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Introduction: The Nature of Early Modern German Jewish Communities

At the beginning of the seventeenth century there were probably no more than 40,000 Jews living in Germany, accounting for less than one percent of the total population.¹ Despite their small number, these Jews settled widely across Germany, in hundreds of different places, including large urban communities, as well as bustling towns outside large cities and even small rural outposts. As such, the concept of Jewish community was a multivalent one in early modern Germany, with Jews forming communities that could be simultaneously local and regional. At the same time, Jews also constituted something of a broader community as Jews of the German Empire or, more simply, as early modern Jews who lived in many different parts of the world. Early modern Jewish identity, therefore, was at once local or regional and universal.²

Early modern German Jews could define their communities in many different ways, based on geography, religious practices, history, communal governing structures, and even the broader politics (civic, territorial and imperial) in which the Jews themselves lived. Some early modern Jewish communities were well established with roots stretching back several hundred years; most communities, however, suffered significant ruptures and were either re-constituted after pogroms or expulsions or newly formed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In some areas, the small number of Jews residing in a particular locale or region collectively formed one Jewish community, which was often simultaneously one religious congregation. In other, larger settlements of Jews, however, multiple congregations developed. In some cases, this led to complex, and at times tension-filled, communities within a particular city or region. While not as large or variegated as some of the multi-ethnic Jewish communities in early modern Italy and the Ottoman Empire, or even in Poland, early modern German Jewish communities could be equally divided. Conflicts erupted over the election and authority of lay leaders, the position of the rabbi, the assessment and collection of taxes and even the religious customs within the community. Added to this was the growing social and economic polarization that affected many early modern Jewish communities.

Still, religious traditions and customs as well as a general sense of “German-ness” often created cohesiveness for early modern German Jews. For many German Jews, the importation of religious customs and legal (*halakhic*) rulings from Poland and Italy were, therefore, threatening and particularly problematic. Leading rabbis made many efforts, particularly at German-wide synods, to stem the influence of such foreign elements.³

¹ See J. Friedrich Battenberg, *Die Juden in Deutschland vom 16. bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2001), 10. For a broader overview of German Jewish settlement and community, see Dean Phillip Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany: Memory, Power and Community* (Aldershot, 2007), 38ff. For a general overview of Jewish settlement and community in the early modern period, see Dean Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham, 2008), chapters 2 and 3; some of the material presented in this article is discussed on 79-82 and compared with the developments in early modern Safed, Israel (82-83).

² For a general overview, see Dean Phillip Bell, “Jewish Communities in Central Europe in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (Aldershot, forthcoming).

³ See, for example, Yitzhak (Eric) Zimmer, *The Fiery Embers of the Scholars: The Trials and Tribulations of German Rabbis in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Be'er Sheva', 1999) [Hebrew].

Some early modern German Jewish leaders thus carefully defined and distinguished “German” practices and identity.

Given the complexities of early modern Jewish life more generally, with a range of interactions with non-Jews, the mass movements of Jews after their expulsion from Spain and the complications caused by conversions from Judaism, defining what was “Jewish,” let alone what was “German,” could be a daunting task. While we have limited information about Jews of Iberian descent in early modern Germany, we do know that a small, but significant number of such Jews settled in Germany for a time in the late sixteenth and during the seventeenth century, particularly in areas of growing international trade. In what follows, I explore the relations between these Sephardic Jews—generally of Portuguese descent, who often came to Germany from the Netherlands—and the Ashkenazic—referring to German (though at times indiscriminately to Polish)—Jews who lived in proximity, but as part of separate “communities.” I ask what these relations can tell us more generally about notions of Jewish community in early modern Germany.

Between Sepharad and Ashkenaz: Ethnicity and Community in Early Modern Jewry

During the Middle Ages both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews claimed biblical roots. Medieval exegetes maintained that the Sepharad mentioned in the book of Obadiah indicated the origins of the Sephardim, just as the Ashkenaz mentioned in the book of Genesis, according to some, referred to the forerunner of the Jews of Ashkenaz. The similarities (and merits) of such “historicizing” aside, there could be significant differences even among Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews.

In the medieval and early modern periods, Sephardic Jews lived primarily in Spain, North Africa, southern Italy and around the Middle East. They also generally comprised the small and far-flung Jewish populations in more (Jewishly) remote areas such as the Americas, India and China, working as international traders. Large numbers of Sephardic Jews lived under Islam, in Spain in the Middle Ages and throughout the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period. Through much of pre-modern history, the majority of Jews were of Sephardic descent—approximately 93% in 1300 and still 67% by 1500, according to one estimate.⁴ By 1700, however, Sephardic Jews constituted only about half of the total Jewish population, and the number of Sephardic Jews would more drastically decline over the ensuing centuries, in part due to the explosion of Polish Jewry and the economic decline of the Ottoman Empire.

Sephardic Jews clearly developed different customs from their Ashkenazic co-religionists. Modern historians have attempted to explain Sephardic and Ashkenazic differences in a number of ways. Until recently, it has been customary to see Sephardic Jews as more “cosmopolitan” and engaged in the external, non-Jewish world. According to this line of thinking, Sephardic Jews frequently lived in heterogeneous societies and so they absorbed non-Jewish social and intellectual elements. Sephardic Jews, therefore, were more engaged in the philosophical streams of their external environment than Ashkenazic Jews, who were more insular and focused on Jewish religious law rather than philosophical speculation. The paucity of Ashkenazic philosophical treatises and the cultural and literary diversity of Sephardic Jews have been taken as proof of this generalization.

⁴ According to Raphael Patai, as cited in Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World*, 36.

