
The Dissemination of News and
the Emergence of Contemporaneity
in Early Modern Europe

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ASHGATE

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CHAPTER 7

“The Blowing of the Messiah’s Trumpet”: Reports about Sabbatai Sevi and Jewish Unrest in 1665–67

Ingrid Maier and Daniel C. Waugh¹

Introduction

A definitive treatment of the spread of news in seventeenth-century Europe is still a project for future generations of scholars. The challenges are both practical and conceptual. By practical we mean in particular the still pressing need to identify and make accessible the sources of the news and analyze their interrelationships. While there is reasonably good bibliographic control over early newspapers (to the extent that we now know at least where to find the majority of the extant copies and know what some of the major gaps are), we are less well served for published separates.² Our knowledge of manuscript sources for the news and

¹ The authors presented this paper at the 2007 conference in Bremen, “Places of News: The Creation of International News Networks in Early Modern Times,” although it incorporates ideas from their contribution entitled “Did ‘Contemporaneity’ Emerge in Early Modern Russia?” presented at the 2006 Bremen conference “Time and Space on the Way to Modernity.”

² As examples, the collection of the Deutsche Pressforschung in Bremen contains copies of most of the extant German newspapers for the seventeenth century, although there are huge gaps in the runs of many of them which presumably will never be filled. The project of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague to digitize historical Dutch newspapers will certainly make it somewhat easier for us to work with them, although there will still be many collections outside the Netherlands that will not be covered. On the continuing importance of separates even in the era of the first newspapers, see, for example, Mario Infelise, “The war, the news and the curious. Military gazettes in Italy,” in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (eds), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London; New York, 2001), pp. 216–36, and Jurta Schumann, “Das politisch-militärische Flugblatt in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts als Nachrichtenmedium und Propagandamittel,” in Wolfgang Harms and Michael Schilling (eds), *Das illustrierte Flugblatt in der Kultur der Frühen Neuzeit. Wolfenbüttler Arbeitsgespräch 1997* (= Mikrokosmos: Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft und Bedeutungsforschung, vol. 50) (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), pp. 226–58. Holger Böning, *Welteroberung durch ein neues Publikum. Die deutsche Presse und der Weg zur Aufklärung. Hamburg und Altona als Beispiel* (= Presse und Geschichte—Neue Beiträge, vol. 5)

their interrelationship between them and published news is still distressingly limited.³ So also, with some noted exceptions, is the study of readership.

Some of the most important advances in the analysis of the spread of news adhere to what we might loosely call the “paradigm of modernization.”⁴ That is the focus in the first instance is on the great invention of the seventeenth century, the appearance of the first regularly published newspapers, and the way in which the spread of the news through this medium paved the way for the emergence of the “modern world,” whatever exactly one might mean by that concept. Certainly a developing sense of contemporaneity amongst those who partook of the media revolution is part of this story. The danger of this conceptual framework though is that it may exclude a serious examination of the many ways news spread through means other than via published newspapers and may limit the exploration of the cultural world of readers to those aspects of world view which somehow incorporate “the modern.” Thus, secular world views eclipse religious ones, rationality trumps superstition, the European-wide replaces the parochial. One certainly should bear in mind Sabrina Baron’s assertion that “there is no evidence that print carried more influence on the formation of public opinion than did manuscript,” and Henry Ettinghausen’s cautionary: “Far from there being a single or uniform awareness of current affairs or a single collective imagination, nascent public opinion varied from the substantial, if not almost total ignorance of more or less remote and illiterate peasants to the highly sophisticated awareness of the well-connected and well-informed.”⁵ Of course insofar as one might attempt to emphasize the continuing prevalence of the “non-modern” in societies where the newspaper began to spread, one

([Bremen], 2002), pp. 136–44, admits their undoubted importance but claims it is as yet impossible to say much on the subject since they are so little studied (see esp. p. 136 n. 387).

³ The presentations at the Bremen conference in 2007 by Mario Infelise, “The Manuscript of News,” and by Alessio Assonitis exploring a specific example from the Medici Archive project, while focusing on the period prior to the appearance of printed newspapers, both illustrate how essential it is to analyze the manuscript sources and networks of correspondents.

⁴ Apart from the title of the present volume (and the emphasis of the conference from which it derives), one can find examples of this approach in the important and meticulously researched books by Böning, *Welteroberung durch ein neues Publikum*, and Wolfgang Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur: Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit* (= Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, vol. 189) (Göttingen, 2003).

⁵ Sabrina A. Baron, “The guises of dissemination in early seventeenth-century England: News in manuscript and print,” where she is criticizing Joad Raymond; and Henry Ettinghausen, “Politics and the press in Spain,” both in Dooley and Baron (eds), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 41 and 204 respectively.

immediately confronts the practical challenge of locating source material. How far can we ascertain the knowledge or world view of peasants or ordinary burghers? We cannot even begin to solve that problem in this chapter. What we can offer is a specific example to illustrate how the modernizing paradigm may need to be reconsidered before it will be possible to write a sufficiently broadly based history of news in seventeenth-century Europe.

