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Cover Photo: Niches in the northwestern and southeastern wall of the "upper room" in the Balšića Tower, where, according to tradition, Shabbetai Ševi lived during his exile to Ulcinj. From Eliezer Papo's private archive.

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What Happened in Izmir
Was Soon the Talk of Hamburg

Shabbetai Şevi in Contemporary German Press Reports

Michael Studemund-Halévy

If everything that is necessary for the appearance of the Messiah does not occur precisely as required, we shall experience a catastrophe (Jacob Sasportas in a letter to Isaac Aboab)¹

1. Rise to prominence

The Shabbatean movement constituted one of the most intellectual phenomena in the annals of Jewish history.² Shabbetai Şevi was probably the first historical personage who profited from the mass media and his rise to prominence is inconceivable without the contemporary periodical press, pamphlets, and broadsides. In the absence of such printed gazettes, the Shabbatean movement would have taken a different course. And it is the periodical press that played a significant part in the success this movement achieved not only in Jewish but also in Christian communities.

Various narratives and word of mouth reports traveled from the Levant to the European Jewries through correspondence, moving along trans-Mediterranean Jewish familial and mercantile networks. Most of the letters about Shabbetai Şevi first entered Europe through the Italian port cities of Livorno and Venice, where numerous Jews, including scholars and (some) rabbis, accepted him as their Messiah. Almost all of the Sephardic families in Europe had relatives abroad or had often installed representatives in the Ottoman Empire who kept them informed about the latest events,

1 Apud Eli Moyal, *Rabbi Jacob Sasportas* [in Hebrew], Mosad haRav Kook, Jerusalem 1992, p. xix.

2 Cf. Jacob Barnai, "The Spread of the Sabbatean Movement in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", Sophia Menache (ed.), *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: the Pre-modern World*, Brill, Leiden 1996, pp. 313–338 [here: p. 313].

so many were aware of the messianic fervor that had erupted.³ Emissaries from and to the Holy Land filled an important role in inter-communal communication in the Shabbatean communication network, and community records (*Livro da Nação* and *Copiador*) from the Jewish diasporic communities played a major role in transferring the information.

2. Between News and Rumors

What happened in Izmir was soon the talk of Hamburg.⁴ When the correspondence about the charismatic Messiah Shabbatai Şevi was passed on from the Ottoman Empire and Italy to Hamburg⁵ and Amsterdam,⁶ people were almost crushed in the crowd in their eagerness to hear the most recent news.⁷ Exaggerated stories of his miracles continued to spread throughout the Jewish and non-Jewish world, and many took mere rumors to be absolute truths. The printed word dealing with the Messiah circulated widely and quickly from country to country, and the weekly local press also carried frequent reports on his appearances, his miracles, his supporters and promoters, but also about the arrival of the messianic age.⁸ These news reports, which as a rule were of widely different origin, contributed to the spread of the Shabbatean movement. In an often sensational manner, there were descriptions of the wanderings of the Messiah and his prophet, Nathan of Gaza, and his imprisonment at the fortress at Gallipoli. Later that year he was summoned to Adrianople to the Sultan's private

3 Jan Willem Veluwkamp, "International Business Communication Patterns in the Dutch Commercial System, 1500–1800", Hans Cools et al. (eds.), *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, Verloren, Hilversum 2006, pp. 122, 127–128.

4 Shabbetai Şevi was greeted with almost total acceptance in Amsterdam and Hamburg, two centers of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews; see Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Die Hamburger Sefarden zur Zeit der Glikl", in Monika Richarz & Rotraud Ries (eds.), *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl. Jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Christians, Hamburg 2001, pp. 195–222. On the Shabbatean movement in Amsterdam, see Yosef Kaplan, "The Attitude of the Sephardi Leadership in Amsterdam to the Sabbatian Movement, 1665–1671", in idem (ed.), *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, Brill, Leiden, pp. 211–233 (this essay first appeared in Hebrew in *Zion* 39 (1974), pp. 198–216).

5 Uri Kaufmann and Michael Studemund-Halévy (red.), "Dokumente zur Affaire Shabtai Zvi in Hamburg", Michael Studemund-Halévy (ed.), *Die Sefarden in Hamburg. Zur Geschichte einer Minderheit*, vol. 1, pp. 225–266, Buske, Hamburg 1994.

6 Jetteke van Wijk, "The Rise and Fall of Shabbatai Zevi as Reflected in Contemporary Press Reports", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 33, no. 1 (1999), pp. 7–27.

7 Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1973, pp. 519, 532–533.

8 Barnai, "Spread of the Sabbatean Movement" [Note 2], pp. 313–338.

council;⁹ he was threatened with death by torture if he did not convert to Islam. Reports about his (alleged) dreadful torture had a great impact on the readers. After his apostasy, Shabbetai Sevi emerged as the Islamic Mehmed Effendi.¹⁰

The newspapers reported how thousands and even hundreds of thousands of Jews from Morocco and North Africa were on their way to Jerusalem. Other Jewish troops (frequently meant are the "ten Lost Tribes") had set out in a march on Mecca.¹¹ An anonymous pamphlet titled *Wahre Historische erzehlung / welcher gestalt Die grosse und fürnehme Stadt Mecha Belägert / eingenommen und geplündert; Auch wie der Sarck deß falschen Propheten Machomets / zu sampe dem ganzen Schatze und Edelsteinen in seiner Kirche von deß Türkischen Käysers Rebblischen Arabern und Türcken gefunden und weggeführt worden*¹² reflects the dynamics of the printed mass

9 Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* [Note 7], p. 674.