Such characterizations abound. Consider a few more examples. Many historians have depicted Sephardic Jews as more flexible in their religious practices and allegiance. So, during times of persecution, Sephardic Jews might apostatize (at times later returning to Judaism), whereas the stalwart Jews of Ashkenaz frequently chose martyrdom.⁵ Scholars have often seen Sephardic Jews as politically powerful and savvy, whereas they have portrayed Ashkenazic Jews politically weak and powerless.⁶ Ironically, due to its perceived political power, Sephardic culture has been seen as self-confident and Sephardic narratives as stressing, even at difficult times, continuity with a classical past; on the other hand, because of its perceived marginalization and powerlessness, some scholars have argued that Ashkenazic Jewry constructed narratives that focused on discontinuity caused by persecution and migration.⁷

It has been argued that the “Sephardic mystique” created by these characterizations was a convenient tool crafted by German Jewish reformers in the early nineteenth century as a means of self-criticism. In so doing, the reformers cast their self-fashioned renaissance of Judaism in the modern period as a return to the sophisticated Judaism of medieval Spain (hailed by many as the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry) and a refutation of the dark ages, characterized by the rabbinism of German and eastern European Jewry in the medieval and early modern periods.⁸ As scholars uncover increasing communal complexity, cultural interaction with non-Jews, and much broader intellectual interests among early modern Ashkenazic Jews, however, this picture no longer appears to be completely accurate.

In addition to the important advances in Ashkenazic, and especially German Jewish, history, scholars have published a number of important studies detailing early modern Sephardic experiences.⁹ These studies collectively point out the diversity and complexity of Sephardic identity and communities and they continue to stress the importance of ethnicity in early modern Jewish identity. In her work on the Sephardic Jews (“Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation”) in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, for example, Miriam Bodian has argued that Portuguese Sephardic identity was crafted from two strands, one centered on Iberian ethnicity¹⁰ and the other related to the broader Jewish collectivity into which Portuguese conversos were seeking to place themselves. The Portuguese also shaped their identity in part by opposition to Ashkenazic Jews and Jewry. Bodian notes that the German Jews fleeing the Thirty Years’ War and arriving from the 1620s onward tended to be from the lowest social rank and did not “conform to the self-image of the Portuguese.”¹¹ “The need to maintain a distance from Ashkenazim,”

⁵ See the famous article by Gershon Cohen, “Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim,” reprinted in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, ed. Marc Saperstein (New York, 1992), 202-33.

⁶ See Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany*, 8-9.

⁷ See Ivan Marcus, “History, Story, and Collective Memory: Narrativity in Early Ashkenazic Culture,” *Prooftexts* 10 (1990): 365-88.

⁸ See Ismar Schorsch, “The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): 47-66, here at 63.

⁹ See, for example, the excellent study of Daniel Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London, 2000).

¹⁰ This is contrasted with other cities with larger Portuguese populations in which the Portuguese never really developed a distinct ethnic component, such as Venice. See Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997), 150.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

she continues, “reflected in part the need to perpetuate a self-image of social superiority, and eventually became part of a defensive posture adopted toward the gentile world.”¹² Although initially permitted to worship with the Portuguese, bury their dead in separate plots of the cemetery, and deemed as unquestionably Jewish, Ashkenazim were not accepted as members of the Portuguese congregations. What is more, as the number of Ashkenazic Jews increased, so did the exclusivist policies of the Portuguese. Although the Portuguese did engage in a great deal of charity towards and cooperation with individual Ashkenazic Jews and the various Ashkenazic communities, Bodian asserts that “the farther away the needy Ashkenazim were, the friendlier the attitude to them.”¹³

Bodian’s argument raises important questions about community and ethnicity in early modern Amsterdam. In what follows I ask if the relationship of ethnicity, religion and identity in early modern Jewry presented by Bodian and others (notably the historian Yosef Kaplan) holds true, especially for other multi-ethnic, though possibly somewhat less “cosmopolitan,” Jewish communities. In this article I focus on Sephardic and Ashkenazic relations in Hamburg and its surrounding Jewish settlements. Although Hamburg has received a good deal of scholarly attention, it has been relatively understudied in comparison with Amsterdam. In addition, there are a number of informative sources available for Hamburg, and the close proximity of smaller Jewish communities simultaneously complicates and offers new opportunities for considering the relationship of ethnicity and identity. Placed within the context of the Jewish communities in and around Hamburg and general attitudes toward Jews, it will become clear that ethnicity was but one part of a wide range of concerns in the formation of early modern Jewish community and identity.

Hamburg and the Jews

Hamburg grew to become a significant metropolis during the early modern period. Between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries its population doubled from 20,000 to 40,000 and nearly doubled yet again by the early eighteenth century.¹⁴ Hamburg’s early modern population was rather fluid, constituted by a very large proportion of immigrants—at times nearly half—from the Netherlands, and later, from Lower Saxony.¹⁵ Tolerant of various religious confessions in many important ways and encouraging of economic development, civic authorities found the Jews to be an important topic of discussion in early modern Hamburg politics.

The first Jews to settle in the booming Hanseatic city of Hamburg were Marranos, fleeing Spain and Portugal or moving east from the Netherlands at the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁶ During the course of the seventeenth century, this community grew dramatically and included a small settlement in nearby Glückstadt. In the early

¹² Ibid., 131.

¹³ Ibid, 127.