The broad and interrelated questions which underlie our study include:

- What is the relationship between manuscript and printed news sources?
- What is the relationship between newspapers and separates (pamphlets and broadsides)?
- What role was played by oral transmission of news?
- Is it possible that certain networks of correspondents were more influential and even efficient in spreading news than were the distribution mechanisms for published newspapers and broadsides?
- Does the evidence of interest in news need to be expanded to include sources which of themselves do not contain news reports?
- Can and should we attempt to draw boundaries between fact and fiction? And the corollary: Do different rules operate about the production and dissemination of news, depending on whether it is objective and rational, or fantastic and seemingly irrational?
- Finally, to what degree is there regional variation in the spread of the news in Europe?

Sabbatai Sevi

Our subject is news concerning Jewish unrest in the Middle East and North Africa and in particular the rise and fall of the false messiah Sabbatai Sevi of Smyrna and his prophet Nathan Ashkenazi of Gaza, Palestine.⁶ On 31 May 1665, a rabbi Sabbatai Sevi who had already acquired a reputation for unorthodox conduct proclaimed himself the new messiah in Gaza. The spread of messianic fever was due largely to his self-appointed prophet, a charismatic young rabbi Nathan Ashkenazi, who reinterpreted kabbalistic sources to proclaim the need for repentance in anticipation of the imminent coming of the new Kingdom on Earth. The earliest news reports about a movement among the Jews paid less

⁶ For the history of the Sabbatean movement we rely on Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676* (Princeton, 1973). Note that there are many variant transcriptions for Sabbatai's name (among the more common, Shabbatai Zevi); we follow that adopted for the translation of Scholem's book.

attention to Sabbatai and Nathan than to fantastic rumors about the movement of the Lost Tribes of Israel and their capture of the Muslim Holy Cities. Only during late autumn 1665 did the focus shift to Sabbatai. Sabbatai left Palestine and traveled via Aleppo to Smyrna, where in December prophetic frenzy developed.

He then left for Constantinople where, it was believed, he would confront the Sultan and bring an end to Ottoman rule. When he arrived in the Dardanelles in January the Turkish authorities promptly arrested him. Nonetheless, the Sabbatean movement grew and peaked during winter 1666. By late summer, the Turkish authorities had had enough. They summoned Sabbatai to Adrianople where the Sultan was in residence and presented him with an ultimatum: apostatize (convert to Islam) or die. Sabbatai chose life. Despite this news, Sabbatean belief did not entirely die, but its later history is not our subject here.

During the height of interest in Sabbatai, news about real or imagined events spread remarkably widely and rapidly in the Mediterranean world, the Middle East, and Europe.⁷ As our title suggests—the reference being to the prophecy in Isaiah about the coming Day of Judgment—the news media indeed trumpeted the news of the messiah. It stimulated imaginations in both Jewish and Christian communities in Europe. That said, perhaps it is an exaggeration to claim, as some believe, that this is the first instance of media hype analogous to what we find on a daily basis in our own time. Indirect evidence about the extent of the movement is to be found in the publishing history of the devotional manual Nathan of Gaza had compiled. Initially it spread in manuscript form, then appeared in print in Constantinople, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Mantua, and Prague.⁸ Even if we did not have the confirmation provided by pamphlet and newspaper reports, the popularity of this manual is testimony to the rapidity with which news of the Sabbatean movement spread.

Until the appearance of Gershom Scholem's massive study of Sabbatai in the 1950s, serious analysis of the movement was a non-topic for most Jewish scholars. Even in Sabbatai's own time, there were many Jewish skeptics about his claims. The denouement of the affair was quite simply embarrassing for Jews. Scholem's study draws upon an impressive array of sources including ones in Hebrew which we cannot access. He mined unpublished letters, for instance those in the contemporary collection of Sabbatean news assembled by the Christian theologian Johann Hottinger in Zürich. Scholem also studied the published pamphlet literature but knew little of the extent to which the regularly

⁷ As Scholem notes, p. 549, it even reached the English colonies in America, where Increase Mather in Boston was inspired to preach several sermons referring to the movement of the Jews, if not to their new messiah.

⁸ See Scholem's list of editions, pp. 936–9.

published newspapers reported on Sabbatai.⁹ A great deal more evidence has come to light since. As Ingrid Maier has shown, there is much to learn about the textual filiation and printing history of the pamphlets.¹⁰ While some Jewish scholars had doubted that the Sabbatean movement was much in evidence in Poland, that view can no longer be defended.¹¹ The movement also attracted considerable interest in Moscow.¹² Although we now have a more balanced picture than did Scholem of the array of news sources, most collections of manuscript newsletters in European libraries await study.

Correspondence Networks between the Middle East and Europe

Our information about correspondence networks is often distressingly vague. News circulating within or coming out of the Middle East was transmitted in the first instance in manuscript form. Correspondence was being exchanged

⁹ See Jetteke van Wijk, "The Rise and Fall of Shabbatai Zevi as Reflected in Contemporary Press Reports," *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 33/1 (1999): 7–27, based on her unpublished dissertation, which includes as an appendix a transcription of all the articles from the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* concerning Sabbatai. Earlier, transcriptions of selected articles about Sabbatai from that newspaper are in Jaap Meijer, *Soo wort men van dromen wacker. Nederlandse bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Sabbatai Tzvi—drie eeuwen na diens optreden 1666–1966* (Haarlem, 1967); Daniel Clarke Waugh, "Seventeenth-Century Muscovite Pamphlets with Turkish Themes: Toward a Study of Muscovite Literary Culture in its European Setting," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Harvard University, 1972), Appendix 2, pp. 490–509.

