

## **EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources**

**Volume 9: Cross-Cultural Connections in the Early Modern Jewish World, Brown University, Providence, RI, February, 26-27, 2012**

### **Jailhouse Encounter: A Sixteenth-Century Jewish-Christian Tale and Its Historiographical Ramifications**

Daniel Jütte, Society of Fellows, Harvard University

#### **Introduction**

Below are two excerpts from the little known early seventeenth-century German memoirs of the non-Jewish Swabian merchant Hans Ulrich Krafft (1550–1621).<sup>1</sup> Krafft was born into one of the most respected families in the city of Ulm, in southern Germany. In the 1570s, he served as a factor for the Augsburg-based Manlich trade company in the Levant.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 1574, however, the Manlich Trade Company went bankrupt, and Krafft, who did not have the means to pay off the debts he had guaranteed on behalf of his employers, was arrested and imprisoned in Tripoli (now in Lebanon). This dismal situation was to last for three years, and Krafft faced moments of real crisis. For example, he was kept for forty days in a cell without a ray of sunlight, and the hygienic situation in the tiny cells was abominable.

I would like to present two excerpts from Krafft's nearly 500-page long memoirs. The first excerpt describes an episode from his imprisonment when he was visited by a German Jew named Mayer Winterbach, who came from the same region of Swabia. Despite Krafft's initial reluctance, the two men eventually formed a friendship. More than a decade after Krafft's release, they met again in Germany and continued their amicable relationship (excerpt 2). Krafft's detailed and personal account provides us with insight into the nature of this uncommon, or perhaps not so uncommon, cross-cultural connection. In my presentation, I hope to raise the question of how to classify Christian-Jewish encounters like the one between Hans Ulrich Krafft and Mayer Winterberg.

#### **On the Translation and the Edition(s) of the Source**

There is no extant translation of Krafft's memoirs in any language other than modern German, which is unfortunate since the original text is fairly challenging, even to native speakers of modern German.<sup>3</sup> Krafft was not a

man of letters and he clearly did not set out to write high literature, but it is clear that he used detailed notes and records from the past when he started putting quill to paper. Written mostly around 1615—about five years before his death—Krafft’s memoirs were primarily written for his three sons. In fact, the autograph manuscript was published only in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the absence of an original title, the editor Konrad Dietrich Haßler decided to publish the memoirs under the title *Reisen und Gefangenschaft Hans Ulrich Kraffts* (The Travels and Captivity of Hans Ulrich Krafft).<sup>4</sup> This was a fitting title, for the account mainly deals with events in Krafft’s life between the ages of twelve and thirty-seven. It gives us little information about his childhood or his life after his marriage in 1587. What we know about these parts of his life must be drawn for other sources.<sup>5</sup>

My excerpts from Krafft’s memoirs are taken from Haßler’s edition (all translations into English are mine).

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<sup>1</sup> The autograph manuscript is preserved today in the Stadtarchiv Ulm, Bestand H (Handschriften/Nachlässe: Krafft, Hans Ulrich). On extant editions, see below n. 4. I will offer a more detailed treatment of this source and of the excerpts in question in an article that is currently under review.

<sup>2</sup> On the rise and fall of the Manlich Trade Company see esp. Hermann Kellenbenz, “From Melchior Manlich to Ferdinand Cron: German Levantine and Oriental Trade Relations (Second Half of XVIth and Beginning of XVIIth centuries),” *Journal of European Economic History* 19 (1990): 612–617. See also Jakob Strieder, *Das reiche Augsburg: Ausgewählte Aufsätze Jakob Strieders zur Augsburger und süddeutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Heinz Friedrich Deininger (München: Duncker & Humblot, 1938) 101–109; 167–189.

<sup>3</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the only historical study that is aware of the riches in Krafft’s memoirs as a source of cultural history (although it uses it only marginally) is Axel Gotthard, *In der Ferne: Die Wahrnehmung des Raums in der Vormoderne* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2007), esp. p. 66. In contrast, see Piirainen’s linguistic study of early modern German, based on a computerized analysis of Krafft’s vocabulary: Ilpo Tapani Piirainen, *Graphematische Untersuchungen zum Frühneuhochdeutschen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968). For Piirainen, Krafft’s book serves only as a random sample from the vast pool of available early modern texts. He is entirely indifferent to its historical content and context. While I cannot judge the value of Piirainen’s linguistic analysis and conclusions, I find his classification of the text as an “uninteresting travelogue” (p. 3) inappropriate and rather condescending.

