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Arranging reality: The editing mechanisms of the world's first Yiddish newspaper, the Kurant (Amsterdam, 1686-1687)

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9. Subjects in the *Kurant* and its sources

Now that we know from Chapter 8 where the *Kurant's* reports come from, and which editing mechanisms the editor used in order to adapt the news to the needs of its readers, in this chapter I will take a look at another important editing tool: the choice of the subjects covered by the *Kurant*, compared to the subjects covered in the sources. Which are the major subjects in the *Kurant* and to what extent do its preferences differ from those of the sources?

In order to answer these questions, I took all hundred issues of the *Kurant* and checked how much space the various subjects take in each issue of the newspaper.¹ Then I did the same for a selection of the Dutch sources. I took a sample survey of 27 issues of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and twenty issues of the *Amsterdamse Courant*. These are the issues that served as the sources of fifteen issues of the *Kurant*, about one issue a month. I took thirteen issues of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* corresponding with nine issues of the *Kurant* by Halevi, and fourteen issues of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* corresponding with six issues of the *Kurant* by Tartas; and six issues of the *Amsterdamse Courant* (only six, because *Amsterdamse Courant* was not used before February 1687) corresponding with four issues of the *Kurant* by Halevi, and fourteen issues of *Amsterdamse Courant* corresponding with six issues of the *Kurant* by Tartas. The sample contains more issues of the Dutch papers from the Tartas period than from the Halevi period, because during most of the Tartas period the *Kurant* was published once a week and it used more Dutch issues as sources for one issue of the *Kurant*. The *Ordinaire Leydse Courant* is not included in the sample survey, because it is a minor source.

In this way it is possible to compare the preferences of the *Kurant* to those of the Dutch newspapers, and also to find out which subjects in the Dutch newspapers the *Kurant* did *not* borrow.²

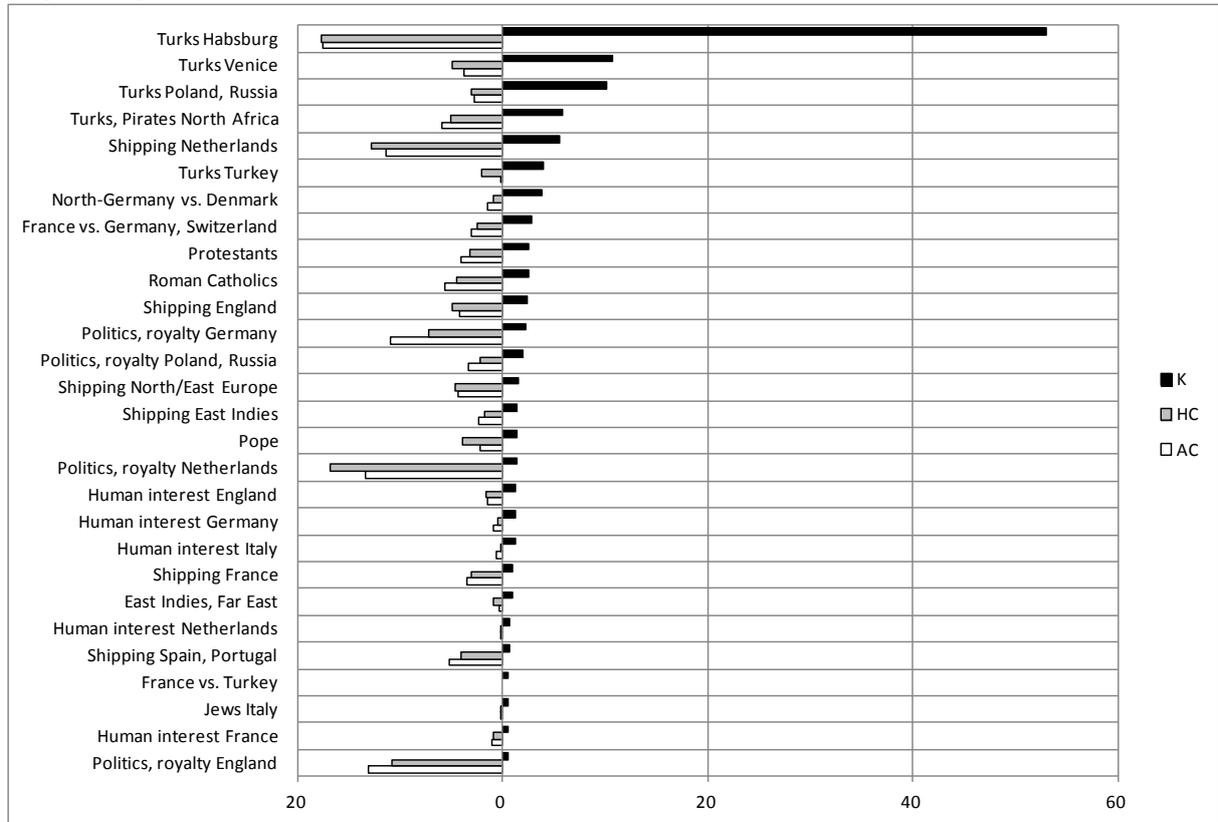
¹ Per issue I counted the lines devoted to each subject and determined the percentage, comparing them to the total number of lines in that issue; some reports cover more than one subject, which is why the total percentage is more than hundred.

² Initially in the comparison I made a distinction between the issues printed by Halevi and those printed by Tartas. Differences exist, but they can be explained by differences in the sources: see Table 19 with all subjects in the appendix. This is why I will not distinguish between Halevi and Tartas in the charts below.

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9.1. The major subjects

Major subjects in the *Kurant*

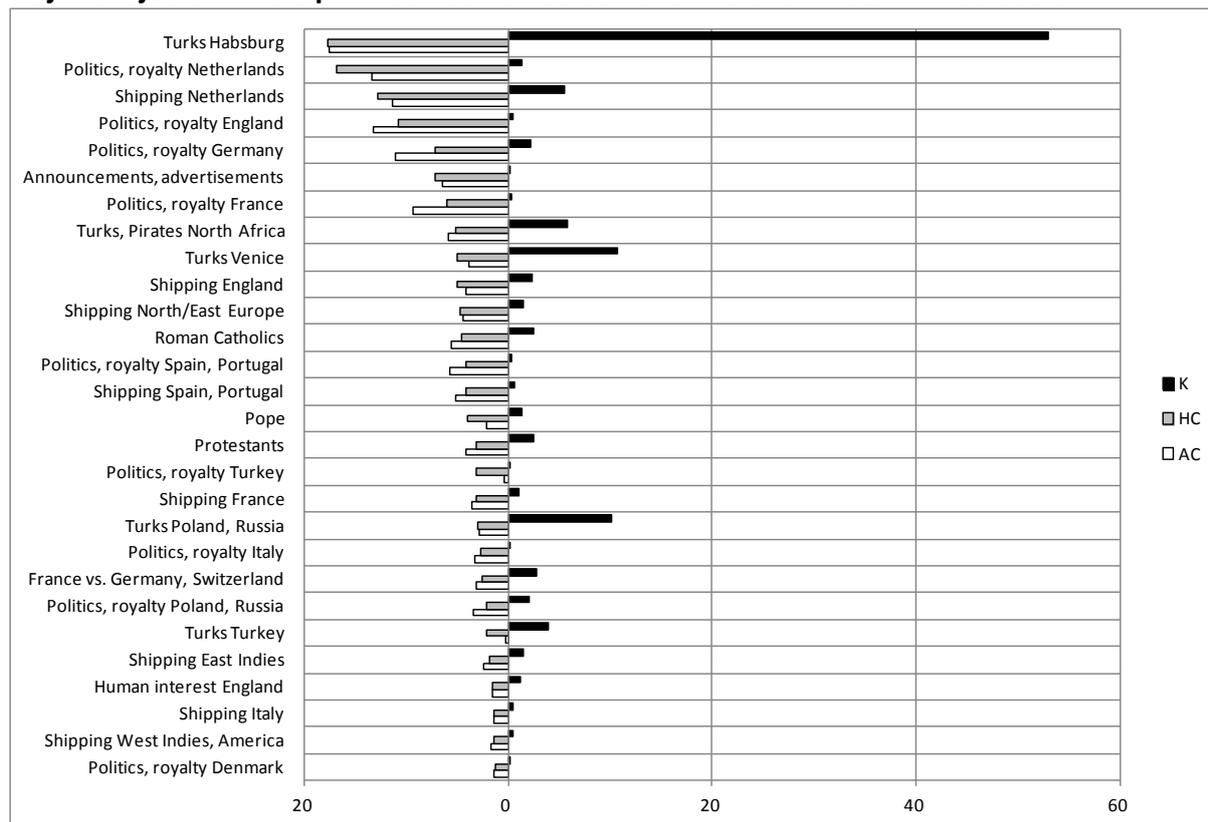


This chart shows the 28 most popular subjects in the *Kurant*, compared to the same subjects in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and the *Amsterdamse Courant*³.

³ See Table 19 with all subjects in the appendix.

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Major subjects in the Oprechte Haerlemse Courant and the Amsterdamse Courant



This chart shows the 28 most popular subjects in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and the *Amsterdamse Courant*,⁴ compared to the same subjects in the *Kurant*.⁵

As we can see, the subject that takes the most space in the *Kurant* and in both Dutch newspapers is the war of the Habsburg Empire and its allies against the Turks in and around Hungary. But while the subject accounts for 17.7 % of the space in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and 17.6 % in the *Amsterdamse Courant*, in the *Kurant* the reports on the war in Hungary take more than half of the space (53 percent). This means that comparatively little space is left for other subjects. The numbers two, three and four of the *Kurant* are, respectively, the Venetian war against the Turks in Dalmatia (10.7 percent), the war by Poland and Moscow against the Turks (10.2 percent), and encounters between European ships and the Turkish – mainly Algerian – pirates from North Africa (5.8 percent). The subjects that follow are shipping news from the Netherlands, reports from Turkey, news

⁴ There are differences between the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and the *Amsterdamse Courant*, but they are marginal. The chart shows the order in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*.