¹⁰ Ingrid Maier and Wouter Pilger, "Polnische Fabelzeitung über Sabbatai Zwi übersetzt für den russischen Zaren (1666)," *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, 62/1 (2003): 1–39; Ingrid Maier, "Acht anonyme deutsche und polnische 'Sabetha Sebi'-Drucke aus dem Jahre 1666. Auf der Spur nach dem Drucker," in *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch 2008*, pp. 141–60; 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*, 39/2 (2009): 133–67. Since these articles provide exhaustive bibliographic references, they obviate the necessity to repeat here all the long seventeenth-century titles, library locations and shelf marks.

¹¹ See Maier and Pilger, "Polnische Fabelzeitung," which includes references to the various earlier publications concerning Polish sources on Sabbatai.

¹² First discussed and published in modernized transcription in Daniel Clarke Waugh, "News of the False Messiah: Reports on Shabbetai Zevi in Ukraine and Muscovy," *Jewish Social Studies*, 41/3–4 (1979): 301–322; since supplemented by Maier and Pilger, "Polnische Fabelzeitung," *Vesti-Kuranty 1656g, 1660–1662, 1664–1670gg*, 2 vols, ed. V.G. Dem'ianov et al. (Moscow, 2008–2009), contains all the Russian translations and their sources. For an overview of the Sabbatai material, see Ingrid Maier's introduction to vol. 2, sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.

among Jewish community leaders scattered in cities such as Gaza, Jerusalem, Cairo, Alexandria, Aleppo, Smyrna, and Constantinople, and even as far away as Baghdad and Yemen. Once the prophet Nathan decided to publicize the new messiah a flood of Sabbatean propaganda spread from Gaza. Yet it is difficult to probe beneath such expressions as “a stream of letters,” “a bag full of letters,” or where only one is preserved be sure that a given mail contained some 30 of them.¹³ To a considerable degree, we rely upon indirect evidence if we are to believe Scholem when he states: “Every mail brought dozens of letters, and every recipient of such a letter could report a detail that was not in the news received by his neighbor. The extant collections of letters faithfully reflect the composite nature of this mosaic of news.”¹⁴

The information from the Middle East arrived in Europe through various channels, in Hebrew (and vernaculars) intended for the Jewish communities and in European languages transmitted by Christian traders, diplomats, and others. Ships bearing messengers and letters would take about a month to reach Livorno from Alexandria or Alexandretta. Smyrna, a major seaport visited by European traders, was a collecting point for news from Constantinople as well as an important center of the Sabbatean movement. Ships from Smyrna might make it to Venice but many went to Livorno or Marseilles. From Smyrna to Livorno also took about a month. In contrast, news from Tunis might reach Livorno in about two weeks. Alternative routes for news were overland through the Balkans—Belgrade, Buda, and on to Vienna—or north to Ukraine and Poland. On all these routes local communities received letters and listened to the tales told by their bearers. The news was broadcast from the pulpit in almost every synagogue and was the subject of intense discussion.

For example, we know that Greek merchants created quite a stir at the market in L'viv (L'vov, Lemberg), in February 1666 with the news they brought from Constantinople, an event later reported in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*.¹⁵ Even after Sabbatai's arrest a Jewish delegation from L'viv set out to visit him in August and returned with a glowing report of their impressions.¹⁶ Ironically they might have felt differently had they known about his apostasy which had occurred while they were returning home in September. A good deal of the Sabbatean propaganda seems to have spread during 1665 and 1666 by virtue of such personal contact.

¹³ Scholem, pp. 259, 362, 418 n. 193.

¹⁴ Scholem, p. 470.

¹⁵ *Oprechte Haerlemse Dingsdaegse Courant*, no. 10, 9 March 1666, fol. 1v, datelined 14 February. All copies of the Haarlem newspaper quoted in this article are kept at Museum Enschedé, Haarlem; the Royal Library in The Hague has microfilms.

¹⁶ Scholem, pp. 599–601.

Individual Collectors of Sabbatean News

We can document how certain individuals consciously collected and disseminated news about Sabbatai. Even if these are narrow examples of highly educated individuals with distinct religious interests, they are amongst our consumers of the seventeenth-century news. One is the theologian, church historian, and specialist in Semitic languages, Johann Hortinger in Zürich, who is well known for his news collection in which Sabbatean materials occupy a prominent place. His collection, much referred to, still must be mined for what it may tell us about seventeenth-century news networks and what he personally may have believed about the Sabbatean movement. Among the letters Hortinger collected was at least one written by the chiliast Protestant Petrus Serrarius in Amsterdam. Serrarius wanted to believe Sabbatai was the new messiah since this then supported his own eschatological views¹⁷ but there seems little reason to think that he was fabricating the letters he received from his network of correspondents and sent on to like-minded chiliasts. Serrarius had close connections with the important Jewish community in Amsterdam and thus was able to obtain immediately the latest news and rumors from the Middle East.

