**Sephardic Jews**

**Summary**

The expulsion of the Spanish Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, the forced baptism of the Jews in Portugal in 1497, the annexation of Portugal by Spain (1580), the capture of Antwerp by Holland (1585) and the conquest of Recife by Portugal (1654) led to one of the largest short-term migration movements in Europe in the Early Modern period. Spanish and Portuguese Jews also settled in strictly Lutheran Hamburg. They became part of the emerging modern commercial center. The economic weakness of Amsterdam beginning in 1621 led to a further influx of Iberian Jews into Hamburg, through which the city profited from Dutch-Brazilian colonial trade. Around the mid-17th century, Hamburg developed into the largest city in Germany, in which more than 3% of the urban population were Jews, in their majority Iberian (Sephardim), as well as German Jews (Ashkenazim). Down to the 20th century, Hamburg remained in a sense the most 'Portuguese' city in Germany.

The Sephardic diaspora functioned like a network or global village: commerce with the English and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean, an endogamy oriented to economic interests, high social mobility, a conflict-ridden return to “bom judezmo” ('good Judaism') and not least, maintenance of the Portuguese language, strengthened the sense of cohesion among the Portuguese. For that reason, we cannot speak in social, economic and cultural terms of clearly defined Sephardic cultural areas or spaces. Rather there was a virtual mega-community encompassing numerous countries and several continents, the “natio lusitana” ('Portuguese nation'). The Sephardic ‘era’ came to an end at the close of the 17th century, when the large Hamburg merchant families (Henriques, Teixeira, Curiel) relocated to settle in Amsterdam. In the 1850s, Sephardim came from Holland, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire to Hamburg. Together with the approximately 100 Portuguese remaining in Hamburg, their descendants became the victims of the National Socialist policy of annihilation.

**About the Author**

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