

## Abstracts 15<sup>th</sup> Contact day Jewish Studies on the Low Countries

**José Alberto R. Silva Tavim, *Between Amsterdam and Brussels: the versions of the manuscript *Relações, Cantigas, Adivinhações...* from the British Library and from KBR***

There are two versions of the manuscript known as "Relações, Cantigas, Adivinhações, e outras corizidades, trasladadas de Papeis Velhos neste Caderno", dated from 1683, one kept in the British Library (London), and the other in KBR (Brussels). Both have been the subject of separate studies, and only recently there has been a comparative analysis of its content.

Without knowing the existence of the Brussels copy, the Portuguese ethnologist Leite de Vasconcelos was the first to discover and study the London version in 1915. Half a century later, Dirk van der Cruise, unaware of the London version, gave detailed information on the Brussels' manuscript. Samuel Armisted and Joseph Silverman, and myself, have analyzed specific parts of the London manuscript. More recently, Jacobo Sanz Hermida has conducted a brief comparative study of both versions, coming to the conclusion that there are differences in the repertoire contained in the two manuscripts. Most notably is the addition at the end, in the Brussels version, of the story about the death of a poor old confectioner in Santarém, stabbed for blaspheming against the Jewish law. This addition dates from 1689, and as the compiler is the same, signing the two versions as Isaac Aboab (i.e. Yitzchac ben Mattatiah Abohav), this reveals that the London manuscript is an older version.

I think that these omissions and additions are not occasional, and depend on the context in which the two versions are found. Although both are mentioned as being made in Amsterdam, we must ask if Isaac Aboab wasn't compiling it having the would-be owner in mind? If the Brussels manuscript is not where it is by chance, as we believe, we must take into account the context of the "Exercice du culte israélite à Anvers" issue, with all its advances and setbacks from the 1670s to the 1690s. This reveals the existence of a group of Jews living in Antwerp, besides an ever-influential community of *conversos*, eager to maintain ties with the Iberian mainstream and prepared to openly adopt another identity in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, especially in times of tension.

**Erik Odegard, Brazil, Barbados and Beyond: Sephardic merchant networks in the Atlantic world, 1654-1674**

In January 1654 the quarter-century long attempt by the Dutch West India to settle a colony in Brazil came to an ignominious end. One of the conditions in the capitulation was the removal, after a period of grace, of all non-catholic inhabitants of the colony. This measure was not directed only at Dutch and other northern European protestants, but especially at the large Sephardic Jewish community of Recife, the capital of the former Dutch colony. Starting in 1654 we see the creation of Sephardic communities in the wider Atlantic world. The first Jewish community in what is now New York was founded by former inhabitants of Brazil in 1654, to name one example. Former "Brazilian" Jews appear in the sources at least in Cayenne, Barbados, Essequibo, Surinam, Tobago, Curaçao, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Jamaica. The fall of Brazil thus had the effect of spreading the Sephardic diaspora more widely across the Atlantic world.

Yet this diaspora remained closely tied to the Dutch Republic and Amsterdam especially. The majority of the former Sephardic inhabitants of Brazil had migrated there from Amsterdam in the 1630s and 1640s and a large number returned to Amsterdam after 1654, taking their Brazilian experience with them. Jewish communities in the Caribbean and North America remained connected to the "New Jerusalem" of Amsterdam. This paper will focus on the role that Sephardic merchants and investors played in the Atlantic world in the 1650s and 1660s. In Brazil, Sephardic investors had accounted for approximately one-third of private investment into the colony and this experience was utilized elsewhere after 1654. Even though direct trade with English Barbados from the Dutch Republic was officially prohibited, we see primarily Sephardic merchants trading with the island under a British name as late as the mid-1660s. Attesting to these links between Dutch Brazil, the Dutch Republic and the developing Atlantic world is the fact that the man sent by Oliver Cromwell to Barbados to explore the possibility of settling Jews on recently-conquered Jamaica was Abraham de Mercado, a former inhabitant of Dutch Brazil himself. Newly-discovered archival material allow me to paint a more accurate picture of the size and financial importance of the Jewish community in Dutch Brazil, as well as their subsequent activities during a crucial period in the development of Northern European colonial empires in the Atlantic World.