One of the most important individual collectors of Sabbatean material was Jacob Sasportas, a controversial conservative rabbi and kabbalist, who fled the plague in London in late 1665 and took up residence in Hamburg.¹⁸ Hamburg, like Amsterdam, was one of the most important centers for dissemination of news. In the reports about the messiah Sasportas may have hoped to find support for his own kabbalistic beliefs. However, with one brief lapse, he never was convinced of the messiah's *bona fides*. For the most part Sasportas collected the information in order to discredit the movement. He frequently expressed to his wide circle of correspondents frustration at not being able to learn the truth. Since much of what he received was generated by Sabbatean supporters he consciously censored material and, with posterity in mind, re-wrote his diary in order for it to present a consistent picture of his anti-Sabbataian credentials.

¹⁷ About Petrus Serrarius and his interest in the Sabbatean movement see Ernestine G.E. van der Wall, *De mystieke chiliast Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669) en zijn wereld* (Leiden, 1987), esp. Ch. 10.

¹⁸ Scholem makes extensive use of Sasportas's correspondence, primarily from the now standard edition of it in Hebrew, *Sisath Nobel Sevi*, ed. Is. Tishby (Jerusalem, 1954), which we have not consulted. For a brief summary of Sasportas's career, see Scholem, pp. 566–9.

“Fake” Pamphlets?

The earliest accounts of Jewish unrest which came to the attention of Serrarius and Sasportas concerned the armies of the Ten Tribes of Israel, some of which even were believed to have taken Mecca. As Scholem acknowledges, such reports might have been fabricated by European Christians and then spread to the Middle East, but he argues such rumors and expectations were already to be found there in the Jewish communities.¹⁹ An external, Christian stimulus was not necessary to fuel the eschatological expectations of the Jews. However, quite apart from the obvious legendary aspects of the stories, we might distrust the indications in the pamphlets that they are based on letters sent from specific locations in the Middle East.

One example is a broadside entitled *Wahre historische Erzählung* which contains a report about the Ten Tribes and siege of Mecca datelined Smyrna, 3 May 1665.²⁰ The earliest extant version of the text was printed most probably in early August by the established newspaper publisher in Breslau, Gottfried Jonisch. A later edition printed at the end of November changed the dateline to 3 October, probably in order to give the appearance that the news was fresh.²¹ We also have a condensed Russian translation based on what must have been a third version of the German text delivered by a Hamburg merchant to the Diplomatic Chancery in Moscow on 15 January 1666.²²

The pamphlet includes some of the widely known fictions about Islam and prophecies about the fall of the Ottoman Empire. One legend tells how a lodestone was used to suspend Mohammed's coffin in the air, this ostensible miracle intended to deceive gullible Muslims. Not the least of the inaccuracies in this legend is the fact that Muhammad's tomb is located in Medina and not in Mecca. Nonetheless, our pamphlet relates how during the siege of Mecca a stray cannon shot hit the tomb, the coffin fell, and this signaled the imminent demise of the Ottoman Empire. The pamphlet also contains seemingly realistic details about Ottoman armies, and a section describing improbable battle standards with slogans and images on them. Those descriptions later migrated from this text into others which combined the news about the Jewish armies with

¹⁹ Scholem, p. 332.

²⁰ *Wahre Historische erzählung/ welcher gestalt Die grosse und fürnehme Stadt Mecha Belägert/ eingenommen und geplündert...*, n.p., n.d. [copy in the library of Wrocław Cathedral, XV.68.Qu]. On the history of this edition see Maier and Schumacher, “Ein Medien-Hype.”

²¹ This edition is known in a single copy, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika [Toruń], Biblioteka Główna, Pol.7.II.3634.

²² Text in Waugh, “News of the False Messiah,” pp. 310–311, and in *Vesti-Kuranty*, vol. 1, text no. 32, pp. 147–9.

information about Sabbatai and his prophet. There is nothing in this text which we should necessarily believe would have originated in the Middle East. It could all be a European fabrication.

Yet even the sober *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* in a report from Vienna dated 6 January 1666 related how on 30 December a courier arrived in 18 days from the Habsburg ambassador in Constantinople bringing letters to the Imperial Court.²³ The account goes on: “In them was definite information that the Jews and Arabs have despoiled the Grave of Mohammed at Mecca, and have seized many places. As a result, the Turkish Court offered to turn over to them Alexandria, Tunis and other places, but they demand the whole Holy Land.” In addition to appearing in the Haarlem paper this report from Vienna was sent in a letter to Italy.²⁴ There is no way to know whether this bit of fantastic news originated in communities of the Middle East or might not instead have been stimulated by circulation there of the rumors sparked by the European pamphlets.

A second example of the spread of tales about the Ten Tribes involves Serrarius who provided the letters published in English chiliast pamphlets in the autumn of 1665. Scholem believes that these letters originated in Jewish communities. At least one of them is quite plausibly attributed to Raphael Supino, a distinguished Rabbinic scholar from Livorno who visited London. One of the more widely reproduced texts which passed through Serrarius’ hands purports to be a letter from Salé in Morocco.²⁵ Its tale about mysterious Hebrew-speaking armies is so intermixed with chiliastic propaganda as to cast doubt on Scholem’s assertion that “the letter does seem to have been sent from Morocco.”²⁶ In one of the letter’s more interesting incarnations, it is the centerpiece of a pamphlet introduced by what surely is a fiction based on tales about the Flying Dutchman.²⁷ Very likely its London printer fabricated the introduction in order to recycle the Salé letter, which had already appeared in print. We would emphasize here that the Salé letter, fantastic as its content may appear to us, seems to have been viewed as

²³ *Oprechte Haerlemse Saterdagse Courant*, no. 4, 23 January 1666, fol. 1v.

