

*Buňatová, Marie (Hg.): Migrationsprozesse und Mobilität der europäischen Juden am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit.*

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Research on the mobility and migration of Jews in the European realm is far from being a desideratum in Jewish historiography. There is a prevalent notion, particularly regarding the early modern period, that both voluntary and forced migration of individuals and entire communities were key factors in shaping the historical experiences of Jews and non-Jews alike. Studies focused on medieval migration processes primarily examine the expulsions that led to significant changes in Jewish settlement

patterns across much of Europe. The book under review integrates these two research areas, exploring Jewish migration and mobility in Europe from the early 15th century to nearly the end of the 17th century. This symbolic bridge connecting two conventional historiographical periods may serve as an implicit statement.

The collective monograph “Migrationsprozesse und Mobilität der europäischen Juden am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit” (Migration processes and mobility of European Jews during the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era) comprises thirteen of the seventeen contributions presented at a two-day eponymous conference held in Prague in October 2021 under the auspices of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The articles, written by researchers from the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, and Poland, focus on the broader geographical space of Central Europe. Prague is central to four contributions, reflecting the involvement of their authors in the project “Migration und Mobilität in der Prager Judengemeinde am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit” led by Dr. Marie Buňatová, the volume’s editor. The order of the studies largely follows the sequence of the conference presentations, with a partial chronological arrangement. Geography does not appear to be a key factor in the book’s structure, leaving it unclear whether this is a deliberate choice or a random decision.

The authors employ a wide variety of primary sources ranging from official documents housed in numerous archives or published in scholarly editions to Hebrew prints and Jewish ego-documents as well as three-dimensional artifacts. All primary and secondary sources are properly cited in the footnotes. The volume also includes black-and-white and color images (with a detailed list provided in the back matter), a list of abbreviations, and a topographical and personal index. The only minor structural flaw is the absence of a comprehensive bibliography, which would undoubtedly facilitate navigation through the current research on the topics studied.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly address each article, taking the liberty to discuss them in a different order than they appear in the volume. As previously mentioned, four articles focus on the capital of the Czech lands, Prague. Marie Buňatová examines various types of short-term mobility and long-term migration among Prague’s Jews, including expulsions, family mobility, economic mobility, and the mobility of rabbis. She hypothesizes that Jews expelled from various principalities or towns within the Holy Roman Empire initially settled in southeastern Bohemia before eventually moving to Prague (p. 26). However, the city also served as a temporary refuge for some expelled Jewish families (p. 27). Eva Doležalová explores the connections between the Jews of Prague and other Jewish communities in Bohemia, as documented in the Prague Supreme Burgrave archives preserved in the National Archives of the Czech Republic. She acknowledges that the identification of individuals mentioned in the sources may be problematic due to inconsistencies in the recording of people’s names (p. 190–191). Furthermore, topographic designations in the names of persons may indicate the locations where their bearers were active rather than where they resided. In Kajetán Holeček’s chapter, the contact radius of Prague’s Jews expands. Using two specific examples, the author illustrates the underlying factors behind the business connections between Jews in Prague and Posen, as well as how these communication channels may have devel-

oped over time. Returning to Prague, Eva Blechová presents a typology of encounters between Jews and non-Jews in both public and private spheres. She highlights that official documents—particularly those recording testimonies of historical figures—inadvertently provide insight into everyday informal interactions.

Two articles examine the “Jewish” policies of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I from different perspectives. Heinz Noflatscher presents several examples related to war and expulsions, illustrating the dynamics of the decision-making process that involved influential figures from the emperor’s inner circle and their connections within Jewish communities—especially among the economic elite. While there was room for negotiation, it also had its inevitable limits. By contrast, Markus J. Wenninger describes Maximilian I’s expulsions of Jews from the Habsburg hereditary lands and the semi-orchestrated resettlement of the expelled individuals in other territories. The contributions by Eveline Brugger and Peter Rauscher can be discussed together. Brugger focuses on the aftermath of the so-called Wiener Gesera (1420–1421), while Rauscher’s study examines the situation in Lower Austria during the 17th century, offering a typology of Jewish migration similar to Buňatová’s, with minor variations. Drawing on works from migration studies, he distinguishes between temporary and regular mobility on one hand, and long-term (sometimes permanent) migration, on the other.

