YidTakNL Corpus: 18th–19th Centuries Regulations of the High German Jewish Community in Holland

RONNY RESHEF (iD)

MIRJAM GUTSCHOW (iD)

*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

]u[ubiquity press

ABSTRACT

The YidTakNL dataset is a thorough bibliography of Yiddish regulations and announcements by the Ashkenazi Jewish community in Amsterdam between 1708 and 1846. All items are related to social, political and administrative aspects of community life. Most of the corpus scans are fully available online, and the regulations are being transcribed using a Transkribus PyLaia HTR model developed by the authors for Yiddish printed in the *Vaybertaytsh* typeface. The Transkribus model will be made public during 2023 and transcriptions will be made available within a few years. The dataset can be utilised for longitudinal research on government - nonprofit relations, the effect of religion on welfare provision and community resilience. Moreover, the dataset is highly relevant for the development of Yiddish typesetting during the 18th–19th centuries and the linguistic evolution of Dutch Yiddish.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Ronny Reshef

Department of Business-Society Management, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, NL

reshef@rsm.nl

(1) OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY LOCATION

Dataset DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8328503

CONTEXT

The YidTakNL corpus was produced as part of an ongoing research project in Erasmus University Rotterdam (2021–2026). The model is important because it would allow researchers to decipher and read the typeset in which the texts were printed, namely the well-known Yiddish *Vaybertaytsh* typeface. This Ashkenazi semi-cursive typeface, also known as *Tkhine-ksav, Tsene-(u)rene-ksav, mashket/mesheyt, taytsh, vayberksav, ivre-taytsh* and *kleyn-taytsh*, was broadly used for printing Yiddish documents between the 16th and the beginning of the 19th century across Europe and the Yiddish speaking world (Zafren 1982: 138; Jacobs 2005: 47; Spinner 2019: 152). The above-mentioned YidTakNL makes original Yiddish texts written in the *Vaybertaytsh* typeface publicly available. These texts deal with socio-political aspects of the Jewish life in Amsterdam in the 18th-19th centuries.

Amsterdam's High German Jewish community was established in 1639 out of necessity, when the Portuguese community excluded the Ashkenazi Jews from services in the Portuguese synagogue. Since its establishment, the High German community experienced multiple rifts and conflicts regarding proper management (elections of officials and funds), many of which escalated to fist fights in the synagogue. In order to cope with the repeated disagreements, the officials of the High German community were assisted by the Portuguese community and the municipality of Amsterdam (Michman, Beem & Michman 1999: 49–50). The frequent conflicts led to numerous regulations, amendments, supplements and extensions of statutes. These schisms are well reflected in the YidTakNL corpus.

Although during this period the Ashkenazi Jewish community also wrote texts in Hebrew and Dutch, the focus of this article is printed Yiddish regulations and announcements. Yiddish texts written in Amsterdam were influenced by the Dutch language to such an extent that signs of this linguistic influence can be found in Yiddish dialects of other countries as well. This influence was mostly semantic, and barely phonetic, morphological or phonological. During the 18th century, the borrowing of lexical expressions and items from Dutch into Yiddish rose dramatically. However, different Yiddish texts written in the Netherlands were influenced by Dutch to a different degree: literary texts seem to have been less affected than practical manuals; guidance books and periodicals for the Dutch Jewish market had more Hollandisms than texts written for a broader audience (Aptroot 1988: 7–11; Aptroot 2017: 142–144; Michman & Aptroot 2002: 2). This period was chosen since the lion's share of compatible Yiddish texts was written between 1711–1834. Barely any relevant documents from before 1711 survived, and since the beginning of the 19th century, Dutch progressively replaced Yiddish as the lingua franca, making Yiddish less significant.

In order to be able to create transcriptions, a model was built using Transkribus. This PyLaia HTR model dedicated to *Vaybertaytsh* typeface will be made available in the coming months. It can help researchers to read and understand Yiddish texts written in *Vaybertaytsh*, since this typeface is substantially distinct from modern Hebrew typefaces, and lay the foundations for computer-based models for *Vaybertaytsh*. Handwritten Yiddish texts such as letters and minutes written in Amsterdam during this period were excluded since this PyLaia HTR model is dedicated to prints.

The first author of this study is currently using the YidTakNL dataset to research the social history of Jews in the Netherlands, and the effect of religion on developments within civil society. Specifically, the data enables studying the relationship between the municipality of Amsterdam and Jewish nonprofit organisations (Salamon, 1987), and how this relationship affected welfare provision initiatives. Therefore, the YidTakNL corpus includes regulations on social and welfare-related aspects written by the leadership of the Jewish community, as well as regulations of individual community charitable organisations. During the research conducted by the first author of this study, the dataset is used to study patterns of philanthropy within the Ashkenazi Jewish community in Amsterdam. The focal themes are related to the efficiency

of welfare initiatives by nonprofits, the possible effect of religion on centralisation versus fragmentation patterns of nonprofits (Bauman, 1985), and the longitudinal development of legitimacy of social enterprises (Suchman 1995: 574; Dart 2004: 418).

