salt marshes in Fez" [section 7]), to collate contradictory statements, to see connections between seemingly unconnected data and thus to assemble in a methodical fashion previously unrelated information, to be skeptical -- do all that, gain forty years' experience as a contributor to academic publications, and then you will understand that no thirteenth-century Jew could have written Higher Macaronic, no thirteenth-century Jew could have written the way the alleged "Jacob" allegedly did, no educated Jew, of any time, would have made the blunders of Jewish interest that the imaginary "Jacob" did, and no one, in fact, whether Jew or non-Jew, could in the thirteenth century have written what the fictitious "Jacob" was alleged to have written and had the experiences he was alleged to have had.\(^{116}\) In contrast, Selbourne, as he himself has now admitted (see the end of section 17), could easily have written his alleged "translation" as an original piece of writing (which is what his stricter critics believe he in fact did).
Quotation D: "We must first engage in a great deal of research" (p. 456).

Comment: True, but Wang's definition of *first* is our definition of *third*. First produce the alleged manuscript, then authenticate it, and then we will, through high-level research, determine its degree of factualness. If Wang cannot wait for stages 1 and 2 and wants to jump to stage 3, he should first read all the negative reviews and letters to the editor; if he reads them carefully, he will presumably understand that even just stage 1 is unattainable because no "original manuscript" has ever been produced and none is likely to have ever existed.

Quotation E: "Generally speaking, however, Jacob's remarks [about factions in Quanzhou] are believable. Their chief significance lies in the fact that they offer supplementary information on subjects which the historical documents mostly omit, enabling us to understand the political situation in Quanzhou. It is indeed this previously omitted history which leads us to conclude that the manuscript cannot be a forgery" (p. 460).

Comment: What's the Chinese for 'non sequitur'? True, we have certain information that is believable, but 'believable' and 'factual' are different meanings: if you have not known me previously, if the present essay is your first and only contact with me, if you have no other means of ascertaining anything about me, and if I told you that I was born and grew up in Vermont, you would probably find that statement believable because I write American English passably and seem to be earnestly interested in finding and defending the truth, but unless you had a way of verifying my assertion (say, with the help of authentic birth and school records), you could not tell whether the statement was truthful (I have never even been to that state). Thus, the fact that information is "supplementary" (like my statement that I was born and grew up in Vermont) does not make it true.

Wang, in contrast, took supplementary information (= Selbourne's allegedly "new knowledge" [see section 7]) to be right because he had no proof that it was wrong, his assumption thus being that, for such information, the unmarked category (to use a linguistic term) or the default mode (to use a computer term) was to be called correct when in fact the standards of research require that the unmarked category or the default mode be called of undetermined and possibly undeterminable factualness (= subtype B.2). If I tell you that on the day of her coronation Queen Victoria had a cup of coffee just before the ceremony and you have no proof that she did not, am I necessarily right? Did Wang ever consider that what he termed "previously omitted history" could be fabricated history?

We agree that "the manuscript cannot be a forgery," but for a different reason: something the existence of which has not been proven cannot be a forgery (or a nonforgery). Wang seems never to have even wondered whether the alleged "original manuscript" exists. If he, Selbourne, or anyone else can prove with evidence acceptable in a court of law or in scholarly circles that the alleged object exists, we will then proceed to the question of authenticity.

See the Comment on Quotation I for another of Wang's non sequiturs.

Quotation F: "I have already noted that the evidence according to which some Western scholars deny the authenticity of the manuscript is, for the most part, connected to our current knowledge of the history of Zaitun in Southern Song" (p. 460).

Comment: "For the most part [...] connected to [...] Zaitun"? We have abundant evidence that
innumerable particulars in the tale and the story having nothing to do with that city or with China at all are wrong. It would be good to read Wang's reaction to the present essay and to all the other negative evaluations. If he does react, let him not waste our time with vague, Selbournesque reactions unsupported by convincing evidence -- we want detailed, step-by-step refutations of all the criticisms with which he does not agree, refutations formulated in the manner required by the highest standards of research. So far, nobody in Selbourne's tiny camp has argued his case professionally.