¹⁴ Joachim Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg 1529-1819* (Cambridge, 1985), 10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ There is a growing body of scholarship on the Jews in early modern Hamburg initiated in part by the Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden in Hamburg. See, for example, the numerous works of Michael Studemund-Halevy, the recent work of Jutta Braden, *Hamburger Judenpolitik im Zeitalter lutherischer Orthodoxie, 1590-1710* (Hamburg, 2001), as well as the collected essays in *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl: Jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Monika Richarz (Hamburg, 2001).

seventeenth century Ashkenazic Jews were allowed to settle in the nearby cities of Wandsbek and Altona, both under Danish rule. By 1627, Ashkenazim were allowed to settle in Hamburg as well, though they were expelled at mid-century and later readmitted. The situation in Hamburg, then, was rather complicated; all the more so since a tension between maintaining religious uniformity and economic viability continually pitted the Lutheran clergy, burghers, and city leadership (in the form of the Senate) against each other, with the fate of the Jews and other religious minorities held in the balance. The Jews' relationship to the city was subjected to numerous strains and attempts at expulsion, and remained contractual into the nineteenth century, based upon short-term arrangements with the city.¹⁷

As in Amsterdam, Portuguese Jews in Hamburg dominated the Jewish settlement during much of the seventeenth century. The Portuguese maintained a privileged status unlike that of the German Jews and they enjoyed the protection of the ruling Senate that was bestowed upon other early merchant communities, such as the English and the Dutch.¹⁸

In 1603 some Hamburg burghers demanded heavy taxes from the Iberian community and called for the expulsion of its Jewish members. The Senate refused to recognize any Jews in the city; though by 1606 it reluctantly had to acknowledge the existence of seven Jewish families and two unmarried Jewish brokers.¹⁹ By 1610 there were 116 Portuguese Jews in the city, and by mid-century approximately 600, who advocated vociferously on their own behalf, noting their influence with the Spanish authorities and the effect that might have on Hamburg trade.²⁰ The city council members opposed an expulsion, largely because of the important economic contributions of the Jews, many of whom were very influential in local and regional finance. In fact, some Jewish financiers had helped to found the Bank of Hamburg in 1619. In light of this, as well as the pending invitations of the Portuguese to the competing cities and towns of Emden, Stade, Altona and Wandsbek, and after consultation with the theological faculty at Jena and Frankfurt an der Oder, the Senate provided the Portuguese community an initial two-year contract in 1612.²¹ The contract was composed of 17 articles that defined the rights and privileges of the Portuguese.

Like the Dutch and English communities, the Portuguese accepted a protected status in return for the annual payment of 1,000 Marks. Indeed, an April 1649 mandate recorded that nobody should insult those “who are here of the resident foreign nations, be they English, French, Netherlandish, Portuguese or other.”²² The authorities admonished the Portuguese to live modestly and peacefully, in return for freedom to trade and conduct financial transactions in the city. They demanded that the Portuguese, like other religious minorities, refrain from public religious displays—they were not permitted to have a synagogue or cemetery or practice circumcision, for example.²³ Indeed, later

¹⁷ Whaley, *Religious Toleration*, 11.

¹⁸ This overview follows the discussion in Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World*.

¹⁹ Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg*, 73.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Hermann Kellenbenz, *Sephardim an der unteren Elbe: Ihre wirtschaftliche und politische Bedeutung vom Ende des 16. bis zum Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1958), 47.

²³ Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg*, 75.

attempts by the Portuguese to build a synagogue (in 1660, 1668 and 1672) were vigorously opposed.²⁴

The prospects and size of the Portuguese community in Hamburg had declined rapidly by the end of the century. The special levies of the later seventeenth century, combined with increasing unrest, tended to undermine the vitality of the Portuguese community. By 1692 the Portuguese Jews numbered only 300,²⁵ then dwindled even further to 27 taxpayers by 1732. Eventually most Portuguese made their way back to the Netherlands.²⁶

The settlement and development of Ashkenazic Jews in and around Hamburg took a rather different course than that of the Portuguese Jews in the seventeenth century. In 1583 an Ashkenazic pearl dealer, in the name of twelve Jewish families, petitioned to settle in the city. His petition was rejected.²⁷ There is some speculation that this Jew, whose petition was later rejected again, as well as additional individuals, eventually settled outside Hamburg, for in 1574 Count Adolf of Schaumburg issued a *Schutzbrief* (letter of protection) to four Jews, providing settlement rights in Altona and Ottensen.²⁸

By 1612, Ashkenazic Jews had negotiated their first general privilege to settle in Altona. With a second contract in 1614, authorities granted general privileges for 16 families.²⁹ In return, the Jews were to pay 100 Reichsthaler per head and an annual *Schutzgeld* (protection fee) of ten Reichsthaler.³⁰ The smaller settlement of Jews in Wandsbek was initiated in 1621 with four families from Altona and confirmed with a privilege dated 10 November 1637.³¹

Although under the protection of the rulers of Altona, many Jews continued to be attracted to the life and opportunities of Hamburg.³² An undated list, presumably from the 1620s indicates that there were 17 protected Jews in the region, eight living in Altona and nine in Hamburg.³³ In 1671 the Ashkenazic Jews in Hamburg, Altona and Wandsbek formed a three-community federation (as Frankfurt rabbi Aaron Koidonover had proposed in 1669³⁴).

Ashkenazic Jews in Hamburg were generally of more modest means and social standing than their Portuguese co-religionists. The wealthiest served as jewelers and small moneylenders and the poorest as craftsmen and laborers. Indeed, there is record of 18 German Jews in Hamburg in 1652, recorded as “servants of the nation,” that is, domestic servants of the Portuguese Jews.³⁵ In the anti-Jewish, and generally unstable, climate of 1648-49, the Ashkenazic Jews were officially expelled from the city. Civic

²⁴ Ibid., 78.

²⁵ Ibid., 79.

²⁶ Ibid., 80.

²⁷ Ibid., 81.

²⁸ *Die Statuten der drei Gemeinden Altona, Hamburg und Wandsbek: Quellen z. jüd. Gemeindeorganisation im 17. u. 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Heinz Moshe Graupe, 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1973), 1:13.

²⁹ Ibid., 1:15.

³⁰ Ibid., 1:15.

³¹ Ibid., 1:29.

³² Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg*, 81; *Die Statuten der drei Gemeinden Altona, Hamburg und Wandsbek*, 1:15.

