

**Jewish Migrations from Germany to Poland:  
the Rhineland Hypothesis Revisited**

Jits van Straten<sup>1</sup>

*Bennekom, Netherlands*

By the sixteenth century there was already a substantial Ashkenazi population residing in eastern Europe which spoke Yiddish and followed Jewish rituals modeled on those of the Jewish population of Germany. It has consequently been assumed by many historians that eastern European Jewry originated in a migration of Jews from Germany prior to that century fleeing the pogroms of the First Crusade, the pestilence of the Black Death, or the expulsions of the fifteenth century. The author examines the historical evidence for such migrations but concludes that no major migration to Poland appears to have taken place as a result of these three events.

**Key Words:** Ashkenazi; Yiddish; First Crusade; Black Death; Fifteenth Century expulsions of Jews; Medieval Germany; Poland.

**Introduction**

An important question that has not yet received an adequate and definite answer is: where did the Ashkenazi Jews who settled eastern Europe come from? Ashkenazi Jews are European Jews, particularly from West, Central and eastern Europe. The Jews in the United States are mainly Ashkenazi Jews from eastern Europe. Before World War II, the Jews living in Poland, Russia and other east European countries accounted for more than 90 per cent of the Ashkenazi Jews.

Over the last 100 years most Jewish historians have favored the opinion that German Jews, and especially those from the Rhineland, were the source of east European Jewry. Because of the prominent role played by the Rhineland Jews, one speaks of the Rhineland hypothesis. To give the Rhineland hypothesis a

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<sup>1</sup> Author's correspondence address: [jits@worldonline.nl](mailto:jits@worldonline.nl)

solid basis the historians point to the three major pogroms that hit German Jewry: the First Crusade (1096), the Plague (1348/49) and especially the expulsions in the fifteenth century (Mahler 1946, p. 22; Mark 1957, p. 190; Vetulani 1962; Weinryb 1972, p. 29; Ankori 1979, p. 36). The consequence of this opinion is that substantial migrations must have taken place from Germany to Poland during the course of these events.

The Rhineland hypothesis also pertains to the origin of the Yiddish language. Many linguists are of the opinion that Yiddish originated in the western part of Germany and that it was brought to Poland by the Jews who were expelled from Germany during the various pogroms (Van Raad and Voorwinden 1973, pp. 57-58; Weinreich 1980, p. 340; Keller 1986, p. 336; Stedje 1999, p. 106). The following three issues are inextricably bound up with this hypothesis:

- a. a sizeable migrations of German Jews from Germany to Poland as a result of the pogroms during the crusades and the Plague, and the expulsions from German cities during the fifteenth century,
- b. a relatively low number of Jews in Poland in 1500 resulting from these migrations (Baron 1957, v. 16 p. 4; Weinryb 1972, p. 32), and
- c. the Rhineland as the place of origin of the Yiddish language that was brought to Poland by the Jews who had fled during the pogroms.

If there is evidence for the above-mentioned migrations, it certainly should appear in *Germania Judaica* (1934-1995), presently the most reliable reference work on Jews in German-speaking regions. So far, three volumes have been published each volume covering a specific period between the fourth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. In each volume the places in the German-speaking regions where Jews lived are discussed in alphabetical order. For each place the history of the Jewish inhabitants is described using archival sources. It is like an encyclopedia that contains all the places in the German-speaking regions where Jews were living.

This study was undertaken to find out what evidence is available to show that the aforementioned mass migrations from Germany to Poland indeed took place, since not all (Jewish) historians agree on their occurrence. It is obvious that *Germania*

*Judaica* should play a central role in this study, and it will be shown that it contains no evidence that the above-mentioned mass migrations took place.

## **Results**

### *The Crusades*

Although there were three crusades, the emphasis will be on the First Crusade of 1096, since the Second (1146) and the Third (1188) Crusades hardly caused any Jewish casualties.

Until the Crusades, the Jews in Germany were treated more or less the same way as the rest of the citizens (Stobbe 1866; p. 8). But in 1096 widespread pogroms were started by the crusaders. It is not clear how many Jews were killed: the number varies from about 2,000 to 12,000. Aronius (1902; nr. 176) considers 4,000 would be the maximum figure, and regards estimates of 12,000 as being much too high.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1905, v. 10, p. 563) states that the first extensive Jewish emigration from western Europe to Poland occurred at the time of the First Crusade (1098) [sic].