**Quotation G:** "Resolving the question of Duzong's temple name depends on establishing whether the manuscript was the original draft which Jacob recorded while in Quanzhou, or a text which was put in order only after his return home. With regard to this question, David Selbourne, in his preface to *The City of Light*, has already offered a detailed and persuasive argument. He first confirms that much of the content of the manuscript was written by Jacob after he returned to Italy. At one point in the manuscript, Jacob writes in Hebrew, 'May blessings be upon Him who guides my hand'. This is most illuminating. Selbourne, noting that the manuscript refers to the 'late earthquake which fell upon us' (damaging earthquakes struck Ancona in 1269 and 1279), concludes that the manuscript may have been completed at the relatively late date of 1290 or later, when Jacob would have been nearly seventy. Although we are as yet unable to determine conclusively the precise date when the manuscript was completed, there can be no doubt that this was after Jacob's return to his home. We therefore have grounds for believing that the questionable terms in the manuscript may reflect problems that Jacob encountered in the preparation of the manuscript, which he resolved with knowledge provided by friends who returned from Zaitun to Italy. At that time, the number of Europeans, including Jews, who came to Quanzhou was much greater than it had been in the past" (p. 468).

**Comment:** As for "the question of Duzong's temple name," Wang seemed not to know even what the question is. It is not: how did the alleged "Jacob" allegedly learn of the temple name after he allegedly left China: It is not even: how did the temple name get into the allegedly "original manuscript"? Rather, it is: do you not understand that when we find that Selbourne's alleged "translation" calls people who were living in the early 1270s by their temple names (not just Tu-tsung is so called), we have all the more reason to believe that someone in our day wrote the "original manuscript," whatever it may be?

Even if we play the game according to Wang's rules (that is, by naively believing Selbourne's story), we have to conclude that temple names for living people are absurd. Let us take, for example, this sentence in Selbourne's alleged "translation":

"But first I should tell that the land of Sinim, or Mahacin, is divided into two parts, that of the Cataini of the north who have fallen under the Tartars and their Cane, Chubilai, and that of the Mancini of the south who live under a king called Toutson [..."] [Selbourne 2000:127]

Playing that game, we find the only reasonable wordings for that sentence to be as follows:

**A.** If the alleged text was not changed after it was written during the alleged trip:
"But first I should tell that the land of Sinim, or Mahacin, is divided into two parts, that of the Cataini of the north who have fallen under the Tartars and their Cane, Chubilai, and that of the Mancini of the south who live under a king called Chao Ch'i."

B. If the alleged text was edited after the alleged trip:

"But first I should tell that the land of Sinim, or Mahacin, is divided into two parts, that of the Cataini of the north who have fallen under the Tartars and their Cane, Chubilai, and that of the Mancini of the south who live under a king called Chao Ch'i [called Toutson since his death in 1274]."

Tertium non datur. Selbourne and his cheerleaders cannot argue that the co-occurrence of temple names and present-tense verbs is not a smoking cannon any more than they could claim that the co-occurrence of *late* (as in "the late John Doe") with present-tense verbs in English is not.

Wang's phrases "the manuscript" and "the original draft" imply that he took for granted the existence of the alleged manuscript and the alleged draft. We have no evidence that either has ever existed and strong evidence that neither of them has.

The phrase "resolving the question" implies that he took for granted not just the existence of the alleged text but also its authenticity. Once again, therefore, as expected, the uncritical, all-believing Wang jumped to stage 3 when we are still at stage Ø.

Selbourne "confirms"? He "confirms"? To what document does the "confirmation" pertain? If to the alleged "original manuscript," let us see it. What were Selbourne's credentials in the study of paper, ink, handwriting, provenance, thirteenth-century Higher Macaronic, and so on and so forth? Is the only suspect known for sure to exist to be his own judge and jury? Can he be considered even just a cooperative witness ("Although I have naturally come under pressure to reveal more, I do not intend to do so" [section 15]) and a reliable witness ("There are no salt marshes in Fez" [section 7])?

From what we have seen of Selbourne's modus operandi, he seemed willing to "confirm" anything, even, on several occasions, to contradict himself or to change his story, in order to defend his enterprise (but the more he opened his mouth or took pen in hand, the more his few supporters tried to help him by speaking out, the deeper they all sank). One cannot "confirm" anything about a presumed non-existent entity other than that it does not exist. If you want us to believe otherwise, produce the document and let us see whether it is authentic.

Selbourne "offered a detailed and persuasive argument"? "Detailed"? Where? "Persuasive"? All Selbourne's "arguments" were devoid of foundation. He and his supporters offered no chain of evidence because they had no evidence (though his book did contain abundant circumstantial
evidence, much of it strong, of a hoax on somebody's part).