<sup>4</sup> *Reisen und Gefangenschaft Hans Ulrich Kraffts*, ed. Konrad Dietrich Haßler (Stuttgart: Litterarischer [sic!] Verein, 1861). One year after the Haßler edition, a more accessible but slightly rearranged translation into modern German was published under the title *Ein deutscher Kaufmann des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts: Hans Ulrich Krafft’s Denkwürdigkeiten*, ed. and trans. Adolf Cohn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht,

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1862). More recently, a heavily condensed selection of newly translated chapters was assembled by Klaus Schubring under the title *H. U. Krafft: Ein schwäbischer Kaufmann in türkischer Gefangenschaft* (Heidenheim: Heidenheimer Verlagsanstalt, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> A valuable compilation of available biographical information on Krafft can also be found in the relevant entry in an online databank of German ego-documents (*Selbstzeugnisse im deutschsprachigen Raum*), maintained by the Free University of Berlin: [http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/jancke-quellenkunde/verzeichnis/k/hu\\_krafft/index.html](http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/jancke-quellenkunde/verzeichnis/k/hu_krafft/index.html) (accessed October 1, 2011). There is also an entry on Krafft in Ralf C. Müller's prosopographical encyclopedia of early modern German travelers to the Levant: Ralf C. Müller, *Prosopographie der Reisenden und Migranten ins Osmanische Reich (1396-1611): Berichterstatter aus dem Heiligen Römischen Reich, außer burgundische Gebiete und Reichsromania* (Leipzig: Eudora-Verlag, 2006), 5:41–70.

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The Journeys and Imprisonment of Hans Ulrich Krafft, translated by Daniel Jütte

Litterarischer [sic] Verein, Stuttgart, Germany 1861, pp. 189-191, 416-417

Excerpt 1 [pp. 189–191]

[p. 189] At the time of the feast of Saint George<sup>1</sup> in the year 1575, a German came to see me in the municipal jail. He greeted me in German, expressing how surprised he was to find a fellow German in this place and, more specifically, in jail. He asked me to receive him benevolently, for he had come to me out of wonderment. He soon noticed that I am a Swabian and thereupon remarked that we were fellow countrymen [*Landtsleüth*]. When he found out that I am from Ulm he promptly said: “I come from a nearby place that is under the rule of the Vöhle lords of Neuburg near Düssen [Dießen]<sup>2</sup>.” We were both surprised that out of all places, we had happened to meet here [in the prison of Tripoli]. But when he said that he was a Jew, I became sad. He rushed to console me. He said that he could understand that I might be afraid of him given the fact that I had been kept in prison partly at the instigation of several Jews. He could see the point. In fact, he had come to see me because my adversaries had urged to him to do so, for they were eager to find out more about me and my family. However, invoking God and all that he owes to Him, he herewith solemnly swore that he would not be involved in any schemes against me. Nor would he speak or act against me. For he and many other German Jews disliked the haughty local [Oriental] Jews even more than we Christians did. [p. 190] He told me that was bound to deliver a message to Safed, but that he did not plan to spend much time there. In fact, he was intent on returning to Germany soon afterwards. If he—as a loyal fellow countryman—could do anything detrimental to them [my Oriental-Jewish creditors], I should let him know and trust him like a

brother. As I recapitulated his offer to him, he affirmed it even more emphatically than before. Thus we reached an accord. Despite the fact that he had known my father in Ulm well (in fact, he told me that they had done business before my father became city mayor) he would declare [in the presence of my creditors] that I indeed originated from Ulm, but that he had never heard of my family. Furthermore, he would state that I was unlikely to be the son of respected people.