Maike Lämmerhirt and Janusz Spira illustrate by way of various examples that the expulsion of Jews from a specific location did not equate to a complete absence of the Jewish element there. In her article on the ejection of Jews from Thüringen in 1436, Lämmerhirt provides evidence that the expelled Jews maintained connections to their places of origin, albeit under challenging circumstances—such as attempting to reclaim rights to previously purchased homes or collect outstanding loans. This may also have been a reason why they tended to remain close to their original residences. The author notes that some regions lack sufficient documentation, resulting in gaps in our understanding of Jewish settlement between the expulsions of the 15th century and the Jewish “comeback” in later centuries. The Jewish presence in Silesia is explored in Janusz Spyra’s article. His main argument is that the official policy of *de non tolerandis Judaeis* in Silesian towns did not signify the end of Jewish presence; rather, due to the utilitarian policies of the Silesian nobility, many Jewish families from Moravia and Bohemia were granted permission to settle. These families subsequently formed the core of the Jewish resettlement in Silesia during the 18th century. The term “expulsion” appears in the volume in various contexts—including a somewhat unique one in Wolfgang Treue’s study discussing the absence of expulsion in the case of Frankfurt am Main. While it is relatively easy to understand why Jews were ousted from certain places, interpreting why they were *not* expelled in others presents a greater challenge. Frankfurt’s “Sonderweg” (p. 243) serves as a compelling counterpoint to studies investigating individual and collective forced migration of Jews.

Lastly, I would like to address the studies by Martha Keil and Lucia Raspe, which share somewhat different source bases and methodologies from the rest of the contributions. Keil focuses on the physical and symbolic migration of artifacts within or beyond the Jewish realm, such as entire books, fragments of parchments and paper,

gravestones, and ritual objects. Not only people migrated from place to place or changed cultural or even religious settings; the life cycle of objects can also be described in similar terms. However, we must often rely on assumptions regarding whether specific objects truly belonged to the Jewish community. In contrast to written sources that document human experiences, researchers studying the mobility of objects must contend with a very limited written or visual resource base. The final article in the volume focuses on the life and work of early modern Hebrew printer Chaim Schachor. Lucia Raspe analyzes his professional trajectory during the first half of the sixteenth century, highlighting new findings about his activities in German towns, where he had to adapt to the needs of Christian readers due to the circumstances surrounding Jewish settlement following numerous expulsions.

The contributions can be viewed as separate entities, but it is far more rewarding to consider them in dialogue. This perspective highlights the shared challenges in researching migration and mobility in the pre-statistical era—particularly the lack of quantitative sources that would clearly identify historical actors (Buňatová, Doležalová) and the absence of records concerning less well-to-do Jewish families in archival documents (Brugger). The outlined hypotheses and typologies serve as an invitation for other experts to join the discussion. For instance, Rauscher briefly mentions the spread of “Betteljuden” in the 18th century following the massive westward migration of Jews as one of the characteristic phenomena of that period. This prompts the question what was different about early modern migration that led to this development, compared to migration patterns in late medieval times? The juxtaposition of contributions investigating late medieval expulsions of Jews from various towns and principalities with early modern migration waves triggered by pogroms and wars in Eastern Europe therefore presents significant comparative potential. One element I found lacking was an introductory or summarizing chapter that would bring all the contributions together, present up-to-date research, explain the book’s place within research trends, and highlight the intersections and common grounds among the articles. Nonetheless, this minor criticism does not detract from the fact that the book contains high-quality studies written by experts in their respective fields, making it a must-read for scholars of both medieval and early modern Jewish history.