"At one point in the manuscript, Jacob writes in Hebrew, 'May blessings be upon Him who guides my hand'. This is most illuminating"? You bet it is. As anyone possessing even a baby flea's thimbleful of Jewish knowledge knows, in Jewish prayer after Jewish prayer, in one Jewish language after another, God is blessed ("baruch ata [...]" \\
"blessed art thou [...]"), but blessings are not wished "upon Him." True, English has the idiom blessings on [...]! ~ blessings upon [...]! (as in the beginning of Francis Jeffrey's letter to Charles Dickens of 26 December 1843: "Blessings on your kind heart, my dear Dickens! [...]") and Yiddish has the idiom a brokhe af...! (as in "a brokhe af dayn kepele!" 'a blessing on your sweet little head!', said to a child), but the alleged thirteenth-century "Jacob" wrote neither in English nor in Yiddish. Here, then, we have another failed attempt to give the text a Jewish flavor. Since Selbourne could probably squirm out by again claiming that he "mistranslated" and that he should have written "Blessed be He who guides my hand," let's dismiss my criticism as a quibble (see note 157), though I believe that he did not translate or mistranslate anything because there was nothing to translate from.117

As for the earthquakes, a latter-day faker could have learned of those events from reliable factual sources and written the tale accordingly. Is knowledge of the earthquakes so recondite that no one in our times could know of them if not for the fictitious "Jacob"'s tale? How did Wang learn of the earthquakes if not from reliable factual sources?

As for "the relatively late date of 1290 or later," we agree only with the last word. Much later. The twentieth century.

Thus, Wang's "grounds for believing [such and such about] the questionable terms" rest on the unproven assumptions that the alleged "original document" exists and that it is genuine, whereas the Scourges of Jacob believe that the "questionable terms" are grounds for believing either that the alleged "original manuscript" does not exist or, if it does, that it is not genuine.

As for "problems that Jacob encountered in the preparation of the manuscript," what were they? And who did Wang think the alleged "Jacob" was? A meticulous Sinologist who perceived problems and set about solving them? No one like that would have used temple names with present-tense verbs.

As for the alleged problems which "he resolved with knowledge provided by friends who returned from Zaitun to Italy," we are presumably asked to imagine a scenario like this:

"Oh dear," Jacob thinks to himself, "Notizie di Sinime says that the Emperor of Sinim is dead. Well, first let me quote from the 1991 imprint of the fifteenth edition of The New Encyclopædia Britannica (a useful tool in getting at the truth): it says that the Forbidden City was "the Imperial Palace complex within the Inner City of Peking, China. Surrounded by a wall 35 feet (11 m) high extending for 2½ miles (4 km) on each side, it contains hundreds of buildings, the principal ones of which served as the imperial palaces of the emperors of China from 1421 to 1911. The 9,000 rooms in the Forbidden City housed the entire imperial court. The Forbidden City was so-called
because no commoner or foreigner was allowed to enter it without special permission from the court officials" (vol. 4, p. 874). Although I visited Sinim about a hundred and fifty years before the Forbidden City was built, that quotation does give you an idea of how the Sinimian kings and emperors were cocooned (really cocooned, not illusorily cocooned like some non-existent manuscript and its just as non-existent owner). Yet despite the fact that I was a mere trader in Sinim, despite the fact that I was a foreigner, and despite the fact that even most Sinimians were not allowed even to set eyes upon the emperor (even before the Forbidden City was built), I was swiftly ushered into the inner sanctum of the imperial palace to chat with him because I'm an astonishing intellectual titan, the grandson of the great rabbi Israel of Florence (of whom you have surely heard), and of noble rabbinical lineage (all of which counts for much among the Sinimians). I can therefore tell you that, although born in 1240, he looked advanced in years the last time we shot the breeze (actually, I talked most of the time and he lapped up my every word). Now when was that? In 1271, when he was just thirty-one years old? In 1272, when he was thirty-two? I can't remember right now, but whenever it was, he was no more than thirty-two. My, my, how he aged in so short a span! Incredible, but true. What's that you say? You don't believe me!? Why I have never been so insulted in all my life! Did I ever lie to you? Did I ever say I heard about lions in Sinim? See section 18. Did I ever say my son was circumcized before his eighth day? See section 17. Did I ever use words not yet in existence? See sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and who knows how many others. Did I ever write anything you had reason to doubt? Why just read all the positive reviews and letters to the editor about my exploits (all written by people with the highest relevant credentials and, all printed in peer-reviewed academic journals of the first water) and you'll see that Trader Jake always tells the truth -- and not just when he copies accurately from reliable latter-day Western secondary sources and when he happens to guess right.