## **Max Farasat, A Place to Call Home: Reading Jewish Belonging and Identity in the Material Culture of Jewish Architecture in the Netherlands**

The city of Delft has recently had a remarkable revival of the visibility of Jewish life. Here, a prewar synagogue has become the spiritual and cultural home of Jews who have very little direct connection to the people that congregated here before the Holocaust. How did this Jewish space in Delft become actually Jewish once again and why does this matter? My work, which merges anthropological and architectural sensitivities, analyses the synagogue in Delft alongside other recently reinvigorated Jewish spaces throughout the Netherlands to probe the parameters of identity and belonging to a community and to a space. As a bachelor's student of the BA Religious Studies programme at Leiden University I conducted small-scale ethnographic research on this revival of Jewish life in Delft.

This research, which was part of a course on qualitative research methods, focused on the role of religious architecture in the creation of a certain sense of belonging, proceeding from an anthropological approach to architecture. The project explored how the synagogue of Delft, which was built in 1862, could partly mediate a complex feeling of connectedness with the pre-war history of Jewish life in Delft. The fieldwork I conducted at this community sparked my interest in the role of material heritage for contemporary Jewish communities in the Netherlands. This spring I will therefore be writing my bachelor's thesis on this topic under the supervision of Professor Sarah Cramsey and explore the interaction of Jewish communities with Jewish material heritage in the Netherlands in more depth. This thesis covers the Jewish community in Delft, alongside a community in Amsterdam and analyses the material culture of both synagogues in which these communities congregate. Relying predominantly on interviews and building analysis, I focus on reading the material culture of buildings and I am committed to developing these theoretical skills.

This research fits within a broader debate on material culture, since local authorities in the Netherlands are confronted with questions regarding the destination of former Jewish spaces. Besides, the research evaluates the scope of Jewish belonging, as it investigates what it is that makes a building Jewish, especially when so few Jews remain around it. Finally, the thesis explores how the Dutch example fits within a broader phenomenon of Jewish spaces in places that are nowadays sparsely populated by Jews.

**Jan Maes, How a German member of the Association of Jews in Belgium (AJB/VJB) portrayed the head of the Sipo-SD department IV (also known as the “Gestapo”) in Brussels as a “Righteous Rescuer”**

At the beginning of 1951, the permanent Court Martial of Brussels started the group trial against five German members of the *Sicherheitspolizei-Sicherheitsdienst* (Sipo-SD) of Brussels, including Franz Straub. A lawyer for the civil parties, sharpened the case in his conclusion: “The Sipo as a collective entity declared criminal by the International Court of Nuremberg. A) The Sipo was a real, reasoned organization of torture and murder, one of the most terrifying in Hitler's Reich, and it is not without irony - if irony had a place here - that, in a case like this, one takes note of the statements of a [Dienststelleleiter] Canaris who only wants to consider the Sipo as a 'normal police'. B) The essential *modus operandi*, the cold-blooded organized *modus operandi*, was to eliminate by all means, including the boldest and most unlawful, all those who, on any account, were considered as a threat to the *Reich* because of their activity, or simply because of their views, their race or political past.” In the context of my doctoral research, while reading the criminal file “Sipo-Brussels”, I came across the testimony of the German Jew, Hans Berlin, in which he fully defended Straub as a defense witness at the trial. But Straub, at the headquarters of the Sipo-SD in Brussels, was the head of the department IV, in the language of the people in Belgium called the “Gestapo”( *Geheime Staatspolizei*), which was labelled as a criminal organization, partly because of its role in the persecution and extermination of the Jews! As a former mediator between the Association of Jews in Belgium or the Vereniging der Joden in België (AJB/VJB) on the one hand and the Sipo-SD on the other, what might Berlin have inspired when he gave his astonishing testimony? But before speculating about his possible motives, we should consider how the Sipo-SD in Brussels was structured, who Straub's superiors and who his subordinates were, who was responsible for what and what power and autonomy Straub himself had as chief of his department. The *Judenreferent* of the *Judenabteilung* of the department IV, who was subordinate to Straub, had a group of Jew hunters who, from the autumn of 1942, tracked down, arrested, interrogated and generally deported Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau via the Dossin barracks, mainly in Brussels (mostly in hiding). As hierarchical superior of the *Judenreferenten*, Straub was therefore also (jointly) responsible for the implementation of the Shoah in Belgium. Who was Straub? Who was Berlin? And what might Berlin's possible motives have been in defense of Straub?

