"A Medley of Contradictions": The Jewish Diaspora in St Eustatius and Barbados

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“A Medley of Contradictions”: The Jewish Diaspora in St. Eustatius and Barbados

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During the 17th and 18th century a number of Jews settled on the English island of Barbados and the Dutch island of St. Eustatius. The Jews on both islands erected synagogues and a number of key structures essential for a practicing religious community. Although they had strong connections that spanned across geo-political boundaries, the synagogue compounds on each island became key places for the creation and maintenance of a Jewish community. I argue that these synagogue compounds represented diasporic places that must be understood through a tri-partite model that explores the relationships between the Jewish community and its hostland, other dispersed Jewish communities, and the homeland. Furthermore, during the early modern period, these compounds were “heterotopias” within the colonial landscape. Heterotopias, as places of alternative ordering, speak to the constructions of social and cultural difference. For the Jews, the synagogue compounds provided them a chance to create a place founded on their cultural values and ideals within the Christian controlled spaces of both islands. Alternatively, for the Christian communities on the islands, the synagogue compounds highlighted how the Jewish community had different loyalties and values than they did. In exploring the ways that these places served as heterotopias, and for how long they were sites of alternative ordering, this dissertation demonstrates the fundamental role that places play in the formation and maintenance of diasporic communities and the dynamic relationship between spaces, places, and identities in the early modern period.
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Chapter I: Introduction

On February 3rd, 1781, Benjamin Lindo woke up on the small Dutch island of St. Eustatius not knowing that by days end the island would be captured by the invading fleet of the British Admiral George Bridges Rodney. When the British landed they immediately made the Dutch Governor, Johannes de Graaf, surrender the island. Lindo, like the other merchants on St. Eustatius, could only watch helplessly as the British seized his warehouses claiming them as prizes. In the ensuing weeks the British soldiers inventoried the captured material and prepared to hold one of the largest auctions ever held in the colonial Caribbean (Jameson 1903:706). The Jewish male heads of households were rounded up and ordered off the island (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:523-526). Lindo told the British Quartermaster that he was British and, therefore, should be allowed to stay on the island along with the other British citizens where he could make direct pleas to the British Navy for the restitution of his merchant goods.

Benjamin Lindo was born in London to English-born parents and had probably spent his entire life in England before starting his business venture on St. Eustatius. In his court testimony, Lindo stated that the Quartermaster rejected his claims to British citizenship because where he was born “did not signify, for he was a Jew” (Before the Most Noble 1786:8). Since Lindo was Jewish, he could not, at least in the eyes of the Quartermaster, be British. In one simple statement, Benjamin Lindo’s connections to any particular state were severed. He could only be a member of the free-floating “Hebrew Nation,” a community bounded by their common history but missing from the political maps of the world.
The diasporic condition is a transnational one in which individuals and communities span defined geo-political boundaries. They are both a part of the location they are in but also a part of a global community. The complex interplay between the local and global and the way diasporic cultural connections supersede physical proximity make diasporic communities the spoilers in debates about national cultural homogeneity and the exemplars of modern globalization. Diasporas call into question any assumed ideas of the relationship between cultures, identities, and space. While this is true in the current world, it was also true during the early modern period.

The early modern period was one of significant changes with the colonization of the Americas, the Protestant Reformation, emerging systems of Atlantic capitalism, and technological advances allowing for quick and effective transportation across great distances. Within this dynamic context, Caribbean Jews played an important role in which they both shaped and were shaped by the world around them. Jews were at once a challenge to the emerging ideals of national purity (as demonstrated by the story of Benjamin Lindo) but were also exploited by those various nations for social and economic gains. Throughout all of these changes, Caribbean Jews created communities, maintained religious traditions, reworked cultural practices, and helped shape their imaginings of the future. Taking the Jewish communities of St. Eustatius and Barbados as case studies, I utilize insights from diaspora theory and historical archaeology to explore how these Jews created communities during the early modern period.

Diaspora has become a buzzword in the social sciences today because of its connotations of transnationalism. Although the term historically has been used almost exclusively to discuss the experience of the Jewish people, numerous human migrations
in the past thirty years have been called diasporas. Despite the diversity of groups labelled as a diaspora, I follow the lead of historian Kim Butler (2001) in arguing that a diaspora implies three key relationships. These are the relationship to the hostland, to other groups within the diaspora, and the homeland. Taking these relationships as a framework for interpretation provides the scholar with a distinct set of questions that highlight both the local components of the diaspora alongside their transnational connections.

Historical archaeology combined with this model of diaspora has numerous insights that can be added to our understanding of diasporic peoples. For while diasporans have challenged simplistic notions that equate geography with cultural affiliation, diasporans have not been disconnected from geo-political space nor have they refrained from creating meaningful places on the landscape. Indeed, diasporans perhaps more than other cultural groups, have had a greater need for carving out places within larger geo-political boundaries for community construction and cultural continuity. Historical archaeologists have long explored the material processes of place making and can continue to do so for diasporic peoples.

Thus, I explore key Jewish sites on St. Eustatius and Barbados. These sites played an important role for the creation of Jewish communities on each island. The Jews on St. Eustatius and Barbados were mostly Sephardic in origin with the majority having immigrated to the islands from the Netherlands. While these communities share many cultural and historical similarities, they were formed in two different contexts. St. Eustatius was a Dutch colony whose economic success relied upon the transshipment of goods throughout the Caribbean and the Atlantic. Barbados was the classic example of a
British plantation island where sugar agriculture reigned supreme. By comparing and contrasting the histories of these two communities and how they created distinct places on their respective island landscapes, it is possible to highlight those cultural practices shared by those within the Jewish diaspora alongside the distinct and unique practices developed in each local context. The first four chapters expand on this discussion and lay out the theoretical and historical background for the study. The next chapters explore the places of the Jewish diaspora on each island through the tripartite relationships of diasporas.

In chapter five, I explore the interactions between the Jewish community and their Caribbean hostlands. The relationship to the hostland defined much of the history for Jews on both islands. The various legal and cultural attitudes of the Dutch and the British towards the Jews on the island created structures that both limited Jewish action as well as creating opportunities for Jews. Within these structures, Jews established a number of key institutions based upon their own cultural and religious ideals. The Jews established a community and a communal core that was distinctly marked upon the landscape. While this community was marginalized within the urban landscapes of both islands, they were nevertheless a known presence. This chapter explores not only the foundations of these communities but the shifting position of these communities within each island’s society through time.

Chapter six discusses the lateral connections that tie the Jewish Atlantic together. One of the most discussed aspect of these lateral connections has been Jews’ connection to the developing system of capitalism. I continue to explore these issues by focusing on how Jewish diasporic connections were integrated into the economies of each island.
Beyond the connections to the system of capitalism, I also discuss a variety of other exchanges that tied various Jewish communities together. These connections were not based upon a market, but instead can best be understood through anthropological models of reciprocity where exchanges were structured by cultural and religious values. These exchanges included the movement of money, religious relics, and the indigent. Furthermore, these exchanges had material representations that can be seen within the synagogue compounds on each island.

In chapter seven, I start with an exploration of various cultural traditions and how they were practiced within the synagogue compounds. These traditions help draw connections to the various homelands of the Jews on St. Eustatius and Barbados. Within this chapter, I introduce Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia. Heterotopias are places of alternative ordering that incorporate a variety of spaces and chronologies that are distinct from the other places on the landscape. The synagogue compounds on St. Eustatius and Barbados were formed from a variety of relationships unique to Jewish history and culture. They allowed Jews to order their world according to their own cultural and religious beliefs. This order did not just include a shared history but also focused upon a shared future. I argue that Jews of the colonial Caribbean did not desire to return to a distinct geographic space but rather believed that the Messiah was soon to arrive. Thus, the Jews of Barbados and St. Eustatius did not have a desire to physically return home but rather had eschatological hopes for a new homeland.

I conclude with the observation that heterotopias are formed within a relationship to a variety of spaces and places and that places only serve as heterotopias from particular points of view. What did the synagogue compounds mean for the Jews? What did they
mean for other groups on each island? Furthermore, how did the meaning of these places change through time? Ultimately, an analysis of the key Jewish places on each island demonstrates the fundamental role that places play in the formation and maintenance of diasporic communities and the dynamic relationship between spaces, places, and identities in the early modern period.
Chapter II: Diasporic Approaches

Diaspora is a term that has become increasingly popular in academic literature over the last twenty years (Brubaker 2005). Its connotations of transnationalism, diversity, immigration, and ambiguity have all been the subjects of research for the social sciences and humanities (see Braziel and Mannur 2003). Scholars are drawn to the term because it implies movement (as much as sedentism) along with an identity not grounded in current geographically defined states (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993; Clifford 1994). Anthropologists, in particular, see diasporic people as representing the ambiguous space between the us/other dichotomy, a space that at once challenges the dominant system while also being shaped by it (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Brah 1996). As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests, diasporic discourses are often focused on “disarticulation,” where themes of “displacement, detachment, uprooting, and dispersion” are highlighted (1994:339). These themes of disarticulation are useful challenges to essentializing tendencies of “territory, people, race, language, culture, religion, history, and sovereignty” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994:339). And thus, in a post-structuralist academic milieu where challenges to all essentialisms are embraced, there has been a proliferation of scholarship dealing with diasporas.

Furthermore, diasporas have provided a new angle for the exploration of the local/global nexus. Neither truly local nor global, studies of diasporans highlight the numerous factors that impact particular communities. In general, scholarship on diasporans has focused on at least one of three key relationships that influenced diasporans’ lives: relationship with the hostland, relationship with other communities within the diaspora, and relationship with the homeland. Following the work of historian
Kim Butler (2001), I argue that the explorations of these three relationships can form a framework for archaeologists exploring the lives of diasporic peoples.

Archaeologists can provide a fresh voice to the work of other diasporic scholars. For while the themes of disarticulation and displacement run heavily through discussions of diaspora, diasporas are also inevitably about re-articulation and emplacement. Diasporans often carve out and create particular places, which help form a diasporic identity and allow for continued practicing of cultural traditions within a new location. The archaeology of diasporic places provides evidence of the way these places were formed, the changing meanings of these places for those who lived there, and the role these places played within the quotidian lives of individuals within the diaspora. Furthermore, historical archaeology can highlight the materiality of the diverse relationships that form a diaspora.

Diasporic Approaches

Almost all definitions and theories of diaspora are grounded within the history of the Jews (Cohen 1997; Clifford 1994:303, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:340; Esman 2009). Although the term diaspora itself “is derived from the Greek verb speiro (to sow) and the preposition dia (over)” (Cohen 1997:iix) and was used simply to refer to Greek colonization and movement, it was when the term was used in a Greek translation of the Bible referring to the forced dispersal in Deuteronomy (28:58-68) that the Jews became permanently linked to the idea of diaspora. Throughout most of history, the term diaspora has been almost exclusively linked to Jews while other dispersals were couched in different terms. As political scientist William Safran (1991:83, emphasis original) argues, “This omission is not surprising, for through the ages, the Diaspora had a very
specific meaning: the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion. However, in the last fifty years, scholars have begun to apply the term diaspora to a variety of movements. This explosion of the use of diaspora has moved the discussion beyond just the Jewish experience and interestingly, the Jewish diaspora has become perhaps understudied in diaspora research.

The Jewish diaspora is defined by a number of historical features, especially a forced dispersal from a homeland. There has been an emphasis on the return to this homeland, although the nearness of this return and the strength of the desire to return has waxed and waned throughout Jewish history and within various Jewish groups. One of the main reasons that diaspora has been used so often in current geo-political debates is that the Jewish diaspora has strong connotations of forced dispersal and ultimately exile (the Hebrew word galut). Thus, calling a movement diasporic makes a political statement that is often used to highlight an exilic past and a lost homeland. Hence when people talk about the Irish diaspora it is almost always focused upon those forced to leave Ireland because of the potato famine and not other periods of Irish migration. The discussion of the African diaspora almost always refers to the transatlantic slave trade as opposed to other historic movements of Africans (Cohen 1997). This is particular pronounced in anthropological studies of diasporas because of anthropology’s tendency to study the subaltern.¹

¹ Ironically, this has actually led to anthropology tending to marginalize the study of the Jewish diaspora itself. As Jews are not easily recognized as a subaltern or the “other” in the West today, they have in recent times tended to be underrepresented in anthropologies of diaspora (see Dominguez 1993, Boyarin 1991b; Brink-Danan 2008).
At this point, I should raise a critique of scholars such as Robin Cohen (1997) and Milton Esman (2009) who propose the concepts of “settler” and “imperial” diasporas. They are right to highlight how colonists and settlers to new lands do face “diasporic” challenges in how leaving a homeland raises questions concerning nativeness, indigeneity, and autochthony. Indeed, one theme that I will discuss later is how in the colonies of St. Eustatius and Barbados everyone was a “newcomer.” Yet, to equate the experience of the transatlantic slave trade to British colonizing of North America seems problematic. The model of diaspora that I utilize, and detail below, includes the idea of a relationship to the hostland. While perhaps risking essentializing the host society, the point is that the diaspora is in some aspects removed from said hostland, and is not the hostland as the colonists and settlers were (or would become). Besides, we already have a slew of terms to describe these types of movements including colonialism, imperialism, and settler. I am not sure what is to gain by muddling these already complicated terms with another. Indeed, it seems to generalize diaspora to such a degree that it is simply a synonym for dispersal.

Diaspora-as-exile has a long standing tradition in scholarship and has shaped many interpretations of past events. Within Jewish historiography, this connection has often led to what has been called a “lachrymose” history (Ray 2008:24). This involves writing Jewish history as a history of loss, struggle, intolerance, and tragedy, ultimately making the diasporic condition one of exile. Exploring diasporas through themes of exile, loss, and trauma certainly have legitimate reasons as horrific events occurred (i.e. the Inquisition, the transatlantic slave trade, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust). Within anthropology, the tendency to map cultural borders onto geographic regions
(Gupta and Ferguson 1997a, 1997b), meant that diasporic peoples like the Jews, who lacked a defined geographic cultural area, were outside the norm and thus a problem to be explained.

Yet, this understanding of diaspora has been called into question as studies of diaspora have shifted from something largely considered in a negative light (exile) to an ideal position of hybridity and flexibility. In large part, this redefinition coincides with the shift in the theories and focus of scholars as they reconsider the fixity of all categories. Much of the discourse focuses on ideas of fragmentation, dis-articulation, partiality, fluctuation, cosmopolitanism, and flexibility. The radical time-space compression of the modern (Harvey 1996), coinciding with scholars critically questioning earlier notions where cultures are translated onto geographic spaces (or vice versa), has re-oriented diasporic discourse.²

Scholars of globalization have begun to focus on diaspora as a context where group identity (even a nation) is created and maintained in absence of a territorial claim. Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin (1993:723) argue in their provocative essay on diasporic processes that, "the renunciation of sovereignty (justified by discourses of autochthony, indigenousness, and territorial self-determination), combined with a fierce tenacity in holding onto cultural identity, might well have something to offer to a world in which these two forces, together, kill thousands daily." In other words, diasporans do not claim control over a particular territory based upon their "natural" connection and origins within that particular space. Boyarin and Boyarin suggest that since diasporic cultures and identities persist despite not claiming sovereignty through autochthony (and

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² The question then becomes, is this shift in social theories and analyses the result of this time-space compression or simply a coincidence.
they are challenging the Jewish claim of Israel through narratives of autochthony and
indigeneity), they rupture the link between space and culture, a link that has led to
numerous violent conflicts. The Boyarins suggest ideas of identity formation that do not
solely privilege geography but also include genealogy.

Thus in the ever more globalized world, diasporans for some have become an
idealized people. Diasporic people are often portrayed as the post-structuralist and post-
modern peoples who have cultures grounded in something that does not lead to the
genocidal violence that defines so many of the modern nation-states’ actions (e.g.
Appadurai 1996). They are a people who have lived a life of displacement and border
crossing while maintaining their culture through time. Aihwa Ong says that for scholars
such as Jonathan Boyarin and James Clifford the “focus on diasporan cultures and
subjectivities then seeks in the off-shore experiences of labor migrants, and in the worldly
ruminations of intellectuals, the birth of progressive political subjects who will
undermine or challenge oppressive nationalist ideologies (and global capitalism)”
(1999:14). While I have highlighted the Boyarins, this new positive view of diasporas
that highlights hybridity and flexibility over exile has largely removed Jews as the
diaspora ideal type to which all other diasporas are compared.

Yet Aihwa Ong critiques this approach as simplifying the place of diasporans to
being outside of the system of nation-states. “In our desire to find definite breaks
between the territorially bounded and the deterritorialized, the oppressive and the
progressive, and the stable and the unstable, we sometimes overlook the complicated
accommodations, alliances, and creative tensions between the nation-state and mobile
capital, between diaspora and nationalism, or between the influx of immigrants and the
multicultural state” (Ong 1999:16). For Ong, ignoring the complications of the relationship between the diasporans and the nation-state by placing them at opposite ends of the spectrum, fails to recognize the flexibility and creativity of nation-states in creating subjectivities and disciplines of both national and transnational populations. Furthermore, it does not adequately explore the ways that diasporic individuals are both shaped and shape the world around them. Historian Jonathan Israel has argued much the same thing when he describes the Sephardic Jews of the 17th century Atlantic as being both “agents and victims of empire” (2005: 5).

While such perspectives may destroy the diasporan as the liberating hero in the construction of a better world, they provide a needed counterweight. In a statement concerning Jewish history, yet could easily be applied to all diasporic peoples, historian Jonathan Ray (2008:54) states: “The realities of the Jewish diaspora experience are to be found somewhere between the lachrymose depiction of exile as endless suffering and displacement, and the equally problematic celebrations of modern diasporas as defiant and empowering counterpoints to the colonizing nation-state.” Diasporic studies grounded in detailed historical and ethnographic research illuminate the complex entanglements of the diasporic subject with territorially based notions of ethnicity and politics. In teasing out these entanglements, it will be possible to gain new insights into both the nation-state and the diasporic subject. And while this may end the diasporic subject as the revolutionary liberator, such insights will bring greater understanding of our world and how we got here, and perhaps, will allow for more thoughtful actions in the future.
The explosion of diasporic studies within the context of current scholarly ideas on transnationalism and globalization has pushed the particular emphasis on the Jewish diaspora to the margins of diaspora studies (Brink-Danan 2008:682-683). The transcendence of the Jewish diaspora has occurred to such a degree that diaspora theories do not explicitly discuss the Jewish diaspora. In part the displacement of the Jewish diaspora is a good thing. To remove the Jewish diaspora as an “Ideal type” allows for the Jewish diaspora to be compared to other diasporas rather than serving as the measuring stick for other diasporas. If the Jewish diaspora is going to contribute to diaspora studies, then scholars of the Jewish diaspora need to enter into a dialogue with scholars of other diasporas so that they can compare, contrast, and share their insights concerning diasporic processes.

Diaspora as an Analytical Tool

Following the lead of historian Kim Butler (2001:191), I define a diaspora as 1) a group of people with a shared identity rooted in a history of dispersal from a homeland, 2) settlement in multiple hostlands, and 3) continued relationships with other peoples within the same diaspora. Thus a diaspora is constituted by a triadic relationship. The three axes are the relationships with the hostland, the relationships with the homeland, and the relationship with other diasporic communities. I define these axes as relationships to highlight how there is a constant interplay between the diasporic subjects (and communities) and each node in the triad. The relative importance of each of these axes is dependent on context and is constantly changing.

It is this triadic relationship that helps define diaspora differently from other forms of movement (immigration, refugee, etc.). These axes explicitly highlight the
importance of space, while not privileging space as the sole factor in diasporic subjectivity. The three axes create a multi-scalar approach that allows us to consider the impacts on diasporic lives ranging from small scale day-to-day interactions to large scale global processes. Finally, these axes allow different views of time to be important. Together they provide a model for exploring identity that is both geographic (hostland) and genealogical (homeland) and allow for various questions that will make it possible to see the “different possible groundings of various Jewish communities, and bring home the point that far from the spatial factor being irrelevant to Jewish culture, it is both necessary and inseparable from time” (Boyarin 1991b:19).

Although multiple peoples may be defined along this triadic relationship, a diaspora does not exist if the community does not see themselves as being at least partially different from the host society.3 This does not necessarily mean that the group has to utilize the term “diaspora.” Nevertheless, they have at minimum an alternate identity grounded in the other three features of the definition given above. The emphasis on this identity of partial difference highlights that being diasporic is not an innate condition. Rather, it is a result of historic processes played out in particular contexts. A person may choose to not be part of a diaspora if the conditions within both the diaspora and the hostland make this a possibility. There is thus a constant negotiation between the self-chosen identity, the prescribed identity given by the host society, and the ways that people and institutions within the diaspora try to control diasporic identity. Diaspora is a dynamic condition of constant emergence.

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3 Note that this difference does not mean antagonism. Identities do not have to be either...or but can also be both...and depending on the context. Thus, ideally, in the US it should be possible to be both Jewish and American without these two identifiers coming into conflict. However, what is essential from a diasporic perspective is that the identifier Jew connects the individual to an alternative historical narrative and connections to the larger Jewish diaspora.
**Relationship with the Hostland**

Diasporas are both transnational phenomena and local processes. Although dispersal and globalized connections are key dimensions of a diaspora, the process of settling in particular locations is just as important. As anthropologist Avtar Brah (1996:182) argues “diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere.’” Diasporas are more than simply dispersal from a homeland but include a settlement in a hostland. The settlement is not fleeting and can be permanent when the idea of return to the homeland is not seen as the ultimate destiny of the particular diaspora. Thus, despite diasporas being defined by routes they are inextricably about both roots in the homeland and establishing roots in new contexts. Or in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (1994) terms, the diaspora is about both “disarticulation” and “rearticulation.”

The anthropology of globalization continually highlights how global phenomenon have local articulations (e.g Appadurai 1996:17; Lewellen 2002). As anthropologist Brian Axel (2004:46) writes, we must have “the understanding of diaspora as a globally mobile category of identification that engenders forms of belonging that are both global in breadth and specifically localized in practice. In other words, diaspora, in these terms, provides one avenue for understanding globalization as a radically localized process.” While not ignoring the impacts of global connections, the creation of particular diasporic communities occurs in specific contexts.

The conditions that structure Axel’s “radically localized process” are the relationships of the diasporic community with the hostland. Once a diasporic group settles and starts the process of community formation they must interact with the host
society and government. The diasporic community cannot form itself within a bubble transmitting ideas and institutions unchanged from its previous locations or the homeland. The diasporic community forms within a structure that it may challenge and at least partially be incorporated into. Any study of a diasporic community must consider the dynamic relationship between local power structures and a diasporic community's cultural practices. Certainly some of these cultural practices will change while others may be allowed to continue. Furthermore, the hostland, in allowing the settlement of diasporans will also change.

**Lateral Connections**

While diasporas occur in a localized setting and diasporic communities come together and are maintained within particular contexts, there is a transnational and potentially global dynamic to diasporas. Even though a diasporic community forms in respect to a particular hostland, it also maintains connections with other people and communities within the same diaspora. Indeed these connections are often based upon genealogical relationships as opposed to geographic relationships. In this way diasporas challenge the notions of spaces that lead to bounded shared identities (particularly nation-states).

One of the defining features of a diaspora, as opposed to other forms of mass movement, is that the various dispersed groups maintain relationships with each other. At times these “decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return” (Clifford 1994:307). These lateral connections may be based upon strong ties of kinship that involve continued interaction or may exist solely

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4 This is even more obvious when we realize that a diasporic community is not necessarily a homogeneous community and is divided along other variables such as race, gender, or class.
through a shared connection to a religion or history. Thus the relationships range from repeated encounters to more abstract connections where individuals feel a degree of solidarity because of a shared history of dispersal as opposed to direct physical contact. No matter the nature of the relationship, it plays a strong role in the formation of a diasporic community.

These lateral connections also break down the minority-majority relationship within the hostland. While diasporans are usually a minority, their connections to other diasporic communities mean that they have a diverse set of resources to draw from when engaging with the majority. Thus, Jews in the Caribbean could look to their brethren in Amsterdam or London to pressure various colonial governments. Additionally, this means that diasporans have the added benefit of having connections in a variety of political entities. As the political situation changes, they can re-orient their lateral connections or even move to these other communities. Thus, to simply frame diasporans as a minority population would miss their diverse connections that provides them a diverse range of political and social opportunities.

This history of movement and dispersal helps remove diasporic communities from a “natural” connection to a particular space. In the previous section I highlighted the fact that diasporic community formation occurs in a particular space and that diasporas are as much about settling as they are movement. This is certainly true, but I hope that it is clear that this settlement in a new location causes the relationship of community to space to be actively created and recreated. Anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997b:50) argue that, “physical locations and physical territory, for so long the only grid on which cultural difference could be mapped, need to be replaced by multiple grids that
enable us to see that connection and contiguity – more generally, the representation of
territory – vary considerably by factors such as class, gender, race, and sexuality and are
differentially available to those in different locations in the field of power.” Thus, while
the physical location is important, it is not the only connection or axis on which
community formation can and does occur. The important caveat is that these lateral
connections should not be essentialized as unchanging either, but rather they should be
explored to see how they are created and re-created through time.

If physical cohabitation is not the only way to define cultural differences and
similarities, then we need to explore the ways that diasporic peoples conceptualize and
create cultural nearness. For diasporic cultures with their lateral connections call into
questions any assumption of cultural similarity based upon physical distance. Rather, we
need to explore the ways that diasporic cultures map their world and the processes that
help create this map. These processes include the shared historical narratives, collective
memories, and shared futures that are discussed below. Also, there are a number of
connections including trade networks, religious networks, and relationships of reciprocity
that also tie diasporic communities together.

Relationships with the Homeland

The term diaspora carries with it a heavy connotation of homeland. As historian
Kim Butler has suggested, “the word ‘diaspora’ is defined, at its simplest, as the dispersal
of a people from its original homeland.” (Butler 2001:189) Although the “the concept of
diaspora embodies a subtext of ‘home’” (Brah 1996:190), the relationship with this home
is far from straight forward or consistent across different diasporas. Therefore, the
relationship to the homeland (which may or not be a political entity or geographic space) is a key factor in the formation and maintenance of a diasporic community.

The homeland is often seen as the key symbol around which diasporic community forms. Again turning to Butler she states, “the construct of the homeland is essential; it functions as the constituting basis of collective diasporan identity” (Butler 2001:204; emphasis original). Despite the dispersal of people from this homeland to a variety of locations, there is still a narrative of dispersal from the homeland that can serve as a key symbol around which a community is constructed. Both of the previous discussed diasporic axes, relationship with the hostland and relationship with other groups within the diaspora, often draw upon the homeland as the substance for that relationship. Whether an encountered or imagined (or more likely both) community, the homeland is often the key symbol identifying shared history of dispersal.

The relationship with the homeland is dynamic and complex. As Butler points out, the homeland is not necessarily a physical place but instead a “construct” (2001:204). For example, what is the “homeland” of the African diaspora? While Africa is a physical space, its size and diversity makes it hard to see the conception of Africa as the homeland in the African Diaspora as the same space as the culturally diverse African continent. The result of this conception of homeland is the creation of “Africa” as a homogeneous homeland easily eliding the cultural complexities of Africa itself. Thus, the homeland is not necessarily a physical space and we need to be careful in assuming that this is case. This is particularly an issue when members of a diaspora long for a return to the homeland. For while return may be the goal, this is not necessarily a return to an actual physical space. As will be shown with the Jewish diaspora in the early
modern Caribbean, there was a constant idea of eventually returning to the homeland, but this was an eschatological homeland as opposed to a physical homeland.

Anthropologist Brian Keith Axel (2004:28) writes, “we come to understand diaspora as something objectively present in the world today with regard to something else in the past – the place of origin.” Thus the past homeland plays an important aspect in the current diasporic condition even if few of the members of the diaspora ever return to the homeland. Butler argues, “to some extent, diasporan representations of the homeland are part of the project of constructing diasporan identity, rather than homeland actuality” (2001:205). In other words, we often have to understand that traditions utilized in the present are practiced within a particular context and that this context is necessarily different from that of the homeland. This pushes our analytical gaze from focusing solely on the homeland as a well-spring of unadulterated traditions upon which a group draws on, to instead seeing these traditions as being actively selected and changed to fit within the current challenges of the day.

The homeland relationship is dynamic due to a number of variables including the conditions in the homeland (look no further than the creation of the nation-state of Israel for a good example of how the homeland can affect a diasporic group), the conditions of those individuals in the diaspora, the changing of the other diasporic axes, and changing global conditions. Moreover, it is necessary to explore how each diasporic group simultaneously maintains, creates, and erases particular traditions towards the homeland. These actions are complicated by the very fact that the homeland itself is not a silent actor but often a powerful player in diasporans’ lives. J. Lorand Matory’s exploration of Brazilian Condemblé has shown how this religious practice was not simply the result of
enslaved Africans being transported to Brazil and establishing a religious system based upon their African heritage but instead the result of constant movement of ideas and individuals across the Atlantic (e.g. 2005; 2006).

The relationship with the homeland has a wide range of possibilities. Perhaps the most common is the idea of historical narrative related to the homeland. This historical narrative is an acknowledgement of the homeland as the homeland. Furthermore, this narrative is often couched in terms of “memory.” Many ethnographies of the Jewish diaspora have focused upon memory (e.g. Bahloul 1996, Boyarin 1991a, Haskell 1994, Deshen and Zenner 1996, Behar 2007). Indeed, the first book-length ethnography of Jews discussed daily life within a type of Jewish community known as the shtetl, which the authors admit no longer existed when their monograph was produced (Zborowski and Herzog 1962).

There are often particular traditions that diasporans attribute to being derived from the homeland. While these traditions may not have the same form or purpose as they had in their original usage, this does not particularly matter. The important factor is that these traditions are believed to be directly from the homeland. They are given both a timelessness and unchanging nature, which solidifies that the group is maintaining that connection with the homeland. This leads scholars to often “generate a diasporic archive, collecting “facts” from the homeland to help explain the peculiar problems of a dispersed population” (Axel 2004:29). This attempt to create a diasporic archive can most easily be seen in the historical anthropology and historical archaeology of the African diaspora where traditions from Africa are often identified in the material culture of enslaved and freed Africans in the Americas (e.g. Herskovits 1990; Ferguson 1992).
However, a simple one to one model of transmission of traditions feeds into the idea that traditions are somehow pristine and pure, particularly the closer they are to an origin. One of the fascinating and challenging features of a diaspora is the fact that while the connection with a homeland suggests a timeless past and an ideal model to strive for, it is nevertheless living within the challenges of the present context. Thus, while many traditions are presented as an unchanging cultural feature, it is in fact something that was actively selected to be maintained. Major questions to be asked of any diaspora is why certain traditions are selected (consciously or unconsciously), suggest why they were selected, and what features in the current context led to that tradition being chosen.

It is important not to conflate cultural identity with cultural traditions. Certain traditions become symbols to display difference and/or to create a diasporic identity. These traditions or material forms may be used to define a particular community – create a particular identity - within the hostland and/or to encourage social cohesion within a particular community. Such traditions and symbols are informed by the diasporan’s culture. However, there are plenty of cultural continuities and traditions that are maintained which do not become used for the purposes of the creation and maintenance of a diasporic identity. These are derived from the history of dispersal and homeland. Indeed, dispersed individuals may maintain certain cultural ideals and forms without consciously choosing to be part of a diasporic community. Within the Sephardic diaspora, some Iberian cultural elements may have been held onto while not necessarily being used to identify the Jewish diasporic community on Barbados or St. Eustatius. Keeping the idea of identity and culture separated helps prevent all cultural retentions being portrayed as resistances (and all of the theories that go with it) while putting the
analytical focus upon those avenues around which cultural identities, antagonisms, and accommodations occur. It can also prevent us from assuming that a loss of a particular cultural tradition equals the loss of a cultural identity.

Archaeology and Diaspora

Having set up a framework for analyzing diasporic peoples, it is necessary to discuss how archaeology can add to this discussion. I believe historical archaeology can play an extremely important role in our understanding of diasporic peoples. Although historical archaeology does not seem to be an obvious choice for exploring a transnational phenomenon such as diaspora because it tends to be site based in its methodology, I do not believe this is detriment but actually speaks to archaeology’s strength. Historical archaeologists have the methods and theories to understand the materiality of the relationships described above and can show how diasporans create meaningful places upon a landscape. I define a place as a singular space of interaction that forms out of a hierarchy of various spaces. Diasporic places are created and understood by a different set of spaces than others places on the colonial landscape. The tripartite model described above provides a framework for highlighting these diverse spaces. Importantly, the places formed by diasporans play a role in the creation of diasporic communities within the hostland.

While conceptions of diaspora in most disciplines started with the Jewish diaspora and then were applied to other cultures, historical archaeology first used the term diaspora to discuss people dispersed from the continent of Africa. This early preoccupation with the African diaspora in historical archaeology can be linked to several developments. The most important influence was the Civil Rights movement, which
brought a national focus on African American history. In the 1960s, African American communities began to highlight the potential archaeological significance of several African American sites including the African Meeting House in Boston (Bower and Rushing 1980), Parting Ways (Deetz 1977), and Weeksville (Singleton 1995:120-121; Bridges and Salwen 1980). At the same time, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 adopted broad language that opened the door for defining a wide array of sites as historically and culturally significant increasing historical archaeological attention on sites associated with disenfranchised peoples. As a result, the focus on the sites of enslaved peoples increased dramatically (Ferguson 1992:xxxv-xxxix).

Furthermore, archaeologist Charles Orser Jr. (2001a) suggests that the increased attention paid to the lives of enslaved Africans helped define historical archaeology’s place within the halls of academia. Orser argues that the exploration of sites associated with enslaved Africans provided historical archaeologists a problem-oriented anthropological voice. In particular, he notes how Charles Fairbanks’ early study of the lives of enslaved Africans on Kingsley Plantation in Florida brought historical archaeology into dialogue with the ethnographic work and theoretical perspectives of such leading anthropological figures as Melville Herskovits (Orser 2001a:623). Fairbanks work, as well as the pioneering study of the Newton Plantation slave cemetery on Barbados by Jerome Handler and Frederick Lange in the 1970s (1978), secured the significant place that studies of enslaved Africans would play in the developing field of historical archaeology.

The turn to African diaspora archaeology also had the benefit of more closely aligning historical archaeology with prehistoric archaeology. The general lack of
documents written by enslaved individuals meant that historical archaeology now had a group who could not easily nor fully be understood through the documentary record. It provided historical archaeologists a means of distancing themselves from historians and to be something more than just a “handmaiden to history” (Noël Hume 1964) or “an expensive way of finding out what we know already” (Bradley 1987:293).

The earliest studies into the African diaspora did not usually use the term diaspora. These studies were often couched as the archaeology of slavery, plantation life, or Afro-American/African American archaeology (Singleton 2010:120). For example, Theresa Singleton in her acclaimed 1985 edited volume *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life*, did not use the term diaspora a single time in the introduction. The majority of early historical archaeologists working on the sites of enslaved peoples had little, if any, background in African history and culture and brought with them the theoretical and analytical tools that had been developed in other archaeological contexts, especially from prehistoric Native North American sites.

One exception was Merrick Posnansky who by the 1980s had conducted a number of significant archaeological explorations in Africa. In his 1984 article, “The Archaeology of the Black Diaspora,” Posnansky uses the terms “African diaspora” and “Black diaspora” to describe displaced Africans in the Americas. Perhaps Posnansky at that time was more ideally situated to think along diasporic lines as an expatriate British Jew who had held academic and professional positions in archaeology in both Uganda and Ghana before becoming a professor at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). In this article, Posnansky called for archaeologists exploring sites associated with Africans and their descendants in the Americas to enter into a dialogue with

Posnansky helped shift the gaze of the archaeologists of the African diaspora to consider the homeland. Many of Posnansky's graduate students have gone on to work on both sides of the Atlantic and have helped bridge the gap between African archaeology and African diaspora archaeology (e.g. Armstrong, 1990, 2003; DeCorse 2001; Agorsah 1996; Kelly 1997, 2008; Monroe 2010). Within the Caribbean, Jerome Handler's continued work on the materiality of the African diaspora also highlighted the important role of African cultures within the Americas (1983). Beyond Posnansky and Handler, historical archaeologists also began to turn to the work of such scholars as Melville Herskovits, Robert Farris Thompson, and John Michal Vlach to gain insights about the African antecedents for African diaspora material forms. Thus, some archaeologists attributed sub-floor pits found in Virginia slave quarters to Igbo individuals and their descendants (Samford 2007) and incised "X"s on the bottom of ceramic vessels to BaKongo individuals (Ferguson 1992). Inspired in part by Posnansky and Handler, the historical archaeology of the African diaspora began to seriously consider the relationship to the homeland as a source for traditions, identities, and practices.

By the late 1990s, diaspora had entered into the historical archaeological lexicon. In 1998, Charles Orser Jr. wrote a review article titled "The Archaeology of the African Diaspora." Yet the adoption of the term diaspora came nearly twenty years after it was adopted in many other scholarly contexts. By the time historical archaeologists began using the term "African diaspora" it was already fairly commonplace to discuss the
transatlantic slave trade as the African diaspora. Thus, historical archaeologists could facilitate adopt the term without having to explain their choice. This situation has led to a case where “generally speaking, the archaeology of the African Diaspora does not explicitly employ or explore diaspora theory so much as advance on the implicit understanding that the phenomenon in focus is unquestionably a diaspora” (Lilley 2004:295).

If we return to Orser’s 1998 review of the field, he mentions three main themes: “the material identification of African identity, the archaeology of freedom at maroon sites, and race and racism” (63). While diaspora studies often discuss issues of identity, the other two themes are firmly within the particular historical purview of the African diaspora. In a 2005 review article of the field, the authors acknowledge how African diaspora has moved beyond the plantations to study African diasporans in a variety of contexts. Furthermore they argue that the African diaspora is “an enormous, almost global event” (Leone et al. 2005:576). In particular, they desire to explore “transnational as well as local, political, and communal responses to enslavement” (Leone et al. 2005:576). Thus, while the transnational element is being highlighted, the discussion still sits within the unique challenges of the African diasporic experience. Indeed, within their conclusion, the authors write: “African diaspora scholars are working to complicate how race, ethnicity, and gender are defined in the past and the present” (Leone et al. 2005:591). Highlighting the complexity of identity, the authors nonetheless do not see diaspora itself as a key attribute to be explored theoretically but instead something that is inherently part of the people dispersed from Africa.
Theresa Singleton has largely focused upon how a diasporic identity forms. She has argued that historical archaeologists “cannot generate dynamic models of cultural identity if we continue to see African peoples as static, or people of African descent in the Americas as conservative retainers of African worldviews” (2001:183). She has suggested that we must in part focus on the “story of the formation and transformation of the black Atlantic world” (Singleton 1999:1). Leone et al. (2005) in seeking to explore the various impacts and reactions to enslavement have provided one route for thinking about the development of a diasporic identity by focusing on the challenges and responses to enslavement. Singleton in her goal to illuminate how diasporic identities are constantly being created has tried to shift the way historical archaeologists’ understand the relationship with the homeland. Instead of seeing the homeland as passive source of cultural traditions, a view which ultimately freezes the homeland into a past vision, she argues that we need to see the relationship to the homeland as a dialogue (2006). With this approach, the homeland is interpreted as an active actor which helped shape diasporan’s lives.

Singleton has not been alone in seriously questioning and exploring the process of African diasporic identity formation. Maria Franklin in her study of the foodways of enslaved individuals on Rich Neck plantation acknowledges the heterogeneity of the enslaved population and that we cannot simply assume that there will be a shared solidarity between enslaved individuals (2001a). Rather, Franklin uses an exploration of foodways to show how a shared identity is created amongst enslaved individuals. Within the context of the 18th century Virginia plantation, she focuses on two major influences for the development of a particular African American food style. The first is a reaction to
the system of enslavement that included only limited food resources. Franklin shows how the enslaved population collaborated to acquire food resources beyond what was provided by the plantation owners. The second influence is from the planters and other white elites attempting to distance themselves from the enslaved population by identifying and stigmatizing foodways that they believed were part of black culture. When taken together, the two processes that Franklin highlights provides evidence for how an African American foodway and identity were formed within 18th century Virginia. Franklin’s study does not simply assume a shared diasporic identity for those dispersed from Africa but rather explores the process of how such a diasporic identity actually is formed within the particular context of the hostland.

The work of Franklin and Singleton have importantly begun to highlight exactly how a shared African diasporic identity arose out of the diverse peoples forcibly brought over by the transatlantic slave trade. However, only recently has there been a push to begin to really explore the idea of lateral connections that created a transnational African diaspora. Archaeologist Akinwumi Ogundiran has argued for an African diaspora archaeology whose interpretations and questions are more firmly rooted in the insights of diasporic theory (Ogundiran and Falola 2007, Ogundiran 2008). Ogundiran explicitly draws from theories in Africana Studies to inform his archaeological research. Thus, Ogundiran co-edited a volume with African Studies and African History professor Toyin Falola (2007). Ogundiran has advocated for what he calls “African Atlantic Archaeology.” He argues “that not only do we have historical continuity between Atlantic Africa and African Diaspora but that both regions should be integrated into a unit of analysis” (2008:3). This approach allows for a far more dynamic view of the
African diaspora that sees the connection to the homeland as a true relationship as opposed to the homeland simply being a source of cultural traditions. It further suggests that we explore the lateral connections between various African diasporic individuals and communities without forgetting local contexts. In other words, while not situated in the same terms, it is an approach that truly considers the three axes discussed above. Charles Orser Jr. has commented on how this approach takes seriously the idea of diaspora stating that “this analysis is especially important because it perceives the diaspora as a transcontinental/transnational process and because it demonstrates clear avenues of comparative inquiry across the wide expanse of the Atlantic” (2010:137). Such approach critically assesses what is meant by the use of the term diaspora.

One exemplar attempt to explore the lateral connections that bring diverse diasporic individuals together has been done by Mark Hauser on Jamaica (2008). Hauser explores the production and trade of locally produced ceramics. By conducting petrographic analyses on locally produced ceramics, he traces the ways these ceramics circulated around the island. Importantly, Hauser combines this archaeological evidence with documentary evidence to show that trade of these ceramics developed more than just an economic market but also “an arena for the development of social networks” (Hauser 2008:193). The development of these social networks tied dispersed communities of enslaved and free blacks on Jamaica together allowing for the creation of important relationships between these communities. In this way, Hauser provides one model for considering the ways that lateral connections are created to help form a diasporic identity that extends beyond the purely local context.
Overall, the historical archaeology of the African diaspora has been largely focused upon its particular purview. Thus, it has been questions that strictly deal with enslavement or race that have most often shaped the field. This is in no way a critique of these approaches as they have incredible value. Indeed, it has been the logical place to start, particularly as historical archaeology has taken on a socially active voice (e.g. Blakey 1997; Franklin 1997; Franklin and McKee 2004). However, historical archaeology finds itself in much the same place that diaspora theory in general was twenty years ago. Within general diaspora theory, the question was whether certain traits and insights could be taken from the Jewish diaspora and applied to other groups that are dispersed from their homeland. Within historical archaeology, are there insights that can be gained from the historical archaeology of the African diaspora that can be applied to other groups considered diasporic? Furthermore, what interpretive gains could be made for the archaeology of the African diaspora, if we were to combine theories of race and enslavement with diaspora theory?

These latter questions are becoming particularly relevant as the diversity of sites explored by historical archaeologists continues to expand. Historical archaeologists have begun to explore sites associated with Jews (Stewart-Abernathy and Ruff 1989; Yamin 1998; Spencer-Wood 1999; Terrell 2000, 2005; Miller 2010, 2011), the Irish (e.g. Orser 2007, Brighton 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009; Horning 2010), and the Chinese (e.g. Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2001, Voss 2005, Orser 2007, Voss and Allen 2008; Schulz and Allen 2008; González-Tennant 2011). Many of these projects have explicitly explored diaspora theory and its approach to historical archaeology.
Stephen Brighton (2009) adopts a Marxist approach to diasporas that seriously considers the intersection of class, capitalism, religion, and Irish identity. By highlighting the different class structures of Irish dispersal, he foregrounds the heterogeneity of what is meant by the term Irish. He further provides a model that explicitly explores the push/pull factors that led to dispersal and the ways these pressures affected those dispersed upon arriving in the United States. Furthermore, Brighton attempts to bring the diverse elements of the Irish diaspora together within a single analysis by exploring sites in the homeland (Ireland) alongside sites in and around New York City.

The archaeology of the Chinese diaspora has really developed over the last 20 years. Much of this work has been in the “descriptive stage,” where the main focus has been on creating a shared terminology and system of classification for various forms of material culture found on overseas Chinese sites (Voss and Allen 2008). However, more recently, historical archaeologists have begun to take a wide variety of problem-oriented approaches for understanding the complex cultural processes experienced by Chinese diasporans. As this field continues to grow, Barbara Voss and Rebecca Allen suggest that “transnational frameworks may be especially important in tracing the complex economic, demographic, and cultural webs that have bound Chinese and U.S. communities together since the 1850s” (2008:19). Edward González-Tennant (2011) has taken the first steps for creating such a transnational and diasporic approach by looking at dispersed Chinese communities on four continents.

Within the studies of the Jewish diaspora, Michelle Terrell’s (2005) study of the Jewish community on the Caribbean island of Nevis has drawn the most from diaspora
theory. Terrell is able to explore the documentary record and a survey of the Jewish burial ground to show how the Jewish community developed. Importantly, Terrell's analysis did not consider the Jewish community purely within its hostland context. She also highlighted the many lateral connections that tied the Nevis Jewish community to other Jewish communities in the Atlantic. Terrell argues that we have to consider the Jewish community from two levels: the local and the global. Her study clearly approached the study of Jews within a diasporic model.