Both Caro (1908, p. 206-207) and Graetz (1909, v. 6, p. 85) indicate that the pogrom was worse in Germany than in any other country. The crusaders first came to Trier, where they killed a number of Jews while others saved themselves by accepting baptism. The Jews fared better in Speyer, where at the most only eleven were killed. The rest were given refuge in the palace of the bishop and the castle of the Emperor, where they were protected. Next the Jewish communities of Worms and Mainz were attacked, 800 being killed in Worms and more than 1000 in Mainz. In Cologne, except for two, the Jews were given shelter in the Bishop's Palace and in various citizen's houses and the Bishop allowed them to escape to villages outside Cologne that belonged to him. However the crusaders discovered where the Jews were hiding and killed many of them.

Almost everywhere the Jews were given the choice of avoiding death by accepting baptism, and those who accepted baptism were able to return to their old religion relatively soon. In the spring of 1097, less than a year after the crusade, the Emperor Henry IV allowed the baptized Jews to live according to Jewish law, and the Jewish communities were able to come to life once more.

Caro states that the Jewish communities continued to exist in

all the places where they were to be found before the crusade (Caro 1908, p. 230), while Feist (1925) says nothing about a possible movement of Jews towards Poland in 1096.

In 1926 S. Dubnow, the famous Jewish historian, wrote in *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (p. 427) that:

the First Crusade that carried the Christian masses to the Asiatic East, simultaneously drove the Jewish masses into eastern Europe [my translation].

However, on the next page he writes, and I will first give the German version:

Über den Verlauf der für die jüdische Geschichte so bedeutsamen Emigrationsbewegung besitzen wir keine näheren Nachrichten, doch wissen wir aus den Notizen mancher damaliger Rabbiner und Reisenden, dass jüdische Kaufleute aus Deutschland nicht selten den Weg ... einzuschlagen pflegten.

We have no further information about the course of the emigration, which is so important for Jewish history, but through notes from a number of rabbis and travellers from that period we know that Jewish merchants quite often took the road to Slavic countries like Poland and Russia [my translation].

When I was preparing this article, it seemed to me rather inefficient to translate the German text when there is an English version as well. When I located the English version, I made a rather strange discovery. Assuming that the German version was correct, it seemed that the English version by Moshe Spiegel had been changed with respect to content. It reads as follows:

There are direct reports about the course of that migration: some rabbis and travellers of that time refer to the fact that Jewish merchants from Germany journeyed to ... (Dubnow 1968, v. 2, p. 790).

In view of the controversy regarding the extent of this mass migration, this is a remarkable change/mistake, especially as there is no note specifying any of these direct reports. The German version (and also the Yiddish version, not quoted here) agrees with the original Russian text.

Mark states that during the First Crusade a mass migration of

German Jews took place towards Poland. However, he also suggests that some of them may have returned to Germany (Mark 1957, p. 190).

According to Vetulani (1962) Jews began to arrive in Poland from southern and western Europe by the end of the eleventh century as a result of the pogroms in their countries of origin.

Prawer (1972, p. 19-20), who briefly describes the atrocities committed during the crusades of 1096 and 1146, does not say a word about Jews fleeing towards Poland.

Similarly Toch (1997) concludes that after 1096 the Jews returned to the places where they had been persecuted before.

In order to decide what really happened during the crusades we have to rely on *Germania Judaica* volume I (Elbogen et al. 1934). The following list shows the information available.

