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Jewish Mobility in the Eighteenth Century: Familial Networks of Ashkenazic Merchants across Europe

Abstract: *The mobility of the Jewish population in the early modern and modern period is usually taken as a given, though much historical research is, nevertheless, done according to political boundaries. This article examines the possibilities to link biographical studies of members of the Jewish mercantile elite in eighteenth-century continental Europe with a transgeographical approach to mobility. Using examples of Ashkenazic merchant families from Amsterdam, Frankfurt (Oder) and Warsaw, the article looks at the creation of familial and commercial connections among merchants, the role of women in these networks, and the influence of this geographical mobility in the cultural realm. It argues that the study of transgeographical connections – familial, commercial and otherwise – of families or groups of merchants will allow for new insights into the strategies of network building and mobility beyond the highest strata of the Jewish population, like early modern Court Jews.*

The topics of travelling and migration – and thus of spatial mobility more generally – are not new to Jewish history. Living in Jewish communities across Europe and beyond, Jews in the early modern period are usually considered to have been exceptionally mobile in comparison to much of the local population. Individual merchants, rabbis and students, as well as groups of political, religious or economic refugees, made their ways across Europe as well as to the Ottoman Empire and into the “New World”. David Ruderman has recently pointed out that “migration was an essential condition of the shaping of Jewish culture in early modern Europe,”¹ and thus can be described as one of the five central elements in early modern Jewish history. This individual and collective mobility not only led to the growth of small Jewish communities and the establishment of many new ones, but also to numerous encounters between Sephardic Jews from Spain, Italian Jews, Ashkenazim moving from central Europe eastward and, from the mid-seventeenth century onward, back to central and western Europe and as far as to the Ottoman Empire. These encounters sometimes caused social tensions but also enabled the

¹ David B. Ruderman: *Early Modern Jewry. A New Cultural History*. Princeton, NJ 2010, 24. The other four central elements according to Ruderman are communal cohesion, knowledge explosion, the crisis of rabbinic authority and the emergence of mingled identities.

transfer and juxtaposition of a whole array of different religious and cultural concepts and practices.²

Though transregional and transcultural approaches to Jewish history in the early modern period are not new, they still are much less prevalent in actual research than one might expect. Already in 1985, Jonathan Israel not only defined for the first time an early modern period in Jewish history but also emphasised the European component of this history by approaching mainly economic and political developments in early modern Jewish communities across political boundaries.³ This, however, has not been the standard approach in subsequent decades. Transgeographical⁴ approaches of nineteenth-century historians as well as nationalist and/or Zionist approaches to Jewish history emphasised the unity of world Jewry and marginalised local circumstances. Moreover, as Moshe Rosman has pointed out, older transgeographical approaches paid little attention to mobility and connections but rather automatically assumed a commonality among Jews all across the world.⁵ Rejecting such approaches, local and regional studies organised – often unconsciously – Jewish history according to political geography, adding a whole array of new and important information on local Jewish communities and their existence within a specific political framework.⁶ These studies usually took into account the mutual influence between Jews and non-Jews, which yielded important findings, but equally has its limitations as it often neglects transregional and transgeographical connections. Thus, the importance both of local conditions and influences as well as of phenomena that developed within the Jewish world across early modern political boundaries should be taken as an argument for writing a relational Jewish history. One of the fields that is highly suitable to

2 Ibid., 23–55.

3 Jonathan Israel: *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*. London ³1998.

4 Here and in the following I use Moshe Rosman's very general term transgeographical to describe connections that crossed early modern political borders as transnational is an anachronistic term applicable to the modern period only. Other terms can define transgeographical connections more closely. Transregional fits connections across political borders in a rather limited space, such as the Prussian-Polish border region. The term transcultural, in contrast, carries a much more complicated baggage as it makes assumptions about the quality of a contact across political, religious or ethnic borders. For a discussion of cross-cultural trade, see Francesca Trivellato: *The Familiarity of Strangers. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*. New Haven, CT 2009, 1–3.

5 Moshe Rosman: Jewish History across Borders, in: Jeremy Cohen and id. (eds.): *Rethinking European Jewish History*. Oxford 2009, 15–29, esp. 17–21.

6 Ibid., 22–23.

this approach is that of Jewish economic history and, in particular, the history of commerce and trade⁷, which will be at the core of this article.

Biographical approaches are equally not new to Jewish history. Especially in the German-Jewish tradition of the nineteenth century, the biographies of important rabbis and scholars were central to this literary history (*Literaturgeschichte*); often enough, epochs were named after their most important protagonists,⁸ though the focus was obviously not on their quite mobile life-courses but on their intellectual and literary achievements. Beyond these prominent figures, the writing of biographies of Jewish men and women in the early modern period suffers from the same problems that all historians face regarding biographical writing: a lack – or at least a relative lack – of suitable sources. Few people left ego-documents or even autobiographical narratives behind, and these are usually not enough to write an individual's biography. This is especially true for those who did not belong to religious or economic elites.⁹ The rather well-known autobiographical writings of Glikl bas Yehuda Leib, Jacob Emden, Ber of Bolechov, Salomon Maimon, from the eighteenth century provide important glimpses into those individuals' experiences and into early modern Jewish life more broadly. With Glikl's memoirs we even have extensive writing from a woman and thus biographical material from "the margins".¹⁰ Nevertheless, even with Glikl we need to keep two things in mind. Despite the fact that Glikl as a woman and as a