⁵ See Tables 20 and 21 with all subjects in the appendix.

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about two other armed conflicts in Europe, between North Germany and Denmark and between France and Germany and Switzerland, and news about Protestants and Catholics.

The Dutch newspapers show a different image. Not only is much more space left for other subjects, the most popular subjects themselves differ from those in the *Kurant*. Almost as important as the war in Hungary is political and royal news from the Netherlands (16.8 % in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, 13.4 % in the *Amsterdamse Courant*), followed by shipping news from the Netherlands (12.8 % in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, 11.3 % in the *Amsterdamse Courant*), and political and royal news from England (10.8 % in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, 13.1 % in the *Amsterdamse Courant*). Political and royal news from Germany (7.2 % in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, 11.0 % in the *Amsterdamse Courant*) and France (6.0 % in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, 9.3 % in the *Amsterdamse Courant*) are rather popular as well. In short, whereas the main focus of the *Kurant* is on the important armed conflicts in Europe, the main focus of the Dutch newspapers is, apart from the war in Hungary, mainly on politics, both in the Netherlands and in the neighboring countries England, Germany and France.

What might be the reason that the preferences of the *Kurant* differ from those of the sources? Understandably, Dutch readers, both tradesmen and ordinary citizens, were interested in political news from The Hague and in Dutch shipping news.⁶ As the Netherlands had a close relationship with England, and the Netherlands were constantly threatened by the French King and from time to time by German troops as well, political news from England, France and Germany was considered interesting by the Dutch newspapers. However, as newspapers were not allowed to divulge all political decisions, 'political' news often consisted of what we would call 'royal news', reports on the banquets organized by the King of France, or on the visits of the Queen of England to the baths in Bath. This was interesting for a Dutch readership, but probably less so for the Jewish readers of the *Kurant*. They were not yet Dutch citizens and lived in their own communities in Amsterdam and other cities; in fact many of them had arrived only recently from Germany or Poland. Although there are exceptions, political and royal news from Poland and Russia is comparatively more popular in the *Kurant* than in the Dutch newspapers. The Polish King Jan

⁶ See Ch. 3.

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III Sobieski was popular among Jews and treated them well.⁷ It is also possible that the *Kurant*, like many books by Dutch printers, was distributed in Poland, and for that reason pays attention to reports from Poland. This remains sheer speculation however, so long as we do not have any indication of the distribution of the *Kurant* outside the Dutch Republic or even outside Amsterdam. Part of this news refers to several visits by Russians envoys to several European capitals. This is a kind of running gag, also in the Dutch newspapers, because these envoys usually have to wait several days before they are admitted to the Stadholder, King or Emperor whom they come to visit and in the meantime demand considerable sums for their stay and consumptions. To make up for this, they bring magnificent presents for their host, which are mentioned in great detail in the newspapers. What the subject is they intend to discuss hardly ever becomes clear. Apparently this was also considered interesting for Jews, probably because they knew this phenomenon from back home.

Nevertheless, what was really considered interesting for the Jewish readers were the armed conflicts in several regions. Many of these Jews or their parents had fled the Thirty Years' War in Germany or Chmielnicki's atrocities in Ukraine and Poland. So they must have been aware of the influence of war on the lives of Jews. Like the Dutch readers of the *Oprechte Haerlemse* and *Amsterdamse Courant*, they were interested in the war between the Habsburgs and the Turks, but even more so. The war in Hungary, and especially the reconquest of Buda, influenced the lives of the Hungarian Jews. The few Ashkenazi businessmen, especially the Gomperts family, were involved in the provisioning of the Imperial troops, as we will see below.⁸ So they needed to know what was going on on the battlefields, although one would suppose that they had their own lines of information and were not (entirely) dependent on a Dutch Yiddish newspaper.

The wars between Venice and the Turks in Dalmatia and Morea (Peloponnesus) and between Poland and Moscow and the Turks were results of the 'Holy League' against the Turkish Sultan and were related to the war in Hungary.⁹ The fact that there was a flourishing Jewish (partly Ashkenazi) community in Venice may account for the interest of the *Kurant* in the war between Venice and the Turks.

⁷ Israel, *Mercantilism*, 125.

⁸ See 9.3.2.

⁹ See Ch 2.

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The fact that many of the readers probably came from Poland may explain the frequent reports on the war between the Turks and Poland and Moscow.

Two conflicts threatened stability in the Netherlands: the preparation for a new war by France against the Dutch Republic and the plans of Stadholder William III to invade England. Yet the news about French war preparations near the French and German borders, comparatively popular in the *Kurant*, has a less prominent place in the Dutch newspapers, whereas news of William III's plans is completely absent, both in the *Kurant* and in the Dutch newspapers, probably because it was censored.¹⁰

Shipping news from several countries is relatively important in the *Kurant*, probably because the ships brought merchandise to and from the Netherlands, which was of interest to Jewish businessmen.

It is also interesting to note that comparatively much space is devoted to reports on Protestants and Catholics, especially the persecuted Huguenots, who tried to find shelter after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by the French King, Louis XIV. Possibly Jewish readers identified with them – or at least the editor thought so.

9.2. Other subjects

The focus of the editor on 'important' subjects like armed conflicts does not imply that he ignored other subjects. In the limited space available he borrowed only a minority of the news on other subjects. Yet virtually all subjects mentioned in the Dutch sources are also mentioned in the *Kurant*. The percentages of news on several subjects, especially human interest stories, in the *Kurant* is often comparable to that in the Dutch newspapers, or even higher. The editor may have judged that sensational news about disasters or miracles was as fascinating to Jews as to everybody else. Here follows a non-exhaustive anthology.

The Dutch newspapers carry many human interest reports from England. The *Kurant* often ignores them, but from time to time picks one or two items, for what reason is often unclear, probably just because they fit into a space the editor had to fill. For instance this report from November 19, 1686:

¹⁰ See 3.6.

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Amsterdam, November 15. From London it is written that on the same day that the New Lord Mayor was to be sworn in, when he wanted to ride to Westminster, his horse fell down under him.¹¹

Or this horrible story from June 13, 1687:

Dublin, May 26. Someone had stolen a horse, then he was hanged and when he had hung on the gallows for three quarters of an hour he was cut from it and brought into a house, then it was found that he was still alive. As soon as the sheriff heard this, he had him returned to prison. There he coughed up a lot of blood, then he became fresh and healthy and then he was brought to the gallows again to be hanged. But the hangman had fallen ill, then another hangman was brought in. But this one said that he would rather be hanged himself than to hang him, then the poor man was returned to prison awaiting further orders.

In the seventeenth century great fires were a frequent phenomenon. The *Kurant* mentions several of them, mostly abroad, but on May 9, 1687 it reports on the terrible fire in the village of Durgerdam, north of Amsterdam:

Amsterdam, May 5. In the village of Durgerdam a terrible fire broke out in the middle of the night, two hundred and fifty houses burnt down, only the church with a few houses remained. It is impossible to describe the great misery and damage that has been done there.

The *Kurant* carries quite a few reports on thunderstorms, floods and other more or less serious natural disasters. This report from December 13, 1686 is one of five reports on the devastating flood in the northern parts of the Netherlands:

Groningen, December 8. Here in the country people are busy restoring dikes that had burst because of the high water, which caused the drowning of so many thousands of

¹¹ Because I am not comparing texts here, I only give the English translation.

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people and cattle.

The thunderstorm in the next report, from September 17, 1686, has far-reaching consequences:

Paris, September 6. The thunder has caused great damage in France, the thunder also knocked off a woman's breast from her body, the child was also wounded slightly, because the child had just suckled from this breast. Nonetheless mother and child stayed alive.

In two reports babies themselves are the main characters. Babies with two heads, that is. This happened in Poland, according to the *Kurant* of December 13, 1686:

Amsterdam, December 12. It is said that in Poland in Lemberg a child was born with two heads and this child lived for four hours. The child also spoke a few words in a foreign language before it died, but nobody understood this language. Many people came to see the miracle of this child.

In Madrid an even more complicated baby was born, writes the *Kurant* of May 27, 1687:

Madrid, May 8. Near this city a child was born with two heads and four hands and three feet. And only one head was alive. And the child already had teeth in its mouth and the child was baptized. And it lived for three hours. And the king and the queen saw it themselves. After its death its body was cut open and two hearts were found in it.

The *Kurant* – quite surprisingly – also brings several reports on monks and nuns behaving improperly, like this one from September 17, 1686:

Amsterdam, September 17. From Naples it is written that there was a clergyman or monk, this monk slept with a nun and the nun died shortly afterwards. And the monk then fled, but after returning he was imprisoned.

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Another report, from November 26, 1686, tells – even more surprisingly – about the miracles of a Roman Catholic saint:¹²

London, November 15. From Milan in Italy it is written that the governor had been ill, but he took upon himself to give the church of Saint Anthony a precious lamp. And if someone loses something from now on, Saint Anthony can make the lost goods return when mass is read in his church.

Apart from the cargo lists of the VOC ships, the *Kurant* carries remarkably few reports concerning trade not. This report, from the *Kurant* dated June 6, 1687 will have been of interest to the readers, as many of the Ashkenazi Jews worked in the tobacco industry.¹³

Stockholm, May 14. In Sweden decisions have been made regarding the import of tobacco and the establishment of tobacco spinning workshops. And it is prohibited under severe penalty that any spun or made tobacco and notched or *briefftabak*¹⁴ be brought into Sweden. But leaf will be allowed to establish spinning workshops.

9.3. News on Jews

Remarkably, the *Kurant* does not carry many reports on subjects concerning Jews. The main reason for this is probably that the sources do not often write about Jews. And the *Kurant* apparently did not have its own correspondents. Yet the few reports on Jews that we saw in the samples all are edited in a special way. Either they are placed as the first article of the newspaper, or some sort of prayer is added. So it might be worthwhile to examine the main reports concerning Jews and compare them with the sources, in order to see whether they got a special treatment by the editor.