²⁴ Scholem, pp. 247–8, esp. n. 31.

²⁵ *The Last Letters, To the London-Merchants and Faithful Ministers concerning The further Proceedings of the Conversion and Restauration of the Jews ...* (London, 1665) [Wing L489, available through Early English Books Online], pp. 4–6. The presumed source is *Translaet uyt een Brief van Sale in Barbaryen, In Dato den 6 Augusti 1665, aengaende den wonderlijcken en machtigen aentocht de 10 Stammen Israels, onder haren nieuwen Messias*, n.p., n.d. [copy in Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana], which is reproduced as Ill. 2 in Adri K. Offenber, “Uit de Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana,” *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 29/1 (1995): 91–9.

²⁶ Scholem, p. 342.

²⁷ *A New Letter from Aberdeen in Scotland, Sent to a Person of Quality. Wherein Is a more full Account of the Proceedings of the Jewes, Than hath been hitherto Published.* By R.R. (London, 1665) [Wing R63, available through Early English Books Online]; Scholem, pp. 348–9.

credible by Serrarius who certainly wanted to believe its content. This was very real and important news for him. And he was a man well aware of and taking pains to be informed of what was going on in the wider world.

Our third example involves broadsides and pamphlets devoted to the rise and fall of the false messiah. Some of them vividly illustrate the supposed miracles and tortures inflicted on him. A careful examination of the engravings reveals how the printed images served as the basis for the creation of new plates.²⁸ Since one of the editions has a specific indication that the pamphlet was “first published in Augsburg” Scholem somewhat incautiously attributed a number of related Sabbatean prints to Augsburg as well. At least one version probably was printed at the bishopric in Konstanz, a whole group of related texts were undoubtedly printed by the newspaper publisher David Friedrich Rhete in Danzig.²⁹ Rhete’s press had an array of fonts and catered to several linguistic communities. In all, he published at least eight Sabbatean pamphlets including separate German and Polish editions and in one case a dual-language German/Polish edition. It is the only example known to date where it is certain that a single printer produced two editions of the same Sabbatean book.

The Rhete editions are of particular interest in connection with the spread of Sabbatean news in Poland and even to Muscovy. At least three of them were obtained by a Ukrainian Orthodox Christian cleric Ioannikii Galatowski (Galiatovs’kyi), most probably when he was resident in the Western Ukrainian city of L’viv, at that time part of the Polish-Lithuanian state.³⁰ Galatowski would then return to Kiev (now under Muscovite suzerainty) and use them as sources when he published there a massive anti-Jewish polemic in Ukrainian and separately in Polish.³¹

The Jewish communities in Poland and Ukraine were caught up in the Sabbatean fervor.³² They paraded in the streets carrying images of the messiah

²⁸ See Maier and Schumacher, “Ein Medien-Hype.”

²⁹ Maier, “Acht anonyme deutsche und polnische ‘Sabetha Sebi’-Drucke.”

³⁰ Waugh, “News of the False Messiah,” pp. 301–305; Maier and Pilger, “Polnische Fabelzeitung über Sabbatai Zwi,” pp. 3–8. Rhete’s editions cited by Galatowski are: *Wunderlicher Anfang und Schmäblicher Aufgang des Jüdischen Königes Sabetha Sebi ... / Dziwny Początek a straszny Koniec tak nazwanego Zydowskiego Krola Sabetha Sebi; Opisanie Nowego Krola Zydowskiego Sabetha Sebi Ktorego Początek, Starość, Osoba, Uczynki, Przystawstwo y cuda ... W Rouku [sic! = Roku] 1666. drukowano; Obszerna Continuatia, w ktorey się znajduje Dalszy progress, Tego co się w Orientalskich Krajach ... Drukowano w Roku 1666.* For details see Maier, “Acht anonyme deutsche polnische ‘Sabetha Sebi’-Drucke.”

³¹ The Polish edition is Ioanicjusz Galatowski, *Messiasz prawdziwy Iezus Chrystus Syn Boży ...* (Kiev, 1672), a copy of which is available on line at http://pbc.biaman.pl/Content/424/messiasz_prawdziwy.pdf, accessed 11 March 2008.

³² Scholem, pp. 591–602.

and his prophet.³³ These demonstrations provoked Christian attacks on the Jews. In an effort to maintain public order, the Polish king issued a decree in May 1666 forbidding the Jews to carry Sabbatai's picture. In it he noted: "They ... are spreading, as plain and indubitable truth, a false report from foreign lands, about some messiah, and they prove this to the simple-minded by printed pamphlets and pictures."³⁴ Thus the king ordered that all printed pictures, pamphlets, and broadsheets about the messiah be destroyed.

Of course this evidence leaves us with unanswered questions concerning what imprints might no longer be extant and where the Rhete imprints would fit. After all, certain of them could hardly have been used as Sabbatean propaganda. Moreover, the king's decrees should not mislead us into thinking that the printed word and image were necessarily the most important means for stimulating Sabbatean enthusiasm in Poland. The massacres of the Jews during the Khmel'nits'kyi uprising in 1648 had prepared the way psychologically for the appearance of a messiah who might lead the remaining Jews to the Promised Land.