(2) METHOD

STEP 1: REFINING AND COMPLETING *INVENTORY OF YIDDISH PUBLICATIONS FROM THE NETHERLANDS*

The dataset is based on Mirjam Gutschow's extensive bibliography, *Inventory of Yiddish publications from the Netherlands: c. 1650 – c. 1950* (2007). However, it only focuses on regulations written and published by community leaders or charitable organisations for the benefit of the community, resulting in 64 sources. The YidTakNL dataset was then completed using catalogues such as WorldCat,[1] National Library of Israel,[2] HebrewBooks,[3] University of Amsterdam library,[4] Hebrew Union College library,[5] Jewish Theological Seminary Library,[6] Tresoar Library,[7] and International Institute of Social History: IISH.[8] This step led to the addition of several items to Gutschow's Inventory and some minor corrections were made (for example, correction of the publication year of a few items). Moreover, permalinks were added to scans of sources from YidTakNL.

STEP 2: VALIDATING YidTakNL

To validate the data from YidTakNL and examine whether any new items were catalogued since Gutschow's bibliography was compiled in 2007, we first consulted books and articles on the Jewish community in Amsterdam in the 18th–19th centuries and composed lists of relevant keywords based on them. In order to find as many potentially relevant sources as possible, the list included keywords such as regulations, rules, laws, Community (Jewish) Amsterdam. Helpful information was provided by librarians from the University of Amsterdam, Tresoar and the Jewish Theological Seminary (see Acknowledgements section), who were contacted via email or in person. The above-mentioned catalogues were then meticulously researched using combinations of search strings containing the collected keywords in Hebrew, English, Dutch and Yiddish. The snowball method was also applied in order to find as many potentially appropriate sources as possible. This was done by browsing through items which could potentially be relevant and performing multiple iterations to ensure a comprehensive collection of items. The items found were compared with YidTakNL, and a few items were added to the dataset.

STEP 3: STANDARDISATION AND PUBLICATION

Thanks to its being based on Gutschow's (2007) *Inventory*, YidTakNL includes comprehensive, standardised metadata. The bibliographic data of YidTakNL is organised in a unified table through Excel-sheet and is made available via Zenodo. It contains the following columns: YidNed-Number, Year (Christian), Title, Author (Hebrew letters), Author (Latin letters), Place, Printer, Year (Jewish) in Hebrew letters, Year (Jewish) in ciphers, Number-of-leaves, Format, Vinograd's bibliography, OCLC-number, Link to public scan (mostly from NLI, Google Books and HebrewBooks.org), Link and shelf marks to entries in library catalogues (NLI, Rosenthaliana, Tresoar and JTS). At a later stage, links to the full texts of a selection of the regulations will be provided via Zenodo.

---

1   https://www.worldcat.org/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

2   https://www.nli.org.il/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

3   https://hebrewbooks.org/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

4   https://uba.uva.nl/home (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

5   https://huc.edu/libraries/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

6   https://www.jtsa.edu/library/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

7   https://www.tresoar.nl/bezoeken/bibliotheek (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

8   https://iisg.amsterdam/en/collections/browsing (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

(3) DATASET DESCRIPTION

The dataset is available at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8328503. It comprises a bibliography (YidTakNL) and, currently, preliminary editions of two Takkanot (Tak1711, Tak1737).

OBJECT NAME

YidTakNL

Tak1711

Tak1737

FORMAT NAMES AND VERSIONS

Excel, PDF, Docx

CREATION DATES

Start: 2023-01-01, End: 2023-09-08

DATASET CREATORS

Mirjam Gutschow, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

Ronny Reshef, Erasmus University Rotterdam

LANGUAGE

Data: Yiddish, Hebrew

Metadata: English

LICENSE

Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)

REPOSITORY NAME

Zenodo

PUBLICATION DATE

Version 1.0: 2023-09-08

(4) REUSE POTENTIAL

The corpus opens up promising opportunities for researchers of social sciences and humanities. First, it contains rich information enabling them to study aspects of social history within the Ashkenazic Jewish community of Amsterdam. This can be related to trends of segregation versus assimilation, gender, secularisation versus conservatism, and external and internal factors influencing the daily life of the Jewish community in Amsterdam. These trends can later be compared with other Jewish or religious communities in similar contexts. To this end, it would be interesting to collect additional sources from other catalogues and publications similar to the ones consulted for our research. A good starting point can be the exceptional publications by Litt (2008, 2013, 2021), who composed elaborate scientific editions of similar Yiddish publications from elsewhere in the Netherlands and Europe, and Van Luit's (2009) extensive bibliography. Similarly, Tal's (2010) unique study, which includes translations, elaborate explanations and annotations on regulations and protocols of the High German Jewish community in Amsterdam, can substantially contribute to such research on social history.