He indeed kept this promise. And as Safed is only two day's journey from Tripoli, he came to visit me again after eight days. He told me marvelous tales about the nearly infinite number of Jews he had seen in the synagogues of Safed. They were of different nations, such as German, Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Polish, and some of them spoke Turkish, Arabic, and Greek—something that went beyond what he had ever imagined. In the remaining eight days of his stay in Tripoli, he often came to see me, and he complained a great deal about the haughtiness of the Oriental Jews. For instance, [he told me how] he had two shirts and several handkerchiefs laundered, which cost him four *medin*<sup>3</sup> (in Germany he would pay less than [the equivalent of] one *medin*). [He went on to report that] soon afterwards a Jew came in who used vile language and accused him of paying his wife with four counterfeit *medin*. Handing back the money, he [the upset Jew] asked whether he [the German Jew] had come to this country in order to cheat its people. The German Jew (by the name of Mayer Winterbach) offered to take the issue to the head of the Jewish community. Thus they both appeared in court: The judge asked the Oriental Jew to present the counterfeit money, and the Oriental Jew complied. The judge then declared that the four *medin* were indeed false. The German [Jew], in contrast, declared that he had paid with good coins and not with these four false ones. The Oriental Jew was confronted with this statement and was asked whether he would swear under oath to his own version, to which he soon agreed. However, lest the Oriental Jew commit perjury over such a small amount of money (roughly three *batzen*<sup>4</sup>), the German Jew took the counterfeit money and cut it into pieces under the eye of the judge. He then paid the fraudulent Jew the same amount in good coins.

[p. 191] I teased Winterbach with this story and recommended that he better return home soon, for he was too naive for this country. [...] Winterbach [...] remarked that while he had traveled thousands of miles in his life (and he later told me in detail about his many journeys), he had never before been cheated in such a devious way. In fact, he admitted, the old saying was still true: “The closer to Safed, the worse the Jews; the closer to Rome, the worse the Christians.”<sup>5</sup> When Winterbach left for Germany on a

Venetian ship on 10 May 1575, I gave him a letters to my dear father and to my friends along with other things to be delivered to Ulm. After the delivery of these items and the thorough report he gave about my state, he received fair reward [in Ulm].

Excerpt 2 [pp. 416–417 (last chapter of the memoirs)]

[p. 416] My readers should know: Now that I, the undersigned, have truthfully and with God's help described everything that occurred to me during my younger days from the age of 12 to the age of 37—when I was bachelor both in foreign lands and at home—I shall leave it at that. [p. 417] However, regarding the period after my marriage, there is one thing that I cannot omit from my present account. The German Jew by the name of Mayer Winterbach of Neuburg [...], who visited me during my imprisonment in Tripoli in Syria in 1575, had tried ever since to find out what had happened to me. He indeed managed to learn that I had eventually returned to my fatherland, and that the city of Ulm had appointed me a bailiff in Geislingen. In August 1590, he all of a sudden came to see me in Geislingen. I did not immediately recognize him, for fifteen years had passed and I did not believe that he would ever come to see me again. He asked me whether I no longer remembered him. While I did not recognize him by his greyish beard, I soon enough did so by his manner of speaking. He brought me as a present a beautiful big nautilus, as well as a beautiful, black-brownish hollow nutmeg (which I later on made part of a beautiful drinking cup in the form of a turtle, which I commissioned). He stayed for two days at my home, and the good-hearted reader can imagine how much more cheerful and merry our conversations were compared to the ones that we had fifteen years earlier and hundreds of miles away from home. I treated him with great gratitude.

While making a side trip during one of his journeys, he came to see me again three years later, in May of 1593. During that visit he told me about the long journey to Italy and Portugal from which he had returned in the meantime. At that time he was intent on settling in Prussia because he had married off one of his daughters there. He was also already quite old at that time, and because he has not visited me ever since, I suspect that his life had been put into God's hands. Despite the fact that he was a Jew, I do not know of a Christian who traveled more than he did.

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<sup>1</sup> April 23.

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<sup>2</sup> Reference here is to the Vöhlin family, an affluent local dynasty that was primarily based in the town of Neuburg an der Kammel.

<sup>3</sup> *Muayyadi* (an Ottoman coin)

<sup>4</sup> A widespread coin in Germanic lands.

<sup>5</sup> This is the Jew's extension of a popular medieval and early modern saying, occasionally also quoted by Luther in his assaults on Papal power. The traditional version is: "The closer to Rome, the worse the Christians." Cf. *Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi*, 9:56, 356–357.