Anyway, to get back to serious business (never mind the peashooters), from my study of Sinimian anthroponyms (I am a thirteenth-century Italian Jewish trader with the training of a twenty-first-century first-rate Sinimologist), I know that the late emperor is now known by a temple name. I'll have to get it. Curious that the obituarist doesn't give it and too bad the Ancona branch of the Jewish Society for the Study of Sinimian Anthroponomy is closed for the day -- the whole staff is in Florence (or maybe in Arezzo, Fano, or Sinigallia) for the director's grandson's circumcizion -- little Abraham was born two days ago and today is his circumcizion -- an adorable child.

I know what! Maybe one of my friends coming back from Zaitun today can tell me. I'll go down to the dock this afternoon and find out."

Trader Jake moseys down to the port, where, sure enough, he meets his fellow Sinim trader, Dave, coming down the gangplank of his ship, surrounded by his entourage -- two cooks, a cook's apprentice, two washerwomen (one of them sporting expensive pearl earrings), two bodyguards, a navigator, and, because he had his eye on the Nobel Prize for Literature, two clerks, who are carrying 280 leaves of paper guaranteed to last only from September 1991 to June 1996.
Miss Rosetta Stone kindly translated the following exchange from Higher Macaronic:

"Hey, Jake, you old codger! Guess what!? Your buddy the Emperor of Sinim's dead! The Sinimians now call him \textit{Toutson}. In their alphabet they spell it \textit{T-o-u-t-s-o-n}, which I think they modified from the Wade-Giles romanization of the name! And other people too you knew are now dead, but I brought you a list of their temple names (we Sinim traders know all about the many names of the Sinimian kings and emperors: personal names, posthumous names, which can change when applied to different phases of their reigns, temple names, and reign names, which can also change) just in case you too have your eye on the Nobel Prize -- though watch out for the Inquisition!"

Says Jake, "Blessings be upon the Unnameable One (peace upon Him)! Amen, amen and amen!"

106. Whether taking the following advice might help us to understand Benjamin of Tudela's text better is not clear:

Since Basque was spoken in the town of Tudela after 1787 -- "hablan el idioma bascongado muchos pueblos de la Vicaría de Vitoria, todos los de Gamboa, los más de la de Salvatierra, los de la de Mondragón, Cigoitia, Zuya, Orduña, Ayala, Orozco y Tudela, en los cuales a lo menos serian inútiles los Curas de concurso abierto, que ignorasen este idioma" (\textit{Pueblos de Álava por vicarías, repartidos sus vecinos en cinco clases}, written after 1787 and published in Barandiarán 1960) -- and since Basque speech territory has in recent centuries been contracting rather than expanding, it is reasonable to assume that if Basque was spoken in Tudela after 1787 it must have been spoken there before too, namely when Benjamin of Tudela lived there. If so, his native language could have been Jewish Basque. It would therefore be worthwhile to look at the language, Hebrew, of Benjamin of Tudela's account of his travels to see whether any Basque influence could be discerned and whether any of the obscure or controversial passages could be elucidated with a knowledge of Basque. It being doubtful that anyone knows twelfth-century Basque and twelfth-century Sefardic Hebrew well enough to carry out the task, it would have to be the effort of at least two people. See Gold 2003 for background.

107. The communis opinio of the negative reviewers of Selbourne's book seems to be that one or more people are guilty of intellectual dishonesty of one kind or another, the sharper critics believing that the only "original manuscript" is the first draft, in English, of an original piece of bad historical fiction written by Selbourne and the milder critics leaving open the possibility that he may have been the hoaxee rather than the hoaxer, that is, someone may have shown him an "original manuscript" which, whether that person knew it or not, was a fake, and he, taking it to be genuine, translated it. The available evidence does not support the latter possibility and in fact speaks against it:

\textbf{A.} Selbourne's friend of "many years," being sympathetic to him, would not play a trick on him, all the less so, such an elaborate one.

