

Article published in:

Björn Siegel, Mirjam Thulin, Tim Corbett (Eds.)

Intersections between Jewish Studies and Habsburg Studies)

PaRDeS : Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies in Germany, Vol. 29

2024 – 202 pages

ISBN 978-3-86956-552-1

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-62207>



Suggested citation:

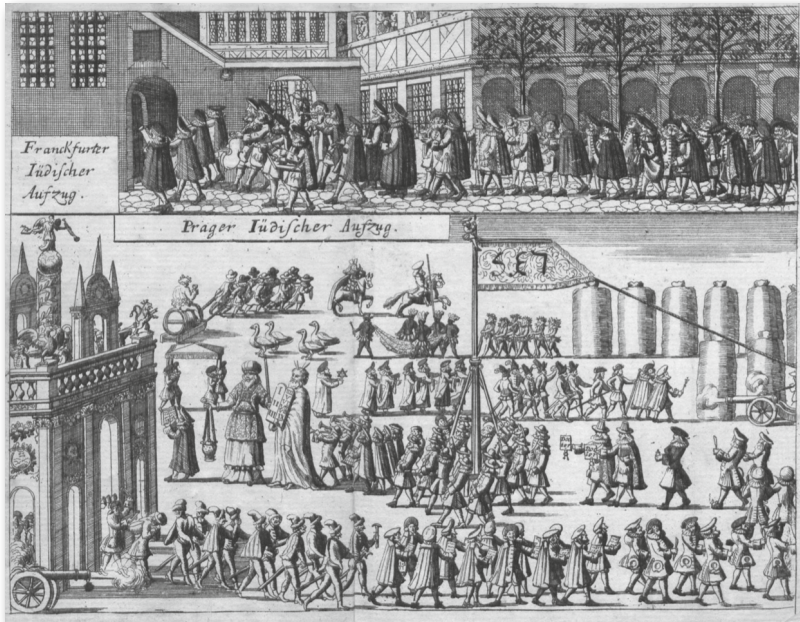
Verena Kasper-Marienberg: Imperial Transition and Early Modern Jewish Continuities: The Case of Bohemian Jewry. *PaRDeS* 29 (2023), S. 53–66.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-65022>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons License Attribution 4.0

This does not apply to quoted content from other authors. To view a copy of this license visit:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode.de>



Processions of Prague and Frankfurt Jewish communities in spring of 1716 celebrating the birth of Habsburg heir Prince Leopold Johann of Austria. Both communities employed similar performative practices to show their belonging to their respective urban community and the empire. Aside from using shared imperial symbols they imitated noble clothing styles to emphasize the status of their Jewish leadership, evoking similarity and closeness to nobility as author Johann Jacob Schudt mockingly noted. Source: Johann Jacob Schudt, *Jüdisches Franckfurter und Prager Freuden-Fest: Wegen der höchst-glücklichen Geburth Des Durchläüchtigsten Käyserlichen Erb-Prinzens, Vorstellend Mit was Solennitäten die Franckfurter Juden selbiges celebrirt, auch ein besonders Lied, mit Sinn-bilder und Devisen, darauß verfertigt; So dann Den Curieuses kostbahren, doch recht possirlichen Auffzug, so die Prager Juden gehalten [...]*, Frankfurt am Main: Andreä, 1716, p. 4.

Imperial Transition and Early Modern Jewish Continuities: The Case of Bohemian Jewry

by Verena Kasper-Marienberg

Abstract

This article brings two seemingly disconnected historiographic models of periodization into conversation: Habsburg studies and Habsburg Jewish studies. It argues for an expansion of the temporal frameworks of both fields to highlight historical continuities connecting the Holy Roman and Habsburg Empire at least from a structural perspective. These historical continuums are a useful analytical lens when applied to marginalized groups, like early modern Jews, in tandem with a central group of contemporary powerholders, such as the Habsburg nobility. Using Bohemia as a case study, this essay juxtaposes questions of transregional transfer of cultural, economic, and social capital with the challenges of Jewish marginalization and discrimination to highlight the changing yet interconnected imperial landscapes.