9.3.1. Portuguese Jews burnt at the stake

¹² Although these examples are all taken from issues printed by Halevi, similar reports are to be found in the issues printed by Tartas as well.

¹³ See Ch. 4.

¹⁴ Tobacco in a paper bag.

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The first report in the *Kurant* concerning Jews may be the most shocking one. The *Fraytagishe Kuranten* from August 23, 1686 opens with a report from Lisbon, July 26, about three Portuguese Jews who were burnt at the stake in Lisbon after refusing to renounce their faith:

(ליסבון) · דען זעקס אונ' צואנציגסטן יולי: אלהיר האט מאן דרייא רייכי
(פארטוגיזן) אין פֿרדאכט גיהאלטן דאס זיא היימליך אירן (יודישין גלויבן) האלטן אונ'
· מאן העט זיא דאז לעבן גישענקט ווען זיא העטן דען (יודישן) גלויבן (ח"ו) פֿר לייקניט
אבר זיא האבן גיזאגט מיר זיין פֿון (יהודים) גיבארן מיר וועלן אויך אז (יהודים)
שטערבן · אונ' זיא זיין אלי דרייא פֿר ברענט ווארדן · אבר גאט איז איין גירעכטר
ריכטר דער ווערט דז און שולדיגי בלוט פֿר גיסן צו זינר צייט וואול וויסן צו גיפֿינן ·
אמן סלה

Lisbon, July 26. Here three rich Portuguese were detained on suspicion of secretly having practiced their faith. And their lives would have been spared if, God forbid, they would have renounced the Jewish faith. But they said: We were born from Jews, we will die as Jews as well. And the three of them were all burnt. But God is a righteous judge, who will be able to find the innocent bloodshed in due time. Amen Sela.

Both the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and the *Amsterdamse Courant* of August 20 open with this report. This is the text of the most likely source, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*:

Lissabon den 23 July. De Inquisitie heeft deser dagen alhier drie Joden, den eene levendig, en de twee anderen, nadat zy eerst waren doot gewurgt, doen verbranden.

Lisbon, July 23. The Inquisition has burnt here three Jews recently, one of them alive, the other two after they were strangled to death.

The text in the *Amsterdamse Courant* is similar. While the Dutch papers stress the cruelty of the punishment, the *Kurant* adds and emphasizes the fact that the three men decided to die as Jews, and adds a prayer about the divine punishment that will await the ones who carried out the sentence.

9.3.2. The Conquest of Buda in 1686 and the fate of the Jews

The main event in the war between the Habsburgs and the Turks in the years 1686 -1687 was the capture of Buda. The events preceding it are described in Chapter 2. The siege of Buda was described extensively in Dutch and European newspapers, including the *Kurant*, and also in pamphlets, and the victory was celebrated throughout Europe (sometimes at the Jews' expense as will be pointed out below). After the conquest on September 2, 1686 the *Kurant* contains several reports about the fate of the Jewish population of Buda. As subjects of the Ottoman Empire, the Jews had fought side by side with the Turks. The reports were published in the *Kurant* between September 24, 1686 and January 17, 1687. This is a report from Buda from September 8, in the *Kurant* of September 24:

(אובן) · דען אכטן סעפטעמבר [...] איבר דריי הונדרט (יהודים) זיין אין דער שול גיוועזן אונ' דיא גימייני קיסרישי זאלדאטן האבן זיא אויך גיוואלט טויט שלאגן אבר דער ברניבורגישי (יענראל) מיט זיין פֿאלק האבן דיא (יהודים) ביים לעבן דר האלטן דאך גלייך וואול האבן זיא דיא זעלביגי (יהודים) אונ' עטליכי הונדרט טירקן גיפֿנגן גינומן · [...] דיא גיפֿנגיני (יהודים) אונ' טירקן ווערדן גיברויכט צו אליר הנד ארבייט אונ' מוזן העלפֿן דיא שטאט ווידר צו פֿר ריכטן ·

Buda, September 8. [...] More than three hundred Jews were in the synagogue and the Imperial soldiers wanted to kill them, but the Brandenburg general and his troops let them live.¹⁵ However, they took these Jews captive, together with a few hundred Turks. [...] The Jewish captives are used for all kinds of work and are obliged to assist in rebuilding the city.

The source of this report is not completely clear. It may be this report of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of September 21, 1686:

Offen, den 5 September. [...] Veel Vrouwen en Kinderen en eenige 100 Joden, die in haer

¹⁵ The fact that it is a Brandenburg general who saves the Jews, may not be accidental. Great Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia (1640-1688) protected the Jews in his own electorate against the often antisemitic population: Israel, *Mercantilism*, 119, 121.

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Synagoge geweest zijn, heeft men oock gevangen bekomen, en over de 3000 Personen ter nedergemaect. [...] De Joden zijn onder de Sauvegarde van den Generael Schoning, welcke aen die kant d'Attaque voerden, en aen wien sy veel Geldt betaelt en noch meer belooft hebben, geraect. [...] De gevangen Turcken en Joden werden tot slechting der Approchien en anderen Arbeyt gebruyckt.

Possibly the editor also used an earlier report, from the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* dated September 17, 1686:

Weenen den 5 September. [...] over de 1000 Turcken meest gewont, en veele Turckse Vrouwen en Kinderen, waer van men 't getal op 500 begroot, in onse handen geraect, en eenige 100 Joden (door welcke men de verborgen Schatten hoopt t'ontdecken) die in haer Synagoge gevluht waren, in 't Duyts om pardon baden en 1000 Ryxdaelders voor de eerste Sauvegarde beloofden, gespaert, en in tegendeel eenige Joodse Familien, die met hare Goederen over de Donau meenden t'eschapperen, door de Tolpatsen achterhaelt en dootgeslagen zijn [...]

Interestingly, the *Kurant* presents the events in a more positive light than the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*. The *Kurant* simply presents general Schöning and his troops as the rescuers of the Jews and neither mentions the fact that the Jews paid a lot of money for their rescue (and promised more), nor the fact that although some hundred Jews were saved, the *Tolpatsen* (Hungarian infantrymen) killed some other Jewish families who tried to escape via the Danube.

The same issue of the *Kurant* carries a report I have been unable to trace back to a source.

(ווין) · דען צוועלפטן סעפטעמבר [...] דיא גיפנגיני (יהודים) אונ' טירקן ווערדן פֿון
· נאך (ווין) גבראכט ווערן ·

Vienna, September 12. The Jewish and Turkish captives will be taken from Buda to Vienna.

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The *Kurant* of September 27, 1686 carries the following report:

(וויין) · דען פֿופֿצעהנטן סעפטעמבר [...] דיא שטאט (אובֿן) איז נון גענצליך ווידר גירייניגט אונ' גיזייברט ווארדן דיא טויטי לייבר פֿון דיא טירקן אונ' (יהודים) האבן דיא קיסרישי זאלדאטן אלי אין דאס וואסיר דיא (טוני) אריין גיווארפֿן · אבר דיא אנדרי טויטי לייבר פֿון אירין גלויבן האבן זיא אין דיא ערד ביגראבן ·

Vienna, September 15. [...] The whole city of Buda has been cleaned and purged. The imperial soldiers have thrown the dead bodies of the Turks and the Jews into the Danube. But they buried the dead bodies of members of their own faith.

This is probably borrowed from the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* from September 24, a faithful, if somewhat more nonpartisan translation (*fun irn gloybn*, 'of their faith', instead of *de Christenen*, 'the Christians'):

Weenen den 12 September [...] Alle de Turkse en Joodse lijken worden in den Donau geworpen, en de Christenen begraven.

A report from September 18 in the *Kurant* of October 1, 1686 reads as follows:

(וויין) · דען אכצעהנטן סעפטעמבר [...] דיא (יהודים) וועלכי אונטר דען קיסר וואונן דיא האבן פֿיל געלט ביא אננדר גילעגט אונ' האבן צווייא (יהודים) דר מיט גשיקט נאך (אובֿן) אום דיא גיפֿנגיני (יהודים) אויז צו ליזן · אונ' זיא האבן גימוזט פֿאר איטליכֿם גיפֿנגן (יהודי) הונדרט אונ' אויך וואול צוויי הונדרט רייקט טאלר געבן אונ' עש זיין שון איבר פֿיר הונדרט קליין אונ' גרושי (יהודים) אויז גיליזט ווארדן · [...] דיא יהודים אין (אובֿן) זאלן האבן צו דיא קיסרישן איין שאץ גיוויזן פֿון דריי מאל הונדרט טויזנט (דוקאטן) אונ' מאן ווערט דאס זעלביגי געלט נאך ויין ברענגן צום קריג צו שטייאר ·

Vienna, September 18. [...] The Jews who live under the Emperor collected money and sent two Jews to Buda to ransom the Jewish captives. And for each Jew they had to pay one hundred or sometimes two hundred *rijksdaalders*, and more than four hundred small and great Jews already have been ransomed. [...] The Jews in Buda are

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said to have indicated a treasure¹⁶ to the Imperials of three times hundred thousand ducats and they want to bring this money to Vienna as a war contribution.

This is a rather faithful translation of the report in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* dated September 28, 1686; the main difference is that the *Kurant* mentions two Jewish deputies and the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* only one:

Weenen den 15 September [...] De Joden, die in 't leven gehouden zijn, werden als Slaven stuck voor stuck voor 100 Tallers en noch meer verkocht, en meest aen een Gedeputeerde van de Joden, welke haer vervolgens in Vryheyt stellen. [...] De Joden, wil men, dat een Schat van 300000 Ducaten in Offen (werwaerts dagelijks veele Timmerluyden en andere Arbeytsluyden vertrecken) ontdeckt hebben, welke men vervolgens herwaerts staet te brengen, en tot den Oorlog t'employeren.