As the diversity of diasporas explored by historical archaeologists continues to expand, the term diaspora itself needs to be critically assessed. We need to ask what justifies labeling all of these diverse peoples with the same term. I have argued that diaspora is more than just a synonym for dispersal but instead implies a distinct set of relationships. Theories of diasporas, largely coming out of the globalization literature, may offer historical archaeologists a new set of possibilities for interpreting the lives of diasporic individuals. Yet, to turn to theories that more explicitly highlight transnational connections is potentially problematically for a discipline that is largely site specific. Furthermore, as the historical archaeology of the African diaspora has demonstrated, identifying sites associated with diasporic individuals can be complex and challenging. Nevertheless, it is within this very challenge that historical archaeology has so much to add to research on diasporas. For it is in particular spaces and places that diasporans actually live and act, and historical archaeology has a chance to ground our understanding of the diasporic experience within the material of the everyday.
Identifying Diasporic Sites

In deciding to undertake a study of a particular diasporic people, the underlying assumption is that this group is somehow different from other peoples in the area and that there are meaningful and identifiable boundaries that separate the diasporic group from the hostland. Because of their lateral connections and homeland connections, the diasporic group is not the same as other people within the hostland. This difference does not have to be antagonist nor stable but rather a place of constant negotiation and flux.

The past twenty years of anthropological research has highlighted how such differences are fluid, always becoming, and never permanent. The construction of such difference is multi-directional both being chosen by particular cultural groups and at the same time being forced upon them. Yet, the final line is that there is something different although we have to be comfortable how emic or etic our interpretations are. Within the realm of archaeology, the challenge is to be able to identify diasporic peoples through the archaeological record.

Archaeology has long faced the challenge of identifying differences, whether said differences are thought of as cultures, races, identities or ethnicities, through the archaeological record (see Jones 1997 for a detailed discussion). Within the early culture-history school of archaeology, there was an attempt to identify various artifact types and patterns that could discern particular cultures. This school of thought created a world of disparate cultures with well-established and recognizable boundaries. Once particular forms of material culture were identified with particular groups then evidence for cultural exchange and diffusion could be mapped. Culture historians were roundly criticized by both processual and post-processual archaeologists for having an overly
simplistic model that failed to incorporate the complexity of life and the ways that boundaries are constantly crossed and negotiated. Processual and post-processual archaeologists developed more sophisticated models of what cultural, social, racial, and ethnic difference mean and the ways that they shaped people's lives. Nevertheless, as Siân Jones (1997:36) has pointed out, many of these studies despite their theoretical complexity still rely upon the culture historians' demarcation of cultural groups through the archaeological record.

Moving to historical archaeological approaches for exploring diasporic peoples, some of the early plantation archaeology of the 1970s and 1980s benefited from having plantation maps that indicated the location of slave quarters. Furthermore, with the growing concern for sites associated with enslaved individuals, they began to focus on architectural features besides the big house and many of these features were attributed to slave housing. Drawing on this evidence, archaeologists could assume that the material culture deposited within these sites was from individuals of the African diaspora. As excavations continued at slave quarter sites, archaeologists began to highlight material culture forms, such as cowrie shells, fist charms, and storage pits while also noticing different patterns of diets, butchering, and access to particular forms of goods that differed from the material culture forms and patterns seen in the big houses.

While at first these differences were explained either through the lens of slavery (Singleton 1985) or status (Otto 1984), the acknowledgment that some of these material cultural forms may reflect African cultural traditions opened up important new avenues for interpretation. The pioneering work of scholars like Leland Ferguson (1992) and Jerome Handler (1983) brought out the possibility of African traditions influencing the
materials found on African diaspora archaeological sites. Within the language of this study, these scholars began to place the emphasis on the relationship to the homeland as opposed to focusing solely upon the context of the hostland. No longer were archaeologists simply identifying artifacts in particular places but they began to see the potential for identifying particular places in the artifacts.

Many of these scholars began to turn to the African continent and see it as a source for the forms of material culture uncovered on diasporic sites. Ethnographies, historical accounts, and archaeological excavations helped create the "diasporic archive" (per Axel 2004) from which archaeologists in the Americas drew from to explain particular material forms. Patricia Samford (2007) highlighting the significant number of Igbo peoples brought to Virginia suggests that some material cultural deposits found in sub-floor pits relate to Igbo spiritual practices. Leland Ferguson famously proposed that "x"-incised earthenwares found in South Carolina may represent a Bakongo cosmogram (1992:109-120).

These direct point-to-point analogies of one tradition in Africa to a single tradition in the Americas have come under significant criticism. Scholars have pointed out that what Ferguson and Samford are able to do is "reveal a realm of possibilities rather than a world of probabilities" (Hauser and DeCorse 2003:69). They fail to acknowledge the complexities and heterogeneity of the enslaved population, the tendency of European slavers to label individuals by the port that they were bought at as opposed to their true ethnic belonging, and the continued dialogue that occurred from new individuals arriving. Furthermore, our current knowledge of the various African cultures during the transatlantic slave trade is relatively limited (see Norman 2011). While we have
highlighted certain traditions that can be associated with the Igbo, the use of certain forms of material culture within sub-floor pits has been identified in other African traditions as well. What all of these scholars would agree upon is that there needs to be significant contextual material to begin to make claims of certain cultural traditions being seen in particular forms of material culture in the diaspora.

To return to the key question at hand, how do we identify sites associated with particular ethnic or cultural groups, one other point needs to be made. While tying down particular places in particular material culture forms may be difficult, the absence of these particular forms does not preclude the presence of particular cultural groups. The lack of subfloor pit shrines does not mean that there were not Igbo or descendent of Igbo people living at a particular site. The absence of this material is not evidence of absence of a particular cultural group. And thus, it is difficult through material culture alone to argue for the presence of a particular diasporic culture.

While material representations of culture and ethnicity are useful, documentary and spatial evidence still rank supreme for identifying who was at particular sites. Trying to read identities through particular forms of material culture - finding places in artifacts - is a process filled with interpretative challenges that run the risk of essentializing cultures and identities within particular material practices. While I will use material culture to address Jewish culture and diasporic identity in the Caribbean, this study addresses sites that can be clearly identified as Jewish through the documentary and spatial record. As Paul Goldstein (2000:182) has astutely pointed out, "archaeology, more than any other branch of anthropology, is the prisoner of space."
The reliance on space for the exploration of diasporic people within the archaeological record should not be seen as a limitation or justification for not considering diasporic peoples or engaging with diasporic theory but rather should focus archaeologists' analytical attention upon the relationship between diaspora, spaces, and particular places. Several archaeologists have looked to diaspora theory to better understand the relationships between space and place. Barbara Bender (2001) has argued that the exploration of diasporic people, when combined with a phenomenological approach, has a chance to not only provide insights into dis-articulation of a group from a landscape but also the re-articulation of that group in a new place. This perspective helps bring into focus the ways that diasporic peoples created meaning in places and then how those places played a role in forming identities, communities, and a social and political voice. In similar fashion, Ian Lilley has focused upon the idea of displacement and the relationship of space to reframe the ways of understanding portrayals of Australia’s past by Australian Aborigines and Australians of European descent (2006). Bender and Lilley have seen the diasporic perspective as a way to re-asses the way that we consider a community’s relationship to particular spaces and places. By doing so, they have suggested the important ways that archaeology can contribute to our understandings of diaspora.

**Diaspora and Place-Making**

Diasporas provide a challenge to any notion of natural connections between physical spaces and identities. As the three axes highlight, diasporans are not only present in particular physical spaces (the hostland) but also have global ties (lateral connections) and are often connected to distant, sometimes lost, places (the homeland).
Diasporas can be mapped numerous ways depending upon the criteria. Within these maps, proximity/distance, nearness/farness may not equate to physical distance. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994:342) argues, “physical location can be experienced as accidents of proximity, while common interest, rather than common location, can become the basis of social life in a medium where location is defined not by geographical coordinates but by the topic of conversation.” The tripartite model I outlined above provides a means of considering the multiple spaces in which diasporans are situated and in which they situate themselves.

Even though diasporas are often discussed within the realm of globalization, this does not necessarily mean that they do not create meaningful places, particularly in the process of forming a community. “Keeping in mind that notions of locality or community refer both to a demarcated physical space and to clusters of interaction, we can see that the identity of a place emerges by the intersections of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or identity” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b:36). Places have a defined identity. This can be a physically demarcated space upon the physical landscape (and thus locatable on a traditional map) but can also be imagined in numerous other ways.

Importantly, a place is formed and exists within “a system of hierarchically organized spaces.” Places are formed and shaped by a variety of different spaces and we can consider them along a variety of scales. For instance, we can think of place within the space of a defined political territory, within the narratives of a messianic future, or within the structures of a capitalist economic system. Mapping a place along these different scales will highlight a variety of different relationships, including the various
flows of power, and bring greater nuance to our understanding of a particular place. For a place constructed by diasporans, the tripartite model will provide one way of highlighting these various hierarchies of space that affect the formation of the place. Additionally, as the nature of these spaces change, so too will the nature of any particular place.

It is within this context of various spaces and places that historical archaeology can truly add to our understandings of diasporas. For archaeologists can do more than just understand the where and how particular places are constructed but can also explore the ways that these places were used. The material culture of the everyday illuminates the spaces as places of interaction. By exploring the material of the everyday, archaeologists have the chance to see the material that structures these interactions. Furthermore, we have to think about the way that these places, and the interactions within them, are shaped by the various spaces that form a diaspora. Indeed, many of the artifacts found within these places transcend the local and have their meanings and values grounded in the lateral connections and homelands of the diaspora.

To fully tease out the meanings of the synagogue compounds, I propose that we consider them as examples of what Michel Foucault has called “heterotopias” (1986). A heterotopia is a distinct place within a society that alternatively orders the world. These were places that incorporated a different set of spaces within a singular place than any other place on the island landscape. As heterotopias, the synagogue compounds spoke to a Jewish culture on the island, a shared vision of the future, and a distinctive Jewish difference from the world around them. Furthermore, as a space of alternative ordering,
they challenged simple conceptions of national and religious identities and brought to the front the complexity of colonial life.
Chapter III: Site Selection and Methodology

To explore the processes through which diasporans create communities, this project focuses on the key institutions of the Jewish community on Barbados and St. Eustatius: the synagogue compound, mikveh, burial ground, and religious leader’s homes. This project does not go chasing individuals across the archaeological and historical records in hopes that they might be Jews, but instead focuses on spaces where Jews voluntarily congregated. Each of the sites selected were relatively isolated from their urban contexts. This means that we can assume that the majority of the material culture recovered from these sites was associated with the Jewish community.

One major limitation of this study is it does not study the margins of the Jewish community. These were sites that Jews voluntarily came to. Those Jewish individuals who either chose or could not express their connection to the Jewish community by interacting within the major Jewish landmarks on each island are not represented. While these Jews played an important role in the history of the Jews on the island, for methodological reasons this group is not discussed in this dissertation.

Barbados Excavations

The archaeological excavations conducted during the summer of 2009 and 2010 focused on the area that served historically as the walking path to the synagogue. This pathway served as the main entrance into the synagogue compound until recent decades when asphalt paving was laid over part of the compound to create a car park (Figure 1). The walking path was in use as recently as the 1930s when noted Barbadian historian Eustace Shilstone began recording the tombstones within the Synagogue’s burial grounds (Shilstone 1988).
Figure 1: Plan View of the Synagogue yard adapted from Shilstone 1988. The black squares represent the archaeological test units. See Figure 2 for a close up view of the excavation areas.

Three different areas along the pathway were selected for excavation (Figure 2). The first area excavated during the summer of 2009 was a 3 meter by 1.75 meter trench in the middle of the pathway. This trench was approximately 9 meters from the current asphalt driveway and a little over 9 meters from the iron gate at the edge of the compound. The unit was placed against the current cemetery wall and extended 3 meters from the wall towards the current property boundary wall. The trench was placed between two trenches excavated previously by Dr. Karl Watson and his students from the University of West Indies, Cave Hill. The trench was given the designation of Trench 1.
The next area opened was a 50 cm by 50 cm test unit placed towards the edge of the compound but still in an area that was believed to be part of the original pathway. This unit was roughly 2 meters from the iron gate, a meter from the cemetery wall, and half a meter from the boundary wall. It was approximately 7 meters from Trench 1. This unit was designated Test Unit 1. The goal of Test Unit 1 was to see if it showed similar stratigraphic layers and material culture to what was unearthed in Trench 1. If it did, then it could be assumed that the entire area showed the same stratigraphy. It would allow us to consider Trench 1 as a representative sample for the whole area.

The third unit we excavated was a 1 meter by 1 meter unit directly adjacent to the Synagogue Lane boundary wall. This unit was approximately 8 meters from the current driveway, 3 meters from the cemetery wall, and 11 meters from the iron gate. It was nearly adjacent to Trench 1 and was designated Test Unit 2. The placement of this unit was located at a bend in the current compound wall where there was a visible transition from one architectural style to another. This was an area thought to be off of the original coral stone pathway, an assumption that was proved by the excavations. This unit showed the most complex stratigraphy of any of the areas excavated and the excavations were taken all the way down to sterile coral bedrock. This unit showed the highest concentration of deposited material of any of the units, probably reflecting its location on the edge of the pathway.
Figure 2: Location of the Excavation Units within the Synagogue Pathway Area

**Stratigraphic Layers**

The top layer of soil in the trench and test units was a thin loose and sandy soil that contained modern materials, including Banks Beer (established 1955) bottle glass, and represents deposition from the last fifty years. Beneath this layer was a layer of a denser sandy loam. Judging by the artifacts recovered from this dense layer of sandy loam, the layer was deposited during the second half of the eighteenth century on into the 19th century. The deposited material included sherds of creamware, which have a TPQ of 1762.

The sandy loam rests upon a solid layer of crushed marl. Marl is commonly found during archaeological excavations in Bridgetown as it was used to pave vacant lots and
serve as a base material for buildings. Marl creates a hard, flat, even surface, which makes it ideal for walking. Furthermore, a thick layer of marl helps eliminate the growth of weeds and other vegetation.

The marl layer at the synagogue contained sherds of white salt glaze stoneware suggesting a mid-18th century date (Noël Hume 1969:114-117). There were almost no fragments of white salt glaze stoneware in the layers beneath the marl. The dense marl layer sealed the earlier soil layers underneath suggesting that any soil layers below predated the 1720s. Figure 3 shows the presence of white salt glaze ceramics above the marl layer and the near absence of white salt glazed stoneware below the marl layer. The few white salt glaze stoneware ceramic sherds found below the marl layer were likely pushed down into the layer as a result of root disturbances from the large tamarind tree located in the center of the burial ground.

![Percentage of White Salt Glaze Stoneware Ceramics](image)

Figure 3: Percentage of white salt glaze stoneware sherds for each layer above the marl layer and the percentage of white salt glaze stoneware sherds for the combined layers beneath the marl layer.
Beneath this marl layer were several layers of small coral rubble and sand. Much of the coral rubble from these layers is from disturbed marl layers. The area was repaved with marl several times although not all of the layers have survived archaeologically as undamaged as the marl layer discussed above. Excavations further along the pathway in Test Unit 1 were less disturbed by more recent construction activities and showed at least two well-defined marl layers on top of each other (Figure 4). The underlying marl layer did not contain any white salt glaze stoneware and was probably deposited sometime in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

![Trench East Profile](image)

Figure 4: The east profile of the excavated trench with TPQ's and MCD's

The layers on top of the coral stone pathway provide a diachronic lens through which we can assess the changing use of this area within the synagogue compound. Figure 4 includes the calculated mean ceramic dates for each of the layers. The trend in pipe bore diameters also demonstrates the chronological shifts within the various layers uncovered. First noticed by JC Harrington (1954), the pipe bore diameters of English pipes tend to get larger the older they are. Harrington originally did his measurements utilizing sixty-fourths of an inch increments. The analysis used here follows this tradition. The resulting matrices from Trench 1 and Test Unit 2 show a consistent pattern of bore diameters getting larger the further back in time the excavations went.
Figure 5: West Profile of Test Unit 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer 1</th>
<th>Layer 2</th>
<th>Marl 4</th>
<th>Layer 5</th>
<th>Layer 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/64th Pipe Stem</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/64th Pipe Stem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Pipe Stem bore diameters through time from Trench 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/16 Pipe Stem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16 - 5/64 Pipe Stem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/64 Pipe Stem</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/64 - 3/32 Pipe Stem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/32 Pipe Stem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/64 Pipe Stem</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Pipe stem bore diameters through time for Test Unit 2
Furthermore, the layers from Trench 1 and Test Unit 1 closely align with both areas of excavation stopping at the coral stone pathway (Figure 5). This pathway seems to extend the entire length of the modern pathway. It is made of local coral limestone and it sits flush with the older cemetery wall suggesting they were constructed at the same time. Test Unit 2 did not have identical stratigraphic layers as it was an area on the edge of the pathway as opposed to being on top of the pathway. That being said, several marl layers were identified which correspond in depth and material to the marl layers found in Trench 1 and Test Unit 1. Since Test Unit 2 did not include the coral stone pathway, this unit was excavated down to a sterile layer of coral limestone bedrock.

Figure 6: The original coral stone pathway with drain feature
Reconstructing the Synagogue Yard

The stratigraphic layers allow for the reconstruction of the history of the synagogue yard. The earliest human disturbed layers are immediately below the coral stone pathway and probably date to the middle of the seventeenth century. The earliest archaeologically identified construction feature in the yard was the coral stone pathway (Figure 6, 7). As noted above, the artifacts suggest that the pathway was constructed sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century. The synagogue, and probably the mikveh, was constructed around this time. The original burial ground wall also runs adjacent to this pathway at a similar depth suggesting it too was constructed at the same time as the pathway. As the burial ground adjacent to the synagogue pathway is not the oldest, the presence of the wall at such an early stage is evidence that the Jewish community was planning ahead for future burials. Thus, the Jewish community in Bridgetown may have felt a sense of permanence in Barbados and demonstrated their future in the island by setting aside space for the burial ground extensions.
Fires were frequent in early Barbados and at some point in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century a fire ravaged an area near the Synagogue. The first layer resting atop the original coral stone pathway for Trench 1 had the highest density of artifacts of any layer encountered during the excavations. This layer possessed a high percentage of faunal material (roughly 40% by count of the material from this layer) along with a high percentage of architectural material including iron nails (approximately 8%) and slate (approximately 3%). Also, within this layer was a high concentration of ash and charcoal. This layer corresponds to two layers excavated in Test Unit 2. At a similar depth, these two layers were also defined by their high density of ash along with a high percentage of faunal material (near 27% for the first layer and near 40% for the
second), iron nails (11% and 18%) and slate (24% and 3%). The similarity of these layers and the nature of the deposition suggest that this might be discarded material from one of the many fires that struck Bridgetown. The artifacts from the layer date this possible fire to sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century or early eighteenth century.

Interestingly, Test Unit 1 did not show evidence of a burn layer. As the rest of the soil layers corresponded with those found in the other units, the lack of an ash layer in this unit is most likely explained by its location. This unit was located at the edge of the compound away from the various structures in the synagogue yard. It may not have had the same amount of flammable material nearby as it was not located near any buildings. Thus, it may not show the same concentration of burn material. The ashy layers and high artifact concentrations all point to a burn episode near the synagogue. Fires were a huge concern for all citizens of Bridgetown (Bowden 2003). The synagogue compound would have wished to avoid the damage of raging city fires, particularly as the compound was near Bridgetown’s powder magazine.

The pathway soon became unruly with trash and probably vegetation and the community felt the need to repave the area with marl (Figure 8). Test Unit 1 produced two distinctive marl layers while Trench 1 and Test Unit 2 both had one clear marl layer and several other potentially disturbed marl layers. The marl layers would have smoothed the area and prevented the growth of intrusive vegetation. The multiple layers of marl demonstrate that the community actively maintained the area. The most distinctive marl layer dates to the second quarter of the eighteenth century. This pattern
of paving the area with marl, then being slowly overcome with random deposition, and then being paved again continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

The marl probably served as the pathway into the synagogue from the seventeenth century until the decline in the Jewish population in the middle of the 1800's. In 1848, for example, there were only 71 members of the congregation left in Bridgetown (Watson 2005:44-45). The decline in the Jewish population led to changes in the Synagogue compound, including the construction of a new coral stone pathway that cut through Burial Ground C (Figure 9). This new pathway through the cemetery was at a different orientation then the original coral stone pathway. The disregard for the cemetery wall
and the cemetery to create this pathway may point to the dwindling influence and size of the Jewish community in this part of Bridgetown.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 9: Plan view of the nineteenth-century coral stone pathway. Notice the pathway would have extended through the cemetery wall.

It is unclear when the coral stone pathway running through cemetery C was abandoned. When it was abandoned, the current wall separating the compound from Synagogue Lane was probably constructed. There was no evidence of an earlier wall found during the excavations; however, the area explored archaeologically is limited by the modern asphalt Synagogue Lane. With the abandonment of the nineteenth-century coral stone pathway, ceramic pavers were laid in the orientation of the original and oldest coral stone pathway (Figure 10). These ceramic pavers that were probably laid in the late nineteenth or early twentieth-century are still visible today. Exactly when these pavers
were laid is unclear, but they predate the asphalt paving of Synagogue Lane as they can be seen to plunge under asphalt near the iron gate. The final shift in the yard was the asphalt paving of the area leading up to the synagogue and the creation of a new gate (the current gate) for vehicle traffic. These changes ended the use of the area under excavation as a pathway and created the layout of the synagogue compound seen today.

Figure 10: Plan view of the current day ceramic pavers

**Tombstone Information**

In 1956, Eustace Shilstone published his transcriptions of all the surviving tombstones in the Barbados synagogue compound (n=338). The tombstones that are still visible today were photographed for this project. The tombstones have been split up into three arbitrarily named burial grounds listed A, B, C (see Figure 1). Burial ground A is the largest burial ground (n=229) and contains the oldest tombstone belonging to
Abraham Eliyahu da Fonseca Valle who died in 1658 (Shilstone 1988:98). The most recent tombstone from the original Jewish community in Burial ground A dates to 1864. The average date for the tombstones in Burial ground A is 1732. Burial ground B is the smallest of the burial grounds (n=39) and the stones have a date range of 1769-1810. The average year for a tombstone in Burial ground B is 1783. Burial ground C has 71 stones. These stones have a date range of 1745 to 1804 with the average being 1770. Utilizing Shilstone’s transcriptions and the photographs taken, the names, ages of death, and the languages used on the tombstones were recorded.

**St. Eustatius Excavations**

Archaeologists began excavating in and around the synagogue compound in the 1980s (Barka 1988). The field reports and artifact catalogues are used here to discuss the archaeology of the synagogue compound. An additional 1m x 1m test unit was placed within the synagogue yard directly adjacent to the stairs of the mikveh. This unit was placed with the specific goal of identifying any evidence for the structure that would have been erected above the ritual bath (Figure 11).
Figure 11: Location of Cantor’s home within downtown St. Eustatius

New excavations were conducted in 2009 and 2010 and focused on the domestic structure identified through oral history as the Cantor’s house. The structure’s proximity to the synagogue, only separated by the small (approximately 1.5 meters) Synagogue Paad, suggests that this structure was associated with the Jewish community. Nevertheless, the excavations sought to prove that the synagogue was contemporaneous with the construction of the building identified as the Cantor’s home (Figure 12).
Figure 12: Surviving walls of the Cantor's house with the Synagogue in the background and a 20th century hurricane shelter on the right

As a key domestic site, the excavations sought to target both the inside of the building and the yard, which would have been a major area of activity. The archaeological sampling for the domestic structure differed from the archaeological methodology for the yard, as detailed below. Only the south yard was explored archaeologically. The surviving deeds from the late 19th century show that this yard was part of the property being studied while the area to the North of the domestic structure belonged to another lot. Moreover, the 20th century disturbances to the north and the east of the domestic structure made these areas unsuitable for archaeological investigations.

An additional test unit was placed to the west of the synagogue. This unit was placed almost directly in line with the entrance to the synagogue although separated by roughly twenty meters from the entrance as a number of more modern structures made excavations closer to the synagogue impossible. This single test unit was excavated to locate signs of a pathway connecting the synagogue compound to the major street of Kerkweg. Like the other units, this unit was excavated in natural layers.
The Yard - Sampling Strategy

No structural remains existed within the yard area being explored with the exception of a 18th century privy in the southwest corner of the city lot and a 20th century privy towards the east half of the city lot (Figure 13). Therefore, a grid of 1 meter by 1 meter squares was mapped onto the existing yard. Each square was then given a number running sequentially. The only places omitted were the two privies and the base of a large tree. A random number generator was used to select the units for excavations. Three units were selected in this fashion. When features and architectural remains were found, adjacent units were excavated to provide more information. The discovery of an unidentified stone feature led to the opening up of three more units that followed the stone foundation of an outbuilding.

The Structure - Sampling Strategy

The excavations around the ruins of the structure were selected to provide maximum information on the building itself. Hence the units were placed in the corners of the rooms (to provide information on two walls), upon the possible edge of a wooden addition added to the structure (which is now gone but identified by paint on the boundary wall), and along the outside of the structure to identify any builders' trenches. All of these excavations were conducted using naturally occurring layers. The depositions within the building were not as deep as those outside the building as it has received much less deposition overtime particularly considering that the building had a roof and shutters until the mid 1990's.
Figure 13: The small squares are the various archaeological units. The dark areas are archaeological features.

Reconstruction of the St. Eustatius Jewish Community

The synagogue on St. Eustatius was built in 1739. Unfortunately, the majority of artifacts found within the synagogue and its surrounding compound date to the 19th century when the synagogue had been abandoned. With the synagogue abandoned, the empty city lot became a popular place for the depositing of rubbish in the neighborhood. The material culture from this site provides a wealth of information about 19th century St. Eustatius as demonstrated by Barbara Heath's doctoral dissertation (1988).

However, beyond the surviving architecture there are few clues about the use of the compound while it was in the hands of the Jewish community. It is unclear when the mikveh was constructed within the compound. It is likely that it was built around the
same time as the synagogue. The results of the test unit from around the mikveh
identified a small posthole almost directly in front of the stairs leading into the ritual bath.
Unfortunately there were just a few artifacts within the posthole feature. The posthole fill
had a TPQ of 1795 from a sponge-painted pearlware sherd. This suggests an early 19th
century destruction of the building on top of the mikveh, which fits within the
chronological history of the Jewish community on the island as the majority of the Jews
left the island in the early 19th century. Within the fill of the posthole were a number of
small iron tacks signifying that the building either had a wooden shingle roof or possibly
wooden shingled walls. There are surviving buildings from the 18th century that have
both wooden shingled walls and roofs. Also within the fill was a small hinge from a
possible door. This is the only feature suggesting the presence of a building on top of the
mikveh. It is unclear whether this is from the inside of the building or the outside of the
building. In either scenario, the uncovered posthole is likely from a door that would have
led to the bath itself. Still left undiscovered is any feature associated with the necessary
cistern that would have provided the rainwater for the mikveh.

The adjacent city lot believed to be the Cantor’s home provided more complex
stratigraphy as well as layers from the 18th century. No layer or feature uncovered could
be dated to before the 1770s. The earliest soil layers were two hard-packed surfaces that
both rested directly atop sterile subsoil (Figure 14). The two hard-packed surfaces had a
MCD of 1780 and 1804. The compression of the soil suggests an area of high usage.
The continued use of the yard would have created these surfaces. Furthermore, the yard
was probably kept relatively clean through sweeping which would mean the majority of
the deposition came from the abandonment of the yard. Thus, the MCD’s probably
represent the latest stages of the yard's use with much of the earlier material having been removed.

Figure 14: Profiles of yard units

These surfaces suggest that the city lot became heavily used in the second half of the 18th century. This was also when the two structures explored were constructed. The building identified as the Cantor's house went through at least three building phases. The first phase began with the construction of a two story rectangular building. This building had a stone-walled first floor and a wooden second story. The stairs were on the outside of the building. Variations on this basic format can be seen throughout Oranjestad on St. Eustatius. The usual urban house model was to have the first floor serve as a commercial space (i.e. store or workshop) with the second story serving as the living quarters. Jacob Robles, the longest serving cantor of the Jewish community on St. Eustatius, was not just a religious figure but also a merchant on the island. It is quite possible that he used this home in the same manner of other merchants performing business transactions within the ground floor. Or, this first floor may have been used by the Jewish community for certain events and/or storage.
Unit 10 was placed upon the eastern wall of the original structure. This unit produced a builder’s trench that undercut the original wall. Within this trench was a sherd of creamware giving the entire structure a TPQ of 1762. This places the construction of this building at the same time as the hard-packed surfaces in the yard. Furthermore, it corresponds to when Jacob Robles moved to the island from Curàçao. Robles died at the age of forty on the island of St. Eustatius in the year 1791 (2 Tebet 5551). Assuming he did not leave for his post on St. Eustatius until he was an adult, he would not have been on the island until the 1770s. We do know that by 1781, Robles was on St. Eustatius and beyond his role of cantor he was a significant merchant on the island. Robles and his business partner Elias Gomes, another Jew on the island, in a 1781 inventory listed an significant amount of materials alongside merchandise worth 22,518.605 pieces of eight consigned the Mendez Brothers in Amsterdam (Inventory of Merchandize 1781). Thus, he had significant resources from his business dealings and could have paid for such a building. The inside of the home was partially covered with a yellow brick floor. These yellow bricks were laid upon their sides creating a tightly packed floor. This building method did not use the side of the brick with the greatest surface area and therefore was not an attempt to minimize the number of bricks used (Figure 15). This construction method created a solid floor ideal for heavy use.
Figure 15: Yellow brick floor of the ground floor of the Cantor’s building (Photography by Sidney Shapiro).

The stone foundation uncovered in the yard was constructed at the same time or just after the construction of main stone structure. This building would have only had a stone footer supporting a wooden structure (Figure 16). Within the footer were postholes spaced about a meter apart (approximately 3 feet). The posthole fills all had TPQs in the 1790s suggesting that the building was abandoned in the early 19th century. Additionally, many of the stones from the footer had been robbed out to be reused elsewhere on the island. The resulting voids were visible in the archaeological record and provide a TPQ of 1820 and a MCD of 1799. Both dates suggest that the building was in disuse by the second quarter of the 19th century. Unfortunately, the extent of the building is unknown and its use is still open to speculation. Jacob Robles and his business partner did own at least ten enslaved workers and this may have been one of their quarters. Alternatively, the building could have been a storage shed or kitchen (or all three).
The original Cantor's home was quickly expanded, perhaps as early as the 1780s. The extension was built using a slightly different technique as can be seen from the stone walls (Figure 17, 18) and did not have the same well-built stone footer that was uncovered in Unit 10. The excavations within the extension (Unit 8) provide an interesting scenario.
The oldest layers were the same hard-packed surfaces seen in the yard. These hard-packed surfaces had MCDs of 1759 and 1727 and the same absolute elevations as the hard-packed surfaces in the yard. This unit had slightly earlier MCDs because its hard-packed layers placed under the house in the last quarter of the 18th century. While material was continually deposited into the hard-packed surfaces of the yard until the early 19th century, deposition into the hard-packed layers of Unit 8 ended when the extension was built. The hard-packed surfaces of Unit 8 did not have artifacts from the late 18th century and therefore had lower MCDs.

The building extension had a raise wooden floor that allowed for small items and loose soil to fall through its cracks. Within Unit 8 was a pier to support the wooden floor. The wooden floor differed from the floor the original part of the building that was covered in the aforementioned yellow brick and red tile. Unfortunately, these different
floor types do not allow a comparison between the extension and the original building because the original building’s floor prevented material from falling through the cracks. Therefore any deposited material within then the original building would have been swept and discarded outside of the house.

*Figure 18: Plan view of the Cantor’s home*

The artifact assemblages within the extension had a much higher percentage of personal items and items related to clothing than what was seen in the yard. This may be the result of it being an internal space within the home. However, it may have also served a particular purpose within the Jewish community. As stated above, the excavations around the *mikveh*, both the new unit from this study and previous excavations, have produced no evidence of a structure besides the single posthole discussed above. While this posthole assures that there was a building, its placement does not provide a place for women to change before entering the *mikveh*. Actual
immersion was done in the nude, and for most communities there was a woman
designated as the *mikveh* keeper who inspected each woman before entering the *mikveh*
to insure that she has followed the proper grooming habits. If the structure above the
*mikveh* only covered the bath, then this activity must have taken place in another location.

The extension of the Cantor’s house was ideal as it was directly across from the
*mikveh*. Women could have entered into this extension, be inspected, and change into a
simple robe that could be easily hung on a hook within the *mikveh*. Since it was only a
short walk (two steps) across Synagogue Laan [Lane], this was certainly possible. The
personal items and clothing items could be from things falling out of pockets while
women changed clothing. While this provides a relatively compact narrative that fits the
archaeological record, the one major caveat is the fact that this extension was not built
until the 1780s. By this time the community was quite large and one would suspect that a
building constructed for these purposes would have been built at an earlier date. While
the building extension is one possibility, the remains of the structure may also lie in the
areas around the Synagogue that have not yet been excavated. The stone structure that
served as the Cantor’s home went through several additional renovations during its
history. However, all of these occurred in the second half of the 19th century and post-
date the Jewish community’s departure from the island.

**Tombstone Information**

In 1976 Johannes Hartog catalogued all the Jewish tombstones that he was able to
identify and combined this information with previously documented tombstones (1976b).
He catalogued 22 stones and transcribed their inscriptions (Figure 19). All of the
surviving tombstones (n=22) were photographed in the winter of 2010. The tombstones
are a mix of raised burial vaults with large roughly 2 meters by 1 meter imported stone and burials marked with just headers and footers. The burial ground was walled off and all of the tombstones seem to belong to members of the past Jewish community. Like the stones on Barbados, the names of individuals, the age of death, and the language of inscriptions were recorded.

Figure 19: The Jewish burial ground on St. Eustatius

**The Documentary Record**

A number of archives and sources were consulted for this project. The archives visited during the course of this research include the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, the Barbados National Archives, and the archives at the Barbados Museum. Additionally, historic sources from the John Carter Brown Library, a number of internet databases, and the plethora of republished historic documents from such journals as American Jewish Historical Society Journal and the Journal of the Barbados Museum and
Historical Society were studied. The documentary record provides another diachronic view of the history of the Jewish communities on both islands.

However, the process of identifying Jews in the documentary record is not always easy. While certain names are more typically Jewish, the fact that Christianity and Judaism have such an intertwined history means that few names are exclusively Jewish. Along these lines, it is often assumed that individuals on the British and Dutch islands with a Spanish or Portuguese name are likely to be Jewish or of New Christian heritage because many of the Jews on these islands were Sephardic. While this assumption is often warranted, I am not willing to assume that simply having an Iberian name meant that somebody was Jewish. Moreover, as time progressed, some Jews on the islands married outside of the faith leading to the dissemination of traditionally Jewish names outside of the Jewish community. Therefore, names are suggestive, but not enough to conclude that an individual in the documentary record is in fact Jewish. However, contextual clues were often helpful. For example, if an individual swore on the Five Books of Moses then it was assumed that they were Jewish. Outside of these contextual clues, multiple lines of evidence often allowed for the triangulation of particular identities. For each island there are censuses taken that include a list of Jews creating a name database which could be cross referenced with names found in other documents. The surviving tombstones (and the death record for the Barbados community) provide another database for comparison. Together, these various sources of information make it possible to identify Jews in the historical record. Nevertheless, I have taken a relatively conservative approach and have tried to not assume any single person was Jewish based
solely on their name. Hopefully, future research will provide a more complete name
database of Jewish individuals on each island.

**Conclusion: Multiple Interpretations**

The methodologies and the areas excavated on each island were slightly different
due to the different contexts. A diachronic analysis of the Barbados community can be
created while the archaeology from St. Eustatius provides only a snapshot into the history
of the community. One of the major arguments of this dissertation is that diasporic life
must be understood through three different relationships (hostland, lateral connections,
and homeland). This is equally true for the analysis of the material culture of a diasporic
group. Thus, the subsequent chapters will often discuss the same material culture objects
as well as the Jewish place on each island through different questions to reach different
conclusions. The idea is not that one chapter's interpretation of the material culture is
better than the other, but rather that the material culture provides insights into these
different relationships. It highlights both the polyvalence of the material culture, but just
as importantly, the impact that our questions have on our interpretations of that material
culture.
Chapter IV: History and Social Structure

Historian Jonathan Israel (2002) calls the Jewish diaspora in the Atlantic World a “diaspora within a diaspora” arguing that the dispersal of Jewish individuals of the Iberian Peninsula was a secondary diaspora within the older and more inclusive Jewish diaspora. The Jews of the Iberian Peninsula became known as the Sephardim, a term derived from the Hebrew word *Sepharad*. *Sepharad* was originally a place named in the book of Obadiah in the Hebrew Bible and spoken of as a place in which exiled Jews from Jerusalem would settle. By the Middle Ages, the Jews of Iberia linked themselves to this particular passage (Cohen 2005:23-24), and *Sepharad* became the Hebrew word for Iberia (Gerber 1992.ix; Sachar 1994:4). The older and more widespread Jewish diaspora most commonly refers to the dispersal from the Holy Land in 70 AD after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans (Cohen 1997:6).

The first Jewish settlers in the Americas were almost all Sephardic. Overtime the Jewish populations saw an increase in Ashkenazim, Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, until the 19th century when Ashkenazi Jews became the majority in the Americas. In the Caribbean, the communities were largely Sephardic in origin and even as Ashkenazi immigration increased the leaders of the community tended to be Sephardim. Both St. Eustatius and Barbados followed this pattern with slight variations. Each island, however, faced its own sets of challenges that helped shape Jewish life. The Barbados community lasted for over 200 years while the St. Eustatius community with its untenable and volatile economic structure lasted less than 100 years.
The Sephardic Diaspora

Jewish migration to Iberia began when the Roman Emperor Titus ordered the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD and increased when the Romans violently suppressed a revolt in Palestine in 135 AD (Gerber 1992:3). Once in Iberia, the Jews created communities throughout the region. While the peninsula came under a number of different rulers, it was during the Moorish governance of Spain that Jews had a period of peace that allowed for tremendous intellectual and religious explorations (Gerber 1992: 59-90; Roth 1995:xi; Ray 2006:15-17). Jews under Muslim rule were neither actively persecuted nor segregated (Cohen 1994; Cohen 2005: 28-30). The Muslim rulers recognized Jews and Christians as fellow monotheists and confirmed upon them the legal status of dhimmis (Cohen 2005:29). This was a status of semi-citizenship that granted religious freedom but prohibited certain political and social rights (Sachar 1994:4; Cohen 2005:28-30). These freedoms allowed the Jewish population to flourish under Muslim rule. By the time that the Catholics in the fifteenth century reclaimed the Iberian Peninsula, Jews constituted an important part of Iberia’s social fabric. Most Jews had developed a strong affinity to the peninsula since their ancestry in that land stretched back over a millennium.

Muslim control of Iberia began to fall apart in the 13th century. As Catholics gained more and more territories within the peninsula, discrimination towards Jews also increased. In 1391, the Dominican leader Ferrant Martínez of Seville helped inspire a number of Anti-Semitic riots that led to the massacre of thousands of Jews (Sachar 1994:44-45). The 1391 massacres and growing Catholic intolerance led some Jews to convert to Christianity creating a converso population (Sachar 1994:50-51). Some of these
conversos adopted Christianity. However, a number of these conversos were crypto-Jews who practiced Catholicism in the public realm but still maintained Jewish cultural and religious traditions in their private lives. The 15th century saw increasing intolerance coupled with the adoption of numerous inquisitions throughout the various regions of Catholic Spain (Roth 1995:203-270).

Intolerance reached new heights in the fateful year of 1492. In that year the expulsion of the Moors from the peninsula was completed giving the Catholic Monarchy of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella total control of the Kingdom of Spain (Gerber 1992:132-139). In this same year, the Catholic Monarchy also expelled all Jews from their Kingdom (Gerber 1992:137-138). This left the Sephardic population in a difficult position. Despite not being Catholic, the Jews of Iberia were Iberian. Many of the Sephardic families had been in the Iberian Peninsula for a thousand years. They spoke the local languages and followed many of the local customs. Nevertheless, the policies of the new Catholic monarchy meant that professing Jews were no longer established members but now unwelcome guests in the Iberian cultural landscape (Cohen 1993:3).

The fear of the Inquisition left Iberian Jews with just a few options: convert to Catholicism, pretend to convert to Catholicism while practicing Judaism in their private lives, or flee.

The sincerity of Jewish conversion became a concern for the Catholics of Spain who viewed all conversos with suspicion. The structure of the Inquisition made it extremely difficult for conversos to convince Catholic authorities of their conversion, and many conversos were wrongfully accused of practicing Judaism in secret (Rowland 2001:126). Causing further problems for conversos was the fact that religious difference
was often coupled with Spanish notions of blood purity – *limpieza de sangre* - in which Jewish blood made one impure (Sachar 1994:173-177; Martínez 2008). As a result Catholicism and Judaism in Spain was something more than a religious choice; they were also an inherited status (Bodian 1997:11-12).

While the 15th century Kingdom of Spain was troubled by the presence of Jews and *conversos*, the Portuguese rulers did not feel as threatened. Indeed, King John II of Portugal allowed the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 to settle within the borders of his kingdom (Rowland 2001:132). Many *conversos* also found safety and solace within Portuguese lands. Portugal already had a large community of Sephardim so the move to Portugal was a logical choice both geographically and socially for Spanish Jews and worried *conversos*. The time spent in Portugal helped shape the Sephardic community and during the 17th and 18th centuries the Jews of the Caribbean were often called the "Portuguese Nation" or used the Portuguese "*os da nação*" ["of the nation"] (Bodian 1997).

The Jews settling in Portugal were not permitted peace for long. The Spanish Crown began to put increasing pressure on the Portuguese to expel Jews from their borders. The Portuguese Crown worried about the effects such an expulsion would have on their population and feared that the loss of the Jewish communities in their kingdom would threaten their economic vitality (Sachar 1994:160-161). To walk this political tight rope, the Portuguese King first forcibly converted all Jews within his borders creating a population of Jews known as *novos cristãos*, or New Christians (Rowland 2001:132). Having ensured that Jews were at least nominally Christian, he then expelled all Jews from his borders. Since all Jews had been forcibly converted, the actual
expulsion effected very few. Nevertheless, because of the expulsion, Jews could no longer practice their faith openly.

The New Christian population in Portugal was tolerated during the first quarter of the 16th century. However, the Portuguese King John III did not show the same tolerance as his predecessor and applied for and received permission to start an Inquisition in 1536 (Bodian 1997:12). The Portuguese Inquisition targeted many New Christians calling into question the sincerity of conversion while adopting many of the same invasive investigative techniques of the Spanish to find signs of New Christians holding onto Jewish traditions. The Inquisitors identified a number of actions and behaviors that they felt indicated Judaism, including no work while wearing clean clothes or jewels on Saturdays, cleaning the house on Friday, preparing food on Friday for Saturday, Kosher slaughtering, no pork or other non-kosher foods, having the Great Feast of September, feasting on known Jewish holidays, and blessing children without making the sign of a cross (Rowland 2001:136).

The impact of the converso and New Christian experience on Jews in Iberia was substantial. During the 15th and 16th centuries many Jews lived a double-life where they professed Catholicism to the outside world while practicing Judaism in private. This undoubtedly affected Jewish religious practice as the institutional support of Judaism was almost entirely removed from Jews' lives (Bodian 1997:10). No longer could they go to the synagogue with religious or social concerns. There was a decline in the number of trained religious leaders to teach religious customs and no opportunity to properly train the next generation of religious leaders.
In some ways, however, the Inquisition itself became a repository of Jewish knowledge for crypto-Jews. The behaviors and actions of Jews that the Inquisitors sought in their attempts to expose false converts may have actually strengthened the importance of these behaviors and actions among those still practicing Judaism (Boyarin 2009:33). One of the few outside sources of information about Judaism available to Jews was the Inquisition itself, which in listing traits associated with Judaism created an institutional knowledge. Thus, in some ways the Inquisition while trying to erase Judaism from the Iberian landscape actually played an important role in the shaping and understanding of certain Jewish cultural and religious traditions.

Outside the religious sphere, it is less clear how disconnected these *conversos* and New Christians were from the Iberian communities around them. Furthermore, we should be careful in assuming religious solidarity while minimizing cultural familiarity. Francesca Trivellato’s (2009a) magisterial exploration of a Jewish trading firm in early modern Livorno demonstrates that Jewish merchants often relied upon distant strangers in conducting certain business deals. Trivellato’s study forces us to explore Jewish networks within their particular historical and political contexts as opposed to assuming Jewish traders always formed networks with other Jews. The business connections between Jews were something that had to be continually maintained and formed and was not something to simply be assumed. Moreover, within the realm of the dispersed from Iberia, the connections may have been rooted more firmly within an Iberian past than a shared religion. Historian Jessica Roitman (2011) has shown that New Christian economic networks often trumped Jewish networks in 17th-century Amsterdam. It is clear that New Christians and *conversos* did interact and create relationships with non-
Jews as well and we need to be careful not to assume solidarity based upon a religious past but actually explore when, where, how, and why such solidarity was created.

While there may have been individuals on Barbados and St. Eustatius who would be considered New Christians or *conversos*, this study focuses on those individuals who decided to openly embrace Judaism on these islands. However, embracing Judaism did not mean that the Jews on these islands gave up their important connections with New Christians or *conversos*, but only that on these islands they had openly adopted Judaism. This brief history is meant to highlight the Iberian nature of Sephardic Jews. The role Iberia played as an important homeland can be seen throughout the Caribbean and at times a shared Iberian heritage would have been more important than a shared Jewish heritage. Certain Jewish communities defined themselves by their geographic origins as much as their shared religion. While many Jews of the early modern Atlantic actively identified with an Iberian past, this community also retained the memory of persecution that came with the Inquisition and Expulsion. In exploring the formation of Jewish communities in the Caribbean, it is necessary to understand the connections to Iberia alongside the connections to the deeper “Jewish” diaspora with its roots in Israel.