10 David J. Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi: Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah*, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Littman library, Oxford 2007, pp. 111–113.

11 *The Oxford Gazette*, 11 [=21] December 1665, "it is now about three month since the Jews gave out that near 600000 men were arrived at Mecha, professing themselves to be of the lost Tribes", apud Brandon Marriott, *Transnational Networks and Cross-Religious Exchange in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds. Sabbatai Sevi and the Lost Tribes of Israel*, Ashgate, Farnham 2015, pp. 63–99 [here p. 88].

12 The earliest extant version of the text was printed in 1665, most probably in Breslau. On the history of this edition, see Ingrid Maier and Winfried Schumacher, "Ein Medien-Hype im 17. Jahrhundert? Fünf illustrierte Drucke aus dem Jahre 1666 über die angebliche Hinrichtung von Sabbatai Zwi", *Quaerendo* 39 (2009), pp. 133–167. Another version of this text was delivered by a Hamburg merchant to the Diplomatic Chancery in Moscow in January 1666; cf. Daniel Clark Waugh, "News of the False Messiah: Reports on Shabbetai Zevi in Ukraine and Muscovy", *Jewish Social Studies* 44, 3–4 (1979), pp. 301–322 [here: pp. 310–311].

media which had only just started to emerge.¹³ Reports, pamphlets, and broadsides circulated about a horde of Jewish warriors who together with "rebellious Arabs and Turks" had conquered the city of Mecca and then plundered it. There was no mention of Shabbatai Şevi in this report, but it surely is interlinked with the general European "Shabbetai hype" of the times.¹⁴ On December 31, 1665, Shabbetai Şevi boarded a ship and sailed from Smyrna heading toward Constantinople, the imperial capital. In February 1666 he was arrested (probably already at the entrance to the Dardanelles), and confined in Abydos (today Abide) under a rather liberal form of house arrest. Thus, for example, it is stated in the *Courante uyt Italien en Duytsland* (Amsterdam):

- 13 On the extensive literature on Shabbetai Şevi and the Sabbatean movement, see the magisterial study, especially important for the Hamburg Portuguese Community, by Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah* [Note 7]. See also Matt Goldish, *Jacob Sasportas: Defender of Torah Authority in an Age of Change*, MA thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1991; idem, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2004; Elie Moyal, *Rabbi Jacob Sasportas* [Note 1]; Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi*. [Note 10]; Cengiz Sisman, *The Burden of Silence. Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015; idem, *Transcending Diaspora: Studies on Sabbateanism and Dönmes*, Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık Tikaret, Istanbul 2016; Leyb ben Oyzer, *La beauté du diable. Portrait de Sabbatai Zevi*, Champion, Paris 2011; Marriott, *Transnational Networks* [Note 10]; Jacob Barnai, *Sabbatianism: Social Aspects* [in Hebrew], The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, Jerusalem 2000; Avi Elqayam, *Sabbatean Millenarianism in the Seventeenth Century: A Study of Moshe Abudiente's Fin de los dias* [in Hebrew], Cherub Press, Los Angeles 2014. See also the following studies: Jacob Barnai, "Christian Messianism and the Portuguese Marranos: The Emergence of Sabbateanism in Smyrna", *Jewish History* 7 (1993), pp. 119–126; idem, "The Outbreak of Sabbateanism: The Eastern European Factor", *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 171–183; Elisheva Carlebach, "Two Amens that Delayed the Redemption: Jewish Messianism and Popular Spirituality in the Post-Sabbatian Century", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 82, nos. 3–4 (1992), pp. 241–261; Leib Fuks, "Sabatianisme in Amsterdam in het begin van de 18e Eeuw", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 14 (1980), pp. 20–28; Aron Freimann, *Sabbatai Sevi* [in Hebrew], Verein Mekize Nirdamim, Berlin 1912; Ludwig Geiger, "Deutsche Schriften über Sabbatai Zewi", *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 5 (1892), pp. 100–105; Moshe Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan: The Diffusion of Lurianic Kabbala and Sabbateanism: A Re-Examination", *Jewish History* 7, no. 23 (1993), pp. 79–104; Michael McKeon, "Sabbatai Sevi in England", *AJS Review* 2 (1977), pp. 131–169; Giacomo Saban, "Sabbatai Sevi as Seen by a Contemporary Traveller", *Jewish History* 7, no. 2 (1993), pp. 105–118; Thomas Coenen, *Ydele* 3.
- 14 All of these rumors corroborated the myths about the famous Prester John, tales which occupied the Christian imagination for a quite long period. See Tudor Parfitt, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 2002, pp. 79–80.

Venice, 8 April. A report has been received from Constantinople that the King of the Jews has arrived there, but he was immediately arrested, and it is reported that after being interrogated, he confessed that he was a poor man and could perform no miracles, as had been falsely alleged, and that he likewise did not intend to mislead the Jews or anyone else. Finally he was released and was observed on the street without any accompaniment.¹⁵

3. Shabbetai Ševi in Contemporary German Press Reports

The entire body of known and extant German newspapers of the seventeenth century is now accessible on microfilm and online and in re-enlargements in the *Deutsche Presseforschung* complex at the University of Bremen, although there are huge gaps in the runs of many of them which presumably will never be filled.¹⁶ The project of the Royal Library in The Hague to digitize historical Dutch newspapers will certainly make it somewhat easier for us to work with them, although there are still many collections outside the Netherlands that will not be covered.