³³ *Die Statuten der drei Gemeinden Altona, Hamburg und Wandsbek*, 1:15-16.

³⁴ Ibid., 1:17-18.

³⁵ Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg*, 81.

authorities later allowed them to return in 1657/58.³⁶ By the 1660s, there were 40 to 50 Ashkenazic families in the city.³⁷ As they attained privileges in the early eighteenth century similar to those of the Portuguese Jews, the population of the Ashkenazim grew rapidly to 600 taxpayers by 1730, with no fewer than 14 unofficial synagogues and numerous schools.³⁸

The Jewish community in early modern Hamburg, then, was multi-layered. Portuguese and German communities existed side by side, both inside the city and in separate communities in smaller proximate towns. Similar to the religious, political and economic diversity of Christians living in Hamburg, the Jewish communities themselves were complex. While not an enormous Jewish population center, the situation in Hamburg points to a number of important issues that faced early modern Jewish communities, including social and economic divisions, diverging religious practices and external non-Jewish social and political pressures.

In what follows, I offer some initial reflections on Sephardic and Ashkenazic relations in Hamburg. Many scholars have assumed that the nature of this relationship mirrored that of the Jewish communities in Amsterdam and, to a lesser extent perhaps, Venice. Many also assume that fundamental ethnic and religious tensions dictated communal identity and community structure. After presenting a few examples that seem to support such conclusions, I will provide a broader context, which reconsiders the role of ethnicity in the creation of early modern German Jewish community and identity.

Internal Jewish Identity

A great fire in 1842 destroyed the archive of the Portuguese Jewish (in what follows, simply Portuguese) community in Hamburg, making a complete history impossible. In addition to some scattered sources, the protocol book of the congregation Bet Israel (or the Holy Community Bet Israel, “kehillah kedosah bet Israel”) in Hamburg, however, is extant for the period 1652 until the early 1680s. The records are primarily in Portuguese, although the entries from the last year are in a Spanish hand. It is from a German rendering of these records that I would like to make a few general observations about Sephardic and Ashkenazic relations in seventeenth-century Germany. It should be kept in mind that the documents present only one piece of a broader equation that must include Ashkenazic voices and take into account Hamburg civic documents, which at times clearly distinguished types of Jews.

Much like a communal constitution, the initial entries of the protocol book outline the nature and structure of the community government. The book begins after the 1652 union of the three communities of “Talmud Tora,” “Keter Tora,” and “Neve Schalom,” by announcing the rather authoritarian rule of the communal council.³⁹ What follows are details about elections, governance and order (especially regarding the *herem* (ban of

³⁶ Braden, *Hamburger Judenpolitik*, 178; *Die Statuten der drei Gemeinden Altona, Hamburg und Wandsbek*, 1:25; See also the memoirs of Glückel of Hameln.

³⁷ Whaley, *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg*, 81.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁹ Isaac Cassuto, “Aus den ältesten Protokollbuch der Portugiesisch-Jüdischen Gemeinde in Hamburg: Übersetzung und Anmerkungen,” in *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 6 (1908): 1-54; 7 (1909): 159-210; 8 (1910): 227-90; 9 (1911): 318-66; 10 (1912): 225-95; 11 (1916): 1-76; 12 (1920): 55-118—here at 6:5.

excommunication)), communal offices and functions (including salaries),⁴⁰ the allocation of money (especially charity), and communal membership and education.⁴¹ What can this important source tell us about Sephardic (Portuguese) and Ashkenazic (Tudesco) relations in seventeenth-century Hamburg and about early modern German Jewish notions of community more generally?

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The Portuguese and Tudesco (as the German Jews were called in the Portuguese sources) were different communities in several ways. They practiced different religious rites. They possessed, in general, very different economic resources and social status. Civic authorities formally tolerated Portuguese Jews, whereas the Tudesco initially owed their permission to live in Hamburg to their service to the Portuguese. Both internally and externally, the Portuguese and Tudesco were recognized as different groups, even though the members of both were Jews.

The settlement of Jews, Sephardic or Ashkenazic, was often a rather contested issue in the early modern period. Settlement could be especially volatile when external civic constraints were added to internal Jewish politics. The position in Hamburg of Ashkenazic Jews, or Tudesco, particularly in the years after the 1648 Ashkenazic expulsion, was often bleak. Throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, the number of Tudesco was small and highly regulated. According to the Portuguese protocol book, it was decided that in “this community book under the date 1 Elul 5414 (1654) the German Jews should be listed, since they are in a sense admitted here, to reside with our nation [admitidos debaixo do titulo de morarem com nossa nação]; from now on they should be required to pay community tax.”⁴² Given that many Tudesco were employed by or were servants to the Portuguese, however, the concept of a community tax was problematic; it implied that those paying the tax were in a sense members of the community. Almost six years later, on 13 Tammuz 5420 (1660), it was therefore determined that this money should no longer be accepted.⁴³

Not only did the Portuguese distinguish themselves from the Tudesco, they also made it clear to civic authorities that the Tudesco were officially a foreign element that should be viewed as separate from their community. This was particularly important given the poor economic status of the Tudesco as well as the suspicion of criminal behavior that seems, as a result, to have followed them. Throughout the early entries of the protocol book, Portuguese leaders closely monitored the Tudesco. On 28 Av 5416 (1656) a register of the 19 Tudesco then living in the city “as servants of the nation [criados de nação]” was drafted and submitted to the burgomaster, who then entered them into a book. As the document went on to indicate, “... the said Tudesco were presented a document, according to which they obligated themselves to buy no stolen goods and to commit no un-permitted business, as follows from the given documents, which remain in the hands of the community.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ For a rabbinic contract, see *ibid.* 11:32-3; for elections, see, for example, 11:41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6:5-31.

