

Bine'ot Deshe by R. Shlomo Adahan: Knowledge Transfers Between the Maghreb and Amsterdam in the Early Modern Period

Michal Aziza Ohana

R. Shlomo Adahan (17th-18th century) was born in Tafilalet, southeastern Morocco. He eventually settled in Tétouan in the north, and also spent time in Amsterdam. There he joined the local Sephardic community—as had several North African scholars who had immigrated to the city as early as the 16th century and participated in the vibrant printing activity, some even serving in rabbinical positions.

In Amsterdam, Adahan authored and published his book *Bine'ot Deshe* (1735), which belongs to the corpus of *musar* and *hanhagot* literature. This literary genre was eschewed by almost all other eighteenth-century Maghrebi Jewish scholarly authors, in stark contrast to those in other contemporary diaspora Jewish communities. Hence the uniqueness and importance of Adahan's work as someone who navigated between the North African and Western European spheres and contributed to knowledge transfers between cultures in the early modern period.

As was common in the *hanhagot* literature of the time, Adahan presented laws and *halakhahs* from daily life and the Jewish yearly cycle; yet his book also displayed unique features. As a result of his passage between distinct geographical spaces, and especially due to his prolonged stay in Amsterdam, he learned of the customs of diverse communities—Maghrebi, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi. He subsequently identified and reassembled these customs in his writing, seeking to disseminate and inculcate them across all Jewish communities, and desiring them to supersede other customs. In thus partaking in the transfer of knowledge between cultures in the early modern period, he made a unique contribution to the formation of a republic of customs and practice, and perhaps even sought to create an 'imagined community' uniting Maghrebi, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi customs.

The Diaspora and the Testaments of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam (seventeenth-eighteenth centuries)

José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim

The testaments of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam provide the best insight into the relationship between families formally separated by belief and geography, in which their identity was allowed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As we shall see, the core of the wealth to be distributed among different family members was primarily generated by their commitment to the commercial dynamics of the Portuguese and the Dutch Empires, directly or through leaving in Portugal, some following of the steps of their ancestors.

It should be emphasized, however, that the circulation of assets provided for in the wills includes people who live mainly in Europe, revealing how the extensive diaspora of relatives spread across several cities does not prevent them from being favored, and on the contrary, allows for the careful management of the fortunes of these large families.

The wills of Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam also offer clues about a continuous connection with New Christian relatives who lived in Portugal, who are also frequently contemplated. This means that the notion of kinship prevails over the definitions of the religious field since in the Jewish universe it does not offer, at the time, the same meaning as in the Christian universe. With this proposal, we intend to offer several examples of documents that reveal the premises stated here.

The Ashkenazi Jewish meat hall in Amsterdam

Ronny Reshef

This study analyses the Ashkenazi meat hall in Amsterdam from 1673 to 1815, identifying five distinct phases in its development. It examines the challenges faced by the institution and the leadership's adaptive strategies. The meat hall served multiple crucial functions: preserving Jewish identity through Halachic adherence, sustaining communal welfare via indirect taxation, and mediating relations with municipal authorities. The identified phases are: (1) Establishment and Institutionalization (1673-1736); (2) Standardization and Accountability (1737-1764); (3) Enhanced Anti-Smuggling Measures (1764-1790); (4) Decentralisation (1790-1808); and (5) Reorganisation (1808-1815). Findings reveal persistent opposition throughout the hall's history, manifested in recurring violations. Ultimately, the separation of state and religion necessitated a fundamental restructuring of the meat hall, reflecting broader societal changes. This research contributes to our understanding of communal governance, religious institutions, and socio-economic adaptations in early modern Jewish communities.

Jewish Dispossession in Luxembourg: The Merits and Pitfalls of the Primary Sources

Linda Graul

The dispossession of Luxembourg's Jewish population during the National-Socialist occupation marks a critical yet significantly under-researched facet of the Holocaust. This paper proposes an in-depth examination of the primary sources available for the study of Jewish spoliation in Luxembourg, evaluating their potential and limitations in effectively uncovering the mechanisms, actors and consequences of this dispossession. It further seeks to place the Luxembourgish case within broader regional and international contexts, contributing to the conference's theme of comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives on Jewish history.

Central to the proposed research are the declarations of fortune, which offer a detailed inventory of Jewish owned assets and serve as a foundation for both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Equally significant are the account books of the Abteilung IV-A., which provide meticulous records of the confiscation and management of Jewish bank accounts, highlighting the systematic and bureaucratic nature of the expropriation. Complementary sources, including materials from the German Federal Archives and internal bank records, shed light on the institutional and individual actors involved in the financial exploitation of Jewish citizens. Additional documentation on the restructuring of Luxembourg's insurance sector underscores the multifaceted nature of spoliation beyond bank accounts as well as stocks and bonds.

Despite the strength of these sources, the research is faced with critical gaps. Sparse documentation exists regarding the claims of Jewish creditors against private individuals and notaries, raising questions about whether debtors intentionally evaded obligations. Similarly, the tracing of confiscated stocks and bonds and the ultimate allocation of proceeds remains elusive, as does comprehensive information on the beneficiaries of expropriation. Moreover, the leading companies have stated to have no sources on confiscated insurance policies. Beyond the material dimensions, the sources inadequately capture the personal and psychological impacts of financial persecution on the victims, including resignation, flight, or suicide. Post-war restitution processes, though partially documented, also lack sufficient detail on legal mechanisms and international comparability.

By critically engaging with these primary sources, this article aims to highlight the methodological challenges and opportunities arising from the study of Jewish spoliation in Luxembourg. It adds to the wider dialogue of the conference by offering insights into the local specifics of dispossession while

reflecting on common patterns of dispossession and restitution in occupied Europe. As such, this proposal aligns with the conference's focus on Jewish history, archives and memory, presenting Luxembourg as a case study to deepen understanding of the economic and human dimensions of the Holocaust.