## **Maarten-Jan Vos, Municipal involvement in the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands 1940-1950**

Over the past three years many Dutch municipalities have commissioned research into their role in the 1940-45 persecution of the Jews and the subsequent restoration of rights. This was prompted by questions from the television program *Pointer* and the digitalization of the so-called *Verkaufsbücher*, the administration of the sale of Jewish real estate to war buyers in 1941-1945. About 7000 transactions in those *Verkaufsbücher* testify to the sale of Jewish real estate, at the time that the Jewish owners had been deported to concentration camps or were in hiding. From September 1941, all Jewish home and land owners had to hand over their property to the *Niederländische Grundstücksverwaltung*, the German looting organization that sold the plots. The digitalization of this data has made it visible who the war buyers were, which houses were involved and which municipalities acted as buyers. After the war, the Jewish owners or their surviving relatives had to apply for legal reparation over the stolen property.

How did that restoration of rights proceed and has it actually done 'justice', in a moral and financial sense? That is the question that's at the core of these researches.

More than 70 Dutch municipalities have already commissioned research or are in the process of doing so. Each municipality approaches the investigation in its own way and municipal officials have to make decisions about the research based on little substantive knowledge. This has led to a wide range of different types of research with differences in results, analyses and researchers. To give an example: the studies sometimes focus on the limited question of whether the municipality in question purchased Jewish real estate itself. On the other side, four-year PhD studies have also been launched. The various researchers have set up an informal network in which they consult with each other.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide insight into the various studies and in particular to discuss the lack of coordination that has evolved. The presentation will focus on the following topics:

- The difference in, researchers, research designs, research questions and the width of the studies, i.e. what is actually being researched?
- How do these differences influence results and analyses?
- The investigations that I have carried out myself. I have now completed three researches myself and am working on two more. What was the purpose and the results there?

Finally, I hope to consider the question with all attendees: what is the overall result of these investigations?

**Joris Kok, Next Year in Antwerp: Labour migration of Jewish diamond workers to Antwerp, 1894-1940**

The diamond production centres of Amsterdam and Antwerp have always been interlinked. At the end of the sixteenth century, when the harbor of Antwerp was blockaded, Jewish diamond traders and their Protestant workers gradually moved to Amsterdam, which would become the foremost industrial location for diamonds in the next three centuries. Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, thousands of diamond workers migrated (often temporarily) from Amsterdam to Antwerp's revived diamond centre to combat unemployment, while thousands of Belgian diamond workers fled to the Netherlands during World War I. What did these flows look like over time? And how was the choice of migrating, the timing and length of migration, and the family context of migrants different between Jewish and Christian diamond workers?

To answer these questions I examine the migration to (and return from) Antwerp by Amsterdam diamond workers using three complementary sources. First, I assess overall flows of (return) migration using monthly statistics reported in the periodical of the Dutch diamond workers' union (ANDB, 1894-1940). Second, I study the individual characteristics—including gender and ethno-religious background—of leavers and stayers using the individual membership administration of the ANDB (1898-1940). Third, for a smaller representative sample of diamond workers, alien files (*Vreemdelingendossiers*) are studied when workers crossed the border in order to study their reception in Antwerp and the family context of their migration.