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Aschaffenburg | 2nd Crusade: caused great sorrow to the inhabitants (p. 14).   |
| Bacharach     | 2nd Crusade: three Jews with their families fled to the castle of Stahleck. When they left the castle to conduct their business they were killed by the crusaders (p. 17).   |
| Bonn          | 1st Crusade: Jews fled to Altenahr or Eller (p. 47).   |
| Boppard       | 1196: Crusaders killed eight Jews (p. 61).   |
| Cologne       | 1st Crusade: the Jews fled to seven villages around Cologne where they were protected by the archbishop. In the end they were killed by the crusaders after all (p. 70).   |
| Geldern       | 1st crusade: is one of the seven villages around Cologne (p. 114).   |
| Halle         | 1st Crusade: six Jews died in fights with the crusaders. The rest of the community went to a place opposite Halle (Merseburg?) (pp. 125, 227 ).  |
| Mainz         | 1st Crusade: about 1000 Jews killed, comprising the largest part of the community.<br>3rd Crusade: According to Eleasar ben Yehuda of Worms, on 2 February, he and most of the Jewish community of Mainz fled to the fortified city of Münzenberg when the |

	movement of the crusaders started. On 26 April they returned to Mainz (pp. 180-181).
Mehr	1st Crusade: some Jews were killed, some forcibly baptized (p. 224).
Neuss	1st Crusade: probably 200 Jews killed (p. 243).
Nuremberg	2nd Crusade: Jews from the surrounding places fled to the city (p. 249).
Prague/Bohemia	1st Crusade: some Jews killed, others forcibly baptized (p. 270).
Regensburg	1st Crusade: all were forcibly baptized, but in 1097 they returned to their own religion (p. 286).
Rüdesheim	1st Crusade: 53 or 60 persons and a certain Rabbi Kalonymos, originally from Mainz, were killed (p. 313).
Speyer	1st Crusade: eleven Jews killed (p. 330). 2nd Crusade: one woman killed (p. 331). 3rd Crusade: according to the above-mentioned Eleasar ben Yehuda, the Jews of Speyer had to leave the city and fled to fortified towns (p. 371).
Strassburg	3rd Crusade: idem for Strassburg (ibid.).
Trier	1st Crusade: partly killed, partly forcibly baptized (p. 377). 2nd Crusade: one person killed (ibid.).
Wevelinghofen	1st Crusade: This was one of the seven places around Cologne where the Jews were sent for refuge by the archbishop (pp. 395-396).
Worms	1st Crusade: 800 Jews killed, and an unknown number forcibly baptized (p. 441). 2nd Crusade: Jews fled to fortified castles; one killed (ibid.).
Xanten	1st Crusade: one of the seven places around Cologne mentioned before (p. 497).

Jews fleeing to Poland are mentioned nowhere. In cases where something is known about the destination of the fleeing

Jews, it appears that they remained in the neighbourhood. Therefore, there is no evidence that the initial impetus to the forming of the large east European Jewry was the result of mass migrations during the Crusade of 1096 from Germany in general and from the Rhineland in particular.

### *The Plague*

Virtually the whole of Europe suffered from the Plague in the fourteenth century. The epidemic first spread from southern France to the bordering Spanish provinces and then to the rest of Europe. In 1348 the Jews were confronted with a serious accusation: they supposedly had poisoned the wells which in turn was alleged to have caused the Plague which became known as the Black Death. The accusation resulted in terrible pogroms.

According to statements by contemporaneous historians, there would have been hardly any Jews left in Germany after the Plague (Kutschera 1910, p. 235). Many refugees and exiles started a new life in Austria, Bohemia and in the bordering provinces of Poland (Dubnow 1969, v. 3, p. 263). According to Feist (1925, p. 130), all the Jewish communities of central Germany, southern Germany and Silesia were destroyed and few Jews remained. However, a little further on, he states that it is not true that during the Middle Ages all Jews were expelled from central Germany. Although the Jews in the Rhineland were hit by numerous pogroms, in some other communities, like Frankfurt, the Jews did not suffer much. Dietz shows that in his time there were 29 Jewish families who could trace their family tree in Frankfurt to before 1400, while the family tree of four of these families even went back to before 1350 (Dietz 1907, pp. 343-344). Between 1350 and 1370 again, small groups of Jews returned to Augsburg, Nuremberg, Cologne, Strasbourg and other cities (Dubnow 1969, v. 3, p. 263). Walcher (1852, p. 5) reports that in 1350, a tax book of the city of Stuttgart mentions a street in which Jews lived; also mentioned is a small yearly levy they had to pay to the city for a couple of buildings, including a Jewish school. In 1382 King Wenzel gave an *enfeoffment* (*Lehnsbrief*) to Margrave Bernhard I of Baden with the express right to protect Jews and to allow them to settle in his territory (Zehnter 1896).