\textbf{B.} Since nobody would benefit, we can think of no reason why anyone would go to such lengths (penning no fewer than 280 leaves in Higher Macaronic, the hardest language in the world to master). Certain leftists in the British Isles may have disliked Selbourne for his rightist ideas, but not execrated him to such an extent that they would pen such a document, plant it with an Italian living "near Urbino," have that person meet Selbourne, and, after "many years," have that person reveal to Selbourne its existence and ask him to translate it (into, of all languages, English....).

\textbf{C.} Selbourne's behavior was not consistent with a belief on his part that someone had played a trick on him. If he had so believed, he would have recognized, on reading the negative reviews and letters to the editor, that the alleged "original owner" had shown him a fabrication, he would have realized that he had been duped, he would have wanted to clear his name by showing that he was an innocent victim, he would have joined the critics' camp, and he would have laid all his cards on the table by revealing everything he knew. But since he did none of that, we must assume that he did not see himself as a hoaxee of any kind.
Thus, the more Selbourne dug in his heels by sticking to every word of his story and to every word of the fictitious "Jacob"'s tale (admitting nothing more than one not unbelievable misprint -- "Feast of Gedaliah" instead of "Fast of Gedaliah" -- and the somewhat unbelievable possibility, one time, that "I may have mistranslated"), the more it became clear that he was not the hoaxee but the presumable hoaxer, especially since we could think of no other culprit and seemed to be the only one who could benefit from such a venture (= the rebroadcasting of his ideas, being hailed as the "discoverer" or the "codiscoverer" of the new Marco Polo, and, possibly, getting even for having been black-balled at Ruskin College).

108. See the quotation from Horace in the penultimate paragraph of section 10.

109. "[...] it is safe to say that no modern forgery could survive for a moment. A convincing imitation of ancient script is virtually impossible, while the papyrus, parchment, or paper on which it would be written could not stand up to modern scientific inspection. Anything of recent vegetable or animal origin fluoresces brightly under ultraviolet light, to name but one test. [...] A modern would-be forger must either copy an existing work, which, in the present state of art history and palaeographical study, would be immediately recognized, or be prepared to invent medieval subject matter" (Urry 1991:611). Paraphrasing Edgar Allan Poe ("Human ingenuity cannot concoct a cipher which human ingenuity cannot resolve"), we may say that "Human perversity cannot perpetrate a hoax which today's human ingenuity cannot unmask."

110. The earliest opposition to Selbourne's book was in the form of attempts to prevent its publication (apparently, the publisher of the first imprint had sent galley proofs to some of the relevant researchers in an attempt to elicit evaluations or blurbs). Whereas Selbourne, stout from what he thought were his "victories" and therefore arrogant enough to take the higher moral ground, saw those attempts as an infringement on his right of free speech (see section 7 on his critics' denial of any possibility that his book might disseminate "new knowledge"), those who labor in the cause of truth and knowledge deemed his book to be such an insult to the truth and affront to research that it deserved suppression. Free speech is important but it is not absolutely free. As Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., said, "The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic." Which is to say that you should not make claims about an "original manuscript" and so forth if you have not first proven its existence, then proven its authenticity, and then determined its degree of factualness, especially if overwhelming evidence suggests a fabrication of some kind; if you cannot produce the alleged "original," you should not publish what you claim to be your recent "translation" of it (the important word here is recent; if you made the "translation" recently, the "original" should still be extant); you should not publish as nonfictional a text which gives every evidence of being fiction; to say nothing of publishing as nonfiction an alleged recent "translation" of an alleged "original manuscript" which gives every evidence of being either non-existent or fictional -- because if you do, you are misleading the public no less than the person falsely shouting "fire!" in a theater.

111. When Wang and his colleagues in the People's Republic of China (save So Kee-long at least) were later to react identically and with the same degree of enthusiasm by coming out in support of Selbourne (see section 20), none of his critics saw their behavior as evidence of a cabal because Selbourne and his few supporters too were like-minded people who had a right to react identically to the same stimulus (the critics' onslaught). Since the Scourges of Jacob did not cry "cabal!" when Selbourne and his tiny band of cheerleaders (which included lecturer in Hebrew and Jewish Tudor Parfitt) reacted in tandem, Selbourne should not have either.