Further media of interest for everyday events in the seventeenth century are the illustrated broadsides and pamphlets, stored in large numbers in the excellent Duke August Library in Wolfenbüttel. The extremely rich stock of *pamphlets* was not systematically worked through and evaluated by Gershom Scholem in his biography of Shabbetai Ševi. He studied the published pamphlet literature but knew little of the extent to which the regularly published newspapers also reported about Shabbetai Ševi.¹⁷

A great deal more evidence has come to light since. As Ingrid Maier and others have shown, there is much to learn about the textual affiliation and printing history

15 *Courante uyt Italien en Duytsland* No. 17, 24 April 1666 (Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv Wolfenbüttel, Z 19), apud Maier and Schumacher, "Ein Medien-Hype" [Note 12]; see also Folke Dahl, *Amsterdam Earliest Newspaper Centre of Western Europe: New Contributions to the history of the first Dutch and French Corantos*, Springer, Dordrecht 1939.

16 See now <http://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/zeitungen17>.

17 He was well aware of the periodical newspapers, as he told me in 1979 during our conversation in Jerusalem about locating sources and evaluating them, but he did not include them in working on his extensive study on Shabbetai Ševi.

of the pamphlets.¹⁸ While some Jewish scholars had doubted that the Shabbatean movement was much in evidence in Germany, Poland, or Russia, those views can no longer be defended. Although we now have a more balanced picture than did Scholem of the array of new sources, most collections of manuscript pamphlets and newspapers in European libraries await future investigation.

3.1 What happened in Izmir was soon the talk of Hamburg

Around the year 1666, the Hamburg Portuguese Jewish Community, itself on a solid financial and administrative basis, was caught up for months in a messianic delirium, which only few community members were able to elude. The "Golden Age" and salvation seemed within close reach¹⁹ as letters, newspaper,²⁰ pamphlets, illustrated broadsides, reports by emissaries, travelers, and commercial agents from the Levant spread the news that Shabbetai Şevi, the "anointed King of the Jews", had appeared in the Holy Land.²¹ The Shabbatean adherents everywhere were engaged in complicated

18 Ingrid Maier and W. Pilger, "Polnische Fabelzeitung über Sabbatai Zwi, übersetzt für den russischen Zaren (1666)", *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* 62, no. 1 (2003), pp. 1–39; Ingrid Maier and Winfried Schumacher, "Ein Medien-Hype im 17. Jahrhundert? [Note 12]", pp. 133–167; Ingrid Maier, "Acht anonyme deutsche und polnische 'Sabethai Sebi'-Drucke aus dem Jahre 1666. Auf der Spur nach dem Drucker", *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 2008, pp. 141–160; Ingrid Maier and Daniel C. Waugh, "The Blowing of the Messiah's Trumpet: Reports about Sabbatai Sevi and Jewish Unrest in 1665-1667", in Brendan Dooley (ed.), *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*. Farnham 2010, pp. 137–152; van Wijk, "Shabbatai Zevi" [Note 7], pp. 7–27; Hanna Swiderska, "Three Polish pamphlets on Pseudo-Messiah Sabbatai Sevi", *The British Library Journal* 15, no. 1 (1989), pp. 212–216.

19 On this, see Barnai, "The Spread of the Sabbatean" [Note 2]; idem, "La diffusion du mouvement sabbatéen au XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle," in Shmuel Trigano (ed.), *La Société Juive à travers l'histoire*, Fayard, Paris 1993, vol. 4, pp. 309–328.

20 The evaluation of the reports in the daily press on Shabbetai Şevi, which to date have not been sufficiently utilized as a source, provides, in addition, important information on the interest the Christians had in the movement. The only albeit brief evaluation of reports in French newspapers on the Shabbatean movement was undertaken by N. Szabolcsi, "Témoignages contemporains Français sur Shabbatai Zevi", *Keleti dolgozatok Löw Immanuel emlékére*, Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, Budapest 1947, pp. 184–188. See on this the (unpublished) informative study by Christiane Ahrens, "Sabbatai Zwi (1626–1676). Untersuchungen zu einer messianischen Bewegung und ihrer Rezeption in deutschsprachigen zeitgenössischen Quellen". Seminar paper submitted for the government examination for qualifying as a teacher in secondary schools, University of Hamburg, Hamburg 1979, pp. 62–77.

21 See Meir Benayahu, "Reports from Italy and Holland on the Beginning of the Shabbatean Movement" [in Hebrew], *Erets Yisrael* 4 (1956), pp. 194–205. In the Hamburg State Archive, aside from the files of the former Portuguese-Jewish Communities in Hamburg and Altona, there are no archival materials in German on the messianic movement of 1666.

eschatological calculations aimed at finding clues in the Holy Scriptures for the years 1665–1667 as well as the names Shabbetai Şevi and his Prophet Nathan.²² Within the span of a few fervid months, the Shabbatean movement surged into a mass movement reaching not only the Jews in the Orient and in North Africa but also the Jewish communities in Europe, from Italy in the south to Glückstadt in the north.²³

The first known report in a Hamburg paper comes from November 27, 1665, but only repeats the legend of the Jews rebelling against the Ottomans.²⁴ The *Nordischer Mercurius* reports on a mass psychosis in Smyrna, which supposedly occurred in December 1665. And the news that Shabbetai Şevi, accompanied by a small number of his faithful, was on the way to Constantinople, only reached a German readership nearly three months after the beginning of his journey.²⁵ An impression of such journalism is provided in a vivid report by a Hamburg correspondent, who describes an experience of his own:

