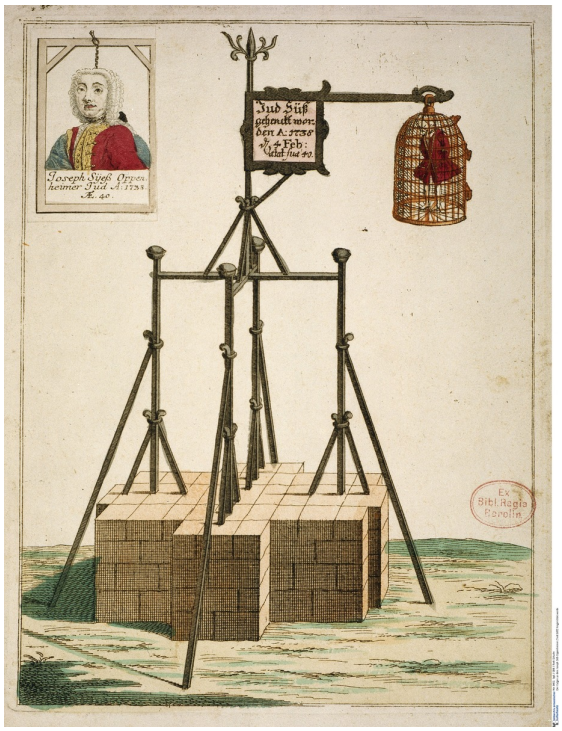
The Gallows from which Joseph Süß Oppenheimer ("Jew Süß") was Hanged (1738)

Abstract

The "court Jew" Joseph Süß Oppenheimer (1698-1738, known colloquially and pejoratively as "Jew Süss") was a financial adviser to Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg (r. 1733-1737), who in 1736 took the controversial step of formally appointing him Privy Financial Counselor. Oppenheimer assisted the duke in establishing absolutist rule by raising taxes and duties while circumventing the parliamentary estates. These policies, together with Karl Alexander's conversion to Catholicism, led to severe conflicts with the estates. After the duke's death in 1737, Oppenheimer became a political scapegoat and fell victim to trumped-up charges of sexual misconduct. He was tried, convicted, and publicly executed in 1738. (Later, the Nazis exploited the story for their own antisemitic ends.) This image shows the doomed Oppenheimer and the gallows from which he was hanged on February 4, 1738. According to legend, before the execution, he was put on display in a human-sized bird cage and pressured to convert to Christianity (which he refused to do). He was then hanged. His corpse remained on display in the cage for six years.

Source



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