ABSTRACT: The presented sources have been selected from the oldest minute book, the pinkas, of the Ashkenazi community in The Hague, which was kept from 1723 until 1786. The Hague was then the Dutch capital and residence of the Orange Stadholders. The city was much smaller than Amsterdam, but it was still one of the most important urban centers of the Dutch Republic. As the capital, its urban population included many officials, diplomats and soldiers, and these people formed and influenced the urban life significantly. The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed the high point of the Rococo with its intensive pursuit of amusement, evidenced by numerous theatres, operas, and pubs, as well as by people’s colorful dresses and the soldiers’ extraordinary uniforms.

This presentation is for the following text(s):

- Haag Jewish Community Minute Book

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Duration: 40:44
Introduction to Haag Jewish Community Minute Book

Stefan Litt, Bar Ilan University, Israel / Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria,

Marching Soldiers, Opera Houses and Young Jewish Men in Eighteenth-Century Hague

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All these opportunities for leisure activities attracted, of course, not only Christians, but also Jews. The visits of young male Jews at the Bosch, the military parade ground, on Saturdays were viewed suspiciously by the elders of the Jewish congregation. The leaders’ attempts to control this phenomenon were based on the halakhic rules of the Sabbath. The Bosch was obviously situated outside the defined Sabbath-boundaries, and Jews couldn’t walk there without breaking the law in case they carried objects with them. The pinkas presents the case of a young man, who was called several times before the leaders to explain his repeated walks to the Bosch on Sabbath, where he had been seen by others carrying a watch. The records, however, do not present the very end of the affair.

Another example for the participation of Jews in the secular, largely non-Jewish, urban life of The Hague is the common visits of the local opera house by the synagogue cantor, the hazan, and the synagogue reader, the kore. The leaders warned both of them that further visits would lead to the loss of their positions within the community.
The examples presented here illustrate the broad encounter between traditional Jewish life in the late eighteenth century and the world of the secular pleasures of the urban center of The Hague.

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On Shabbat Hagadol 532, the wise head of the beit din, he may live, has insistently warned in his sermon that no one shall dare to walk on Shabbat to the Bosch. This is because one cannot be careful enough not to carry anything, and easily one can cause a desecration of the Shabbat as the Bible says, God forbid!

On Sunday, the day after Passover 532, the leaders, God may protect them, gathered in the house of the wise head of the beit din, he may live, and they summoned before them Michel Benjamin Haas. The leaders and the wise head of the beit din, he may live, have questioned him why he walked to the Bosch yesterday, on the holy Shabbat, carrying his watch with him, which fact is well known to the leaders. Why has he desecrated the Shabbat? In addition, didn’t he hear the rabbi speaking about this when delivering his sermon on Shabbat Hagadol? He answered that he did it unintentionally, and that he was not attending the sermon on Shabbat Hagadol. He thought that one could carry a watch with him out of the place. Furthermore, he promised not to do so in future. The leaders, God may protect them, answered then that actually he was worth of being punished with the exclusion from the synagogue and with other additional kinds of punishment. Only because of his excuse that he did not know that, and because it happened for the first time, the leaders, God may protect them, have not punished him this time, and he has to beg for pardon for his sins with the wise head of the beit din, he may live.

The leaders, God may protect them, have made public the following announcement about this on Friday night in the synagogue (and the abovementioned Michel was present):

Some individuals did not abstain from going to the Bosch on last Holy Shabbat, and some of them have carried things from one place to the other, as they have admitted by themselves. This is, besides our many sins, a desecration of the Shabbat; and as
happened last year, when a great misdemeanour occurred that had never been seen in Israel before, when some people, sons of the devil, had seditiously and deceitfully left the area on the Holy Shabbat. [They did it] in order to go to the ground, where the soldiers drill, and to seeing them. They would have been worth for being punished publicly for being complete villains by excluding and expelling them. But [for this time] they only have been warned and have not been punished, because they have excused themselves with their ignorance.