The *Kurant* of October 29, 1686 carries another report on the imprisoned Jews:

(וויין) · דען זעכצעהנטן אוקטובר [...] אין (אובן) זיצן נאך גיפנגן ביא פינף אונ' צוונציג הונדרט טירקן אונ' עש זיין דרונטר ביא פיר הונדרט טירקיש קינדר · אבר עש זיצן נור צוונציג טירקיש ווייבר גיפנגן · אבר דיא גיפנגיני (יהודים) זיין אלי פון אירי ברידר אויז גילעזט ווארדן:

Vienna, October 16. [...] In Buda about twenty-five hundred Turks are still imprisoned and among them are about four hundred Turkish children. But only twenty Turkish women are imprisoned. But the imprisoned Jews have all been ransomed by their brothers.

The probable source, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* from October 26, 1686, says:

Weenen den 13 October. [...] Men spreekt, dat [...] in Offen 2475 gevangene Turcken, daer onder 400 Kinderen, en maer 20 Vrouwen, gevonden zijn.

¹⁶ It is not quite clear what kind of treasure this is. It may have to do with the fact that many Jews in Buda were engaged in money-lending: Komoróczy (ed.), *Jewish Budapest*, 28, Raj & Vasadi, *Jewish Life in Turkish Buda*, 41.

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Interestingly, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* does not mention the Jews, who have all been ransomed, neither here nor elsewhere in the paper or in the papers immediately preceding or following this issue. So this again may be an addition of the editor of the *Kurant*.

Finally, the aftermath, in the *Kurant* of January 17, 1687:

בערלין · דען פֿירטן יאנווארי · דיא ווייל דער ברניבורגישי לייטנאם יענראל שאנינג דיא
יהודים פֿון אובן האט ביים לעבן דר הלטן זוא האבן דיא בערלינר אדר ווינר יהודים
דעם זעלביגן יענראל גאר איין הערליך גישענק פֿר ערט אונ' גירעגאלירט ·

Berlin, January 4. Because Lieutenant General Schöning from Brandenburg let the Jews of Buda live, the Jews from Berlin or Vienna presented him with a splendid gift.

The *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* dated January 14, 1687 reports:

Berlijn den 4 January. De Joden hebben den Luytenant Generael Schoning over het minnelijck Tractement, de Gevangens van haer Religie aengedaen, magnifijcq geregaleert.

So here the *Kurant* unconditionally adopts the praise for the Lieutenant General.

9.3.2.1. Non-Jewish texts about the Conquest of Buda

Considering that the reports mentioned above describe dramatic events for the Jews of Buda, their tone is remarkably detached. Most reports can be traced back to the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, and the editor did not add a specific Jewish outlook. In some cases the *Kurant* even describes the events in a more positive way than the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*. We get the impression that the Jews from Buda were treated reasonably well by the Imperial troops, despite the fact that many of them were killed during the siege. I have been unable to find more Dutch Jewish texts about the conquest of Buda, so it is hard to determine whether this really was the way the Dutch Jews perceived the fate of their fellow

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Jews in Buda.

I did find two non-Jewish Dutch texts about the siege of Buda, however. One of them does not mention any Jews.¹⁷ The other one does: *Dagverhaal van de vermaarde belegering der sterke Stad Buda, of Offen* (Diary of the famous siege of the strong city of Buda, or Offen) from 1686. It is an extensive day-to-day report of the events. Jews are mentioned a few times: 'the Jews did not want to assist in defending the place, but wanted to give money for it' (p. 34). And: 'the commanding Turkish Pasha stayed in the Jewish streets [quarter], near the Vienna Gate, where he had a great amount of gunpowder delivered in a cellar, to protect it from the bombs.' (p. 41)

These remarks give the impression that the Jews sided with the Turks. Another passage, though, suggests that Jews, together with Christians, were recruited by the Habsburg side: 'The Duke of Lorraine, having seen that a crowd of Christians and Jews was roaming about in and around the army camp, without doing anything useful, had them assembled until there were 5000 of them. And had them equipped with shovels and spades to use as [for making?] entrenchments during the siege.' (p. 62)

And finally: 'As far as the Jews are concerned, they came under the protection of General Schöning, who led the attack on that side, and whom they had paid a great amount of money, and promised even more.' (p. 82)

This is almost literally the same text as the report in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* dated September 21, 1686. The *Kurant* dated September 24, 1686 borrowed part of this report, but left out the fact that the Jews paid for their rescue.¹⁸

Another intriguing Dutch text is *Examen of Getuygenis van een Jood Aengaende het geen sich voor en in de Belegering der Stadt Offen en daer omtrent toegedragen heeft* (Examination or testimony of a Jew concerning the events before and during the siege of the city of Ofen), translated from German, 1687. It is dated November 25, 1686. It may be the record of an interrogation of a captured Jew in order to find out more about the circumstances of the battle. The Jew, Jacob Tud, 31 years old, gives a detailed account of the strength of the Turkish garrison in Buda, and tells about taxes: 'A Jew, whether he is rich or poor, has to pay a ducat a year as protection money, he is not charged more,' and about

¹⁷ *Extraordinaire Post-tydinge*.

¹⁸ See p. 206-207.

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other duties: 'During the siege the Jews had to carry water, wood, wine, ammunition and other things, and they were forced to work (but not on the Sabbath).' He also tells that 'the citizens and the Jews' traded between Buda, Turkey and Vienna. Buda was an extremely rich city, 'where more gold, silver, pearls, and similar valuables could be found than in Constantinople (exclusive of the Serail).' However, most of it was burned by the Imperial army. The Jews had to pay 70,000 guilders as a ransom, one half to General Schöning, one half to the Duke of Lorraine and the other Imperial generals, 'but as the Jews were completely looted and ruined, the Jews from Prague, Trewitz, and Nikolsburg had spoken up for them, until the assembled Jews in Turkey and elsewhere would collect the money.' This highly informative 'examination' does not show special sympathy for either side, nor does it comment on the way the Jews were treated.

Finally, I found a play: *Buda anders Offen, Treurspel* (Buda, or Offen, Tragedy), from 1686. It is: 'a tragedy for the Ottoman, but a happy-ending story for the Christians.' It takes place on September 2 and 3, 1686. The scenes of the battle alternate with a 'chorus of Turkish women and a chorus of Jewesses'. The Jewesses take sides with the Turks, and compare the impending fall of Buda to the destruction of Jerusalem. They warn the Muslims that they can no longer suppress the Christians. They will fall victim to their own pride, just like Icarus (p. 20, 29-31). After the Habsburg victory, the chorus begs for mercy, which it receives from the Duke of Lorraine. They do not have to fear for their chastity, but they have to be subservient (p. 57-58). Finally the 'Turkish scum' has to bury the dead, 'and let the Jewish people go and clean the roads.' (p. 60)

For all its symbolism, this play gives a rather faithful description of the events in Buda. Apart from that, it is interesting that the Jewesses are given the task of warning the Muslims that their end is near. Just as Jerusalem fell victim to the Romans, now Buda, and the Muslims, will fall victim to the Christians.

9.3.2.2. Jewish eyewitness-accounts

The Netherlands were not directly involved in the Habsburg war against the Turks. How do the Dutch texts relate to the accounts of Jews who personally experienced the events in Buda? The best-known eye-witness accounts are Yitzhak Schulhof's *Megillat Oven* (Buda

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Chronicle) and *Kina Gedola* (Great Lamentation).¹⁹ Schulhof, born in Prague, was the son-in-law of the Vilna-born Buda Rabbi Ephraim Hakohen. Schulhof describes the history of Buda during the Turkish occupation, and the siege and its aftermath. On September 2 a group of Jews escaped to the Great Synagogue, but the besiegers, he writes, 'sacrificed the sons of Israel in the House of God, spilling the blood of innocent victims.' Habsburg soldiers entered the building, and the roof and the walls collapsed. Many of the people who were still alive were massacred by the soldiers. Schulhof was almost killed as well, but after he told a soldier he was a subject of the Habsburg Empire, he was taken captive. Finally he was redeemed by a woman, who took him to Samuel Oppenheimer in Vienna. From there he went to Nikolsburg (the capital of Moravia, now Mikulov), like many other ransomed Jews from Buda. His wife and son were killed during the siege. The synagogue was burnt down, with the dead bodies of the Jews in it, but the names of 72 Jews who died, including Schulhof's wife Esther, are mentioned in a memor book that was kept in Worms.²⁰ Schulhof probably did not exaggerate in his dramatic account, because his findings were confirmed by the report of a German army doctor, Johann Dietz of Brandenburg, who wrote about the great cruelty of the Habsburg soldiers when they were fighting in the Jewish quarter.²¹

Schulhof wrote that he was ransomed by fellow Jews. The *Kurant* from October 1, 1686 also mentions the capture and ransoming of Jews. This is the main subject of another eyewitness account, the poem 'Eyn sheyn nay lid fun Ofen' (Prague 1688).²² It was written in honor of the person who took the initiative to save the Jews of Buda, Alexander (Sender) Tausk from Prague. The author, Ahron ben Yosef, was himself one of the ransomed Jews. Tausk was assisted by Reb Shmuel Heidelberger, also known as the Court Jew Samuel Oppenheimer, who, as the main financier of the battle against the Turks, maintained a close relationship with the Habsburg authorities.²³ When the walls of Buda fell, Tausk went there by boat from Prague in an attempt to save the Jews. He went to the Imperial commander and told him he wanted to ransom the Jews. The soldiers did not distinguish between

¹⁹ Kaufmann, 'Isak Schulhof', 296-327.

²⁰ Kaufmann, 'Isak Schulhof', 321; the book was later transferred to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, as a part of David Oppenheimer's manuscript collection.

²¹ Komoróczy (ed.), *Jewish Budapest*, 505.