7 For the modern period the work of Sarah Abrevaya Stein has demonstrated the high degree of mobility and interconnectedness of Jews from Europe, North America and South Africa in the ostrich feather trade. Sarah Abrevaya Stein: *Plumes. Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce*. New Haven, CT 2008. Adam D. Mendelsohn's recent book traces the rise of Jewish rag dealers into the clothing trade business in America and the British Empire. Adam D. Mendelsohn: *The Rag Race. How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire*. New York 2015. For the early modern period, see in addition to Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*: Lois Dubin (ed.): *Port Jews of the Atlantic*. Special Issue of *Jewish History* 20, no. 2 (2006); David Cesarani and Gemma Romain (eds.): *Jews and Port Cities, 1590–1990. Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism*. London 2006 (= *Jewish Culture and History* 7, no. 1–2 (2004)); Jonathan Israel: *Diaspora within a Diaspora. Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World of Maritime Empires*. Boston 2002.

8 For example in Heinrich Graetz's *History of the Jews*, where one finds the "Epoch of Maimuni (Maimonides)" or "The Mendelsohn Epoch". Rosman, *Jewish History across Borders*, 18.

9 An example for transgeographical lives difficult to trace is that of refugees after the Chmielnicki uprisings in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1648/49. Adam Teller: *Jewish Women in the Wake of the Chmielnicki Uprising. Gzeires Tah-Tat as a Gendered Experience*, in: Richard I. Cohen et al. (eds.): *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman*. Pittsburgh 2014, 39–49.

10 Natalie Zemon Davis: *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*. Cambridge, MA 1995, 5–62. On Glikl, see also Michael Stanislawski: *Autobiographical Jews. Essays in Jewish*

Jew can be considered at the margins of historians' view for over two centuries,¹¹ one should not forget that she – wealthy and articulate – did indeed belong to a small Jewish mercantile elite.¹²

One possibility to at least partly circumvent these problems and to integrate a wide array of sources beyond the individual level might be collective biographies. Aimed not at following an individual's life from beginning to end but rather analysing a group of individuals related by family, geography or occupation – to mention just a few possibilities –, collective biographies allow for the exploration of shared features, views, and mentalities within such groups.¹³ In this article, I try to suggest some ways of combining collective biography with the analysis of commercial networks, though these are neither complete life stories nor a network analysis as would be the case in the social sciences. My approach takes merchants and their families, their business partners and clients rather into account as a tightly or more loosely woven web of relations.

Based on an analysis of commercial and familial networks of Jewish mercantile families located in Amsterdam, Frankfurt (Oder) and Warsaw from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century,¹⁴ I will suggest three topics worthwhile considering when connecting “mobility” and “biography” in historical studies of the transitional decades between the early modern and the modern period. The examples also focus on Ashkenazic Jews instead of Sephardim, who are usually considered more mobile. Though many Sephardic merchants – whether in Amsterdam or Livorno, around the Mediterranean or in the “New World” – overcame longer distances or traded higher volumes, Ashkenazim involved in trade across the European continent or transregionally were nevertheless crucial to supplying the local population, local authorities and armies. In what follows, I will discuss network strategies of those merchants, the role of female family members in those commercial networks, and the impact of those connections on the cultural sphere.

Self-Fashioning. Seattle 2004, 32–53; Monika Richarz (ed.): *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl. Jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Hamburg 2001.

11 On the exclusion of those not belonging to the male Christian western elite, see Levke Harders: *Legitimizing Biography. Critical Approaches to Biographical Research*, in: *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 55 (2014), 49–56, esp. 52–53.

12 Moreover, the reliance on a single autobiographical source for the reconstruction of historical conditions and statements about general circumstances of daily life proves to be problematic at least. Robert Liberles: “She sees that her merchandise is good, and her lamp is not extinguished by nighttime”. Glikl's Memoir as Historical Source, in: *Nashim. A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 7 (2004), 11–27, esp. 15. See also Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews*, 5–6.

13 Harders, *Legitimizing Biography*, 53.

14 Cornelia Aust: *Commercial Cosmopolitans. Networks of Jewish Merchants between Warsaw and Amsterdam, 1750–1820* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

Familial and Commercial Connections

Kinship, shared religion and ethnicity were crucial in the formation of early modern business connections, not only among Jewish merchants. Armenians, for instance, formed commercial networks based on shared ethnic origins, while Dutch or Scottish merchants sent their sons to Russia and northern Europe to establish businesses. They maintained their commercial networks based on religion and place of origin. In many cases, however, Christian merchants acculturated to their new domiciles, often via intermarriage with local families of the mercantile elite.¹⁵ Thus, merchants usually were *per se* a highly mobile group.

Jews from across Europe regularly married into other Jewish communities near and far, though, in general, business connections based on marriage ties seem not to have lasted for more than two generations. Marriage among families of the Jewish mercantile elite in central Europe were orchestrated for a variety of reasons, including the increase of a firm's assets, the geographical extension of commercial networks, entry into new branches of business, and the circumvention of state-imposed legal marriage restrictions. Moreover, marriage decisions were made based on social status and economic ability and were central to commercial cooperation.¹⁶

Though much better known for its Sephardic community, Amsterdam constituted an important hub for Ashkenazic merchants and their commercial networks, especially as a central place for the trade in bills of exchange and for the provision of credit.¹⁷ Familial connections within the Netherlands and across Europe played an important role as the marriage patterns of the Symons family, one of the leading families of Ashkenazic merchant-bankers in Amsterdam show. The two brothers Benjamin and Samuel Symons, whose ancestors had lived in

¹⁵ See, for example, Sebouh David Aslanian: *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*. Berkeley, CA 2011; Steve Murdoch: *Network North. Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603–1746*. Leiden 2006; Jan Willem Veluwenkamp: Familiennetwerken binnen de Nederlandse koopliedengemeenschap van Archangel in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw, in: *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 108 (1993), 655–672.