⁴² 17 Av 5419, *ibid.*, 8:284.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9:335.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6:41-2; see also 7:171, 4 Iyar 5416 regarding not increasing the number of Tudesco allowed to settle in the city.

While the Tudescos were not directly accused of wrongdoing, clearly they were suspect. Throughout the pages of the protocol books, Portuguese authorities detailed many cases in which Tudescos were punished or even expelled from the city on account of inappropriate behavior, even if such behavior was not generally specified. On 5 Kislev 5418 (1657), for example, it was decided that for the good management of the community it was necessary to expel from the city several German Jewish families. The decree went on to indicate that, “Since now it has become known to the board that several of their women planned to return here and to people of our community, it was commanded that nobody of our community should take them ...”⁴⁵

On 20 Elul 5417 (1657), to take another example, it was announced that there were lingering Tudescos and Tudesco families of evil renown [pessoas e cazas prejudiciaes], who should without fail be expelled after the holidays, “in order to mitigate disadvantageous consequences, which their lingering could cause for the general public.”⁴⁶ At times, the Portuguese leadership worked closely with German Jewish leaders,⁴⁷ especially those in Altona. In some cases, the German Jewish leaders themselves initiated proceedings. On 11 Tevet 5425 (1665), for example, the Portuguese *mahamad* [community council] assembled at the request of the board of the Altona Tudescos, for they were informed that there were to be found among the German Jews persons who were engaged in unscrupulous money handling.⁴⁸

And yet, in Hamburg, the issue of Tudesco residence was not simple. Given the presence of a community of Tudescos in the city itself as well as the larger community in Altona, the Portuguese Jews of Hamburg were forced to cooperate and negotiate with Tudescos. According to the Portuguese protocol book, “16 Iyyar [5424 (1664)]. In the junta appeared Natan bar Aron and Natanel Forst, governor of the German community. They indicated the troubles, which could grow, since foreign Tudescos, without our permission or theirs, settle in this city. In order to control this disorder, they considered it appropriate, in their synagogue, to make known that under the punishment of the *herem*, no German or Polish Jews [tudesco ou polaco] should settle in this area, without first being authorized by our council and theirs ... It was further decided that the 18 living here [be] announced with the consent of the *mahamad* and that no others should be accepted who were not previously authorized in the above manner ...”⁴⁹ In the end, then, there were actually a number of categories of Tudescos in Hamburg, some recognized as legitimate and as a discrete community, others seen as comprised of marginal or unauthorized elements.

Restrictions on Jewish settlement were, of course, not unique to early modern Hamburg. Throughout the late medieval and early modern periods Jewish communities restricted the settlement of Jews for various internal economic and political reasons. Obviously, in the political climate of early modern Germany, where expulsions and privileges of non-toleration of Jews were frequent, Jewish settlement privileges also depended heavily upon the permission of ruling non-Jewish authorities. In cities like Hamburg, however, where city rulers and church leaders often had divergent priorities

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8:229.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 7:207-08.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11:67.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10:264; see also 13:89, 101-02, 104, 105, 111-14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 10:249.

and policies regarding the settlement of foreigners and religious minorities, and where a range of local, territorial, imperial and even foreign powers competed for political authority, Jewish settlement could be a particularly contested issue.

Not surprisingly, Portuguese leaders, who engaged in constant negotiations with Hamburg authorities, found the begging of poor Tudesco both unseemly and a potential political liability. The protocol book reports that

The great outrage, which was caused by the begging Tudesco at the gate, was discussed. The directors in Altona and the Tudesco residing here should be informed that if there is no improvement, the lords of the community are commanded by order of the Senate, that, as a warning for the rest, at first two people will be transferred to the workhouse, since the lords of the Senate and the burghers demand this rule. The guardians in question should be of the Polin and of both Tudesco, which primarily beg at the houses ...⁵⁰

The Portuguese leaders presented Tudesco begging as a significant political issue. They noted, however, that the swift response threatened for such begging was dictated and to be carried out by the Hamburg Senate. Curiously, while the Portuguese leaders took a firm stance, a short time later, on *Rosh Hodesh* [beginning of the month of] Heshvan 5419 (1658), they discussed whether the Tudesco should receive monthly support. This arrangement would make it unnecessary for the Tudesco to beg at the gates.⁵¹ It is hard to say if the Portuguese leaders were, with this suggestion, seeking a politically expedient solution or if they were genuinely concerned about the plight of the poor Tudesco. What we can say, however, is that the Portuguese leaders clearly presented the punishment for Tudesco begging at the gate as emanating from the non-Jewish Hamburg authorities and not themselves, and that, at the very least, the Portuguese community leaders entertained solutions for the problem that would help the poor Tudesco, even if they would simultaneously solve their own political predicament.

Discussion of the problem of unseemly begging, however, recurred throughout the protocol book. Consider one final example, which adds further nuance to the question of Portuguese and Tudesco relations. On 7 Shevat 5423 (1663) it was noted that:

The Magistrate here has, along with the board, received ever-increasing complaints due to the spreading house begging of the poor Tudesco. Moreover, a great annoyance develops for the individual community members, because daily and even on the Sabbath a crowd of poor begs from house to house in obtrusive ways. As the *parnasim* [lay leaders] explain to the Germans, it is primarily our usually great charity to the poor that is to blame for the people remaining here longer and also becoming a burden on the German community. On the other hand, since there are also many needy in our community and it is also necessary to help them first, the *mahamad* wants to remedy the aforementioned ill if possible and directs therefore to all our members the request to instruct the people of their house to support with money no begging traveling Tudesco, be they foreigners or residents of Altona or Wandsbek, men or women; only on Fridays should they be administered, each as they like, bread or pretzels. This ordinance was announced in the synagogue on the above day.⁵²

⁵⁰ See the further discussion of what to do regarding taxing the house begging Tudesco from Altona and Wandsbek—*ibid.*, 7:186, dated 6 Tishrei 5417.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8:243.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10:233.