1 Periodization Models in Early Modern Habsburg and Jewish Studies

The 18th century has become the primary area of research for early modern Habsburg Jewish historiography. Its narratives tend to highlight the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), rabbinic schisms between different religious movements such as Sabbateanism, Frankism, and Hasidism, and enlightened toleration policies from Joseph II to Napoleon.¹ These studies emphasize the

¹ Since the list of important works would be too long, see as an exemplary selection Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Paweł Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Louise Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Der Pädagoge und Reformler Peter Beer (1758–1838)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008). Joshua Teplitsky, *Prince of the Press: How One Collector Built History's Most Enduring and Remarkable Jewish Library* (New Haven: Yale Uni-

continuities of Jewish life in Central Europe between the 18th and 19th centuries with a periodization model based on intellectual history. They describe the Jews' path to modernity as beginning with religious pluralism and culminating in the participation of Jews in the European Enlightenment and civic projects.² In European Jewish historiography, this intellectual success story has been termed the "long 18th century" by Michael K. Silber and other scholars, which reached its apex with Jewish emancipation in the mid- to late-19th century when national revolutions accelerated full citizenship for Jews in the German and Habsburg lands.³ It echoes the concept of a "saddle period" (Sattelzeit) as discussed in the broader realms of intellectual history since the 1960s, mainly by Reinhart Koselleck and Michel Foucault.

However, most Habsburg Jewish studies scholars have not taken notice of a dramatic political change that occurred during this period and its effect or lack thereof on Jewish daily life: the transition of Central European empires between 1804 and 1806.⁴ In 1804, Francis II/I (1768–1835), the last emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (r. 1790–1806), proclaimed a new Austrian hereditary empire encompassing all Habsburg hereditary and crown lands. Two years later, under pressure from Napoleon, he disbanded the Holy Roman Empire, the largest and longest-standing Central European political association, after

versity Press, 2019); Sharon Flatto, *The Kabbalistic Culture of Eighteenth-Century Prague: Ezekiel Landau (the 'Noda Bihudah') and His Contemporaries* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010).

- ² The chronological chapter division in survey works is a good indicator for this common periodization. See, for example, Christoph Lind, "Juden in den habsburgischen Ländern 1670–1848," in *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, eds. Eveline Brugger, Martha Keil, Albert Lichtblau, Christoph Lind, and Barbara Staudinger (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2006), 339–446. Similarly, Louise Hecht, "Österreich, Böhmen und Mähren 1648–1918," in *Handbuch Zur Geschichte Der Juden in Europa*, eds. Julius Schöps and Elke-Vera Kotowski, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: WBG, 2001), 101–34; Dan Diner, "Between Empire and Nation State: Outline for a European Contemporary History of the Jews, 1750–1950," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 61–80.
- ³ Michael K. Silber, "The Making of Habsburg Jewry in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, eds. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 763–797, here 763.
- ⁴ The Holy Roman Empire has not been sufficiently discussed in broader empire studies. While this article cannot examine this in more detail, it is noticeable that it is often subsumed under the Habsburg Empire, with a trajectory running from the Spanish-Habsburg to the Austrian Empire of the 19th and 20th centuries. For a discussion of the possible reasons, see Peter H. Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), 3–6.

almost 400 years of Habsburg leadership. For two years in between, Francis II/I held the power of both empires in a most intimate union: his legal persona. Continuities and fundamental disruptions went hand in hand during this transition period of intense warfare in Central Europe. When Francis ultimately abdicated on August 6, 1806, the Holy Roman Empire and its imperial institutions were dissolved. The imperial diet in Regensburg, the two supreme courts in Vienna and Wetzlar, the empire's executive imperial circles and, most importantly, the sophisticated political structure of its imperial estates across Central Europe all ceased to exist.⁵ The resulting power vacuum was filled by European rulers who replaced imperial hierarchies and institutions. For Jews who had lived within the borders of the Holy Roman Empire, the legal basis of their claim to residency as *cives romani* had fundamentally rested on imperial law and it would now be entirely replaced by territorial and state law.⁶

Readers of Habsburg Jewish history appear to have taken little notice of the transition of Central European empires, which is essentially absent in the scholarly literature, particularly in English. This gap is of note because the imperial shift is constitutive for the field of Habsburg studies, with Habsburg imperial historiography commonly beginning with 1804. A brief example serves as illustration: over the last fifty years, Habsburg studies published in the leading American scholarly journals of the field have focused almost exclusively on the history of the Austrian Empire, founded in 1804, the Austro-Hungarian Empire since 1867, and its successor states. Even though every new editorial board of *Central European History* and *Austrian History Yearbook* reaffirmed the goal of including premodern Habsburg history, recent analyses of these journals have shown early modern histories of the Habsburg lands

⁵ On the long underrated reaction to the end of the Holy Roman Empire due to Prussian and Austrian-focused historiographies, see Wolfgang Burgdorf, *Ein Weltbild verliert seine Welt: Der Untergang des Alten Reiches und die Generation 1806*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009).