¹⁶ Rotraud Ries: Status und Lebensstil. Jüdische Familien der sozialen Oberschicht zur Zeit Glikls, in: Richarz, Kauffrau Glikl, 280–306, esp. 292–295. See also Cornelia Aust: Between Amsterdam and Warsaw. Commercial Networks of the Ashkenazic Mercantile Elite in Central Europe, in: *Jewish History* 27, no. 1 (2013), 41–71.

¹⁷ On Amsterdam, see Jan De Vries and A.M. van der Woude: *The First Modern Economy. Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815*. Cambridge 1997, 136; Peter Spufford: From Antwerp and Amsterdam to London. The Decline of Financial Centres in Europe, in: *De Economist* 154 (2006), 143–175.

Amsterdam since the early seventeenth century, were mostly involved in trade in diamonds and bills of exchange and provided financial services.¹⁸ They belonged to the small affluent elite of the community, although the volume of their business activities was not comparable to those of the most affluent Sephardic merchants and bankers. In 1743, Benjamin Symons was listed among the ten wealthiest taxpayers in the Ashkenazic community, and his sons Abraham and Emmanuel Symons continued the business in the 1770s after the death of Benjamin and his brother Samuel.¹⁹ The marriage strategies of the Symons family included marriages among close relatives to secure the family firm, multiple marriages into one geographically close family to enhance their shared business and to gain additional capital, and marriages over longer distances to create new business opportunities and broaden their commercial networks.

In an attempt to keep the family business together Benjamin Symons married his son Abraham to Veronica, the daughter of his business partner and brother Samuel Symons. Consanguineous marriages were not uncommon, and among Sephardic Jews they were the norm rather than the exception. For Benjamin and Samuel Symons the cohesion and strength of their shared business was surely the most important incentive for the marriage between their children, though similar marriage arrangements were probably not uncommon in families where capital played a smaller role. The couple's marriage contract, preserved in a Dutch version, stipulated a clear division of the couple's assets, but points to the expectation that both would share their business and the income resulting from it. Veronica Symons brought a dowry of 17,000 Dutch guilders in cash plus various movable goods into the marriage, a hint at the wealth of the family and the importance of dowries for raising liquid capital.²⁰

The closest marriage connections were forged between the Symons family and the Boas family in The Hague. Tobias Boas' father was a Polish immigrant dealing in textiles, jewellery and precious metals, and thus was involved in similar fields of trade as the Symons family. Tobias Boas (1696–1782) succeeded in turning the

18 J.C.H. Blom, R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld and Ivo Schöffer: *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*. Oxford 2002, 92 and 100–102. On the immigration of Ashkenazic Jews to Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, see Yosef Kaplan: Amsterdam and Ashkenazic Migration in the Seventeenth Century, in: *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23 (1989), 22–44. On the Jewish involvement in the diamond trade in Amsterdam and London in the eighteenth century, see Gedalia Yogev: *Diamonds and Coral. Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade*. New York 1978, 110–182.

19 For the economic activities of Amsterdam Jewry in general, see Herbert Ivan Bloom: *The Economic Activities of the Jews in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Williamsport, PA 1937, 177–178.

20 Aust, Commercial Cosmopolitans, 96–100.

business into a large-scale banking house of international standing, a career similar to that of many of the more affluent Ashkenazi merchants in the Netherlands.²¹ Tobias Boas was married to Sara Symons (b. 1704), the sister of Benjamin and Samuel as well as of Berend Symons (b. 1708), who also was a successful merchant banker. After the death of his first wife, Samuel Symons married Mietje Boas, a daughter of Tobias Boas. Two more children of Boas married children of Benjamin Symons. Thus, the two families were closely linked by marriage ties. These close connections also found expression in the business ties of the two families.

The marriage strategies of the Symons family were closely mirrored by the way they structured their business undertakings. While Emmanuel Symons became responsible for the family's business in Western Europe and the Mediterranean, Abraham Symons took over the Central and East European part of the business. For the commercial venture into Central and Eastern Europe, the Symons family used an additional marriage strategy. Abraham Symons' uncle Berend Symons sent two of his sons away, one of them to Frankfurt (Oder), where he married Hendele, daughter of the affluent merchant Pincus Moses Schlesinger, in 1758. This marriage tie was advantageous for both sides. Simon Symons began a shared business with his brother-in-law Levin Pincus Schlesinger. While the Schlesingers gained easier access to the credit market in Amsterdam, the Symons family extended its ties to one of the most important Jewish families in the textile trade in Prussia. The familial ties of the Schlesingers to Amsterdam were strengthened further with an additional marriage arrangement. In 1763, Levin Pincus Schlesinger travelled with his father to Amsterdam, where he married Margolia Elias Daniels. Two years later, his business partner Simon Symons, whose first wife and only son had passed away, went to Amsterdam to marry Mitje Elias Daniels, a sister of Margolia. The additional financial capital that these weddings brought into the shared business of Levin Pincus Schlesinger and Simon Symons may have provided them with the financial power to offer their services to the Polish king, who made them court suppliers in 1765, the year of Simon Symons' wedding with Mitje Elias Daniels. The ties established through these marriages proved to be strong. Even the quarrels that broke out between Simon Symons and the father-in-law from his first marriage Pincus Moses Schlesinger in the 1780s could not disrupt these ties completely. After Simon Symons' death in Warsaw in 1793, his wife did not return to Amsterdam or follow her brothers to London but remained in Frankfurt (Oder) until her death in 1811. Pincus Moses Schlesinger even bought