112. Halkin echoed Barrett's remark that "not one of the dozen or so substantive charges against it made in my review has been answered in the Afterword"; "David Selbourne has chosen to answer my article by responding, for the most part, to attacks on his book made by others while ignoring the points made by me" (Halkin 2000b). Selbourne's silence was eloquent: his failure to address the criticism was an implicit recognition that he was incapable of doing so, which in turn was an implicit recognition of defeat. Had he possessed even an iota of his grandfather's Jewish knowledge, Selbourne would have known that the Talmud says shetika kehodaa domya 'silence is as good as an admission' (Yevamot 87b). If Selbourne again fails to respond adequately to the hardpan of the matter, namely all the criticisms in the negative reviews and letters to the editor (now he has to face the present essay too), his response will once again be eloquent.

If Selbourne does react, my guess is that he will ignore those criticisms (or respond inadequately) and deploy the stratagems we have seen him use before:
A. dismissing the criticisms with brief counter-assertions unsupported by evidence (as he did when calling the Wassersteins "wrong" about "mellah" [see section 7]), dishing up lame "explanations" (as he did when claiming that "I may have mistranslated" [see note 44] but without saying what the "original manuscript" has and what the right translation is), telling half-truths (as when he said that "There are no salt marshes in Fez" [see section 7]), dismissing "certitudes" as being of "grave doubt" [see note 157]), alluding to unnamed and presumably non-existent supporters (as he did when mentioning "many of my correspondents, including Hebraists," who presumably do not exist), and bestowing grandiose titles on people who would be shocked to learn of them (see note 143 on Henri Gambourg).

B. talking only about peripherals (say, the possibility I raise that he may have wanted to hoax the academic world and, if so, the reasons he might have had for doing so).

C. responding only to quibbles (see note 157 for a list of what may legitimately be so called).

D. throwing out epithets with nothing backing them up, as when speaking of "hornets" and "vipers" (see note 157).

My barbs are at least supported by facts.

As Latin-speakers say of people whose discourse is without substance, vox et praeterea nihil 'a voice and nothing more'.

113. That Finn copied uncritically is no surprize. A member of the British consular corps (for example, during part of the 1850s he was consul in Jerusalem), he was also a self-trained Orientalist, prone to misromanize, as we see, for instance, in Finn 1878, which, though a valuable book if used critically, is full of misromanizations (and not just of Arabic). See Finn 1929 for more on him. See also section 7.

Far be it from me to paint all British consular officials (or all consular officials or everyone) with the same brush. Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-1895), to take one example of a British consul (in Baghdad; later he was British minister in Persia), did yeoman service in the field of ancient Western Asiatic studies.

114. As for "Prof. David Selbourne," by the time he was black-balled out of Ruskin College (see subsection F in section 22, including note 147), he had attained only the rank of untenured tutor.

115. "One of the things that immediately struck me is that Jacob's narrative is quite unlike other contemporary travel narratives of Asiatic expeditions (Marco Polo, Odoric of Friuli, John de Plano Carpini, etc.). Jacob is tediously long-winded, providing us with minute personal details, descriptions of his emotional states, and lengthy passages of reported speech, including multi-page exchanges of dialogue (particularly of political and religious dispute). Even allowing for the fact that the Jewish literary tradition of the time may be different from the Gentile and that Jacob is, naturally, his own man, this is highly unusual in context and to me, frankly, worrying" (Moore undated).

Moore's argument can actually be made stronger if we supply information that he lacked: since extant Jewish hodoeporica of the period is on the whole no less superficial, unreflective, and naive than contemporary non-Jewish hodoeporica, "the Jewish literary tradition of the time" was no different from the non-Jewish one.

In connection with Moore's sentence beginning "Jacob is tediously long-winded [...]," let us note that trader "Jacob"s tale says little about his commercial dealings, it being given up mostly to ethical, philosophical, political, and social ideas which happened to be identical, or nearly so, with Selbourne's. Take away all of "Jacob"s lecturing and little is left of his "tale."