According to Feist, Dubnow and Baron, a large number of those who escaped the persecutions fled to the east and found

refuge in the Kingdom of Poland. This idea can also be found in the more recent literature. For example Motulsky (1995) states that Ashkenazi Jews, whose ancestors originally came from Palestine, migrated to the Rhineland in the ninth century, and that in the fourteenth century they moved to Poland.

But none of the above-mentioned authors provides any evidence or documentation for the claim that Jews migrated from Germany to Poland. Graetz does not even mention Poland (Graetz 1909, v.7, pp. 331-348).

Again we will have to turn to *Germania Judaica*, in this case Volume II (Avneri 1968), for evidence concerning the extent of migration of German Jews to Poland during the Plague. Volume II covers the period between 1238 and the mid-fourteenth century. The last but one sentence of the Introduction reads as follows: “survivors found refuge in Neumark and Poland; after a while, others were again taken on in the cities that had committed murder of the Jews, under essentially worse circumstances than before the Plague” [p. XXXIX; my translation].

I accordingly divided all the German places mentioned in Volume II of *Germania Judaica* in which it was certain that Jews were living, into the following three categories:

- Places where no pogrom took place as a result of the Plague (12).
- Places where Jews were killed and/or expelled (350); When it was stated, I also noted the place to which the survivors migrated.
- Places without information about the Plague or places where it is not clear what happened during the Plague (360).

Contrary to what Avneri writes in the Introduction, there is no evidence whatsoever that Jews fled from Germany to Poland during the Plague. When anything is known at all, it appears that, again, the Jews mainly fled or moved to somewhere else in Germany or to another German-speaking region. Poland is mentioned nowhere (except in the Introduction). An extra reason to assume that few if any Jews went to Poland is the fact that within a relatively short time Jews are once again to be found living in more than one third of the affected places. Where did these Jews come from? Back from Poland? In that

case they certainly did not contribute to the formation of Polish Jewry.

#### *Expulsions During the Fifteenth Century*

Mahler (1946, pp. 26-27) states that the persecution of the Jews in Germany reached its height in the fifteenth century, stating that shortly after 1400 the Jews were expelled from the Rhineland, halfway through the century they were expelled from southern Germany, and toward the end of the century from the remaining German cities, as well as from Austria, Silesia, Bohemia and Hungary. He alleges that all these Jews went to the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, as the Polish economy had an urgent need for merchants and craftsmen.

Writing about a fifteenth century migration of Jews to Poland, Weinryb takes the view that there were probably no more than twenty-five to fifty thousand Jews living in the whole of Germany at the beginning of the fifteenth century, but that sizeable groups of Jews were apparently streaming into Poland from Austria and Bohemia, as well as from Germany (1972, pp. 29-30). He refers to more than 20 cities and regions (mostly in Germany), which suggests that he thought that the Jewish migration to Poland took place from these cities and regions. But he admits that the evidence for a substantial migration is almost purely indirect, referring to a number of documents in which permission by Polish rulers is granted to small numbers of German Jews to enter and live in Poland. In addition, an increasing number of people appear in Poland using German place names as surnames.

Toch (1997) believes that at the beginning of the fifteenth century, some places in Germany had as many Jews as immediately before the Plague, although others had less. He states that during the notorious expulsions of the fifteenth century, the Jews left the bigger cities but settled in nearby villages. According to him, there was a pre-emptive migration which led to a situation that was characteristic of the sixteenth century: the Jews took up residence in villages close to major cities for which they were unable to obtain a residence permit, in order to be able to enter the cities in the daytime to carry on their trade. Therefore, as of the fifteenth century, residence in the country became common for German Jews.

Initially it seemed to me to be a good idea to check the places mentioned by Weinryb, but in the end I chose a broader

approach, using *Germania Judaica* Volume III 1350 - 1519, Part One (Maimon 1987). The first part contains all places from A through L, and I categorized these (excluding the Dutch and Belgian ones) in the following way:

- Places from which Jews were expelled, with destination where possible (169),
- Places from which Jews were not expelled (14),
- Places about which it says nothing is known about an expulsion, or about which no mention is made of any expulsion (307),
- Places about which it is unclear whether there were any Jews in the fifteenth century (18).