²² Fürst, 'Ein šein nai lid', 223-230; the poem is published in a booklet in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

²³ Grunwald, *Samuel Oppenheimer; Israel, Mercantilism*, 102-103.

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Muslims and Jews and slaughtered both in the streets. Tausk gathered all Jews into the synagogue and had the entrance protected. The Duke of Lorraine promised him no Jew would be killed, but they would be detained. Several Jews were killed, however, or died from hardship. Tausk managed to ransom 274 Jews and 35 Torah scrolls and sent them on a ship to Pressburg (Bratislava) and finally to Nikolsburg. With the help of Samuel Oppenheimer and the King of Poland another sixty Jews were ransomed. The whole operation had cost Tausk so much money that he was unable to pay the ransom and spent some time in prison. Tausk went to several European cities, wrote a plea to convince the local authorities of his heroic deeds, Jewish communities sent letters of recommendation, and finally he succeeded in raising the money.²⁴

The description of the facts in Schulhof's chronicles and in the poem and the pamphlet is quite similar to the description in the *Kurant* and the other Dutch sources. The *Kurant* mentions two Jews who were sent to Buda. These could well be identified as Samuel Oppenheimer and Sender Tausk. The numbers of ransomed Jews correspond as well. And yet the tone is quite different. Whereas Schulhof and the poem paint a dramatic picture of the situation, the *Kurant* is detached and matter-of-fact, like the Dutch newspapers. It sides with the Habsburg camp and gives all credits to a Brandenburg general rather than to the Jews who ransomed their fellow Jews. It reports from the perspective of the Habsburg camp, writes about the Jews unemotionally, and gives the credit for their rescue to a Brandenburg general, rather than to the Jews who ransomed them. From other sources we know that the situation *was* dramatic for the Jews. According to Jonathan Israel, the re-conquest of Budapest and other Hungarian cities meant 'utter disruption' for Hungarian Jewish communities, 'the Jewish quarters of Budapest, Belgrade and many other places being brutally sacked by Austrian soldiers.'²⁵

In a sense, the same detachment can be seen in the reports about a fleet of river barges used to supply the Habsburg forces during and after the siege of Buda. The *Kurant* writes about this extensively while failing to mention that the operation was entirely organized by

²⁴ This plea really existed: a pamphlet was kept in the Stadtbibliothek of Breslau, published by Sender Tausk himself, containing his plea and letters from the Jewish communities of Nikolsburg, Cracow, Frankfurt, and both the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi communities of Amsterdam: Brann, 'Zum Ofener Judenmord', 540-553; in the 19th century the pamphlet was kept in the city library of Breslau.

²⁵ Israel, *Mercantilism*, 102-103.

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the court Jew, Samuel Oppenheimer of Heidelberg. This is the very same Reb Shmuel Heidelberger from the poem, who ransomed the Jews in Buda in order to save them from the rage of the Habsburg forces while, on the other hand, supplying the same forces with food, clothing, ammunition, etcetera, mostly from Jewish dealers in Frankfurt, but also from Hamburg and Amsterdam.²⁶

It is understandable that Dutch newspapers do not mention this Jewish connection, but for the Jewish readers of the *Kurant* it might have been quite interesting. Especially because Oppenheimer's Amsterdam agent was the well-known Amsterdam businessman and printer Moushe or Cosman Gomperts²⁷. And what is more, there are even links between him and the *Kurant*. The compositor translator and editor of the *Kurant*, Moushe bar Avrom Ovinu, decided to start his own printing business in 1688 and after working with Cosman Gomperts for a short time, he took over his printing house.²⁸

9.3.2.3. Consequences of the Conquest of Buda for Jews elsewhere

As mentioned before, the siege of Buda was followed intently by many Europeans, and the victory was celebrated in many countries, especially those that were part of the Holy League. And in some cases the Jews fell victim to these celebrations, for instance in Rome. The *Kurant* reports about the troubles quite extensively. The first report, from Rome, dated August 13, is published in the *Kurant* of September 3, 1686.²⁹

(רום) · דען דרײ צעהנטן אויגוסט · דאס גימייני פֿאלק אין (רום) האבן פֿר נומן דאס
דיא קיסרישן פֿאר דיא מאל דיא שטאט (אובֿן) ניט ווערן איין קריגן · אונ' דיא ווייל זיך
דאס גימייני פֿאלק ניט האט גיקענט רעכֿין אן דיא טירקן זוא זיין זיא איבר דיא
(יהודים) גילאפֿן · אונ' עס ווערן (ח״ו פֿיל יהודים) אום איר לעבן גיקומין · אבר
גאט האט גימאכט דאס דיא זאלדאטן האבן זיא גשיצט אונ' דיא (יהודים) האבן זיך
דר היים אין אירי הייזר פֿר שלאסן ·

²⁶ Israel, *Mercantilism*, 102; Grunwald, *Samuel Oppenheimer*, 59-63.

²⁷ Israel, *Mercantilism*, 102; Kaufmann & Freudenthal, *Die Familie Gomperz*, 333-334.

²⁸ See 6.3.

²⁹ Also mentioned in 8.3.

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Rome, August 13. The mob has learned that this time the Imperials will not be able to capture the city of Ofen. And because the mob could not revenge itself on the Turks, they have attacked the Jews. And God forbid many Jews would have lost their lives. But God made the soldiers protect them and the Jews have shut themselves at home [in their quarter?] in their houses.

The report in the probable source, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of August 31, 1686, is quite similar, although it does not mention the motive of the mob, seeking revenge on the Turks, which might well be a clarification of the editor of the *Kurant*:

Roma den 10 Augustus. Op 't verdwijnen van 't gerucht van de verovering van Buda is het Volck deser Stadt gaende geworden tegens de Joden, en souden veele om de Hals geholpen gehad hebben, soo 't door de Militie niet gestuyt en de Joden in haer Quartier geweken waren.

In addition to the motive, there is another interesting difference. According to the Dutch newspaper it was not God, but the militia itself who prevented the people from starting a pogrom. The mentioning of God in the *Kurant* reminds us of the report from Lisbon mentioned above. While the Dutch papers stress the cruelty of the punishment, the *Kurant* emphasize that the three men decided to die as Jews, and adds a prayer about the divine punishment that will await the ones who carried out the sentence.

The report from Rome in the *Kurant* is followed by two reports that are more in line with the Dutch newspapers, both dating from just before the conquest of Buda. One report, in the *Kurant* from September 17, 1686, records that Jews were advised to stay indoors at night, because the ordinary people are very embittered toward them. According to the other report, in the *Kurant* of September 24, 1686, the Pope summoned another two hundred soldiers to protect the Jews from a pogrom.

Then Buda is finally conquered. The *Kurant* of October 8 opens with a report from Rome:

(רום) • דען פֿיר צעהנטן סעפטעמבר • נאך דעם אין (רום) איז איין (קוריר) אן קומן
אונ' האט דיא צייטונג מיט גיבראלט דאס (אובן) איז איין גינומן ווארדן זוא האט מאן
דיא גישטיק לוז גישוסן אונ' אל דיא קלוקן אין דער גנצן שטאט גילייט • אונ' וויא

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וואול זיר שטארקי וואכטן גיהאלטן ווערדן זוא טון דאך גלייך וואול דאס גימיני פֿאלק
דיא (יהודים) ביליידיגן ביא נאכט פלאגט מאן זיא מיט פֿיאר ווערק אונ' ביא טאג
ווערפֿן זיא דיא (יהודים) מיט שטיינר · אויך טוט מאן דיא טירקן אונ' דיא (יהודים)
אב מאלן אויף אלר הנד וואונדרליכי אונ' אב שייצליכי גימעל אז מאן קאן דר דנקן:

Rome, September 14. After a courier had arrived in Rome and brought news that Ofen was conquered, the cannons were fired and all church bells tolled all over the city. And despite the close watch of the guards, the mob is offending the Jews: by night it pesters them with fireworks, by day it throws stones at them. It also portrays the Turks and the Jews in every kind of odd and terrible way one can think of.

The *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* from October 5, probably the source of this report, tells basically the same story as the *Kurant*, but elaborates on the several couriers from different places who all brought the same good tidings about the conquest of Buda. Unlike the *Kurant*, it mentions the singing of the Te Deum, and the fact that the Pope ordered all Roman families to show their joy for several evenings. The part on the attacks against the Jews is quite similar to the *Kurant*:

Roma den 14 September. Maendag arriveerde een Courier van den Postmeester van Bologna, met de tyding van 't innemen van Offen, over Mantoua daer gekomen, 't welck 's nachts door een andere Courier van Venetien geconfirmeert, maer noch niet geloofd wiert, voor dat den Grave van Sanfre, Kamerling van den Ceurvorst van Beyeren, een Brief van sijn Heer en Meester met het selve nieuws aen den Paus overgelevert had; waer op 's anderendaegs 't Geschut van 't Casteel van S. Angelo gelost en alle Klocken der stadt geluyt wierden. Den volgende avont arriveerde den Grave van Thun met een Brief van den Keyser, welcke de dag daer aen ter Audientie geadmitteert wiert. Den Paus heeft door een Edict laten belasten, dat alle de Huysgesinnen van de Stadt desen en eenige volgende avonden Vreugde-teecken en vertoonen sullen. Morgen staet 't Te Deum soo in de Pausselijcke Capel, als alle d'andere Kercken, gesongen te werden. Ongemeen uytsporigh is de Gemeente tegens de Joden, en laet niet na, onaengesien de stercke Wacht, 's nachts met Vuur-wercken en by dagh met Steenen haer t'infesteren, en met wonderlijcke Figuren haer en de

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

Turcken op 't aldersmaetste af te maken.

A week later, October 15, the *Kurant* reports from Rome, September 21:

(רום) · דען איין אונ' צוונציגשטן סעפטעמבר · דיא (יהודים) האבן גימוזט בייא
דרייא טויזנט (שקודי) אויז גיבן אום פֿיאר ווערק מאַכן צו לאזן אונ' דיא (יהודים) הבן
זיא גימוזט זעלברט אן צינדן ·

Rome, September 21. The Jews had to spend about three thousand scudi to have firework made, and the Jews had to set it off themselves.