Sabbatai in Moscow

Copies of David Rhete's *Dantziger Ordinari Zeitung* and at least three of his Sabbatean pamphlets were processed in Moscow by the translators in the Diplomatic Chancery.³⁵ Such foreign pamphlets and newspapers were classified

³³ We cannot be certain what these images were. The more "realistic" portraits of Sabbatai and Nathan include those in the engravings of Thomas Coenen's book on the movement published in 1669 and reproduced in Scholem, frontispiece and facing p. ix. The perhaps realistic depiction of Nathan, published as *Warhaffte Abbildung dess Newen Jüdischen Propheten Nathan*, n.p., 1665, also exists in a manuscript copy, as do the upper part of the figure shown in *Warhafftige Abbildung Josuae Helcams*, n.p., n.d. [Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv Wolfenbüttel, 1 Alt 22—Nr. 227]. This file also contains some manuscript newsletters about Shabbetai. As Ingrid Maier has shown, two of the known Shabbetai images—etchings in folio made by the famous etcher Jan Bensheimer—were printed 1666 in Danzig by D.F. Rhete, as illustrations (folding plates) of anonymous pamphlets about Sabbatai and Nathan. For details about location and reproductions of those "portraits" see Maier, "Acht anonyme deutsche und polnische 'Sabetha Sebi'-Drucke," illustrations no. 13 and 14.

³⁴ Quoted by Scholem, p. 597.

³⁵ The best overview of the Muscovite acquisition and translation of foreign news is Ingrid Maier's introduction to *Vesti-Kuranty 1656 g., 1660–1662 gg., 1664–1670 gg.*, vol. 2. See also S.M. Shamin, "Dostavka i obrabotka v Posol'skom prikaze inostrannykh gazet v tsarstvovanie Fedora Alekseevicha," in *Issledovaniia po istochnikovedeniiu istorii Rossii (do 1917 g.)* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 121–34. Shamin is the most productive scholar in Russia

as state secrets in Muscovy. Their translations normally did not circulate beyond the immediate entourage of the Tsar who would listen to the news read aloud while his boyars listened in the antechamber. We assume his personal interest to a considerable degree dictated what was selected for translation. Fortuitously the Muscovite government had just established regular postal communication with Riga specifically to ensure biweekly delivery of news.³⁶ Between mid-January and mid-July an impressive two dozen items in the Muscovite *kuranty*—the translations prepared from foreign news sources—contained information about the Jewish unrest. These items included longish texts such as the account about the siege of Mecca and the Rhete pamphlets. Other items were at most a sentence or two. The source for several of the reports was the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*.

Since one of our topics here is reader response we need to ask why this apparently unusual interest in the story about Sabbatai in Moscow. The most likely explanation is that the news coincided with a religious upheaval and eschatological expectations involving a schism in the Russian church.³⁷ We know that Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich was extremely devout and took an active role in church affairs. Another explanation may be the longstanding concerns of Muscovite foreign policy about anything that might affect neighboring Poland or the Ottoman Empire. Finally, in a city where there was no significant Jewish community there was a scandal brewing in which a Jewish-born doctor, Daniel von Gaden, was accused of proselytizing for Judaism even though he had converted to Protestantism years earlier on his arrival in Moscow.³⁸

currently working on the Muscovite news translations; he has a forthcoming book on the subject, where the focus will be the last third of the seventeenth century. The present authors are preparing a more general overview of Muscovite acquisition of news.

³⁶ For a new assessment of Muscovite news communication with Europe, see Daniel C. Waugh and Ingrid Maier, "How Well Was Muscovy Connected with the World?" in *Imperienvergleich. Beispiele und Ansätze aus osteuropäischer Perspektive. Festschrift für Andreas Kappeler*, eds G. Hausmann and A. Rustemeyer (Wiesbaden, 2009): 17–38. The article includes information on the postal service and calculations of transit times for news reports.

³⁷ This idea, suggested in Waugh, "News of the False Messiah," has been documented best by T.A. Oparina, "Chislo 1666 v russkoi knizhnosti serediny—tret'ei chetverti XVII v," in *Chelovek mezhdru Tsarstvom i Imperiei. Sbornik materialov mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 287–317.

³⁸ On this incident involving Daniel von Gaden in 1665, see Sabine Dumschat, *Ausländische Mediziner im Moskauer Russland* (= Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, vol. 67) (Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 536–8. Perhaps to avoid further unpleasantness, von Gaden and his wife converted to Orthodox Christianity in 1667.

Newspaper Coverage of Sabbatai

So far we have been focusing on the pamphlets and broadsides. What about the newspapers? Our example here is the well-preserved *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*. This material can be supplemented by evidence from England and despite the fragmentary preservation from the German-language press. While the German papers followed the story, it is apparent that they reported it in less detail than did the Haarlem paper.³⁹ Even among Dutch papers (the Amsterdam ones are unfortunately not so well preserved) the Haarlem *Courant* may in fact have been unique for the extent of its coverage.