It can be stated with certainty that the Jews were expelled from only one third of the places where they lived during that time. I will cite information about the German towns that Weinryb mentions as examples, plus some additional towns. The dates of expulsion are given in parenthesis.

Augsburg (1438, 1440): The expelled Jews went to Günzburg, Bamberg, Frankfurt am Main, Mainz, Nördlingen, Rothenburg/Tauber and Ulm (p. 49).

Bamberg (1475): many left the town voluntarily; some stayed until at least 1485 in the hope soon to be allowed lawfully to remain (pp. 76-77).

Erfurt (1453): the Erfurt Jews settled in Hochheim and Daberstadt, two villages near Erfurt (p. 316).

Freiburg (1401): no destination known (p. 397).

Glogau (1484): no destination known (p. 441).

Graz (1438, 1496): this is an Austrian town. One Jew expelled in 1438 went to Pressburg, Hungary, two others went to Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Some of the expelled in 1496 left for Eisenstadt, Hungary (p. 464).

Heilbronn (1471-1476): not mentioned by Weinryb: Most of the expelled Jews went to smaller neighbouring towns and villages, especially Neckarsulm and Sontheim. Others went to Massenbach and other places. One Jew went to Speyer, and later to Nördlingen, Schweinfurt, Ulm and Worms (p. 536).

Magdeburg (1493): one of the expelled possibly went to Braunschweig (p. 778).

Mainz (1438, 1462, 1470): the first date mentioned is 1438. In 1445 the Jews were again allowed to live in the city. In 1462 not only the Jews but also some non-Jews were thrown out of the city following the capture of the city by Adolf II of Nassau. In 1463 the Jews were allowed back, but in 1470 they were again expelled. No destinations are given (pp. 805-806).

Mecklenburg (1492): not mentioned in *Germania Judaica*.

Meissen (1411): no expulsion is mentioned in *Germania Judaica*.

Nuremberg (1499): most of the expelled, 10 families, about 60 persons, went to Frankfurt am Main. Others went to Neustadt/Aisch and Hüttenbach, and some also ended up in Turkey and the Slavic East. The expression Slavic East is not further explained (pp. 1022-1023).

Salzburg (1498): this is an Austrian town. One of the expelled went to Regensburg (p. 1291). According to note 81 (p. 1295), the destinations Hungary, Poland and Turkey, conjectured by Altmann are not mentioned in any source (p. 1291).

Ulm (1499): the expelled moved to Bonn, Günzburg, Pappenheim, Mutzenhausen and Worms (pp. 1507-1508).

Württemberg (1498): not mentioned in *Germania Judaica*.

Würtzburg (1450, 1489): in 1450 at least 18 families left the city or planned to do so.

As a last example of a German city, in 1423/24 the Jews were expelled from Cologne. Quite a number left for Deutz (on the other side of the river!), many went to Siegburg, Mühlheim am Rhein, Frankfurt am Main, Speyer and, as it seems, also to Salzburg. Later we find one Jew in Poland with a name that refers to Cologne: in 1521 Abraham ben Jechiel (from Cologne) died in Lemberg. In Lemberg German was spoken.

Cologne is not just given as an example, because it is the only German place in connection with which Poland is mentioned. In the Town Hall of Cologne, a very nicely decorated Gothic key was found, connected to a wooden hanger by way of a leather strap (Wirtler and Kapsler 2000, p. 460). On one side of the hanger, dated 1427, three years after the

expulsion, there is a Hebrew inscription, saying that it belonged to the Schaf family; on the other side there is an inscription in German, saying “up der burger huis” meaning “in the Town Hall”. The key cannot have been confiscated during the expulsion, because the date is too late. Furthermore, if the Schaf family possessed a box in the Town Hall in 1427, they must have been living in the neighbourhood (they indeed lived in Deutz). What use would a Hebrew inscription have in 1427, if there were no Jews living there? This means that after the expulsion, people who were able to read Hebrew, i.e. Jews, still had ties with the city of Cologne. One might go one step further and conclude that even after the expulsion this Jewish family must have been of considerable importance for Cologne, otherwise they would not have had this box in the Town Hall.