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Litterarischer [sic] Verein, Stuttgart, Germany 1861, pp. 189-191, 416-417

#### Excerpt 1

[p. 189] Vmb Georgj Ao 1575 kompt ein Teuscher Zu mir Ins gefencknus der Statt, grießt mich Auff Teusch, mitt verwunderung, daß er einen Teuschen In diser Landts Artt, sunderlichen In verhaftung finden soll, bitt, Ich sols Ime Zu gutt haltten, das wunder habe Ine Zu mir triben. Der Mörcktt auch bald, daß Ich ein schwab werd sein, mit vermelden, er haltte dafür, wir seyen Landtsleüth. Da er mörckt, Ich were von Ulm, sagt er strackhs darauff: Ich bin nitt weytt darvon, vnder den freyherrn Vöhle Zuo Newburg bey Düssen. Darlber verwundertten wir vns Noch mer, daß wir vnuerhofft alda sollen Zusammen khomen. In dem Als er sich Erklert, er wer ein Jud, ward Ich darlber trawrig; der sprichtt mir bald wider trostlich Zuo, Er Mörcke wol, weil Ich Zum tail auch ettlicher Juden gefangner sey, so thüe Ich mich ab Ime Enttsötzen; es seye nit on, eben meine widersächer haben Ine darumben Zu mir Zu gehn genöthiget, Zu erkhundigen, wer Ich vnd was mein vnd der Meinigen thun vnd lassen sei; Er wölle mir Aber hiemitt angeloben, An eines Aidts statt, so hoch er vor Gott schuldig, daß er Im geringsten nichtts wider mich wöll practicieren, Röden noch fürnemen, dan er vnd vil Ander Teusche Juden seyen den hochtrapednten hielendischen Juden mer feindt dan wir Cristen. Er habe [p. 190] was Zu Safföt, das Ist Faphet, AußZurichtten, wölle sich nit lang saumen Zuuerrichtten vnd bald wider Ins Teuschland machen; derowegen, kinde er mir Als ein Trewer Landtsman wider sy was gutt Außrichtten, soll Ichs Ime Als meinem leiblichen bruder vertrauen. Da Ich Ine seines anerbietens Noch einmal erInnertt, betheurt er mirs höher Als Zuuor. Hierauff wurden wir mit einAnder Dacordo, vnangesehen daß Ime mein herr Vatter Zu Vlm wol bekandt vnd, wie ermeldt, vor der Zeitt Im Burgermeister Ambtt vor Ime Zuschaffen gehapt, so soll er AnZaigen, Ich sey wol von Vlm, Aber Ime seye meins geschlechtts Niemandt bekandt, er haltt auch nitt dafür, daß Ich Ansehenlicher Leith kind sey, wölches er Trewlich gehalten. Vnd weil ermeltt Saffet nit Zwo tag rayß von Trippolj ligt, Ist er in Achtt tagen wider Zu mir khomen vnd mir wunder gesagt, wie es ein vnZahlbar Juden alda vff der Schul hab, von Mancherlay Nattion, Als Teusch, welsch,