⁶ In most parts of the Holy Roman Empire, like in Bohemia, territorial laws for Jews had already de facto replaced or outmaneuvered imperial law mostly because of a lack of imperial executive power and special legal privileges granted by emperors to territorial princes. In theory, however, and in special cases, like denied justice, Jews from across the empire could still appeal for protection to imperial institutions qua imperial law until 1806. On the development of imperial legislation regarding Jews in the Holy Roman Empire, see Friedrich Battenberg, "Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen jüdischer Existenz in der Frühneuzeit zwischen Reich und Territorium," in *Judengemeinden in Schwaben im Kontext des Alten Reiches*, ed. Rolf Kießling (Berlin: Akademie, 1995), 53–79, here 60–61.

and the Holy Roman Empire to be marginal, at best.⁷ Habsburg Jewish history is well represented from the 19th century onward; early modern Habsburg history, and Habsburg Jewish history in particular, are not. This suggests a lack of conversation between the intersecting fields of early modern Jewish and Habsburg Studies.

What might be gained if we created an interface between early modern Jewish and Habsburg studies and connected these two different periodization models? Instead of reading models of Jewish modernity backwards into the 18th century, what would following the path of early modern Jewish history forward into the 19th century tell us about the imperial shift?⁸ If we look back before the 18th century and consider the cultural history of European Jewry in combination with political, social, and economic patterns that were constituted during and in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War, would this alter our understanding of European Jewish history?

2 Bohemia's Position within the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy

The Habsburg lands followed very different paths and paces in their integration into the Habsburg administration and later Austrian Empire. Bohemia formed part of the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy from 1526⁹ and had a continuous Jewish presence since at least the High Middle Ages.¹⁰ Geographically and politically, the Kingdom of Bohemia had

⁷ Andrew I. Port, "Central European History since 1989: Historiographical Trends and Post-Wende 'Turns,'" *Central European History* 48, no. 2 (2015): 241–43; Stephan Sander-Faes, "Habsburg Studies under Siege: Notes on Recent Early Modern Scholarship," *The Seventeenth Century* 37, no. 1 (2022): 169–75. For a slightly more positive resume, see Joachim Whaley, "Central European History and the Holy Roman Empire," *Central European History* 51, no. 1 (2018): 40–45; and the contributions of John Deak and Chad Bryant in the same volume.

⁸ Robert Evans poignantly emphasizes the continuities between the Holy Roman and Habsburg empires in the framework of empire studies: Robert Evans, "Communicating Empire: The Habsburgs and Their Critics, 1700–1919," *Royal Historical Society (London, England): Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 19 (2009): 117–38.

⁹ "Bohemia" is here used interchangeably with "Bohemian lands," which included Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Lusatia under the Wenzel crown. For more detail, see Verena Kasper-Marienberg and Joshua Teplitsky, "Between Distinction and Integration: The Jews of the Bohemian Crown Lands until 1726," in *Prague and Beyond: Jews in the Bohemian Land*, eds. Kateřina Čapková and Hillel J. Kieval (Philadelphia: Penn University Press, 2021), 22–60.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the status and importance of Bohemia within the Holy Roman Empire, see Jaroslav Pánek, "Der böhmische Staat und das Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit," in

a particular proximity to the Holy Roman Empire, nominally belonging to the Holy Roman Empire as an electorate principality. As the primary estate among the secular electorate curia (*weltliche Kurfürstenkurie*), it enjoyed renewed engagement in imperial affairs from 1708 and participated in a leadership role in the Imperial deputation of 1803. This important political position as well as the composition of its high nobility, several of whom held property in both Bohemia and the Holy Roman Empire, explains its central role among the Habsburg lands until the end of the Holy Roman Empire.¹¹ While Bohemia may be somewhat exceptional, it offers possibilities for historical insights from both sides of the imperial divide.

At first glance, Francis II/I's creation of the Austrian Empire in 1804 and his dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 might not have made much of a difference in Jewish daily life in the Bohemian lands. The Habsburg administration had already territorialized Jewish politics, rechanneling their legal recourse and financial revenue from the institutions of the Holy Roman Empire to local and regional Habsburg institutions. Jews lived mostly under the auspices of Habsburg noble landowners or royal/imperial cities and seemed removed from the political realities of the Holy Roman Empire. However, what has yet to be explored is whether the transition of empires might have set Jews living in the German lands and those in the Habsburg lands on divergent paths. For centuries, Jews in both regions had shared an imperial political and legal framework, even if governed by different regional and local authorities.¹² In the early 19th century, this fundamentally changed.