²¹ B.W. de Vries: *From Pedlars to Textile Barons. The Economic Development of a Jewish Minority Group in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam 1989, 41; Blom, Fuks-Mansfeld and Schöffner, *Jews in the Netherlands*, 102.

a special privilege that allowed her to stay in the city.²² Though it is difficult to explore the merchants' perceptions of their multiple spatial identities, this example seems to show that both Simon Symons and his wife may have developed a certain feeling of belonging to the Jewish community in Frankfurt.

Economic considerations, however, were not the only reason for Jewish merchants to arrange marriages of their children in different towns, which may be one of the features that distinguishes them from fellow Christian merchants and their commercial and familial networks. Legal restrictions on Jewish communities by the Prussian state aimed at a strict limitation of population growth among Jews. Although a privileged protected Jew (*ordentlicher Schutzjude*), Pincus Moses Schlesinger was originally allowed to pass this status on to only one child. Evidence suggests that matches made for his children and particularly his sons were driven not only by economic considerations but by the need to secure their privileged status. One can trace the paths of four of Pincus Moses Schlesinger's sons.²³ While he passed on his privilege to his oldest son Levin Pincus, who married the aforementioned Margolia Elias Daniels from Amsterdam, solutions for Levin's siblings had to be found.

The most common solution was to emigrate and to find a match in another city, preferably one that provided new economic opportunities as well. Both Alexander Pincus and Abraham Pincus moved to Königsberg in the 1760s. There, Isaac Mendel, the brother-in-law of Pincus Moses Schlesinger, had carried on an extensive wholesale trade with Poland and Russia until his death in 1765. Alexander Pincus Schlesinger received his residence privilege through his marriage to the daughter of the local privileged Jew (*Schutzjude*) Abraham Seeligmann. While the brothers' move to Königsberg solved the problem of their residence privilege, it also was of great importance for their father's business in the city, where they continued their uncle's business.²⁴ The example of the Schlesinger family fits with a generally large immigration of Jewish men to Königsberg. In the second half of the eighteenth century nearly every second groom came from outside the city, mostly from Brandenburg but also from Silesia, Poland, and the settlements outside of Danzig, as well as from Russia after the first partition of Poland in 1772.²⁵ This

²² Aust, *Commercial Cosmopolitans*, 100–104.

²³ The register of Jews in Frankfurt (Oder) lists eight children of Pincus Moses Schlesinger, five sons and three daughters. *Judentabellen der Stadt Frankfurt (Oder), 1748–1759, Abteilung I, VII, 107* (Stadtarchiv Frankfurt/Oder), 144v–145.

²⁴ Aust, *Commercial Cosmopolitans*, 104–105.

²⁵ Rolf Straubel: *Die Handelsstädte Königsberg und Memel in friderizianischer Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des ost- und gesamtpreußischen "Commercium" sowie seiner sozialen Träger (1763–1806/15)*. Berlin 2003, 304–305.

underlines the high degree of mobility of Jewish families, many of which were involved in commerce.

Nevertheless, Pincus Moses Schlesinger was not able to marry off all his sons successfully at the appropriate age. The youngest of the male siblings, David Pincus, remained in Frankfurt (Oder) and his age of 43 years at the time of his marriage is suggestive. Neither the Prussian records nor the translation of his prenuptial contract mention any earlier marriage, thus he probably had to wait until a suitable opportunity arrived. When Gittel, the only child of the privileged protected Frankfurt (Oder) Jew Isaac Herz Reiss, turned 20 – her father had died in 1782 when she was 12 – the marriage between her and David Pincus was decided. Thus, David Pincus Schlesinger received the privilege of the first child that had been passed on from Isaac Herz Reiss to his only daughter Gittel.²⁶ For David Pincus Schlesinger it was a prestigious marriage, but also a very late one.

Marriage strategies of the Jewish mercantile elite took various forms and were driven by multiple motivations. Through marriage ties these merchant families secured their social and economic position, and extended their networks into new places or branches of trade. Moreover, marriage could secure or enlarge the financial assets of a business and open new market opportunities. Finally, marriage was also a means to secure the right of settlement and legal status in places like Prussia where these rights were seriously limited. Though the familial connections described here were often at the core of business undertakings, this does not mean that these commercial networks were restricted to family members or to Jews in general. Both the Symons and the Schlesingers had numerous Christian business partners and regular Christian customers. Similarly, in her memoir the Hamburg female merchant Glikl repeatedly describes reliable Christian business partners of her husband and herself, while not shying away from denouncing unreliable Jewish business partners.²⁷ Nevertheless, the reconstruction of marriage connections tied to business connections allows us to see a widely woven net of travel and migration across Jewish communities in Europe in more detail than the general claims often made about Jewish connectedness and mobility. Though the example of the Symons and the Schlesinger family put a focus on marriage strategies, the available data concerning their commercial activities, their travels and their involvement in communal matters would allow for a more extensive collective biography tying together the mobility patterns of multiple family member across time and space. Moreover, it is also possible to trace their connections to

²⁶ Aust, *Commercial Cosmopolitans*, 106.