In addition, since the dataset is composed of regulations, it can also be used to research legal aspects of Jewish life in Amsterdam. This can be done especially when studying the regulations

side by side with legal documents from other authorities involved in the status of the Jews in Amsterdam during the same period: the municipality, province and national authorities. Such research can for example be conducted by adding sources from the municipal archive of Amsterdam,[9] the archive of the Province of Holland (later North Holland)[10] and the Royal Library of the Netherlands.[11] Another possible use can be comparing the regulations with intra-community *kruzim*, announcements published within the community. These *kruzim* reflect a de facto application of the de jure regulations. Studying both source types side by side can contribute to our knowledge of the manners in which rules and regulations were practised, and the dynamics between the two layers of public-social policy. Moreover, the regulations can be beneficial for comparative research with secular, municipal legislation as well as with Church regulations.

The dataset can be utilised for linguistic research on semantics, morphology and syntax. Since it contains hundreds of pages of Yiddish texts written over the course of roughly 100 years, the dataset has an enormous potential for promoting our knowledge on Dutch chancery Yiddish, its contact with and influence by Dutch, and its adaptation over time. Since the dataset is focused on a specific dialect of Yiddish, studying it can improve our knowledge of local variations in this unique language, as the influence of Dutch on Yiddish is still under-researched (Aptroot 1988: 7; Aptroot 2002: 202, 204, 209; Aptroot 2017: 143). Moreover, the scope of the dataset including the text editions and model is also sufficiently comprehensive for computational and experimental research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ronny Reshef: writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, project administration

Mirjam Gutschow: writing – review and editing, data curation, visualisation

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Ronny Reshef orcid.org/0009-0006-3583-7005
Department of Business-Society Management, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, NL

Mirjam Gutschow orcid.org/0000-0002-0356-5475
Department of Jewish Studies, Yiddish Culture, Language and Literature, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, DE

REFERENCES

Aptroot, M. (1988). Dutch Impact on Amsterdam Yiddish Prints. In *Dialects of the Yiddish Language*. (pp. 7–11). Oxford: Pergamon. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-036564-0.50005-3

9   https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

10   https://noord-hollandsarchief.nl/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

11   https://www.kb.nl/ (Last accessed: 3 November 2023).

Aptroot, M. (2002). Yiddish, Dutch and German among late 18th century Amsterdam Jewry. In *Dutch Jewry: Its history and secular culture (1500–2000)*. (pp. 201–211). Leiden: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004500952_011

Aptroot, M. (2017). From Yiddish to Dutch: Holiday Entertainment between Literary and Linguistic Codes. In *The Religious Cultures of Dutch Jewry* (pp. 141–156). Leiden: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004343160_007

Bauman, M. K. (1985). The emergence of Jewish social service agencies in Atlanta. *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, *69*(4), 488–508. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40581435

Dart, R. (2004). The legitimacy of social enterprise. *Nonprofit management and leadership*, *14*(4), 411–424. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.43

Gutschow, M. (2007). *Inventory of Yiddish publications from the Netherlands : c. 1650–c. 1950*. Leiden: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004149847.i-242

Jacobs, N. G. (2005) *Yiddish: A linguistic introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Litt, S. (2008). *Pinkas, Kahal, and the Mediene: The Records of Dutch Ashkenazi Communities in the Eighteenth Century as Historical Sources* (Vol. 19). Leiden: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004167735.i-236

Litt, S. (2013). *Jüdische Gemeindestatuten aus dem aschkenasischen Kulturraum 1650–1850* (Edition 1). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. DOI: https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666310157

Litt, S. (Ed.) (2021). Jüdische Fürsprache: Quellen aus Gemeindeprotokollbüchern (pinkasim) des aschkenasischen Kulturraums 1586–1808. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. DOI: https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666311260

Michman, Y., & **Aptroot, M.** (2002). *Storm in the community: Yiddish polemical pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry, 1797–1798*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press.

Michman, J., Beem, H., & **Michman, D.** (1999). *Pinkas: geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland.* Amsterdam: Contact; Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap.

Salamon, L. M. (1987). Of market failure, voluntary failure, and third-party government: Toward a theory of government-nonprofit relations in the modern welfare state. *Journal of voluntary action research*, *16*(1–2), 29–49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/089976408701600104

Spinner, S. J. (2019). Reading Jewish. *PMLA Modern Language Association of America*, *134*(1), 150–156. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2019.134.1.150

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of management review*, *20*(3), 571–610. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080331

Tal, E. (2010). *Ha-qehilah ha-ʾaškenazit be-ʾamsṭerdam ba-meʾah ha-18*. Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Šazar le-toldot Yiśraʾel.

Van Luit, R. T. (2009). *Mediene Remnants: Yiddish Sources in the Netherlands Outside of Amsterdam* (Studies in Jewish History and Culture, vol. 23). Leiden: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004156258.i-218

Vinograd, Y. (1993–95). *Thesaurus of the Hebrew book: listing of books printed in Hebrew letters since the beginning of Hebrew printing circa 1469 through 1869*. Jerusalem: Institute for Computerized Bibliography.

Zafren, H. C. (1982). Variety in the Typography of Yiddish: 1535–1635. Hebrew Union College Annual, 137–163. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23507628