Several days ago I received a sketch of their King, whom they call Sabutey Seby, and my house was thus packed with Jews. To prove the truth of the matter they had brought along a foreign Jew who assured us, speaking in Portuguese, that he had beheld this King in Smyrna a short time ago and had venerated him there. The King is a man of 42 years of age and said to be very similar to the likeness in the drawing. And the local Jews believe in him, they chastise themselves, have done away with their casinos and are joyously awaiting to be soon delivered into the realm of their previous freedom.²⁶

The wondrous news reports from the Holy Land and the innumerable letters and numerous pamphlets increasingly fueled the mood and threatened to destroy not only

22 The messianic hopes of the Jews initially were concentrated on the year 5408 (1648): "In the year 408 of the sixth millennium, all residents of the underworld shall be reawakened to a new life, because it is written: 'In this year of jubilee ye shall return every man onto his possession'". But the year 5426 (1666) found greater dissemination for the End of Days, a calculation based on the Thousand Year Reign and the number of the beast "666". On this, see Gerhard (Gershom) Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica. Die jüdische Mystik (Gnosis, Kabbala, Sabbatianismus, Frankismus, Chassidismus) behandelnde Bücher und Aufsätze von Reuchlin bis zur Gegenwart. Mit einem Anhang: Bibliographie des Zohars und seiner Kommentare*, Schocken, Berlin 1933.

23 On the Shabbatean movement in Amsterdam, see Kaplan, "The Attitude of the Sephardi Leadership in Amsterdam" [Note 4].

24 *Wöchentliche Zeitung auß mehrerley örther* 49/3, 1665.

25 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeittung vnd Relation* (Zürich) 14/2, 1666.

26 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / 10 / 1.

the peace inside the c Jews, against them. For that reason, with the aim of preventing the news from the Ottoman Empire from leaking to the outside, a session of the *Ma'amad* was convened on 26 Tevet 5426 (January 3, 1666) in order to discuss the matter in regard to

what regulations should be adopted in order to prevent the damage to us that can result by the disturbance of the peace by the rabble as a result of the news reports being published on the advent of the salvation we hope for (may the Lord in His mercy let it come soon nigh!). The decision is made that the deputies Isaac Namias²⁷ and Selomo Curiel, in the name of the Community, should confer with the lawyer Borderio Paulo, whom the Senate has appointed to inspect that printed matter. And they should advise him not to allow those pamphlets (*gazetas*) to be printed. Mr H. H. Mose Israel, in his prudent caution, sent a note of warning to all members of this Community stipulating that no one should speak with members of another faith about those news reports. Whosoever violates this will be fined five Reichsthalers, and payment of this fine will be strictly exacted. Should the individual persist in this infraction, he shall be excluded from the Israelitic community.²⁸

The first report on the Hamburg Jews and their messianic expectations did not appear until February 1666 in a Zurich newspaper:

Our Jews are highly delighted and say that within a few months, the entire world shall hear of incredible things. Their new King, whom they call Sabbathei Seby, is said to be a man of 42 years in age, and a Portuguese Jew here states that he himself venerated and saw the image of this King in Smyrna a few months ago. All have gotten rid of their gambling dens and are living on a strict diet regimen and in self-castigation, saying that in but a few short weeks, they shall be restored to their former freedom.²⁹

At the center of the Shabbatean sermons was always the call for changing one's ways and avowals of gratitude that one might now be permitted to behold what previous

27 Michael Studemund-Halévy, *Biographisches Lexikon der Hamburger Sefarden*, Christians, Hamburg 2000, p. 690.

28 Isaac Cassuto, "Aus dem ältesten Protokollbuch der Portugiesisch-Jüdischen Gemeinde", *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 10 (1913), p. 295. The Great Assembly thus turns to the official responsible in the city for approval of leaflets in order to ban the distribution of damaging leaflets.

29 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeittung vnd Relation* (Zürich) 10-2, 1666, apud Ahrens, *Sabbatai Zwi* [Note 20], p. 47.

generations had yearned for in vain. Eschatological expectations were cherished not just by the Jewish communities but also by chiliastic and philosemitic groups buoyed by the hope of the physical appearance of the Messiah. Orthodox Christian circles viewed the appearance of prophets and messiahs as a sign in the Holy Scriptures announcing the coming of the Last Judgment. News reports about the "King of the Jews" were thus also avidly read and collected by Christian researchers, such as the Swiss scholar Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667), who in his collection of 56 volumes *Thesaurus Hottingerianus* gathered together all reports and documents available to him.³⁰

Rabbi Jacob Sasportas (c. 1610–1698), for a time resident in Hamburg, collected the 373 letters and reports on the Shabbatean movement sent to him; these were later published by his son Isaac Sasportas in the volume *ציצת נובל צבי*.³¹ As for Hamburg, according to Sasportas' testimony:

What was done was very much greater than in Amsterdam, and the great sound was arousing and the sound from the holy temple resounding and ringing ... saying, this is the end of wonders and David King of Israel does live".³²

And I with my very own eyes did see ... that they unleashed their tongues against the non-believers and called them heretics, in a way that made my hands tremble, and I could not speak for my followers were few ... and even they did not speak aloud but in secret. And the masses were stronger than their leaders and there was no one to talk back to them, and on many occasions they desired to excommunicate the non-believer.³³

30 For a negative description of this collection, see Ludwig Geiger, *"Deutsche Schriften über Sabbatai Zewi"*, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 5 (1892), pp. 100-105.