Studies of the Bohemian nobility have emphasized the importance of Habsburg legislation during the Thirty Years' War – namely the Revised Land Ordinance of 1627 – for it transformed the composition of Bohemian nobility and integrated them more fully into the Habsburg administration.¹³ The

Alternativen zur Reichsverfassung in der Frühen Neuzeit?, eds. Volker Press and Dieter Stievermann (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 169–78.

¹¹ On the complex and changing position of Bohemia in the context of the Holy Roman Empire, Alexander Begert, *Böhmen, die böhmische Kur und das Reich vom Hochmittelalter bis zum Ende des Alten Reiches: Studien zur Kurwürde und zur staatsrechtlichen Stellung Böhmens* (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2003).

¹² On imperial framing as a constitutive element of European Jewish history and culture, see Malachi Haim Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau: Jewish European History between Nation and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 10–12, 28–35, 187–235, 290–92.

¹³ See Václav Bůžek and Petr Maťa, “Wandlungen des Adels in Böhmen und Mähren im Zeitalter des ‘Absolutismus’ (1620–1740),” in *Der europäische Adel im Ancien Régime: Von der Krise der*

dispossession of those Bohemian nobles who identified mainly as Protestants and the reallocation of their lands to Catholic nobles who were loyal to the Habsburgs brought significant changes in Bohemia's noble economies. It has been estimated that more than half of the noble property in the Bohemian lands changed hands. Nobility from all over Europe gained the Bohemian *Inkolát*, the right to purchase and bequeath land in Bohemia and hold a seat in its noble political fora. Recent studies highlight post-1648 Bohemian nobility's increasingly transregional profile, which was geared towards political status both in the Holy Roman Empire and at the Habsburg court in Vienna.¹⁴ As Petr Mat'a shows, the new aristocratic Bohemian elite after the 1620s was granted princely titles through both the imperial and Bohemian chanceries, simultaneously creating, whether intended or not, a higher integration of the Bohemian nobility into the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁵ Thomas Winkelbauer interprets this strategy as a long-term effort towards state building that made the imperial court "the centre of political power and the most important site of the communication, interaction, and integration of the political elites of the Habsburg territories as well as the Holy Roman Empire."¹⁶ Yet, we know rather little about how the loss of their imperial noble status in 1806 affected their self-positioning in the noble landscapes of Central Europe.

3 Economic Developments: The Schwarzenberg/Kader Case

The consolidation of larger noble estates since the 1620s created more differentiated manorial economic systems that – most likely not coincidentally – increasingly opened up to Jewish merchants who functioned as intermediaries between local populations and manorial courts and as access points to Jewish

ständischen Monarchien bis zur Revolution (ca. 1600–1789), ed. Ronald G. Asch (Vienna: Böhlau, 2001), 287–321; James Van Horn Melton, "The Nobility in the Bohemian and Austrian Lands, 1620–1780," in *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Northern, Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Hamish M. Scott, vol. 2 (London/New York: Longman, 1995), 110–43.

¹⁴ Bůžek and Mat'a, "Der europäische Adel," 195

¹⁵ Petr Mat'a, "Bohemia, Silesia, and the Empire: Negotiating Princely Dignity on the Eastern Periphery," in *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495–1806: A European Perspective*, eds. Robert Evans and Peter H. Wilson (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 143–165, here 156.

¹⁶ Thomas Winkelbauer, "Separation and Symbiosis: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Empire," in *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495–1806: A European Perspective*, eds. Peter H. Wilson and Robert Evans (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 167–183, here 176.