**Sietske van der Veen, Defining 'the' Jewish Dutch Elite(s), 1870-1940**

From the last decades of the nineteenth century until the Nazi occupation, a substantial part of the Jewish Dutch minority experienced unprecedented opportunities for upward social mobility, as well as for integration into mainstream society. At the same time, Dutch Jews were confronted with a new, racist form of antisemitism. To explore how they seized opportunities and dealt with challenges, in my dissertation, I analyse the lives of over seven hundred Jewish members of the Dutch cultural, political and financial elites whose personal histories were documented in the Dutch Biography Portal. To be able to carry out such an analysis, it is vital to meticulously define what I

actually mean by Jewish members of the elite – or elites –, and if it is indeed possible to speak of ‘the’ Jewish Dutch elite(s). The answer to this query is twofold, as it entails determining who felt or was considered Jewish in the period under research, as well as establishing who could be deemed part of the upper echelons of Dutch society. By critically discussing the concepts of ‘eliteness’ and Jewish (self-)identification, and the terminology and theoretical approaches in the existing historiography, this paper will arrive at a working definition of who, between 1870 and 1940, belonged to this group – or groups. The definition is followed by an explanation of the method used to identify Jews in the Dutch Biography Portal who serve as a proxy for these particular (groups of) Dutch Jews.

### **Channa Zaccai, The first Israelis in the Netherlands: A case study of diaspora, Jewish identity and integration**

Since the inception of the State of Israel in 1948, Israeli Jews have moved abroad. Whereas Jewish immigration to Israel has been widely studied, academic scholarship on Israeli emigration is more limited. From the perspective of Israel's Zionist ideology, Israeli emigration can be seen as a violation of Jewish sovereignty: ‘a loss of Jews to the Jewish state.’ The phenomenon of emigration is part of an increasing trend of Israeli migration in the world at large, with Israelis seeking second citizenship in Europe and buying houses in low-cost countries, such as Greece, Bulgaria and Portugal.

Israeli Jews have been immigrating into the Netherlands since the 1950s, however there is only one socio-demographic study done of Israelis in the Netherlands, in 1996. With research mostly focusing on social-demographic, security or economy factors, Anglo-Saxon countries or Europe as a continent, I propose a study that ‘maps’ Israeli emigration from a diachronic angle in the Dutch case. When did Israeli emigration start and for what reasons? How do Israelis relate to their dual identity of having both a global Jewish and a national Israeli identity? I will also inventorize Israelis’ attitudes towards Judaism, the Dutch Jewish community, the global Israeli diaspora and Dutch society.

The arrival of the first Israeli Jews in the Netherlands forms the starting point to analyze the rise and development of an Israeli diaspora in the Dutch case and globally. The presence of Israeli Jews in the Netherlands – nowadays comprising approximately 25 percent of the entire present-day Dutch Jewish community –, a country with a longstanding history of Jewish presence and a diverse local Jewish community, provokes questions on the construction of Jewish identity and their

integration into the local Jewish community and Dutch society. To what extent was there such a thing as social and cultural integration into local Jewish communities and Dutch society as a whole?

This presentation is part of my PhD research on Israeli Jews in the Netherlands between 1960 and 2020. I will show that Zionist ideology, the international context and the aftermath of the second world war mutually inform the attitudes and perceptions of both Israeli Jews and Dutch Jews towards one another. The study of (the history of) Israeli diasporas can contribute to a new body of knowledge on Jewish life and Jewish identity construction and practices in the twenty-first century.

### **Hilde Greefs and Anne Winter, Eastern-European newcomers in Antwerp at the turn of the twentieth century: the Jewish dimension?**

As a port city and important hub for transatlantic migration, Antwerp welcomed increasing numbers of migrants and mobile groups during the nineteenth century. As the century progressed, more foreign migrants tended to move over longer distances and from a wider array of places. Next to migrants from neighbouring countries, increasing numbers of migrants from Eastern-Europe and Russia found their way to Antwerp. Although the majority of these Eastern-European migrants were on their way to America, and only temporarily stayed in Antwerp, increasing numbers also settled in the city. By exploring some sample years in the foreigners' files, we will focus on the migration trajectories, profiles and settlement patterns of these foreign newcomers, a significant proportion of whom likely had a Jewish background. Although the foreigners' files contain interesting information on the migration trajectories (birth place, last place of residence), social background (family composition, occupation) and settlement patterns in the city, religion is not mentioned so we can only trace it indirectly. However, the source offers us important insights in the backgrounds and occupational profiles of this new wave of Jewish newcomers who were probably also attracted by the re-awakening of the diamond industry in Antwerp in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.