31 The rabbi and printer Jacob Emden likewise published 1767/68 in Altona a shortened version in Hebrew of *ציצת נובל צבי*. On Jacob Emden and his fight against the Shabbatean movement, see Avrom Bik, *R. Jankev Emden* (Yiddish), Ikuf-Varlag, New York 1946; on Jacob Sasportas' activities and anti-shabbatean polemics in Hamburg, see Moyal, *Rabbi Jacob Sasportas* [Note 1]. See also Kaufmann and Studemund-Halévy, "Dokumente" [Note 5]; Studemund-Halévy, *Biographisches Lexikon* [Note 27], pp. 778–780. Yaakov Dweck (Princeton) is currently preparing an extensive study on Jacob Sasportas (personal communication).

32 *ציצת נובל צבי*, p. 17. Cf. Ezer Kahanoff, "On Marranos and Sabbateans: A Reexamination of Charismatic Religiosity - Its Roots, Its Place and Its Significance in the Life of the Western Sephardi Diaspora", *Ma'of u-Ma'aseh* 8 (2002), pp. 107–140.

33 *ציצת נובל צבי*, p. 47.

3.2 Newspapers, Broadsides, Pamphlets

My analysis of the Shabbetai Şevi affair as reflected in the newspapers is based on the entire extant corpus of German-language newspapers for the period 1665 to 1667, supplemented by five illustrated broadsides and eight pamphlets on the Shabbatean movement. In this way, the decisive period for this messianic movement is covered. The reports from after 1667 that I have included are the result of a few random samples, because given the huge amount of material, it is impossible to work through all the extant newspaper source materials beyond the year 1667.

Between the years 1665 and 1667, there are nearly 100 press reports about the Messiah Shabbetai Şevi – an extraordinarily large number if one considers that only a meager fraction of the newspapers are now extant. All issues of the newspapers available were examined, including such publications where there are only a small number of extant issues for the given year. For that reason, I think there is little sense in looking at the available material for each periodical separately. Consequently, my study will not be able to shed much light on possible differences in reception between individual newspapers from Protestant and Catholic areas or between newspapers from cities with large Jewish and Sephardic communities, such as Hamburg, important commercial centers and papers that appeared quite far from the centers of information.

The reportages in the German press reports I have examined stem from the following sources: Vienna (22); Venice (20); Hamburg (11); Amsterdam (8); Rome (5); Izmir (4), London (3); Cremsbier (3); Stettin (2), and one each from Antwerp, Marseille, Nuremberg, Rheinstrom, Aleppo, Adrianopolis, Constantinople, Lemberg, Kamienieck, and Warsaw.

In 1665, a total of nine reports appeared; in 1666, a total of 51; in 1667, five reports; in 1668 one report; and in 1671 three reports.

The number of articles or short news on every aspect of Shabbetai Şevi is remarkable, equally remarkable is the length of some reports: 56 reports are extremely short: one to five lines, 34 six to ten lines, eleven are longer than ten lines, fourteen were even longer, nine actually filling an entire column. In terms of their magnitude, the newspaper reports have no prominent place, aside from a very few exceptions. Yet in a period stretching over more than six years, the reader was kept informed about the events surrounding Shabbetai Şevi. The Shabbatean movement thus belongs among the small number of topics that have entered the press after forfeiting their current relevance for those involved.

October 1665

The first extant report of this kind is from October 13, 1665.³⁴ Covering a full page, it describes the joint campaign launched by Arabs, Turks, and Jews against the Ottoman Empire. Named as leaders of the uprising are the Pasha of Cairo, Caramazet, and the Pasha of Babylon, Zelinfort. But it notes that the supreme command of the operation was in the hands of the 'Hebrew' Rabbi Habacuc Rubal. It states that this army captured and plundered Mecca and took possession of the grave of Mohammed.³⁵ The same report appeared more than two months later, on Christmas Day 1665, in the *Nordischer Mercurius*.³⁶ The description there extends beyond the facts mentioned above and adds an allegorical description of the army, also dealt with by an illustrated pamphlet in images and text.³⁷ The account of this uprising, with some slight variations, appears in other papers as well. In one report, the Mamelukes have conquered Mecca, in another only the Jews, in still another the Pashas of Cairo and Babylon. Toward the year's end, reports are published casting doubt on the credibility of the news reportages: a report from Amsterdam mentions the uprising, but does not wish to go into any further detail on the "fabulous matters" that have been reported, since the entire matter is deemed to have but questionable truth.

November 1665

An account from Rome dated 27 November 1665 deviates totally from this report: the text of this report stems from a private letter sent from Jerusalem to a clergyman in Rome. There is talk about an uprising of the Jews³⁸ and a "new Messiah", who is referred to as a seducer, and the names Sabbadaei and Nathan also appear, even though the writer of this letter falls prey to a common error of the day. He considers Nathan to be the Messiah and Shabbetai Şevi to be his Prophet. The author describes the Messiah "Sabbadaei" as "a young man, with a fine figure ... aged 23". The letter mentions the traditional historical element of Shabbetai Şevi's intention to journey to Constantinople, there to be anointed as King. The conclusion of the writer casts some

34 *Ordinari Wochentliche PostZeitungen* [Erfurt (?)] / 13. 10. 1665, 103, 3–4.

35 Marriott, "Who Sacked Mecca? The Life of a Rumour, 1665–1666" [Note 13], pp. 63–99]. On the pamphlets, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* [Note 7], pp. 74–75, Nos. 61, 67, 70. See also *Ordinari Dienstags Zeitung* (Hamburg), Nr. 1665/43 (Staatsarchiv Stralsund, Sign. E 4o 511k).

36 *Nordischer Mercurius* [Hamburg] / 1666 / 25 / 12 [Venice], pp. 16–17. See also Else Bogel and Elger Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Studien zur Publizistik 17, Bremen c. 1971.