The *Oprechte Haarlemse Courant* from October 12 carries a report that, again unlike the *Kurant*, mentions the singing of the *Te Deum*, and tells that even the Jews lit bonfires:

Roma, den 21 September. Over 't innemen van Offen is het Te Deum met groote Plechtelijckheit gesongen, en veele Vreugde-Vuren, selfs door de Joden, aengestoken.

This might be the source of the *Kurant*, yet the meaning is somewhat different. The seventeenth-century Dutch word *selfs* could mean both mean 'themselves' and 'even'. The grammatical construction in the Dutch text – '*selfs door de joden*' - suggests that the meaning here is 'even', and expresses surprise: apparently even the Jews were happy and lit bonfires, while *zelbert* in the Yiddish text clearly means 'themselves' and expresses indignation: not only were the Jews forced to buy firework for the joy of others, but they had to set it off as well. Besides, lighting *Vreugde-vuren* ('bonfires') is something else than setting off *fayer werk* ('firework'). Finally, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* does not mention any payment.

So the *Kurant* may have had information from elsewhere,³⁰ and this may be one of the rare occasions in which the *Kurant* adds its own 'Jewish flavor' to a report. We know from other sources that it was quite common for the Jews of Rome to have to pay for the festivities of their Christian fellow townsmen. From the fourteenth century onward they had

³⁰ Not from The *Amsterdamse Courant*, which reports on the festivities in Rome, on October 12, 1686 but does not mention the Jews.

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to pay a special 'festivity tax'. During Carnival and other festivals they were forced to make fools of themselves and were ridiculed in several ways.³¹ On the other hand it is true that Pope Innocentius XI, who reigned during the re-conquest of Buda, had no ill feelings toward Jews and did his best to protect them from the mob.³²

After the re-conquest of Buda, the Habsburg army captured several more cities and fortresses, but in the description of the events the *Kurant* does not mention Jews.

9.3.3. Sound-and-light show in Venice

In some cases, the *Kurant* seems to be even less interested in things Jewish than were Dutch newspapers. For instance, on November 2, 1686 both the *Oprechte Haerlemse* and the *Amsterdamse Courant* write in great detail about a magnificent sound-and-light show in the Venice ghetto in honor of the conquest of Napoli de Romania (now Nafplio, in Greece) by the Venetians, who fought against the Turks. The show, which represented the battle between the Venetians and the Turks, included severed (Turkish) heads and limbs and lasted three days, from Friday to Sunday. This is the version of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*:

Venetien den 18 October. [...] Alle de Parochien deser Stad hebben ongemeene vreugt over 't innemen van Napoli di Romania bewesen; gelijk oock de Joden, welcke op haer groote Plaets een Berg, tot nabootsing van den Berg Palamida, met doode Turckse Hoofden, Armen, Beenen, &c. besaeyt, opgerecht hebben gehad; aen de Voet sag men en Zee met Galeyen en Schepen; weynig van daer op een groot Pedestal een Statue, representerende den Capiteyn Generael, doe hy na 't Gebergte naderde en de Turcken op de vlucht dreef, en noch wat verder een Machine met eenige Trappen, opgepropt van Guardes, en daer binnen den Capit. Generael met d'andere hooge Officiers, en een Turck, op een Silvere Voet-Schabel nedergebogen, de Sleutels der Fortres presenterende: 's avonts staken sy tot 3 dagen na malkanderen 2 Toortsen uyt elcken Venster van hare Huysen, en veele Machines en Vuurwercken in Brant.

Nothing of the kind can be found in the *Kurant*. Only more than two weeks later, November

³¹ Berliner, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, 46-47.

³² Milano, *Il Ghetto di Roma*, 93, 98; Vogelstein & Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, 226.

19, does the newspaper produced the following report:

(פֿענעציען) • דען ערשטן נאוועמבר • [...] ווייל דיא הערן פֿון (פֿענעציען) אזוא גרוש
גליק האבן אין דען טירקן קריג • זוא האבן דיא (יהודים) וועלכי צו (פֿענעציען) וואונן
אם זונטאג ווידר פֿיל פֿריידן פֿיאר ווערק אן גיצונדן אונ' אויף אליר הנד ווייז אונ'
מאניר דיא גליקליכי שלאכטן אן דיא טירקן ביוויזן • אונ' דיא (יהודים) צו (פֿענעציען)
טון קיין געלט שפארן פֿאר דר גלייכן פֿיאר ווערק אויז צו געבן •

Venice, November 1. [...] Because the gentlemen of Venice have been so fortunate in the Turkish war, the Jews who live in Venice again lighted lots of fireworks of joy and demonstrated in all manners the lucky blow to the Turks. And the Jews in Venice spare no money to display these kind of fireworks.

This is probably taken from another report in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, from November 16. Could it be, then, that the pious editor of the *Kuranten* was afraid to confront his readers with the fact that their Venetian brothers and sisters clearly had not observed the Sabbath (which was, by the way, quite common among Venetian Jews)?³³ The Ashkenazim living in Holland may have been interested in what was going on in the world, but they were still traditional in their behavior and may have harbored some suspicions against the more easy-going Venetian Jews, who shared the passion of their non-Jewish townsmen for music and theater, and performed plays that had nothing Jewish about them except their author, for an audience of Jews as well as Christians.³⁴

Yet the editor may also have had another reason for not mentioning this event. Celebrations of this kind were described extensively in broadsheets in Venice and all over Italy. This increased tension among the population, who vented their agitation on Jews. Because of the violence against the Jews that may have been caused by the colorful descriptions of the celebrations of the war victories, the Venetian authorities prohibited the publication of weekly gazettes.³⁵ The editor of the *Kurant* may have considered it wise not to bring controversial news of this kind.

³³ Roth, *History of the Jews in Venice*, 192.

³⁴ Curiel & Cooperman, *The Ghetto of Venice*, 54.

³⁵ Infelise, 'The war, the news', 232.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

Quite a few inhabitants of the Venice ghetto were Turkish Jewish merchants, who were often seen as spies.³⁶

(פֿענעציען) · דען ערשטן דעצעמבר · דיא צוויי טירקישע (באשיז) וועלכע נאך
(פֿענעציען) זיין גיקומן צו וואונן דיא זעלביגע האבן זיך מיט אל איר גיזינד אין דער
· יודישן גאסן וואונגן גירונגן אונ' איר דולמעטש הייסט (רבי יצחק) ·

Venice, December 1. The two Turkish Pashas who came to live in Venice squeezed their entire train into the Jewish alleys and their interpreter is called Rabbi Yitshak.

No source in the Dutch newspapers can be found, but both the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of November 2, 1686 and the *Amsterdamse Courant* of October 26, 1686 report on this subject, so it probably stems from a Dutch source. In any event, neither in the *Kurant*, nor in the Dutch newspapers are any signs of hatred towards the Jews of Venice in relation to the war against the Turks.

9.3.4. Belmonte

Another Jewish emphasis we can see in the *Kurant* of May 9, 1687, which reports:

(אמסטרדם) · דען פֿינפֿטן מייא · [...] דער הער (עמנואל בעלמונטע) איין
פארטוגיזישער יוד פֿאלץ גראבֿ פֿון דען רעמישן רייך אונ' רעזידענט פֿון דען קיניג אויז
· שפאניען איז נאך (אנטווערפן) גיצוגן ·

Amsterdam, May 5. Sir Emanuel de Belmonte, a Portuguese Jew, count palatine of the Roman Empire and resident of the King from Spain, left for Antwerp.

This report about the remarkable and influential Sephardic Jew in the service of the Roman Empire (Germany) and the Spanish King³⁷ was probably taken from the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of May 6, but the words 'a Portuguese Jew' are an addition by the *Kurant*.

³⁶ Infelise, 'The war, the news', 231-232.

³⁷ Israel, *Mercantilism*, 109.

9.3.5. The Jews of Cochim The *Kurant* one of these Turkish Jews may have been mentioned in the following report of Leidsche Courant, 20, 1686 seen in a report in the *Kurant* of August 26, 1687.³⁸ It reads:

(אמשטרדם) דען פֿינף אונ' צוונציגשטן אויגושט • אויז אוישט אינדי האט מן בריב
ביקומן דז דורטן פֿיל טויזנט שווארצי אונ' וויישי יהודים טון וואונן שון ביא פֿיר צעהן
הונדרט יאר אונ' זיא הבן זיך דורט בזעצט נאך דען דז (ירושלים) איז פֿר שטערט
גווארן אונ' עש גיבט גרוישי קלוגי לייט צווישן זי אונ' זיא הבן דיא זעלביגי ביכר אדר
תורה וויא עבן אל היר צו לנד •

Amsterdam, August 25. From East India³⁹ letters have been received that thousands of black and white Jews have been living there for about fourteen hundred years, and they settled there after the destruction of Jerusalem, and great, wise men are among them, and they have the same books or Torah as here in this country.

The *Amsterdamse Courant* does not mention anything of the kind, but in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* dated August 23, 1687 we find the following report: 'It has been confirmed that a great multitude of Jews were found around and in Suratte, whose ancestors have lived there for hundreds of years; but the majority is black and the others are white.'

These reports clearly refer to the Jews of Cochin, in Malabar, southwestern India (Suratte, or Surat, is situated more to the north). From the tenth century there had been rumors about a Jewish settlement there. In 1663 Cochin came under Dutch rule, and in 1686 a delegation of Portuguese Jews from Amsterdam set out on a fact-finding mission to the Jews of Cochin. On their return, the head of the delegation reported their findings in a booklet called *Notisias dos Judeos de Cochim*, published by Uri Faybesh Halevi (Amsterdam, August 18, 1687). Ten days later, a Yiddish translation appeared with the same publisher, *Tsaytung*

³⁸ Dated incorrectly August 27, 1687.

