

## New Approaches to the Expulsion of Jews from Vienna and Lower Austria in 1670\*

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In 1670, the relatively young but very significant Jewish community in Vienna came to an end as the Viennese and Austrian Jews had to leave the country on imperial order. Only from 1570 onwards had some privileged families permanently moved to Vienna and by and by, especially after the move of the imperial residence from Prague to Vienna in 1619, the number of Jews had increased. The Jews were assigned a restricted area in 1625; the so-called "Untere Werd" was a district on the other side of the Donaukanal outside of the City of Vienna.<sup>1</sup> The Jews' Town which developed there not only turned into an attraction for tourists but also came to be one of the largest Jewish centres within the Holy Roman Empire. The English physician Edward Brown, Fellow of the Royal Society had been travelling through Europe from 1667 – 1669 and had written down his impressions in a report. He described the situation in the years preceding the expulsion as follows: "But here are no small number of Jews, who have a distinct Habitation assigned them over the Water. They have also a Street allowed them in the City for the daytime, but they must all depart at night beyond the River into the Suburbs.

They are much distasted by the Citizens and Tradesmen, and the Scholars agree but ill with them. While I was in Vienna there was a quarrel between them to a high degree. For the Scholars assaulted the Jews Town, beat, wounded, and threw divers of them into the River. Divers Scholars were wounded, some killed, and also some Souldiers who were commanded out to compose the Fray: and the Jews Town was guarded many days by the Souldiers of the City. This begot such ill Blood and Complaints, that a good number of the Jews were to be banished at a certain day. The Jews, to ingratiate with the Empress, then with Child, presented her with a noble silver Cradle, but she would not receive it. And there was great danger of the general banishment of them when I left that City, which was afterwards effected, they being severely prohibited from living, not only at Vienna, but in any part of Austria, where there were formerly whole Villages of them (...).

I must confess they seemed useful unto the place for ready accommodation of any thing, either by sale or exchange, but the people looked with an evil eye upon them, as taking away much of their Trade and Employment. They also looked upon them as useless in war for defence of the place; and were not without some jealousy that they held correspondence with the Turks, and gave Intelligence of their Affairs unto them."<sup>2</sup>

In his text, the Englishman Brown analyses the reprisals and acts of violence against Viennese Jews in the 1660ies which culminated in the complete expulsion of the Jews in 1670. Brown considers the following groups enemies of the Jews: the students of the university who even assaulted the Jews' Town which was at this time protected by soldiers; the citizens and tradesmen of the City of Vienna who were economical rivals of the Jews; and the imperial family, especially the empress Margareta who came from Spain and who had refused to accept a silver cradle presented to her by the Viennese Jewry during her pregnancy. Thus Brown distinguishes between different groups who felt a deep animosity towards the Viennese Jews. Although

Brown is not that explicit it is clear that he as a contemporary considers the encounter of various influences as responsible for the expulsion of the Jews from Vienna – they had after all lived in the Jews' Town for 45 years. Brown does not, however, pass any judgment upon the Jews' enemies and their motives insofar as he does not note one decisive motive for the decision to expel the Jews.

The events around the expulsion of the Jews from Vienna were not only noted by Brown, but caused international, public uproar.<sup>3</sup> The reasons named for the expulsion of the Jews did not, however, differ fundamentally. Count Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, an official biographer of emperor Leopold I, refers to the religiosity of emperor and the empress as well as to scandals within the Jews' Town. The periodical "Theatrum Europaeum" names Jewish wrongdoings such as the killing of Christians, theft, cooperation with the Ottoman Empire and thus treason against the Holy Roman Empire, procuration and finally sexual offence with female Christians as reasons behind the expulsion. These reasons had also been summarised in a sermon by the bishop of Wiener Neustadt, Leopold Count Kollonitsch. The fact that the decision-makers and motives for the expulsion remained very vague is a common factor of the above-mentioned publication as well as of later publications. The empress is once and again referred to, as are misdemeanours of the Jews; however, the students' violence and the animosity of the City of Vienna as stressed by Brown are completely neglected. Religious and moral reasons behind the expulsion clearly dominate contemporary publications, not economic conflicts.