37 *Warhafftes Conterfey oder Abbildung / Des Jüdisch vermeinten Wunder Propheten Nathan Levi* (possibly Augsburg 1666, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana Eb 1. B-24).

38 *Europäische Wochentliche Zeitung* [Kopenhagen] 1665 / 98 / 1–2.

useful light on the question as to the expectations Christians entertained regarding the Day of the Lord or Last Judgment around the year 1666:

It appears that the Final Judgment is nigh because almost everywhere there are rebellions, heresies and false prophets abound, which are infallible signs of the approaching Final Judgment.

January 1666

In January 1666, the topic of those "rebellious Jews" is picked up again.³⁹ On January 21, 1666, it was reported that a "great force to suppress" the rebellious Jews in Constantinople had assembled. This report is not historically documented, nor is the following either, a report extant in four accounts:

There is wondrous slander regarding Jewish victories against the Turks, to the effect that their General Sapeamelek⁴⁰ has defeated the Pasha in Jerusalem, has killed many near Yektar along with 30,000 Turks and conquered numerous localities.⁴¹

For the first time, there is also a report about the echo this was having in Europe:

Jewry in these parts is overjoyed because they believe the coming of the Messiah is near at hand, and in Hungary and other places they are removing the roofs from their houses.⁴²

It is also reported that the Jews in Greece are preparing to leave and have sold their belongings.⁴³ There is a report about the enthusiastic reaction among the Jews in Hamburg to the news filtering in from Smyrna. In the Hamburg report, the correct name of Shabbetai Sevi also appears for the second time, and his correct age is given. The hope of salvation in a few short weeks is commented on as follows:

39 *Wochentliche N. Zeitung* [Regensburg] / 21 1.1666 / 5 / 2: Rheinstrom 21. 1. 1666.

40 See also Sapeamelek, Sapielinilek, Sapeammeleck.

41 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung vnd Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 7 / 4; see also *Relation Aller Fürnemen vnd gedenckwürdigen Historien* [Straßburg] / 1666 / 8 / 3: Vienna, 8. 2. 1666; *Wochentliche Ordinari-Post-Zeitungen* / 1666 / 8 / 4: Vienna 10. 2. 1666; *Wochentliche Zeitung auf mehrerley orter* [Hamburg] / 1666 / Pr. 8 / 1 : Vienna 1.2. 1666.

42 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung vnd Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 4 / 2.

43 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung vnd Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 8 / 4: Venice; *Wochentliche Ordinarij Zeitungen* [Konstanz] / 1666 / 9 / 4: Venice, etc.

Our Jews have been greatly delighted by the most recent letters from Italy, since they soon shall become the happiest of all human beings in the presence of their King. Only the rich are said to think more highly of new profits than of prophets.⁴⁴

This remark later became a cheap bon-mot which the anti-Jewish polyhistor and clergyman Johann Jakob Schudt (1664–1722) would make use of in the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

February 1666

At the end of February 1666, the first details are spread in the press. The *Nordischer Mercurius* gives a detailed account of the mass psychosis in Smyrna that had come to pass in December 1665.⁴⁶ The news that Shabbetai Şevi, accompanied by a small number, was on the way to Constantinople now also now reaches the German readers, almost three months later.⁴⁷

May 1666

Most press reports from March to May 1666 have been preserved. It is thus probable that there were now the most detailed reports about Shabbetai Şevi's imprisonment, his supposed (fictitious) execution, the then astonishing freedoms he was granted during the detention that followed, the purported miracles, etc.⁴⁸ It is also likely that the interest in the Shabbatean movement peaked in this period. The newspapers report in detailed and drastic accounts about the maltreatment Shabbetai Şevi endured and the subsequent fictitious execution. Four additional papers report that the new Messiah arrived in Constantinople accompanied by 300 or 3,000 persons, and that he was flayed and maltreated and his entire retinue was beheaded.⁴⁹ Yet other papers report that Shabbatai Şevi was strolling freely on the streets as a poor man, while others report that he had been put to death in a wretched manner.⁵⁰ Three papers, including the *Nordischer Mercurius*, correctly report that Shabbetai Şevi was tortured and thrown into prison, and that the Jewish elders had also been arrested in a bid to extort them.

44 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung vnd Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 10 / 2; *Wochentliche Ordinari-Post-Zeitungen* / 1666 / 11 / 2.

45 Johann Jacob Schudt, *Juedische Merckwuerdigkeiten*, Lamm, Berlin 1714, part 1, p. 372.

46 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1665 / 12, p. 270.

47 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / 26 / 2 [Venice], pp. 159–160; *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung und Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 14 / 2: Amsterdam.

48 *Wochentliche Ordinarij Zeitungen* [Regensburg] / 1666 / 15 / 3 : Vienna.

49 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung und Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 17 / 3: Vienna; *Wochentliche Ordinari Postzeitung* / 1666 / 18 / 2: Vienna.

50 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / 9 / 4 [Venice], p. 246.

At the beginning of May 1666, there are reports about "strange things" that had come to pass in the jail. There is also talk about bribes being passed to get more favorable conditions behind bars for the prisoner. In a report from Venice, even the amounts involved are mentioned: 100,000 reais had been offered to the Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü,⁵¹ a further 100,000 had been promised to him if he should release Shabbetai Şevi. Then what follows are detailed reports on how Shabbetai Şevi held royal court in the prison of the so terribly feared Turks.