Dispossession, Persecution, and War Damages: Working with Post-World War II Compensation Case Files in Luxembourg

Jana Susanne Müller

When looking at the existing historical research on restitution and indemnification in post-World War II Luxembourg, it becomes apparent that there are few contributions who only cover certain aspects and certain sources. Many questions both regarding the compensation policies and its underlying framework as well as with regards to the everyday practices and the individual experiences of compensation have not yet been researched. This is where my PhD thesis would like to contribute to by focusing on the Jewish community in Luxembourg and those who had been persecuted as being Jewish during the occupation period. How did the process of restitution and indemnification look like in Luxembourg for the Jewish community? What criteria of inclusion and exclusion played a role and was there a difference compared to other “victim groups”? What were the bureaucratic practices and what possibilities of agency did Jewish claimants have?

The proposed paper would like to work on these questions by considering first insights into the broader framework of restitution and indemnification in Luxembourg and particularly by presenting a first preliminary analysis of a sample of individual compensation case files of Jewish claimants. What kind of information can be found in these case files of the Luxembourgish “Office des Dommages de Guerre”? How can they contribute to finding answers to some of the above-mentioned broader questions? At the same time, the paper would also like to reflect upon what is missing when only looking at the case files and where limitations of this source may be.

Since my PhD thesis has only started in October 2023, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to present my first findings and further ideas and to discuss them with researchers from other institutions. I would be particularly interested in also reflecting about how the policies and practices in Luxembourg may have been different from or similar to those in the neighboring countries. A comparative perspective could certainly help to better understand and contextualize the situation in post-war Luxembourg and the paper could contribute to one aspect of Jewish Studies on the Low Countries.

Lezecher, In Remembrance: The Addition of the National Holocaust Names Memorial to Dutch Commemorative Culture

Senske de Vries

‘The Hebrew letters [lezecher, in remembrance] inspired me to organize the memorial in this context’ (Daniel Libeskind, personal communication, May 17, 2023).

The Hebrew word, Lezecher, is the essence of the National Holocaust Names Memorial (NHNM) located in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. This anthropological research, conducted while obtaining my Master’s degree, explores what place the NHNM has acquired within Dutch commemorative culture. Qualitative research methods, such as deep hanging out, observing, interviewing, and walking-along, have been used in this study. The analysis aimed to answer to the question of what the, relatively new,

NHNM means within Dutch commemorative culture, especially after its complicated and long process of coming into existence.

This ethnography centres around on the interaction of people with the memorial space. It focuses on what the memorial enforces, evokes and needs. Furthermore, it discusses the diversity of people who 'populate' the memorial space. These include the victims it commemorates, their relatives, but also care takers and passers-by. The agentive perspective sheds an exceptional light on the invisible and ongoing necessity of maintenance and protection to support the ritual and contemplative function of the memorial.

This anthropological study contributes to an understanding of what preceded the unveiling of the memorial, exploring what happens at the NHNM on a daily basis, and what place it has acquired within Dutch commemorative culture. It goes further by arguing that the NHNM may be seen as an archive in the canon, using Aleida Assmann's metaphor regarding the function of memory (2010). The Holocaust victims from the Netherlands are no longer only lists of names in an archive; the information from the archives is now part of the canon. The space needed just for the names, together with a few details of information shows how much room is necessary in order to bring those names back to society, giving them a proper place. The NHNM operates in the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam, and the given that the memorial acquired this place becomes visible when one looks at all the objects spread throughout the memorial, put there by visitors.

Critical Editions – Holocaust Testimonies in Historical Context

Dorien Stuyen, Frédéric Crahay & Sarah Timperman, Stephen Naron

The Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, an initiative of Yale University, started collecting first person testimonies from Holocaust survivors in 1979. Over the years, the Fortunoff Archive has established collaborations with archival institutions and museums dedicated to the history of the Holocaust all over the world. In Belgium, the Auschwitz Foundation has been recording testimonies and sharing them with the Fortunoff Archive for decades.

In 2025, Fortunoff Archive launched its Critical Editions Series. Each Edition (web based) contextualizes one survivor testimony in its historical time and place. The testimony is chosen by a visiting scholar who writes an introductory essay, along with an annotated transcript that provides additional insight and background information into the testimony. The participating scholars are encouraged to choose a testimony conducted in the national language of their country, in order for testimonies that are not in English to be more easily accessible.

For Belgium, the Auschwitz Foundation and Kazerne Dossin have been invited to both create a critical edition. The Auschwitz Foundation will delve into a testimony in French, while Kazerne Dossin has chosen a testimony of a Dutch speaking survivor. In this panel, chaired by Stephen Naron of the Fortunoff Archive, staff members of both institutions will reflect on the work already carried out.

The Auschwitz Foundation has chosen Paul Halter's testimony. One of the first recordings made as part of the Fortunoff Archive program in Belgium. This will enable the Foundation to monitor the evolution of the witness's testimony. A contextualization of Paul Halter's story will be carried out, which is interesting because he was both a racial deportee and a member of the Resistance. Finally, Paul Halter's early commitment to memory also becomes apparent from his testimony. The scholar will analyze how he perceived the challenges of transmission at the time.

Kazerne Dossin has opted for the testimony of Joseph Blitz, whose life reflects the life of many Jewish inhabitants of Belgium. He underwent all phases of racial persecution in Belgium and was deported via one of the earlier transports. This contribution will shed more light on Joseph Blitz's personal story, on the steps undertaken to analyse his story, on future steps regarding the contextualization of his testimony and on the challenges of working with the testimony of a survivor who never spoke up in public about everything he went through.