Here the situation was a more internal one. At issue was not begging at the gates, but rather begging at the doors of individual Portuguese homes. The Portuguese Jews, according to this entry, continued to give charity to poor Tudesco. But Portuguese relations with Tudescos seem to have become more complicated. The Tudescos were presented as both organized and diverse. Portuguese leaders are in communication with Tudesco governors and “the German community.” At the same time, Portuguese communal leaders clearly differentiated categories of Tudescos. Foreign and traveling Tudescos—even from Altona and Wandsbek—were distinguished from those resident in Hamburg. The document also reveals something of a change in the status of the Portuguese Jews themselves, who were now depicted as themselves in growing need for charity.

The protocol book reveals that Portuguese Jews both distinguished themselves from and identified with Tudescos. On the one hand, Portuguese leaders at times expressed grave concern over certain Tudescos, such as several Tudescos from Prague, who were “evildoers and scoundrels” [malfeitores e velhacos] (and who were, incidentally, the object of a petition to the Senate by the German Jews themselves⁵³). But Portuguese leaders could be very circumspect about even well connected local Tudescos. On 2 Adar 5426 (1666), for example, a Tudesco by the name of Doder, who resided with the influential and powerful Portuguese businessman Teixeira, requested support to return to Poland to his wife and children. He maintained that on his trip from Poland he lost 200 Reichsthaler of merchandise. The board was of the opinion that the situation was not as drastic as Doder made it out to be and awarded him only 1 Reichsthaler.⁵⁴ The connections of this particular Tudesco with Poland raise complicated questions about how Portuguese Jews understood the term “Tudesco.” While the Portuguese generally distinguished German and Polish Jews, at times these boundaries were blurred. While late medieval and early modern German Jews themselves distinguished German (Ashkenazic) customs from Polish ones⁵⁵ and attempted to distance Polish *halakhic* influence,⁵⁶ cultural and religious interactions between German and Polish Jews played a growing role especially with the dramatic population growth and intellectual productivity of Polish Jewry by the end of the seventeenth century. In this case, the term Tudesco seemed to imply any non-Portuguese Jews.

On the other hand, as Miriam Bodian notes for Amsterdam, the records of the Portuguese community in Hamburg indicate that the Portuguese Jews maintained a sense of connection to a broader, universal Jewish community. Portuguese Jews expressed support for and a sense of unity with foreign Tudescos in the Holy Land and throughout central Europe, as witnessed by frequent allocations of charity and strong statements of support. The protocol book records, for example,

On the 25th Adar 5430 (1670), with incessant regret we hear from the board members of the Tudescos about the unrest and the expulsion of our above-mentioned brothers in Vienna and Austria. They have received from them general letters, in which the request is expressed to encourage the people who stand favorably with the princes

⁵³ 28 Tishrei 5430, in *ibid.*, 13:81—the Portuguese chose to wait and see what might develop.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11:3.

⁵⁵ See Bell, *Jewish Identity in Early Modern Germany*, 55, for example.

⁵⁶ See Joseph Davis, “The Reception of the *Shulhan ‘Arukh* and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity,” *AJS Review* 26:2 (2002): 251-76.

and the magnates, to intercede on their behalf. Ishac Senior has been charged in writing to turn to various people in Rome as well as to the Queen of Sweden. At the same time, the aforementioned general fast day was fixed. God hear us for the sake of His holy name!⁵⁷

One recurring topic in the protocol book—the issue of kosher meat—underscores the complexity of Jewish ethnic identity in early modern Hamburg. A piece of legislation from 25 Adar 5419 (1659), for example, reiterated that, “no meat, either fresh or smoked, also no tongue, should be purchased in order to give this to a member of our community.”⁵⁸ As the decree of 4 Iyar further clarified, no meat was to be purchased except from Amsterdam or Glückstadt, that is, “slaughtered by a *shohet* [ritual slaughterer] from our nation and examined [degolada e badcada].”⁵⁹ Further restrictions were added to the pieces of meat that could be purchased from German Jews.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the decree noted, “due to religious considerations it is forbidden to buy from the fat that German Jewesses are accustomed to sell at the gates.”⁶¹ On 8 Tishrei 5420 (1659) the matter was again reconsidered, and with approval from the *hahamim* [wise ones, referring to rabbis in Sephardic communities] and out of consideration for the precautionary measures, one could buy fat from any *shohet* from whom one could buy meat, as well as, curiously, from a Tudesca named Esperanca; but from nobody else. The Portuguese governing board imposed a monetary fine on anyone transgressing this rule.⁶² On 7 Nissan 5423 (1663), after four years of examination it was determined that there were indeed problems with the meat from Tudescos in Altona and Wandsbek due to the Tudescos’ use of unsuitable knives.⁶³ The matter was apparently complicated by disputes among the Tudescos themselves in Wandsbek, Hamburg and Altona.⁶⁴

Restrictions on the sale of meat were not new to the seventeenth century. Two separate lines of development came together and were further conditioned by the ethnic and communal structures in Hamburg. Already in the fifteenth century German rabbis struggled with concerns that ritual slaughterers were not well trained in their profession or supervised closely enough. In response, some rabbinic leaders, such as Jacob Weil in fifteenth-century Augsburg wrote responsa addressing this situation. Weil also wrote a short treatise on the laws of ritual slaughter. Similar concerns were expressed in the 1603 synod of German Jews that met in Frankfurt am Main.⁶⁵ On the other hand, various Christian writers were troubled that Jews sold some meat deemed not kosher to their Christian neighbors. To these writers it might imply that kosher meat, and hence Jewish law and ritual, was seen to be superior to that of Christians. But it might also, and more practically, suggest that Jews were underselling Christian butchers, offering the meat they could not use at very low prices.