³⁹ India.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

*oys India, or: Kenis der yehudim fun Cochin.*⁴⁰ Although, at that time, the *Kurant* was no longer being published by Halevi, it seems likely that the paper's editor used some inside information not available to the Dutch newspapers, which would account for the mentioning of the Torah. This seems to be the only report in which the editor used inside information. The reason may have been that the information was immediately available to him. As he had to work fast, in most cases he may have been unable to find Jewish sources, whereas Dutch newspapers were always at hand.

9.3.6. The killing of the High German Jew in Hamburg

The most important event concerning Jews in the *Kurant* is the killing of the High German (Ashkenazi) Jew in Hamburg, which received prominent coverage in the Dutch press as well. The first report, in the *Kurant* of July 29, 1687, is as follows:

אמשטרדם) דען אכט אונ' צוונציגסטן יולי · [...] צו (המבורג) האט מאן איין הויך
טייטשן יודן אום גיבראכט גלייך שיר אויף דיא זעלביגי מאניר וויא פאר צווייא יארן
איז אמשטרדם גישעהן איז · אבר דיא מערדר זיצן אין (אלטינא) גיפנגן אונ' זיא ווערן
בלד איר פֿר דינטן לוינ ביקומן ·

Amsterdam, July 28. [...] In Hamburg a High German Jew was murdered, almost in the same way as two years ago in Amsterdam. But the murderers are being detained in Altona and they will soon receive their just deserts.'

Both the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and the *Amsterdamse Courant* carry news on the same subject:

HC Jul 26, 1687 *Hamburgh den 22 July. De Joden, gemerckt hebbende, dat een van haer, die hier in een Huys gegaen was, zedert vermist is, hebben den Hospes van 't*

⁴⁰ Segal, *Jews of Cochin*, 37-44; Pereyra de Paiva, *Notisias*; Steinschneider *Cat. Bodl.* c.1980, nr. 6540; Fuks & Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, 241. Of the Yiddish translation of 1687 no copy has survived. We know of its existence from a reprint of the text by Samuel b. Judah Shamash, Amsterdam, 1713. On the title page of that reprint, the edition of Uri Faybesh Halevi with the exact date of publication is stated.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

selve tot Altona vervolgt en op de Bekentenis van sijn Meyt, dat de vermiste Jood in sijn Huys doot geslagen en in de Kelder weg gestoken is, nevens sijn Vrou doen arresteren.

AC Jul 26, 1687 *Hamburg den 22 July. [...] Een persoon sekere Jode van de Beurs gehaelt hebbende, om een goude Ketting te verkopen, heeft hem, in huys hebbende, eerst 't gelt afgedwongen, en daer na vermoort, en in sijn Was huys begraven; deselve is tot Altena gevangen, en heeft 't seyt al bekent, sal loon na verdienste bekomen.*

The *Amsterdamse Courant* is probably the source, but it has more information on the victim and the circumstances of the murder. But the *Kurant* has information that is missing from the Dutch newspapers. According to the *Kurant*, the murder was committed 'almost in the same way as two years ago in Amsterdam.' As we will see below, though, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of August 12, 1687 and the *Amsterdamse Courant* of September 6, 1687 do refer to the disappearance of another Jew some years before in Altona, who now turns out to have been murdered by the same person, under similar circumstances. It seems likely that the *Kurant* is referring to this event as well, and accidentally writes 'Amsterdam' instead of 'Altona.' Possibly the *Kurant* has this information from another source. The story is continued in the *Kurant* of August 1, 1687:

(המבורג) דען פֿינף אונ' צוונציגשטן יולי • דער יודן מערדר מיט זיין פֿרויא אונ' מייד
זיצן נאך צו (אלטינא) גיפֿנגן מאן האט נאך (גליקשטאט) גשיקט אום צו זעהן אויב
מאן זיא קען ארויז ביקומן זוא ווייל זיא דען מוירט אין המבורג האבן ביגנגן זוא וועלט
מאן זיא אויך גערן אין המבורג דרום שטראפֿן •

Hamburg, July 25. The Jew-murderer with his wife and maid are still detained in Altona. A message was sent to Glückstadt asking whether they can be released.⁴¹

Because they committed the murder in Hamburg, it is considered preferable to punish them in Hamburg as well.

The following report in the *Amsterdamse Courant* is probably the source of the report in the

⁴¹ From Altona, a suburb of Hamburg, which was under Danish rule.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

Kurant:

AC Jul 29, 1687 Hamburg den 25 July. De Moordenaer van de Jood sit met syn Vrouw en Meyt noch tot Altena gevangen; men heeft na Gluckstad gesonden, om te sien of men de Moordenaer, om die hier te straffen, bekomen kan.

Then several reports appear in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* that are not borrowed by the *Kurant*:

HC Aug 2, 1687 Hamburgh den 29 July. Of de Persoon, die laetst de Jood vermoort heeft, herwaerts gebracht sal werden of niet, is noch onbekent.

HC Aug 12, 1687 Hamburg den 8 Augusti. De Moorder van de Jood en sijn Meyt zijn eergisteren t'Altona geëxamineert; als wanneer de Meyt noch een Moort, aen een anderen Jood, bereyts voor 4 Jaren geschiet, bekent en de Plaets, daer hy verstoocken was en daer hy oock gevonden is, ontdeekt heeft.

HC Aug 16, 1687 Hamburgh den 12 Augusti. Van hier zijn eenige Persoonen afgesonden, om de Ouders van de Joden Moordenaer van Lubeck, alwaer sy gearresteert sitten, af te halen.

HC Aug 23 1687 Hamburgh den 19 Augustus. De Ouders van de Joden Moordenaer, die te Lubeck in arrest sitten, zijn hier noch niet aengekomen.

HC Aug 26, 1687 Hamburg den 22 Aug. [...] D'Ouders van de Joden Moordenaer zijn hier gebracht.

HC Aug 30, 1687 Hamburg den 26 Augusti. Het Proces van den Joden Moordenaer wert t'Altona geformeert.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

The next report in the *Kurant* follows on September 12, 1687:⁴²

(המבורג) דען פֿינפֿטן זעפטע' דינשטאג איז דער (יודן מערדר) אין (אלטינויא) דורך דיא בורגיריא פֿר וויזן גיווארן דאש מאן אים זאל דען קאפף אב שלאגן אונ' ביגראבן · אונ' דיא מייד זאל גיגיישלט ווערדן אונ' גיברנד מרקט · דער פֿאטר אונ' מוטר זיין און שולדיג ביפֿונדן · אבר מאן וויש נאך ניט וואס גאש (אויבר גיריכט) היר אויף זאל פֿאר גוט ביפֿינדן אדר (יודיצירן) ·

Hamburg, September 5. On Tuesday the citizens in Altona ruled that the Jew-murderer be decapitated and buried. And that the maid be whipped and branded. The father and the mother were found innocent. But it is yet unknown what the supreme court will deem good or will rule.

The following are the reports in the Dutch press. The *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of September 9 is probably the source:

HC Sep 6, 1687 *Hamburg den 2 September. Heden is de Jooden Moordenaer nevens sijn Meyt t'Altona voor het Neder-Gerecht geweest: van de weck sal haer Proces apparent volkomen gemaect werden: Hy heeft de Moort aen de Jood, wiens Lijck men volgens het rapport van de Meyt oock gevonden heeft, insgelijcks beleden, maer segt, dat noch een ander, die, als een Bootsgesel gekleet, vertrock, daer aen mede hantdadig is geweest.*

AC Sep 6, 1687 *Hamburgh den 23 Augustus. [...] Tot Altena heeft den Moordenaer bekent dat hy 2 Jooden vermoort heeft, de Vader en Moeder syn onschuldigh bevonden.*

HC Sep 9, 1687 *Hamburg den 5 September. Dingsdag is de Joden Moordenaer in Altena door de Burgery verwesen, onthooft en begraven te werden, en gisteren de Meyt in een Geesseling en Brantmerk; wat het Opper-Gerecht daer op goetvinden sal, weet men noch niet.*

⁴² Incorrectly dated September 13, 1687.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

The *Kurant* of September 19, 1687 continues as follows:

(אמשטרדם) דען אכצעהנטן זעפטעמבר · [...] פֿון (המבורג) האט מאן צייטונג דאש
דער (יודן מערדר) נאך צו (אלטינא) גיפֿנגן זיצט אונ' מאן האט זיין זאך נאך אלר הנד
(אוניווערסיטיטן פֿר שיקט אום צו פֿר נעמן וואש פֿאר איין טויט דאז מן אים זאל הין
ריכטן ·

Amsterdam, September 18. [...] From Hamburg a report arrived that the Jew-murderer is still detained in Altona and his case was sent to several universities to learn in what way he should be put to death.

The *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of September 13 is probably the source of this report, although the *Kurant* adds some explication:

HC Sep 13, 1687 Hamburg den 9 September. [...] De Joden Moordenaer sit noch te Altona gevangen en sijn saeck is, om Advysen daer over in te nemen, na eenige Universiteyten gesonden.

The next report is in the *Kurant* of September 26, 1687:

(המבורג) דען צוונציגשטן זעפטעמבר · ענטליך האט דער (יודן מערדר) זיין רעכט
אורטל ביקומן דאש מאן אים זאל לעבנדיג רעדן ·

Hamburg, September 20. Finally the Jew-murderer got his legitimate verdict, that he will be broken on the wheel alive.

The Dutch newspapers have several similar reports; both the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* and the *Amsterdamse Courant* from September 20 could be the source. Interestingly, the *Kurant* adds an opinion, *zayn rekht urtl*, 'his legitimate verdict', whereas the Dutch newspapers stay neutral.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

HC Sep 20 1687 Hamburg den 16 September. [...] Gisteren is de Joden Moordenaer te Altona gecondemneert, om levendig gerabraeckt te werden.