²⁷ Chava Turniansky (ed.): *Glikl Zikhronot. 1691–1719*. Jerusalem 2006, 208–214, 220–222 and 290–296.

other Jewish and Christian merchants at least to some extent and thus to map wider commercial networks.

The Role of Female Family Members

With the case of Glikl as an active merchant with – and later without – her husband, one might inquire in more detail about the role Jewish women played in the framework of their familial and commercial connections. As Glikl's case suggests, women were more than just nodal points in these networks and played important roles in running businesses. However, it is much more difficult to examine their roles within business, including in the cases of the Symons and the Schlesinger families, where we find them only as marriage partners, even if it is very likely that they assumed an active role in business as well.

In the early modern period, women were an inseparable part of the family's economic activities. Commercial and trade laws in Central Europe did not exhibit exclusively patriarchal structures. In urban environments, many Jewish and non-Jewish women were active in retail trade, either as part of their husband's business or on their own. In Polish towns, women, among them many single women, were involved in retail trade, innkeeping, brewing and small-scale moneylending, while noble women took part in running estates.²⁸ Only towards the end of the early modern period were women increasingly excluded from retail and wholesale trade.²⁹

²⁸ Merry E. Wiesner: *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge ³2008, 101 and 116. See also, Maria Bogucka: *Women in Early Modern Polish Society Against the European Background*. Aldershot 2004, 31–52. Cezary Kuklo: Kobiety w życiu społeczno-gospodarczym miast polski przedrozbiorowej, in: *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 207, no. 3 (2003), 391–402, esp. 392 and 401. On the numbers and status of single women in eighteenth-century Poland in general, see Cezary Kuklo: *Kobieta samotna w społeczeństwie miejskim u schyłku Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej. Studium demograficzno-społeczne*. Białystok 1998, 117–143 and 219–221. On the noble woman Elżbieta Sieniawska who ran an estate, see Moshe Rosman: *The Lords' Jews. Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA 1990, 147–184. On a female Jewish leaseholder on Sieniawska's estate, see Janusz Nowak: Feyga Lejbowiczowa. Arendarka w końskowoli Sieniawskich. Z dziejów gospodarczej aktywności kobiet żydowskich w początkach XVIII wieku, in: *Rocznik Biblioteki Naukowej PAU i PAN w Krakowie* 48 (2003), 211–236.

²⁹ Susanne Schötz: *Handelsfrauen in Leipzig. Zur Geschichte von Arbeit und Geschlecht in der Neuzeit*. Köln 2004, 26–28, 42, 70, 217 and 422–434; Daniel A. Rabuzzi: Women as Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Northern Germany. The Case of Stralsund, 1750–1830, in: *Central European History* 28, no. 4 (1995), 435–456.

Jewish women were similarly, if not more, involved in the economic activities of their families. In German-speaking lands, Jewish women took part in various kinds of commerce, although here as elsewhere most women who appeared in tax registers were widows.³⁰ One can assume, nevertheless, that they had already been active in commerce during the lifetime of their husbands. If not, it is hard to imagine how they would have been prepared for commercial undertakings. Glikl recounted her regular travels to fairs including one to Leipzig, where she was accompanied only by her 15-year-old son Moses.³¹ Beyond autobiographical accounts, archival documentation strengthens the assumption that women regularly accompanied their husbands to fairs. The standardised and printed slip of paper to register Jews entering the city of Leipzig to attend the fair had a space for “wife”.³² Among the various members of the Schlesinger family from Frankfurt (Oder) who travelled regularly to Leipzig to conduct business it was not unusual for their wives to accompany them.³³ Though the registers of Jews attending the Leipzig fair do not show a large number of women travelling to the fairs independently, Pincus Moses Schlesinger travelled to five different Leipzig fairs with his wife Bela during the 1750s.³⁴

In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, eighteenth-century sources suggest that married women pursued their own business in retail trade on noble estates.³⁵ The will of the wealthy Cracow merchant David Todros Kozuchowski from the mid-seventeenth century also adds to this picture as he “appointed his [...] wife as overseer, power, executrix and governor over the entire estate from the smallest to the greatest item, as of today, for all the days of her life. [...] Thus she will conduct all business as she sees fit and as she desires as she always has [...]”³⁶

30 Michael Toch: Jewish Women Entrepreneurs in the 16th and 17th Century Economics and Family Structure, in: *Jahrbuch für Fränkische Landesforschung* 60 (2000), 254–256.

31 Turniansky, Glikl Zikhronot, 416, 454, 472, 484 and 496.

32 Acta die von verschiedenen auswärtigen Handelsjuden über den ihnen zeithero versagten Durchgang durch die Pleißenburg [...] betreffend, 1790, Tit. LI 23, (Stadtarchiv Leipzig), 17.

33 Acta den Handelsjuden Markus Levin Schlesinger aus Frankfurt (Oder) betr. anno 1787, Tit. LI 18 (Stadtarchiv Leipzig), 1, 9.

34 Judenverzeichnisse 1742–1764, 10024 Geheimer Rat (Geheimes Archiv), Loc. 9482/3 (Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden), 143, 205, 210v, 218v and 224. For more details on travel to fairs, see Aust, *Commercial Cosmopolitans*, 110–113 and 137–145.

35 Adam Teller: *Kesef, koah, ve-hashpa'ah. Ha-Yehudim ba-ahuzot bet Radzivil be-Lita ba-me'ah ha-18*. Jerusalem 2006, 210–216; Gershon David Hundert: The Role of the Jews in Commerce in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania, in: *Journal of European Economic History* 16, no. 2 (1987), 245–275, esp. 266.