⁵⁷ Cassuto, “Aus den ältesten Protokollbuch,” 13:106-07.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8:264.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8:271.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 8:276, for Rosh Hodesh Tamuz 5419.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8:277.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 9:320; further discussed on 322.

⁶³ See *ibid.*, 10:234-35 for extensive details.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13:68.

⁶⁵ See the third article, reprinted in Hebrew and three German translations in Eric Zimmer, *Jewish Synods in Germany During the Late Middle Ages (1286-1603)* (New York, 1978), 160-61. For an English translation, see Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1924), 260.

In any event, the role of ritual slaughter and kosher meat was important in early modern Judaism. In many places the community council maintained control over the supervision of kosher meat. Denial of the benefits of ritual slaughter, that is, access to kosher meat, was one of the punishments prescribed for Jews placed under the *herem* (excommunication), simultaneously marking ritually slaughtered meat as a benefit of communal membership.⁶⁶ Ritual slaughter was also connected to communal authority in another way. Rabbis possessing more authoritative ordination and recognition were given authority to appoint ritual slaughterers and inspectors and to send such inspectors to other communities.⁶⁷

By prohibiting Portuguese Jews from purchasing meat from Tudescos, Portuguese authorities may have been responding to the concerns of Christian authorities about the unauthorized sale of meat at the same time that they were drawing clear communal boundaries based on ethnicity (certain Tudescos), but also social status (poor German Jewesses at the gates), religious practices and knowledge, and geography (outside Hamburg). While ethnicity was an important element in the traffic in kosher meat, even differentiation along ethnic lines was not complete, as some Tudescos were apparently more acceptable than others.

Understanding “Community”

The cases discussed briefly above require a few points of context. First, the Portuguese protocol book mirrors such compilations for other religious minorities, such as the Mennonites, in date and perhaps also in general content and focus.⁶⁸ This may imply that the protocol book was written for external purposes and in an effort to account for and demonstrate the order within the Portuguese community. Indeed, although the protocol book does have some similarities with *pinkasim* [Jewish community ledgers] in other German cities, it is also somewhat differently focused. Although the protocol book lists communal ordinances and records appointments to communal offices, there are few financial (or other) transactions recorded. Throughout the protocol book there is reference to the community book or community archive,⁶⁹ which may have been closer to a traditional community *pinkas*.

In this light, the material from the protocol book must be seen as part of a broader form of communal discourse that engaged internal Jewish issues but that also served external political purposes. The protocol book, curiously, was not written in German, and so was probably not readily accessible to German authorities; on the other hand it was also not written in Hebrew and was therefore more accessible to non-Jews than the traditional *pinkas*. The Portuguese language may have served well the dual purpose of and audience for the protocol books. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the primary foci of the protocol book are the topics of governance and order, along with the concomitant discussion and pronouncement of the *herem* for those transgressing communal ordinances and civic laws. Sephardic-Ashkenazic relations as depicted by Portuguese leaders in the

⁶⁶ See Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Identities in Fifteenth-Century Germany* (Leiden and Boston, 2001), 154.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶⁸ See Michael Driedger *Obedient Heretics: Mennonite Identities in Lutheran Hamburg and Altona during the Confessional Age* (Aldershot, 2002).

⁶⁹ See Cassuto, “Aus den ältesten Protokollbuch,” 8:255, 289; 9:337; 10:274; and 13:60.

book, therefore, were not simply related to ethnic difference, but rather involved complex political, social, economic and religious concerns. In this context, it was important to distance German Jews, who for much of the period covered here were either not looked favorably upon or not allowed in Hamburg by the city authorities.

If the Portuguese were indeed a nation as Bodian and others have claimed, then the concept of nation is worth examining in more detail. Bodian notes that the term “nation” in Amsterdam was used in its Roman sense to denote a local community of foreigners.⁷⁰ But nations in the medieval and early modern periods could be rather complex. As we see for the case of Spanish Christians residing in Rome, for example, the consolidation of groups of individuals representing particular geographical locations or political orientations could lead to group solidarity and sense of community, but they could also provide important political leverage.⁷¹ Often such “nations” in dispersion were defined in ethnic terms, and they created tools, such as charity, dowry societies and patronage to maintain and enhance their particular identity.⁷²

The idea of nationality, and accompanying citizenship, however, might exist at various levels. In the case of early modern Spain, it has been argued that community existed simultaneously at two levels—at the level of the local community and at the level of the community of subjects.⁷³ In this case, citizenship or membership in a community was determined more by residence, participation and acceptance than by lineage or any formal legal process; that is through social rather than legal classifications.⁷⁴ In addition, in some larger communities, regional distinctions within the “nation” were evident and could be divisive, as they were for some Jews in northern Italy and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period.

As we have seen, membership within the Portuguese community could be complicated and communal boundaries could be changeable. Even the notion of “foreign” could, at various times, be directed at different groups or individuals. An entry in the protocol book for 9 Nissan 5416 (1656), for example, states that, “All foreigners stopping here should be notified by the community servants that they must leave the area three days after the Passover holiday, or they will be expelled by means of the authorities.”⁷⁵ Similarly, in the entry for 22 Nissan, it is noted that “it is necessary for the existence and the better administration of the community, to enact a decree that nobody, *whether from our or the other nation*, should reside in this city, without being licensed by the board [my emphasis].”⁷⁶ While the concept of foreigners seems to have applied equally to German or Polish Jews, it might simultaneously be applied to foreign Sephardim as well. Foreign Jews were separated very carefully in areas of ritual life, as evident in the protocol book statement that “Foreigners are forbidden to serve as *hazan* [cantor] in the main synagogue or in the *medrash* [study hall] of the Talmud Tora.”⁷⁷ While ethnicity was an important element in communal identity, it was not the only

⁷⁰ Bodian, *Hebrew of the Portuguese Nation*, 6.