The fictitious "Jacob" reminds of us of Pamela the equally fictitious servant-girl heroine of Samuel Richardson's Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, whose "remarkable literary powers and [...] propensity for writing on all occasions were cruelly burlesqued in Henry Fielding's Shamela" (The New Encyclopædia Britannica, 15 ed., 1991, vol. 4, p. 529), and his impossible voyage calls to mind "the many 18th- and early 19th-century writers whose 'Tours,' 'Travels' and 'Journeys' were vehicles for sententious moralizing, uninspired raptures, and sentimental accounts of amorous adventures," satirized by William Combe (idem, vol. 3, p. 479). After the Iacobomastiges' dissection of The City of Light, little burlesque and satire are needed.
I have mislaid the reference to a delicious misprint in the on-line version of the bibliographical reference for one of the versions of Selbourne 1997a (if memory serves, one of the translations into a non-English language), namely the one which gives the fictitious "Jacob"'s year of death as 1221. Verily, the moment of his birth and the moment of his death coincided absolutely.

Lasker's article is relevant in another connection too. In his attempt to explain why the alleged "original manuscript" remained unknown for seven hundred years, Selbourne alleged that "If the manuscript had become public in his lifetime [the imaginary "Jacob" (D.L.G.)], he would have risked severe punishment, and Mr. Selbourne speculates that the manuscript was kept secret for so many centuries precisely because it is so profoundly anti-Christian" (Kristof 1997:A10) or, to take another version of his story, "Early in 1990 the owner shows Selbourne his transcription of the first few lines of the manuscript [which] had remained hidden all this time with a local family. During Jacob's own time, hiding it was a necessity. The Inquisition was well underway, and the book's aspersions against Christianity would have put his community in further jeopardy. But as Selbourne says: 'It was as if a family taboo had remained attached to the object', so it is unlikely that the public will ever see it" (Davidson 1997), or, to take a third version, "It is the record of a trip to China by a pious, educated Jewish merchant, a journal kept secret for fear the Inquisition would find it heretical" (unsigned 1997b).

Since Kristof, Davidson, and the third person did not dissect Selbourne's claim, we will now do so:

A. Because thirteenth-century Italian Jews not only wrote anti-Christian treatises but those writings were known to Christians and in fact circulated among Christians (Lasker 1997) and European Jews continued to write and circulate such literature (like Yitschak ben-Moshe Halevi, who was born around 1350, possibly in Perpignan, and is also known as Profat Duran, wrote Al tehe kaavotecha, known to Christians of the times as Alteca Boteca [see note 52 for the etymology], which "portrayed with subtle irony what he saw as the irrationality of Christian doctrine and summarized with feigned naiveté the worst abuses of the contemporary church" [unsigned 1991c], also wrote Kelimat hagoyim, an "anti-Christian polemic[...], which discredited the Gospels and early Christian writings, attacking them in historiocritical terms" [ibidem] and died around 1415 -- in his own bed), the alleged "Jacob" and the alleged later Jewish owners of the alleged document had no reason to fear persecution.

B. The Inquisition had jurisdiction only over Roman Catholics (thus, also over Roman Catholics of Jewish ancestry, whether or not they were crypto-Jews). Over public Jews (Jews who were Jews openly and thus had not converted to Roman Catholicism or any other religion) it had no jurisdiction, it never asserted such jurisdiction, it never tried to obtain such jurisdiction, and it was never offered such jurisdiction. The alleged Jewish family which Selbourne alleged kept the alleged "original manuscript" until it was allegedly acquired by the alleged "present owner" would thus have had nothing to fear from the Inquisition.

Selbourne's mention of the Inquisition, therefore, revealed yet another of the many yawning gaps in his education: he must have heard or read latter-day imprecise wordings like "the Inquisition persecuted Jews" (which is a faulty way of saying that it persecuted Roman Catholics whom it suspected of being crypto-Jews), not bothered to ascertain the truth (an old story with him), and proceeded to spin the yarn about the alleged Jewish family's alleged fear of the Inquisition.

If so, the next logical question is why he dragged in the irrelevant Inquisition. His ostensible goal was to "explain" why the Jewish family had for hundreds of years kept secret the existence of the alleged "original manuscript." My guess is that his real goal was to make himself the right person at the right time in the right place to "translate" the alleged "original manuscript." That is, if the alleged "Jewish family" did not fear the Inquisition, it might have published the alleged manuscript before Selbourne's time. Had that happened, his entire enterprise would have been impossible.