**The Spread to the Northern Europe and the New World**

While some *conversos* and New Christians remained in Iberia, many fled from the peninsula spreading throughout the Mediterranean world as well as to Northern Europe (Schreuder 2004:168). One of the most popular destinations was the Netherlands. Some

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5 The Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam often defined itself by its geographic origins limiting many of its social institutions to individuals of Iberian origin (Bodian 1997). Moreover, this same community “appropriated the concept of purity of blood in order to define their collective identity in opposition to other Jews” (Trivellato 2009a:18; see also Kaplan 1989). Although no documentation has been found yet concerning ideas of blood purity and Jews on St. Eustatius and Barbados, there were clear tensions between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews on each island.
of the Dutch provinces, and particularly the city of Amsterdam, adopted a relatively tolerant view towards non-Protestants. Many *conversos* and New Christians upon arriving in the United Provinces gave up their crypto-Jewish lifestyle and openly embraced Judaism (Israel 1985:50-51; Bodian 1997; Hsia 2002; Swetschinkski 2004; Cooperman 2008). A large and vibrant Jewish population developed in the Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Early in the 17th century the Jews of Amsterdam were allowed to construct a synagogue and practice their faith openly. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Amsterdam held one of the largest communities of Jews in Western Europe. The first Jews to flee to Amsterdam were Sephardic but by the 18th century a significant number of Ashkenazi Jews escaping the pogroms of Eastern Europe began to settle there (Swetschinkski 2004). During the 17th century Amsterdam helped supply monetary, religious, and social support to other Jewish communities in the Atlantic world.

While some Jews spread out across Europe, others went to the developing American colonies, although not always by choice. Portuguese Inquisitors occasionally banished Jews to the Portuguese possessions overseas. Historian Geraldo Pieroni has explored a number of Inquisitorial documents and has found that a little over 50% of the individuals banned to Brazil had been accused of Judaizing (2001:244-250). Alongside the banished New Christians were a number of New Christians who voluntarily chose to take part in the colonial enterprise. It is unclear how many of these New Christians practiced Judaism, but some certainly did (Boyajian 2001). Thus, even in the early days of European colonization there was a Jewish presence.
The arrival of Sephardic Jews in Brazil became far more pronounced once the Dutch West India Company captured the northeastern portion of Brazil from Portugal and established a colony in Pernambuco. With the establishment of the Dutch colony, a number of openly practicing Jews from the Netherlands decided to join the colonial effort (Schreuder 2004:169). Some of the New Christians and Jews coming from the Netherlands may have had family and friends amongst the New Christian community in Portuguese Brazil. While in Dutch-controlled Brazil, Jews experienced a period of unprecedented religious freedom including an act passed by the Dutch West Indian Company (WIC) that gave Jews the right to practice their religion as freely and openly as their Christian counterparts. This was the first document suggesting religious equality in the Americas (Israel and Scwhartz 2007:13-32). Many of the Jewish inhabitants in Dutch-controlled Brazil, both New Christians and openly practicing Jews, became involved in the developing sugar industry. Jews were involved in all aspects of the sugar industry ranging from overseeing plantations and production to providing important capital to taking part in the transatlantic Slave Trade (Boyajian 2001). During the Dutch occupation of Pernambuco, over 1000 Jews lived in Brazil making up nearly half the white population of the colony (Pijning 2001:491). However, the Dutch success in Brazil was short lived as the Dutch were expelled during the Portuguese re-conquest of northern Brazil in the 1640s and 50s. The Jews in Brazil fearing the Portuguese would bring the Inquisition with them fled from Brazil into other parts of South America and the Caribbean archipelago.
Jews and the American Colonies

Some Jews did not have a choice about going to the Americas as they were banished there by the Portuguese Inquisition. However, the Jews that settled in the Dutch colony of Pernambuco did so voluntarily. The move to the Americas represented a significant amount of risk for all involved including the Jews living in the Netherlands. The Jews of the Netherlands had experienced a renaissance of sorts and had a chance to practice Judaism openly and freely although they were not on equal grounds either legally or socially with their Protestant neighbors (Kaplan 1989; Bodian 1997; Hsia and van Nierop 2002; Swetschinski 2004). While each individual’s reason for coming to the Americas was driven by personal factors, there were several major enticements for Jews to take the risk of starting a new life in the colonies.

The first was the opportunity to gain greater religious and social freedoms. Just like other migrant groups to the Americas, some Jews may have hoped that full and open religious freedom and tolerance could be established in the new colonies in the Americas. Although the Netherlands had proven to be religiously tolerant, Jews were denied social and religious equality (Swetschinski 2004). The ability to go to the Americas, particularly at the start of these colonial ventures, was a chance to redefine Jew/Gentile relations in a new frontier context. The shortly lived Dutch colony in Brazil proved this to be the case as the WIC ordered Jews to be treated the same as their Christian neighbors (Israel and Scwhartz 2007:13-32).

Another reason was economic opportunity. It is certain that Jews, as with other colonists, jumped at the chance to capitalize on the emerging economic possibilities available in the New World (Schreuder 2004:169). Jews were restricted to just a few
professions in Europe and their ability to achieve significant economic prosperity was significantly hindered (Swetchinkski 2004). In the Netherlands, Jews were not allowed to join guilds. This restricted Jews from most economic activities. The Americas opened up a whole new set up economic prospects, particularly those surrounding such commodities as sugar, cotton, dyewoods, and tobacco. This was an economic opportunity both within Europe and the Americas. Within the Americas, Jews became involved in all aspects of colonial production, as will be shown below, while in Europe, Jews often became involved in the distribution and refinement of colonial products (Israel 1985:62).

There were also particular reasons that solely fit within the Jewish worldview for Jews to settle in the Americas. The discovery of the Americas and the native peoples who lived there raised deep philosophical questions about the nature of humanity and the history of humankind. Some speculated that the lost Tribes of Israel had settled in the Americas. The Dutch Rabbi Menassah Ben Israel combined first-hand accounts with Biblical references to argue in his book *The Hope of Israel* (1652) that some of the peoples of the Americas were Jewish. Such beliefs raised the possibility that there may be free Jewish kingdoms in the Americas (Efron 2001; Katz 2001). As a people without a state, the chance of finding Jewish governed kingdoms was certainly intriguing.

Ben Israel’s viewpoint was built on more than just the hopes of religious freedoms. He, as did many other Jews, saw the opening of the Americas (and England) as a sign of messianic prophecies. Some Jews felt that if they spread across the entire globe establishing religious enclaves in all parts, then the Messiah would arrive (Schmidt
2001). For these Jews it became necessary to not only go to the Americas but to establish communities there. Ben Israel wrote:

"The Lord has promised that he will gather the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, out of the four quarters of the world . . . Whence you may gather that for the fulfilling of that, they must be scattered through all the corners of the world . . . And this appears now to be done, when our synagogues are found in America." (in Sarna 2006:213)

Thus, the crossing of the Atlantic for many Jews represented far more than worldly opportunities. To establish synagogues in the Americas was part of defining a new future. The coming of the Messiah implied a radical change by joining the spiritual and physical world together (Leibman 2012:10). Therefore, many Jews crossed the Atlantic not for the here and the now, but instead for the world to come.

**Barbados**

While Barbados was named by the Spanish, it was the British who established the first permanent European settlement on the island. Barbados, unlike many of the other Caribbean islands, was solely governed by the British until its independence in 1966. In 1627, a merchant company owned by Sir William Courteen settled on the West Coast of Barbados (Gragg 2003:31). While this company was the first, another English merchant company founded by the Earl of Carlisle settled on the southern part of the island only a year later (Gragg 2003:32-33). The two competing settlements fought for control of the island. Carlisle's men ultimately prevailed taking control of the island in 1629 after King Charles I officially recognized Carlisle as Lord Proprietor of the English Caribbean (Dunn 1973:49).

The early plans for the colony centered on agricultural production, particularly tobacco. A significant number of white indentured servants were shipped to the nascent 84
colony to provide the first labor force (Gragg 2003). While tobacco was successfully
grown on the island, competition from the Chesapeake glutted the tobacco market, which
depressed the price of tobacco and hindered early Barbadian prosperity (Gragg 2009:24-
25). Moreover, the tobacco grown on Barbados was considered of poor quality and could
not compete in the English markets (Gragg 2003:89-90). Barbados planters also
attempted to grow cotton amongst other agricultural pursuits achieving only moderate
success (Gragg 2003:94-98). It was not until the introduction of sugar cane to the island
that Barbados achieved its prized status in the emerging British Atlantic economy. By
the 1650s, sugar was the major crop of the island and its production would define much
of Barbados' economy and make it "the foremost English possession" during the 17th

At the same time that the British colony of Barbados was starting, England was
going through a tumultuous period of Civil War (1642-1651). Conflict at home left the
struggling colony without access to much needed provisions and supplies. As a result,
Barbadians relied heavily on trade with the Dutch (Schreuder 2006). Yda Schreuder has
explored the notarial records in the Amsterdam Municipal archives for this period to trace
the nature of the commerce between Amsterdam and Barbados. She has found that
amongst these Dutch traders there were a few Sephardic Jews. The earliest record that
deals with a Sephardic merchant trading with Barbados comes from 1638 and there were
a few Jewish merchants throughout the 1640s trading with Barbados (Schreuder
2006:61). While the Dutch provided the majority of goods, there is evidence of
Sephardic Jews from Hamburg also trading with the island. Jonathan Israel has identified
at least four Sephardic merchants from Hamburg who sent goods to Barbados during the

85
1640s (1989:144). Two of the more prominent of these merchants, Simon Enrique and Benjamin De Caceres, moved beyond simply trading on the island and secured their own source of colonial goods by purchasing a plantation. They were recognized by the governor of Barbados in 1653 as “being inhabitants of this island of Barbados and have a plantation as also a storehouse at Bridge towne” (in Schreuder 2004:177).

Within the same period of the English Civil War in which Barbados was relying on Dutch merchants for many goods comes one of the earliest descriptions of a Jew living on Barbados. Royalist Richard Ligon had fled from civil war in England and lived in Barbados between 1647 and 1650. In his *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (1673:42), he wrote: “there was an ingenious Jew upon the Island, whose name was Solomon, that undertook to teach the making of it [bricks]; yet for all that, when it came to the touch his wisdome failed, and we were deceived in our expectation.” This brief mention was situated within a longer passage in which Ligon discussed the difficulties that the colonists were having in turning the clay sources on the island into bricks. At the time of Ligon’s visit, Solomon like others on the island had not yet figured out the proper method of tempering the local clay for brick manufacturing. The account provides two important insights. The first is that within the context of the English Civil War when supplies were difficult to procure on Barbados, Jews did not simply offer supplies as merchants, but some, such as Solomon, also attempted to address the need by trying their hands at particular trades. The second is that Ligon clearly demarcates Solomon as a Jew, although he fails to tell us how exactly he knows this. Ligon is relatively neutral in his account but Solomon is not identified by any geographic origin but simply by his religious association.
While the majority of the first Jews in Barbados were merchants, they only consisted of a few individuals. It was the expulsion of the Dutch from Brazil that helped create a sizable Jewish community on the island. With the Portuguese claiming Pernambuco, Jewish refugees from the former Dutch colony settled in a variety of locations in the Caribbean including Barbados (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:45). Importantly for the planters of Barbados, these Jewish immigrants had gained experience working with sugarcane while living in the successful sugar-producing regions of Brazil (Pjing 2001; Israel and Schwartz 2007). Planters on Barbados had no prior experience with sugarcane cultivation and processing and therefore Jews coming from Brazil had important intellectual capital to contribute to the British colony.

One of these early pioneers in the sugar industry was David Raphael de Mercado. David Raphael along with several members of his family had lived in Dutch Brazil until the Portuguese conquest when he and his family returned to Amsterdam. In 1655, David Raphael along with his father, Dr. Abraham de Mercado, asked for and received a license to legally settle on Barbados by Oliver Cromwell (Schreuder 2006:67). It was probably in Brazil that David Raphael de Mercado learned about sugar processing and on Barbados he received a patent for the “making and framing of sugar mills after a new manner” (Samuel 1936:19). Despite settling on Barbados, the Mercados remained part of an active merchant family based out of Amsterdam. In 1658, Dr. Mercado was described as an “Amsterdam merchant” in the Amsterdam notarial records. Just a year later, David Raphael was also described as an “Amsterdam merchant” (Schreuder 2006:67). David Raphael was able to translate his knowledge of sugar agriculture and his merchant ties
into considerable economic wealth and his extravagant pyramidal marble tombstone is still easily identified in the Jewish burial grounds today (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Pyramidal tomb of David Raphael de Mercado on Barbados

The first documentary record for the actual synagogue comes from a 1664 deed (Quaker Records 1948). The deed is for the lot north of the synagogue compound and shows the outlines of the synagogue building suggesting that the building had already been constructed. The earliest tombstone from the burial grounds that surround the synagogue belongs to Abraham Eliyahu da Fonseca Valle and dates to 1658 (Shilstone 1988:98). Whether the synagogue was constructed by 1658 is unclear, but the land on which the synagogue compound rests must have belonged to the Jewish community by then. The community called itself the Nidhe Israel (the “scattered from Israel”).
The tombstones provide further evidence about the nature of the first members of the Jewish community. It appears that the first Jews on the island were mostly male (Figure 21). The assumption is that deaths should be an indicator of the gender ratio on the island. If there are more male deaths then female deaths then that is probably a reflection of their being more males than females on the island. The major challenge to this assumption would be that one gender saw a higher death rate than the other. Unfortunately, we do not know the gender breakdown of Jews arriving on the island to calculate the death rate. Instead, I have taken the average age of death as a proxy for rate of death. The underlying assumption is that if one gender had a higher death rate than the other, then we would expect that gender to have a lower average age of death.

The average age of death based upon the tombstones shows that men had an average age of death of 46, while women had an average age of death of 47. Based upon the assumptions above, I consider the number of deaths a rough index for the gender ratio on the island. As Figure 21 shows, the first fifty years saw mostly men dying on the island and only after 1700 does the gender ratio even out. As conversion was not common, and it is unlikely that individuals converting to Judaism could be buried in the surviving burial grounds, the change in gender ratios reflects first the shifting migration habits with more women coming to the island and subsequently the development of families on the island. Thus, the first interactions between Jews and non-Jews on Barbados were done mostly between men.

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6 There are records suggesting that there were several other Jewish burial grounds near the Synagogue that are now beneath or destroyed by more modern buildings. At least one of these burial grounds was probably reserved for Jews who had left the faith, people who had converted to Judaism, or individuals who had broken with the Jewish community (Shilstone 1988:xxv-xxviii).
The meeting of Sephardic Jews and the British on Barbados represented a moment of complex cultural contact. It should not be forgotten that many British had never had direct contact with an openly professing Jew since Jews were expelled from England in 1290 AD (Endelman 2002:15). This expulsion does not mean that every person of Jewish descent left from England but it precluded Jews from practicing Judaism publicly and probably meant there were few practicing Jews at any one time in England. While direct contact may have been limited, ideas about Jews remained prominent in Britain and were kept alive in religious debates and literature. The most famous literary example would be the character Shylock in William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. Indeed, for those British individuals who did not live in the major metropolitan areas such as London, Jews remained a relatively alien presence well into the 18th century. The Scottish Lady of Quality, Janet Schaw wrote in 1775 (1923:136)
upon seeing a Jew on St. Eustatius: "I had never seen a Jew in his habit, except Mr. Diggs in the character of Shylock." Thus, while Jews may have been expelled from England they never left the cultural imagination of the British. Jews in the 17th century were often stereotyped as being merchants. This stereotype had some foundations as many of the Jews were merchants and the first Jews interacting on Barbados were traders. Yet a closer inspection highlights how many of the Jews, even during the first years, were not solely merchants but practiced numerous occupations such as Solomon the brick-maker.

While the majority of the Jews arriving to Barbados came from the Netherlands, they for the most part retained an Iberian identity and culture. In Amsterdam, immigrating Sephardic Jews were identified as “Portuguese” and the first synagogue was built in the “Portuguese” quarter of the city (Bodian 1997:47). This label of “Portuguese” was an identity that the Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam chose for themselves. They often referred to themselves as the “Portuguese Nation” or used the Portuguese “os da nação” [“of the nation”] (Bodian 1997). Furthermore, in 1615 the leaders of the Jewish community in Amsterdam established an institution to provide dowries to poor brides called Santa Companhia de dotar orphas e donzelas pobres, or Dotar. As Historian Miriam Bodian has adroitly shown, this society highlighted the complicated relationship between religious and cultural identities in Amsterdam. The society, despite being a part of the Jewish religious communal structure, bore a non-Hebrew name and sought to “marry orphans and poor maidens of this Portuguese Nation, and the Castilian” from across Europe (in Bodian 1997:48). Importantly, the criteria for who would receive benefits from the society were based upon ethnicity and lineage and not religious affiliation. Indeed, non-practicing Jews of the “Portuguese” diaspora could
apply for and did receive benefits while practicing Ashkenazi Jews were not eligible (Bodian 1997). What this suggests is first that we have to be careful in not simply equating religious identity with cultural identity. Secondly, it demonstrates how strong an Iberian identity persisted after dispersal from the Peninsula.

Thus, the presence of Jews on Barbados created a particularly complex intertwining of economic, cultural, and religious identities. Within the world of trade relationships, the connections to the Netherlands were often highlighted. However, neither the Barbados government nor the Jewish community referred to themselves as Dutch. Despite their recent Dutch origins, the Jewish community was far more Iberian in its cultural practices. Many Jews on the island actively maintained their Iberian traditions. Adding a third layer to this discussion is the religious identity of the community. It is here, that the Barbados elites attempted to simplify what could be an overly complicated discussion by referring to the Jews on the island as “Jews” or the “Hebrew Nation.”

When the first Jews arrived on Barbados, their economic, cultural, and religious identities were neither well defined by Jews or non-Jews. The colonial context allowed for a re-definition of all of these various ways of defining difference and cohesion. The interesting question is how these various tensions were negotiated through time on the island. What is clear is that while there were Jews on Barbados during the early years of settlement, it remains to be seen how there became Jews of Barbados.

St. Eustatius

St. Eustatius was established as a Dutch agricultural colony in 1636 (Attema 1976:16). Although the hopes were for the same agricultural success seen on some of the
surrounding islands, the small, only twenty-one square kilometers (twelve square miles),
volcanic island receives sporadic rainfall and the only fresh water sources are a few wells
and constructed cisterns. These geological factors severely hindered the development of
an agriculture-based economy. Just as damaging to economic growth was the way the
island was used as a political pawn in the conflicts of the Dutch, French, and British.
During the 17th century the island changed between these three European nations at least
nine times (Attema 1976:61). Such political instability, which was sometimes coupled
with physical seizure and razing of the island, guaranteed slow development. For Jews
both fleeing from Brazil and deciding to cross the Atlantic from established European
communities, it is hard to see St. Eustatius offering a favorable place to settle. The
changing of political hands was often more dangerous to Jews than to other Europeans
because they could not guarantee that the Dutch (or English or French) would fight for
their rights. Whereas the Dutch, British, and French settlers could expect that their
respective governments would seek protection for their citizens, the Jews, whose
citizenship was questionable, could not be assured that their interests would be
considered in dealings between the European nations.7 Furthermore, the strongest voice
for the Jews on the island would have come from the Jewish communities in Europe,
most prominently the Amsterdam community, which did not have the same power as the
militarily supported states.

For the 17th century there are few documents referring to the Jews of St. Eustatius.
This is certainly a reflection of both the absence of an in depth exploration of the Dutch

7 While this was a fear, it was not always the case. The British had extended Jews a number of political
and religious freedoms during their control of Suriname. When the Dutch claimed Suriname in 1667, they
continued to give Jews all the rights that the English had promised them in the hopes that the Jewish
community would remain on the island (Ben-Ur and Frankel 2011:17-29).
Archives concerning St. Eustatius and the political instability of the island. Nevertheless, in 1660 we have records of two Jews, Abraham Israel Henriquez and David Seraiva, meeting on the island (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:518). Whether either man was a permanent resident of the island at the time is unknown. The number of Jews living on St. Eustatius in the 17th century was probably quite small, and this situation did not change until St. Eustatius gained a degree of political stability. In 1696, the island was returned back to the Dutch from the British and the island remained in the Dutch hands until it was famously seized by the British in 1781 (Attema 1976:61; Hurst 1996; Jameson 1903; Tuchman 1988). Although St. Eustatius was not well-suited to be an agricultural colony, it was in an ideal position for conducting trade. It was near several British and French islands and along the trade winds leading to the Spanish islands of the Greater Antilles. Furthermore, the island has a deep harbor on its Caribbean side that allowed a significant number of ships to anchor near its shores at any one time. These factors led Chevalier Durepaire to say in a report to the States of Holland and West Friesland in 1714 that the island was “rich in opportunities” (in Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:518). When coupled with Dutch economic policy and philosophy of free trade, the island soon exploited these geographic features to become an entrepôt for the Northern Caribbean (Tuchman 1988:18-22).

With the return of St. Eustatius to the Dutch in 1696 and the potential for political stability, a number of Jewish merchants began to settle on the island. Isaac and Suzanne Emmanuel, historians of the Curaçao Jewish community, note a number of Curaçaoan Jews moving and trading on St. Eustatius during the first two decades of the eighteenth century (1970:518). In 1722 there were 1,204 inhabitants on the island, of which twenty-
one were Jewish. Of these twenty-one, there were six men, four women, and eleven children. These twenty-one Jews owned eighteen enslaved individuals (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519; Hartog 1976b:2).

In 1730, there were enough Jews on the island to catch the island administrator’s, Everard Raecx’s, attention. During this time, the WIC governed the island. In a letter written on September 18, 1730 he mentions having to help settle several conflicts occurring amongst the Jews on the island (Hartog 1976b:3). Moreover, in the same year, the *parnassim* (presidents) of the Amsterdam community sought equal rights for Jews settling on the island from the WIC. This request was honored by the WIC who sent a letter to Everard Raecx ordering him to give Jews the same “freedom of religion and trade” as their Christian counterparts (in Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519). The Jewish community had grown to such a size that its actions and potential for disruption were now an active concern for the WIC governors on the island.

By 1737 the community had reached a new population threshold as it began to gather resources for the construction of a synagogue (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519). The synagogue was completed in 1739. The community called itself *Honen Dalim*, meaning “Gracious to the Needy” (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:520). By the time the synagogue was built on the island, St. Eustatius had already begun to establish itself as a key market place in the Caribbean providing a number of goods to the surrounding islands (Attema 1976:33-34). The island exploited its favorable geographic position between French and British islands particularly since it was a free port allowing ships from all nations to trade while not charging customs duties (Tuchman 1988:18-22). St. Eustatius became a center of trade that grew even more profitable when the English
and French went to war. The best example of this certainly comes from the Seven Years War (1756-1763), where the British decided to weaken the French island of Guadeloupe before invasion by blockading the island and St. Eustatius, which was providing many of the goods to the French island that were not being provided by the metropole (Pares 1975:164). By the 1770s, St. Eustatius was one of the busiest ports in the Atlantic with merchants from around the world buying and selling goods in its warehouse district (Hiss 1941:96; Schaw 1923:135-138; Tuchman 1988:18-22; Barka 1996:225).

The establishment of the Jewish community occurred within a different context from what happened on Barbados. Most of the Jews who settled on St. Eustatius did so while it was under the control of the Dutch. Unlike the British, by the 1730s the Dutch had a long history of interacting with Jews. Dutch society had already legally defined Jewish subjectivity and the Jews did not represent a foreign presence. Furthermore, Jewish settlement on St. Eustatius occurred after nearly 90 years of Dutch settlement on the island. While those 90 years were filled with instability, it nonetheless meant that when Jews began to settle on the island, there was already a fairly well defined society present. This was far different from the early presence of Jews on Barbados when the British colony was just getting started. Nevertheless, there are key similarities as well. The Jews who arrived on St. Eustatius still maintained significant Iberian cultural practices and most likely viewed themselves as Iberian. They were also clearly defined as Jewish in the documentary record and not as Dutch suggesting that religious difference still played an important role in the organization of Dutch society.
Community Organization

On both islands, the Jewish community established a number of key institutions including the synagogue. The establishment of an official community would have required a communal constitution that defined how the community leaders were chosen, who could be part of the community, what the proper behaviors of the community members were, how taxes were to be raised on the community, and how to utilize the finances of the community. Unfortunately, for both communities, scholars have yet to find the original constitution. However, a number of documents suggest that the organization of the community followed the same basic structure that is seen in other Sephardic communities at the time.

Both communities would have had a governing council known as the mahamad. The mahamad was led by several of the more prominent lay members of the community. The mahamad was headed by the parnas (president) or possibly by the parnassim (more than one individual fulfilling this role). The word parnassim was probably translated as wardens in many of the documents, particularly, when there are interactions between the Jewish community and Christian churches. Christian churches also had leadership positions known as wardens so this was a common term symbolizing leadership within a religious context.

The mahamad was in charge of many key features of the community including the hiring of religions leaders such as the rabbi, the hazzan (Cantor), the shamaz (beadle), the mohel (circumciser), the gabay (treasurer), and the shohet (ritual slaughterer). Moreover, the mahamad oversaw the distribution of money in the community (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:96-97). The surviving minute books from the late 18th
and early 19th century list a number of expenditures by the *Nidhe Israel* community. The community paid for the maintenance of the synagogue compound, the salaries for key religions positions, tombstones for particular individuals, taxes to the island’s government, security guards for the night of *Yom Kippur*, legal fees when lawyers were hired, and charity (Community Records 1696-1887). A 1790 document shows a similar distribution of community funds on St. Eustatius (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:527).

Without the surviving constitution of the community, many of the intricacies of the official community organization are lost. It is unclear how the *mahamad* was chosen but it was probably through election by the males of the community. We also do not know how long each *parnas* served and whether there were limits to the number of times a person could occupy the position. However, we do know that all the documented members of the *mahamad* on St. Eustatius were male (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:518-533). Also, the leaders of the community on both islands were not necessarily trained to serve religious functions in the society and therefore did not normally take on religious roles in the community. Rather they were in charge of hiring the key religious positions in the Jewish community. This does not mean that individuals did not at times serve important religious functions (such as being the cantor or mohel) but this was not a requirement for the position.

Beyond the control of the money, the *mahamad* also settled many disputes that arose within the Jewish community. This was often a source of tension between Jewish communities and civil governments. Jewish communities went through great lengths to try to prevent Jews from turning to civil authorities to settle disputes. The Synod of Castilian Jews in 1431 stated that “no Jew or Jewess shall bring his or her neighbor,
whether a Jew or Jewess, before any judge, ecclesiastic or secular, who is not of our faith” (in Tamari 1987:55). Scholars have argued that Jewish modernity was partially ushered in by the loosening of the control that the mahamad could exert and with Jews beginning to rely on the courts of the state to settle their non-religious disputes. The ensuing narrative will show how Jews in the Caribbean utilized both the courts of the mahamad but also selectively utilized the courts of the colonial government.

Furthermore, the mahamad controlled access to key Jewish institutions including the mikveh, burial ground, and synagogue. This meant that the mahamad could control the ability for Jews to fulfill many of their religious ideals. These included ritual purification within the mikveh so that a woman would be clean for the marital bed and the insurance of being buried in sanctified ground. One of the greatest sources of power for the mahamad was their ability to separate Jews from the key institutions needed to live a proper religious life.

However, the mahamad had limits. The members themselves changed and it seems likely that a particularly unloved individual could be kept out of the seat of power. Moreover, the mahamad had no military or legal power outside of the synagogue compound walls itself. Beyond the synagogue compound, the status of mahamad was not necessarily recognized by the rest of Barbadian or Statian society. They also did not have total control of Jewish life within the community. In 1792 on Barbados, Lunah Arrobus, a Jewish woman who may have converted to Christianity, passed away. The Barbados government ordered Arrobus to be buried in the Jewish burial ground because

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8 It is likely that the members of the mahamad were elected. However, who got to vote is unknown. The details for selecting the mahamad would have been given in the community’s founding charter. Unfortunately, this document has yet to be found. If found, it would provide numerous insights into the design of the community, structure of its leadership, and communal obligations.
they thought Arrobus was Jewish. The Jewish community did not desire to bury Arrobus within the sanctified grounds because they believed Arrobus was a convert to Christianity. Despite the Jewish community’s protests, they were forced to bury Arrobus. Therefore, the community had Lunah Arrobus buried in a nook with “a way” to divide her burial place from the rest of the synagogue compound (Shilstone 1988:xi-xii). Even though the mahamad controlled much of the Jewish community, they did not have total autonomy. Moreover, the mahamad was a distinctly social and religious organization that did not have a military element meaning that it could not use physical force as a component of its decisions.

Conclusion

The first Jews who arrived in the Caribbean were Sephardic in origin. They had a deep past rooted within the Iberian Peninsula which helped shape their community. With the slow introduction of Ashkenazi Jews over the next two centuries, the Jewish communities became ever more complex. While the Sephardim and Ashkenazim could point to a shared religion, much of the way that the religion was practiced, and much of their culture outside of this religion was different. These cultural differences highlight the fact that the Jewish community was never a homogeneous whole. Jonathan Israel’s formulation of the Sephardim being a “diaspora within a diaspora” certainly seems true (2002).

The communities on St. Eustatius and Barbados shared much in common. The basic community structure was the same and many of the individuals shared similar pasts rooted in the Iberian community in Amsterdam. However, the communities also represent major differences. St. Eustatius was shorter lived. Arising in the 1730s and
almost completely gone by 1800, the Jews of St. Eustatius enjoyed just a brief 70 years of prosperity on the Dutch island. Nevertheless, the brevity of their tenure was not something easily predicted by those living on the island. On the other hand, while the Barbados community saw population fluctuations, it lasted well over 200 years. It represents a community that could truly establish roots on the island and provides a diachronic window into the process of diasporic community formation.
Chapter V: Relationship with the Hostland

Diasporans’ connections across national boundaries and great distances have provided avenues for scholars to re-examine the way we understand space. Moreover, diasporas are considered a phenomenon of movement (Lewellen 2002; Clifford 1994), in which routes are often highlighted over roots. However, the life of a diasporan is not a life free from connections to spaces and places. Rather, diasporans demonstrate the relativity of spatial connections and the variety of ways that people create and are created by the space around them.

In Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson’s now classic essay on space, they argue that there is often a collapse of culture and space. While culture gets mapped, the space on which culture is being inscribed is hidden from view (1997a:7). The end result is that space and culture can become synonyms. Thus, Barbadian culture is for those found on the island of Barbados. For Gupta and Ferguson “all associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts.” (1997a:4) Physical proximity does not necessarily equal cultural proximity. Rather anthropologists should explore the relationship between culture and space.

Diasporic peoples are often portrayed as having strong connections to a place, but that place is the homeland and not the present context. This connection to the homeland is a connection to a place in the past (and potentially the future). While I will talk about the relationship to the homeland more in a later chapter, for now I want to suggest that solely equating a diasporic culture with a past homeland creates an avenue for essentializing a diasporic identity. In seeing a place within a person, as opposed to seeing a person in a place, a Jew becomes a Jew no matter where they disperse. This
creates one of the paradoxes of diaspora where diasporans can be held-up as the paragons of the fractured, hybrid, postmodern world (i.e. Hall 1990) and yet possess an uncritically considered essentialized and permanent identity (see Brubaker 2005 for more of this discussion). I believe that simply assuming that someone is Jewish because of their genealogy fails to account for the active processes of community formation that occur in particular contexts.

Diasporic settlement is more than simply a step along the way but also involves the creation of a local place. Avtar Brah posits that the “very strong association of notions of diaspora with displacement and dislocation means that the experience of location can easily dissolve out of focus.” (1996:180, emphasis original) She goes on to say that diasporic communities are not a given to be assumed in each location but rather something continually created. They are “constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively” (Brah 1996:183).

Thus, diasporans are not a people without place nor a people of an ancient place. Rather, they are active actors in the hostland. Archaeologists must understand how diasporans created a sense of place and how/if they utilized this place to create and maintain a diasporic community in a new area. James Clifford sums up this point of view by saying that “the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement.” (1994:308)

With this in mind, what were the social and political limitations of Jewish life in Barbados and St. Eustatius? How did Jews challenge these limitations and assert
themselves in the colonial Caribbean frontier? How did the Jews of St. Eustatius and Barbados define the local? How did they create a place on each island allowing for the continuity of a diasporic culture within the Caribbean? To borrow Brah’s words, what was “the crucible of the materiality of everyday life” that allowed for a Jewish diasporic community to be established and maintained on each island? And finally, for how long can we consider these as Jewish communities within the hostland verses being communities that are part of the hostland?

St. Eustatius

During the 18th century St. Eustatius transformed from a small trading and agricultural Dutch outpost to the mercantile entrepôt of the Northern Antilles. By the second half of the 18th century the island had become a cosmopolitan center, where the majority of the island’s inhabitants’ social and economic lives were directly tied to transatlantic trade (Attema 1976; Tuchman 1988; Barka 1996, 2001; Hurst 1996). During this time the island extended the Dutch ideal of freedom of conscience creating a separation between private and public lives, and thus creating one of the most tolerant societies in the New World (notice that even here the island was still a society with enslaved individuals). Yet, this tolerance was mostly based on shared prosperity as opposed to high ideals of liberal ideology. The incredible increase in trade on the island allowed for nearly all free people to have a share in its wealth. This quelled economic jealousy (because nearly everyone was successful), which kept individuals from invoking old tropes of hate (including Anti-Semitic tropes) to condemn their economic competition.
Yet despite this general toleration, Jews, with one exception, were not part of the island's government. How did the Jews live through the tension of both creating a sense of place on the island while not being fully part of the island's governing society? How did they create a place on the island? How did these places negotiate a Jewish presence? To answer these questions, I will start with a discussion of Dutch attitudes towards religious diversity and the ways such attitudes were brought to St. Eustatius. I will then move into a discussion of the Jewish landscape on St. Eustatius highlighting the way a community was created.

**Dutch Attitudes towards Jews**

The Jewish community on St. Eustatius was established mainly under Dutch rule of the island. While St. Eustatius was a transient and cosmopolitan place, it was the WIC that governed the island (Israel 1995:935-955). Therefore, to understand the social and political climate in which the Statian community formed, it is necessary to explore Dutch attitudes of tolerance.

During the 16th century the Dutch freed themselves from the Spanish forming the loose confederation of the United Provinces or the Dutch Republic (Israel 1995). Independence from Spain followed the Protestant Revolution so that the newly independent Dutch Republic was a protestant nation. Nevertheless, there still remained a number of Catholics living in the United Provinces. To prevent conflict based upon religion, the United Provinces in article 13 of the Union of Utrecht (1579) stated, “nobody shall be persecuted or examined for religious reasons” (Hsia 2002:2). This article allowed for a freedom of conscience where each individual was left with the right to believe religiously what they wished. However, the article did not specify the right to
practice any religion publicly. Rather, the article in a limited fashion declared that no one
was to be persecuted or investigated for their religion. This article reflected a larger
move in the Dutch governmental system where a distinct separation was created between
public and private (Cooperman 2008). Thus, being Jewish in the United Provinces was
not a problem but practicing your faith outside of your private home could be.⁹ While
respecting the right of each individual to have a “freedom of conscience,” the Dutch did
not suggest in anyways equality of religions.¹⁰

These attitudes were combined with a degree of economic pragmatism,
particularly in the mercantile centers of Holland. Holland with its major city of
Amsterdam was in many ways the center of the United Provinces, and not coincidentally
the location of the headquarters of the Dutch West India Company (Kaplan 2002:17).
The main concern for the Regents of Holland was civil peace fostering economic
prosperity. Thus the Regents of Holland and indeed the government of the United
Provinces as a whole had “a tacit toleration of religious diversity that was allowed to
flourish as long as the necessary concord between believers did not endanger the unity of
the body politic and the civic community” (Frijhoff 2002:32). The United Provinces
relied upon each religious community to maintain strict boundaries in the realm of
religious belief to avert conflicts between religious communities (Hsia 2002:3).

However, it should be noted that these strict boundaries were merely within the
religious field as the Dutch relied upon and expected economic contributions from each

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⁹ This is one of the reasons that the first Synagogue in Amsterdam does not appear until 1614 despite there
being a growing number of Jews settling in Amsterdam before this year who had a desire to express their
faith openly (Swetchinski 2004:12).
¹⁰ Notice the difference from modern ideas of religious toleration. The Dutch attitude did not say anything
about religious “equality” nor did it guarantee the right to practice your religion openly. Thus, the Dutch
attitude was truly one of “toleration” where religious diversity was something to put up with as opposed to
something being celebrated or encouraged.
community. In the case of the Sephardic Jews, their transnational connections that created trade networks in both the Iberian and Ottoman empires were seen as valuable assets (Schama 1987:593). A recent study of Jews in Amsterdam has shown that Jewish business relationships often expanded outside of the immediate Jewish community (Roitman 2011). To fully exploit the trade networks that the Sephardic Jews and Portuguese New Christians were a part of the boundaries of these communities had to be permeable in situations of commerce. Thus, the Dutch model of tolerance actually began to divorce the economic sphere from religious sphere of individuals’ lives (although this and the next chapters will show how a true separation never was achieved). While trade networks existed in the public sphere, religious choice remained in the private sphere, and as long as the two spheres did not clash creating social unrest, the Dutch elites were willing to be religiously tolerant.

Following this logic, the city council of Amsterdam did pass two different laws that were adopted by all of the States of Holland and West Friesland. The first law was passed in 1616 and stated three prohibitions:

(1) ‘not to speak or write (and to make sure that is not spoken or written) anything that may, in any way, tend to the disdain of our Christian religion”; (2) ‘not to attempt to seduce any Christian person from our Christian religion nor to circumcise one”; and (3) ‘not to have any carnal conversation, whether in or out of wedlock, with Christian women or maidens, not even when such are of ill repute’.” (Swetchinski 2004:13)

None of these three stipulations curtailed Jewish religious practices nor forbid Jewish rituals. However, they do reflect the Dutch government’s goal of keeping religious communities separate. The tenor of the law is that Jewish religious practice is fine as long as it does not threaten Christian life. Interestingly, one threat was sexual relations with Christian women, and that even sexual relations with Christian women of “ill
“repute” was prohibited. Overall, these three stipulations helped impose distance between the communities while also reaffirming that the United Provinces prioritized Christianity, particularly Protestant Christianity.

The second decision officials in Amsterdam made affecting all of the States of Holland and West Friesland was a 1636 by-law which restricted Jews from achieving full burgher -something close to the idea of citizen - rights. The right to acquire the status of burgher, usually through purchase, was never denied to Jews. However, being a Jewish burgher did not include the same rights as being a Christian burgher. Jews could not transmit their burgher status to their children, could not become a burgher by marrying the daughter of a burgher, nor take part in “poortersneringen (literally, livelihoods of a poorter)” (Swetchinski 2004:20). This latter prohibition’s most significant result was that it prevented Jews from joining various trade and craft guilds. Nevertheless, the position of burgher did provide a certain degree of legitimacy in disputes concerning international commerce and thus was worth purchasing for many Jews (Swetchinski 2004:22).

Together, these two laws clearly demonstrate that Jews in the Netherlands were not legally equal to Protestants. The Dutch ideal of maintaining a separation between public and private meant that official enacted laws allowed for private freedoms as long as they did not impede upon other’s freedoms, particularly Christian freedoms. Moreover, this hands-off Dutch attitude towards Jews was partially inspired by economics and the Dutch’s increasing role in developing transnational capitalist markets. The Dutch were emerging as a major economic power and the trade networks brought by the Sephardim tying them to Spain and Portugal as well as the Ottoman Empire were
desired. Thus, the economic opportunities that the Portuguese Nation, as the Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam called themselves (Bodian 1997), helped motivate the relatively liberal Dutch attitude towards the Jews. During the rest of the 17th and 18th centuries the Dutch were politically ambivalent towards Jews and only provided full equality to them in 1796 (Swierenga 1994:19).

**Tolerance towards Jews on St. Eustatius**

St. Eustatius was established and governed by the Dutch West India Company and by the middle of the 18th century had an economy based almost solely on trade. By the 1760s the island reached such dizzying heights of economic prosperity that it was known throughout the Atlantic world (Tuchman 1988:18-22). However, by the late 1790s the island’s economic success was almost completely lost. St. Eustatius’ economy was built off of its favorable geographic and political position and once the political and mercantile networks of the Atlantic shifted, St. Eustatius was left with few economic resources. The Jewish community on St. Eustatius was established only a few decades before this economic boom and rode the waves of prosperity as far as they would carry them before they, as with many of the other island residents, left the small island’s shores for more fruitful economic pastures.

The Jewish community on St. Eustatius did not reach significant numbers before the 1730s. It is likely that because of their small numbers and lack of any visible institutions on the landscape (i.e. a synagogue) the few Jews living on the island were ignored. This changed in 1730 when the WIC administrator, Everard Raecx, received a letter from his superiors stating:

"... we deeply desire and [by this] order and command that the residents of their Nation (i.e., of the same Nation as the Amsterdam parnassim) and all future
settlers [of said Nation] be granted freedom of religion and trade and that no difference whatsoever be shown between Christians and those of the aforementioned Nation; further, that they are to be treated in the same manner and are to be given no cause for justifiable complaints. At the same time, we recommend that you maintain law and justice on the island without partiality and without the least connivance, in the hope that this island, with the blessing of Almighty God, may gradually become more prosperous." (in Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519)

The Amsterdam Jewish community instigated the writing of this letter by approaching the WIC with their concerns. It is unknown if this letter was a reaction to a particular incident on the island. The letter does show that the Jewish community was taking an active role in securing its rights and freedoms and were not simply passive pawns suffering the whims of their current political environment. Moreover, it also demonstrates how Jewish communities separated by oceans supported each other. For the WIC, this decree was not without precedent. A similar decision was made in regard to the Jews of Dutch Brazil in the 17th century (Israel 2007:24-27). Additionally, this was not just a policy of the WIC. The Dutch States General had passed a decree in 1657 that said Jews who conducted long-distance trade or lived abroad were to be given all the same rights as other Jewish citizens (Schama 1987:593). While Jews may have been considered different than Protestants, their economic potential was greatly valued and as was seen from the 1730 letter, the hope was that the presence and freedom of Jewish activity would make the island "more prosperous."

From the few documents that exist concerning the Jewish community it seemed to thrive during the 18th century with few disturbances or conflicts with the larger island wide society. No records indicate any conflicts with the island government or major
conflicts between individuals on the island. So far, no evidence of physical violence perpetrated towards Jews has been found in the documentary record.

The governor of the island was sometimes asked to mediate conflicts within the Jewish community. Like many of the Caribbean Jewish communities, the Jews on St. Eustatius were mostly Sephardic with an Ashkenazi minority (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:520-521). The Ashkenazi Jews were often from lower classes, usually poor who were sent from Amsterdam to the colonies (to be discussed in the next chapter), and did not have the numbers to create a separate synagogue. Instead, they worshipped alongside the Sephardic community, while also sharing with the Sephardic community the mikveh and burial ground. These two groups had multiple conflicts because of their different linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions. Additionally, there was often a significant class difference between the more affluent Sephardim and the impoverished Ashkenazi Jews. In 1760, the two groups reached an impasse that the local mahamad could not settle. The conflict was most likely exacerbated by the fact that the mahamad, who ruled on most communal conflicts, consisted of the wealthiest members of the Jewish community and were almost assuredly Sephardic. To solve this dispute and prevent community fracture, something that could have been quite challenging for the small community, the Sephardic leaders of the island took the circuitous route of asking the Amsterdam parnassim to petition the Dutch West India Company for help in settling the dispute. The WIC had Governor Jan de Windt bring the two groups together to create new hascamoth (rules) for the community (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:521). The use of the government to serve as an objective arbitrator was a precedent already
established in Amsterdam over 100 years earlier when the Amsterdam city officials mediated a conflict in that Jewish community (Swetchinski 2004:12-13).

It is perhaps not surprising that St. Eustatius was tolerant to a Jewish presence. By the 18th century, St. Eustatius had become a haven for merchants from across the globe. When the British seized the island in 1781 they made a list of all individuals on the island who were received as burghers in the previous six months (Table 3). For each individual a place of origin was listed. Geographic areas represented included England, Ireland, France, Scotland, Italy, Germany, Corsica, Hungary, Belgium, Poland, Bournos, and Susante (Barka 1989:13). St. Eustatius had an open attitude towards allowing foreigners to settle on its shores. Thus, if Dutch attitudes of religious tolerance were at least partially inspired by economic concerns, then the merchant haven of St. Eustatius represented this devotion to trade (and subsequently tolerance) to the extreme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Number of Burghers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsica</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susante</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Origins of the recently confirmed burghers on the island of St. Eustatius in 1781 (Barka 1989:13). Dutch burghers were probably included within another document.

The majority of Jews on the island were merchants. While there is some evidence of Jews fulfilling small craft positions like tailoring (St. Eustatius Gazette 1794), their main economic activity was trade. This even included the Cantor of the community,
Jacob Robles, who along with his business partner Elias Gomes traded in clothe with the Mendez Brothers firm in Amsterdam (Inventory of Merchandize 1781). Unlike other locations, the concentration of Jews as merchants would not have stood out as the majority of free individuals on the island were involved with international trade. Indeed, Statian Jews joined other merchants on the island to protect their economic position from outsiders. In 1779, a petition signed by 22 Statian merchants was sent to the WIC asking for higher taxes and duties to be placed on outsiders. Of the 22 signees, three were Jews (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:523). While the actions of three Jewish merchants do not represent the actions of the community, this petition highlights the fluidity of social interaction by showing that Jews on the island at times aligned with non-Jews on the island. For the signers of the petition, any perceived difference was easily overlooked in favor of protecting their markets from outside competition.

Overall, from a political viewpoint, the Statian Jewish community experienced a relatively advantageous relationship with its host government. It seems from the few official documents sent by the WIC that the island was to be ruled with the same degree of tolerance as was extended to the Jews of Amsterdam. While Jews never held the highest positions in the local government, one Jew, Daniel Nunes Henriques, did serve as a secretary and official translator (for Spanish and Portuguese) within the island's government (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:1052). Yet, these documentary insights provide only official discourse and do not necessarily illuminate the actual conditions on the island. While the political elites may have passed certain laws, this did not necessarily mean that the diverse groups of people living on St. Eustatius held the same
attitudes or viewpoints. Furthermore, what were the ways that the Jewish community created its own sense of place on the island?