36 Moshe Rosman: How Family Wealth and Power Are Organized. The Will of David Theodore [Todros] Kozuchowski, in: *Early Modern Workshop. Jewish History Resources. Volume 3. Gender*,

A figure similar in many ways to Glikl but different in the outstanding trans-geographical extent of her involvement in business, is Judyta Jakubowiczowa, daughter of Levin Buko, born in Frankfurt (Oder) around 1750. She was born into one of the wealthiest and most influential merchant families of the city. While Glikl, despite travelling to Amsterdam and spending the last years of her life in Metz, was very much rooted in the German-speaking lands, Judyta crossed political and cultural borders. Via her family and business connections she and her business can be seen as an extension of the commercial networks of the Symons and Schlesinger families, who both equally established ties to Warsaw.

Most likely following already established connections between Jewish mercantile families in Frankfurt (Oder) and in or around Warsaw,³⁷ Judyta moved there in the late 1770s to marry the much older Szmul Jakubowicz Zbytkower. Until his death in 1800, both were closely involved in trade, the processing of agricultural products and army supplying. In the following three decades Judyta continued her and her husband's business on her own and, unlike Glikl, did not remarry, which was rather unusual at the time. Until the end of the Napoleonic Wars she was especially active in army supplying, serving Polish, Prussian, Russian and French troops. To do so, she kept close relations to family members and fellow Jewish merchants from Frankfurt (Oder), among them her brother Philip Levin Buko, who resided in Grodno and after 1812 in the Prussian town of Memel (now Klaipėda in Lithuania). One of her closest business partners, especially in financial matters, became the army supplier and banker Jacob Herz Beer in Berlin, son of Herz Beer, the wealthiest Jewish merchant and one of the communal leaders in Frankfurt (Oder) in the second half of the eighteenth century. Only after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the creation of the Kingdom of Poland in 1815 did Judyta move into banking, and she continued using her business connections primarily to Prussia and Russia with the support of her family and already existing commercial networks.³⁸

Family, and Social Structures. Middleton, CT 2006, 57–58. URL: <http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=emw> (15 June 2015).

37 Due to a privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* Jews were not allowed to settle in the city of Warsaw since 1527. Only in the second half of the eighteenth century did an increasing number of Jews settle in the estates of Polish nobles (*jurydyki*) around the city or in Praga, a then independent town on the other side of the Vistula. Some settled in Warsaw illegally. Artur Eisenbach: The Jewish Population in Warsaw at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century, in: *Polin* 3 (1988), 46–77; Hanna Węgrzynek: Illegal Immigrants. The Jews of Warsaw, 1527–1792, in: Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet (eds.): *Warsaw. The Jewish Metropolis. Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*. Leiden 2015, 19–41.

38 For more details, see Cornelia Aust: Merchants, Army Suppliers, Bankers. Transnational Connections and the Rise of Warsaw's Jewish Mercantile Elite (1770–1820), in: *ibid.*, 42–69, esp. 55–59.

In general, as in the case of Judyta Jakubowiczowa, it is only widowhood that allows a closer look at women's economic role. Aside from a few letters that Judyta wrote and signed herself during her husband's lifetime and most likely while he was travelling, she appears as economically active only after his death. However, one can assume that women would not have been able to take over these activities unprepared upon the death of their husband, but were only able to do so because they had been closely involved in them beforehand. The example of Judyta Jakubowiczowa not only confirms the active involvement of Jewish women in business beyond being marriage partners and nodes in family networks, but provides an unusual insight into a transgeographical biography of such a woman.

The Cultural Sphere

It was mainly money, but also diamonds and much more mundane goods such as cloth, meat, wood, vodka and grain that were moved along the commercial networks examined here, which were largely but not exclusively run by Jewish merchants, many of them belonging to extended families. Though hard to quantify, it is comparatively easy to identify these goods. However, it is much more complicated to point to the ideas, habits and lifestyles that were negotiated and exchanged along those connections. These multi-directional and often transcultural connections among Jews from across Europe as well as between Jews and non-Jews created a cultural sphere that is difficult to dissect.³⁹ As Francesca Trivellato has shown, close commercial connections especially in cross-cultural settings did not naturally lead to close cultural interaction or influence: "The cosmopolitan language of business letters did not automatically spawn cosmopolitan feelings of tolerance, mutual respect, curiosity and appreciation of differences."⁴⁰

Despite much greater geographic proximity than among long-distance merchants, cultural differences were felt and expressed even among Jews from the Holy Roman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the anonymous Yiddish polemical poem *Di Baschraybung fun Aschkenaz un Polak* (A description of Ashkenazim and Polish Jews) the supposedly Polish-Jewish author describes the cultural differences that he experienced during his flight and wan-

³⁹ On the connection between cultural transfer and family connections, see Dorothea Nolde and Claudia Opitz-Belakhal: Kulturtransfer über Familienbeziehungen – einige einführende Überlegungen, in: ead. (eds.): *Grenzüberschreitende Familienbeziehungen. Akteure und Medien des Kulturtransfers in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Köln 2008, 1–14.