credit networks in Prague and Vienna.¹⁷ Noble families like the Franconian Schwarzenbergs, who gained the Bohemian *Inkolát* during the reallocation of noble property in 1654, actively promoted Jewish settlement in their Bohemian estates. In six of their 24 Bohemian dominions, Jewish settlements emerged during the second half of the 17th century, followed by another nine during the 18th century. At the same time, the family rose within one generation to the highest ranks of nobility within the imperial court system, gaining a princely ennoblement in 1670 and a leadership position on the Imperial Aulic Council in 1674.¹⁸ Similarly, some of their Jewish subjects transitioned from the lower ranks of rural retailers to wealthy court merchants. Adam Kauder for example, competed unsuccessfully with other local Jews over years for permission to settle on the Schwarzenberg estate at Frauenberg (Hluboká nad Vltavou) in southern Bohemia in the 1670s. Finally, in 1683, he was allowed to settle with his family for an annual fee of 50 Gulden as a so-called *Schutzjude* (protected Jew). Synchronously with the rising career of his employer Prince Johann Adolph von Schwarzenberg (1615–1683) in the imperial court system, Kauder’s economic activities expanded to Vienna as well. In 1697, his settlement fee had risen to 250 Gulden, only to be doubled again in 1706. He sponsored around 50 people from his extended family and employees in his household and eventually financed and organized army supplies together with the influential Viennese court merchants Samson Wertheimer and Samuel Oppenheimer. On at least one occasion, Wertheimer came to visit Kauder in Frauenberg and used his connection with both Kauder and Schwarzenberg to find a temporary shelter for Hungarian Jewish refugees in Frauenberg in 1703.¹⁹ Earlier studies about close credit relations between rural Bohemian

¹⁷ See Aleš Valenta, “Jüdische Kredite des böhmischen Adels im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert,” *Judaica Bohemiae* 44 (2009): 61–95; Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern. Erster Teil: Das Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969).

¹⁸ On the families’ continuous success throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, see Dana Štefanová, “Gutsherren und wirtschaftliche Aktivitäten: Eine Fallstudie zur ‘Schwarzenbergischen Bank,’” in *Adel und Wirtschaft: Lebensunterhalt der Adelligen in der Moderne*, eds. Ivo Cerman and Luboš Velek (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2009), 63–83; Raimund Paleczek, “Die Modernisierung des Großgrundbesitzes des Fürsten Johann Adolf zu Schwarzenberg in Südböhmen während des Neoabsolutismus (1848/49–1860),” in *Adel und Wirtschaft: Lebensunterhalt der Adelligen in der Moderne*, eds. Ivo Cerman and Luboš Velek (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2009), 135–84;

¹⁹ SOA Třeboň, Český Krumlov, Frauenberg, file no. A5AJ1a, doc. 36, no folio, October 20, 1697; doc. 42, no folio, August 16, 1702; doc. 44, no folio, December 16, 1703. Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte*, 6. This case study is part of my current research project about the relation-

Jews and noble lords suggest that Kauder was not an exception.²⁰ Further studies will have to investigate if there are other similar professional biographies of Jews connected to the development of Bohemian noble manorial economies and how they carried on beyond the turn of the century.

Beyond individual case studies, the assumption of new opportunities in the noble estates in the Bohemian countryside is echoed more broadly in the demographic shifts within Bohemian Jewish internal migration. While Prague was home to most Jews in the Bohemian lands until the late 16th century, this changed dramatically in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War. By the early 18th century, only one quarter of Bohemia's Jews (around 10,000 people) lived in Prague, while the majority (around 30,000) lived in the countryside, primarily in noble towns and villages.²¹ Future studies will have to ascertain whether the phenomena of changes in noble economies and Jewish rural migration were indeed interconnected, but so far, the numerical data suggests that they were. If so, we will have to ask more systemically how the political, economic, and cultural integration of Bohemian nobility into the Habsburg elite was supported, facilitated, and mirrored by their Jewish subjects.

4 Court Jews and Noble Jews

Did the phenomenon of Jews in courtly services end in the Habsburg lands in 1806? There is little evidence to support this assumption. The historiography of Jews in courtly services (*Hoffaktoren*) has traditionally focused on the Holy Roman Empire and most studies have therefore cited 1806 as the presumed end date of the "court Jew phenomenon." Focusing on the Holy Roman Empire, Rotraud Ries states: "functionally, court Jews were a solid part of the absolutist premodern system. Not only because of this, they stopped

ship of rural Jewries and Habsburg nobility in the Bohemian lands after 1648 and will be expanded upon in future publications.

²⁰ Petr Koptička and Hana Legnerová, "Jews, Burghers and Lords: Social and Economic Relations in the Town of Roudnice Nad Labem (Raudnitz), 1592–1619," *Judaica Bohemiae* 41 (2005): 5–43; Jan Podlešák, *Naše dny se naplnily: z historie Židů v jižních Čechách* (České Budějovice: Klub přátel Izraele, 2002). On credit relations between Prague Jews and Bohemian nobles, see Marie Buňatová, "Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Prager Juden zum Adel in den böhmischen Ländern an der Wende vom 16. zum 17. Jahrhundert," in *Juden und ländliche Gesellschaft in Europa zwischen Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit (15.–17. Jahrhundert): Kontinuität und Krise, Inklusion und Exklusion in einer Zeit des Übergangs*, ed. Sigrid Hirbodian and Torben Stretz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016), 33–50.