Only once are the names of involved civil servants and office-bearers made mention of: in 1671 an anti-Jewish satirical poem by Matthias Abele, jurist, writer and brother of an imperial clerk and privy councillor, was published. He not only names the emperor and the empress but also refers to the following people as being those mainly responsible: the imperial father confessor Philipp Mueller; the anti-Jewish and anti-protestant bishop of Neutra and later of Wiener Neustadt, Leopold Count Kollonitsch; the Austrian court chancellor Johann Paul Hoher, baron von Hohengran, and the three imperial commissioners who supported the expulsion of the Jews: the lower-Austrian regimental councillor (Regimentsrat) Count Paul Sixt Trautson, Johann Georg Koch who was "Geheimer Hofsekretär" and the Lower Austrian regimental councillor (Regimentsrat) and Landuntermarschall Adam Anthonio Grundemann.

If Esaias Pufendorf, Swedish resident at the imperial court, can be believed, three different parties tried to gain control at court:<sup>4</sup> According to Pufendorf, the court chancellor Hoher, also named by Abele, was the centre of one group which the imperial father confessor P. Philipp Mueller SJ and Christoph Ignaz Abele – brother of Matthias – also belonged to. Abele and Hoher worked together closely and had direct access to the emperor.<sup>5</sup> David Kaufmann, who in 1889 published the most extensive study on the expulsion of the Viennese Jews so far, however, does not hold the group around Hoher responsible.<sup>6</sup> He passes responsibility for anti-Jewish agitation on to the "Spanish and the Jesuits" at the imperial court, the so-called "Spanish Party" without though overlooking or neglecting the anti-Jewish policy of representatives of the City of Vienna or resentment within the imperial family itself. Max Grunwald's analysis on the reasons for the expulsion of the Viennese Jews is less emotional but otherwise quite similar:<sup>7</sup> their Christian rivals in Vienna would have talked the municipal administration into addressing the emperor himself and

asking for the expulsion of Jews. Jews were accused of numerous crimes such as cooperation with the Ottoman Empire and thus treason against the Holy Roman Empire, and the continued economic prosperity of the City was verbally granted for the time after the expulsion. An additional factor – according to Grunwald – was psychological. Mishaps within the imperial family, who had not yet produced an heir and were under enormous dynastic pressure, were interpreted by the clergy as punishment for the toleration of Jews. Emperor Leopold had then finally given in to this pressure.

According to Kaufmann and Grunwald, anti-Jewish pressure from the City of Vienna, from influential parties at court and catastrophes within the imperial family – all to be seen behind a background of widespread anti-Jewish sentiment – were the decisive moments and reasons for the expulsion of the Viennese Jews.

The Czech historian Ivo Cerman has quite recently published a new study on this topic titled “Anti-Jewish Superstitions and the Expulsion of the Jews from Vienna in 1670”.<sup>8</sup> Cerman is less concerned with the reconstruction of events leading to the expulsion of Viennese Jews, but wanted to prove that the imperial court and the political elite of the City of Vienna were moulded by anti-Jewish superstition. Therefore, the model of a process of civilisation marked by rationalism, as held by Norbert Elias, would not be tenable. Cerman’s approach, however, goes past a valid interpretation of events as he bases his arguments on the assumption that rational action is not possible within a – according to our modern point of view – superstitious conception of the world.

Although Cerman’s study barely provides us with new insight, a renewed discussion on the background of reasons for the expulsion of 1670 seems necessary to me. This stems mainly from the fact that very little attention has so far been given to the role of the Jews themselves. Most recent research on the early modern history of the Aschkenas has shown that they should not be looked at as a mere object of authoritarian politics, but that they were themselves also acting protagonists.<sup>9</sup> Until now, not enough emphasis has been put on this aspect within the history of the Viennese Jews in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Although older Jewish historians have referred to the dubious tax collector Hirschl Mayr – Naftali Hirz ben Juda Selke Segal – this man has in the old historiography always played the role of a fundamentally evil individual.