In mid-May, a report from Venice spreads about an opponent of the messianic movement, a rabbi, to whom the Jews were not listening: his warnings were falling on deaf ears. This report, which talks about that "stubborn and blind people", constitutes one of the few remarks based on an antisemitic tendency. At roughly the same time, the *Nordischer Mercurius* carries the longest newspaper report we have on Shabbetai Şevi: it is dated May 11, 1666, and covers a total of five pages⁵²

The report begins by stating that people at the court of the Sultan must think Shabbetai Şevi is a very special personage, because otherwise they would have long since "impaled" him on the stake. There is a report extending from the beginning of the Shabbatean movement until Shabbetai's imprisonment on February 8, 1666. The chronology of events and the data report are largely in keeping with the historical facts. The author, a Dutch merchant from Smyrna, apparently had close contact with the Jews in the city and learned the story of Shabbetai Şevi's life from them. He also claims to have seen Shabbetai Şevi in December 1655 in Smyrna, because he describes him as "corpulent, though graced with a fine figure".⁵³ This text was also reprinted in the *Hollandtse Mercurius*, *Darium Europium* and in *Theatre Europium*. The report of the German merchant Johann Georg Greflinger⁵⁴ was the first to publish an almost authentic description in German of the biography of Shabbetai Şevi. It is also the only detailed description of the Shabbatean movement in the extant periodicals.

51 The Ottoman Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661–1676) was one of the greatest statesmen of the Ottoman Empire; see Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923*, Murray, London 2005; see also Sisman, *The Burden of Silence* [note 13], pp. 31, 55, 106, 108, 246.

52 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / 11 / 5 [Venice], pp. 296–290.

53 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / p. 297.

54 On the famous satirical poet, translator, publicist, and chronicler Johann Georg Greflinger (c. 1620–1677), founder of the *Norddeutscher Mercurius* (1664–1738), see Wolfgang Harms, *Das illustrierte Flugblatt der frühen Neuzeit*, Hirzel, Stuttgart 2008.

August 1666

In August 1666, there is a report that one brother of Shabbetai Ševi was a land agent, a broker in real estate, which is also in keeping with the facts.⁵⁵

September 1666

The subsequent reports deal with Shabbetai Ševi's conversion to Islam on September 16, 1666.⁵⁶ The reactions to this spectacular bit of news differed markedly, extending from a tersely worded report to an analysis that encompassed and evaluated the entire previous set of developments:

From Smyrna comes the report via Livorno that the supposed Jewish Messiah has foresworn the Jewish religion due to threats from the Sultan in order to save his own life. And in doing so, he has heaped disgrace and shame for all eternity upon his people.⁵⁷

October 1666

The next reports we have are from October 1666. There is a description of what was happening in the Kilitbahir Fortress (Boğazhisarı) in the Dardanelles:

The purported Messiah of the Jews is still imprisoned in the Dardanelles, Jews from throughout the world come daily to pay him a courtesy visit, they arrive on foot, on horseback, 12 janissaries are at his side.⁵⁸

The following later report is largely in keeping with the historical facts:

Smyrna, 28 August. The Messiah united with the Jews is still in the Dardanelles, where he is being grandly treated by the Turks, and his person empties the bags of the Jews, but fills those of the Turks. That because daily he welcomes many visitors from all corners of the globe. Some come from a distance 39, 40, up to 50 whole-day journeys, one person on horseback, another by foot. He is thus on the whole = in great esteem. He goes out whenever he so desires, and has 12 janissaries at his side, who in their festive dress provide him company. People say that the reeve of the castle has, by this means, already accumulated from those desiring to see him the sum of some 60 to 70,000 Reichsthalers.⁵⁹

55 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / 21 / 8, p. 506 [Amsterdam].

56 *Neue Vnpartheysche Zeitung und Relation* [Zürich] / 1666 / 47 / 4: from Italy.

57 *Wochentliche Ordinari Postzeitung* [Heidelberg] / 1666 / 48 / 3–4: London.

58 According to the age-old prophecy, the Messiah was supposed to suffer before the final Redemption

59 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1666 / 28 / 8 [Smyrna], p. 638.

1671

In 1671, the *Nordischer Mercurius* carries a report that the "Messiah, revered yet with great honor among the Jews several years ago, is still a Muslim and in the meantime has become the appointed educator of the son of Sultan Mehmed IV".⁶⁰ Another news report states that Elijah Şevi, a brother of Shabbetai, had converted to Islam (Elijah returned to Judaism after the death of Shabbetai Şevi).⁶¹ Likewise from 1671, we have a special issue of a newspaper dedicated to the "Jewish Prophet".⁶² The report consists of a letter from "Gorion ben Syrach" sent from Adrianople to the Amsterdam Rabbi Ben Eleazar, and two letters from a certain "Moses ben Manasse" from Aleppo are also appended.⁶³

1690

The last established proof of a report in a newspaper touching on Shabbetai Şevi stems from 1690 and is contained under the column heading "*Ruhestunden*" ('Hours of rest and quiet') in the oldest newspaper from Altona. The editor presents his ideas in fictitious dialogues. In a discourse on Shabbetai Şevi, he mentions the arch impostor Shabbetai Şevi, who suddenly rose to fame in 1666, but fell from that pinnacle even faster. Later news accounts report only with scorn about the impostor who claimed to be the Messiah.