²¹ Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte*, 1–3.

functioning in this capacity with the end of the old empire.”²² In the Habsburg lands, however, the framework of the “old empire” did not necessarily cease to exist, it had transformed into something else. Despite the lure of urbanization and greater social mobility in the growing metropolitan areas of the empire, the majority of Bohemian Jews in the mid-19th century continued to live mainly in rural areas. Still predominantly under noble rule, they dwelt in almost 2,000 localities of which only around 200 were communities composed of more than ten families and a formal synagogue.²³

The continuity of Bohemian and Austrian noble property structures in the imperial framework along with continuously increasing Jewish populations in their estates indicates that there might be another story to tell for the Habsburg lands. As many Habsburg, and in particular Bohemian, nobles developed from primarily landowners to agents of economic change through agricultural reform, banking, and early entrepreneurship at the end of the 18th century, so did Habsburg Jewish elites change alongside them to become bankers, monopoly leaseholders, and manufacturers.²⁴ Both social groups seem to have been innovators towards economic modernity while maintaining occupational patterns of premodern agricultural societies, with distinct techniques of elite cohesiveness (*Elitenbildung*) and adaptiveness (*Elitenwandel*) that derived from early modern models of success.²⁵ For Bohemia at the turn

²² Rotraud Ries, “Hofjuden – Funktionsträger des absolutistischen Territorialstaates und Teil der jüdischen Gesellschaft,” in *Hofjuden – Ökonomie und Interkulturalität: Die jüdische Wirtschaftselite im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Rotraud Ries and Friedrich Battenberg (Hamburg: Christians, 2002), 11–39, here 27. See also Friedrich Battenberg, “Die jüdische Wirtschaftselite der Hoffaktoren und Residenten im Zeitalter des Merkantilismus,” *Aschkenas* 9, no. 1 (1999): 31–66, here 65.

²³ Hillel J Kieval, “Bohemia and Moravia,” in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2010, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bohemia_and_Moravia. Last accessed October 13, 2023.

²⁴ On the engagement of Bohemian nobles in early Habsburg industrialization, see particularly the case studies in part I and II of Ivo Cerman and Luboš Velek, eds., *Adel und Wirtschaft: Lebensunterhalt der Adeligen in der Moderne* (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2009). On the contribution of Jewish elites to early Bohemian industrialization, see Martina Niedhammer, *Nur eine “Geld-Emancipation”? Loyalitäten und Lebenswelten des Prager jüdischen Großbürgertums 1800–1867* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018); Jiří Kudela, “Prager jüdische Eliten von 1780 bis in die 1. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Judaica Bohemiae* 28 (1992): 22–34.

²⁵ See Karsten Holste, Dietlind Hüchtker, and Michael G. Müller, eds., *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts: Akteure, Arenen, Aushandlungsprozesse* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009). For a different path in comparison to the Habsburg lands in Poland, Prussia, and the Netherlands, see Cornelia Aust, *The Jewish Economic Elite: Making Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

of the 19th century, Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein poignantly observed that “the (Jewish) elite in the era of the Toleration Edicts stepped into the footprints of the court Jews and fulfilled their function.”²⁶ As we ascribe a larger role to nobility in the slow process of modernization, we might consider reevaluating and expanding what it meant to be a court Jew or a Jew in courtly service as well. Rotraud Ries’s intergenerational model of “court Jews” suggests that the functions ascribed to Jews in courtly societies were highly adaptable to the changing needs of the court whether it was for purposes of status representation, army supply, credit financing, or luxury commerce. “Court Jews” like other Jewish merchants worked and invested in multiple businesses in and out of courts simultaneously to reduce their financial risk. The support of the small rural nobility as well as high status aristocracy brought Jewish merchants into contact with a broad range of noble courts which in return created a diverse social spectrum of “court Jews.” Some worked on behalf of several nobles out of economic hubs like Prague, Vienna, and Frankfurt, but most others lived within or close to local court societies. Not a cohesive group by any means, their common denominator was economic dealings with Central European noble courts safeguarded by individual business contracts; a social practice that likely did not end in 1804 or 1806.²⁷

Most notably, we can see an overlap in trajectory between Habsburg Jews and Habsburg nobles in the urge for ennoblement among the rising Habsburg Jewish merchant elite. As Rudolf Kučera has pointed out, the Habsburg court administration enabled Jewish individuals and families to rise to the rank of nobility already in the late 18th century, while Prussia distinctly chose not to, even though its Jewish population had a similar social and economic profile.²⁸ The first two ennobled Habsburg Jewish families were notably from Bohemia: tobacco merchant Israel Hönig in 1789 and the Popper family in 1790, followed by another 26 Jewish families during the first half of the 19th century.