In my exposé, I will concentrate on three main themes: 1) the relationship between Viennese Jews and the Imperial Court and the City; 2) the conflicts of Viennese Jews within their community; and 3) the reasons for the expulsion of the Jews from the imperial city of residence.

## 1

The imperial city of residence Vienna had a special position within the Aschkenas Jewry. Although the Jews had been driven away in the late Middle Ages – as had happened in most cities of the Holy Roman Empire – Jews settled in Vienna in the 1570 under to protection of the emperor. In 1625, the move to the Jews’ Town outside of the city took place and in 1632 the area counted already 104 residential buildings. Although we do not have detailed information about the population, it can be assumed that Vienna’s Jews’ Town inhabited 2.000 to 3.000 people in the middle of

the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Within the Holy Roman Empire, only very few cities – Prague, Frankfurt and Hamburg – had similar numbers of Jewish inhabitants. At this time, Vienna was a fast-growing metropolis with roughly 50.000 inhabitants (including the suburbs). Although the Jewish population did not come to more than about 5% of the total population, they were a visible group within the city, living in their own restricted residential area.

Due to Vienna being an imperial residence, the city was divided into two fundamentally different legal spheres:<sup>11</sup> that of the imperial court and that of the city. The latter sphere referred to the mayor, the magistrate and thus to the municipal jurisdiction which the city's citizens but not the members of the imperial court were subject to. At the head of the imperial sphere stood the emperor; he was in practice replaced by the Lord High Steward (Obersthofmeister), the highest office-bearer at court. The responsibility for the jurisdiction lay in the hands of the Court Marshal (Obersthofmarschall). Vienna's Jews were in legal terms subject to him – with an interruption of two years; they thus belonged to the sphere of the imperial court and not the city. The emperor alone could grant right of residence to Jews, he could afford protection and jurisdiction. Together with the mayor, the magistrate of the city of Vienna, whose members were mainly merchants and were thus economic rivals of the Jews, every now and then demanded the expulsion of all Jews from Vienna. This fundamental conflict between court and city posed the gravest danger for the Jewish right of residence. As soon as the Emperor lent an ear to the city's anti-Jewish attitude, the Jews were jeopardized.

City and court were, however, no rigid entities but complex social organisations. The international court of the Hapsburg emperors mixed Germans and Spaniards, Italians, Bohemians and Hungarians, gentry and high nobility. Differing circles competed for titles and offices. When I use the expression "court" I do not refer to all its members but to its leading lights, the political decision-makers.

## 2

Which role did Vienna's Jews play at court? In how far were they involved and integrated in this complex system? Although this has not been stressed enough by previous historical research, the Viennese Jewry did not form an entity but distinctions can be made between various families and circles. The Jews of Vienna were in no way members of the court society, their relationship with and connections to the imperial court were primarily of a business nature. The same can be said for the individual members of the imperial court. While the records handed down to us allow us to almost easily reconstruct the business relations between emperor and Jews, it is much more difficult if not impossible to prove any contact of Jews to individual members of the imperial court. We have to mainly rely on sources in aristocratic and princely archives and these are as a rule more incomplete than those of the imperial administration. The commercial contacts between Viennese Jews and members of the court aristocracy cannot nearly be reconstructed and it is therefore impossible to find out which officials at the imperial court the Viennese Jews had a specifically close business relationship with and which not. Even the most recent studies on the aristocracy at the imperial court do not enlighten us on this question.