**Jews and Blacks on St. Eustatius**

Any discussions of the Jewish social position in the early modern period must seriously consider the relationships among Jews, enslaved blacks, and free whites. Unlike the metropoles, Europeans were often the minority in their Caribbean colonies and the white Protestants had a more prominent other to help form their social identity than the small Jewish minorities. The more prominent divide in the Caribbean was between the free white population and the enslaved black population as opposed to the difference between Christian and Jew. Jews were viewed as different from white Protestants as the discussion above demonstrates, but the degree of difference and the manifestation of those cultural boundaries differed.

While St. Eustatius was never a true plantation island, it was a slave owning society. By the 18th century there were dozens of established plantations on the island that relied upon enslaved laborers. Moreover, by the 18th century the free population was a clear minority. While never reaching the same ratios as seen on some of the more prominent plantation islands like Barbados or Jamaica, St. Eustatius was unquestionably a slave society (Gilmore 2005:53:54).

While it seems that Jews tended not to own plantations on St. Eustatius, they were slave owners. The twenty-one Jews listed in the 1720s census owned eighteen enslaved workers. Since only ten of the twenty-one were adults, it is clear that most of the adult Jews owned multiple enslaved individuals (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519; Hartog 1976b:2).
Among the documents created when the British captured St. Eustatius in 1781 was a list of all of the burghers on St. Eustatius. According to the list there were 52 individuals known to be Jews along with the Jewish firm of Lindo and Noble. Included in this list was the number of enslaved individuals owned by each burgher. Twenty-two Jewish burghers owned enslaved individuals while the thirty other Jewish individuals and the one Jewish merchant firm did not own any enslaved individuals. David de Leon owned the most enslaved individuals (14) closely followed by Salomon Levy (12), while no other Jew owned more than six enslaved Africans. Emmanuel de Leon who had no enslaved workers in 1781 created an inventory in 1784 that included eleven enslaved Africans (TOEGANGSNUMMER 1784:706-704). An inventory from 1781 that was signed by the Cantor of the island, Jacob Robles, and Elias Gomes shows that they owned 10 enslaved individuals (Inventory of Merchandize 1781). In the British documents from 1781, Jacob Robles is listed as owning no enslaved individuals while Elias Gomes is listed as only having a single enslaved individual. Thus, the 1781 documents from the Rodney capture probably under-represents the degree of Jewish slave ownership (Rodney Rolls 1781).

Many of these enslaved individuals would have been used to do the trade work of some of the Jews as well as working in the warehouse district. In 1792 Abraham Abendanone offered a reward for two runaway slaves, Emanuel and Clarisa. Emanuel was a “Portuguese Negro” who was “well known by most of the Canoe Negroes on the Bay” (St. Eustatius Gazette 1793). The majority of the enslaved Africans owned by Statian Jews probably labored on the bay helping the movement of goods on and off of
the anchored ships. Moreover, it is likely that the urban Jews rented their enslaved workers to other individuals on the island for added income.

Historian Jonathan Schorsch has done the most research on the relationship of Jews and blacks in the early modern period (2000, 2002, 2004, 2005). His extensive scholarship has explored more than just the numbers but also Jewish ideas of slave ownership. Schorsch has shown that Jews, like their Christian counterparts, could find religious and cultural justification for the ownership of enslaved individuals. For Jews, these religious arguments became intertwined with whether enslaved men were to be circumcised and whether conversion was possible (2004). It was unlikely that the St. Eustatius Jews tried to convert many of their enslaved laborers. While the majority of these enslaved individuals were not Jewish, some were owned by the community and would have been given access to the major institutions as they maintained these structures. Just like the enslaved individuals within the plantation homes (Upton 1984), these enslaved individuals had access that was denied other free whites on the island due to their almost invisibility based upon their slave status.

Schorsch highlights two major issues concerning Jewish slave ownership. The first is that many of these Jews came from an Iberian past and may have been impacted by Iberian ideas about limpieza de sangre (purity of blood). Such purity of blood arguments fed into ideas of racialized slavery. Furthermore, works from New Christians in the 17th century often purposefully juxtapose Jews and blacks. Schorsch (2004) argues that this was partially an attempt to define Jews against blacks. Such distancing would help slide Jews toward the other end of the spectrum, white Europeans. On the islands,
slave ownership was more than just an economic tool but also a way to reinforce one’s whiteness, or at least one’s degree of civility.

However, the lines between free and enslaved were constantly being blurred, particularly through sexual relations. While no records have yet provided evidence of sexual relations between Jews and blacks on St. Eustatius, it is probable that they ran the same gamut from coerced to true affection that was seen in other relationships between free and enslaved individuals. Several families on St. Eustatius have Iberian last names, such as Lopes, and one of the more prominent families on the island today has the surname Lindo, the same surname as the young Jewish man who led off this dissertation and who will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. Whether these are the descendants of the Jews on the island with the same surnames is unknown but certainly possible.

The Creation of a Jewish Place in St. Eustatius

The synagogue for all Jews on the island, both Sephardic and Ashkenazi, would have been the heart of the community.

“At least since the diaspora experience in the Greek and Roman worlds, where it was ubiquitous and vital, the synagogue has been the sanctuary of the Jewish people, literally and figuratively: the place where Jews have offered prayers of petition and gratitude, listened to the reading of their Scriptures, celebrated festivals, studied texts, and found refuge in times of physical and spiritual difficulty.” (Raphael 2003:97).

The synagogue created a particular Jewish place on the island. Before the synagogue was constructed, the Jewish community would have been a network of domestic homes linked through social and religious connections. The construction of the synagogue created a central node for the practicing Jews on the island.
The creation of synagogue was a major step for the Jews on St. Eustatius showing that they no longer saw themselves as itinerant travelers but were now long term residents. Whereas, the burial ground and mikveh were key institutions, they were in some ways more practical than the synagogue by insuring a sanctified final resting place and allowing for ritual purification. Indeed, the construction of a synagogue is not required for religious services. The one necessity is having a minyan (ten Jewish males), while the space can technically be anywhere. In terms of size and visibility, the synagogue was the most significant Jewish artifact on St. Eustatius. Moreover, its original construction exceeded the capabilities of the community itself and the Jews on the island required support from other Jewish communities to construct the Synagogue. This is particularly striking because the synagogue did not fill any absolutely necessary roles for practicing a proper Jewish life.

While there were numerous impetuses for the construction of the synagogue, one of the key reasons was the creation of a community center. As mentioned above, the synagogue in Jewish life was always more than a religious place but also a social place. It was a place where Jews could come together with their co-religionists. “Here announcements of bans, sales, lost objects and forthcoming marriages were made and all sorts of services performed whose secular far overshadowed their religious elements” (Baron 1942b:144). The compound would have been a distinct place on the landscape where Jews could be the majority as opposed to the minority. Moreover, the synagogue and its compound were controlled by the mahamad and it is here that Jews could assert their own authority. While this power had limits, the synagogue nevertheless created a
Jewish controlled space allowing for Jews to express autonomy that was denied them in the larger island government.

Moreover, the synagogue created a central node for the Jewish community. Without a synagogue, the Jewish community would have been a web of personal connections linking domestic spaces. The synagogue compound was maintained by the community itself and governed by the community's appointed leaders. Its creation prevented Jewish life on the island from being completely run by the capriciousness of individuals. Indeed, with the creation of the synagogue came also the formal constitution of the community, thus creating an institutional structure that partially superseded individuals.

The synagogue served as a symbol both to the Jews on the island and the non-Jews of a Jewish presence. Even today, the ruins of the synagogue speak to the Jewish history on St. Eustatius (hence this dissertation). While the synagogue marked a Jewish presence, its construction also highlights the tensions that surrounded Jewish life for the island and Dutch attitudes towards religious tolerance. The Jews petitioned for the creation of the synagogue in the 1730s. The petition was accepted but under one restriction: "the divine service of the Jews would not hinder the one of the Christians" (in Hartog 1976b:5). The WIC would permit Jewish religious practice but only insofar as it did not directly impede the actions of their Christian neighbors. Such an attitude recalls the Dutch law of 1616 with its three restrictions on Jewish life that allowed Jewish religious freedoms to exist as long as they did not disturb other parts of Dutch society. Such a requirement was issued to quell possible social unrest. The Dutch cultural attitude
of maintaining a stark contrast between the public and private lives of individuals was continued on the island.

While the WIC was religiously tolerant, religion still played a role in Dutch life and was prominent on the Statian landscape. The Dutch Reformed Church was the tallest building on the island and was built adjacent to the major fort, Fort Oranje, in Oranjestad. Moreover, Fort Oranje was next to the main government buildings and the building that housed several of the governor's on the island. Thus, the island had a defined core of religious, military, and government buildings. The Dutch Reformed Church was easily visible to ships entering the harbor. The Dutch Reformed Church was also on Kerkweg (Church Way), one of the major streets in Upper Town Oranjestad.

Whether the Jewish community or the island government chose the location for the synagogue is unknown. However, the placement of the synagogue had to be in a location that did not disrupt the larger Christian community. While the location of the synagogue in the present day seems to fit this stipulation perfectly, the current walls of the synagogue compound and the modern day street layout may not mimic the urban landscape of the 18th century. Therefore, a number of archaeological test units were used to identify the previous street patterns surrounding the synagogue to see if the present day entrance to the synagogue compound was the same entrance used in the 18th century.

The modern entrance is located off of the small Synagogue Paad (Synagogue Path). Could the synagogue have been reached by any of the other major streets creating a more grand entrance than a small gate off of a narrow alley? The presence of an 18th century building to the north of the synagogue insures that it was not reached more directly from Fort Oranje Straat. Moreover, to the south there were no major roadways
for which the synagogue entrance could connect. Therefore, test units were placed linearly east and west of the building to see if it had a pathway connecting to either Kerkweg or Bredeweg. The test units provided no evidence of any path or roadways. This negative evidence suggests that the street pattern seen today is the same as the street pattern from the 18th century. Furthermore, it suggests that the street pattern conforms with the street pattern visible on P.F. Martin's 1781 map of Oranjestad.

Thus the current entrance to the synagogue seems to be the historic entrance to the synagogue. This means that anyone entering the synagogue compound would have had to transverse the relatively small and isolated Synagogue Paad. Plus, the synagogue itself would have been shielded by the surrounding buildings making it almost invisible to anybody traveling along the major streets of Bredeweg, Fort Oranje Straat, or Kerkweg. Additionally, the small pathway would have kept the number of Jews entering and leaving the main streets relatively small at any one time as it is impossible to be more than two abreast on the Synagogue Paad.

In Timothy Ingold's (1993) discussion about the way individuals move through space he compares this movement to the work of the orchestra. The members of the orchestra combine a number of different clues from their fellow musicians, the conductor, and the instrument to create their part and form resonance amongst the various members (Ingold 1993:160). He argues that this is the same for individuals moving through a landscape. The streets of Oranjestad would have had their own rhythms with different groups moving through the streets at different times for different purposes. For Jews, visiting the synagogue on Friday nights and Saturdays was a different pattern than other groups, particular Christians, who celebrated the Sabbath on Sundays. Saturdays would
have been a day of activity for most of the island. Any Jew traveling to and from the
synagogue, particularly on Saturday mornings when the rest of the city would have been
alive with weekend markets, would have slipped into the small alley leading to the
synagogue without disrupting the main flow of traffic. By keeping the visibility of their
movement minimum, Jews would not have disrupted the city's rhythm. Thus, the
location of the synagogue fully lived up to the one stipulation given by the Dutch
authorities. The synagogue compound could quite easily be ignored by the larger Statian
society providing no disruption to everyday life on the island.

Along similar lines, the synagogue had a white sand floor over a wooden floor as
evidenced by the discovery of sand during the excavations inside the synagogue ruins
(personal communication R. Grant Gilmore III). The covering of synagogue floors with
sand was fairly common in the Sephardic diaspora and has had several interpretations.
One of the most common explanations has been that the white sand symbolized the Jews
continued displacement from their homeland, and thus they were still metaphorically
wandering through the desert (Arbell 2002:19). The white sand probably included an
aesthetic appeal as well as the sand found in the St. Eustatius synagogue was not from the
island.

Another hypothesis has been that the sand helped mute the sound of feet within
the synagogue. Thus any passerby would have trouble discerning the number of
individuals inside the synagogue by the noise they were making. Norman Barka's
excavations of the synagogue ruins during the 1980s identified a number of architectural
features showing that the floor of the synagogue had wooden boards raised on several
large wooden beams (Barka 1988). This floor design would have created a hollow space
beneath the floor boards. This hollow space would have created significant noise when a large number of people were ambulating inside. The placement of sand on top of the floorboards would have helped to mute this sound. As the synagogue, although not easily visible, was near several buildings in downtown Oranjestad, its place on the sonic landscape would be just as important as its place in the visible landscape. The sand, by muting the sounds of people within the synagogue, would have served the same purpose as placing the entrance to the synagogue on the small Synagogue Paad. While the sand may have represented a state of perennial wondering, it probably also served the practical purpose of “muting” the Jewish presence on the island.

Yet, while the Jewish community may have desired and were asked to mute their presence, total disappearance was never the goal. The synagogue, although not easily seen nor heard, was not a humble building. The rectangular building stood two stories tall and had exterior measurements of 12.3 meters (east to west) by 8 meters (north to south). The interior of the building would have measured 11.7 meters (east to west) by 7.4 meters (north to south) with the walls averaging 0.6 meters in width. The walls of the building were constructed out of Dutch yellow brick.11 The synagogue’s architecture does not mimic the architectural styles of the surrounding buildings. If seen, the building would have stood out. While the presence of the synagogue was kept relatively in the background of the urban landscape, it was undoubtedly there. On a small island such as St. Eustatius, the ability to completely disappear was nearly impossible. Disappearing was probably never the goal of the Jewish community anyway. The ability to create such a building would have been important sign of religiosity and perseverance. It was the

11 These bricks are commonly known as ijsselstein because they come from the clay along the Ijssel River (R. Grant Gilmore, III personal communication).
community core and was a constant reminder of a Jewish presence both to Jews on the island but non-Jews as well. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, the construction of the synagogue played an important role in setting the stage for the arrival of the Messiah.

Nevertheless, the building’s location fully encapsulated the Dutch idea of religious tolerance. The elites of the island probably cared very little for the shape or size of the synagogue, but simply desired that its presence did not disturb the daily life of those on the island. With the synagogue being difficult to see from most major streets and with its entrance on the small Synagogue Paad, the placement of the Honen Dalim core would not have disrupted the regular flow of traffic through the town.

Moreover, from the Jewish point of view, minimizing their presence would have been desired. While the island had legally defined religious tolerance, the Jews of St. Eustatius would have been only too aware of Anti-Semitic actions occurring beyond the island’s shores. Not only from their own past that included dealing with the Inquisition in Iberia, but also the refugees from both Iberian controlled areas and Eastern Europe served as constant reminders of discrimination towards Jews. The Scottish Lady of Quality Janet Schaw (1923:136-137) described two Jews on the island whose physical disfigurements “set Christian cruelty in a worse light, than I could have believed possible.”

Additionally, the religious tolerance of the Dutch was not a policy of accepted religious diversity. Jews were still treated as different from their protestant neighbors and as long as this difference is marked it can easily be attacked. That the precariousness of Jewish life was acknowledged by the community itself can be seen by a letter written on
April 10, 1781 to the British when the British seized the island. In this letter the Jewish leaders described Jewish dispersal:

"Heaven having been pleas’d for the effectuation of its own wise and good purposes, to interpose an insuperable obstacle to the Assemblage of the Hebrew Nation into any one distinct and compact political Society, or State by the Wonderfull(?) dispersion and dissemination of its Individuals thro’ all the Countries of the known World, hath nevertheless seen proper to mitigate the rigour of such its just punishment of their Transgressions and those of their Forefathers, by the generous effusions of Humanity and Compassion in the land of Strangers" (Humble Address 1781)

The letter highlights the Jewish community’s understanding that their presence relied upon the tolerance of the host nation. Therefore, keeping their presence relatively muted on the island would have been advantageous.

However, while Jews may have minimized their presence in the quotidian movement through the urban landscape, this does not mean that they were not active in defining their place on the island. The creation of the synagogue suggests as much. If they wanted to be completely anonymous they would not have sought to construct a synagogue. Moreover, the earlier discussed 1730 letter provides one example of the Jewish community seeking certain legal rights.

As compared to the mikveh or the burial grounds, the synagogue was the building with the most flexibility. It was not necessary to have a specific building to hold Jewish services. The only requirement is for there to be a minyan (ten men). Wherever a minyan could be gathered, then religious services could follow. The construction of the synagogue therefore represented a degree of permanence to the Jewish community. To gather enough resources to construct such a building suggested that the community planned on staying on the island for years to come. Moreover, the synagogue served as a powerful symbol on the landscape for Jews. The synagogue was the heart of the
community and would have been an important location not only for religious reasons but also social reasons. It is here where many members of the community would have come together to discuss business, the latest news, and gossip. Thus the construction of the synagogue was an important sign that Jews on the island were creating a diasporic community.

The Mikveh: A Ritually Pure Community

Adjacent to the synagogue and within the same compound was the mikveh (Figure 22). The mikveh was a ritual bath necessary for purity rituals that women used each month after menstruation. Immersion reconnected women with God and made them clean for the marriage bed (Leibmann 2009). The visit to the mikveh was a key component of Jewish life. Laura Leibman writes, “the woman who follows the laws of the mikveh is lauded and her marriage is elevated to a spiritual level” (2009:114). Failing to observe proper mikveh rituals not only threatened the impurity of individual women but also threatened the purity of the entire of community (Leibman 2009:114).
Figure 22: Layout of the synagogue compound with the mikveh in the upper northeast corner of the synagogue compound

The mikveh itself had to be kept clean and would have been enclosed as the actual immersion was done sans clothing. On St. Eustatius, the mikveh was built into the ground and its ruins were discovered archaeologically by the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research in 2005 (Figure 23). Further excavations in 2010 sought evidence of the structure that would have been on top of the bath. As users of the bath would have been doing so nude, a structure for privacy was needed. The excavations at the top of the stairs uncovered a single posthole whose fill dated to the 19th century. Within the posthole fill were a number of small shingle nails and a hinge (Figure 24). The presence of the posthole near the top of the stairs and not at the corner of the bath suggests that it was for a door. Whether this was a posthole for an interior or exterior door is unknown. Much of the surrounding area is disturbed, particularly by a large tree, and may have hidden any evidence of a larger building.
In other Caribbean islands, such as Barbados, the building atop the *mikveh* was for more than just privacy. It also was the space where the *mikveh* keeper inspected each woman to make sure she was properly groomed to enter the bath (Leibman 2009:129). The *mikveh* keeper was also responsible for overseeing the actual immersion to monitor that each immersion was done properly. Furthermore, the *mikveh* could be quite slick and the *mikveh* keeper would be in or near the *mikveh* in case a woman fell on the slick stones. While the community would have certainly employed a *mikveh* keeper it is unclear where she would have performed her duties before women entered the bath. Moreover, the *mikveh* would have been filled with rainwater meaning that a cistern should be close to the bath, but so far no evidence of a cistern has been found.
Observation of the purity laws associated with the mikveh was a significant aspect of 18th century Jewish life, both for Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews. However, the mikveh itself was not necessary as women could have immersed themselves within the ocean. The ocean would have represented challenges, particularly for concerns of privacy, but was an option for mikveh observance. The fact that the community on St. Eustatius was willing to pay for the construction and maintenance of the bath points to its importance in Jewish life on the island. Additionally, the construction of the mikveh within the synagogue compound reinforced the importance of the synagogue as the center of the Honen Dalim community. Creating a proper place for ritual immersion meant that the Jewish community on St. Eustatius could reproduce itself within the religious dictates of purity. Ultimately, the mikveh allowed the woman to return to the marital bed and thus its creation was an essential part for the reproduction of the community.

**The Jewish Burial Ground: Eternal Roots**

Separated from the synagogue, and on the edges of the town, is the Jewish burial ground. This location fits Jewish tradition where the burial ground is to be separated
from the synagogue itself and on the edges of town (Terrell 2005:58). The burial ground was adjacent to a Christian burial ground known today as the “Old Churchyard Cemetery” that once surround a seventeenth-century Dutch Reformed Church that was abandoned by 1745 (Attema 1976:65). It is unclear whether the land for the Jewish burial ground was in this location out of religious understanding or simply because the city organizers designated this location as a general location for cemeteries. The Jewish burial ground was separated from the Christian burial ground by a path and was walled in meaning that whether the location was by choice or government fiat, the Jews did have their own space to bury their dead. Moreover, the deceased were often buried under significant tombstones with seventeen still in existence. Several of the surviving tombs include a large stone slab resting upon a brick burial vault. These burials were quite visible and were clearly meant to be seen. Just like the synagogue, the presence of the Jewish cemetery would have been a sign on the landscape to Jews and non-Jews alike of both a Jewish presence and history on St. Eustatius.

Although the earliest stone (1742) postdates the construction of the synagogue (Hartog 1976b:44-45), the burial ground may have been the first thing that the Jews asked for on the island. While synagogue services could be held in any building, and the cleansing for the ritual bath could have been done in the ocean, the unpredictable nature of life meant that having a proper resting place for the dead would have been a priority. Thus, Jews tended to create a consecrated burial ground as soon as possible upon arriving in a new location.

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12 Notice how this tradition is different from most Christian church arrangements where the burial grounds are directly adjacent to the church building itself.
The linguistic choice on the tombstones suggests some of the interactions with the community on the island (Table 4). Out of the 18 surviving tombstones, one-third (6) included English. Just three tombstones utilized solely Hebrew while 10 of 18 included either Spanish or Portuguese. None of the tombstones included an inscription in Dutch. While Hebrew was almost entirely a religious language, the various secular languages indicate the diversity of the Jewish individuals’ past on the island. The significant presence of the Iberian languages is certainly due to the fact that the Jews were largely Sephardic. The presence of English may have represented the significant trade relations that St. Eustatius had with its neighboring English islands as well as the fact that many of the Jews on the island had come from England.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Combination</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish/Portuguese</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew and Spanish/Portuguese</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew and English</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Spanish/Portuguese</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew, Spanish/Portuguese, and English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Inscription languages on Jewish tombstones on St. Eustatius

**The Cantor’s House: Religious Continuity**

The final known piece of the Jewish landscape for St. Eustatius was the Cantor's house. Sigfried Lampe, the recently deceased island historian, identified the surviving stone structure across from the synagogue as the home of the Cantor. The Cantor read from the Torah and was the leader of songs during Sabbath services. Because of St. Eustatius’ size, it did not have a Rabbi. The Cantor would have been a key religious figure. Nevertheless, while the Cantor was a hired position, it was not a professional one.
The Cantor did have training particularly in reading Hebrew but the Cantor could be drawn from any adult male in the community. Thus, the role of Cantor was not necessarily a fulltime occupation.

The identified location of the Cantor’s home fits within the context of other Jewish buildings on the island as it is only separated from the synagogue by the small Synagogue Paad. Moreover, one of the entrances to the building is on the Synagogue Paad suggesting that this was one route to enter the building. It is likely the Cantor's home was built by the Jewish community to house the religious leader. On Barbados, the Jewish community built and maintained a number of domestic structures to house key religious figures (Shilstone 1988:xxx; Westphal 1993:36) and the same was probably true for St. Eustatius.

The stone structure that served as the Cantor’s home was a two story building. The first story was made from volcanic basalt. The second story would have been constructed from wood. The original stairs remain and are on the outside of the building. This architectural style is common in urban St. Eustatius where the first story was stone or brick and served as the area of commercial activities while the second story constructed of wood would have served as the living quarters. Whether the Cantor used the house in the same fashion is still unclear, but certainly a possibility. It is likely that the Cantor played a major role in organizing holidays and religious festivities and the bottom floor of this building may have been an important space for some of these activities. Furthermore, the bottom story of this building may have been a storage facility for particular religious objects such as prayer books and shawls when religious services were not being held.
The excavations revealed that the original building was approximately 9.6 m x 6 m. While excavating along the east wall of the structure, we uncovered several creamware fragments under the wall providing a terminus post quem (TPQ) of 1762 for the original stone structure. This fits within the Jewish timeline for the island. The first known Cantor, although earlier Cantors were possible, was Jacob Robles from Curaçao whose tombstone still exists on the island (Figure 25). Robles was born in 1751 and died at the age of 40 in 1791. Assuming he did not take up his role as Cantor until adulthood, he would not have been in the role of Cantor until the late 1760s which is when the original stone structure explored was built. Furthermore, the 1760s saw a rise in the island’s and the Jewish community’s prosperity making the construction of such a building feasible. The stone structure was not a humble residence as much of the ground floor was covered in a well-constructed brick floor. The bricks were of the same Dutch yellow-bricks used for the construction of the Synagogue. The bricks were rectangular in shape and positioned upon their side so that their thinnest side formed the surface. This increased the number of bricks needed to cover a certain area as opposed to laying the bricks so that their largest side (if measured by area) formed the floor.
Figure 25: Tombstone of Jacob Robles Cantor of St. Eustatius

Whether the building was paid for by Robles or the Jewish community or a combination of both is unknown but both had significant resources at their disposal. Many of the leaders of the Jewish community were wealthy merchants including Jacob Robles himself. In 1781 Robles and his partner, Elias Gomes, provided an inventory to the invading British showing that they had a large quantity of goods both on the island and in the Netherlands valued at 22,518.6.5 pieces of eight (Inventory of Merchandize 1781). This shows not only Robles’ own purchasing power but also that the position of Cantor was not a full time profession. Although the Cantor did receive a small stipend from the Jewish community (198 pesos in 1790 [Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:527]),
the position was not a professional one and most Cantors would have been involved in other occupations as well.

The excavations conducted in and around the Cantor's home show that this stone structure was present when the Jewish community on St. Eustatius was at its height. Moreover, the dates correspond to when Jacob Robles, the longest serving Cantor, began his tenure on the island. The stone structure was a significant building that reflected the wealth of both the Jewish community and Robles himself. The continued growth of the community is reflected in the addition that was built onto the Cantor's home in the 1780s.

**Jewish St. Eustatius**

The location of the Cantor's home directly across from the synagogue would have created a Jewish community core within downtown Oranjestad. All of the major Jewish buildings, the synagogue, mikveh, and Cantor's home were adjacent to each other. The only exception was the Jewish cemetery that was placed on the edges of town, which fits Jewish tradition. The placement of these buildings together created a coherent community center for the Jews on the island. Interestingly, despite this community center being placed in downtown Oranjestad, the main ingress and egress was through the small Synagogue Paad and the synagogue and Cantor's house are only barely visible from any of the major surrounding streets. Thus, despite the Jewish community creating a central area, they could still mute their presence to non-Jews who lived and worked in Oranjestad.

The Jews manipulated the urban landscape to suit their own purposes and took active steps to minimize their presence on the island. The Jewish community never sought to hide its presence as the construction of the synagogue and the burial ground
clearly demonstrate. It was probably not advantageous to disappear completely as they had been given religious and mercantile freedom on the island. To disappear completely would have opened up spaces for intolerance against an unseen other. Additionally, much of the tolerance extended towards Jews came from their perceived economic benefits to the island and to completely disappear would also erase the visibility of these economic benefits to non-Jews.

However, the extent of the Jewish community was something that was probably only known by few on the island. By constructing the synagogue where they did and erecting other key community buildings (the Cantor house and the Mikveh) directly adjacent to the synagogue itself, the Jews kept their presence relatively contained. Such a decision would have helped mute their presence and not test the limits of the protestant society’s tolerance.

While the narrative of visibility is important, the formation of a Jewish core in Oranjestad served an important role in creating and maintaining a community. Each of the monuments constructed were important for living a Jewish life. For those practicing Judaism, each of these institutions would have been essential for them to fulfill their religious desires and obligations. The synagogue, mikveh, and Cantor’s house were all places that Jews would visit often during their lifetime. Their proximity was certainly convenient. It created an area in the urban landscape in which mostly Jews would visit as there would have been little reason for non-Jews to head down the Synagogue Paad.

The community core represented a Jewish place on the island. The construction of this community core was inspired by comfort as much as it was religiosity. The creation of this place would have been a way to open a space for Jews to come together
with the people that they share the most things in common. This included more than just Judaism, but also a shared past, language, and cultural traditions. Many of the surviving tombstones have an Iberian language written on them, and it is likely that a visitor to the synagogue was as likely to hear Spanish or Portuguese as they were to hear Dutch, English or Hebrew. The Jews through the construction of this suite of important religious buildings created a place dedicated to Jewish communal interaction. Within the synagogue compound walls, the Jews could live their cultural and religious traditions surrounded by individuals who understood these traditions and shared many of the same cultural values.

Yet given the astronomic rise of St. Eustatius' prosperity during the 1770s and 1780s, it is not quite clear if the Jewish community had to mute their presence at all. With the incredible amount of wealth coming into the island, it is hard to see Jewish mercantile success engendering jealousies from others on the island. Despite the wealth coming into the island, it appears that no Jew decided to enter into the plantation society of the island. A map from 1781 (Martin) lists all of the plantation owners on the island and none of them were Jewish. While these plantations were as much to convey a sense of a particular social class (i.e. to be a white planter in the Caribbean), they were also economic entities. Yet the decision by the Jewish community to not enter the plantation world of St. Eustatius may have been a reflection both of that elite society not desiring a Jewish presence but also the Jews themselves not desiring to enter into that sphere of society. Jews in other contexts certainly did expand into the plantation realm (Cohen 1991) but the mercantile wealth of St. Eustatius may have anchored the community to the economic positions of merchants and urbanites.
Jews and the Hostland on St. Eustatius

St. Eustatius had a tolerant policy towards religious diversity. They provided few legal structures in which to discriminate Protestants from non-Protestants. Indeed, the island’s economic prosperity brought an incredible diversity of individuals to its shores. The Jews took advantage of this tolerance and established a communal core on the island. The construction of the synagogue pointed to the Jewish individuals’ desire for a community. It also suggests an idea of permanence, as the significant outlay of resources required for constructing these buildings would have only been justified if the community expected to be there for multiple generations. The compound and other key religious buildings served as significant religious places in each Jew’s life.

These places were demarcated on the landscape and to enter through their gates brought Jews from the minority into the position of being a majority. They were places that were controlled by the Jewish community and created within a Jewish tradition. Moreover, they made it possible for all the Jews to live and die according to Judaism. Nevertheless, the creation and control of these places created divisions within the community. The conflict between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi suggests as much. Ultimately, the community was able to carve a place for itself on the island.

Despite the creation of this Jewish place, the St. Eustatius community was short-lived lasting only about 80 years. While it created these places on the island, it does not seem that the Jews on the island fully connected with the island itself. At the beginning of the 19th century when the island went through political turmoil and lost its privileged trading position, the community left the island. Like most of the merchants, the Jews went to greener pastures. The story of the Statian community highlights the ways that
Jews in the Caribbean created a community. It demonstrates the ways that Jews interacted with the hostland through both political and material means. Yet, it also shows the limit of this hostland interaction and identification. The nature of St. Eustatius as a trader's haven, and the brief time of Jewish inhabitation, all contributed to their being a Jewish community on St. Eustatius but never a Jewish community of St. Eustatius.

**Barbados**

Unlike St. Eustatius, the Jewish community on Barbados formed during the first years of the British colony. The Jews lived through many of the various fortunes and misfortunes of the island. The Jewish community was almost exclusively an urban population with just a few Jews purchasing plantations. The archaeological and documentary records provide diachronic windows into the complex and dynamic relationship that the Jewish community had with other parts of Barbados society from the 1650s to 1831.

**The Legal Structures of Jewish Life**

Various laws and political debates highlight some of the government attitudes towards the Jewish community. Each of the acts passed created a structure to define the place of Jews within Barbadian society. Many of these acts were the result of petitions from the Jewish community who took a politically active approach of defining their place within the British Kingdom and island society. It is within these legal structures that the Jewish community on the island formed. Understanding the legal status of Jews on the island is an essential component in exploring the relationship between the Jewish community and its hostland.
The first Jews to settle on Barbados were merchants who provided many important goods for the early colony. However, the acceptance of Jews on Barbados is quite surprising considering that Jews had been expelled from England in 1290 AD and Jews had not yet been formally allowed to re-settle in England. Nevertheless, the colonial context led to British and Jews living side-by-side for the first time in centuries.

The first legal document to deal with Jews was a 1656 act that stated:

Upon the Petition presented to ye Governor and Council concerning the Jews, by the Grand Inquest, that ye Laws and Statues of ye Commonwealth of England relating to Foreigners and Strangers be exactly taken notice of, and put it due execution, by those whom it should or may concern. (Minutes of Council, August 12, 1656, p. 250, cited by Davis 1909:130)

This was in part a reaction to the passing of the Navigation Acts by the English Parliament. These acts made it illegal for foreigners to trade within their controlled territories (Trivellato 2009b:114). Jews were not explicitly discussed in the laws and therefore the Island Council had to decide how Jews would be legally classified. The Barbados council decreed that Jews would be “Foreigners and Strangers.” Thus defined, Jews could not legally take part in transatlantic trade without the purchasing of Letters of Denization. Importantly, the law was a tacit acknowledgement of a Jewish presence on the island and did not evict Jews from the island.

The British did not desire to fully cut Jews out of trading on the island. The Jews utilized this British desire to help define their position as British colonial subjects. Jews could apply for and purchase a letter of denization. These letters made it possible for Jews to trade on the island (Snyder 2009:54). Jews, perhaps more than any other group, relied upon such legal documentation to legitimate their place within the colonial context (Snyder 2009:57-58). Barbadian Jews were active purchasers of these letters. Between
1660 and 1668, at least 40 Jews on Barbados purchased and received letters of denization (Samuel 1970). Nevertheless, the extent of legal rights that denization gave to Jews was never explicitly laid out. This led to a political debate about whether Jews could give testimonies in legal courts on the island. This debate provides greater insight into the place of Jews and Judaism within the British colony during the 17th century.

**Jewish Legal Testimony**

The Jews of Barbados were active purchasers of the letters of denization. They needed these legal documents to legitimize their place within the British colony and to ensure that they would be allowed to pursue merchant activities. The Jews saw denization as a status that conferred upon them a certain rights including the ability to give testimony in court. Court testimony would have been essential for the Jews trading on Barbados. In a market system, many of their trade partners would be strangers and Christians. No longer were the Jews solely trading with their co-religionists who they could usually trust, particularly when trade relationships involved kin. Moreover, trade outside of the Jewish community meant Jews could not turn to the Jewish institutional structure to settle disputes. The dealing with strangers required a mechanism to create honest exchanges and to settle disagreements. Bringing legal action against people helped do so by creating a system of punishment for those who broke contracts. Barring Jews from legal recourse put them at a severe disadvantage when dealing with Anglican British merchants.

The Jews on Barbados felt that denization granted them the right to give testimony in courts and therefore directly petitioned the British Parliament in Whitehall asking for their rights to be protected. The British court summarized the petition thus:
that notwithstanding their Denization, divers persons of said Island do endeavour to deprive them of the benefit thereof, and refuse to admit their testimony in Courts of Judicatures, and expose them to all sorts of injuries in their Trade (in Davis 1909:131)

The Jews feared that without legal recourse they would receive “injuries in their Trade”.

Upon receiving the petition Whitehall sent a request to the “Right Honble, the Lord Willoughby of Parham, His Majesty’s Governor of ye Carribee Islands; who was required to report his opinion thereupon, to his Majesty in Council” (in Davis 1909:131).

Lord Willoughby\textsuperscript{13} responded:

I have called to my assistance some of the chief Planters, and have considered of the said Petition, and certificate thereunto annexed, and do thereupon humbly Report to Your Majesty, that I do find that Your Majesty’s Hebrew subjects in the Island of Barbados have not been exposed to any other injuries in their Trade, or otherwise, than only such as they conceive redound to them by reason of the non-admittance of their Testimony in Courts of Judicature; whereof also, during my residence on my Government I never received any complaints from them. But I do find it to be true, that the Judges in the Courts of Judicature in Barbados have ever since Your Majesty’s most happy Restoration, refused to admit of the Testimony of the Hebrews in such cases wherein Your Majesty’s Christian subjects are parties; for that they are of opinion that by ye Law they neither can, nor ought to admit them, since they refuse to swear upon the Holy Gospel, which ye Law requires to be done in ye administration of all oaths, in civil causes depending between Your Majesty’s subjects. Nevertheless their Testimony hath been, and is admitted in those courts in all cases depending between Hebrew and Hebrew, to which Your Majesty’s Christian subjects are not parties; but I do find, that in the time of the late Usurpation, their Testimonies were then admitted in all Courts, and in all cases whatsoever … (in Davis 1909:131-132)

Lord Willoughby confirmed what the Jewish petitioners had stated in their own petitions.

They were not allowed to give testimony in courts. However, Willoughby’s response contains an explanation: this was because Jews would not “swear upon the Holy Gospel.”

\textsuperscript{13} Lord William Willoughby was the governor of the English Caribbean islands including Barbados between the years of 1667 and 1673. William Willoughby was the younger brother of Sir Francis Willoughby of Parham (d. 1666). Sir Francis Willoughby was not easily convinced that Jews should have been allowed to resettle in England. In a 1655 letter he wrote: “but they are a people as full of blasphemy as any under the sun, a self seeking generation” (in Katz 1982:210). The documents from Barbados do not document how much of this sentiment William Willoughby shared with his brother.
Whitewall’s response to this explanation ordered Willoughby to:

require his Council, and the Assembly there, to pass an Act or By-Law, whereby such Hebrews as shall from time to time be Naturalized by His Majesty, and resident in the said Island of Barbados, shall and may be freely admitted to give their Testimony in the Courts of Judicature there, in such manner and form, as the Religion of the said Hebrews will permit; and such as the Governor for the time being, His Council and the Assembly there, shall allow of; and likewise to enjoy the full benefit of their Naturalization, according to the tenor and purport of His Majesty’s Letters Patents. (in Davis 1909:132-133)

While Whitehall’s response suggested religious tolerance in court cases, it also contained a number of clauses that ultimately left the extent of Jewish freedom on the island in the hands of the island Governor and Council. Despite the vagueness of the response, it is an interesting example of religious tolerance, particularly considering that the nature of Jewish testimony in England was still debated and Jews were not allowed to instigate legal actions against Christians until 1697 (Henriques 1908:189-191).

The Island Council took advantage of the clause stating that Jewish testimony could be accepted in the “manner and form … such as the Governor for the time being, His Council and the Assembly there, shall allow of”. The “Act appointing how the testimony of the People of the Hebrew Nation, shall be admitted in all Courts and Causes” passed in 1674 stated:

all such persons of the Hebrew Nation as reside in this Island, and are men of Credit and Commerce, shall from henceforth be freely admitted before all Judges, Justices and other Officers, in all Courts and Causes whatever, relating to Trade and Dealing, and not otherwise, to give their Testimony upon their Oaths, on the five Books of Moses, in such manner and form as is usual, and the Religion of the said Nation doth admit. (No.61 in Hall 1764:94)

The final decision was left in the Governor and Island Council’s hands and they decided to limit Jewish testimony to court cases dealing with commerce.
The deninized Jews on the island were not satisfied with this law limiting their testimony to only cases dealing with “trade and dealing.” The Jews on the island petitioned the Governor of Barbados, Sir Jonathan Atkins, to expand Jewish testimony to all courts (Davis 1909:134). The petition persuaded the Governor to include an addendum, although it is not clear whether it was officially enacted, which stated that Jews could give testimony to Justices of Peace in cases that dealt with “being beaten, maimed or wounded” (Lucas 1946/47:89). The result of the 1674 law and the consequent petition was that Jewish testimony was limited to dealings of commerce and physical violence. While limited in fashion, the petitions were ultimately successful in giving Jews a legal voice. The 1674 Act helped partially redefine the place of Jews within colonial society.

By petitioning for their voice to be heard in the courts, the Jews of Barbados sought to redefine the boundaries between religions. In challenging the fact that the island officials “refuse to admit their testimony in Courts of Judicatures” the Jews were arguing for their testimony to be considered legitimate. This was a right that they believed their purchasing of letters of denization granted them. The Jews were asking for the right to speak the truth in court and to have that truth believed.

Derek Penslar has suggested that one of the markers of Jewish modernity was the separation of economic life from religious life. In particular, he points to how Jewish economic activity within the public realm, and relying on the state to settle its disputes, diminished Jewish communal authority (1997:27). In seeking the right to give testimonies in the civil courts, the Jews on Barbados were recognizing the authority of the colonial government within the realm of economics. I suspect that this separation of
the economic and religious spheres within the Jewish life was not something new. The *converso* experience meant that for crypto-Jews religion was relegated to the private and domestic sphere, while they maintained their economic activities within the public sphere. Moreover, once crypto-Jews could openly profess their religion, most of the places where they settled, such as the Netherlands, permitted a Jewish presence largely because of their economic value. Therefore, their economic activities remained within the public realm. This was further reinforced by the fact that many Sephardim had an identity rooted within Iberia as much as an identity rooted through their religion, and this meant that many Sephardim maintained economic connections with non-Jewish individuals from Iberia (Bodian 1997). All this is to say, that the idea of seeing economic activities outside of the religious sphere was not novel to the Jews on Barbados.

However, the separation was not complete. Lord Willoughby stated that Jewish testimony was denied because “they refuse to swear upon the Holy Gospel.” The Jews were only willing to go to court if they could do so without out breaking their religious tenets. To swear on the Christian Bible would have broken the commandment “you shall have no other god besides me” (Exodus 20.3). While Jews may have had economic desires, they were only going to achieve these desires without compromising their religion.

Jewish equality was denied based upon their religion. However, in Willoughby’s response to Whitewall he did highlight two exceptions which both dealt with Jews providing testimony against non-Christians. The first exception was that Jews gave evidence while the Barbados government investigated a recent slave uprising. A revolt by their enslaved laborers was the biggest fear of the white minority on the island and
therefore it was logical that the government would seek evidence from all sources. Moreover, the island elites probably assumed that Jews, who were slave owners, shared in this very fear. Since Jewish testimony was not to be used against White Christians, its truth was accepted. This exception highlights the social hierarchy on the island in which Jews rested uncomfortably above the enslaved population but beneath the free white British Anglicans of the island.

The second exception was that Jews were free to give testimonies in any court case dealing with other Jews. This exposes the logic of oaths as a tool for ensuring truth. In court cases between Jews, each Jew was required to give an oath on the Five Books of Moses. Since each Jew swore this oath, all the testators were on a level playing field. Each Jew had the same ability for their testimony to be accepted. Their truthfulness (or deceitfulness) was equal since both parties swore on their Holy Book and believed in the same third party arbitrator. This logic does not deny the existence of the Jewish God nor Jewish belief in a God. Rather it simply suggests that Jews were not as likely to tell the truth based upon an oath to God as Christians were.

The oath taking system of the British world privileged the Christian members of society. This fact was not lost upon the British who utilized oaths as a tool of social control. The British, and the Barbados elites, often required oaths before individuals could take important government positions. Since Jews were not allowed to swear upon the Holy Evangelicals, they were excluded from holding these important positions. The same worked for the courts, by denying the ability of Jews to give oaths in courts, Jews could not testify against Christians. In both cases, the Barbados elites could pass laws
that prevented non-Christians from taking office without passing laws that overtly targeted non-Christians.

The result was that Jews were denied access to truth in the courts. Jews could not make oaths that would be trusted and therefore their testimony could not be considered as truthful as a Christian’s. Jewish testimony despite its truthfulness would not be believed by its Christian audience. Jews could not appeal to the proper supernatural arbitrator to guarantee the truthfulness of their testimony. No matter what Jews said, their testimonies were held in less regard than their Christian neighbors. Jewish truth was not valued the same as Christian truth.

The 1674 law nuanced such a system. It made Jewish testimony equal to Christians but only in courts dealing with trade. Such a decision legally split the Jew between an economic being and a social being. This uncomfortable split suggests the early attitudes of Anglican society towards Jews in which economically they were a group to interact with but socially a group to be at least avoided and possibly discriminated against. This attitude was expressed within the landscape of Bridgetown in the 17th century.

**Jews and Blacks on Barbados**

Part of the 1674 discussion about Jewish testimony included their social positioning *vis-à-vis* the enslaved population of the island. Barbados was the example *par excellence* of a plantation society that relied upon the labor of enslaved Africans. With the adoption of sugar agriculture within the majority of the plantations, the inhabitants of the island began to purchase more and more enslaved laborers. The overall demographics rapidly shifted on the island from the reliance on indentured servants from
Europe to the reliance on enslaved individuals from Africa. By 1680, there were twice as many enslaved individuals as there were white inhabitants (Dunn 1973:88). Like other free people on the island, Jews were slave owners. This included both individuals as well as the community who owned enslaved individuals and utilized them for the maintenance of the synagogue compound.

Jewish ownership of enslaved individuals did become a point of contention between the Jewish community and Anglican elites. In 1688 a lengthy act titled “An Act for the governing of Negroes” included a clause targeting Jews on the island (No. 82 in Hall 1764:112-121). The 17th Clause of this long act stated:

“AND in regard the Planter’s necessity doth compel them for the management only of their Lands, to keep so vast a stock of Negroes and other Slaves, whose desperate lives and great numbers become dangerous to them, and all other the Inhabitants; that therefore such who are not bound up by that necessity, in having Plantations of their own, or hired Land, may not increase the danger of this Island, by keeping Negroes or other Slaves to hire out to others. Be it therefore enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That no person of the Hebrew nation residing in any Sea-port Town of Island, shall keep or employ any Negro or other Slave, be he Man or Boy, for any use or service whatsoever, more than one Negro or other Slave, Man or Boy, to be allowed to each of the persons of the said Nation, excepting such as are denizened by His Majesty’s Letter Patent, and not otherwise; who are to keep no more than for their own use, as shall be approved of by the Lieutenant Governor, Council and Assembly: And if any Negro, Man or Boy, more than is before allowed by this Act, shall be found three months after the publication hereof, in the custody, possession or use of any of the persons aforesaid, then every such person or persons, shall forfeit such Negro or other Slave; one moiety of the value thereof, to whomsoever shall inform, and the other moiety to His Majesty to the use of this Act appointed.” (Hall 1764:119)

The justification given for this act was that the greater the population of enslaved individuals on the island the greater the danger for everyone on the island. It was argued that the plantation owners needed a significant number of enslaved individuals (interesting how necessity is the language here, almost naturalizing the slave system), but
those in the "Sea-port Town" did not have the same necessity. Therefore, they could only own one enslaved individual and no more. This was to increase the safety of the island. The law did give an exception for denized Jews, saying that they could "keep no more than for their own use."