Therefore, the leaders, God may protect them, and the wise head of the beit din, he may live, warn urgently that from this day on, no one, may it be man or woman, grown-up or young, shall dare to go to the Bosch on Shabbat, even when they do not carry anything with them, for not breaking the fence, God forbid! And whoever dares to go and break through the border, will be banned, excluded and expelled from the community of Israel, and he will be cursed forever. This is what those perpetrators deserve, who publicly desecrates the Shabbat.
Every listener may be blessed!

Entry No. 2:
On the first day of the month Iyar 532, minor reckoning, the leaders, God may protect them, gathered in the assembly room of the elders and before them came witnesses, Issac Shleeser and Wolf ben Menahem, both members of the community, and also Michel ben Anshel Bikten and testified that yesterday, on Holy Shabbat, they have seen Michel ben Benajmin Haas coming from the Bosch.

The leaders, God may protect them, have again called the above mentioned Michel, who, until now, has not yet come to hear the sentence of the leaders. His mother, Hena, wife of Benjamin Haas, has come and said that her son, mentioned above, had been to the Bosch, but he had not carried anything with him. She urgently asked the leaders, God may protect them, not to sentence her son Michel, mentioned above, in absence, and she promised that he will appear before the leaders.

Fol. 244. Entry No. 3
The leaders, God may protect them, considered to be good to tell the hasan, R. Matatjahu, and the kore, R. Benjamin, not to dare to go to any kind of comedy or opera from today on. In case they would violate the prohibition, by daring to go together or any of them to comedies or to the opera, they will be excluded from their offices for six weeks for the first time. During that time they will not be allowed to do any service. For the second time, they will be relieved from their offices completely. Each of them will get a copy of this decision from the shammash, in order to comply with these instructions. Here, Hague, Sunday, Tammuz 6, 539, minor reckoning. The vain Itzik Leiden, scribe of
the community

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Early Modern Workshop: Jewish History Resources

Volume 2: Jews and Urban Space, 2005, University of Maryland

Haag Jewish Community Minute Book
Pinkas, 1723-1798

Prepared by Stefan Litt, Bar Ilan University, Israel / Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria.

Fol. 219 v., entry No.1:

"If a member of the congregation is worthy to be called 'rabbis' or 'sages', he shall be received and be instructed in the ways of the Torah. He shall not be allowed to enter the synagogues or the holy places, to put on the phylacteries or to pray in the 'kol kohanim' manner."

Ma'or Shabbat Shuvah, ed. Jacob L. Gans (Jerusalem: "Ma'or Hatorah" 1958), 92:1.
entry No. 2:

יום א' ד'ח' ז'אייר תקלת ל'' ייינו קהל נ'' הפר במראיך ברוחר הקהל ושנahrain קהל נ'' ח''איך שלישך低い ז'זלאק

בנ מתמה ב''ב''גור מיכל ב' אשיי בקיפות הערוד, והיו בזים א الداخل תשבח קדש המבמעת והן עשו בז'זרא קומן או

מעל מבנית וו

קהלה כך חכבי מיכל נ'' וודר ליה רופ אותו לעכלת על הנה נאה נ' ב' איזל קהל נ' או הנענת אשת מבניך והיא פר

אונה להקבカラー הנה נ'' אולין אוerver שמע נבון בזכיות בני דר נאף קהל נ'' יז' יש

מען קייו פסק על הנה מיכל נ'' המק וולה שלא שפנין, והיו שפחטס וריד' או פר קהל משעלאל ודוער

Fol. 244, entry No. 3

קהלה כך חכבי מוכנטים ללההו נ'' מחתו' מרתקרא נ''abytes ציינו נ'' ביבט' ציינו מ' או אנא' שי די' ציינו דה יד

שיטד' זליין או איןוף קומTorrent או опер' צי בז'ל' ראובג שערור על הז' אי אורין צי פארק主营业י צי Torrent או oper' צי

איי קומTorrent או oper' צי ג'ג' פס א"ש א'_ticketי 6 ז'ואון' שיכור שדל Torrent צי' מ' שיכור צי קוני שיכור צי


וקי' אראק לייד' נ"ק

Archive: Gemeentearchief Den Haag, NIG Den Haag, Nos. 1-3

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