⁴⁰ Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 17.

derings following the Chmielnicki uprisings in the mid-seventeenth century. With polemical exaggeration he depicts differences in dress, eating habits, economic behaviour, and the use of leisure time.⁴¹ Though the polemical nature of the poem probably exaggerates the differences between the two groups, the text nevertheless points to the fact that the differences between Ashkenazim from German-speaking lands and those from Poland went beyond differences in legal matters (*Halakhah*), customs (*minhagim*) and liturgy.⁴²

To return to Judyta Jakubowiczowa, who had moved from Frankfurt (Oder) to Warsaw in the late 1770s, we unfortunately do not know much about how she dealt with the probably drastic change in her cultural environment. Growing up in the Jewish community of Frankfurt (Oder) she was certainly influenced by the inclinations of the wealthy community members towards the early writings of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish enlightenment. Members of the aforementioned Schlesinger family and Judyta's brother subscribed to the 1791 Berlin edition of Psalms with Moses Mendelssohn's German translation and commentary, the Pentateuch edition edited by Aaron Wolfson and Joel Brill (1789) as well as to the 1798 edition of *Sefer ha-Gedarim* (Book of Definitions) published by the *maskil*, follower of the Jewish Enlightenment, Isaac Satanov.⁴³ In contrast, Judyta Jakubowiczowa's future husband Szmul grew up in a traditional Jewish family in Poland and developed leanings toward Hasidism.⁴⁴ When Judyta married her much older husband, he had already been married twice and had four children, who grew up in his household. They most likely spoke some form of Yiddish to each other, though Judyta was fluent in German and wrote passable French, a fact that was important to the extension of their shared business, especially as army suppliers. In the historiography, however, their marriage is often described in rather negative terms, either depicting Szmul as a simple-minded and strictly religious person or Judyta as an arrogant and selfish woman who did not respect her husband and eventually was responsible for the conversion of some of her children.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Max Weinreich: Tsvey yidishe shpotlider oyf yidn, in: *Filologishe Shriftn. Shriftn fun Yidishn Visnshaftelekh Institut* 3 (1929), 537–554.

⁴² See, for example, Moshe Rosman: *Innovative Tradition. Jewish Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, in: David Biale (ed.): *Cultures of the Jews. A New History*. New York 2002, 217–268.

⁴³ See Aust, *Commercial Cosmopolitans*, 284–285.

⁴⁴ On the Hasidic leanings among Warsaw's Jewish mercantile elite, see Glenn Dynner: *Men of Silk. The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*. Oxford 2006, 89–116.

⁴⁵ Most vividly, this narrative is found in the work of the Polish-Jewish historian Ezriel N. Frenk: *Meshumadim in Poilen in 19ten yohrhundert*. Warsaw 1923, 22–32.

Even after the death of her husband in 1800, in the nearly three decades in which she ran the business by herself, she had to manoeuvre among her family members and her Jewish and non-Jewish business partners in a complex cultural field. Her Hasidic stepson Szmul Berek (Bergsohn) as well as her convert son-in-law, the banker Samuel Antoni Frankel, were close business partners. As far as we know, she held a salon in Warsaw in the second and third decade of the nineteenth century following the model of the Jewish salon women in Berlin. Due to her close business contacts with Jacob Herz Beer, originally from Frankfurt (Oder), and her regular travels to Berlin she was also familiar with Beer's wife Amalie, who held a salon in Berlin in the 1820, while her husband was a patron of the early religious reform movement. During her regular visits in Berlin she surely was introduced to this cultural environment.

In Warsaw, by contrast, she was also closely linked to the traditional Jewish community and to Hasidic circles. Though she may not have opposed the conversion of one of her three daughters, her step-daughter, and some grand-children she personally kept ties to the *Hevra Kadisha* (burial society) in Praga, a town outside of Warsaw on the other side of the Vistula (today part of Warsaw). The land that her husband had purchased to establish a Jewish cemetery in Praga in 1780 remained in Judyta's possession after her husband's death. A contract, written in German with Hebrew letters, confirms this in 1810. It is the only preserved document that she has signed with Gitl, the Yiddish form of her name. The contract itself left administration of the cemetery, as well as the profits from selling burial plots, to the *Hevra Kadisha*. In return, the burial society had to pay an annual rent to Judyta and her descendants and to maintain the cemetery properly. This case shows not only how Judyta carried on her and her husband's business after his death, but also that she was sufficiently attached to the Praga Jewish community to remain involved with its traditional-minded leadership.⁴⁶

Judyta's property list and her last will provide a mixed image of her attitudes toward religion and tradition. Upon her death, in 1829, Judyta was one of the wealthiest women in Warsaw, and the state administration promptly ordered an inventory of all her property for tax purposes. This long list appears to confirm that she held highly acculturated attitudes. With the exception of "five pieces of silverware with religious depictions," not a single item is listed that appears to have been a ritual object, nor are there any books, though one must keep in mind that books and ceremonial objects may have been handed down from her husband directly to his sons. She did, however, own a copper engraving of the Russian tsar

⁴⁶ Aust, *Commercial Cosmopolitans*, 295.

Alexander I and a painting of the Polish Prince Josef Poniatowski, items that mark her close connection to the government and possible admiration for Alexander I.⁴⁷

Judyta's last will complicates the image of an acculturated woman as much as it confirms it. She penned, in German, two different but fairly similar versions of her will shortly before her death.⁴⁸ Among her family members, she divided her assets without regard to the religion of the descendants. Similarly, Judyta assigned considerable amounts to charity, dividing them between Jews and Christians, although the sum for Jewish institutions was about one third higher than that for non-Jewish institutions. Even more surprisingly, she stipulated a gift of 5,000 gulden to be distributed to the poor "without regard to religion" during her burial. Giving to the poor in one's will was customary in Judaism, but giving to Christians, much less "without regard to religion," was decidedly not.