The earliest of the European published accounts mentioning Sabbatai Sevi appeared both on the verso of the 14 July 1665 edition of the *Haeghsche Post-Tydingen* and as a separate broadside.⁴⁰ The focus of this piece is a chiliast message rather than the Jewish news *per se*. But this was an isolated early example of a newspaper account mentioning the messiah. The flood of reporting about Sabbatai was yet ahead.

Abraham Casteleyn's *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* had a deserved reputation for its international coverage. Like most of the contemporary newspapers it generally stuck to reporting the facts which makes its emphasis on the story of Jewish unrest the more striking. Between late 1665 and early 1667 the Haarlem newspaper published some 39 articles in which there is information directly relating to the Jewish events.⁴¹ Some are feature stories, in one case occupying nearly a quarter of the space in that issue of the paper. Understandably, the only ongoing news which consistently received more attention was the Anglo-Dutch naval war. The reportage on Sabbatai peaked in March 1666 when some 11 articles contained information on the Jewish events. Standards of objective reporting were relaxed. There is even evidence of trying to anticipate reader expectations: the paper might note the arrival of news from the Middle East and

³⁹ We have not systematically examined all German papers. Note, however, that the important Hamburg *Wochentliche Zeitung*, which seems to be complete for this period, included a good many short news items about Sabbatai and related Jewish affairs (each of the three weekly issues has a different title): *Ordinari Diengstags Zeitung* [= *ODZ*], no. 43 (1665), fol. [1v]; *ODZ*, no. 47 (1665), fol. [2r]; *Appendix der Wochentlichen Zeitung* [= *AWZ*], no. 49 (1665), fol. [2v]; *ODZ*, no. 49 (1665), fol. [2r]; *Wochentliche Donnerstags Zeitung* [= *WDZ*], no. 50 (1665), fol. [2v]; *ODZ*, no. 4 (1666), fol. [2r]; *ODZ*, no. 8 (1666), fol. [1r]; *WDZ*, no. 14 (1666), fol. [2v]; *WDZ*, no. 15 (1666), fol. [2r]. The Hamburg paper is no. Z9 in the standard bibliography of the early German press: Else Bogel and Elger Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts: ein Bestandsverzeichnis mit historischen und bibliographischen Angaben*, 3 vols (Bremen, 1971–85).

⁴⁰ Van Wijk, p. 17.

⁴¹ Van Wijk, p. 22.

then specify that it contained no new information about the Jewish events.⁴² The editorial position of the paper was hardly pro-Jewish; it welcomed news of the apostasy.

Although there is no way to quantify the impact the newspaper coverage undoubtedly contributed to the growth of excitement about the messiah in Europe. This same reportage also provides evidence about the significant impact from receipt of the latest news through the post in manuscript newsletters. We know that skeptics such as Sasportas who first heard the rumors about the Jewish unrest from manuscript propaganda or possibly the printed broadsides demanded confirmation from more reliable sources. The newspapers were considered to be such a source. Yet it is clear that much of what the Haarlem paper published about Sabbatai and Jewish unrest was not accurate since rumor and misinformation were endemic in some of the paper's sources.

The nearly intact runs of the Haarlem paper allow us to calculate transit times for news. We often can determine how long it took a Sabbatean story to reach Europe, appear in print, and then be spread to distant subscribers. The most frequent datelines are Constantinople, Smyrna, or the intermediary transit point Livorno. Once the news had arrived in the latter city it predictably would reach Haarlem in 22 to 25 days. A story datelined Smyrna, 16 January 1666, was printed in Haarlem on 16 March and arrived in Moscow nearly 50 days after that.⁴³ In other words 108 days elapsed between its origin and its translation into Russian. In another example, probably more typical, Smyrna news of 1 April appeared in the Haarlem paper on 18 May and probably arrived in Moscow 25 June, some 86 days after the original report had been sent from Anatolia.⁴⁴ The pamphlets published by David Rhete in Danzig presumably arrived much more quickly in Moscow, even if their contents might have been equally dated. Possibly the Muscovite diplomatic files will eventually reveal evidence that other Sabbatean news arrived via the more direct route from Constantinople through Ukraine.

⁴² *Oprechte Haerlemse Saterdaegse Courant*, no. 13, 27 March 1666, fol. 1r, datelined Aleppo 29 December: "Dese brieven melden van de Joodtse Saecke niet."

⁴³ The text is published in Waugh, "News of the False Messiah," p. 312; *Vesti-Kuranty*, vol. 1, text no. 38, p. 164. The source is *Oprechte Haerlemse Dingdaegse Courant*, no. 11, 16 March 1666, received and translated in Moscow on 23 April (3 May, New Style).

⁴⁴ The text is published in Waugh, "News of the False Messiah," pp. 315–16; *Vesti-Kuranty*, vol. 1, text no. 48, p. 185. The source is *Oprechte Haerlemse Dingsdaegse Courant*, no. 20, 18 May 1666, most likely received and translated on 15 June (25 June, New Style).