⁷¹ See Thomas James Dandeleit, *Spanish Rome: 1500-1700* (New Haven, 2001).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 159 and 166; see Bodian, *Hebrew of the Portuguese Nation*, as well.

⁷³ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, 2003), 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4, 42, 44, 45 and 205.

⁷⁵ Cassuto, “Aus den ältesten Protokollbuch,” 7:67.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7:167.

⁷⁷ On 3 Kislev 5415; *ibid.*, 6:48.

element. Lineage, wealth, professional expertise or external connections might be equally important qualifications for inclusion in (or exclusion from) the community.

Throughout the protocol book, Portuguese leaders sought a delicate balance between internal order and external politics.⁷⁸ As one example makes clear, the two fields—internal and external—were often inextricably intertwined. On 27 Tamuz 5415 (1655) the board decided that a Tudesco by the name of Ylel, who was married to a former maidservant of Jeosuah de Palassios, be expelled “on good grounds presented against the afore-named, as also against his recognized poor lifestyle [sua má vida] *and especially because of the circumstance that he exceeded the number authorized here* [my emphasis].” Ylel apparently made every effort to remain, contrary to the order of the presiding burgomaster Schleebosch, though he finally left the region. In consideration of good order, the community leaders recorded that he should never return there.⁷⁹ Here internal social concerns merged with external politics and oversight.

Finally, compounding matters in Hamburg was the often-visible anti-Jewish animus throughout the seventeenth century. The influential pastor Johannes Müller, for example, asserted that toleration of the Jews contributed to the decay of Lutheranism in Hamburg. In a 1649 essay, he complained of the noisy and extravagant religious ceremonies of the Jews; he also maintained that Jews defiled the Christian Sabbath, insulted Christian women and possessed generally poor morals. While many of the concerns over Tudesco transgressions and behavior recorded in the protocol book echoed Müller’s accusations, it should be noted that Portuguese Jews, despite their different, often more privileged status, were often depicted in the same way.

By the end of the seventeenth century Portuguese and Tudescos in Hamburg were portrayed in the same broad strokes by city leaders as well as by fiery preachers. The previously preferential treatment of Portuguese Jews was eventually extended to German Jews as well. There were probably several reasons for this shift. One reason may be the decline of the Portuguese population and the need of its economic services, particularly as Hamburg grew to become an even more important and far-reaching economic power. Another reason may be the growing religious toleration of Jews more generally, reflected in positive theological support of freedom of religion⁸⁰ and the more uniform application of Roman law to both Christian and Jewish citizens.⁸¹ In any event, by the early eighteenth century the question of ethnicity no longer had the same import in Hamburg that it had during the previous century.

⁷⁸ In one interesting passage, there is a prohibition and penalty imposed on anyone who circumcises any foreign people [estranhos] or foreign children who are known to be non-Jewish [que não são da semente de Israel] (no date, but likely late Sivan or early Tammuz; *ibid.*, 6:30).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 6:53-4.

⁸⁰ This argument has been made for Halle and is perhaps applicable in Hamburg to some extent as well. See Udo Arnoldi, *Pro Iudaeis: Die Gutachten der hallischen Theologen im 18. Jahrhundert zu Fragen der Judentoleranz* (Berlin, 1993).

⁸¹ See J. Friedrich Battenberg, “Von der Kammerknechtschaft zum Judenregal: Reflexionen zur Rechtsstellung der Judenschaft im Heiligen Römischen Reich am Beispiel Johannes Reuchlins,” in *Hofjuden und Landjuden: Jüdisches Leben in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Sabine Hödl, Peter Rauscher and Barbara Staudinger (Berlin, 2004), 65-90.

Conclusion

As a preliminary conclusion, let me suggest that although there were clearly differences between Portuguese and Tudesco in early modern Hamburg, it does not seem to be the case that such differences were merely, or even primarily, oppositional. Tudesco, due to a variety of local circumstances, including economic considerations, were internally differentiated and they interacted in numerous ways with the Portuguese of Hamburg. Tudesco could have a range of relationships with the Portuguese. On 9 Adar 5416 (1656), Jacob Habilho, for example, brought a complaint against a Tudesco named Leb because he had created a great stir at his door and had drawn a knife on another Tudesco, named Yzaque. Leb was summoned, punished with a fine of 1 Reichsthaler, and threatened that if there were any further complaints against him, he would be irrevocably expelled.⁸² For whatever reasons or needs, there could be varying sympathies and treatment for different Tudesco—even if Jacob simply wanted peace in front of his house—and as we have already seen, not all Tudesco were portrayed with the same biased brush.

In an environment such as Hamburg that was growing dramatically and that encompassed a variety of Jewish sub-communities, the boundaries of community were frequently discussed. Such boundaries rarely, however, were permanent and were nearly always porous. Ethnicity was one tool in the attempts to craft identity, but in Hamburg practical concerns seem to have overridden ethnic sensibilities overall. In the sources examined here, ethnicity could be related to community building and communal identity, but it does not seem to have been the sole, or at times even the central factor. Geographical, political, economic, social and political factors also played important roles in the definition and structure of early modern Jewish community. Perhaps in the end, the very dichotomous distinction between Sephardic and Ashkenazic, as represented by the Portuguese and Tudesco, that has been handed down in scholarly literature needs to be reconsidered as well.

⁸² Cassuto, “Aus den ältesten Protokollbuch,” 7:161; see 14 Av 5425, 10:275-76, where only Tudesco employed by Portuguese were to be admitted to the synagogue. They were, it should be pointed out, nevertheless, admitted to the synagogue.