²⁶ Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte*, 104.

²⁷ On the overlap and approximation of noble and Jewish elite communication circles and value systems, see Rotraud Ries, “Hofjuden als Vorreiter? Bedingungen und Kommunikationen, Gewinn und Verlust auf dem Weg in die Moderne,” in *Judentum und Aufklärung: Jüdisches Selbstverständnis in der bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit*, ed. Arno Herzig, Hans Otto Horch, and Robert Jütte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 30–65; Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte*, 104.

²⁸ Rudolf Kučera, *Staat, Adel und Elitenwandel: Die Adelsverleihungen in Schlesien und Böhmen 1806–1871 im Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 100–104.

Of those 26 families, almost half came from the Bohemian lands, three from Vienna, three from Hungary, eight from the German lands, and four from western Sephardic communities.²⁹ William McCagg counted a total of 443 Habsburg families of Jewish heritage and/or Jewish identity that were ennobled between 1701 and 1918. This might tell us a story not only of Jewish social mobility aspirations but of close relations that developed between noble and Jewish elites to the imperial state, which derived from shared paths, networks, and economic interdependencies since the 1620s. Given the lack of structural changes in the interconnected living conditions of Bohemian nobles and Jewish Bohemians until the mid-19th century, it seems sensible to rethink the entangled histories of both social groups in a longer perspective beyond the imperial shift.

5 Interconnected Spaces

The restrictive grip of the Habsburg administration on Bohemia after the Thirty Years' War had mediating effects on its Jewish inhabitants as well. Due to being perceived as Habsburg loyalists during the war, Bohemian and Moravian Jews received confirmation by Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II of their privileges of settlement and commerce in 1623. However, starting in the 1650s, a series of state commissions started to restrict Jewish life both in terms of space (segregated living areas and restrictions on Jewish settlement in certain places in 1618 and 1659) and demographics.³⁰ Bohemian nobles, the Bohemian Chamber, and Jewish communities were able to mitigate the new restrictions for several decades until the *Familiant Laws* issued in 1726/1727 effectively capped Jewish settlement rights until 1848. With a limit of 8,541 Jewish families in Bohemia, it allowed for only one son of any Jewish household to marry and establish his own household in the Bohemian lands. For Moravia, Michael L. Miller has rightly pointed out that Jewish demographic growth until the 1840s suggests that the legal restrictions might not have been consistently applied and noble territories and clandestine marriage systems

²⁹ William McCagg, "Austria's Jewish Nobles, 1740–1918," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): 163–183, here 170. See also Kai Drewes, *Jüdischer Adel: Nobilitierungen von Juden im Europa des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013), 378.

³⁰ Jaroslav Prokeš, "Der Antisemitismus der Behörden und das Prager Ghetto in nachweißbergischer Zeit," *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik* 1 (1929): 41–262.

offered loopholes to circumvent the forced migration of young adults.³¹ Yet, for young Bohemian Jewish adults these laws must have been a constant obstacle and determining parameter if they planned their life paths in the Bohemian lands or elsewhere in the Austrian Empire. The shift of empires did not change this circumstance. Instead, we can assume that Jewish families continued to develop multiple migration scenarios and economic opportunity patterns for their children, using both transregional familial and communal networks. Scholars have pointed to common early modern Jewish migration patterns, in the case of the Bohemian lands particularly from Moravia to Hungary and from Bohemia to Austria and the Holy Roman Empire.³² This suggests that from a Jewish perspective, we can conceive of Central Europe and its empires as interconnected spaces in which legal differences and economic opportunities of early modern origin were major long-term factors in steering migration. Retrospectively creating regionally exclusive narratives of German, Austrian, Czech, and Hungarian Jews based on modern ideas of national borders does not necessarily match the realities of Habsburg Jewries, who had to navigate and circumvent Habsburg imperial and regional administrative restrictions in ever new and creative ways in terms of mobility and migration. Utilitarian legislation under Maria Theresa and Joseph II opened new possibilities of doing so, namely entrepreneurial opportunities, military service, and access to public primary and secondary education.³³ Yet, the legal restrictions on Jewish settlement that required transregional mobility in the first place remained in place for Bohemian Jews until the mid-19th century. Only in 1848/49 did Austrian imperial legislation break this barrier. That Bohemian Jewish mobility and migration patterns after the imperial shift of 1804/06 mostly pertained to the same imperial regions of Central Europe speaks to a continuous early modern spatial understanding and sphere of activity of Habsburg Jewish life paths.