frantzösisch, Portugaleser, Spanier, Polaccen, von Türckischer, Arabischer vnd kriechischer sprach, döß er sein lebtage nitt geglaubtt. In den Achtt tagen, so er hernach Noch zu Trippolj muß bleiben, Ist er offtt Zu mir Auß vnd Eingangen, da hatt er mir vil von disen Orientischen Juden hochmuth geklagtt, vnder Andern, man hab Ime Zway hemendter sampt ettlich schnuptiechlin geseubertt, dauon hab er miessen vier Medin geben, er hette nit ein Im teuschland dafür derfen Zallen. Bald khom ein Jud, Red Ine trutzig An, er habe seinem weib vier falsche Medin geben, ob er darumb Ins Land sey khomen, dj leüth Zubetriegem, vnd gibtt im gleich wider. Er der Teusche Jud, mit Namen Mayer winterbach, erbeutt sich mit Ime für der Juden Obersten Zugehen; sy bede khomen für: der sprichtt, der Land Jud soll Ime dj falsche Mintz geben, der thutts hernach dem Judexs Zustöllen; der Richtter sprichtt, die vier medin seyen Falsch; der teusch sagtt, er habe seim göggentayl gutte vnd nitt dise 4 falsche Medin geben; darIber wirdt der Land Jud befragt, ob ers mit dem Aid wölle bestettigen, wölches er bald Zu thun sich anerbotten. Ehe Aber der Teusche Jud den Andern einem falschen Ayd vmb ein so geringes geltt, souil Als 3 batzen, hatt wöllen thun lassen, thutt er das falsch geltt vor dem Richtter Zerschneiden vnd dem falschen Juden ander [p. 191] gutt geltt wider dafür geben. DarIber Ich Ine winterbach wol gefexsiert vnd gesagt, er solle nur bald wider haim Raysen, er seye Zu Ainfalttig In dise Land [...] DarIber sagtt er winterbach [...] er seye sein tag (wie er mir dan hatt erZöltt, wohin er aller göggen Auff vnd Nidergang gerayßt) vil tausentt meyl gewandert, er seye Niemals also lüstig betrogen worden, mit fernem vermelden, das Altte sprichwortt seye noch war: Ie Nehner gehn Saffet, Ie Erger Jud; Ie Neher gehn Rohm, Ie Erger Crist. Als er winterbach hernach den 10 Mayo Ao 1575 vf einem venedischen schüff wider Ins Teuschland verrayßt, hab Ich Ime schreyben An meinen L. Vatter vnd befreindten vnd Andere sachen, In Vlm Zu Iberliuern, mitgeben, Ist Ime Auch vf fleyssige IberAntwortung vnd gründtliches berichtts, wie es mit mir beschaffen, ein gutt Drinckgeltt verehrtt worden.

## Excerpt 2

[p. 416] Zu wissen: Diweil ich vnderschribner nunner Gott lob Alles wahrhaftig beschriben, was mir In meiner Jugendtt vom 12 bis vff das 37 Jar Lödigs standts In der frembde, Zum tayl Anhaimisch, begöggnett vnd widerfaren, will [p. 417] Ichs darbey beruhen vnd bleiben lassen. Allein kan Ich eins In meinem Ehstand Zu melden nitt vmbgehen. Nach dem der Teusche Jud, Namens Mayer Winterbach von Newburg [...], wölcher mich In Ao. 1575 vnuersehens zu Trippolj in Siria In meiner gefengnus hatt haimgesuchtt, vnd er mich seyder hero hatt Aus kundttschafft, wie daß Ich wider In mein Vatterland Ankhomen vnd Vlmischer pflieger Zu Geußlingen worden sey; Als hatt er mich Im August Ao 1590 Zu Geußlingen Auch vnuersehens Nach meiner Erlödigung wider haimgesuchtt, wölchen Ich In 15 Jarn nitt gleich erkanntt, weil Ich vermaint, er werde dj tag seins Lebens nitt mer Zu mir khomen. Indem aber er

mich fragt, ob Ich Ine nitt mer kenne, hab Ich Ine bölder An seiner Röd Als grawlechtten bartt erkanntt. Der brachtte mir Auch Zum gruß ein schönen grossen Mörschnecken sampt einer schönen schwartz Braunen holen Muscatnuß schalen, darauß Ich mir ein schönes drinckh geschirr In form einer Schülttkrotten hab machen lassen. Was es für ein fröliches lustiges gesprech göggen dem vor 15 Jarn Iber Vil hundert meil Zwischen vns beeden In Zwayen tagen, so er bey mir gewesen, hatt Abgeben, kan der gutthertzige Leser selbstn ermessen, hab Ine hernach von mir danckbarlichen Also abgeförttiget, daß er Iber drey Jar, Ao 1593 Im Mayo mich am fürIber Raysen hatt widerumben haimgesuchtt, mit erZöllung, wie er Zwischen der Zeitt wider ein Weytte Rayß In Ittalia vnd portugal volbrachtt, In Willens, sich In preysen Zu begeben, alda er ein Tochtter hab verheurath, vnd weil er Zimlich bedagtt gewesen, auch seyder nitt Zu mir khomen, haltt Ich Ine für Gott beuohlen. Ob er wol ein Jud ward, so glaub Ich nit, daß ein Crist weytter Als er gerayßt sey.