Although the law points to fear of control of the enslaved population as the reason for its enactment, it was only the Jews who were limited to owning a single enslaved individual. This suggests that while the law was couched in terms of safety, the real impetus was limiting the economic potential of Jewish merchants on the island by preventing them from subsidizing their merchant success by renting their enslaved individuals. Indeed, the clause about denized Jews provides more evidence of this, as it states these Jews were to only own enslaved individuals for "their own use," while the renting of enslaved individuals to other individuals was probably frowned upon. It should be noted that this law only dealt with Jews within the port cities and had no effect on the few Jews who owned plantations who it seems were at liberty to own as many enslaved individuals as they wanted.14

The creation of such a law rested at least partially on the growing concern of merchants on the island that the Jews were going to monopolize all trade. No such fears seem to be leveled against Jewish plantation owners. Whether this was because the plantation owners were so few in numbers as compared to the British plantation owners or whether owning a plantation helped elevate Jews’ social status to something akin to

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14 In Wilfred Samuel’s seminal work on the Jews of Barbados he notes three prominent Jewish plantation owners in the 17th century. David Da Acosta owned a plantation and 61 enslaved Africans. David Namias, another probable Jew, owned 12 enslaved Africans. Daniel Bueno Enriques, from Seville, married David de Acosta’s only child and owned a small plantation with 14 enslaved Africans, before inheriting his father-in-laws plantation in 1684 (1936:13-15).
landed gentry is unclear. Either way, the attempt to limit economic production focused solely on the port towns where the vast majority of the Jews lived and worked.

Owning enslaved individuals was a legal right Jews were willing to fight for and they challenged the 1688 act. The Jews petitioned against the act and had it repealed in 1706 (no. 108 in Hall 1764:166). Within the justification for this repeal the Island council stated: “But forasmuch as the said Nation inhabiting here, are become considerable Traders, and in order to carry on the same to advantage, as well of the Public as of themselves, are obliged to employ a greater number of Negroes and Slaves, then were at the time of making the said Law thought necessary.” (Hall 1764:166) This law points to the activity and success of the Jewish merchants on the island and justifies their ownership of enslaved individuals as their economic profits would be a benefit to the “Public” as well as for the Jewish community. The legal place of the Jews continued to be framed within a discussion of profits. Each time the Barbados government justified the extension of rights to Jews, they did so by highlighting how Jewish merchant activity would be a boon for the island. The right to own enslaved individuals was not legally restricted after this act.

From the copies of the 86 wills of Barbados Jews in the American Jewish Archives, over half (n=46) refer to slave ownership (Table 5). These wills show that the Jewish slave ownership varied in size but was an important part of Jewish life on the island. Enslaved individuals made up the majority of the available laborers on the island therefore the right to own enslaved individuals was important to be economically competitive with the other slave owners. The ownership of enslaved individuals was also a means for Jews to make sure they were on free side of the free/enslaved divide. As this
divide became linked to racial ideas, this would help establish Jewish whiteness (Schorsch 2004:166-216). The ability to own enslaved individuals helped confirm Jews' own position in the colonial society and it was something that they clearly fought for as evidenced by the repealing of the 1688 law in 1706 (Hall 1764:166).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Number of Wills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Jewish slave ownership as reflected in surviving wills

**Jewish Taxation**

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Jewish difference was reaffirmed by the island government through taxation. In 1680, the Barbados government provided a list of all the acres, slaves, and taxes levied for different parishes and towns on the island. The towns are listed separately as the taxes were raised by different criteria than the plantations. What is fascinating is that Jews are listed as their own separate category directly beneath the geographic locations of parishes and towns. Thus, while the rest of the islanders are considered as part of a parish or town, Jews were identified by their religion as opposed to where they lived on the island. Just like the category of “Jew” could exist anywhere without concern for where somebody was born, in this 1680 list, one simply belonged to being Jewish as opposed to being part of an area. It seems that
the statelessness of Jews was recognized by the British and therefore Jews would be considered as a group unto themselves as opposed to being a part of any single location. Within the mental geography of the Barbados government, Jewishness was a logical location in which a person could exist besides the physical locations marked on a map.

This levy list is the model followed throughout the 17th century where the Jewish community was given one lump sum that they were expected to pay for taxes. Moreover, Jews were not exempt from the other forms of taxes on property and therefore were taxed twice (Welch 1998:57-58). Once they were taxed as members of the town or parish that they lived in and the second time they were taxed for being Jewish. The tax was both economically unfair and also reinforced Jewish difference. Furthermore, the taxes created one lump sum for Jews to pay, as opposed to taxation based upon ownership or occupation (Table 6). This recreates the Jews as a coherent group in the mindset of the colonial government.
### Parish Acres Negroes Townes: theire Levy of Sugar for theire Trades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Negroes</th>
<th>Townes: theire Levy of Sugar for theire Trades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Phillips</td>
<td>13506</td>
<td>4610</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ church</td>
<td>14136</td>
<td>4758</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oistins Towne: the m'chants &amp;c for their trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Johns</td>
<td>7637</td>
<td>3276</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Georges</td>
<td>9540</td>
<td>5318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Michaels</td>
<td>7427</td>
<td>3608</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Towne have of Negroes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1360</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Towne also: the m'chants &amp;c for their trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Peters</td>
<td>7055</td>
<td>2646</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hole Towne: the m'chants &amp;c for their trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Andrews</td>
<td>7258</td>
<td>2162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Lucyes</td>
<td>6685</td>
<td>2217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the Jewes in this Island</td>
<td>92717</td>
<td>38352</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: “Tax Return on Land and Slaves” (Brandow 1983:95)

**The Jewish Legal Person after the 1730s**

Besides taxation, there is little legal action concerning Jews in the 18th century.

The major legislative act was the Plantation Act passed in 1740 by the British Parliament. This act made it possible for any Jew living in the British colonies to apply for naturalization (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995; Endelman 2002:74; Snyder 2009). To be naturalized gave Jews the right to trade within the Navigation Acts. However, even naturalized Jews were kept out of most forms of political life because they could not take Oaths on the Holy Evangelicals. Interestingly, the Plantation Act was passed without much political ado or furor. When a 1753 bill in Britain was passed which created a path for the naturalization of Jews not born in England, the public outcry was so great that before the year was up the bill was repealed (Rabin 2006, 2010; Endelman 2002:75).

One reason for the different reactions in the colonies verses the metropole has to do with
the degrees of native-ness which can be drawn in each location. While the British could point to their deep history in Britain, the same cannot be said for the British on Barbados. On Barbados, Jews and other groups can claim just as deep a past on the island as anyone from Britain. Therefore the “naturalness” of anybody in Barbados could not be invoked to the same way that the British could in Britain. On Barbados, autochthonous claims to the island would have been difficult in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Another reason for the different reactions to Jewish naturalization was probably the social dynamics of Barbados verses England. It has been argued that one of the major reasons that the “Jew Bill” received such attention was because Jews were seen as an “other” to which Englishness was defined against. Therefore, any “naturalization” of Jews represented a significant threat to England by eroding the barriers between the two groups. With that barrier erased, the Jews became a significant threat to destroying, or at least corrupting, the core values of Englishness, which at the time was synonymous with Anglicanism (Rabin 2006, 2010).

In the Caribbean, the Jews would not have played the same role. Rather, there was a more significant and more dehumanized other in which Creole and English identity could be juxtaposed. The enslaved Africans represented a more powerful foil for white Barbadian identity. Therefore, Jews did not represent the same place on the island’s elite mentality and the potential to erode the barriers between the two groups was not as significant a threat to constructions of identity and nationality. This does not mean that religious difference was not important, because Jews were still being barred from a number of government positions because they would not swear on the Holy Bible.
Nevertheless, this religious difference was becoming less meaningful in the slave society of the island.

Significantly, an act passed in 1786 repealed the previous act of 1674 that limited the rights of Jews to give testimonies only in court cases dealing with commerce (Lucas 1946/47:88-90). From 1786 on, Jews were allowed to give testimony in all courts and all cases, even those cases involving Christians, by swearing upon the Five Books of Moses. The change I believe was coupled with the lessening of social tensions surrounding the Jews themselves. By this time Jews had been inhabitants of the island for over 100 years establishing numerous connections that assuredly crossed religious lines. Additionally, the Jewish community's population had entered a noticeable decline. Such decline in population made the Jews less dangerous socially and economically. This law still did not lift the other restrictions on Jews such as being able to vote or run for political office, but for the first time they had legitimate legal channels in which to defend themselves in all cases, not just those dealing with trade or physical violence.

Although this was a major change, it still took another 50 years for Jews to gain true equality with white Christians in the eyes of the law. In 1831, the “Act for the Relief of His Majesty’s Subjects in this Island who profess the Hebrew Religion” was passed. This act stated:

that from and after the publication of this Act, all Acts and such parts of Acts as impose any restraints or disabilities whatsoever on white persons in this Island professing the Hebrew Religion, shall be and the same are hereby repealed.

And whereas the removal of such restraints and disabilities will impose the performance of certain duties on the before-mentioned persons, be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that all fines and penalties imposed on other white persons for any refusal or neglect, either in the performance of duties or the execution of offices, shall be and the same are hereby extended to the said persons professing the Hebrew Religion. (West Indies-Toleration Laws 1831)
The Act clearly relied upon racial differences targeting only "white persons" that were "professing the Hebrew Religion." With this law, Jews were given legal equality with all other free whites on the island.

The 1831 law preceded the end of slavery within the British Caribbean by just three years. The granting of Jewish citizenship would have been a necessary step to help maintain the social hierarchy already established on the island. Jews had always been slave owners on Barbados and in the 1670s the Barbados elites asked for help from Jews to identify the culprits of a slave revolt. In the 1670s, the Barbados elites hoped that since Jews were slave owners as well, they would ally with the Barbados government to quell any possible slave revolt. Therefore, if Jews were not granted citizenship in 1831 while enslaved Africans were freed and granted citizenship, then Jews would be legally more restricted than blacks. This would have upset the hierarchy on the island.

**The Archaeology of Barbadian Jewry**

The laws and the attitudes described are almost entirely prescriptive. That is to say, they are meant to control certain behaviors as opposed to necessarily describing human activity. The laws and acts passed may reflect certain attitudes and be suggestive of certain happenings on the island, but they tell us little about what actually was happening. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between an Act or law being passed and it being enforced. Therefore, the discussion above was meant to create a large-scale framework to consider the actions of the Jews of Barbados. While keeping in mind the narrative above, it is my goal to turn to alternative sources of evidence to illuminate what all this meant for the individuals acting on the ground. Where did Jews live on the island? What routes did they travel? Where was the synagogue located?
What do these things tell us about the way the Jewish community was formed on Barbados?

**Jewish Domestic Space**

The first Jews probably settled in the area known as Cheapside. This was a mainly economic zone of Bridgetown. Moreover, a major street in Cheapside was called Madeira Street, probably because of the number of merchants trading Madeira wine. As Madeira was a Portuguese possession, the early connections to this region were with Portuguese merchants, many of them being Jews (Samuel 1936:11; Campbell 1972:95). Early accounts mention the presence of a “Jews Brick House” in Cheapside (Bowden 2003:30). The building associated with an unnamed Jew may have been the home/warehouse of one of the more prominent merchants on the island as well as the building in which the Sabbath was observed during the early years of Barbados. The Jewish religion does not require a synagogue to hold religious services. Rather, the only requirement is that a *minyan* (ten adult males) is established. Whether the building mentioned in Ligon served as the *de facto* synagogue for the early Jews on the island is only an educated guess at this point.

Cheapside was a major locus of Jewish settlement into the beginning of the 18th century. The levy records from Bridgetown in 1715 show seventeen homes were either owned by a Jewish individual or a Jewish firm in Cheapside. Swan Street had the next highest total of Jewish homes taxed by the city at five. Interestingly, Swan Street became known as Jew Street and was identified as such on William Mayo’s 1722 map of the island. This suggests, that although the Levy records do not list a significant number of Jewish homes on this street, there nevertheless was a significant shift of the Jewish
population to this area. Swan Street was just one block away from the synagogue.

Furthermore, its location was several blocks from the shoreline. This movement towards the inner part of the city may have reflected an economic shift by many of the Jews on the island towards being retailers and shop owners (Bowden 2003:40-45). With the Navigation Acts, and the strengthening of the British Navy to enforce these acts, many Jews may have been squeezed out of the transatlantic trade and forced into local island based commerce.

While many of the Jewish owned homes had Jewish neighbors, others did not. Swan Street may have been a place where Jews tended to live, but it was neither a ghetto nor exclusively Jewish. It was a street that had a diverse group of people living on it coming from various backgrounds. The Levy records show that streets such as Cheapside and Swan Street had a concentration of Jews, but there were also a significant number of non-Jews living on these streets. While the Synagogue compound was a controlled Jewish space, the spaces where Jews worked and lived were not.

However, the fact that Jews tended to cluster in a particular neighborhood is interesting. The other small Jewish community on the island was located in the northern town of Speightstown. This town also had a street known as Jew Street. In Rachell Mendes 1711 will, she discusses her two homes which were situated to the East of the home of Daniel Villoa and to the west of the Pond (Mendes 1739). It suggests that Jews did desire to live near their co-religionists. While this might be a reaction towards safety, and the petition for protection of the Jewish body above suggests the fears of bodily harm, I believe that it is more a reflection of comfort. Jews lived close to their relatives and people who had similar cultural backgrounds. It was probably more comfortable to
live near others who spoke the same language (an Iberian language) and had a similar history. Furthermore, these were the people who were potential marriage partners for the largely endogamous community. Thus the coming together in a neighborhood was probably more a desire of comfort as opposed to security.

**The Synagogue Compound**

In a 1664 deed for the city lot that would soon contain the Quaker meeting house, the synagogue was shown within the neighboring lot (Quaker Records 1948:82). This is the first documentary evidence of the synagogue. The early date of the synagogue is quite remarkable. It is probable that no other religious group outside of the Anglicans had a building for worship constructed before the synagogue. Thus a narrative of complete Jewish exclusion is unwarranted. However, as the discussion above suggested, much of Jewish tolerance on the island was inspired by economic hopes as opposed to ideas of religious equality.
The synagogue compound was placed on the edge of the city (Figure 26). It is unclear whether this spot was chosen by the Jewish community or by the island government. Either way, the compound was constructed on the margins of Bridgetown. The edges of town were a liminal area between the city and the plantations. Tucked where it was, the synagogue compound was neither on any of the major urban streets nor the key streets leading out of the city. Thus the visibility of the synagogue was limited.

Moreover, the synagogue compound was placed near the Magazine. Fires were a major concern for the colonial city (Challenger et al. 1999:77-79). The excavations within the synagogue compound found at least one burn layer suggesting a major fire hit the synagogue compound and surrounding area during the late 17th century. In an environment where fires are a major problem, the one building you did not want to be
near was the Magazine. It is perhaps not surprising that the synagogue compound's
neighbor was the Quaker meeting house as the Quakers were another religious minority
whose presence on the island was uneasily accepted (Gragg 2009).

The synagogue compound included the synagogue, the mikveh, several burial
grounds, and possibly several other structures. The burial grounds surround the
synagogue and the mikveh which is against Jewish tradition. According to tradition, the
burial grounds should be placed at the edges of town. This was the pattern for the Jews
in Amsterdam suggesting that this was a religious tradition that the Jews of Barbados
would have known. It is unknown whether the burial ground or the synagogue was
established first in the compound. The earliest surviving tombstone belongs to Abraham
Eliyahu da Fonseca Valle and dates to 1658 (Shilstone 1988:98). The synagogue was
probably constructed around the same time but there is no clear evidence of the
synagogue's existence until 1664. The Jewish community never purchased separate
plots of land for the burial grounds and the synagogue.

The deviation from tradition should be analyzed. The quick assessment is that
this represents a certain amount of control by the island government. The island
government may have been willing to give one space to the Jewish religion in Barbados
but two separate spaces may have been too much to ask. However, I would also suggest
that this may also be the result of cultural ignorance. While a burial ground surrounding
a synagogue is against Jewish tradition, it fits well within a Christian tradition where the
Anglican churches of Barbados had burials around them (and even within them). Thus,
the island government may not have been receptive to giving two separate plots of land
because they did not understand the religious prescriptions behind the request while
possibly attempting to force other groups to follow their practices of commemorating the deceased.

**The Walls**

Despite the synagogue compound not completely living up to Jewish tradition, it was the heart of the Jewish community. Not only the location of religious services, burial services, and visits to the mikveh, but also one of the major locations for charity distribution, community judgments, complaints, and even possibly trade for kosher meats. Indeed, the synagogue was not only the religious center of Jewish life but also the social center for the Jewish community.

However, the construction of the synagogue was not necessary for a Jew practicing Judaism. Similar to St. Eustatius, the decision to construct a synagogue, a decision that involved a serious amount of resources, cannot be easily dismissed. Like the St. Eustatius synagogue, the Barbados synagogue would have been a symbol to Jews and non-Jews of a Jewish presence. Moreover, it represented an idea that the Jewish community planned to be on the island for a significant amount of time to justify the outlaying of resources. They were establishing roots upon the island.

The establishment of the synagogue would have been an important symbol for Jews in their negotiations with the Barbados government. From the legal documents we see Jews playing a significant role in trying to define their own place in colonial society. They petitioned the island government and the British parliament. Also, the Anglican vestry often assigned particular Jews to collect the extra taxes from the Jewish community. This was a role that the assigned Jews sometimes refused (Vestry Records 1948). To expect their voice to be heard, the Jewish community needed some visibility.
The synagogue would have been a reminder that the Jews were a part of colonial society and therefore they had to be considered. Thus, the synagogue was more than simply a symbol to the Jewish community but also a symbol for the community in stressing their own place in the colonial society. Along the same lines, the synagogue also represented a center for the Jewish community. It would have been continued affirmation of the presence of Jews on the island and a spread of Judaism to new corners of the world. The walls of the synagogue compound played an important role symbolically and practically.

The walls would have been a key source of protection and security for the Jewish community and for the religious relics kept within the synagogue itself. Security was certainly an issue. The surviving ledger books for the community from the late 18th century show that iron locks were an annual purchase for the community (Community Records 1696-1887). Moreover, the excavations from the pathway area found several iron locks (Figure 27). The security was heightened during particular religious holidays such as Yom Kippur when Jews would be at the synagogue throughout the night. The same ledger books also show that the community hired security for Kippur night (Community Records 1696-1887). As the community members were supposed to be at the synagogue for Kippur night, they needed to pay for non-Jews as extra security to insure no disturbances during this holy holiday. This last example shows how Jews may have desired extra security but also were willing to co-operate with non-Jews on the island.
The community, at least early on had fears about their safety. The Governor’s 1675 decree shows that the Jewish community was concerned about their safety as they asked to be able to provide testimony during circumstances where they were under threat of or received physical harm. There have yet to be particular records pointing towards actual physical harm on Jewish individuals, but it is clear that the community did have the fear that such violence could occur.

In part this fear rested upon the Jewish diaspora’s history of dispersal (Chapter 7) and the knowledge of Jewish persecution in other locations (Chapter 6). However, the fears of the Jewish community also had a basis in their relationship with their hostland. The Jews in the late 17th century had constructed a secondary synagogue in the small urban center of Speightstown on the northwest coast of the island. It was probably an offshoot of the Bridgetown community and it is likely that they shared the same burial ground (Samuel 1936:24). In 1737 this synagogue was destroyed. During a local wedding, a dispute arose between a Jew and non-Jew on the island. The argument involved a potential robbery and ultimately led to a group of non-Jews burning down the synagogue (Arbell 2002:207-208). The dispute seemed to have started as a relatively
personal conflict. However, the ultimate result was not physical violence upon the particular Jew but rather the destruction of the synagogue. The original conflict may not have been religiously motivated but the final result was clearly Anti-Semitic in nature. While a few Jews remained in Speightstown, many others left the town after this event and the synagogue was never reconstructed. This event was certainly a poignant moment in Barbados Jewish history as it showed a threat to the Jewish community.

In some ways, the security was more than just about protection. The locked gate into the compound also gave the community access control. They could decide who came into the compound. In this way, the walled in compound allowed for a creation of a Jewish space in an otherwise non-Jewish environment. It was a space controlled by the Jewish community and within its walls the Jews were in charge. The Jewish community could chose who could enter and leave, could chose who could worship, and control who was buried with the burial grounds (with one exception to be discussed below). It was a small location where Jewish autonomy could be asserted.

The significant quantity of tobacco pipes found on and alongside the pathway suggests the sense of security within the synagogue compound (Table 7). Tobacco smoking had become a favorite activity for nearly everybody in the Atlantic world. For the Jewish community, like many Europeans, tobacco smoking was a key leisure and social activity. The gathering of people often included the smoking of tobacco. For archaeologists, tobacco pipes are common finds for 17th and 18th century depositions. They are often read as items of sociability (Rafferty and Mann 2004:xiv). The tobacco pipe itself is often a key part of the ritual of coming together for formal and informal

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15 The remains of the Synagogue in Speightstown are currently unknown today. Additionally, while the historical documents suggest that there was a street known as Jew Street, I have yet to find any street known as that today.
gatherings. The high quantity of tobacco pipes in the synagogue compound falls along the same line. The significant presence of tobacco pipes indicates that the pathway within the compound was more than just a place of movement, but also a place of social interaction. Jews would have gathered here to smoke their pipes and discuss the current events, religious debates, business transactions, and probably even local gossip. The tobacco pipes themselves were an important part of this interplay as the sharing of tobacco and the sharing of fire encouraged a degree of camaraderie. While Jews may have been a minority outside of the synagogue compound walls, within them they were the majority. This was a decidedly Jewish place demarcated by the religious buildings and physical barriers.

<table>
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<th>Stratigraphic Level</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Percentage of smoking pipes out of total number of artifacts found in each layer uncovered in the drainage ditch next to the synagogue pathway.

**Pathways**

While the location of the synagogue compound was probably not by choice, the space within the walls was controlled by the Jewish community. The community placed the mikveh on top of a natural spring so that the bath could have a source of fresh water. The burial grounds filled in the open spaces around the synagogue and other buildings.

The excavations show that the coral stone pathway was constructed during the second half of the 17th century and was probably built the same time that the synagogue itself was constructed. Thus, it predated the majority of the tombstones in the burial grounds and therefore could have been constructed anywhere within the compound. Yet
the pathway does not lead in a straight line off of any of the streets to the synagogue itself. Additionally, the pathway does not connect to either of the two larger streets, James Lane and Magazine Lane, abutting the compound. Rather, the pathway connects to the much smaller and less traveled street known today as Synagogue Lane.

Additionally, the pathway goes off of Synagogue Lane at an acute angle. This is not simply an oddity of the modern street patterns but something that was present from at least 1722 and probably earlier. On the William Mayo map of Bridgetown, he clearly orients the synagogue compound to the same orientation as we see today. He includes a small gap in a wall that mimics the placement of the iron-gate (even if he omits the actual synagogue building itself). Thus, the current orientation of the pathway inside the compound and the way it connects with Synagogue Lane is the same as it would have been in the 18th century. The orientation suggests that as Jews entered and left the synagogue compound they could easily slide in and out of the traffic on the street. This meant that entering the compound would cause the street traffic minimum disturbances.

The key is to not think of the streets of Bridgetown as a group of lines on a map, but rather as causeways for the movement of people. Streets are the path to the destination and rarely the destination itself. They are locations of motion. How does entering and leaving the synagogue disrupt the traffic of people moving through Bridgetown? With the entrance on the less busy Synagogue Path, and with it not forming a right angle, the movement of people into and out of the synagogue was one that would cause little disturbance to the traffic flow of the Bridgetown streets. Similar to the situation on St. Eustatius, the rhythms of the Barbados streets would not be disturbed by the different ways that Jews split the week.
For most of the time, Jewish movement through the streets would have been no different than the other people moving through the streets of Bridgetown. However, Jews organized their lives and calendars around their traditions as opposed to the Christian calendar of the Barbados elites. The Jews of Barbados observed their Sabbath starting on Friday evening and through the day Saturday. Furthermore, Jews celebrated a number of holidays. These days of religious observation and celebration differed from the larger Christian community. The Jewish community would have been traveling to the synagogue at times the rest of the city would have been traveling to and from markets. Thus, at times, Jews heading to and from the synagogue would have disrupted the flow of traffic through town. To minimize this difference, the entrance to the synagogue was placed on acute angle off of the small Synagogue Lane.

The effect of the pathway location was to minimize the visibility of Jews entering and exiting the synagogue itself. This does not mean that the Jewish community was trying to hide its presence. As suggested above, the very presence of the synagogue compound precludes the Jewish community from hiding. However, Jews were a source of concern for the larger community. Several of the complaints by non-Jews on the island towards the Jews on the island highlight that many on Barbados feared that Jews would overrun trade on the island. Thus, a minimized presence would have helped ease fears of the Jews overrunning Bridgetown society and help to reduce possible conflicts.

**Celebrations and Religious Holidays**

One of the key features of the Jewish community was the observance of religious holidays and social ceremonies. These ceremonies were both key parts of Judaism as well as important components in bringing the community together. The holidays, which
often fell on different days from the Christian holidays, were a reminder of a connection to another tradition and an alternative ordering of time. Additionally, these holidays and other ceremonies (such as weddings and funerals) were important rituals that brought a number of the community members together to participate in the same event.

These celebrations were significant for the process of community cohesion. The recognition of particular times, days, and events as important suggests that the community had similar cultural values. This was reinforced by the continued use of the Hebrew calendar and the celebration of Jewish holidays. These events, only truly celebrated and remarked upon by Jews, was an indication of a shared cultural practice.

The excavations from the synagogue compound pathway area produced a surprising quantity of faunal material. While there were several domestic buildings inside the synagogue compound (the mikveh keepers home and the Rabbi’s House), it was thought of a place of public interaction more than a domestic space. This is particularly true as the excavations focused on the pathway and the areas next to the pathway. Nevertheless, there was a significant quantity of faunal material in the excavations.

The faunal material represented the largest quantity of materials in the earliest of levels. Level 6, the level directly above the pathway had the highest percentage of faunal material with slightly over 40% of the material from this layer being faunal. While there was a dip in Level 5, Level 4 had the next highest percentage of faunal material at about 39%. The more recent levels had less faunal material than the older levels (Figures 28, 29).
Alongside the changing faunal percentages, there was also a shift in refined tableware ceramics (Figure 30). The earliest levels showed a significant quantity of tablewares. The majority of these tablewares were tin enamel wares but there was also a
quantity of fine early ceramics including Western Midlands slipware, Metropolitan ware, and even some early porcelain ceramics. The community shows a continued dedication to purchasing the latest changes in ceramic types with a clear and definite shift from tin enamel ware ceramics to white salt-glaze stoneware ceramics. These white salt-glaze stonewares tended to be serving dishes and tablewares as well. The percentages of refined ceramics remained a significant proportion of the overall material recovered.

![Refined Ceramic Types](image)

Figure 30: Distribution of refined ceramics in Trench 1

However, there is little evidence that the white salt-glazed stoneware ceramics are replaced by the extremely popular ceramics of the late 18th and early 19th centuries including creamware, pearlware, and whiteware. The absence of these ceramics is a bit surprising considering the earlier prevalence of refined tablewares and the shifting tastes in ceramic types through time. Why are there so few late 18th and 19th century ceramics in the synagogue compound?
It is unlikely that the lack of purchasing is due to a lack of purchasing ability. While the community dwindled in size during this time period, it did not necessarily dip into poverty. They still were able to gather enough resources to rebuild the synagogue when it was destroyed in 1831. Additionally, many of the Jews remained wealthy members of Barbadian society.

The two patterns discussed above suggest an important shift in the use of the synagogue compound. While at first the high presence of faunal material was surprising, it is not nearly as surprising if the synagogue compound was the location of major religious and social ceremonies. Many of these ceremonies involved eating. Thus the high presence of faunal material and refined ceramics that were then partially discarded on the edges of the compound can be explained by these moments of communal dining. However, this process seems to have changed by the second half of the 18th century. Not only are there less faunal remains but the community is not purchasing the same number of fine tablewares.

The changing patterns are probably a reflection of the community becoming more integrated with the surrounding people on the island. Rather than isolating major celebrations to the relatively protected and controlled Jewish space of the compound, the Jews began to observe many of these celebrations in their own homes or alternative places in the Bridgetown landscape. The synagogue was no longer a refuge for Jews, but now a part of the fabric of Barbados life.

**Linguistic Choice**

The placement of the synagogue alongside the burial grounds speaks to the uncomfortable position of Jews during the early years of settlement on the island.
Furthermore, Jews were taxed at a far higher rate than their Anglican counterparts and were not entitled to any form of social welfare from the intertwined religious-political system of the Anglican elites. This not only included charity for the living but also for the dead. While Jews would have wanted to bury the dead by their own customs, it was also something that they had no choice about. The island council was certainly not going to pay for the internment of deceased Jews. Most of the time this worked in perfect harmony as the Jewish community desired to bury their own dead, but if there were disputes about a deceased’s “Jewishness” then tension could arise. In the case of Lunah Arrobus, the island government was sure she was Jewish – something the Jewish community denied – and therefore the island government forced the Jews to pay for and have her buried within the Jewish burial grounds (Shilstone 1988:xii). Thus, Jews did not have total control of the synagogue compound.

Nevertheless, the Lunah Arrobus case was the exception rather than the rule, and the burial of the dead would have been done according to Jewish cultural traditions. The tombstones were in large part the product of the Jewish community, seen mostly by Jews who controlled access into the compound, and would have meant for Jewish eyes. Charting language choice through time provides an interesting exploration of the changing relationship with the hostland (Figure 31). The earliest years tended to show tombstones that included either an Iberian language or an Iberian language and Hebrew. As time progressed, the percentages of tombstones showing three languages increased. Alongside the religious language of Hebrew, and the language of their past, Iberian, was included the language of the island, English. As time marched on, the Iberian languages slowly disappeared from the tombstones. Tombstones including English and Hebrew
began to dominate the linguistic choice of the community. The language choice suggests the changing relationship of the community on the island, starting from a community on the margins – a community of foreigners and strangers in the language of the Anglican elites – to a community more intertwined with the hostland – adopting the local language and becoming more enmeshed with the island society.

![Languages on Tombstones](image)

Figure 31: Distribution of inscription languages on Barbados

The language choice seems to correspond with the changing use of the synagogue compound itself. During the early years, the synagogue compound was the heart of the Jewish community and the place of common interactions. Also, it seems to have been a popular place for meals and celebrations. However, moving into the late 18th century there became a great dwindling of both refined ceramics and faunal material within the
synagogue compound. Additionally, there was an increase of wine bottle glass perhaps suggesting more individual activity as opposed to communal activity within the compound itself. Together, this data suggest that the Jewish community began to move many of their celebrations out into the larger urban landscape perhaps because of a greater acceptance by the hostland. Like the greater presence of English on the tombstones, the other material culture from the compound suggests a similar story.

**Jewish Barbados**

In 1831 a major hurricane caused severe damage to Barbados destroying a significant number of buildings in Bridgetown. The synagogue was a casualty of Mother Nature's annual gift to the Atlantic. The community, despite its small size (under a 100 practicing members), undertook a major campaign to raise the funds to rebuild the synagogue. Despite the fact that their numbers were decreasing, the remaining community members on Barbados clearly felt it was important to reconstruct. The final reconstructed building is the basis for the large two-storied building that exists today (Figure 32).
At the same time that the building was destroyed, an official law was passed making Jews equal to whites on the island. They were no longer discriminated within the laws of the island. Instead they gained all the rights and responsibilities that white Christians enjoyed. They were granted these rights alongside the free blacks on the island.

When the synagogue was re-opened in 1833, it was a major event on the island. Local newspapers described the grand re-opening pointing out all of the important Barbados elites and government officials who were part of the festivities (Shilstone 1988:xxii). It is unlikely that the original synagogue was opened with the same degree of fanfare in the 1650s. The Barbados Jewish community by 1833 had become a part of the Bridgetown landscape that was celebrated as opposed to being tucked away in the swampy margins of the early city.
The relationship that the Jews had on Barbados had certainly shifted through the almost two hundred years discussed here. The first Jews arrived on Barbados as foreigners and strangers to the others on the island. Their place was not well-defined legally nor socially. This is reflected not only in the legal language of the day but in the placement of the synagogue and the decisions made by the Jewish community about the layout of the synagogue compound. Moreover, the material record suggests how the synagogue compound started as a refuge within the Anglican dominated urban landscape.

By the end of the 18th century, the Jews' social position in the colonial context had moved away from the margins. A number of key factors helped usher in this change. One was the decrease in the population of the Jewish community. During the early years, there was a persistent fear by non-Jews that Jewish merchants would slowly force out their competitors and dominate the transatlantic trade. This did not happen and became less of a fear as many of the major Jewish merchants on the island left for burgeoning merchant centers such as Charlestown, SC and Philadelphia.

Furthermore, while the synagogue compound was separated from the rest of Barbados, the domestic and work spaces of Jews were not. Jewish businesses relied on both Jewish and non-Jewish patrons. Their neighbors were just as likely to be Gentile as they were to be Jewish. They owned enslaved individuals and like their fellow slave owners, some had children with their slaves. The community's boundaries were not impermeable but rather were crossed through a number of different avenues.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1831 that the Jews on the island were granted full citizenship. This was probably linked to the emancipation of slaves that was to occur just two years later. If the Barbados government did not act to fully include Jews as citizens,
then once emancipation occurred Jews would be legally more discriminated than the
formerly enslaved. Thus, to keep the social hierarchy stable through this time, the
Barbados government had to grant citizenship to the Jews. This change in legal status
combined with the material evidence from the synagogue compound showing how Jews
had stopped using the synagogue compound as a refuge, suggests that by 1831 the shift
from there being Jews on Barbados to there being Jews of Barbados was complete.

Conclusion

On both islands, the Jewish community was centered in and around the
synagogue. The Jews created the same important institutions for Jewish daily life (the
synagogue, mivkeh, and burial ground) while also dealing with issues of security. Both
synagogues were tucked off of minor alleyways minimizing the visibility of Jews
entering and leaving the compound itself. Additionally, the St. Eustatius synagogue,
which was far closer to its neighbors and had a wooden floor, utilized white sand to
muffle the sound of Jews within the compound walls. The synagogues were not meant to
hide a Jewish presence, but their location made it difficult for observers to truly guess the
number of Jews on the island.

The creation of a Jewish place on each island provided for the creation and re-
creation of a Jewish community. These places were essential for the continuation of
Jewish cultural and religious traditions on the island. Furthermore, in practicing these
traditions, their religious and culture were continually re-affirmed. The creation of these
places formed roots on each island. Diasporas are in part about the creation of a
community in a particular place and on each island the Jews actively did this. The Jews
had to carve out their place within each colony’s society. This was something they did
through both the creation of material places as well as through political discourse.

However, the narrative presented in this chapter is incomplete. Many of the interpretations and arguments are suggestive, but to better understand the actions of the Jewish community and others on the islands, it is necessary to more fully understand the Jewish relationship to other Jewish communities and to the homeland.
Chapter VI: Relationship with Other Communities in the Diaspora

One of the defining features of a diaspora is that dispersed communities maintain strong ties with other communities. These lateral connections greatly affect the lives of diasporans and help shape their actions within particular contexts. Often the strength of these relationships supersedes relationships based off of physical proximity. The presence of these lateral connections implies a shared connection for various diasporic groups that does not rely on physical nearness. Diasporans have a shared identity that is not totally defined by the emplacement in or the control of a particular demarcated geographic space. Because of this non-spatial identity, several scholars see diasporas as the key for freeing the current world from the hegemony of nation-states, whose formation is founded on the controlling of physical space (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993; Appadurai 1996). The suggestion is that these lateral connections allow for the creation and survival of a nation that does not rely upon a state. This is certainly not a new idea as Thomas Jefferson wrote of the Jews “they still form ... one nation, foreign to the land they live in” (in Chyet 1970:38).16

The power of these lateral connections can be overstated and essentializing. While it is true that diasporans maintain identities and cultures not grounded in a particular current state, this does not mean that the condition of diaspora is an inherent and permanent situation. Diasporic cultures are the result of numerous processes and connections and are not static. We cannot simply look at the lateral connections between

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16 I swore that I would never quote Thomas Jefferson. My life has been spent in his shadow. I grew up five miles from his summer home, which was where I had my first archaeological field experience. I then proceeded to attend the school that he founded for my undergraduate degree and the school he graduated from for my graduate degrees (not to mention being an alumnus from a high school named Jefferson Forest). Yet here is my moment of weakness, may the readers forgive me.
diasporic communities as nodes linking unchanging groups together. Rather we need to see these links as the constitutive tissue that helps to position individuals and communities within the diaspora. It is important to explore the ways that physical distance is minimized by creating alternative forms of nearness. Furthermore, these lateral connections help shape the actions of the local community.

In the first part of this chapter I will explore the relationship between the Jews on each island and the emerging political-economies of the British and Dutch in the Atlantic. This discussion will highlight the double-edged sword that the lateral connections can play in the diasporans’ lives. These lateral connections both created an economic niche for Jews but also were the source of many of the most vitriolic anti-Semitic commentary. Throughout this discussion, I want to show how the connections between various Jews were shaped by the developing mercantilist logics of the British and Dutch as well as the ways that the British and Dutch had to change to incorporate Jews into their economic systems.

Following this discussion, I explicitly explore long distance politics. I want to demonstrate that the logic of the emerging nation-states of the early modern period put Jews in a particularly troubling position as they did not have a nation-state of their own to represent them in the political arena. Rather than seeing this totally within a negative light, I suggest that having connections within numerous nation-states helped Jews navigate the tumultuous waters of the early modern Caribbean. These connections provided Jews some flexibility as they had representatives in a variety of nation-states who could put pressure on various governments.
Moving beyond the political-economy of the early modern period, I will explore non-economic routes of exchange. On Barbados and St. Eustatius there were alternative networks of exchange that included financial support and charity. The exchange of wealth and the indigent were based off religious and cultural ideals whose practice continually reinforced a sense of shared responsibility across the diaspora. These were exchanges not dictated by the powers of a state, nor market forces, and more closely represent the classic models of reciprocity long studied by anthropologists (e.g. Mauss 1990). I would like to explore these exchanges as examples of gifts that helped create relationships between Jewish communities.

I end with a discussion about the movement of religious relics and religious leaders through the diaspora. Both of these created lasting connections between Jewish communities. Religious buildings and relics accrued through time a history of these lateral connections. These objects and individuals inscribed these lateral connections onto the physical place of the synagogue compound.

**Jews and Capitalism: Pariahs and Port Jews**

The relationship between Jews and capitalism has a long scholarly tradition in the West. Many of the early scholars who have explored the development of capitalism (i.e. Marx, Weber, Sombart and Simmel) have discussed Jews within their analyses. “Jewish commerce provided a convenient and highly resonant means for analyzing the nature of commercial economy and assessing its social and political significance” (Karp 2008:2). Particularly in the late 19th and early 20th century, the place of Jews within European society was a source of constant tension and therefore Jews provided a meaningful, and politically charged, locus for discussions about capitalism. I turn to the ways that three
pillars of the social sciences, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Werner Sombart discussed Jews within the capitalist system.

I then move into a discussion about their scholarly heirs, the scholars of port Jews, who have tackled head on the relationship between Jews and the emerging capitalist systems. These scholars have highlighted a route to Jewish modernity grounded in economic rationality as opposed to a concerted intellectual movement. The scholars of early modern Jewry have taken a Judeo-centric viewpoint that has highlighted Jewish agency. I build off this approach by seriously considering the dialectic between Jewish action and the economic structures of the time to suggest how they both constituted the other. If “Jews are at once agents and victims of diaspora” (Israel 2002a:1), then they are also agents and victims of the emerging system of capitalism.

**Marx and the Jews**

The only time that Karl Marx explicitly discussed Jews was in his essay “On the Jewish Question” (1978). Throughout this essay Marx made an argument for “human emancipation.” Human emancipation was something quite different from political emancipation, which Marx saw as only an incomplete form of emancipation. Marx (1978:46) states:

> Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species-being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as political power.

The argument is that the state (thus politics) has divided people into distinct parts: the rational self-interested individual and the member of a shared community. “Thus man as he really is, is seen only in the form of the egoist man, and man in his true nature only in
the form of the *abstract citizen*” (Marx 1978:46). For Marx, true human emancipation (his ultimate goal) was to remove this divide. In his formulation, Judaism represented the world as the egoist man, the profit-accumulating individual. Marx argued that true human emancipation can only occur when the world emancipates itself from Judaism. Political emancipation, although a necessary step in Marx’s evolutionary schema, would only be an incomplete emancipation. It would fail to remove this division because it would fail to emancipate the world from the idea of the *egoist* individual. It would not bridge the artificial difference between the “individual man” and the “abstract citizen.”

To contextualize this argument we must understand what Marx meant by Judaism. He limited his analysis of Jews to their everyday lives while saying little on Judaism as a religion.17 He wrote:

> Let us consider the real Jew: not the *sabbath Jew*, whom Bauer considers, but the *everyday Jew*. Let us not seek the secret of the Jew in his religion, but let us seek the secret of the religion of the real Jew. What is the profane basis of Judaism? *Practical need, self-interest*. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? *Huckstering*. What is his worldly god? *Money.* (Marx 1978:48)

Marx went on to argue “the *chimerical* nationality of the Jew is the nationality of the trader, and above all of the financier” (Marx 1978:51). Marx focused on what he believed was the Jewish practice of the everyday, profit maximization. For Marx these economic activities are Judaism as he said the basis of Judaism is “practical need, egoism” (Marx 1978:50). In Marx’s argument Judaism embodies the modern system of capitalism. “The god of the Jews [money] has been secularized and has become the god

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17 And here we can truly see the difference of approaches between Marx and Weber. For Marx completely underplays any religious implications but rather wants to focus on Judaism as it is practiced in the everyday (i.e. historical materialism), while Weber (to be discussed below) will focus almost purely on how Judaism as a religion dictates Jewish action.
of this world” (Marx 1978:50). Therefore, Judaism is the stand-in for the subject that dominates Marx’s later writings. Thus when Marx called for emancipating the world from Judaism, he was really saying the world must be emancipated from capitalism. He explicitly made this point when he stated, “in emancipating itself from huckstering and money, and thus from real and practical Judaism, our age would emancipate itself” (Marx 1978:48).

Marx’s later writings almost never reference Jews or Judaism. Rather his analytical gaze fully shifts to discussing modern capitalism and he stopped utilizing Judaism as a symbol for capitalism. He does not suggest that such predilection towards money was a racial trait. Marx believed that Jews can be emancipated (and ultimately must be emancipated) from their capitalist orientation. With the emancipation of Jews from their capitalist orientation, there would no longer be a group defined as Jews, at least as defined by Marx. This was not to be taken as an urge for genocide but rather Marx’s own desire to free humanity from the coercive elements of capital.

In Marx’s essay Jews are stereotyped as merchants and financiers. Interestingly, the majority of Jews during this time, even in Marx’s hometown of Trier were not merchants and financiers (Fischman 1991:29-30), and this stereotype is something that is probably overstated throughout much of Jewish history. Marx gladly drew upon these stereotypes although I am not sure he cared one way or the other about their validity. He provides no evidence for these stereotypes. Jews were a rhetorical tool for Marx to critique the capitalist system and its supporting states. Indeed, Marx in this piece points out that “the God of Jews [money]” has become “the God of this world” (Marx 1978:50). Within Marx’s argument, it does not actually make any sense to mark Jews as an “other”
since practices of Jews are the practices of everyone. Thus, for the "Jewish Question" to even exist merely demonstrates that the bourgeois has missed the larger problem, capital. Marx used Jews as a rhetorical device in which to critique the political-economic system of his day and probably enjoyed pointing out that the stereotypes leveled at Jews were pure hypocrisy. Ultimately, Marx called for human emancipation and not just the political emancipation of Jews. Human emancipation was for everyone while political emancipation failed to bring about revolutionary change.

While Marx may not have written this paper to discuss Jewish history nor religion, he does explicitly link Jews to capitalism and presents them as the representations of modern capitalism. Marx ultimately focused upon the historic and material situations of Jews and the role that they actively played while underplaying the religious and cultural attitudes that structured Jewish life. Nevertheless, Marx ended up elevating Jews as the paragons of the modern capitalist world even if his goal was simply to use Jews as a rhetorical tool in which to critique the political-economy of the time.

**Max Weber**

In contrast to Marx, Max Weber argued that Jews only acted on the margins of modern capitalism. Therefore, they were not the driving force behind its development. Moreover, Weber looked to the dictates of the Jewish religion to explain Jewish action and role in the development of capitalism. For Weber, it was the Protestant work ethic that inspired the "spirit of capitalism." Protestants' belief in predestination required them to prove their religious place in the afterlife through their everyday actions. Thus a Protestant:

> could demonstrate his religious merit precisely in his economic activity. He acted in business with the best possible conscience, since through his rationalistic and
legal behavior in his business activity he was factually objectifying the rational methodology of his total life pattern (Weber 1978:616).

The objectification of the rationality of their life through economic activities was the means for Protestants to prove to themselves and their community of their merit for and place in the afterlife (Weber 1978:616). Indeed, Weber suggests that a “he [a pious Puritan] could demonstrate his religious merit through his economic activity” (1978:616). It was this shift to the rational organization of one’s life and labor coupled with an ascetic lifestyle that lead to the “spirit” of modern capitalism (Weber 2002).