The newspaper reports do not provide any new knowledge regarding the history of the Shabbatean movement in the Ottoman Empire, but together with other sources they allow us to make certain statements about the expectations of the coming of the Messiah in northern Europe.⁶⁴

When Shabbetai Şevi converted to Islam on September 16, 1666, after his arrest and under threat of execution, and the news of that arrived in Amsterdam, at the latest in November, almost all testimonials of the messianic hope were destroyed in the Portuguese Jewish Communities, books were confiscated, extensive bodies of correspondence were burned, entries were deleted from the Community books and registers or the corresponding pages were simply torn out. Despite his conversion, Shabbetai Şevi remained for many of his adherents the "King of Israel", and they interpreted his apostasy as a move to save Israel from misfortune.

60 *Nordischer Mercurius* / 1671 / 29 / 2 [Amsterdam], p. 124.

61 *Europäische Montags (Freitag) Zeitung* [Hannover(?)] 1 / 1671, Fr. 33 / 3 : Constantinople. See also Sisman, *The Burden of Silence* [note 13], p. 108, note 92.

62 *Wochentliche Ordinarj Zeitungen* [Konstanz] / 1671 / enclosure after 21 / 2.

63 See Scholem, *Sabbatai Şevi* [Note 7], III. XIII.

64 Ahrens, "Sabbatai Zwi" [Note 20], p. 75.

Just how great the Messianic longings remained among the Portuguese and (High) German Jews in Hamburg and Altona is underscored by the example of the 'charlatan' Shabbatai Rephael Supino (c.1639–after 1668),⁶⁵ one of the greatest believers in Shabbetai Şevi, who in 1667 was still able to successfully appear in Hamburg as a Prophet of Shabbetai Şevi and who was enthusiastically received and celebrated, especially by the Ashkenazic Jews. The herem against Supino was declared after the Hamburg congregation Bet Israel officially abjured its belief in the very disappointing messiah.⁶⁶ After the forced conversion of Shabbetai Şevi to Islam in 1666, a great many disillusioned Portuguese Jews in Hamburg and Amsterdam left their communities, and some converted to Christianity.⁶⁷

In disillusionment with the messianic hope, the most illustrious period in the history of the Portuguese Community in Hamburg came to an end.⁶⁸ From the 1660s

65 Raphael Supino, a rabbi and scholar from Livorno who had accompanied Menasseh ben Israel on his mission to London, is an important source of Shabbatianism; see Marriott, *Transnational Networks* [Note 13], pp. 33, 68–69, 73, 83, 90, 97, 102; see also Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi* [Note 13], pp. 103, 116.

66 *Livro da Nação* (Minute Book), vol. 1, 1652–1672, fols. 368, StAH, 522-1, 993; Yosef Kaplan, "The Place of Herem in the Sefardic Community of Hamburg during the Seventeenth Century", in: Michael Studemund-Halévy (ed.), *Die Sefarden in Hamburg, Zur Geschichte einer Minderheit*, vol. 1, Hamburg 1994, pp. 63–83 [here: p. 82]; see also Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Die Hamburger Sefarden zur Zeit der Glikl", Monika Richarz (ed.), *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl. Jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Christians, Hamburg 2001, pp. 195-222.

67 Between 1671 and 1708, 150 Jews were baptized in the Church of St. Michael in Hamburg; see Martin Friedrich, *Zwischen Abwehr und Bekehrung*, Mohr, Tübingen 1988, p. 110. See also Jutta Braden, *Konvertiten aus dem Judentum in Hamburg 1603–1760: Esdras Edzardis Stiftung zur Bekehrung der Juden von 1667*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2016. In the Genealogical Collection "Baptisms of Jews in Hamburg" (*Judentaufen in Hamburg*) prepared by Dr. Freytag in 1938 for the Research Center on the Jewish Question in the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany (*Forschungsstelle Judenfrage, Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands*), on the basis of the Baptism Registers of the five main churches, for the period 1680–1694 the following Portuguese Jews are listed: Hanna Henriques (June 17, 1684), Abraham Meatob (April 7, 1685), Abraham Jessurun (April 7, 1685) and Cortissos (February 13, 1694). But see the passage by Jacob Sasportas, where he writes: "And likewise among the residents of Amsterdam and Hamburg and England, there were no conversions, praise to the Lord" (Kaufmann and Studemund-Halévy, *Dokumente zur Affaire Shabtai Zvi* [Note 5], p. 251).

68 In a sermon by the Protestant pastor Johann Rephun on Ash Wednesday (February 28, 1666) in Thurnau, he noted that Jews in large numbers could also be converted to Christianity if they were hoodwinked by a prophet of their own or by the Messiah (*Juedischer Heer-Zug / Das ist: Einfaltige Jueden-Predigt*, Thurnau 1666, leaf, B3 r+v).

on, Portuguese began to exit Hamburg, since better legal and economic conditions were offered to them in Amsterdam and in the Dutch and English overseas colonies.⁶⁹ This process was accelerated in the 1690s, when in the Hansa city the anti-Jewish policy of the Hamburg Parliament proved victorious and the Sephardim were stripped of their privileges in 1697. Families such as that of the Teixeira's were among the Portuguese who now resettled in Amsterdam in large numbers.

69 Michael Studemund-Halévy, "Hamburg's Sephardim between Welfare and Poverty", *Jewish Culture and History* 16, no. 1 (2015), pp. 95–104; idem, "The Graves They Left Behind: The Peripatetic Lifestyle of Hamburg's Sefardim between Welfare and Poverty", Myriam Silvera (ed.), *I Marrani*, Florence 2015, pp. 173–189; idem, "Across the Waters. Sefardi Pioneers from Hamburg in the Caribbean", idem (ed.), *A Sefardic Pepper-Pot in the Caribbean*, Tirocinio, Barcelona 2016, pp. 159–209.