The Appeal of Sabbatean News to Europeans

It is easy to appreciate the complex responses of Jewish communities to the Sabbatean news. What about the interest among Christians? This was still an age when religious belief and practice were central to most individuals' world views. Only a very small percentage of Europeans had what we might term a secular and rational outlook.⁴⁵ Most of those who might learn the news from reading printed newspapers or brochures and manuscript correspondence or from oral communication surely would pay attention to stories which might have cosmic importance for their lives. Thus the interest cannot have been limited to small groups such as the chiliasts who had a definite focus on an imminent Final Judgment or the Tsar in a Moscow where public ritual and private belief affirmed that the Russians adhered to the one true faith and their capital was the heavenly Jerusalem.⁴⁶ Surely for most consumers of the news, it was precisely the seemingly irrational and fabulous aspects of the Sabbatai story which provided its appeal.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For an introduction to some of the ways in which older views regarding modernizing secularism are being reassessed, see the review article by Caroline Ford, "Religion and Popular Culture in Modern Europe," *Journal of Modern History*, 65 (1993): 152–75. A good example of mid-seventeenth-century religious devotion which seemed to know no class or educational boundaries is the pilgrimages to Hornhausen in Saxony, where it was believed that Divine dispensation worked through healing waters of a local spring. Testimonials by elite visitors and long lists of cures were reported in pamphlets, for example, *Gründlicher unnd Warhaffter Bericht/ von dem Wundersamen Heilbrunnen/ so newlicher Zeit auß sonderbahrer Göttlicher Gnade/ in dem Stiff Halberstadt bey einem Dorff Hornhausen genant ...*, n.p., n.d. [copy in Dresden, SLUB, Hist.urb.Germ. 723,56]; *Weiterer Bericht Von dem wundersamen Heyl-Brunnen/ Welcher von einem Knaben/ als derselbe am fünfften Martii auß der Schuel gegangen/ zuerst erfunden worden ...*, n.p., 1646 [copy in Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Mx 85(2)]. Both accounts about the miraculous watering hole were translated in Moscow (see *Vesti-Kuranty 1645–1646, 1648 gg.* [Moscow, 1980], pp. 133–42).

⁴⁶ On Muscovy as the new Israel or new Jerusalem, see Daniel B. Rowland, "Moscow—the Third Rome or the New Israel?" *The Russian Review*, 55/4 (1996): 591–614. See also Oparina, "Chislo 1666 v russkoi knizhnosti" for a detailed account of how, oddly enough, the western calendar reckoning of 1666 as the apocalyptic year found resonance in Russia even amongst the Old Believers. She places the interest in Sabbatai in this eschatological context. Note that Scholem, pp. 94–102, emphasizes the need to separate the Jewish responses from those of the Christian chiliasts, and he is skeptical about any wider resonance of the Sabbatai news amongst Christians.

⁴⁷ See the comments of Böning, *Welteroberung durch ein neues Publikum*, pp. 45–46, 105, 132–5, on the limited degree to which wondrous events were reported in regular newspapers. Wonder tales certainly figured in the selection of foreign news translated in Moscow. See S.M. Shamin, "Chudesa v kurantakh vremen pravleniia Fedora Alekseevicha (1676–82 g.)," *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki*, no. 4 (2001): 99–110, and his "Skazanie o dvukh startakh: K voprusu o bytovanii evropeiskogo eskhatologicheskogo prorochestva

The Christian and Jewish communities shared millenarian concerns, at the same time that for both communities the appeal of the news played into deeply ingrained biases about how misguided adherents of the other faith were. Thus one can easily understand how reportage about Sabbatai became anti-Semitic propaganda and Jewish demonstrations were often confronted by Christian, anti-Jewish satire, and even violence.

Apart from considerations of belief, there is another explanation for the phenomenon of Sabbatean news. Given the importance of Jewish merchants, commerce was bound to be affected by Jewish unrest.⁴⁸ Contemporary sources emphasize that in key cities commerce came to a halt as Jews stopped working, spent their time in penitential devotions, and in many cases packed their bags and set out to meet their messiah. The impact of Sabbateanism on commerce must have concerned the readership we imagine for a sensible newspaper such as the *Haerlemse Courant*. Thus the focus on this particular news is of a kind with reportage which in the normal order of things might include lading lists from newly arrived East Indiamen.⁴⁹ Jewish unrest was suddenly real and not a matter of rumor, irrespective of one's personal beliefs about the Final Judgment.

Conclusion

As we have demonstrated here, the example of the "Messiah's Trumpet" in 1665–67 opens a great many fruitful lines of inquiry if we wish eventually to develop a full understanding about the spread of news in the seventeenth century. We do not pretend that it was a typical news story; how far one may safely generalize from it is a good question. Some of the distinctive features of the Jewish correspondence networks and the impact of religious fervor might not be found in other communities or be expected to extend to other kinds of news stories. At very least though we might wonder whether in our study of the news we should separate fact from fiction, print from manuscript, or newspaper from broadside in order to consider only those aspects of the story which by a priori assumption embody modernity.

v Rossii," *Vestnik tserkovnoi istorii*, 10 (2008): 221–48. For a thoughtful examination of how the perception of "wonders" in Europe changed over time, see Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York; Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

⁴⁸ On this point see van Wijk, pp. 24–5.

⁴⁹ For an example of such a list and its translation in Muscovy, see Ingrid Maier and Wouter Pilger, "VOC–Ladinglijst vertaald voor de Russische tsaar (1667)," in Wim Honselaar et al. (eds), *Die het kleine eert, is het grote weerd. Festschrift voor Adrie A. Barentsen* (= Pegasus Oost-Europese Studies, vol. 1) (Amsterdam 2003), pp. 191–213.