³¹ Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 33–40.

³² Silber, “The Making of Habsburg Jewry in the Long Eighteenth Century,” 768, 769, 775. Věra Leininger, *Auszug aus dem Ghetto: Rechtsstellung und Emanzipationsbemühungen der Juden in Prag in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Singapore: Kuda Api Press, 2006), 57–68.

³³ Michael Silber, “From Tolerated Aliens to Citizen-Soldiers: Jewish Military Service in the Era of Joseph II,” in *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, eds. Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 19–36.

6 Conclusion

Early modern Jewish history studies complement and enhance many of the core topics that traditional Habsburg studies discuss as key terms for the Austrian Empire: internal migration; inconsistent but intentional policies towards (religious) minorities; imperial institution-building; noble power accumulation; legal pluralism; and transnational economic networks, to name but a few. These phenomena, which – depending on one’s interpretation – either led to the eventual downfall of the Austrian Empire or its long-term stability beforehand, have a long “prehistory” in early modern Europe that deserves greater attention. It is likely that Habsburg Jewries, alongside Habsburg nobles, navigated the structural remnants of the Holy Roman Empire in the emerging Austrian Empire particularly well due to their long-standing familiarity with the legal structures of imperial institutions as well as the socioeconomic practices within courtly societies.

More in-depth research on the continuities of legal traditions, like the transformation of the legal status of Jews from subjects under imperial law to those under territorial and state law, as well as the role of Jews within developing noble economies from the 17th to the 19th centuries could alter our understanding of European Jewish history more broadly. The current narrative of a Jewish path towards modernity predominantly centers on the Haskalah and Joseph II’s toleration legislation in the Habsburg lands that was echoed in other parts of Europe. The focus on Jewish entrepreneurship in urban and semi-urban protoindustrial environments has prioritized the dominant perspective of a radical transformation of Jewish economic profiles at the turn of the 19th century. A reconsideration of Jewish men and women who were not in the immediate orbit of the emerging Jewish middle class, but who remained under noble protection and in the service of noble court societies and their economic structures beyond 1804/06 might uncover a simultaneous but different economic continuity. This may diversify and enrich our understanding of Jewish history. The conditions manifested in the Habsburg lands might also have parallels in other European societies where the Jews’ route to citizenship was substantially delayed and noble power holders continued to determine the conditions of Jewish life.

To disregard the historic continuum of those Habsburg Jewish men and women who previously lived in the Holy Roman Empire in the narrative of

Austrian imperial history turns a blind eye towards their deeply entrenched experiences and expectations. These frames of reference informed their sense of civic allegiance and political alliances long before 1804/06. It can moreover be assumed that these continuities were not limited to the Jewish subjects of the two empires, but mirrored the life experiences and perceptions of other social groups in courtly circles and other marginalized societies as well.³⁴

A reconsideration of the imperial political periodization of 1804 in favor of an interdisciplinary engagement with early modern social and minority studies would enhance our understanding of premodern continuities and the legacies that carried over into the Austrian Empire. Abandoning either-or binaries and seeking out imperial practices and frameworks that overlapped between the Holy Roman Empire and the consolidating Habsburg Monarchy that was to become the Austrian Empire could highlight the liminal spaces that Central Europeans navigated so comfortably for over a century. By the same token, scholars of Jewish history could revisit their current periodization focusing on the Enlightenment and emancipation and move on to explore how early modern imperial framework and the transition of empires might have impacted and informed the self-perception of the diverse Jewish societies in the Habsburg lands.

³⁴ See by comparison Andreas Helmedach, "Bevölkerungspolitik im Zeichen der Aufklärung: Zwangsumsiedlung und Zwangsassimilierung im Habsburgerreich des 18. Jahrhunderts – eine noch ungelöste Forschungsaufgabe," *Comparativ* 6, no. 1 (1996): 41–62; Ulrich Niggemann, "Migration in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ein Literaturbericht," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 43, no. 2 (2016): 293–321.