We therefore assume that Selbourne had to give the public the impression of circumstances resulting in the alleged manuscript's lying cocooned until he came on the scene in the second half of the twentieth century, by which time, by sheer chance, it had allegedly come into the hands of someone who, by sheer chance, was allegedly living "near Urbino," who, by sheer chance, eventually became Selbourne's friend of "many years," who, by sheer chance, allegedly learned of Selbourne's alleged "interest in Judaica including the history of medieval Jewry in Italy" (see the last paragraph of note 58), who, by sheer chance, allegedly told Selbourne of the existence of the alleged manuscript, and who, by sheer chance, allegedly let him see it.
on numerous occasions between September 1991 and June 1996, after which time it allegedly disappeared again, allegedly forever.

And so it was to Selbourne alone that the Precious Gift was revealed for a few short years. A flash of light, which only he had the privilege to see, between two eternities of darkness.

Yet the alibi about the Inquisition could carry Selbourne only so far in time, for by the end of the eighteenth century and certainly by the time of Italian reunification, the Inquisition in Italy had lost most of its ferocity. By 1908 the name 'the Inquisition' had become so embarrassing that it was dropped in favor of 'the Holy Office'. In 1965 an even tamper name was chosen, 'the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.'

Selbourne therefore presumably knew that he faced a gap of some two hundred years at least: if the Inquisition eventually lost its fangs, he needed, we suppose, a new alibi to explain why the alleged "Jewish family" kept on hiding the alleged document down to the time that its existence was revealed to him ("early in 1990" according to Selbourne 2000:1). In note 124 we will return to that presumed quandary of his.

Paragraph D below, the text to which note 124 is attached, that note, and note 144 point out more of Selbourne's attempts to cocoon the alleged "original manuscript."

C. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the alleged "Jewish family" (whom Selbourne never named) allegedly owning the alleged "original manuscript" did dread the Inquisition (after all, even though you and I know that it had no jurisdiction over public Jews, people do have irrational fears, so that such a possibility has to be entertained). If so, it could have held back the anti-Christian parts of the alleged manuscript (almost all of which are found in just one chapter) and published the rest.

D. Notice Selbourne's apophasis and Davidson's non sequitur in the sentence "'It was as if a family taboo had remained attached to the object', so it is unlikely that the public will ever see it." Being too rational a person to believe in tabus, he could not write "A family taboo has remained attached to the object." Nonetheless, as part of his effort to cocoon the alleged document (see paragraph B), he wanted to use the word taboo (we know he wanted to, because if he had not, he would not have used it -- remember that since there is no "original manuscript," no "Jewish family" guarding it, and so on, he was free to write his story as he pleased). Therefore, to use the word and protect himself from a possible charge of irrationality, he hedged with the apophatic words "as if."

How terribly, terribly convenient for Selbourne that the hypothetical taboo did him no harm between September 1991 and June 1996, when he was privileged to be allowed to gaze upon the Precious Gift. To match Selbourne's apophasis, I will say this: it's a good thing I don't believe that curses (or tabus) exist, for if I did, I might wonder whether it was as if a family curse had remained attached to that imaginary object, so that anyone thinking that he had seen it would later get into boiling water in the relevant academic quarters and soon regret that he had.

Now for the non sequitur. If Selbourne spoke of tabus just "hypothetically," Davidson was not entitled to her conclusion ("so it is unlikely that the public will ever see it").

To summarize paragraph D: there is no such thing as a "tabu"; Selbourne's mention of the word taboo was presumably aimed solely at creating the illusion that the alleged document was cocooned beyond retrieval (see the diagram to which note 124 is attached); a good reporter would have asked Selbourne whether he believed in tabus; and since cheerleader Davidson did not, we assume that she was a bad reporter, a believer in tabus, or both.

Thus, on the surface, Selbourne gave the impression of being ever so pained that the alleged "present owner" refused to cooperate, as if to say, "oh how nice it would be to let the whole world see the precious document; oh how wonderful it would be if we could publish a facsimile of the entire original manuscript; do let me give you the very most I can, an earnest, in the interim, of the authenticity of the text [see section 3]; and oh let us hope that the present owner will eventually be mollified."

But that, I submit, was only an impression that Selbourne wanted to make. Counterpoising it was his smokescreen -
- thrown up to conceal not an existing document but nothing.

117. I thank Wang for calling attention to the wording "May blessings be upon Him," which I had overlooked in plowing through Selbourne's treacly Wardour Street English (see the first paragraph of section 5). It would be good to know what the alleged "original manuscript" has. Once Selbourne gives us that information, we will have another surprize for him.