The other three or four times that Poland is mentioned are in connection with mainly Silesian (at that time German, but today Polish) places. To give an example of one of these: Breslau, 1453. The Jews moved to other places in Silesia, Bohemia, Moravia and Poland.

I did not check Part Two of Volume III of *Germania Judaica* any further than the places mentioned by Weinryb. We may assume that the destinations of Jews who lived in places that start with the letters of the second half of the alphabet would not have been much different from those of Jews from the places A through L. Said differently, I assumed that no selection towards Poland would have taken place in respect of those leaving places whose name began with letters from the second part of the alphabet, and that being the case it appears that no substantial movement of German Jews took place towards Poland in this time period.

*Germania Judaica* clearly shows that where we know the destination of Jews who were expelled from a German town or city, they usually went to another German location. Sometimes only a few Jews were involved in such a migration, at other times it was a considerable number.

## **Discussion**

The evidence of *Germania Judaica*, plus the inability of historians to produce evidence regarding substantial migrations from Germany to Poland, makes it clear that mass migrations from Germany to Poland during the periods investigated cannot be proven. The lack of evidence makes the Rhineland

hypothesis questionable as far as migrations are concerned. Moreover, the finding of the wooden hanger with the Hebrew inscription in the Town Hall of Cologne, dated 1427, is evidence that total expulsion did not take place.

I should point out that I am certainly not the first researcher to question the idea that east European Jewry is based on migrations from Germany. As far as the Crusades are concerned, already in 1910 Kutschhera (pp. 199-200) wrote that in the days of the Crusades there were not enough Jews in the eastern part of Germany and in Bohemia to be able to send large numbers of Jews to Poland. King (1992) writes: "Demographically it is not possible to account for the enormous growth of Ashkenazic Jewry in Poland and other parts of eastern Europe from western European sources alone."

The interesting question concerning this subject is: how is it possible that the Rhineland hypothesis could become a generally accepted theory based on mass migrations without anybody producing any evidence for it? While reading the chapter "Origins and History of Ashkenazi Jews (8th to 18th Century) by Ankori in *Genetic Diseases Among Ashkenazi Jews* (Ankori 1979), the answer to the question presented itself. On p. 36 Ankori writes: "Expulsion followed expulsion: from England in 1290, from France in 1306 and twice again until it was made final in 1394, and in the 15th century from individual cities and provinces from Germany, [...] The better-known expulsion from Spain in 1492 [...] merely completed the picture. By the end of the Middle Ages and in early modern times, western Europe was *judenrein* [cleared of Jews]." And to complete the thought, he continues: "Thus, half a millennium or so after his original arrival on the Carolingian scene, the Ashkenazi Jew was on the road again. This time the direction of the movement was eastbound, to Central and eastern Europe, ...".

His basic idea, and thus the basic mistake, is the lumping together of all expulsions. The expulsions from England and Spain were the only ones which gave the Jews no choice but to leave the country. Neither France, nor Germany at any point became *judenrein*! The lack of knowledge about the real situation in Germany (and France) could lead to such a conclusion. This would also explain why Weinryb (1972) concludes that in 1500 there were only 10,000 to 15,000 Jews in

Poland/Lithuania. That sounds like a reasonable number if they had to come from Germany. However, these estimates are not factual. Following this line of thought, it also becomes (almost) logical to assume that the expelled Jews went to Poland – how else can one explain east European Jewry? These easy assumptions may be the reason why nobody gives any evidence for the migrations to Poland – it all seems so self-evident.

Maybe there were some other migration streams from Germany to Poland in the period covered? If that would have been the case, for sure something would have been mentioned in *Germania Judaica*.

There are some points that are put forward by Weinryb as evidence of mass migration from the west (Weinryb 1972, pp. 29-31).

- a. The ritualistic tradition of Polish Jewry resembles that of French-German-Bohemian Jews.
- b. From the fourteenth century and on, an increasing number of surnames from German places are found among Jews in Poznan, Kalish and Cracow.
- c. Many rabbis came from Germany.
- d. In the fifteenth century some Jews came from Bohemia.