When Weber analyzed Judaism he did not see the same features that would lead to a similar rise in economic rationality as seen in Protestantism. Weber focused upon Jews as a pariah people and religion. Weber saw Jewish pariah status as affecting two key features of Jewish life that explained why Jews were not the causes of modern capitalism. The first result of being a pariah was that this:

status presented purely external difficulties impeding their participation in the organization of industrial labor. The legally and factually precarious position of the Jews hardly permitted continuous, systematic, and rationalized industrial enterprise with fixed capital, but only trade and above all dealing. (Weber 1993:250)

Thus, legal restrictions on Jewish economic activity limited Jews to just trade and dealing. Weber believed that one of the hallmarks of modern capitalism was the rational organization of industrial labor (Weber 1978:614) and this was an area prohibited to Jews.

The second result of being a pariah people was that Jews “retained the double standard of morals which is characteristic of primordial economic practice in all communities: what is prohibited in relation to one’s brothers is permitted in relation to strangers” (Weber 1993:250). This bifurcated moral standard included the charging of
usury. "All the well-known admonitions of the rabbis enjoining fairness could not change the fact that the religious law prohibited taking usury from fellow Jews but permitted it in transactions with non-Jews" (Weber 1978:615). This meant that "for the Jews the realm of economic relations with strangers, particularly economic relations prohibited in regard to fellow Jews, was an area of ethical indifference" (Weber 1993:251). Jewish economic activity, particularly with strangers, was permitted by God because it did not directly conflict with any religious laws. However, these actions were not "infused with positive ethical value" (Weber 1993:252). Unlike Protestants, Jewish economic activity, no matter how rationally organized or ethically practiced, did not affirm to a Jew their religious and moral merit. Indeed, the ideal Jew dedicated themselves to the study of their religion often to the detriment of their businesses (Weber 1978:617).

Furthermore, Weber focused on the relationship to the future (for Protestants this was their life after death) as the structure of Jewish life. Jews were the chosen people but were currently being punished for their sins. While Jews would follow the laws of their religion, they did not have the same need to rationally order the world. Unlike Protestants who saw their ability to impart rationality onto the world as proof of their salvation, Jews understood that only God can impart rationality on the world.

An ascetic management of this world, such as that characteristic of Calvinism, was the very last thing to which a traditionally pious Jew would have thought. He could not think of methodically controlling the present world, which was so topsy-turvy because of Israel’s sins, and which could not be set right by any human action but only by some free miracle of God that could not be hastened. He could not take as his "mission," as the sphere of his religious "vocation," the bringing of this world and its very sins under the rational norms of the revealed divine will, for the glory of God and as an identifying mark of his own salvation. (Weber 1978:620-621)
Only God could deliver God’s promises and nothing a Jew could do in their life could change that. Rather, Jews remained dedicated to their religious laws. These laws shaped Jewish action but did not impart the same need for Puritanical asceticism. The observation of these laws would ensure that a Jew would have a place when the Messiah did arrive and provided a sense of “self-esteem” while waiting for God’s plan but following religious dictates could not change God’s plans (Weber 1978:619).

Weber’s approach provided the opposite viewpoint from Marx in two ways. The first is in the larger theoretical stance where Marx’s historical materialism stood in opposition to Weber’s focus on the way religion affected human practice. The second is that Marx presented Jews as the exemplars of modern capitalism. Weber, in contrast, felt Jews were an anachronistic holdover who could only partake in the edges of modern capitalism. Like Marx, he highlights how Jews tended to be merchants and financiers, but in Weber’s argument this only demonstrated how Jews were kept out of the industrial world and the control of labor. Ergo, how Jews could not become a full part of the new capitalist system.

**Sombart and the Jews**

The German sociologists Werner Sombart disagreed with Weber’s conclusion that capitalism arose from Protestantism. Rather, he found that capitalism was the outgrowth of Judaism. He published *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (1969[1911]) in direct response to Weber’s *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1978[1905]). Sombart followed a similar line of thinking to Weber in seeing a certain “spirit of capitalism” arising from the “religious mechanisms and religious qualities” of a
particular group (Davis 1997:56). Yet, for Sombart, it was the Jews and not Protestants from which capitalism arose.

Jews developed the rational character needed for capitalism and this was combined with a sense of ruthless acquisition. “He [the Jew] recognizes, in the true capitalist spirit, the supremacy of gain over all other aims” (in Davis 1997:56). This focus on acquisition as one of the key features of capitalism was contrasted to Weber’s emphasis upon asceticism. Furthermore, Sombart sought the development of capitalism through the development of credit systems, financing, and international trade, areas long associated with Jews.

Focusing particularly on Jewish history, Sombart highlighted how Jews had been dispersed for many millennia and were strangers within various lands. This helped Jews to develop an ability of “speedy adaption” (read cultural flexibility?) and a certain unscrupulous behavior towards non-Jews (perhaps not so dissimilar to Weber’s emphasis on Jews having a certain indifference towards Gentiles). But perhaps more importantly, Sombart saw the rationality of capitalism within the actual religious structure of Judaism. For he thought Judaism was a strictly rational religion (selectively focusing on only certain forms of Judaism) that was based upon living according to the Law. The Jews also recognized the importance of the contract because of the Covenant (Davis 1997:57). Sombart’s work was the most overtly anti-Semitic of all the scholars discussed here. He tied Jews to greed and suggested that this connection was racial. Unlike Marx who used Jews as a convenient tool for critiquing capitalism, Sombart explicitly located the foundations of modern capitalism in Jews and suggested that Jews both culturally and religiously were exemplars of capitalism.
While not normally routed through Marx, Weber, or Sombart (c.f. Davis 1997; Snyder 2010), the exploration of Jews during the early modern period, and more broadly the exploration of diasporas generally often portray diasporans as either exemplars of the future or anachronistic holdovers of the past.\(^{18}\) Where some scholars see diasporans, even in history, as having cultural traits of mobility and flexibility that were ideally situated for modern capitalism (and beyond) others have suggested that diasporans are actually a group who hold onto older non-modern forms of exchange and social cohesion that can be at times at odds with the modern world. Adam Sutcliffe (2009) has argued that the Jews of the early modern period should not be seen as the paragons of the new capitalist world (as ideal merchants) but instead as the holdover of a medieval trade diaspora that lost its place within the emerging capitalist world system. While the debates have shifted, much of modern scholarship has returned to consider whether Jews and other diasporans are in fact the paragons of a modern (or even post-modern?) or essentialized holdovers of a time lost.

**The Port Jew**

Within the past twenty years, the connection between Jews and capitalism has been highlighted again. These arguments explore the various ways that Jews interacted in the early modern era. This has best been represented by the concept of the "port Jew" or "port Jewry" (Sorkin 1999; Dubin 1999). The "port Jew" concept has focused more intensely on the lives of the Jews themselves and the roles they played in particular contexts. In particular, these studies have focused on the economic activities of the port.

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\(^{18}\) Aihwa Ong (1999) summarizes this debate by looking at more recent literature on globalization and the way that diasporans are often portrayed. She does not delve back into the history of the Jewish diaspora, but here again we see an example of the way that Jews were discussed becoming the model for the way diasporas in general are explored by scholars.
Jews. Standing in contrast to Marx, Weber, and Sombart, scholars of port Jews do not attempt to identify the foundations of modern capitalism. Rather, they take a detailed look at the lives and historical context of Jews during the early modern period (e.g. Sorkin 1999; Dubin 1999, 2002, 2006; Cesarani 2002a; Cesarani and Romain 2006; Kagan and Morgan 2009; Klooster 2006). Yet despite their different questions, the scholars of the port Jews main discussion centers around Jews and the emerging system of capitalism and they often consider Jews as either ideal flexible merchants within the emerging capitalist world system or an anachronistic trade diaspora.

The “port Jew” concept developed as a reaction to the heavy emphasis placed on understanding Jewish modernity through the development of the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment. Before the 1990s, the emancipation of Jews and their connection with modernity was most often understood as being the consequence of court Jews in central Europe (Cesarani 2002b:1). This approach excluded the story of the Jews fleeing from the Iberian Peninsula who settled in Atlantic and Mediterranean port cities. Purposely paired, the rhyming “port Jew” was offered as an alternative to the “court Jew.” First defined by David Sorkin (1999) and Lois Dubin (1999), the port Jew was found in various Atlantic and Mediterranean ports where their commercial acumen was valued. The port Jew became enmeshed in the transnational commerce of the port cities and thus played key roles in the movement of goods and capital in the developing global markets (Dubin 2006:117). The economic entanglement of the port Jews with the larger port city created avenues towards modernity that were different than the route followed by the court Jew. Whereas the court Jew’s modernity was tied to the Haskalah and led by such intellectuals as Moses Mendelsohn, the port Jew’s path to modernity and emancipation
was based upon economics. For the port Jew, the various cities in which they resided allowed certain freedoms to encourage and support economic activity. These freedoms often led to full political emancipation while permitting Jews to define their community within their own terms. Furthermore, with Jews allowed to enter into the economic realm of these cities freely and as equals, they began to accept and practice their economic activities under the civil government as opposed to the hierarchy of the religious community. Whereas pre-modern Jewish life was ultimately tied to the synagogue, the economic freedoms gained in the early modern period allowed some Jewish activities to occur outside of the synagogue (Penslar 1997:27). Thus the prime mover for Jewish modernity was located in economic utility as opposed to a concerted intellectual movement (Cesarani 2006b:2). The process was gradual and defined by shifting cultural attitudes through time as opposed to revolutionary moments.

Since its first formation, the port Jew concept has gone through a number of changes and interpretations (Cesarani 2006b). However, the key idea remains that the port Jew was located in mercantile centers and their actions were dominated by commerce. Thus, following a long scholarly tradition, the port Jew concept has again highlighted the link between Judaism and the emergence of capitalism. Studies of the port Jew have provided greater contextual and historical detail and do not speak in the generalities used by Marx, Weber, or Sombart. However, the basic questions seem to remain the same. What was the place of Jewish merchants in early modern and modern European society, why were they merchants and how did early modern Jews relate to the emerging capitalist system?19

19 One can see Marx rolling his eyes at the discussions of Jewish emancipation spurred on by the “economic pragmatism” of capitalism. Like the young Hegelian he critiqued in “On the Jewish Question,”
Port Jews of Barbados and St. Eustatius

While I do not adopt the port Jew concept in this dissertation, as I consider a diasporic approach more complete in understanding Jewish life in the early modern period, the Jews of Barbados and St. Eustatius can both be considered “port Jews.” The connection between the Jews of the two islands and the developing capitalist system is important. However, the goal is neither to suggest that the Sephardic Jews of the Caribbean became merchants solely because of their place as a diasporic people nor to suggest that their culture was antithetical to the developing capitalist system. As Francesca Trivellato (2009a:277) suggests we need to move “beyond totalizing interpretations that conceive trading diasporas as either antiquated remnants of a pre-modern world (and thus inefficient economic institutions) or idyllic consortia of cooperative kith and kin.” The goal is to more completely understand the ways that Jews interacted within their world. They were neither paragons of post-modernity nor anachronistic holdovers, but instead were products of their times whose lives both shaped and were shaped by the various cultures and systems with which they interacted. Jews actively, and were forced, to fulfill certain roles in the capitalist system. While scholars have often highlighted how the logic of the capitalist system (i.e. economic pragmatism or utility) created certain freedoms, they often do not focus on the ways that Jews helped influence these discourses about economic utility and often created spaces of freedom for themselves in the developing capitalist system. Furthermore, the discussion should also seriously consider how the same system in which these freedoms formed also relied on

these scholars are speaking about what Marx defined as political emancipation as opposed to human emancipation. In Marx’s evolutionary schema, this political emancipation would mean very little, as the very condition that allowed for the logic of “economic pragmatism” was the concept that people needed to be emancipated from.
certain political inequalities. These inequalities were often justified through negative cultural attitudes towards Jews. To explore these tensions it is important to not reify concepts of “capitalism” or “mercantilism” as coherent structures already present in the early modern period, but rather see these as structures that were being developed during this time period. The ways that Jews inserted themselves into these developing systems and the ways that these systems incorporated Jews was constantly negotiated. This approach will not only provide insights into the history of the Jews in the early modern period but also provide insights into the development of modern political-economies.

**The Development of the Caribbean Jewish Merchant**

The majority of Jews who came to the Caribbean were Sephardic in origin. The Sephardim had a crypto-Jewish heritage, where they had publically displayed a Christian persona while maintaining a personal connection with Judaism. The crypto-Jewish past forced Sephardic Jews to become intimately acquainted with Christian Iberian culture. They learned how to switch between the different worlds of Judaism and Christianity and ultimately how to incorporate both into their lives. Many Sephardic Jews, even after fleeing from Iberian and openly embraced Judaism, maintained non-Jewish aliases for their commercial activities. Moreover, Jews had a long history connected to Islam as they lived many generations within Muslim controlled Iberia. This cultural fluidity and flexibility proved advantageous for Jews once they were forced out of Iberia (Kagan and Morgan 2009:vii). The Jews were the ideal cultural brokers with dispersed communities and history that allowed Jews to effectively connect Christians, Muslims, and other Jews (Israel 2002a). The attribution of cultural flexibility is not merely the creation of the
modern scholars but something that Menassah Ben Isarel highlighted in his 1655 petition to Oliver Cromwell for the re-admission of Jews into England:

Now in this dispersion our Fore-fathers flying from the Spanish Inquisition, some of them came in Holland, others got into Italy, and others betooke themselves into Asia; and so easily they credit one another; and by that means they draw the Navigation where-ever they are, where with all of them merchandizing and having perfect knowledge of all the kinds of Moneys, Diamants, Cochinil, Indigo, Wines, Oyle, and other Commodities, that serve from place to place; especially holding correspondence with their friends and kinds-folk, whose language they understand; they do abundantly enrich the Lands and Countrys of Strangers, where they live, not onely with what is requisite and necessary for the life of man; but also what may serve for ornament to his civill condition. (in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995:11)

Ben Israel foregrounded profit as the main justification for the settlement of Jews. He stated, “Profit is a most powerfull motive, and which all the World preferres before all other things” (in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995:10; emphasis original). One of the main reasons that Ben Israel provides for why Jews would be profitable to England was their diverse trade networks and their knowledge of all manners of commodities. Moreover, Ben Israel highlighted that Jews did not simply provide the necesseties but that Jews would help increase the wealth allowing for the purchase of “what may serve for ornament to his civill condition.”

More than just cultural flexibility, the Sephardic crypto-Jewish history also formed the lateral connections of the Sephardim. While many crypto-Jews would eventually return to practicing Judaism openly, many others would convert to Christianity and retain a New Christian identity. Religious difference did not sever the connections between Sephardic Jews and New Christians that were forged in Iberia. Thus, even as many Sephardim returned to openly practicing Judaism they maintained connections that were rooted in their Iberian past. When discussing the economic connections between
Jewish communities we also have to highlight that many of these connections are with New Christians and these connections were not necessarily based upon a shared religion (Bodian 1997; Studnicki-Gizbert 2009; Roitman 2011).

During the late 16th and early 17th century, Amsterdam became the major center of Jewish life in the Atlantic and the majority of Jews who first came to St. Eustatius and Barbados arrived through Amsterdam. This merchant city used this new community to open up trade routes throughout the world, particularly to Portuguese controlled lands in the Atlantic and Pacific and the Ottoman Empire. However, the city administrators placed limits on Jewish economic activity. They passed legislation that prohibited Jews from joining guilds (Swetschinski 2004:20). Without access to the guilds, Jews were essentially banned from many of the artisan and industrial activities of the city. Jews therefore focused much of their economic activity on the various trade and industries arising around colonial resources. Colonial produce such as sugar and dyewoods had not had time to develop an established guild system, which meant Jews could often take part in their refining and distribution. Thus, when Jews were able to enter into the realms of refinement and industrial production, it was centered upon the new goods of the colonies, such as sugar, coral and diamonds, as opposed to the older industries dominated by the established guilds (Israel 1985:62).

When the Dutch decided to establish an overseas colony in Brazil, a significant number of the Portuguese Jews and New Christians decided to join this effort. The colonies offered new economic and social possibilities. In the colonies there was no guild establishment to curtail Jewish activity. Moreover, the Jews would be present from the start and therefore had a chance to better define their role in the developing society.
Jonathan Israel has argued that the Jewish and New Christian activity in Brazil, particularly in Dutch Brazil, was the key step to linking Jewish activity in the Atlantic world with the sugar trade (Israel 2009:8). It is hard to argue against his point. Dutch Brazil had one of the largest populations of Jews and New Christians of any American colony during the early modern period with Jews making up perhaps half of the white population with an estimated 1,450 individuals in 1644 (Pijning 2001:491; Israel 2007:27). These Jews and New Christians became involved in every aspect of the new colonial project based around sugar production. There were Jewish/New Christian plantation holders, providing evidence that Jews were not opposed nor culturally unable to pursue economic activities outside of money lending and trade, as well as Jewish/New Christian merchants. Moreover, Jews/New Christians were slave owners and some took part in the transatlantic slave trade (Faber 1998). The result was that “the Brazil traffic, then, first generated a relatively large pool of both crypto-Jewish and Sephardic merchants engaged in, and orientated toward, transatlantic commerce” (Israel 2009:8).

Yet despite the significant number of Jews/New Christians in Dutch Brazil and the significant impact that this colony had on the organization of Jewish transatlantic commerce, the colony only lasted thirty years. The expulsion of the Dutch sent the Jewish and New Christian population throughout the Atlantic World. However, their time in Brazil was long enough to establish strong connections to the sugar trade. Additionally, Jews had a new form of intellectual capital, the knowledge of how to effectively grow and process sugar cane, that was a desired commodity for the Protestant colonies of the Caribbean.
Barbados

Almost immediately after the battle between the merchant companies of Courteen and Carlisle for the right to govern Barbados was settled (Gragg 2003:31-42), the burgeoning colony faced a new challenge with the outbreak of the English Civil War (1642-1651). While no conflict occurred on the island, the warring metropole could not send ships to Barbados. Cut off from the metropole, the Barbados colonists sought alternative sources for many of the needed and desired goods necessary for the development of the island. The Dutch were the most aggressive in filling this gap and dominated the trade to Barbados during this decade. Amongst these Dutch merchants were a number of Jews (Campbell 1972:86) and it was these Jewish merchants who were the first settlers on the island (Schreuder 2004:176). These Jews helped position Jews as merchants within the emerging colonial society.

However, the era of free trade that allowed the Dutch and Jewish merchants to trade on Barbados was short lived. In 1651, the British government passed the first of several Navigation Acts (Campbell 1972:89). These acts targeted foreign trade to the islands and restricted the movement of goods to British ships. By limiting the movement of goods to British ships, the Crown insured that their merchants would have markets to sell their goods, that the refined goods produced in Britain would have a colonial market, and that the colonial produce would be returned to the metropole for refinement.

The ultimate goal was to strengthen the metropole (Magnusson 1995:5). The colonies were to be a resource that served the imperial center and encouraged the growth and success of the Crown. As historian Stephen Fortune suggests, “the nucleus of economic growth was the metropolis; plantation expansion was a stimulus or
regenerative force” (1984:53). The emphasis on nationalism can be seen in 18th century Englishman William Cary’s description of the British mercantile model:

“by which means the Kingdom is become the centre of trade, and standing like the sun in the mist of the its plantations, does not only refresh them, but draws profit from them, and so indeed is it a matter of exact justice that it should be so” (quoted in Deerr 1950:410)

The Navigation Acts became part of a sophisticated legal structure (Magnusson 1995:5) that relied upon military force. The laws were designed to control the movement of people and goods in and out of port cities. Furthermore, sophisticated navies and military outposts in the colonies prevented interlopers from disrupting the defined trade routes. The end goal of the system was to create a favorable balance of trade in the metropole where the value of exports from Britain exceeded the value of imports (Smith 1776:543-567).

The Navigation Acts relied upon an idea of “Britishness” and played an essential role in reinforcing and spurring on British nationalism. For the system to work who was and who was not British had to be explicitly and legally defined. Those who were not British would either be taxed at a heavier rate or banned from trading in any British controlled territory. This left Jews in a troubling position as they were not considered British, even if they were born in Britain. Thus, the mercantilist system made legal economic activity a sign of national belonging as all economic activity was ultimately meant to strengthen the British crown. Since many of the trade networks of Jews were not solely located within the British Atlantic, they were a challenge to the nationalistic ideology of the mercantilist system.
Historian Holly Snyder (2009:56) suggests that “the most significant challenge faced by Jewish merchants in the Atlantic world” was “the negotiation of imperial boundaries.” The mercantilist mindset of the British reinforced national and imperial boundaries. However, this national and imperial imagination did not have any space for the incorporation of Jews (who most British could not envision as being British). In the mapping of the world, and in drawing imperial boundaries, the locating of Jews was difficult. Jews were one group that was not easily defined by a geographic space that had a corresponding government. The end result was that Jews did not fit the national stereotype of British and therefore had to prove their right to trade within the British Atlantic.

Unlike in England, by 1651 there was already a well-established group of Jewish merchants on Barbados, which helped preclude any major debates about Jewish settlement on the island after the passing of the Navigation Acts. Additionally, the British Parliament itself took a more lenient view with its colonies with Cromwell giving Dr. Raphael de Mercado and his son David permission to settle on Barbados in April of 1655 (Endelman 2002:24). This was six months prior to the Whitehall council held to discuss whether Jews should be allowed to re-settle in England.

While there was a significant presence of Jews on the island, Barbados was still under the Navigation Acts and therefore they explicitly had to define Jews within colonial society. As stated in the previous chapter, the island council in 1656 decreed that Jews would be considered “Foreigners and Strangers” (Minutes of Council, August 12, 1656, p. 250, cited by Davis 1909:130). Importantly, the Island Council’s decision did not question the right of Jews to settle in Barbados. Rather the Jewish presence was
already accepted and the question was simply how to define them within the legal structures of the Navigation Acts and within Barbados society. Furthermore, the Jews were solely identified by their religious practice as opposed to their physical origins meaning that the Jews were not considered Dutch, Spanish, or Portuguese. The result of being categorized as “Foreigners and Strangers” was that if Jews wanted to trade on Barbados then they would have to purchase Letters of Denization. This was something that the Jewish community did with great fervor. Between 1660 and 1688, at least 40 Jews on Barbados purchased and received Letters of Denization (Samuel 1970).

Yet, the extent to the rights that denization on Barbados provided were debated. In 1669 the Jews sent a petition to Parliament arguing that denization gave them the right to give testimonies in all courts. While this was received by a sympathetic ear in London, the Island Council was not so generous with the distribution of rights to the Jews. On Barbados, Jewish legal testimony was limited to cases either dealing with other Jews or in cases dealing with “trade and dealing.” Thus, denization was mainly an economic category for Jews to acquire. It made it legal for them to trade and ship goods to and from Barbados but did not create social equality.

The 1740 Plantation Act extended the rights for Jewish traders in the emerging British Empire. This act allowed Jews to be naturalized if they had resided in one of the British colonies for seven years. If Jews met the residency requirements then they “shall be deemed, adjudged and taken to be his Majesty’s natural born subjects of this kingdom, to all intents, constructions, and purposes, as if they, and every of them had been or were born within this kingdom” (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995:21). Naturalization was certainly an important legal designation and Jews throughout the British colonies in the
Americas applied for naturalization. However, the extent that naturalization guaranteed rights is unclear. While it provided more protections and probably made merchant activities easier, Jews on Barbados did not gain the right to give testimonies in all courts of law until 1786 (Lucas 1946/47:88-90) and they were not put legally equal to British Christian inhabitants of the island until 1831 (West Indies-Toleration Laws 1831). Thus, even though they could be naturalized after 1740, naturalization did equal being Christian and British.

For Barbados, the desire for international trade networks was linked to the developing sugar industry. This meant not only the trade networks but also the knowledge of the sugar industry. As mentioned previously, David de Mercado became quite wealthy creating patents for different sugar refining technologies. Moreover, the Sephardic Jews brought with them connections to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies and metropoles. While the British were accruing a significant amount of wealth from agricultural production, their colonies in the Americas lacked mineral wealth and therefore the British often had a shortage of bullion and coinage. Jews were one possible route to address this shortage because of their many connections with the Iberian colonies (Fortune 1984:41).

But perhaps the greatest perceived strength of having Jewish merchants on the island was there connections to merchants outside of the emerging British Atlantic. Jews could provide goods to the planters that were often cheaper than what the British could supply. Jews could also ship the colonial produce to the European markets that would maximize the profits of the planters. The planters of Barbados in 1656 urged “that the admission of Jews or any other accession of free trade will tend exceedingly to the
advantage of the Colonies, and consequently of his Majesty and trade” (Sainsbury 1964a:49). Not only did the planters desire Jewish merchants on the island but also conceptually linked Jews with free trade.

The Navigation Acts made Jewish exploitation of their diverse networks more challenging. Purchasing endinization and naturalization was one way to deal with the restrictions of the Navigation Acts. However, they often utilized their mobility to help circumnavigate mercantilist trade restrictions. Jonathan Israel states that “in reality, the Navigation Acts were observed by Barbados Jews neither in the letter nor the spirit, since they continued to import large amounts of Dutch, Westphalian and Silesian linens, spices, and manufactures, from Amsterdam, and export sugar and tobacco to Holland” (2002:403). Importantly for the Jews on Barbados, the establishment of the London Jewish community in the second half of the 17th century gave the Jews a convenient legitimate face. While many ships leaving from the colonies would be officially destined for Jewish firms in London, this was only a stopover (if at all) while final destination was still Amsterdam (Israel 2002a:403; Endelman 2002:23).

However, while Amsterdam may have been the central hub of Jewish merchant activity in the 17th century, the 18th century saw a shift in Barbadian Jewish merchant networks. A collection of documents (Caribbean Jewry 1708-1790) defining legal representation in the American Jewish Archives provides an insight into the various commercial networks (Figure 33).
The connections highlight the heavy emphasis on networks within the British Atlantic. London is easily the most prominent location of trade while Jamaica and New York represent other British connections. The Demerara connections come from the short period when the British possessed this colony. Outside of the British controlled regions, there were also relationships with the Dutch (St. Eustatius, Curacao, and Suriname) and the French (Martinique).

Moreover, these documents highlight a key element that shaped gender relationships on the island. Several of these documents concern the male proprietor of a business leaving to conduct business on another island. Often times, the business on Barbados did not simply end but continued under the care of an appointed representative. In six of these documents, the appointed legal guardian of the business interests was the merchant’s wife. Given the unpredictable nature of long distance travel during the 17th and 18th century (alongside the significant travel time), Jewish women often inherited the
merchant businesses of their husbands and were the legal leaders of these businesses. In this way, Jewish women had the chance to become quite affluent.

However, Jewish merchant activities were not only a source of potential wealth (both for the Jews and the colony of Barbados) but they were also a source of insecurity. In regard to the movement of bullion and coin, Jews were often accused of clipping coins. David de Mercado was not only the inventor of several sugar industrial technologies but also a victim of such accusations (Davis 1909:139-142). Whether this accusation was legitimate or not is unclear. This sort of claim would come with the territory of being one of the major importers of coins into the island, particularly an importer who was not British. Additionally, clipping coins was an old accusation within England. In the decades leading up to Jewish expulsion in 1290 AD, a significant number of Jews were accused of coin clipping and many were hung for this offense (Mundill 2010:90-93). This remained within the historical memory of many English as demonstrated by the comments of James Howell who was outraged by the rumors of the early 1650s that suggested Jews might be re-admitted to England. Howell wrote that the Jews had not been expelled from England because of their religion but rather because of their significant crimes that included the “crucifying of Christian children” and the “counterfeiting of coins” (in Katz 1982:190-191).

Additionally, the merchant activities of the Jews often evoked jealousy amongst other British merchants. In 1665 merchants on Barbados proclaimed:

that the Jews are a people so subtle in matters of trade, and that they and their stocks are so settled in other nations that in a short time they will not only ingross trade among themselves, but will be able to divert the benefit thereof to other places; whereas it seems the interest of his Majesty to keep his own trade, that the whole profit may flow in hither and the trade be carried on by the manufactures and navigation of these kingdoms. (Sainsbury 1964a:49)
Beyond this, these same networks led to the questioning of Jewish loyalty. After another condemnation of Jewish trade, Thomas Newton's complaint in 1665 contained this question of Jewish loyalty:

and being a people only minding trade and to be useful to each other they will not be helpful in case of invasion or insurrection, which is too much to be doubted, so many English having been sent off that the few remaining cannot but stand in fear of the blacks who are six for one in number. (Sainsbury 1964a:296)

More than just the fear that Jews would flee if the island came under attack or if the enslaved population revolted, they also were concerned that the Jewish merchants were giving information to the enemies. A 1681 petition to the Council of Barbados stated:

The presence of Jews is inconsistent with the safety of Barbados; they have already given, as there is too much reason to believe, intelligence to her enemies, and will do the same again. (Sainsbury 1964b:69)

Jewish lateral connections came into direct conflict with the ideals of British protected trade. The Jewish trade networks were based upon a diversity of markets, across international boundaries, and did not support any singular location or nation. The mercantilist system was based upon creating internally dependent markets, restricting the crossing of boundaries, and was ultimately designed for the greatest benefit of the metropole. There was a fundamental tension to this economic ideal. It is clear that many individuals found advantages with trading outside of the British Atlantic and many elites actively courted Jews to help create transnational networks. Within this tension, the Jews on Barbados found an economic niche that they had helped create for themselves during the colony's formation. However, these transnational connections called into question
the loyalties of the Jews to the island and the British cause. Such questions of loyalty reinforced Jewish difference on the island while helping to curtail Jewish prosperity.

Despite the diverse networks that Jews had because of the diaspora, these lateral connections did not exist outside of the economic policies of the British. While the Netherlands were the economic center for the Jewish diaspora to the Atlantic during the 17th century, by the 18th century the Jews of Barbados were centered on London as evidenced by the documents above. Jews never had a state to protect their interests and did not have a navy to guard their ships. Breaking the Navigation Acts represented serious risk and many Jews did not find the risk worth it. This was coupled with continued growth in transnational commercial activities of English ports, particularly London. Thus, it makes sense that the Jews of Barbados turned to both the legally less problematic and economically vibrant metropole for their merchant activities. This did not mean that Jews stopped their connections with other Jewish communities as the documents above attest, but the documents also show that London was the center of the Jewish mercantile activity on Barbados during the 18th century.

This in part explains the diminished role that Jews played in the Atlantic economies of the 18th century Atlantic World. Scholars have pointed out that by 1750 Jews no longer held a prominent place in the trade networks of the Atlantic (Israel 2005, 2009; Emmer 2001; Sutcliffe 2009). This is partially due to the greater power and sophistication of the British merchants who began to rely less on Jewish long distance trade networks (Israel 2009:16). Furthermore, for the Jews of Barbados the power of the British navy and sophistication of their law enforcement would have made trading outside of the British markets challenging. The mercantile model had become
established for the British and breaking the Navigation Acts was sufficiently dangerous that many Jews would have followed the less risky plan of simply trading within the British Atlantic. Thus, Jews followed the mercantile patterns of their non-Jewish neighbors as opposed to trading in alternative networks.

Jonathan Israel notes that the Jewish communities of the British Atlantic became “more distant and independent” from the Amsterdam community (2009:16). While below a number of additional reasons will be given for why this distancing occurred, the shifting economic exchanges helped create this separation by creating a feedback loop. These merchant networks did more than move commodities and capital but also connected individuals. As these merchant connections decreased so did the connections between the individuals in each community. As the connections between individuals decreased, fewer merchant connections developed. Each fed into the other. This was not totalizing as the narrative from St. Eustatius will show some British Jews maintained strong connections with Amsterdam. However, the impact of the shift in networks and the strength of the British trade restrictions help explain why the majority of Jews on Barbados in the 18th century were probably shopkeepers as opposed to merchants. Thus the majority of Jews had property on Jew Street, located several blocks from the shore, as opposed to owning the warehouses along the waterfront (Bowden 2011).

**Barbadian Jewish Merchants**

During the 17th and 18th centuries the British often looked to the Dutch with jealousy over their wealth and merchant activities. They partially attributed the success of the Netherlands to the presence of a large Jewish community. Josiah Child stated: “Because the Dutch who thrive best by Trade, and have the surest Rules to thrive by,
admit not only any of their own People, but even Jews and all kind of Aliens, or any of their Cities or Towns Corporat.” (1698:103; emphasis original). Both Jews and non-Jews who argued for Jewish settlement in Britain pointed to the potential profits from Jewish trade networks. Furthermore, John Toland argued that “the Jews having no such Country, to which they are ty’d by inclination or interest as their own, will never likewise enter into any political engagements, which might be prejudicial to ours” (in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995:14). Thus for some, Jews were the perfect route for expanding British trade networks without strengthening one of their geo-political rivals. Yet, as the narrative above has shown, not everyone saw Jews’ lack of country as a positive as John Toland did. Many feared Jewish merchants and where there loyalties lied. Thus, the British ensured that when Jews did enter into their lands there were enough legal restrictions that they could control the growth and power of the Jewish community.

In exploring the merchant networks on the Jews of Barbados an avenue into the complex interplay between Jews and the desires of the British colonialists is gained. As the British expanded their markets they began to see Jews as an economic asset to be utilized. There were many Brits who saw a Jewish presence as a positive for the welfare of Barbados and the emerging British Atlantic. This opened up a space for Jews to become politically active and advocate for more legal rights and protections, which they successfully did including in 1674 when they won the right to give testimonies in courts dealing with trade. However, the Barbados government took active steps to marginalize the Jewish community as seen by the limitation of Jewish testimony to just courts of trade. Such marginalization can be seen in the Bridgetown landscape as evidenced by the location of the synagogue, the non-traditional juxtaposition of the burial grounds around
the synagogue, the ways the synagogue was utilized, and the orientation of the pathway leading to the synagogue.

While diasporans are often held up as the major foil for the system of the nation-states, the story of the Barbados Jews suggests something slightly more nuanced. Without a doubt a Jewish presence challenged the British system of mercantilism that relied upon notions of nationality. In part, the restrictive economic system of the British opened up a space for the diasporic community. Diasporans cannot be seen as existing outside of the systems of capitalism and nations but rather should be seen as active players within that context whose activities both shaped and were shaped by these very systems. Certainly the economic system of the British helped dictate the economic activities of the Jews. However, the Barbados and British government also had to adjust for the incorporation of the Jews. The British did not demand assimilation nor force conversion. The Jews that settled on Barbados also refused to assimilate and practiced their religion openly. In allowing Jews to trade on the island, a number of laws and designations had to be adjusted or created.

**St. Eustatius and Mercantilism**

While the British adopted a relatively strong model of restricted trade, the same cannot be said for the Dutch in the Atlantic. The early Atlantic enterprises were run by the West India Company (WIC). This company was in charge of establishing colonies in the Americas as well as targeting the ships of the Iberian empire. The early WIC had a significant military element (Emmer 1981:77-76). The grandest military conquest of the WIC was the capturing of northeastern Brazil from the Portuguese. This colony was to last only thirty years before the Portuguese evicted the Dutch. Dutch Brazil was the most
successful agricultural colony for the Dutch in the Americas until the development of Suriname in the 18th century. Besides Suriname, the Dutch possessions in the Americas were quite limited. The islands of Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba, Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten all had rainfall patterns that severely hindered large scale agriculture. The short-owned colony of New Amsterdam (New York) was profitable but its focus was mainly towards trade as opposed to establishing plantations. Moreover, the Dutch lost New Amsterdam in 1667 with the Peace of Breda when they gave New Amsterdam to the British in exchange for Suriname (Goslinga 1971:407). Thus, the Dutch had only one serious agricultural colony in the Americas by the second half of the seventeenth century and therefore could not utilize the same plantation model of the British and French.

Moreover, the WIC itself was constantly in financial troubles even going bankrupt in 1674 (Emmer 1981:81). The results of the poor WIC was a lack of shipping power. This not only meant that the WIC had trouble enforcing any laws that would restrict trade on the islands (like the Navigation Acts for England) but also that they had few ships for the transporting of goods. Thus, the WIC owned colonies consisted mainly of private businesses importing and exporting goods (Emmer 1981).

Without major agricultural colonies or a strong military presence, the Dutch adopted a different economic model for the Caribbean. Centered on two trade entrepôts, St. Eustatius and Curaçao, the Dutch followed a policy of free trade. These two islands served as markets for importing and exporting goods from throughout the Caribbean. They provided alternative markets for individuals on the surrounding British, Spanish, and French islands to buy and sell goods.
St. Eustatius' relatively small size and sporadic rainfall patterns prevented it from ever being a major player in the plantation world. In 1781, there were 88 plantations with the average size of 51 acres. Seventy-one percent of the available plantation land rested in the hands of 16 individuals and the West India Company (Martin 1781). The wealth of the island rested on their willingness to buy and trade with anybody at low prices. This was made possible by the WIC's decision to remove all import and export taxes for goods on the island in 1756 (Tuchman 1988:21). St. Eustatius filled a market niche for the surrounding French and British islands. Planters on these islands would often ship their produce, particularly sugar, to St. Eustatius for it to be refined and then shipped to various markets in Europe, not just the Netherlands. This could provide greater profits for British and French planters as the mercantile system of these two colonies often led to glutting the metropole markets driving prices down. Furthermore, the merchants of St. Eustatius imported goods from throughout the Atlantic World and were willing to sell these goods to the French and British islands. The French and British islands under their respective mercantile governments were expected to buy all their refined goods from French and British merchants. These islands were legally reliant on their metropole markets and often paid high prices for particular goods. The option of going to St. Eustatius for needed supplies and desired luxuries created greater freedom for the surrounding individuals on British and French islands. Perhaps no better example of the strength of these markets can be given than the fact that the British while waging war with the French blockaded not only the French island of Guadeloupe but the neutral Dutch island of St. Eustatius as well (Pares 1975:164). The British realized that many of
the goods supporting the French islands flowed through the small Dutch entrepôt and thus they attempted to break this commodity stream.

The free trade policy contributed to the cosmopolitan nature of the Dutch island. The place of Jews on the economic map of St. Eustatius was quite different than that on Barbados. On Barbados, Jews were outsiders who provided certain alternative markets and were thus concomitantly sources of potential wealth and disloyalty. The Jews of St. Eustatius joined the ranks of numerous other minority groups on the island buying and trading goods. Although they were in stronger numbers than most other groups and did have a greater impact on the local society as evidenced by the construction of the synagogue, they nevertheless were not a challenge to the laws of the Dutch colony. They were in many ways just one amongst a number of non-Dutch merchants on the island. The Jews on St. Eustatius followed a similar model of other Sephardic Jews in the Atlantic maintaining strong merchant networks to other Jewish communities and with family members. The story of Benjamin Lindo who started off this dissertation provides an example of the merchant networks of Jews on St. Eustatius.

**Benjamin Lindo**

Benjamin Lindo was born in England to two Jewish parents who were also born and raised in England. Benjamin’s father, Elias Lindo, was a major international merchant based out of London. Benjamin followed his father’s footsteps and went into the family business. At the age of seventeen or eighteen, he crossed the Atlantic with his younger brother, Ephraim, and settled on St. Eustatius. Benjamin and his brother went to St. Eustatius to establish a warehouse for the movement of goods throughout the Atlantic. Both Benjamin and Ephraim were still minors when the original contract was written and
therefore a partnership was arranged with a Frenchmen based out of Amsterdam named David Noble. There is currently no evidence to tell us whether David Noble was Jewish or not. They called the new firm Lindo and Noble and the original contract was to last six years. Furthermore, Elias Lindo provided his sons a two thousand pound interest free advance to get them started (Before the Most Noble 1786:9).

As Bernard Bailyn pointed out in his pioneering study *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (1955), trade during the 17th and 18th centuries was extremely risky. Without the advantages of modern technology, the shipping of goods across the seas to representatives who would then oversee the buying and selling of your goods required a great degree of trust. While there were various ways of ensuring trust, and creating a reputation was one of these, merchants often relied upon family members. As Bailyn points out, "being both all important and extremely fragile and unreliable, commercial ties were best secured by the cement of kinship or long friendship" (1955:87). By sending family members to various ports, individual firms would have trusted and valued representation on each island. It was hoped that blood would be thicker than greed and that these family members would fairly oversee commercial exchanges. For Elias Lindo, sending his sons to the island of St. Eustatius was a way to further expand his merchant business while also having someone he trusted to represent his best interests on the island.

Benjamin and his brother arrived on the island in 1778 and quickly established a warehouse as the home base for their business activities. Their warehouse would have been in Lower Town along the shores of Oranje Bay. By the 1770s this district had well over 200 warehouses and was the commercial and economic soul of the small island.
Only two years into their island adventure, Ephraim returned home to London because of health concerns. This left Benjamin and David Noble as the two in charge of the Statia trading firm.

While we have few documents leading up to 1781, the capture of St. Eustatius by the British created a significant archive of material on the merchant activity of the island. Some of the richest sources come from court cases of merchants, particularly British merchants, suing Admiral Rodney for wrongly seizing and selling their goods. When Admiral Rodney seized the island, Benjamin Lindo, although born and raised in England, was treated the same as the other Jews on the island and watched helplessly as the British seized his warehouses and auctioned off all of his merchant wares (Table 8). While Benjamin could not save his goods from being sold, he had the advantage of having his father located in London. One of the advantages of having a network across political and geographic boundaries is that you often have friends or family close to the people you need help from. Benjamin could do little in the face of the British Navy, but his father could utilize his resources to protect their mutual business interests. Ultimately, the Lindo lawsuit was successful and in 1788 they were reimbursed slightly more than 6500 British pounds for the goods taken by the British Navy (Before the Most Noble 1788:2).

<table>
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<th>Number</th>
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<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Britannias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
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<td>Copper-Plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Puncheons</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trunks</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>Culters Ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Puncheons</td>
<td>Culters Ware</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>235</td>
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<td>Candles</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pieces</td>
<td>Callicoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
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</tr>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
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<td>Brins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bales</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gesfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieces</td>
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<td>Creas</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pieces</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Coarse Flemish Linen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrels</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bags</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bale</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Chests</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Loose Platellas</td>
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<td>Stockings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puncheons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Linen Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jans, Jeannets and Dimities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dimity, Cotton Handkerchiefs and Copper-plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bales</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Callimancoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tandems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ruans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Waistcoats and Petticoats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bales</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>blue long clothe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taffeties and Ginghamns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bales</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Berampants Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>primed Linen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sundry Articles consisting in Cutlery Ware, Boxes of Snuff, Shoes, Buckles, Sundry Trinkets of Steel and Pinchbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chests</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sundry Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sundry Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelves in Store</td>
<td></td>
<td>Haberdashers and Cutlers Wares, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: 1781 inventory of British owned goods consigned to the warehouse of the trading firm Noble and Lindos (Before the Most Noble 1786)
The trading firm of Noble and Lindos provides some insights into the trading networks of the Jewish community. While it is unknown whether David Noble was Jewish, he brought to the firm major contacts with the Jewish and New Christian merchants in Amsterdam. In the original contract it is stated that Messrs. Isaac Abrabanel Henriques and Cortissos should be responsible for issuing credit for the new firm of Noble and Lindo. Furthermore, Isaac da Costa Jesurum “should be the Broker and Freighter” for many goods coming out of Amsterdam. All of these individuals were likely Jews and/or New Christians. These were business connections kept up by Elias Lindo who often shipped his goods from London to Amsterdam, where they would be under the watchful eye of Jesurum or Henriques, before being sent to St. Eustatius. Elias’ business correspondences highlight the multilingualism of Sephardic merchants as he corresponded in English, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese (Before the Most Noble 1786).

Other merchants also consigned goods and entered into business partnerships with other Jews within the Atlantic. Jacob Robles, the afore discussed Cantor, and Elias Gomes in their 1781 inventory delivered to the British Navy stated that they had a variety of goods (mostly various forms of clothe) with the account of “Gebroeders Mendes in Amsterdam”. Gebroeders (brothers) Mendes was a Jewish owned firm. On the inventory was an identifying mark that was probably on the containers of goods. The mark used was a Star of David with the letters “ML” within it (Inventory of Merchandize 1781).

While there is strong evidence that many Jews relied upon their co-religionists to create trustworthy business relationships, the community was certainly permeable and had significant dealings with non-Jews as well. Elias Lindo represented a number of Gentile merchants who sent goods to St. Eustatius (Table 9). Additionally, the major
British merchant, Richard Puller, often consigned goods to Samuel Hoheb, a prominent Jew, on St. Eustatius. Thus, although Jews often relied upon kin networks in establishing long distance trade, they were not exclusive to the Jewish community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Merchant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery</td>
<td>from Hurst and Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery</td>
<td>of Thomas Mary and John Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mould Candles</td>
<td>of Watkinson and Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton and Dimities</td>
<td>of Quince and Jeffard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>of Joseph Newnham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>of Robert Alburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottons and Handkerchiefs</td>
<td>of Gray and Freeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callimancoes</td>
<td>of Freemans and Grace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: List of Goods and Merchants who had consigned said goods to Elias Lindo that were then sent them to the Noble and Lindos Firm on St. Eustatius to be sold (Before the Most Noble 1786).

By analyzing the court cases, we can recreate the trade networks that the Lindos used on St. Eustatius. The strongest connections for Benjamin were to his family in London. While the British trading on St. Eustatius was a problem in the eyes of the British, the Dutch and the officials of St. Eustatius had no problem with it. Illegality is in the eye of the beholder. Benjamin was welcomed in as another member of the diverse merchant community and his connections to London would have been considered an asset to the island.

**St. Eustatius Jewish Merchants**

The Jewish population of St. Eustatius drastically decreased in the early 19th century when the island was controlled by the British and French consecutively. Each placed heavy tariffs on imports and exports while patrolling the ships that came into Oranje Bay’s harbor. By the time the island was returned to the Dutch, the shipping lanes in the North Atlantic had shifted and most of the merchants had left the island’s shores.
Benjamin Lindo was one of these emigrants. On the island of St. Thomas there was an Elias and Benjamin Lindo & Co. in the early 19th century (Cohen 2004:29). This is almost certainly the same Benjamin Lindo discussed above, while the Elias may have been an homage to Benjamin’s father who had died in 1788 or possibly one of Benjamin’s twelve siblings (Before the Most Noble 1786, 1788). Many of the Statian Jews moved to St. Thomas as the Danish island replaced St. Eustatius as a free trade market in the Northern Antilles (Cohen 2004).