More insight into the acting of Jews at the imperial court and the connections between Jews' Town and court society is given by files and records written down in connection with the trial against the tax collector and Viennese Court Jew Hirschl Mayr.<sup>12</sup> Hirschl Mayr was during his lifetime as well as in historiography probably the most controversial personality of Vienna's Jewry. Gerson Wolf describes him as having been "a cunning personality who reminds one of the old Roman tax collectors who the Talmud denies eternal salvation."<sup>13</sup> David Kaufmann saw a ridiculous ruler of the Viennese ghetto stirring up disaster: "the henchman of the Court Marshal, the slave of the Aulic Chamber (Hofkammer) conducted himself as ruler, as pasha of those at his mercy."<sup>14</sup> Major reasons for this derogatory comment seem to have been the excellent connections and relations Hirschl had to the imperial court, which Hirschl must have used with great expertise. Hirschl, who was probably the son of a Viennese Court Jew himself, initially played a role in the events around the assassination of the Jewess Eleonore, who had in 1651 been shot on the open road by an unknown horseman. Eleonore had brought financial irregularities within the Jewish community to court and was presumably assassinated for that reason. After her assassination, Hirschl – whose customer Eleonore may have been – denounced leading members of the Viennese Jewry to the imperial court, but no proof of their guilt was found.<sup>15</sup>

His cooperation with the authorities did not only gain Hirschl friends within the Jewish community, and he was for that reason completely freed from Jewish jurisdiction and was put under the direct orders of the Court Marshal.

From 1653 onwards he functioned as a feared tax collector of the lower Austrian rural Jewry; however, after the death of Ferdinand III he apparently fell out of favour. Shortly after the death of the emperor an investigating committee looked into his activities as tax collector on the orders of Ferdinand's successor, Leopold I, and Hirschl was accused of tax fraud. The fact that the investigation against Hirschl started right after an emperor's death and after the entire balance of power had changed at court and different people had taken over influential offices can be interpreted as an indication for the good relations Hirschl must have had to important office-bearers at the imperial court. Already at the beginning of the investigation the request was made to have the committee's chairmen report directly to the emperor and it was pointed out that important members of the court might hinder the investigation. The committee thus stated: "it is not necessary to point out which friends and patrons this Jew has; witnesses confirm the authority he has and the almost indescribable fear he causes in Jews here in Vienna as well as in the countryside."<sup>16</sup>

The fact that Hirschl sent his wife to the imperial court then residing in Prague and Frankfurt in order to look after his interests also tells us much about his connections. Hirschl Mayr successfully pressured for a replacement of members of the investigating committee who were high office-bearers of the imperial court. The investigation was indeed soon abandoned. Although this was not the last scandal which Hirschl Mayr was involved in, it was he who – after the expulsion of the Jews – again took up negotiations with the imperial court regarding the return of the Viennese Jews. According to Hirschl, the inner-Jewish conflicts as well as the relations of the differing parties with various circles at the imperial court had not ceased. Hirschl insisted that he was continuously pursued by his old enemies of the

Viennese Jewry, even though he now lived in Bohemia. His two enemies Markus Wenzel and Simon Perlhefter seemingly also were in close contact with bishop Kollonitsch, one of the main protagonists of the expulsion.

The investigation against Hirschl Mayr and the negotiations regarding the return of the Viennese Jews clearly show that it is too simple to look at the expulsion of 1670 as a conflict between Jews, imperial court and city. Not only should we, as has been stressed in historical research, base our research on the assumption of differing parties at the imperial court, but foremost on the aspect of various, rivalling groups within the Viennese Jewry itself. The main problem for historical research here is that we have almost no knowledge of the inner structure of the Viennese Jewry and that nearly no sources are extant to research this aspect. It can, however, be said without doubt that Hirschl Mayr was not as dubious a personality as presented in old historiography, but that he was certainly embedded in a broad network based on blood-relations and on friendship within the Viennese Jewry. As was the case in any other community of many thousand people, conflicts had to inevitably arise also within the Viennese Jewry. The rivalry between the individual circles must have, however, been so strong that any acting was impossible at least at some point.