In contrast, Judyta's stipulations in her will regarding her own burial suggest a close affinity to Praga and to the cemetery she and her husband Szmul had purchased. She decided that the cemetery was to be transferred to the burial society of Praga or of Warsaw a year after her death. Although a new Jewish cemetery had been opened in Warsaw in 1806 and a number of family members, including her step-son Berek Szmul, were buried there, she insisted on being laid to rest at the old Praga cemetery:

I ask to be buried quietly at my churchyard [sic] in Praga. [...] Moreover, three learned men shall pray for me for one year in my synagogue no. 150 in Praga; each of them will receive three hundred gulden for the year, and another three hundred gulden shall be given for the light to burn for a whole year.⁴⁹

Her wish emphasised her close affinity to her and her husband's property in Praga beyond its mere material value – a marker of a possible local identity –, since she insisted on being buried in her cemetery and being prayed for in her synagogue, though she had probably not attended the latter on a regular basis. She observed the Jewish tradition of having learned men pray for her after her death and light a candle in her memory. Yet her use of the word "churchyard" (Kirchhof) for the Jewish cemetery suggests a high degree of acculturation. Judyta Jakubowiczowa certainly belonged to the most acculturated group of Warsaw Jewry, but she remained

47 Artur Eisenbach and Jan Kosim: Akt masy spadkowej Judyty Jakubowiczowej, in: *BŻIH* 39 (1961), 88–143, esp. 102 and 115.

48 The first version is dated February 27th, the second March 5th 1829. The differences between them are minimal. Kancelaria Kowalewskiego, syg. 8, no. 675 (Archiwum Państwowe, Warsaw), 159–163v.

49 Kancelaria Kowalewskiego, syg. 8, no. 675, 162v–163. The synagogue was situated in one of the houses that belonged to Judyta's property.

attached to essential Jewish customs, at least with regard to her own burial. These limited insights into the life of Judyta Jakubowiczowa and her environment in Warsaw suggest a high degree of cultural adaptation and flexibility among those Jewish merchants and Jewish travellers in general who regularly crossed not only political but also cultural boundaries within continental Europe at the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

The examples of familial and commercial contacts between Jewish merchants across the European continent examined here can only provide a glimpse into the complex questions of network building, mobility and belonging. Though in general not different from other Christian or Jewish familial and (on this basis) commercial networks, the connections and spatial mobility of Ashkenazic merchant families exhibit some peculiarities. Ethnicity played a role in so far we do not find any intermarriage into Sephardic families, though in Amsterdam, where Ashkenazim and Sephardim lived in close proximity, shared business was common, as were Christian business partners and clients. Nevertheless, it seems that the Ashkenazic merchants examined here less frequently had Christian business partners than did their Sephardic coreligionists.⁵⁰ Moreover, legal restrictions on Jews played a crucial role in decisions about spatial mobility. Though economic considerations were important in forging marriage ties, legal considerations were no less so. Finally, these Ashkenazic merchant families moved mostly eastward, a fact that counters the common narrative of Jewish westward migration in eighteenth-century Europe, even though they were numerically in the minority.

Merchant families are just one field for examining the mobility of individuals and groups in collective biographical studies, but they constitute a particularly rewarding one. Trade and commerce are especially suitable for the study of transgeographical mobility in early modern and modern Jewish history, although similar studies for rabbis and students should prove to be equally fruitful. The merchants' mobility included the crossing of political as well as of cultural borders and led to regular contact not only between Jews of different social and geographical backgrounds, but also between Jews and Christians, men and women. A biographical study of numerous family members spread across Europe including if possible also unrelated Jewish as well as Christian business partners casts

⁵⁰ For Sephardic connections with non-Jewish trading partners, see Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 194–223.

a wider view of these commercial networks. In the cases examined here, it shows the families outside their local contexts. Such an approach may also allow historians to move away from biographical considerations of the upper class, in this case often Court Jews, who made up only a very small minority of the Jewish population. Though the families examined here still belonged to the Jewish mercantile elite, it should nevertheless be possible to inquire into the lower levels of Jewish society by examining the movements and familial connections of Jewish retail traders or the wandering poor.

Having followed Jewish merchant families from Amsterdam in the west to Warsaw in the east at the turn from the early modern to the modern period, we have still seen primarily issues linked to early modern mercantile mobility. The establishment of commercial connections via marriage was central and legal aspects, in the sense of circumventing legal restrictions aimed at Jews, played an important role. If we look at the most important banking houses of nineteenth-century Warsaw – most of which had Jewish owners or owners who had converted to Christianity⁵¹ – new parameters appear. The ancestors of most of these families had immigrated to Warsaw around the turn of the century from both towns and villages close by, from the Prussian-Polish borderlands or, in a few cases, from as far as Amsterdam. However, they now found themselves in a setting much more characterised by the aspirations of an emerging Polish national movement and to some extent considered themselves Polish Jews. Nevertheless, they were part and parcel of the transnational banking scene of the nineteenth century and connected by business and family with other Jewish and Christian banking houses across Europe.⁵² However, they have hitherto been recognised and researched mainly as Polish-Jewish bankers without taking their transnational mobility and connections into consideration.

51 François Guesnet: Banking, in: *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. URL: <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Banking> (5 Aug. 2015).

52 For transnational ties among nineteenth-century Jewish banking houses, see Rainer Liedtke's article in this volume.