AC Sep 20, 1687 Hamburg den 16 September. Den Mordenaer die de laetste Jood hier vermoort, en tot Altona gevangen geseten heeft, heeft zyn Sententie bekomen om levendig gerabraekt te worden.

HC Sep 27 1687 Hamburg den 23 September. De Jooden Moordenaer staet morgen t'Altona volgens sijn bekomen Sententie gerabraekt te werden.

AC Sep 27 1687 Hamburg den 23 September. Morgen voormiddag sal de Moord[enaer] tot Altona geexecuteert worden.

The Kurant of October 3, 1687 announces:

(המבורג) דען זעקס אונ' צוונציגסטן זעפטעמבר · דער יודן מערדר איז לעבידיג
גירעדרט ווארן

Hamburg, September 26. The Jew-murderer was broken on the wheel alive.

Either Dutch newspaper could be the source. The *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* reports how courageously the murderer behaved in his last moments; the *Amsterdamse Courant* adds information on the maid. Both additions are left out of the *Kurant*. Information on the maid is provided in the next issue of the *Kurant*; positive remarks on the criminal can hardly be expected of the editor:

HC Sep 30, 1687 Altona den 25 September. Gisteren is de Joden Moordenaer gerabraeckt: Hy trock sijn Rock en andere Klederen selfs uyt en ging seer couragieus sig ter neder leggen en tot de Doot bereyden.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

AC Sep 30, 1687 Hamburg den 26 September. Eergisteren is den Jode-Moordenaar tot Altona levendigh gerabraeckt, en op den [een?] Radt geleyt; de Meyt die hem geholpen heeft, sal morgen daer gegeesselt en gebrantmerckt worden.

And the aftermath, in the *Kurant* of October 10, 1687:

(המבורג) דען פֿירטן אויקטאבר נאך דעם דאש מאן צו (אלטונא) האט נייליך דען (יודן מערדר) לעבנדיג גירעדרט גיהאט זוא האט מאן אויך דיא מייד וועלכי אים האט צו דען מוירט גהולפן גיגיישלט אונ' גיבראנד מארקט · אבר אין (המבורג) אין דער (נייא שטאט) האבן עטליכי יונגן אונ' בויען גיזעלן צווייא יודן הייזר גיפלינדרט אונ' פֿיל אנדרי יודן גשלאגן אונ' גרוישי מוט ווילן פֿר שטיפֿט אונ' דיא זאך ווער זער איבל אב גילופֿן · אבר דיא רייטר וואכט זיין דר צווישן גיקומן אונ' זיא האבן דאש גיפעפל פֿון אננדר גישיידן · דר נאך האט מאן גילאזט איין (פלאקאט) אויז גין דאש מאן מיט זולכי ווידר שפעניגי זער שארף ווערט (פראצעדירן) ·

Hamburg, October 4. After the Jew-murderer was broken on the wheel alive, recently, the maid who helped him with the murder was also whipped and branded. But in Hamburg in the New Town some boys and sailors ransacked two Jewish houses and beat many other Jews and caused great mischief and things might have turned out badly, but the mounted guards intervened and dispersed the mob. Subsequently an edict was issued that very firm action will be taken against unruly persons of this kind.

The Dutch newspapers have the following news; the *Amsterdamse Courant* of October 4 is probably the source:

HC Sep 30, 1687 Hamburg den 26 September. [...] Terwyl de Joden Moordenaar t'Altona geëxecuteert wiert, heeft men de Poorten deser Stadt gesloten gehouden.

HC Oct 4, 1687 Hamburg den 30 September. Saturdag is de Meyt van de Joden Moordenaar t'Altona gegeesselt, gebrantmerckt en gebannen; sijn Vrou, segt men, onschuldig bevonden te zijn en ontslagen te sullen werden.

9. Subjects in the *Kurant* and its sources

AC Oct 4, 1687 *Hamburg den 30 September. Op aenstaende Donderdag staet de Borgery hier te vergaderen. Sedert dat den Joode Moordenaer gerecht is, en het Vrouwmens dat hem geholpen had, is gegeeselt en gebrantmerckt, soo hebben eenige jongens en Matroosen op voorleden Sondag twee huysen van de Jooden inde nieuwe stad geplondert, veel andere Jooden geslagen, en groote insolentie bedreven, en soude het lichtelyk hooger geloopen hebben, ten waere de Ruyter-wacht daer op in gereden, en dit gepeupel van een gescheyden had, waer op een scherp Placaet is gepubliceert, inhoudende dat men tegen sulke moetwillige en baldage menschen als tegen Verstoorders van de gemeene rust soude procederen.*

It is clear that the Jew murder in Hamburg was considered an extremely important subject in the *Kurant*. And yet the two Dutch newspapers cover it even more exhaustively. Virtually everything mentioned in the *Kurant* can be traced to either the *Amsterdamse* or the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* with only a few exceptions: the adding of an opinion, *zayn rekht urtl*, 'his legitimate verdict', whereas the Dutch newspapers stay neutral, and the fact that according to the *Kurant* the murder was committed 'almost in the same way as two years ago in Amsterdam.' As pointed out above, it seems likely that the *Kurant* accidentally wrote 'Amsterdam' instead of 'Altona', but as the two Dutch papers refer to the first murder only in later issues, the *Kurant* may have had an additional source. In any event, the two Dutch papers report in greater detail about the circumstances of the murder, the victim, the arrest of the murderer, his wife, maid, and parents, the confession of the maid and that of the murderer.

We know about the two murder cases in Hamburg and Altona from yet another source: the memoirs of the Jewish businesswoman Glikl Hamel (1645–1724). At the time of the murders she lived in Hamburg. She wrote about them because they had made a profound impression on the townspeople and because she was a distant relative of the wife of the first victim. She recalled them in her memoirs four years after the second murder, helped by the account of an eyewitness, Samuel ben Meir Heckscher.⁴³ Although Glikl's story differs in places from Heckscher's account, together they make a coherent report of what happened in line with – though much more detailed than – the reports in the *Kurant* and the Dutch

⁴³ Heckscher, 'Notizen', 394-400; Grunwald, *Hamburgs deutsche Juden*, 14–17.

9. Subjects in the Kurant and its sources

newspapers. The edict mentioned in the *Fraytagische Kurant* of October 10, 1687 (and in the *Amsterdamse Courant* of October 4) was issued by the Hamburg Senat on September 16, 1687.⁴⁴

The murders of the two Jews in Hamburg and Altona were clearly shocking events for both Jews and non-Jews. As information about them probably also came from Jewish sources (albeit not Glikl Hamel and Heckscher, because their accounts were written some time after the event), one would expect the *Kurant* to provide some inside information missing in Dutch newspapers. This is not the case, however. On the contrary, the reports in the *Kurant* are less extensive and less detailed than those in the Dutch newspapers.

9.3.7. Advertisements

The *Kurant* contains eleven advertisements, six by Uri Faybesh Halevi, five by David de Castro Tartas. Two of them advertise Jewish books. The first one, from December 13, 1686, reads:

גם טוא צו ווישן דאש בייא מיר צו קויף איז אונ' ערשט נייליך איז גידרוקט גיווארן
איין (טייטש יום כיפור קטן) גאר וואול פֿר טייטשט דאש איטליכר מענש זאל קענן פֿר
שטין וואש ער (מתפלל) איז ·

Also good to know that at my place a recently printed *Yom Kippur Katan*⁴⁵ in Yiddish is for sale, translated very well, so that anyone will be able to understand what he is praying.

This is clearly an advertisement by Halevi himself for one of his own publications. It is the only advertisement that is not borrowed from a Dutch newspaper. Although Halevi printed more books during his publication of the *Kurant*,⁴⁶ this is the only publication for which he advertises.

The second advertisement about Jewish books can be found in the *Kurant* of August 8,

⁴⁴ Grunwald, *Samuel Oppenheimer*, 22, n. 54; about ninety years ago the edict was kept in the Staatsarchiv in Hamburg.

⁴⁵ Mentioned in 6.1, and probably composed (and translated?) by Moushe.

⁴⁶ See Gutschow, *YidNed*.

1687.⁴⁷ It reads:

ך"ו אויגושט ווערט מאן צו אמשטרדם אין דער קייזרש קרון אין דער קאלבר שטראט
פֿר קויפֿן דרייאַ טויזנט הויך טייטשי יודישי ביבלן •

The 26th of August in Amsterdam in the Keizerskroon in the Kalverstraat three thousand High German Jewish Bibles will be on sale.

This advertisement was probably borrowed from the *Amsterdamse Courant* of August 7, 1687:

Op den 26 Augustus, 1687, sullen tot Amsterdam, in de Keyzers Kroon, in de Kalverstraet, door de Makelaar Hendrick de Schepper, verkogt worden, ontrent 3000 Hoogduytse Jode Bybels in Folio, aldaer gedruckt by Joseph Athias, met Octroy voor 15 jaren; die nader onderrichtinge begeert, spreke aen de bovengenoemde Makelaer, woont op de Keyzers-gracht, tusschen de Huyde-straet en Leydse-gracht, tot Amsterdam.

The *Hoogduytse Jode Bybels* are volumes of the Yiddish Bible translation printed by Joseph Athias.⁴⁸ It seems somewhat strange that the editor borrowed the 'un-Jewish' expression '*Hoogduytse Jode Bybels*' ('High German Jewish Bibles') and left out the name of the printer. This in sharp contrast with the first advertisement, which uses Hebrew words, not only the name of the prayer book, but also '*vos er (mispalel) iz*' ('what he is praying'). Maybe he just did not want to invest too much time in advertising publication of another printer, or maybe there was some other reason.

⁴⁷ Incorrectly dated August 5, 1687.

⁴⁸ See Ch. 6; Kleerkooper & Van Stockum, 11-12 mentions the auction; see also Aptroot, *Bible Translation*, 21-23.