The Viennese Jewry spoke in one voice only when addressing the authorities regarding two cases: the granting and confirmation of privileges on the one hand and tax payments on the other. As the emperor was financially very much interested in the Viennese Jews, the correct payment of taxes was a very sensitive topic – and the imperial court did not refrain from threatening expulsion in this matter. Around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a couple of events “irritated” the relationship between Jews and Christians. In 1648, the tax administration of the Viennese Jewry was for the first time looked into. A valet of the Aulic Chamber (Hofkammerdiener) Karl Damian substantially participated in the investigation. In a number of reports on the examination of the account books of the Viennese Jewry he commented on the influence of Jews on the imperial court. According to Damian, the Jews had mentioned publicly that “they knew a number of noblemen at the imperial court who they were favoured by and that they dared foil this investigation of their books with the help of money and presents.”<sup>17</sup> According to these statements the Viennese Jews had powerful patrons at the imperial court who were bribed with money and other presents in order to push through Jewish interests.

The result of the tax investigation showed total tax dues of 190.000 florin over 19 years; however, only 148.000 florin had been paid. The historian and archivist of the Israelite Religious Community in Vienna, Leopold Moses, considers the tax debts of the Viennese Jewry which were not paid off until 1669 one of the decisive reasons for the expulsion of the Jews from Vienna.<sup>18</sup>

## Summary

Expulsions of Jews are very often explained monocausally. The anti-Jewish attitude of the Viennese merchants who looked at the Jews as business rivals and were thus interested in their expulsion is especially stressed. In fact, studies of 17<sup>th</sup>-century-activities in Vienna show that Vienna’s magistrate pursued an anti-Jewish policy. This was not enough, though, to expel the Jews from Vienna. A total expulsion lay exclusively in the hands of the emperor – whose jurisdiction the Jews were subject to

– and in the hands of his most influential political and religious advisors who in turn did not want to do without the Jews for financial and economical reasons. The records covering the case of Hirschl Mayr clearly show that individual Jews had very good connections to the upper circles of the imperial court. We cannot definitely put our finger on the decisive cause that changed the attitude at court and made emperor Leopold I decide in favour of the expulsion of Jews. Without doubt we have to consider a bundle of reasons: apart from a culmination of overdue taxes, a number of scandals unsettled the Viennese Jewry. The inner conflicts within the Jews' Town clearly indicate that we cannot talk of or assume an inner unity. In how far the appearance of Sabbatai Zwi increased the inner tension and burdened the relationship of Vienna's Jews to their Christian environment, is unclear.

The general political situation and the events and incidents at the imperial court itself also had a negative effect on the Jews. In 1663, a new war against the Ottoman Empire had started; mishaps within the imperial family which were interpreted as a heavenly punishment and difficulties of Leopold I within his empire – a group of Hungarian aristocrats conspired against the emperor in the late 1660ies – did not improve the overall situation. The emperor, who had initially been intended to embark on a career as a church man, was certainly deeply convinced to have served God with the expulsion of the Jews. Although everybody was aware of the financial and economical consequences of an expulsion, it was nonetheless ordered "to increase the Glory of God"<sup>19</sup>, as expressed by Leopold I himself. The negotiations regarding the return of the Viennese Jewry thus failed due to the emperor's strict position even though the Aulic Chamber had considered a renewed settlement as positive for Vienna. The expulsion of Jews from Vienna in 1670 shows that rash generalising statements about the motives behind the expulsion are not satisfactory. In times when the expulsion of Jews seemed to be a thing of the past, one of the largest communities of Aschkenas was destroyed in Vienna.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ignaz Schwarz, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien. Von ihrem ersten Auftreten bis zum Jahre 1625*, in: *Geschichte der Stadt Wien*, ed. by the Alterthumsvereine zu Wien, vol. 5: *Vom Ausgange des Mittelalters bis zum Regierungsantritt der Kaiserin Maria Theresia, 1740* (2. part), Wien 1914, 1-64; Alfred F. Pribram (ed.), *Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Wien. Erste Abteilung, allgemeiner Teil 1526–1847* (1849), vol. 1, Wien-Leipzig 1918; Sabine Hödl, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich unter der Enns 1550-1625*, PhD thesis, Wien 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Brown, *An Account of Several Travels Through a great part of Germany (...).Wherein The Mines, Baths, and other Curiosities of those Parts are Treated of*. London 1677, 113-115.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Peter Rauscher, *Ein dreigeteilter Ort. Die Wiener Juden und ihre Beziehungen zu Kaiserhof und Stadt in der Zeit des Ghettos (1625-1670)*, in: Susanne Claudine Pils, Jan Paul Niederkorn (eds.), *Ein zweigeteilter Ort? Hof und Stadt in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen 2005, 87-120, 87-88.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht. Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, vol. 1, Wien 2003, 185.