As far as the points (a) and (c) are concerned, they are the same. It is known that the level of Jewish learning in eastern Europe, at least until the First Crusade was very low. This is clearly shown by the fact that all 17 rabbis who are named with respect to *responsa* before 1096 come from western Europe, and especially from western Germany and France (Agus, 1965). A *responsum* is an answer given by a rabbi of outstanding Talmudic knowledge to a question put to him by a local Jewish court that felt itself incompetent to solve the question. It is therefore quite obvious that if rabbis had to come from western Europe, the ritual tradition might well be west European. This does not prove a mass migration from Germany.

As far as point (b) is concerned, I do not know how many surnames are involved, or how many of those names belonged to rabbis. With surnames one has to be careful, a place name does not always mean that the bearer of a place name came from that place.

Point (d) does not say anything about the origin of these Jews. Beider (2001, pp. 172-174) concluded from onomastic

research that during the Middle Ages there was no relationship between German and Czech Jews. He does not know where the Czech (Bohemia and Moravia) Jews originated, and the names found do not point to any specific region.

It is quite obvious that individuals moved from Germany to Poland (merchants, rabbis), but this is not the same as mass migrations.

### Conclusion

1. During the First Crusade and the Plague, the Jews of Germany did not migrate to Poland.
2. During the expulsions in the fifteenth century, the Jews were not expelled from Germany and did not migrate *en masse* to Poland. Remarks about Germany being *Judenrein* at the end of the Middle Ages are speculation.
3. The Rhineland hypothesis is not tenable when it has to rely on mass migrations of Jews during the Crusades, the Plague or the fifteenth century expulsions.

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Under the Rhineland Hypothesis, European Jews would be very similar to each other and would have a predominant Middle Eastern ancestry. The rival explanation, the Khazarian Hypothesis, states that the Jewish-convert Khazars – a confederation of Turkic, Iranian, and Mongol tribes who lived in what is now Southern Russia, north of Georgia and east of Ukraine, and who converted to Judaism between the 7th and 9th centuries – along with groups of Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman Jews, formed the basis of eastern. If there was no mass migration out of Palestine at the 7th century, what happened to the ancient Judeans? And crucially for Dr Elhaik, how would these new findings affect disease studies on Jews and Eurasian populations? @article{Elhaik2013TheML, title={The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses}, author={E. Elhaik}, journal={Genome Biology and Evolution}, year={2013}, volume={5}, pages={61 - 74} }. E. Elhaik. Published 2013. Biology, Medicine. Genome Biology and Evolution. The question of Jewish ancestry has been the subject of controversy for over two centuries and has yet to be resolved. [...]

**Key Method** We applied a wide range of population genetic analyses to compare these two hypotheses. Jewish Migrations from Germany to Poland: The Rhineland Hypothesis Revisited. J. Straten. History. Evidence Matters HISTORICAL METHODS, Winter 2007, Volume 40, Number 1 Copyright © 2007 Heldref Publications Early Modern Polish Jewry The Rhineland Hypothesis Revisited JITS VAN STRATEN Independent scholar Bennekom, the Netherlands Abstract. As mentioned before, there is no evidence of rate was not as large as had been previously indicated in the a Jewish mass migration from Germany. literature, and, as a result, the influence of Jewish infant The Therefore, in this First, a crude calculation back to 1500 will be made for study, the size of the Jewish population in the Polish- the Jews of Congress Poland, to get a preliminary idea Lithuanian Commonwealth in The calculation come from Germany after all, for no substantial migrations shows that... The result is that many theories of Jewish presence in northern Europe (the Ashkenazi) tend to be politically inspired: complaints of medieval ecclesiastics about Jews creating of slave-trading networks; complaints of ecclesiastics about proselytizing Jews forcibly converting their employees/slaves/housekeepers; the more recent (and equally discreditable) theory of wholesale early medieval Khazar conversion to Judaism. And even the seemingly less pernicious theory, but still reflecting a cultural stereotype more so than historical knowledge, is that of Jewish migration as a by-product of some essential mercantile imperative of Jewish culture. Leaving aside the above disclaimer then we can turn to evidence.