The example of Benjamin Lindo highlights a number of characteristics of diasporic networks and the ways that Jews maintained connections with other Jewish communities. The Lindo merchant enterprise crossed multiple national boundaries—England, the Netherlands, St. Eustatius, and France. To establish a new warehouse on the island of St. Eustatius, Elias Lindo sent his two sons. This kinship relationship meant Elias had a trustworthy business partner across the Atlantic, a business partner that he did not have to constantly monitor. Moreover, having individuals of the family within the boundaries of multiple nations proved extremely valuable. When Benjamin Lindo lost his goods to the British Navy, he could turn to his father in London to help sue the British government. Those merchants who did not have connections to London faced greater challenges in recuperating their lost wares because they could only rely on British friends and business relationships to represent them. Finally, Lindo’s business shows the permeability of trade networks. While many of Elias and Benjamin’s trade partners were Jewish, they were not exclusively Jewish. Several non-Jews utilized this firm. Thus, the economic value of the Lindos’ was not limited to the Jewish community but extended to both hostlands, St. Eustatius and England.
**Conclusion: Island Jews and Capitalism**

On the two islands, Jews were positioned in different structural positions. On Barbados, Jews during the 17th century provided alternative markets for the movement of goods into and off of the island. They sat at the edges of the mercantilist system and constantly straddled the line between legal and illegal trade. While the Jews were valued for their diverse trade networks, they were also feared. The success of Jews was looked upon with jealousy by British merchants and this jealousy often manifested itself in anti-Semitic terms. Thus, Jews' economic activity helped define them as not-British upon the island. This would be the case until the second half of the 18th century when the Jews of Barbados had shifted their activities to more easily fit into the mercantilist model of Britain. By the 18th century, the majority of their trade relationships seem to have been with Jewish communities within the emerging British Empire. These shifting networks may have in part helped root the Barbados community to the island as its individuals began to move away from basing their economic livelihood upon transnational trade.

On St. Eustatius, the Jews were part of a cosmopolitan group of merchants. The island of St. Eustatius was a free market alternative to the restricted markets of the surrounding British and French islands. While this made the island an appealing place for many Jewish merchants, it meant that being an international merchant did not separate Jews out from the rest of the island’s population. Nearly all the free people on the island were involved with the transatlantic trade. Jews were not treated differently within the laws of the island when it came to trade. Because Jews were allowed to openly trade across international borders, much of their focus would not have been on the island itself helping to prevent the establishment of strong roots on the island. Thus, it is not
surprising that when the majority of merchants left the island of St. Eustatius, the Jews were part of this emigrating group.

**Political Proximity**

One of the challenges of the colonial project was the ability to govern from a long distance. The result is that often the biggest decisions concerning the governing of a colony comes from afar by individuals who may never have been to the colony. For those in the colony, this was a troubling situation. How could you ensure that the metropole would pass policies that served your interests? Particularly in a world without instantaneous communication, having political proximity, i.e. being near the decision makers, had certain advantages. For diasporans, there were advantages to having fellow diasporans within political proximity to the legislators. I want to explore the ways that the Jewish communities on each island maintained political proximity and also how these needs help dictate the relationships between Jewish communities.

**Barbados**

In 1654, the Amsterdam Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel sent his son, Samuel Soeiro, along with the Amsterdam merchant and former *parnas* Manuel Martinez Dormido to England to deliver a petition for allowing Jews to settle in England. Furthermore, Dormido brought his own requests to the English government. Dormido had last a fortune when the Portuguese claimed Dutch Brazil. He hoped that the English, who had just allied with the Portuguese could help him recover his losses. The English parliament did not act on either request. Nevertheless, Cromwell personally intervened in the case of Dormido writing a letter to the Portuguese crown requesting a restitution of Dormido’s goods (Endelman 2002:23-24). Meanwhile, the issue of Jewish re-settlement was
delayed and a year later Ben Israel would present his petition directly to the English (Katz 1982:190-231). While Ben Israel ultimately failed in having official legislation passed to allow Jews to settle in London, Jews did begin to settle there in the 1660s. Importantly, Jews were crossing national boundaries to engage in dialogue with foreign governments. In one case to expand the area of Jewish settlement, while in Dormido's case, it was to achieve personal restitution. While diasporans are often discussed in terms of their mercantile networks that cross boundaries, their ability to have physical representation in multiple locations also could prove an advantage.

Yet, the nature of these relationships highlights some political limitations. During the early years of Jewish settlement on Barbados the Jews had strong connections with the Amsterdam community. However, when political problems arose with the Barbados government, it is unlikely that the Amsterdam community was well placed to speak on the Barbados' community’s behalf. Indeed, as the discussion of the mercantilist model above suggests, if the Amsterdam community did speak up, this could reinforce the idea of Jews evading the restrictions of the Navigation Acts.

When the Jews felt that they were not receiving enough rights through denization in the 1670s, they directly petitioned the parliament in London. This was not the only petition the Jews would send to England to try and ensure their rights on Barbados. It is likely that as the London community grew in size and prosperity in the 18th century, the Barbados community would turn to it to help them with political battles. It was the London community who were closest to the British parliament and the ones who could speak up about injustices to the Barbados community without raising the specter of Jewish disloyalty.
In the previous chapter, it was shown how by the late 18th century the Jewish community had become more integrated into Barbados society and had begun to utilize English more often in their lives (as indicated by the tombstones). The previous section highlighted how the mercantilist policies of the British eventually centered Jewish mercantile networks on London. The political situation of Barbados being a British island meant that Jews became more reliant on the Jewish community in London as opposed to other Jewish communities. While these other connections did not disappear, their effects on Jewish everyday life on Barbados dwindled.

**St. Eustatius**

The Jewish community from its very beginning relied upon the Amsterdam community to secure its political rights. In 1730, even before the synagogue was constructed, the Governor of St. Eustatius received a letter from the WIC asking him to treat the Jews the same as the Dutch Christians on the island. The WIC’s letter was written in response to the Amsterdam Jewish community’s request (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519). It is likely that the Amsterdam community put pressure on the WIC for Jewish equal rights on St. Eustatius because the St. Eustatius community had made a direct plea to the Amsterdam community.

This was not the only time that the St. Eustatius community would go around the island Governor by contacting the Amsterdam community. They appeared to have done so when they petitioned to construct the synagogue and in 1753 when they had trouble settling the conflicts between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:519-521). These examples show that the Jews of St. Eustatius were not limited by physical proximity. Rather, they had lateral connections to draw upon and to help shape
their lives. Unlike Barbados, the lateral connections of St. Eustatius could remain largely fixed upon Amsterdam and Curacao. St. Eustatius was a Dutch island and therefore the Amsterdam community and the larger Jewish community in Curacao were in the best position to put pressure on the WIC, who also happened to be based out of Amsterdam. It was a logical connection.

The British seizing of St. Eustatius on 1781 provides a lens into how alternative political connections can also play a role in the diasporans' lives. When the British seized the island, there were a number of Jews born and raised in England, such as Benjamin Lindo. This meant that the Jews on the island, when mistreated by the British, could turn to Jews in England for help. They were not reliant upon the Jews in the Netherlands to represent their cases. So individuals like Benjamin Lindo, could turn to family members, friends, and other Jews to help present their case to the British government. Unlike the Dutch merchants on the island, the Jewish merchants had options. They were not fully reliant upon the Dutch government or the Dutch Jewish community.

"Flexibility" has become a buzzword in globalization studies (e.g. Ong 1999). These scholars have suggested that the ability to be flexible and mobile is an advantage in a world in which time and space have been compressed. The Jews on St. Eustatius had such flexibility in their ability to adjust to political upheavals. While the Jews had strong connections to the Amsterdam community, the fact that there were Jews dispersed throughout the Atlantic World created a support network that was not reliant upon any single nation. Thus, when the Jews on St. Eustatius found themselves under British control, they could utilize their British connections. When the island transferred to the French and then back to the Dutch, the Jews were ideally suited to navigate these political
changes. Their lateral connections that spanned national boundaries provided Jews a certain degree of flexibility to deal with the turbulent political environment of the 18th century Caribbean.

**Conclusion**

There was/is a powerful interplay between diasporic connections and nationalistic politics. These connections often were challenged by economic policies that restricted trade within national boundaries. However, these diasporic connections were key tools in the diasporans’ repertoire for negotiating their place in a particular homeland. On both islands, the connections to Amsterdam and London were utilized to put pressure on the colonial government. These connections allowed Jews to circumnavigate the island chain of command and apply pressure from other political spaces. By appealing directly to the metropole, or asking the Jewish communities in the metropole to place pressure on the British and Dutch governments, the Jews could achieve concessions from the island Governor’s that would have been denied to them if they could only appeal directly to the island Governor. Thus, the dispersed connections were a form of political power at the diasporans’ disposal.

Despite Jews having connections across physical boundaries, and even at times across national and imperial boundaries, the power of the nation partially dictated Jewish lateral connections. In both cases, the most common route for the Jews to utilize in appealing for political help was to approach the Jewish community in the corresponding metropole. This necessity ultimately structured the nature of connections for each Jewish community. Jews on Barbados may have had early connections to Amsterdam, but the political environment of the British colony re-oriented their networks to be more London-
centric. The Jews on the island of St. Eustatius remained strongly linked to the Amsterdam community while they remained within the Dutch Atlantic world.

**Non-Market Exchange Networks**

Diaspora studies often focus on the relationship between the diasporic group and various political-economies. This has become even more common place as we consider diasporic peoples in the capitalist world of today (e.g. Ong 1999). The role of Jews within this emerging system has been one of intense exploration since the late 19th century (i.e. Marx, Sombart, Weber, and Simmel). This relationship to capitalism has continued to be a focus for scholars of Jewish history particularly as they study the Jews of the early modern Atlantic World (Kagan and Morgan 2009). I hope to have shown that the port Jew concept is the heir to the earlier formulations by Marx, Weber, and Sombart. Again, the political and social position of Jews is linked to their place within the emerging capitalist system. The mercantile connections have been highlighted to such a degree for the Jews of the Atlantic port cities that one scholar has suggested that “Jews knew that they were Jews because of the economic bonds between them” (Penslar 1997:33). The conversation above was supposed to illuminate the role of Jews within each island’s context. The powerful effects of the political-economy of the 17th and 18th centuries certainly shaped Jewish life. Conversely, the incorporation of Jews into the economic desires of the various nations helped shape those very nations. Moreover, many of the connections that Jews maintained with each other were shaped by the various political-economic systems of their respective European metropole.

However, this emphasis on the political-economy often ignores the other connections that tie diasporans together. The economic connections (even if secured via
family) may not be the most important lateral connections. Furthermore, it is a limited framework for considering the ways that these connections actively bind diasporic peoples together and thus continually reinforce a diasporic culture. I argue that diaspora is not an essential position, but rather something that is continually re-created through time, and therefore we need to understand the role that these lateral connections played in minimizing physical distance by creating social nearness.

The next step is to focus on exchanges, but on exchanges not driven by the desire for profits. It is certainly obvious at this point, but worth highlighting, that the Jews of the early modern period did not have a state. Therefore, exchanges between communities were not compelled by any form of military force. Exchanges between Jewish communities were not sanctioned under the power of the state. This does not mean that there were not differences in the power and influences of various communities (as there certainly were) but that the relationships between these communities were not bound by a singular authority. Rather the nature of these connections were derived from cultural dictates. This suggests that these exchanges should not be modeled necessarily within the same theoretical framework as the exchanges discussed above, but rather should be understood as systems of reciprocity.

One interesting question is why would the Jewish communities in each metropole help out the Jewish communities in the colonies? There were certainly limits to what the Jewish communities in each metropole would or would not do, but there are enough examples to show that the metropole communities often attempted to help out the Jews in the colonies. This can be partially explained by economic rational self-interest as the Jews in the colonies were often important cogs in Jewish mercantile networks. However,
I would also like to suggest that these connections recognize a shared solidarity amongst the dispersed Jews of the Atlantic world. Part of the reason that the metropole Jewish communities helped out is because they felt they should help out. The next sections explore some of the ways that this solidarity was built and maintained. They explore how these lateral connections are reinforced and why Jews dispersed throughout the Atlantic World would continue to care about other dispersed Jewish communities.

**The Connections of Misfortune**

In 1654 a small group of Jews fled from Recife, Brazil, to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (New York). These Jews arrived almost entirely destitute. The WIC director of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands, which included New Amsterdam, Peter Stuyvesant, was not happy to receive these Jews. In a petition to the WIC written on September 22, 1654 he detailed the reasons why the Jews should be expelled from his colony. The petition is littered with comments about Jewish deceitfulness and problematic attitudes towards Christianity. Within this anti-Semitic language was included a line stating: “the Deaconry also fearing that owing to their present indigence they might become a charge in the coming winter” (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 1995:452). One of Stuyvesant’s greatest concerns was how to deal with the poor Jews. He did not think it right for the Christian community to support these poor Jews and worried that giving these Jews support would stretch the resources of the new colony too much for its survival.

The burden of the poor was an issue that comes up repeatedly when discussing the place of Jews in a particular society. While Jews were accepted throughout Northern Europe and the Americas, this acceptance was often based upon the economic benefit that
the Jews could provide. City magistrates and colonial administrations could see the advantage of Jewish trade networks but worried about the presence of the Jewish poor (Swetschinski 2004:17-18). While the city of Amsterdam allowed Jews to worship freely and largely govern themselves, one of the responsibilities of the Jewish community was to take care of destitute Jews. The Amsterdam city administrators worried about the potential burden on the city government for providing for the indigent and therefore placed the responsibility squarely on the Jewish community (Cohen 1991:19).

This was not something new or culturally challenging to the Jews. Judaism has long held a strong ideal of charity and the Jewish communities of the early modern period kept this spirit alive (Baron 1942b:290-350). Furthermore, the wealth a Jewish merchant accrued was believed to have ultimately been a gift from God and therefore the merchant was a steward of this wealth as opposed to a true owner (Tamari 1987:36). Simply being a steward of God’s largesse meant that the entire Jewish community had some claim to these profits and the merchant was expected to contribute significantly to the community’s welfare (Snyder 2010:610). So while the various governments may have placed the responsibility for the poor on the Jewish community, the Jewish community would have taken up this responsibility anyways.

In this section I explore the trials and tribulations of misfortune for various Jewish communities. No single Jewish community could survive the misfortunes that often beset them. Neither the Jews on St. Eustatius nor Barbados had the resources to reconstruct their synagogues after hurricanes. The Amsterdam community could not easily provide for all of the poor Jewish refugees who fled to the city. The ways that the Jewish communities on each island relied on other Jewish communities when times were
hard is another powerful way that the lateral connections within the diaspora were continually remade.

**Barbados**

In 1729, the Jewish community of Shearith Israel in New York City desired to construct a synagogue. Like other Jewish communities at the time, Shearith Israel did not have the resources necessary for such a construction project on their own. They relied upon the support of other Jewish communities in building the synagogue. The Jews of Barbados provided support with Rebecca Sylvia, David Lopez and several others combining to send slightly over 22 English pounds for the synagogue’s construction (Pool and De Sola 1955:415). The Barbados community continued to support the construction efforts of Shearith Israel in the ensuing years. In 1737, Lunah Burgos donated 40 English pounds to Shearith Israel to construct a boundary wall around the New York Jewish burial ground. This was particularly important for Lunah whose husband Mordecas Burgos had been buried in New York (Pool and De Sola 1955:415).

New York did not represent the only connection. When the synagogue on St. Eustatius was damaged in the early 1770s, they sent a letter to the Barbados community asking for monetary help to repair the damaged building. The Barbados community honored the request. The Barbados Jews also provided monetary assistance for the construction of synagogues in Charleston, SC and Philadelphia (Watson 2005:55). Beyond the help with physical buildings, the Barbados community gave monetary aid to distressed communities for other projects as well. In 1792 and 1801 they sent money to Tituan (Morocco) and Tiberia (modern day Israel), respectively (Watson 2005:55).
However, aid was not a one-way street. The Jewish community of Barbados also turned to other Jewish communities for help when it was in trouble. In 1780, a hurricane devastated much of Barbados including the synagogue. The Jews of Barbados in their attempts to rebuild turned to several Jewish communities for support including the Bevis Marks community in London. The London community sent to Barbados 200 English pounds along with three Sepharim (spiritual books, probably the Torah) to assist in the rebuilding process (Barnett 1959/61).

This list is not meant to be inclusive. Certainly there were other exchanges between the Barbados community and other Jewish communities. However, even this anecdotal evidence demonstrates the ways that the Jewish community was part of a much larger support network that stretched across the Atlantic. The Jewish diaspora was often reinforced during times of trouble. When the Barbados community faced challenges, they turned to their fellow Jews as opposed to the local population. By doing so, Jews not only demonstrated one advantage of the diaspora, but also reinforced the connections between the communities. Each letter sent and received asking for support was a reminder that the Jews on Barbados were part of a larger community, a community that spanned national boundaries and geographic space. The Jews of Barbados had a shared responsibility and obligation to support other Jewish communities when they asked, just as the Barbados community could rely on these dispersed communities when help was needed. Moreover, because of the various funds that were used to support the construction of key buildings like the synagogue, these buildings became a landmark that not only spoke of a Jewish presence but were testimony to the connections that bound
Jews together throughout the diaspora. For without these connections, the synagogue itself could not have been constructed.

**St. Eustatius – “Charitable to the Needy”**

In 1775, Janet Schaw, a Scottish Lady of Quality, landed on the island of St. Eustatius. Within Miss Schaw’s vivid description of Lower Town, Oranjestad, she included a discussion of two disfigured Jews. She (1923:136-137) wrote in her journal:

The first that welcomed us ashore were a set of Jews. As I have never seen a Jew in his habit, except Mr. Diggs in the character of Shylock, I could not look on the wretches without shuddering. But I was shown two objects that set Christian cruelty in a worse light, than I could have believed it possible. The one, a wretch discovered to be innocent of a crime laid to his charge. While he was stretched on the wheel and under the hands of the executioner, he was taken down with hardly a joint in its place, yet the miserable life still remained. He was banished France, as the sight of him was a reproach. He has both his hands and one of his feet fallen off since he came to St Eustatia, where he is treated with much humanity and pity. The other is a man who was eighteen months in the Spanish inquisition, and was tortured till he has hardly the semblance of a human creature remaining. The infernal accuser at last appeared and declared he had mistaken him, for he was not the person they meant, and brought the other to them. As he seemed quite out of his senses, they did not chuse [sic] to murder him, but turned him out in the dead of night to the street, where he was found by some Dutch sailors, who being convinced of the truth of his story, and certain that he would either be remanded back to his dreadful prison or immediately murdered, had the humanity to carry him aboard their ship where their care restored his senses and memory, and they brought him here, where he remains. I was assured the truth of both these stories by many of the most respectable people of the town, by whose charity they are supported.

The poor and the abused played an important role in the societies of the early modern period. The responsibility for the poor and the role of the colony or state in providing for the poor was something of constant negotiation. It is clear that the colony and state felt responsibility for the poor as evidenced by Stuyvesant’s comments above.

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20 This is an interesting note for it shows how Jews within the British Isles were mostly limited to London and therefore even by 1775 a Scottish woman would have had few chances to directly interact with an openly practicing Jew. The reference to Shylock suggests how important this fictional character was for the British imagination.
If Stuyvesant truly had no concern for the Jewish poor (or at least knew that no others had concern for this impoverished group), then he would have simply let them starve without saying a word. Rather he wanted to deport the Jews so that they would no longer be his responsibility. Although a harsh decision, Stuyvesant partially was basing his decision on the limited resources available to the nascent colony in the American frontier.

However, frontier societies were not the only places that were concerned about caring for the poor. In Amsterdam, the city officials made it the Jewish community's responsible to take care of their own indigent. This was a responsibility the Jewish community took seriously, particularly since they knew that if they ignored this responsibility they could lose their rights and protections granted to them by the city administrators. Therefore, the Jewish community of Amsterdam created a number of institutions to deal with the less fortunate (Bodian 1997; Swetschinski 2004; Roitman 2005).

The stress on the Amsterdam community grew throughout the 17th and into the 18th century. Amsterdam had become a refuge for Jews fleeing from numerous repressive regimes both in Iberian controlled lands as well as throughout Eastern Europe. Many of these refugees arrived with little to nothing and relied upon the charity of the various Jewish congregations in Amsterdam (Schama 1987:592). The Amsterdam communities did not have the resources to support this refugee population. One of the solutions to this problem was to outsource their poor. As noted historian of American Jewry Jacob Rader Marcus stated, “it was cheaper to send a man abroad where he might find ways to rehabilitate himself than it was to carry him as a pauper on the community rolls” (1970:98). It was cheaper for the Amsterdam community to pay one lump sum that
provided passage and provisions for an impoverished individual to be sent across the Atlantic than it was to continually pay for that individual year after year.

The Jews sent out from Amsterdam went to a number of locations throughout Europe and the Atlantic World. In Robert Cohen's (1991) study of the Suriname community he explored the distribution of the *despachados* (the poor being sent away from Amsterdam) between 1759 and 1814. His analysis shows that the large Jewish community of Suriname received 135 individuals. Another 111 individuals were sent to the Caribbean with the Jewish community of Curaçao receiving the majority (73). The much smaller Jewish community of St. Eustatius received 18 *despachados*, while the larger British communities of Jamaica and Barbados received 17 and 2 *despachados*, respectively. While the outsourcing of the poor from Amsterdam did cross national boundaries, it is clear that the majority were sent to other Dutch controlled areas. Given the concern about dealing with the impoverished, it seems likely that significant numbers of poor Jews being sent to other nations and their colonies had to be done delicately.

One further element should be noted for the exportation of impoverished Jews throughout the Jewish Atlantic. Janet Schaw describes two of these impoverished Jews when she arrives on the island. Both of these Jews have physical scars from harsh treatment doled out to them in other parts of the world. Such individuals would have served as a potent reminder of the challenges Jews faced. The Jews on St. Eustatius did not live in a bubble (or an island paradise). While no evidence of physical violence towards Jews has been discovered through the documents on St. Eustatius, the presence of these *despechados* provided visible evidence of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, the Jews on St. Eustatius and other islands would have been aware of events occurring in other
Jewish communities, as evidenced by the fact that the story of the destruction of the Speightstown Synagogue on Barbados was republished in numerous newspapers throughout the Americas (Arbell 2002:207-208). These factors may help explain why the Jewish community on St. Eustatius sought to minimize its presence.

**Conclusion - Exchange and Value**

For each island, I highlighted two different forms of relationships between the island and the larger Jewish diaspora. On Barbados a selection of exchanges occurred where support was given both to and from the Barbados Jews to other Jewish communities throughout the diaspora. The same phenomenon occurred on St. Eustatius as can be seen by the Barbados community giving aid to the St. Eustatius community in 1772. St. Eustatius during the late second half of the 18th century became a popular place for sending the poor. At a far higher percentage than on Barbados, St. Eustatius received the poor from the overpopulated Amsterdam community. These exchanges helped reaffirm the connections between the various Jewish communities in the Jewish diaspora.

In both cases, it is possible to frame these forms of connections into a language of resource management. The small dispersed Jewish communities had limited resources. Without a state to rely on to support them in troubling times, these dispersed Jewish communities relied on each other for support. Moreover, the obligation of taking care of the less fortunate was not possible by any single community so the impoverished were sent throughout the diaspora to share the resource burden of supporting those who could not support themselves. The result is that these dispersed communities become dependent upon each other for their continued survival and prosperity.
Yet such a reading of resource management is entirely a functionalist reading with
the suggestion that the act was based in the end on the rational self-interest of the
community, while failing to prove that this was in fact the most rational choice. Rather
the exchanges of money between the communities can best be seen within the
anthropological literature of "the gift" (per Mauss 1990). The money was given
sometimes because it was asked but often unsolicited, and it was given with no
expectation of return. The money was not being sent to the other community for some
object to be returned. Rather such money was given (sometimes for specific purposes)
with no expectation of exchange. The giving of the gift did create reciprocity as seen by
the constant giving and taking of gifts through time. It needs to be explored about
whether such reciprocity was between particular Jewish communities or rather between
each individual Jewish community and the larger Jewish diaspora. That is to say, and
some of the evidence suggests this, that when the Barbados community received a gift
from the Statian community, it could reciprocate by providing a gift to another struggling
Jewish community and not necessarily to the Statian community.

Many of these gifts were in currency, and thus the ultimate anonymous object.
Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that this money was often used to buy particular
material goods and it is within these material goods that the giver can be found in the new
location. When a Jew on St. Eustatius or Barbados looked upon the synagogue on each
island they would have seen something that was not only the product of their small
community but was also the product of the larger Jewish diaspora. The bricks and
limestone blocks, the chandeliers and benches, were only possible because of the
donations of those throughout the diaspora.
One of the interesting juxtapositions of the discussion above is the idea of money as a gift versus the exchange of that which is most hard to alienate, individual persons.

The movement of the poor through the Jewish diaspora was really the movement of responsibility. Each community who received those poor souls agreed to accept the responsibility of supporting them with the resources that they have available. The despechados through their personal stories, their accents, mannerisms, relationships, and idiosyncrasies provided a human face to a shared fate within a larger diasporic community. Like the stones of the synagogue, the people within it reminded the Jews on each island of their connections and shared responsibilities to a larger Jewish diaspora. These were exchanges and responsibilities built not entirely upon resource maximization or rational self-interest, but instead on religious and cultural ideas of morality.

Religious Relics

In April 29, 1657, two Jews, Abraham Chillon and Abraham Messias received a Holy Scroll from the Parnassim of Amsterdam to be taken to the island of Barbados. Surviving in the record books is this testimony by the two Jews (in Emmanuel 1955:19):

We, Abraham Chillaó and Abraham Mesiah, declare that we received from the gentleman of the Mahamad a Sepher Thora of fine parchment with its yellow taffeta lining; a band of red damask; a cloak of green and red satin with gold lace border; a cloth of green camelhair with white flowers for the reading desk, and senifa [sic] of mottled blue; some curtains of green damask with fringes; a flowered satin cloth of dark red and white to cover the Sepher at the reading desk; two remonim of gilt wood, and a box containing the Holy Scroll and all what has been given to us for delivery to the Island of Barbados to our brethren there who, at the behest of this K.[ahal] K.[ados], shall pay what the gentlemen of the Mahamad may ask. Amsterdam, the 16 Yar of 5417 (April 29, 1657).
[signed] Abraham Chillon

Unfortunately, this scroll and all of its accoutrements may have been victim to the vicissitudes of transatlantic travel as the Amsterdam community gave Aaraó Israel
Capadose a second Sepher Torah to be sent to Barbados on September 16, 1657 (Emmanuel 1955:19). Perhaps, this second Torah scroll was given as a replacement for the loss of the previously gifted scroll.

The Torah scrolls were the center of Jewish intellectual, cultural, and religious life (Snyder 2010:615). Each scroll was the product of significant labor as they were/are written by hand on vellum. The writing must be done by a certified religious scribe known as a sofer (Snyder 2010:615). The small communities of the Caribbean, particularly during their early years, could not produce their own Torah scrolls. Therefore, they relied upon more well established communities to provide their early scrolls.

The job of asking for and transporting such valuable items was probably given to esteemed members of the Jewish community. It would have been an honor to receive the scrolls. The solemnity of the giving is reflected in the detailed attestation by Abraham Chillon given above. The giving of said scrolls was so important that they seem to have been always noted in the various minute books.

The scrolls, alongside other important religious items such as remonim (decorations for the ends of the scroll rollers) and menorahs, accrued their own history as they travelled through the diaspora. This history would have been known by the community itself. Thus the Barbados community knew of the origins of their Torah scrolls. Even today, the Jewish community of St. Thomas proudly displays a silver menorah that originated in the Jewish community of St. Eustatius from the 18th century (Judah Cohen personal communication). Thus, the usage and visibility of these important religious objects was a constant reminder of the connections between the Jews on the
islands and other Jewish communities. While their religious significance will be further highlighted in the next chapter, the value of these goods often rested in their deep history and their history of movement.

Moreover, these objects sometimes required maintenance. Certainly attempts were taken to protect these religious objects but they still faced the challenges of their environment, as demonstrated by the lost Torah of Barbados. The Torah itself was not simply an object of display but also an object that was used on every Sabbath and religious holiday. This means that it would have received use wear. Like the original production of the Torah, the repair of such items needed to be done by specialists. When the St. Eustatius Torah needed repair, they first turned to the Jewish community of Curaçao. The Curaçao community replied that they could not perform the necessary repairs and thus the Statian community sent their Sepher Torah to Amsterdam (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:520).

The Torah scroll and other religious relics were essential pieces for the practicing of Judaism. Such items helped create an environment where Jews could practice freely and appropriately. Like the synagogue buildings themselves, which were partially funded by the gifts of other Jewish communities, many of these artifacts came from abroad. These networks of relic exchange highlight the reliance of the island communities on the larger communities for their religious needs. However, more than that, when a Jew walked into the synagogue compound they were surrounded by objects of the diaspora. The buildings were partially built off the donations of other Jewish communities, the menorah lit during Hanukah had come from across the seas, and the Torah scroll that the Cantor read off of came from Amsterdam. All of these items had a
past within the diaspora and a past that was known by the Jews on each island. Indeed, this past was part of their value. Through the use of these items, the Jews reinforced their place within a larger diaspora and connected them to their diasporic brethren throughout the world.

**Religious Leadership and Scholars**

Neither the St. Eustatius nor Barbados communities were large enough to train their own religious leaders. Rather they relied on other Jewish communities to provide these religious officials. Similar to the movement of religious objects through the diaspora, Jewish religious leaders and scholars also moved through the diaspora. These individuals played an important role in binding Jewish communities together. These travelling Jewish intellectuals not only brought with them significant knowledge, but also the latest religious debates and news about Jewish communities throughout the diaspora.

**Barbados**

On Barbados, the first *Haham* (Rabbi), H.H. Lopez came from Amsterdam (Samuel 1936:8). He had spent several years in Brazil before returning to Amsterdam after the Portuguese seized Dutch Brazil. He would serve the *Nidhe Israel* community for twelve years before taking up the same position in the Curaçao community (Samuel 1936:8). While Amsterdam provided the first Rabbis for the Barbados community, the 18th century Barbados community turned to London for their religious leaders (Samuel 1936:3).

However, the Barbados Jews were not always happy with their religious leaders. It appears that several of them enjoyed the island life too much. In 1797, the Barbados *mahamad* requested that the Barbados community send them a married *Hazan* (Cantor)
as any unmarried one "may contract wicked habits" (in Westphal 1993:35). Indeed, this was inspired by a particularly lazy Hazan who "would scarcely teach the children the Hebrew and Spanish although he engaged so to do, ... his attachment to strong drink, and a natural slothfulness of disposition subjected him to continual complaints of disease; and in the end he fell a martyr to that obnoxious practice and indolence" (in Westphal 1993:35). This Hazan was ultimately dismissed by the mahamad who held the power to fire and hire religious leaders.

While the Barbados community could not train their religious leaders they did have certain qualifications that they preferred. They expressly requested religious leaders who spoke Spanish or Portuguese. This was not only so they could teach the Iberian languages to the younger generations but also because they would pronounce Hebrew in a way familiar to Sephardic Jews. It was a clear sign that the Barbados community saw itself as largely Sephardic and moreover found this Sephardic heritage worth keeping by teaching it to the next generations.

The most famous travelling Rabbi to settle on Barbados was Haim Isaac Carigal. Carigal was born in Hebron. He spent the majority of his adult life travelling throughout the Jewish diaspora with stops in the Mediterranean, Eastern and Western Europe, and the Americas. His first exposure to the Caribbean came in the 1762 when he spent two years with the Jewish community of Curacao (Emmanuel 1957:482-483). After that Carigal went to the Newport community in Rhode Island where he became close friends with Reverend Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale University. In 1774, Carigal moved to Barbados and became the Rabbi of the community (Emmanuel 1957:483). Barbados was Carigal's last stop as he died on the island. His tombstone is one of the most elaborately
decorated stones in the burial grounds and has one of the longest and most complex inscriptions (Figure 34). Furthermore it contains several images highlighting Carigal’s life including two hands set in the Priestly Blessing referencing Carigal’s lineage as a Choén, the tools utilized by a Mohel, a quill suggesting he was trained as a Sofer, and his honored position as the Shofer blower. Carigal’s presence on Barbados not only fulfilled a religious need but he brought with him a wealth of knowledge about other Jewish communities in the diaspora. His itinerant history helped break down the insularity of the Barbados Jewish community.

Figure 34: Haim Isaac Carigal’s tombstone on Barbados (Photo by Sidney Shapiro)

The Barbados community in order to encourage the arrival of such travelling intelligentsia and Rabbis constructed a building within the synagogue compound to house these individuals. This building was supported by the community itself and the upkeep was done by the community (Community Records 1696-1887). In this way, the
Barbados community constructed a space to encourage travelling Jews (at least a certain type of travelling Jews) to visit the island.

**St. Eustatius**

St. Eustatius relied almost exclusively on religious leaders from Curacao. The first recorded Hazan, Jacob Robles, was from there. Upon his death in 1795, Curacao sent another Hazan to the island. The Curacao community in the 18th century served as the religious mother community for the small island of St. Eustatius.

There are no records of any prestigious visitors such as Carigal visiting the smaller island of St. Eustatius. Nevertheless, St. Eustatius was probably on the circuit for the travelling Jewish intelligentsia and emissaries, and the community at least twice gave money to emissaries from the Holy Land (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:521-522).

The inventory of Elias Gomes and Jacob Robles included ten bedsteads and beddings. These were listed under family use, although it is an exceptional number of beds and bedsteads. It is quite possible that some of these beds were to be used by visiting dignitaries. As one of the religious leaders of the St. Eustatius community, it was probable that Jacob Robles would have played a role in hosting these visitors.

**Tombstone Languages**

By considering the lateral connections that tied Jewish communities together, we can return to the issue of language choice represented on the tombstones to provide nuance to the argument made in the previous chapter. As mentioned, the majority of the Jews on Barbados were Sephardic in origin and this Sephardic heritage was represented by the presence of the Iberian languages on the tombstones. However, the Iberian languages were more than just a language of heritage as the use of these languages in
Jewish daily life helped serve other purposes as well. The ability to speak Spanish and Portuguese would have been a major advantage for Jewish merchants on Barbados because few English had similar linguistic abilities. Many of the Jews on Barbados had family and social ties to both Jews and non-Jews in Iberia as well as in the Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic colonies. These were both economic as well as social relationships. The tombstones show that the Iberian languages were common for well over the first 100 years of the community's existence. One of the reasons for these Iberian languages continued presence on an English island was because many of the Jews on Barbados would be using these Iberian languages within their economic dealings. Thus, it was not simply a language of the past but also a language of the present for the Sephardic Jews on the island.

Despite these complex relationships between Sephardic Jews, the prominence of Iberian languages begins to disappear by the last quarter of the 18th century. Why? In part, the Jewish community had become more and more reliant on the London community of Bevis Marks for most of its religious and social needs. This included charity money, religious leaders, and a political voice. The London community's location in the metropole made them a powerful resource for the Jews of Barbados to use in political negotiations on the British island. Additionally, the strength of the British Navy and its ability to enforce the economics of mercantilism further restricted Jewish trade within the emerging British Empire. The mercantilist system limited the movement of non-British goods on and off of Barbados as well as severely limiting trade with non-British merchants. This led the Jews on Barbados to shift their trade networks from Iberian controlled regions to the British Atlantic. Thus, the Jews on Barbados needed to
know English as opposed to Portuguese or Spanish for the majority of their business activities, which helps explain the disappearance of Iberian from the tombstones (Figure 35).

Like Barbados, the Statian Jews often placed an Iberian language upon their tombstones (Figure 36). For the Statian Jews whose life was tied to transatlantic trade, these Iberian languages would have been important for much of their business transactions. The government of St. Eustatius recognized the importance of the Sephardic Jews' linguistic ability and one Jew, Daniel Nuñez Henriquez, served as a clerk for the island government and as a translator of Spanish and Portuguese into Dutch (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970:523). Interestingly, Dutch does not appear on the tombstones despite the fact that most Statian Jews had business relationships with the Netherlands. Thus, not every language of commerce was placed on the tombstones. The
lack of Dutch will be explored in the next chapter. However, for both islands, we need to consider the presence of Iberian languages as not only a language of the past but also of a language of their everyday life within a new environment.

![Language choices on St. Eustatius](image)

**Figure 36:** Distribution of Language choices on St. Eustatius. It was not possible to explore language change overtime because of the small sample size (n=19).

**Conclusion**

This chapter explored how the Jews on Barbados and St. Eustatius maintained lateral connections with other Jews in the diaspora. These relationships were continually created and re-created. Through time the nature of these relationships changed and different relationships often formed (both in location and type). These relationships
played an important part in the diasporan's lives. They were not just keys for the
diasporic community's survival and prosperity but also for the continual maintenance of a
diasporic identity. Various relationships between the communities tied these dispersed
people together. They provided a constant reminder of being part of a larger diaspora and
the diverse spaces in which the Jewish community on each island inhabited.

The chapter began with a discussion about the link between Jews and capitalism.
This is a link that has a long history in the thinking of the West and has been something
that various scholars have tried to tease out. This has led to a number of studies that have
focused on the economic attitudes and policies of both Jews and their surrounding
hostlands. Through these analyses important links of commerce are highlighted. Often
these economic explorations are linked to concepts such as kinship but the final emphasis
of analysis is on the economic models. Jews in these cases are usually represented as
economic rationalists who utilize their dispersion for their own political-economic
advantage.

The relationship between Jews and the development of modern capitalism is one
that needs to be explicitly discussed when exploring the Jews of the early modern period.
The discussion here has suggested some of the reasons why Jews filled the roles that they
did within the colonial systems. The nature of Jewish economic networks with their
reliance on trade with other Jews, New Christians, and Iberia undoubtedly played an
important part in the maintenance of a Jewish diaspora.

However, I also moved beyond a purely economic reading of these lateral
connections. While highlighting the economic rationality of the decisions by Jewish
groups, I have also presented alternative ways that the Jewish communities created
relationships. These discussions have explored systems of exchange where the value is not necessarily upon economic maximization but instead value dictated upon other cultural terms. Religious needs and the ethical responsibilities extended across geographic boundaries tying the various Jewish communities together under a singular diasporic relationship.

While I have schematically separated economic relationships from non-economic relationships, the truth is that these were both involved in each Jew’s live, and that they informed each other. These relationships shaped both individual diasporic communities and the larger diaspora. Due to various internal and external pressures the shape of these connections changed through time. The Barbados community, although starting out with a strong Sephardic heritage rooted/routed through the Sephardic community in Amsterdam, became more Anglicized and shifted its connections to the Bevis Marks community of London. The St. Eustatius community was freer to maintain strong connections with the Amsterdam community. Nevertheless, it also developed strong relationships with the communities surrounding it. It should not be surprising then, that when St. Eustatius went into serious economic decline, the majority of Statian Jews did not return to Amsterdam, but rather settled on the emerging trade entrepôt of Danish St. Thomas (Cohen 2004). St. Thomas had a similar economic, political, and physical climate to the one the Statian community had become accustomed too.

These lateral connections that tied the various Jewish communities of the Atlantic together were inscribed in the material culture of the community itself. The language choice on the tombstones provides one avenue for considering the changing relationships between the various Jewish communities. Furthermore, the synagogues on each island
were constructed partially out of the funds provided from other Jewish communities. Additionally, many of the key religious relics were from other communities. The use of the synagogue and these religious relics would have been constant reminders for the Jewish community of their connections to other Jewish communities. Perhaps even more powerfully, the diversity of the Jewish community itself spoke of the connections to a larger Jewish diaspora. From the religious leaders who came from various locations to the poor supported by the community, the simple diversity of origins helped ensure that the Jewish communities were not insular but part of a much larger network of Jewish communities.
Chapter VII: Relationship with the Homeland(s)

Three thousand years with no place to be
And they want me to give up my milk and honey
Don’t you see, it’s not about the land or the sea
Not the country but the dwelling of his majesty

Jerusalem, if I forget you
Fire not gonna come from me tongue
Jerusalem, if I forget you
Let my right hand forget what it’s supposed to do
Jerusalem, if I forget you

-from Hip-Hop artist Matisyahu and his song “Jerusalem”

In hip-hop artist Matisyahu’s song “Jerusalem” he makes an ode to the Jewish homeland centered on the city of Jerusalem. Based upon Psalm 137, Matisyahu’s lyrics suggest that this is a connection that is far more complex than the simple idea of dispersal from a particular location. The homeland is a complex interweaving of origin narratives along with stories of dispersal. While the homeland may be a physical space on the map, it does not necessarily have to be. Moreover, a return to a physical space may not be the ultimate goal. When exploring the Jewish diaspora to the Caribbean, scholars have to acknowledge the fact that these Jews did not return to the “homeland” of the Middle East despite that being possible for many. Rather, as will be shown, the relationship to the homeland combined narratives of the past with Jewish eschatology. While the previous chapters have explicitly highlighted the way that diasporas interact with space, this chapter introduces a diasporans relationship to time. Previously time has been the non-active tapestry that events unfold upon (i.e. the narrative structure of mapping change overtime), but here I will suggest the powerful ways that the Jews interacted with their past and future.
I would like to start by exploring the relationship to the homeland through a familiar narrative of maintained traditions. I will explore the various structures and material culture through the lens of exploring sustained cultural traditions within a new environment. However, a simple one to one model of transmission of the tradition feeds into the idea that traditions are necessarily pristine and pure, particularly the closer they are to an origin. One of the fascinating and challenging features of a diaspora is the fact that while the connection with a homeland suggests a timeless past and an ideal model to strive for, the diasporan community is nevertheless living within the challenges of its present circumstances. Thus, while traditions may be presented as unchanging cultural features, they are often actively selected to be maintained. Major questions to be asked of any diaspora are why certain traditions are selected consciously or unconsciously and what features in the current context led to that tradition being chosen. As anthropologist J. Lorand Matory argues, “Diaspora scholars would do equally well to recognize that commemoration is always strategic in its selections, exclusions, and interpretations” (2006:163, emphasis original). I will argue that in part the selection of particular cultural and religious traditions within the Caribbean were often more oriented toward the future than they were in recreating the past.

Complicating this picture is the deep history of the Jewish diaspora in which multiple dispersals have occurred. The narratives related to these dispersals differed. Highlighting which dispersals formed a collective memory and which dispersals did not can provide insights into the nature of the relationship to the homeland. Moreover, where different narratives of the homeland exist, these clashes help divide the diasporic community. Within the Caribbean we see a Sephardic majority who invoked both Israel
and Iberia as homelands. As historian Miriam Bodian has shown for the Jews of Amsterdam (many of whom were the first Jews in the Caribbean), Iberia served as powerful homeland with these Jews often calling themselves la nacao, the Portuguese word for “nation,” as opposed to referencing themselves as Jews or Hebrews (Bodian 1997). Indeed, at times the dispersed Iberian Jews and New Christians established social networks and ties that relied upon a shared Iberianness as opposed to a shared religion.

On Barbados and St. Eustatius, the dominant Sephardic population lived side-by-side an Ashkenazi minority. Both island were not big enough to support separate synagogues for each group and therefore these two groups lived and worshipped together. Such a situation complicates the relationship to the homeland. It is necessary to describe the dynamic relationships to the various homelands of the Jewish diaspora – Iberia, Eastern Europe, and Israel – and suggest the reasons why certain homelands were highlighted while others were not.

I will argue that the synagogue compound and burial grounds on each island can best be understood within Michel Foucault’s theory of the heterotopia (1986). Arriving within the walls of the compound helped transport the Jews on each island from the Caribbean to a place recognized by Jews throughout the diaspora. Within these walls, Jews not only saw familiar sites and friends, spoke their traditional languages and worshiped the religion of their ancestors, but they also interacted with this space within a framework of time different than what they experienced on the island. Sabbaths and holidays, when coupled with the Jewish calendar, created an alternative temporal universe for Jews to live.
Tied to this narrative of the homeland were the messianic leanings of many of the Jews in the 17th and 18th century Caribbean. Part of Jewish messianic belief required Jews to spread throughout the world and establish places of worship within these various locations. Messianic prophecies included the homeland as not just a narrative of the past but also as an orientation for the future. Thus, we must interpret the actions of Jews on Barbados and St. Eustatius as both a relationship to the past but also as a relationship to the future.

**Traditions of the Homeland**

The ruins of the original synagogue still remain on St. Eustatius, while the reconstructed synagogue from 1833 stands on Barbados. Both of these synagogues have a similar form to the more famous early modern synagogues in Amsterdam, London, and Newport, RI. All of these follow a pattern of what Laura Leibman calls the neo-Solomonic order. This design for synagogues was an outgrowth of Amsterdam Rabbi Jacob Judah Leon de Templo's (ca. 1603-1675) "messianic vision of the Tabernacle and Temple" (Leibman 2011:14). Leibman argues that the key features of the neo-Solomonic order is "a rectangular basilica that is preceded by a portico and contains a women’s balcony, usually with latticework and held up by Solomonic columns, ideally twelve in number; a central tevah; and the use of the divine proportion of 37:100 that echoes that of the Temple and symbolizes the meeting place of God and Israel" (2011:22). The tevah, also known as a bimah (Meek 1995:8), was a raised platform where the Cantor/Hazzan and invited individuals would have read from the sacred Torah Scrolls.

The St. Eustatius synagogue incorporates some of these elements. The synagogue has a rectangular basilica. There was a second story balcony that extended around three
sides of the basilica (only the east wall did not have the balcony) which would have been the women’s gallery. Whether this second floor had latticework or not is unknown. Furthermore, while the columns have been destroyed, excavations in 2007 showed that there were twelve pillars to support the second floor balcony (R. Grant Gilmore, III personal communication). The location of the tevah can only be surmised and it is probable that it rested in a location to create the desired 37:100 ratio. Since the wooden floor of the synagogue has long since been lost there are no architectural or archaeological evidence remains to suggest exactly where the tevah was situated.