<sup>5</sup> Heinz Noflatscher, *„Freundschaft“ im Absolutismus. Hofkanzler Johann Paul Hoher und die Standeserhebungen Kaiser Leopolds I.*, in: *Historische Blickpunkte. Festschrift für Johann Rainer*. Zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern. In co-operation with Ulrike

Kemmerling-Unterthurner and Hermann J. W. Kuprian ed. by Sabine Weiß, Innsbruck 1988, 469-504, 477-478.

<sup>6</sup> David Kaufmann, Die letzte Vertreibung der Juden aus Wien und Niederösterreich. Ihre Vorgeschichte (1625-1670) und ihre Opfer, Wien 1889.

<sup>7</sup> Max Grunwald, Samuel Oppenheimer und sein Kreis (Ein Kapitel aus der Finanzgeschichte Österreichs), Wien-Leipzig 1913, 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Ivo Cerman, Anti-Jewish Superstitions and the Expulsion of the Jews from Vienna in 1670, in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 36, 2000, 5-33.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g.: Peter Rauscher, Barbara Staudinger, Widerspenstige Kammerknechte. Die kaiserlichen Maßnahmen zur Erhebung von „Kronsteuer“ und „Goldenem Opferpfennig“ in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: *Aschkenas. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 14, 2004, 313-363. Johannes Mordstein, Selbstbewusste Untertänigkeit. Obrigkeit und Judengemeinden im Spiegel der Judenschutzbriefe der Grafschaft Oettingen 1637-1806, *Epfendorf* 2005, 199-203.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ignaz Schwarz, Das Wiener Ghetto. Seine Häuser und seine Bewohner, Wien-Leipzig 1909; Andreas Weigl, Residenz, Bastion und Konsumptionsstadt: Stadtwachstum und demographische Entwicklung einer werdenden Metropole, in: Andreas Weigl (ed.), *Wien im Dreissigjährigen Krieg. Bevölkerung – Gesellschaft – Kultur – Konfession*, Wien-Köln-Weimar 2001, 31-105.

<sup>11</sup> Rauscher, Dreigeteilter Ort.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Rauscher, Langenlois – לנגל Eine jüdische Landgemeinde in Niederösterreich im Zeitalter des Dreissigjährigen Krieges, *Horn-Waidhofen an der Thaya* 2004, 117-131; Barbara Staudinger, „Gantze Dörffer voll Juden“. Juden in Niederösterreich 1496-1670, *Wien* 2005, 168-170.

<sup>13</sup> Gerson Wolf, *Die Juden in der Leopoldstadt im 17. Jahrhundert*, Wien 1864, 33-34.

<sup>14</sup> Kaufmann, *Vertreibung*, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Leopold Moses, Die „Märtyrerin“ Leonore von Wien, in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 81, 1937, 439-443; Rauscher, *Langenlois*, 118-119.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Rauscher, *Langenlois*, 121-122.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Messing, Die Kontributionen der Wiener Judenschaft im 17. Jahrhundert, in: *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 3/4, 1942, 14-72, 53.

<sup>18</sup> Leopold Moses, Neue Ergebnisse der jüdischen Geschichtsforschung in Österreich, in: Leopold Moses, *Spaziergänge. Studien und Skizzen zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, ed. by Patricia Steines, *Wien* 1994, 268-283, 279.

<sup>19</sup> Pribram, *Urkunden*, Num.115/XI, 231-234, 233.

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