Like the St. Eustatius synagogue, the reconstructed Barbados synagogue also has a rectangular basilica. While we do not what the original synagogue looks like, we know that the reconstruction was built out of the ruins of the original synagogue and matched its dimensions (Karl Watson personal communication). There was a portico and a women’s balcony supported by columns.

In both synagogues the Torah scroll was stored in the ark on the most easterly wall. When not being read, it would have been shuttered in the ark protecting the sacred scroll. As mentioned previously, the Torah scroll had to be created within certain traditions and neither of the discussed islands had the requisite conditions to create their own Torah scrolls. Therefore the Torah scroll as an object represented the connection to other Jewish communities. But more than this, the Torah scroll was the essential object of the Jewish religion. It was the one thing around which all Jews, no matter whether Ashkenazi or Sephardic, could agree. The Torah scroll was always written in Hebrew, the language of the ancient homeland, and when the Torah scroll was read during religious services it was read in Hebrew.
Moreover, since the time of the second temple the Torah scroll has served as a "portable fatherland" (Safran 2005:44). With the dispersal of Jews, and the inability of many Jews to visit the Temple — and of course after the destruction of the Second Temple this meant all Jews — the institution of the synagogue arose. These synagogues were created to provide Jews the opportunity to explore God's revelations contained within the *Torah* and to discuss its meanings (Shinan 2004:1929). This shift from Temple to synagogues firmly created the idea of the "People of the Book" and placed the religious basis of the Jewish people within the *Torah* and its people as opposed to a singular center. This meant that Judaism could travel anywhere and be practiced anywhere as longs there was the presence of the *Torah* and a minyan. While a synagogue aided in the practicing of Judaism, it ultimately was not essential. As Salo Baron (1942a:62) states: "the exilic community shifted the emphasis from the place of worship, the sanctuary, to the gathering of worshipers, the congregation, assembled at any time and any place in God's wide world."

The eastern wall was the wall closest to Jerusalem. The ark was to be the focus of the Jewish ritual services and the direction that individuals faced during services. Thus, in facing the ark, the Jews were also facing Jerusalem and their ancient homeland. Each time Jews came into the synagogue they were reminded of their connection to the homeland through their religious traditions. The orientation of the synagogue itself brought the Jewish body in-line with this homeland connection (Figure 37). "By orienting all prayerful assemblies in the direction of Jerusalem it also focused world Jewry's attention on a single goal" (Baron 1942a:75).
The eastern orientation of the synagogue and the Hebrew on the Torah scroll would have been recognized by all Jews on the islands, both Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Yet, these maintained traditions did have differences. There was a distinct difference between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew. So although the text may be the same, the reading of the text would be in a fashion that was familiar to the Sephardim and not the Ashkenazim. This pronunciation was not something trivialized as the Barbados community specifically requested a Rabbi from Bevis Marks that was in the Sephardic tradition as they preferred this pronunciation of Hebrew (Westphal 1993:35).

The synagogues on both islands had a second floor that was reserved for women and children. This second floor was a balcony allowing for women to look down upon the reader and the ark but minimized their visibility to the men below. There may have
been a screen setup to further obfuscate the presence of women to the men below. The result was a gender differentiated religious service that attempted to remove sexual tension. Sexual purity was a major concern for the Jewish community as will be seen in the discussion of the mikvoat.

The mikveh on each island were also important traditions transplanted from the homeland into the Caribbean islands. The mikveh on each island had to be either fed by a spring or filled with rain-water as dictated by Leviticus 11:36 (Leibman 2009:116). The Barbados mikveh was filled by a natural spring while the St. Eustatius mikveh would have been filled from collected rainwater. Both fit the demands of how the mikveh was to be used. The mikveh usages were informed by traditions from the homeland and were viewed by the Jews on the island as necessary constructions to practice a proper Jewish life. They were understood as deeply-held and vital institutions for the Jewish community. While the ritual purification could have taken place in the ocean, the specific construction of the mikveh on each island was a sign of the importance the Jewish communities placed upon upholding this cultural practice within a new context.

The neo-Solomonic order was a 17th century development. Although seen mainly in Sephardic contexts, the form of these synagogues was not reminiscent of the pre-expulsion synagogues of Iberia (Leibman 2011:23; see also Halperin 1969; Meeks 1995:100-119). Leon de Templo in his design elements attempted to re-create the key elements of the original Temple and Tabernacle. In doing so, he was making connections to a deep history of the Jewish diaspora partially bypassing the Iberian past. Similar to the invocation of Israel in the name of many of American Jewish communities, the
design itself was meant to draw connections to the shared origins and camaraderie of all Jews within the diaspora.

**The Burial Grounds**

The burial ground was an important part in the construction of a Jewish community on the islands. As Salo Baron states, “the cemetery appeared as second only to the synagogue among communal institutions” (1948b:146). Yet, the burial grounds were less flexible than the synagogue. While synagogue services could be held in any building, the burial ground needed to be a restricted area where only Jews could be buried. As stated in the fifth chapter, this requirement meant that the Jews on each island had to negotiate with the host society for the placement of the burial ground. There are certain ideals for the placement of the burial ground. The *Mishnah* tractate *Baba Batra* states that burial ground should be located on the edges of town (Terrell 2005:58). This would place the ritually impure burial ground away from the synagogue and the *mikveh*. The St. Eustatius burial ground lived up to this tradition (whether by choice or not is unclear) while the Barbados burial ground surrounded the synagogue. Although not ideal, compromises concerning the placement of the burial grounds were not unprecedented. The history of Jewish burial grounds throughout the medieval and early modern period in Europe show cultural and political negotiations about their placement (Baron 1948b:146-157). Thus, the Barbados community was following a tradition of compromise that was well established within the diaspora.

The burial grounds were an important location for Jewish ceremony. Death incurred several different rituals including a proper period of mourning and particular funeral rites. In the surviving Jewish wills from Barbados, it was common for the will
giver to explicitly state that they desired to be buried in the Jewish burial ground. Furthermore, several spoke of being buried according to the customs of the Jewish people. While not common, several wills included money to be paid for individuals to observe mourning rituals or otherwise gave money “for mourning.”  

The Barbados Burial Ground

Many of the inscriptions on the tombstones (69%) included Hebrew. The placement of Hebrew upon the tombstones indexed the connection to the common origins of all Jews. The presence of Hebrew was relatively consistent throughout time. On Barbados, Hebrew is on the majority of the tombstones (72%) between the years of 1660-1850 (Figure 38). During the early years of the community there are a lower percentage of tombstones with Hebrew, just 47% of the tombstones before 1700, on them because of the relative lack of Hebrew knowledge within the large community. During the 1650s and 1660s Jews were just having a chance to emerge from a crypto-Jewish life in Europe. Because of this, many Jews had not had a chance in the early 17th century to learn Hebrew, particularly when they could not practice Judaism openly. While there was a re-emergence of Hebrew within the European communities and on the islands, this was a process that took time. Hence, the earliest years saw a lower percentage of tombstones utilizing Hebrew.

On the other end of the temporal scale, Hebrew on the tombstones begins to disappear after the 1850s (13% of the stones). This was a time period when the Jewish community was dwindling in size and becoming more integrated with the larger Barbados community. The tombstone evidence suggests that during this period the use of

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21 See the wills of Abraham Lindo, Jr. (1784), Rebecca Nunez (1775), David Pinheiro (1781), and Isaac Pinheiro (1796) for examples of money being paid to mourners.
Hebrew, and possibly the strength of connections to Judaism, was shifting. It may be a sign of less strict religious observation and Hebrew knowledge. However, I would warn in making too simple an argument that the disappearance of Hebrew on the tombstones represented a lessening of Jewish cultural traditions. The tombstones were still placed within the Jewish burial ground – as opposed to Christian burial grounds, public burial grounds, or private burial grounds – and it may be a reflection of language losing its important role in defining a Jewish life.

Hebrew was a language almost entirely limited to religious contexts. For most Jewish individuals on the islands, they spoke and read Hebrew when considering the Torah and its related commentaries. The Torah was the center of Jewish religious life as mentioned above and learning Hebrew was seen as a key part of living a religious life. Thus, it is not surprising that Hebrew frequents Jewish tombstones. The use of Hebrew was part of living life as a Jew and practicing a Jewish religion. It also referenced a uniquely Jewish history. Importantly, its use spoke of the shared origins of all Jews on the island, both Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and it is likely that as the community developed, the greater presence of Hebrew indicated the expanding of the Jewish community to include the diverse origins of its members.
Figure 38: Changing use of Hebrew through time on Barbados tombstones

While Hebrew has a relatively constant presence on the tombstones on Barbados, the presence of the two Iberian languages (Portuguese and Spanish) suggests the connections to another homeland. The time on Iberia helped shape much of the lives of the Sephardic Jews in the Caribbean and one of those were in the languages that they held onto. The Barbados community specifically requested Rabbi's from Bevis Marks that could speak Spanish or Portuguese. This was not only recognition of this language as a common language of the community but also so that the Rabbi could teach this language to the younger generation (Westphal 1993:35). The community took an active role in maintaining its connection with Iberia.

The Barbados tombstones provide a diachronic window into the use of Iberian languages through time (Figure 39). Of the tombstones up to the year 1900, 84% (n=283) had at least part of their inscription in an Iberian language. In comparison, 70%
(n=235) of the tombstones include Hebrew and only 50% (n=169) of the stones include English. Thus, the Iberian languages were the most common on the tombstones.22

![Language Change Through Time, Barbados](image)

**Figure 39: Language choice through time on Barbados tombstones**

Tracing the changing nature of the Iberian languages on the Barbados tombstones highlights the changing nature of the relationship to the homeland (Figure 40). In the first twenty-five years of Jewish settlement (and burial in the synagogue compound), tombstones either had just an Iberian language or included inscriptions in both an Iberian language and Hebrew. It is perhaps not surprising that these early years saw a preponderance of Iberian inscriptions. Many of the early Jews on Barbados only spoke an Iberian language.23 Particularly coming from a crypto-Jewish past, a number of the Jews would not have had institutionalized familiarity with Hebrew. Hence, it is not

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22 These languages are glossed as Iberian simply because of the complexity of the languages on the tombstones. While many were recognizable as Portuguese or Spanish, many others, either due to the short nature of the inscription or language mixing, could not be determined. Many Sephardic Jews had experiences in both Spain and Portugal and probably had familiarity with both languages. Moreover, the relatively small population would have precluded the ability for Jews to marry strictly along lines of strict Iberian lineages. Therefore, I have left the gloss of Iberian languages, because they both played a role in the maintenance of a Sephardic identity on the islands.

23 David DeCosta’s 1685 will was written in Spanish.
surprising that in these early years Jews chose inscriptions within the languages that they knew. As Jews could practice Judaism freely both in the Caribbean and in Northern Europe, they had more of a chance of having religious leaders who spoke and read Hebrew, and could pass this language on to the next generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Languages on Tombstones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1650-1675</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1675-1690</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1690-1700</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700-1725</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725-1750</td>
<td>Hebrew and Portuguese/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-1775</td>
<td>Portuguese/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775-1800</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1825</td>
<td>Hebrew and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825-1850</td>
<td>Hebrew, Portuguese/Spanish, and English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 40: Language change through time on Barbados tombstones

During the next 25 years, all but one of the tombstones had an Iberian language on it. There were more tombstones with just Iberian on it then stones that included combinations of Iberian, Hebrew, and English. This was still a period of immigration to the island as well as the period when the generations of just Iberian language speakers were beginning to pass away. In the next fifty years, the number of stones with just
Iberian upon them begins to dwindle. In the following years stones were more likely to have an Iberian language and Hebrew or were trilingual (an Iberian language, Hebrew, and English). This was a reflection of the Jewish community re-Judaizing. Much of Jewish religious life centers upon reading the Torah and therefore knowledge of Hebrew was central to religious life.

However, the presence of Iberian languages does not disappear. Indeed, between the years of 1701 and 1750, every stone had an Iberian inscription on it. Thus, the community was making an active decision to hold onto their Iberian roots through language. Importantly, the use of multiple languages on the tombstones suggests that the Jews of Barbados did not see their connections as an either/or proposition. They were comfortable in drawing connections with both Iberia and Israel. These were two homelands that reflected part of a long journey as opposed to one necessarily having to replace the other.

Iberian languages remain on the tombstones of the islands until 1826. Amazingly, this would have been some 200 to 300 years after many of the Jews on Barbados had left the Iberian Peninsula. Multiple generations had passed without these Jews ever having lived in Portugal or Spain. Yet, these languages were held onto. This demonstrates how powerful the Sephardic homeland was for the Jews on the island. As suggested earlier, the Jews of the Barbados community actively tried to teach the younger generations the languages of their forefathers. The Iberian languages were an important part of Sephardic identity and the connection to this homeland was something that was vigorously maintained.
Moreover, this connection to the Sephardic past was not only visible in the linguistic choices of the Jews on Barbados. The orientation of the tombstones also played a role. It was Sephardic tradition to have the tombstones horizontally positioned (Figure 41). This was in opposition to the Ashkenazi tradition of vertical tombstones (Ben-Ur and Frankel 2011:48). All of the tombstones within the Barbados Jewish burial grounds have horizontal stones with the exception of one. David Raphael de Mercado has an ornately carved marble pyramid tombstone. The pyramid tombstone style was often reserved for well-respected members of the Jewish community.

Figure 41: Burial ground A on Barbados

Despite the majority of Jews being of Sephardic origin, we know that there were Ashkenazi Jews living on the island. It is possible that the Ashkenazi Jews had a separate burial ground although we have no evidence of said burial ground at this point. This leads to the surprising observation that no Ashkenazi language shows up on any of the
surviving tombstones. The absence of Ashkenazi languages suggest that upon the island these languages were not often utilized and probably not often heard within the synagogue compound itself. The community followed Sephardic customs and this included the memorialization of the dead. Moreover, without a separate place of worship and education, Ashkenazi Jews would not have the same institutionalized support for the continuance of their languages. Thus, while the Ashkenazi Jews may have maintained connections with their homeland, it was not reflected within the synagogue compound and the tombstones. If origins were to be evoked, it was either Israel, which all of the Jews could connect, or Iberia, which the majority and those in power had dispersed.

Exploring the languages of the Barbados tombstones highlights the changing nature of the relationships to the homeland. The early Barbados community was as much rooted in Iberia as it was to the ancient homeland of Israel. The horizontal tombstones and the prevalence of Iberian languages are all indicators of this strong connection. Furthermore, the fact that the community specifically asked for a new Rabbi who spoke Spanish demonstrates the community leaders' desire to perpetuate this language for the ensuing generations. Iberia was a powerful symbol around which much of the community centered. However, time proved to be the ultimate challenge. Iberian, despite its popularity, was a language of quotidian life. While the hiring of a Spanish speaking Rabbi was an attempt to institutionalize this language, Iberian languages were not part of the religious life of Jews on the island. On the opposite end, with the institutionalization of Judaism on Barbados, Hebrew became far more prevalent on the tombstones. Hebrew as the language of religious services would have been known by all

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24 All of the inscriptions in the Hebrew script are in Hebrew and not Yiddish which could also be written utilizing the Hebrew script.

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Jews, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, on the island, even if spoken with different inflections. Because Hebrew was necessary for study of the Torah and would have been the language of religious observation, it had a support structure that ensured its continuation through time. While the Iberian languages slowly dwindled, Hebrew remained a strong presence on the island. This was more than just a representation of the religious language but also a cultural and religious practice in which all Jews on the island could participate. However, even Hebrew ultimately disappears with the late 19th century when tombstones tended to only have English inscriptions. The diversity of languages on the tombstones shows that these languages were not seen as exclusive of each other. It was perfectly possible and acceptable to utilize multiple languages upon one's tombstone.

St. Eustatius Tombstones

The surviving 19 tombstones of St. Eustatius do not allow for the same diachronic analysis of the changing relationship to the homeland that can be seen in the Barbados tombstones. However, a synchronic analysis can provide some insights into the relationship to the homeland with the Jews of St. Eustatius. The St. Eustatius stones have a more equitable distribution of languages: Hebrew (58%), an Iberian language (53%), and English (37%). The later establishment of St. Eustatius suggests that most Jews would have been exposed to Hebrew before their arrival on the islands. Nevertheless, there are three stones from individuals who died between 1785 and 1791 which have just an Iberian language inscribed upon them. All three of these elaborate stones have intricate Iberian inscriptions but despite having room upon the tombstones do not include a Hebrew inscription.
The only two stones that just have English inscriptions belong to individuals who
died in 1825 and 1843. By this time the Statian Jewish community had basically
dissolved and it is unlikely that there were enough Jews on the island to form a *minyan*.
Without the institutional knowledge, Hebrew was probably little used and hence they
placed the language they were more familiar with on the stones.

While comparing the composition of language choice from the two islands is
difficult because of the difference in sample sizes, one striking difference is the presence
of tombstones with just Hebrew written upon them on St. Eustatius. Out of the 338
tombstones on Barbados, none has just Hebrew written upon it. Every single stone that
contains Hebrew also has a secular language. On the much smaller St. Eustatius with its
scant 19 surviving tombstones, three have inscriptions only in Hebrew. The difference
may be due to the vocal Ashkenazi minority on the island. While we do not have clear
idea of the exact percentage difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardi on the island,
we have records of strife between the two groups. The conflict between the two elevated
to such a point that the Island's Governor was asked to mediate. The Hebrew only
tombstones belonged to Hannah de Leon (a Sephardic name but she was married to Philip
Benjamin), David Preger (could be Sephardic or Ashkenazi), and Samuel Bachrach
(could be Sephardic or Ashkenazi).

The other strange occurrence on the St. Eustatius tombstones was the lack of
Dutch. Not a single tombstone had any Dutch inscription. This was despite the island
being a Dutch controlled territory and many of the Jews having spent time in the
Netherlands. Nevertheless, by the 18th century, English was extremely common on the
island. The newspaper of the island, the *St. Eustatius Gazette*, was largely published in
English (Hartog 1984). Many of the tombstones on the island, not just the Jewish ones, have English inscriptions and no Dutch inscriptions and English is the lingua franca of the island today. This helps explain the presence of English on the tombstones as it was the language often used on the island. However, it does not necessarily explain the lack of Dutch. Barbados showed a similar absence of Dutch despite the connections to the Jewish community of Amsterdam. Only Isaac Eliazer Soesman’s tombstone contained a Dutch inscription on Barbados. Isaac was a Jew from Suriname who had immigrated to Barbados and died on the island in 1864. Thus, on both islands, Dutch was not a language of commemoration.

An interesting question emerges, why was Dutch not adopted as a language by the Jews on the island to the point that they would inscribe it on their tombstones? Is it simply an issue of time depth and will the tombstones of Jews who have scattered from these islands to non-English speaking countries utilize English inscriptions? To provide a complete answer, we would need to trace linguistic choices on tombstones throughout the entirety of the Jewish diaspora to discuss linguistic choice and homeland connections. However, for now, the tombstones on both islands suggest that Dutch was not a language of identity to be held onto. When it was not used as a language of everyday, it did not appear on the tombstones of either Barbados or St. Eustatius. In the continued dispersal, various places become homelands while others do not, and the lack of Dutch suggests that for the Jews on the islands the Netherlands did not serve as a homeland.

Like the stones on Barbados, the majority of the Statian stones were flat following the Sephardic tradition. There were several burials that were represented by curved headstones and footstones. These stones had minimal space for inscriptions with often
only the name represented. Also, these would have been less expensive than the large horizontal tombstones. There is evidence that the Barbadian Jews had several other smaller burial grounds that may have been the final resting place for the poorer Jews of the island (Shilstone 1988:xxv-xxvii). It is likely that the surviving Jewish burial ground on St. Eustatius served all of the Jews on the island. The headstones and footstones may represent some of the poorer Jews on the island who did not have the purchasing power to pay for the thick roughly two meter by one meter imported stone tablets. It is quite possible that these stones belong to some of the despechados who had been sent to St. Eustatius in the 18th century.

The synchronic nature of the St. Eustatius tombstones provides a different picture from Barbados. On St. Eustatius we see less expensive burial markers and the presence of several tombstones that only have Hebrew inscriptions. The higher and more vocal presence of Ashkenazi on the island may explain the stones with just Hebrew inscriptions. Moreover, while the previous chapter demonstrated the strong connections between the St. Eustatius Jewish community and the Amsterdam Jewish community, Dutch was not utilized on any of the tombstones. Dutch did not become a language that the dispersed Jews of Amsterdam tried to maintain in the same way that they maintained the Iberian languages and Hebrew. Indeed, even in Amsterdam during the 17th and 18th century, the Sephardic Jews would identify themselves as the Hebrew Nation or Jews of the Portuguese Nation but not Jews of the Dutch Nation.

**Dichotomies of Time**

One of the arguments for the Jews on both St. Eustatius and Barbados to have their main entrances to the synagogue compound on small back alleys was to minimize
their presence on each island. I have argued that Jews would be moving through the streets at a different rhythm than other island residents. The main reason for Jews travelling at different rhythms from others is because Jews celebrated the Sabbath from sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday evening. Often on Friday evenings, and definitely on Saturdays, Jews would be traveling to the synagogue to observe Sabbath services. This stood in contrast to the Christian groups on the island who observed the Sabbath on Sundays. Additionally, Jews celebrated a number of religious holidays that other groups on the islands did not. Many of these religious holidays included visits to the synagogue. Thus, Jews followed a different rhythm than the Christians on the island. But more than just a different day of Sabbath observance and religious holidays, Jews on both islands continued to observe and keep the Jewish calendar.

The Jewish calendar is complex intertwining of lunar and solar movements. Months are determined by lunar cycles. However, many Jewish holidays are supposed to take place during particular seasons, which are based upon the earth's orbit around the sun. Therefore, the Jews add a corrective every few years to re-align the religious holidays with their appropriate seasons and therefore to align the lunar with the solar calendar. The result was the creation of a calendric system that relied upon both lunar and solar revolutions. Additionally, the correctives would have helped align the Jewish calendar with the Christian based solar calendar (Carlebach 2011).

The keeping of the Jewish calendar was an important cultural tradition for the Jews on the island. The tradition of the Jewish calendar extended well back into ancient times and the foundations of the calendar system could be found in the Torah. The exact layout of the Jewish calendar was not standardized and there were differences particularly
regarding the structure of the added days to tie the Jewish calendar to the solar year. Different Jewish groups would have had slightly different ways of measuring time (Carlebach 2011). Nevertheless, the general framework of the calendar was the same with the same names of the twelve lunar months, the same names for the days of the week, and the celebration of the Sabbath on Friday evening and Saturday. This meant that despite their cultural differences the Sephardim and Ashkenazim on the islands would have recognized and followed a similar calendar. Keeping the Jewish calendar was an important part of Jewish religious and social life. It was a daily reminder of a Jewish connection to their past and their ancient homeland. It also served as a unifying symbol around which Jews from diverse backgrounds could come together.

On Barbados, 96% (n=322) of the tombstones include the Jewish calendar when discussing the date of death. The Jewish date was placed on stones that included all the language combinations between English, Hebrew, and Spanish/Portuguese. The latest tombstone that utilizes the Jewish date comes from 1891. The same story holds true for St. Eustatius where 16 of the 18 tombstones (89%) include dates in the Jewish calendar. In both burial grounds, the Jewish calendar was used ubiquitously.

While the Jewish date was always used in the Hebrew part of the inscriptions, the secular languages – Spanish/Portuguese or English – showed greater diversity. It is perhaps pertinent to point out that the burial grounds on both islands were walled off and separate from other burial grounds. Additionally, the burial grounds on Barbados were within the walled off and gated synagogue compound. In both cases, it is likely that most common visitors were other Jews on the islands and the enslaved individuals who were 25 Dates of birth were usually given in the Jewish calendar but there are fewer stones containing this information.
forced to clean the burial grounds. Thus, we can assume that the intended audience for the tombstone inscriptions was other Jews and not the larger island society.

On Barbados, of the 64 tombstones that included only a Spanish/Portuguese inscription, 42 (65%) had the date given in just the Jewish calendar. This includes some of the oldest stones in the burial grounds. While Spanish/Portuguese was a secular language, the use of the Jewish calendar in these inscriptions highlights the fact that the Jews were keeping this calendar on the islands as well as utilizing it as a method for recording time. What is more, this was not simply a manner of translation. The Jewish calendar was not translated into the equivalent Christian date. Rather, the Jewish calendar was transliterated from Hebrew script to Latin script but it was retained as something different. Indeed the vast majority of tombstones on Barbados (n=234, 69%) utilized the Jewish and Christian calendars together. On St. Eustatius, 61% (11 of 18) of the tombstones included dates in both the Jewish and Christian calendar. Quite often, both these calendars were utilized in the same inscription normally structured around the word “corresponde” (corresponding) to signify the date in the other calendar system.

Thus, the majority of the stones on Barbados and St. Eustatius were not only multi-lingual but also bi-calendared. Like the multi-lingual stones, the double calendars represented the complex in-betweeness that Jews inhabited between the Christian world and their Jewish culture. Despite the keeping of the Jewish calendar, much of the daily lives of Jews would have been dictated by the Christian calendar since this was the time-keeping of the host society. When Jews made business deals with Gentiles, when they went to the courts, when they made legal documents, and when they planned their days of activity, they encountered the Christian calendar. Particularly, Jews had to accept that
while they were religiously allowed to conduct business on Sundays, the Christians on the island would be observing the Sabbath.

The maintenance of the Jewish calendar was an important tradition throughout the diaspora. This calendar played a critical role in the structuring of Jewish religious life. Jewish holidays were some of the key events that re-enforced a Jewish culture on the island and the calendar was an essential part of this. The Jewish calendar was vital for defining Jewish time on the island. Interestingly, we see the Jewish calendar used within the secular languages of Iberia and England. This suggests that the Jewish calendar was part of the everyday lives of Jews, not just in their religious lives. More importantly, the Jewish calendar is not replaced by the Christian calendar but placed side-by-side on the tombstones. The two calendric systems were not seen as equivalents that could be converted from one to the other, but rather, they both had to be marked on the stones. Thus, the Jewish calendar was a powerful example of the ways that the homeland played a role in a diaspora. Not only was it a source for cultural and religious traditions, but the homeland structured Jewish time.

The Synagogue Compound as a Heterotopia

The Jewish community had a complex relationship to its various homelands as evidenced by its narratives of the past and maintained traditions acted out in the present. Moreover, the previous chapters have discussed the intersection of multiple spatial relations within and around the synagogue compound. I would like to now theorize this place within a singular concept: heterotopia. Heterotopia has become a favorite subject of cultural studies and cultural geographers over the past twenty years where it has been
used as a new way to explore issues of marginality, subalterness, revolution, liminality, and third-space (e.g. Soja 1996; Hetherington 1997; Preucel and Matero 2008).

Heterotopia was a term originally used in anatomy “to refer to parts of the body that are either out of place, missing, extra, or, like tumours, alien” (Hetherington 1997:42). Michel Foucault’s use of the term as it related to physical space is most clearly seen in his posthumously published lecture “Of Other Spaces” (1986). In this essay, Foucault worked through ideas of utopia and heterotopia. For Foucault, utopia is a space that ultimately cannot exist. Utopias are the perfection of society and therefore are “fundamentally unreal spaces” (Foucault 1986:24). As Kevin Hetherington suggests, utopias are like the horizon, something to strive for but impossible to ever reach (1997:139-143).

In contrast to utopia, there are key “places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society” (Foucault 1986:24). Foucault argues that these places are an “enacted utopia” in which all of society’s sites are “represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1986:24). Since these places are different from all others – thus in many ways being out of space – Foucault in creating nice verbal symmetry called them heterotopias (1986:24). Fitted nicely into the discussion above, Foucault understood that “space and time are fundamentally inseparable” (Martin 1999:60). Utopia is something to strive for and thus is always something in the future, just over the horizon. Heterotopia as an enacted utopia contains much of this forward thinking while being part of the present.

Foucault presents six principles or traits of the heterotopia. While I don’t think it worthwhile to consider this a checklist to try and determine whether something is or is not a heterotopia, I do think these traits provide insightful questions to ask of a place and
help explain the synagogue compounds on each island. The first principle is that all cultures have heterotopias. Furthermore, he suggests that there are two kinds of heterotopias.

The first kind is what Foucault calls a “crisis heterotopia” or a place in which individuals who have somehow left society can be reintegrated into society. Foucault with this form of heterotopia certainly has in mind the work of anthropologists such as Van Gennep and Victor Turner. Such examples are places specifically designed for menstruating women or coming of age rituals. The mikveh on both islands can be understood through this idea of crisis heterotopia. While menstruating, a Jewish woman has become ritually impure, and therefore has numerous social limitations as well as being distanced from God. In order for her to remove this impurity (the crisis) so that she can return to the marital bed (needed to literally reproduce society) and to bring her back into connection with God, she must visit the mikveh for ritual immersion. Only by going to this place can she be re-integrated into the Jewish community as a fully practicing member.

The second form of heterotopia is based upon deviation. Heterotopias of deviation are places “in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (Foucault 1986:25). These places stand outside the norms of society. They are, in Kevin Hetherington’s terms, places of “alternative ordering” (1997). This deviation comes from the juxtapositions of spaces and times (sets of relationships and power structures) that exist within the heterotopia and nowhere else. Furthermore, it is this very deviation, which provides the heterotopia with its meaning within societies and cultures.
Foucault's second principle is that the nature of heterotopias change. I would reword this slightly to say that places that are heterotopias at one time may not be so in the future. This is a key insight as it forces us to consider the context in which a heterotopia is present as well as the dynamic nature of life. This allows Kevin Hetherington to define heterotopia as a "space of alternative ordering" (1997:41, emphasis mine) as opposed to a space of alternative order. This dimension also serves as a reminder to ask a key question set forth by Bruce McCoy Owens (2002:276) who states that: "Unless anthropologists limit their subjects to themselves, it is critical for them ask for whom such spaces are 'alternative orderings,' and for whom these orderings comprise 'incompatible' juxtapositions that disturb or 'suspect' the 'set of relations they happen to designate.'" A place as heterotopia only serves so in juxtaposition to other places and will only do so as long as certain relationships exist. As time and relationships change, so do does the possibility of a place being a heterotopia and the meanings given to these places.

Moreover, the fact that heterotopias change through time is the key reason why heterotopias are not utopias. A utopia, as the perfection of society, would not need to change. While ideas of what a utopia does change through time, if utopia was to be truly created then change would stop. By definition, perfection implies no change for to change it would mess with perfection. The importance of this principle cannot be emphasized enough. The argument made here is that the synagogue compounds on the two islands represent heterotopias during the early modern period but not that synagogue.

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26 Now it may be possible to think about perfection changing but I would suggest that this could only happen if everyone and everything takes part in the changes.
compounds will always be heterotopias. The concept of heterotopia only exists in relation to other places and therefore context is essential to exploring heterotopias.

It is in the third principle that we really begin to see the distinctive character of the heterotopia. The heterotopia is a space that juxtaposes several spaces into a singular real place (Foucault 1986:25). Often the spaces being integrated within the heterotopia would be considered incompatible outside of the heterotopia (Foucault 1986:25). The power of the heterotopia is its ability to transform these multiple represented spaces into a coherent singular place.

The synagogue compounds juxtaposed several different spaces. The first and obvious is the physical space within which the synagogues existed. On both islands, the compounds were placed in the hidden nooks of the urban centers. They were walled off and allowed to be separate from the rest of the city. But more than that, the synagogue compounds also indexed the diverse spaces of the Jewish diaspora. The buildings themselves were constructed with contributions from the communities of Amsterdam, London, New York, and Curaçao. The holy relics inside the synagogues were constant reminders of other communities in the diaspora. On both islands, the Iberian languages on the tombstones referenced their maintained merchant networks. Alongside the diverse spaces of the diaspora, the compounds also evoked the origins of the Jews. The synagogues were laid out in a tradition that could be traced back thousands of years. The orientation of the synagogues insured that Jews would face Jerusalem during religious services. When the services were held, the reader speaking Hebrew connected Jews to their ancient past. These connections were amplified by the presence of the tombstones with their Hebrew and Iberian inscriptions. Additionally, the Barbados community chose
to call itself the “scattered from Israel” and not the Jewish community of Barbados. Thus, the homelands, both Israel and Iberia, were represented within the synagogue compounds. The diaspora incorporates these various relationships to space (hostland, lateral connections, and homeland). The power of the heterotopia is the ability to tie all of these different spaces together within a singular ordered location. While these various juxtapositions may have been occurring, the key of the synagogue compound was its ability to create order from this potential chaos.

Furthermore, “the heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their tradition time” (Foucault 1986:26). Not only do the synagogue compounds order various ideas of space but also various conceptions of time. As argued in this chapter, the synagogues were in some ways a place of the past. By evoking the homeland, the synagogue compounds were a way of connecting Jews to their deep history. Moreover, the rhythms of the synagogues operated on a different calendar that that of the society around them. The coming and goings to the synagogues were dictated through an alternative measuring of time. Thus, the entering of the synagogue compounds and the observation of Jewish religious days and holidays all represented a break from the ordering of time in the rest of the island society. But more than just this break (and in some ways a break within the present), and beyond the synagogues evoking the past, the synagogues also incorporated the future (a topic to be discussed below).

In Foucault’s fifth principle he says that the heterotopia must be a place that has limited permeability. While access is restricted, the heterotopia cannot keep out all the relations to other spaces. The synagogue compounds exhibited both characteristics. As has been shown, access into the compounds was restricted through walls and gates.
However, the synagogue compounds were not a place truly separate from the surrounding city. While walking into the compounds may evoke connections to other places and times, Jews did not lose contact from their present location. On Barbados, the synagogue and the mikveh were constructed out of Barbados limestone. While on St. Eustatius, the Dutch yellow brick synagogue highlighted its place within the Dutch Atlantic. The enslaved individuals utilized by the community for the maintenance of the compound were further reminders of the permeability and interrelationships of the heterotopia with the surrounding spaces. Other connections included the material culture used by the Jewish community. While the religious relics may have a history of purely a Jewish context, the archaeological excavations on both islands show that there were a variety of other objects brought and used within the synagogue compounds. From the plates used to serve food, to the tobacco pipes smoked on the pathways, to the beads worn as decoration, each of these items indexed the Jews place on each island. This permeability was further emphasized by the English inscriptions and the use of the Christian calendar. On Barbados, the placement of the burial grounds around the synagogue further highlighted that the Jewish community formed within a non-Jewish power structure. Yet despite this permeability, which could lead to tension, the synagogue compounds still maintained their role as the center of the Jewish community.

And all of this leads to the actual role of the heterotopia. Foucault states:

"The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled." (1986:27)
It is the latter that I believe the synagogue compounds represented for the Jewish community. The synagogue compound created an alternate space on the city landscape. It was separate from the surrounding urban environment in both its spatial and temporal representations, and Jews understood it as such. Despite all of the various juxtapositions that occurred within the compound walls, the space was still easily understood by the Jews on the island and by any Jew within the Sephardic diaspora. It was a place that was ordered and controlled by the Jewish community and therefore was an alternative to the Christian dominated urban landscape of Oranjestad and Bridgetown. For all the complications that swirled around Jews in their everyday lives, the synagogue compound was the one place in which Jewish culture could continue without pressure from non-Jews. Out of the complexity of their lives came the singular center of the community. It provided social order, a different social order for the Jews of the islands.

**Utopia and the Future**

Foucault creates a juxtaposition of heterotopia and utopia. The heterotopia often contains utopic elements even if it is not truly a utopia. The synagogue compounds may have provided an alternative social ordering and created a place within the island context where Jews were the majority, but they were never designed to be a utopia. This was not a space to be lived in at all times but only a place to visit. Furthermore, Jews believed that utopia would arrive with the Messiah, and the Messiah would arrive when God decided and not necessarily because of Jewish actions on the ground. Nevertheless, the synagogue compound was constructed with an eye towards the future and perhaps a future utopia. For the Jews of the Caribbean, the relationship with the homeland was not
only a feature of past traditions and historical narratives but for many it included a shared destiny. During the 17th and 18th century there was a significant feeling amongst the Jews of the coming of the Messiah (see Leibman 2012) and these dreams of the future helped define the way the synagogue compound was viewed and constructed on each island.

**Messianic Prophecies**

In 1650, Menassah Ben Israel, a prominent Jewish scholar of the Amsterdam Jewish community, published his influential book *Mikveh Israel* (Hope of Israel). The book was originally published in Latin as well as Spanish. Moses Wall translated the Latin version into English in 1652. Thus, the book in only four years could speak to a diverse set of audiences including the scholarly (Latin), the Sephardim (Spanish), and the growing community in England (London and also Barbados). The work, as the name suggests, spent a significant amount of time discussing the arrival of the Messiah. Ben Israel stated, “The shortness of time (when we believe our redemption shall appear) is confirmed by this, that the Lord has promised that he will gather the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, out of the four quarters of the world, calling them *Nephussim* [Hebrew for dispersed]” (Méchoulan and Nahon 1987[1652]:158).²⁷

Ben Israel tied his argument for the arrival of the Messiah to various Jewish prophecies. One of these concerned the dispersal of the Jews across the globe. As Ben Israel noted, the prophecy implied that the Jews would be drawn from the “four quarters of the world.” The underlying assumption is that Jews would first be spread to the four

²⁷ In an interesting correlation of Judaism and Christianity, many Protestants of England were in favor of allowing Jews to settle in England. They argued that the settlement of Jews would ultimately lead to the conversion of Jews, an important step needed for the second coming. Thus, while Ben Israel saw the settlement of Jews in England as a sign of the arriving Messiah, many Protestants saw this as the sign of the Messiah arriving again. Thus messianic ideals were shared by all, although their ideas of how and what would happen when the Messiah arrived were certainly different.

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quarters of the earth. Ben Israel connected Jewish dispersal to Daniel 12:7 which states: “And when the scattering of the holy people shall have an end, all those things shall be fulfilled.” (Mechoulan and Nahon 1987[1652]:158) And so Jews must spread to the four quarters of the world before they could be brought back together. The discovery of the Americas opened up a new meaning to the idea of the four corners of the world and the settlement of synagogues in the New World held significant promise for individuals like Ben Israel. Ben Israel concluded that the prophecy of Daniel 12:7 “appears now to be done” because “our synagogues are found in America.” (Mechoulan and Nahon 1987[1652]:158)

Thus, for Ben Israel and those who shared in his hopes, the establishment of the synagogues was a religious symbol of the arrival of the Messiah. However, it was not just Ben Israel’s writings that contained these messianic hopes. It is probably not coincidental that the Curacao, Savannah and Philadelphia Jewish communities all chose to call themselves Mikveh Israel (Sarna 2006:215). On Barbados, Nidhe Israel (“the scattered of Israel”) symbolized not just a lost homeland but could also evoke the passage from Daniel that talks about the scattering of Jews across the globe. The Honen Dalim (charitable to the needy) name of St. Eustatius does not fit into this messianic narrative. The significant number of poor sent to St. Eustatius may suggest its charitable name, while it was formed sometime after the height of the 17th century messianic writings. Whereas the Barbados community was formed just a few years after Menassah Ben Israel’s book was published in English.

Historian of American Judaism, Jonathan Sarna, provides evidence that some Jews in the thirteen colonies were anticipating the arrival of the Messiah. Ezra Stiles, the
same Ezra Stiles who was good friends with the Barbados Rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal, reported that Jews in Newport, RI were “wont in Thunder Storms to set open all their Doors and Windows for the coming of the messias” (in Sarna 2006:215). While across Atlantic, the great commotion surrounding Sabbatai Zevi during the 17th century and his false claims to being a Messiah suggest the messianic thinking of many of the Jews of the early modern period (Leibman 2012:10-13). It is likely that the same undercurrents of the arriving Messiah ran through the communities of St. Eustatius and Barbados.

**The Role of the Synagogue Compound**

Menassah Ben Israel argued that the establishment of synagogues in the Americas would pave the way for the arrival of the coming of the Messiah. He did not simply suggest that dispersal was enough, but also the construction of the main building of Jewish worship. As argued, the synagogue was the center of Jewish life and therefore the construction of the synagogue suggested that not only Jews, but Judaism, had spread across the seas and was established in diverse places. This was an important part of the messianic prophecies. Jews were not only dispersed but also practicing their religion.

Importantly, this dispersal does not imply nor compel Jews to proselytize. It is simply the movement of already practicing Jews. This was an important distinction because one of the biggest fears of both the Dutch and British was that Jews would actively proselytize amongst their populations. Such attempts at conversion were seen as a threat to the religiosity of the nation and a breakdown of the social order. Hence, the city council of Amsterdam legislated against Jewish proselytizing (Schama 1987:591). Therefore, the Jewish conceptions of the arrival of the Messiah differed from the
protestant ideas of the second coming which firmly rested on the conversion of Jews to
Protestant Christianity.

The construction of the synagogues on both islands allowed Jews to live a proper
religious life in the fashion of their ancestors. They could observe religious holidays and
attend the synagogue on each Sabbath. Thus, the synagogue itself was a key sign of the
religiosity of the Jewish community and was a key part in the fulfilling of messianic
prophecies. By following the design of the Temple and Tabernacle as understood
through Rabbi Leon de Templo, each community would have reinforced this connection
to the past and future (Leibman 2011). The names chosen by various Jewish
communities, names that were chosen with the establishment of the synagogue, reflect
this.

Beyond the synagogue itself, the mikveh was not only constructed with a purely
religious purpose in mind. As Laura Liebman points out (2009), the term mivkeh also
translates as “hope” as can be seen in Ben Israel’s Mikveh Israel (the Hope of Israel).
The mikveh played an important part in the religious life of the community and for the
community to remain ritually pure. Yet, the building of a mikveh was a voluntary choice.
The communities had a relatively convenient option: the ocean. Women could have used
the ocean to ritually purify themselves. The construction of the mivkeh would have
created a symbol of the community’s connection to its past traditions. The Jews would
have been recreating a key feature that would have been seen in the synagogue
compounds of their ancestors. Moreover, the placement of the mikveh within the
compound itself brought it under control of the leaders of the community. It allowed the
leaders of the community to monitor who used the mikveh and that the women used the
mikveh properly. This would have been accomplished by the women assigned to be the mikveh keeper. The use of the mikveh was something that the community wanted to encourage and display for all Jews on the island.

In the Jewish religion, to be ritually impure is to be distanced from God (Leibman 2009:117). Women’s monthly menstruation would have made them ritually impure and thus distanced from God. While in this ritually impure state she could not sleep in the marital bed. An impure woman was not only a threat to herself but also to the purity of the community. Each woman’s individual impurity could make the entire community impure (Liebmann 2009:114). Therefore, leaving the process of allowing the woman to reconnect with God within her own hands was dangerous not just for her own sake but for the community’s as well. Thus, the community constructed the mikveh on each island. Based upon the principles laid out in the Talmud, these buildings allowed for ritually impure women to be made whole again. They could close the gap that had developed between them and God. Importantly, married women could return to the marital bed. The community took upon itself the need to construct these mikveh and provide the keepers for the ritual baths. They took the ritual purification of women as a serious endeavor that affected all of the practicing Jews on the island. Moreover, the mikveh allowed for the community to remain ritually pure. It meant that the Jewish community as a whole remained close to God.

Furthermore, the attainment of grounds to be reserved solely for Jewish burial grounds served much the same purpose. Jews desired to have their own burial grounds for the internment of those who have passed. This allowed for these burial grounds to be
properly sanctified according to the Jewish religion. This created another sacred place in which Jewish tradition could be continued.

It was important for the Jewish communities on both islands to create an environment to properly practice their religion. This was essential for the community’s identity as it recalled a shared homeland and highlighted a shared belief for the Jews on the island. However, during the 17th and 18th centuries these traditions were more than traditions of the past, but key practices for defining their future. In settling in the Americas and in practicing their religion openly, the Jews were playing a part in fulfilling messianic prophecies. This eye towards the future also helped tie the community together because it suggested a shared a future. The synagogue compound was a way to organize that future in a manner that differed from the way the other communities on Barbados and St. Eustatius viewed the future.

In Foucault’s theory of the heterotopia he concentrates on how the heterotopia involves various slices of time. The synagogue compounds included three slices of time. They evoked the past through their traditions and material forms, they were both within the present and indicated the present with the tombstone inscriptions that used English and the Christian calendar, and they helped define the future by creating a space for Jews to live a proper religious life. Each of these temporal orientations was realized within the walls of the synagogue, and the synagogue helped order each of these conceptions of time. It was a place that allowed Jews to reconnect with their past and plan for their future. At least at first, these pasts and futures were ordered differently than the pasts and futures of the surrounding communities. The heterotopia creates a sense of order separate from the society around it and as Jews entered the synagogue compound they entered into
a world that included not just an alternative past or religion but also an alternative vision for the future.

Conclusion

The term diaspora suggests the idea of a homeland. It is one of the threads that ties various scholarly approaches to diaspora together. Furthermore, the idea of homeland is often coupled with two key movements: dispersal and return. While dispersal is fundamental to the idea of diaspora, the idea of return is much more debated. When exploring diasporas, scholars often ask whether there is a desire for return, whether diasporans take active steps to make a return possible, and what is exactly meant by the idea of return.

The Jews of the Caribbean undoubtedly had a connection to their various homelands. They maintained linguistic and cultural traditions alive on the island while continuing to practice the religion of their ancestors. Furthermore, they designed their synagogues to evoke Solomon’s Temple. The homelands of the Jews played a powerful role in their culture and identity and the Jews actively maintained these traditions.

Yet, the connection to the homeland for the Jews of the 17th and 18th centuries was not necessarily to a physical space. While the Jews may have commemorated the lost land of Israel, they were doing this with an eye to the future and not the past. Many of the Jews who came to the Caribbean had the option of returning to Jerusalem and the space of what was once the Kingdom of Israel but chose not to. It does not seem that physical return was a desire of these Jews. Rather, they did return to openly practicing the religion of their ancestors. In doing so, many believed that they were walking the path towards the arrival of the Messiah. The Messiah would not mean the return to the
ancient Holy Land but instead a re-organization of all spatial and temporal concerns. Thus, the homeland of the Jews was not a physical space on the map to be returned to but rather a new future.

Foucault (1986:27) stated that one of the roles that the heterotopia may play is “to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.” The synagogue compound did just that. Within the compound various traditions of the homeland alongside the dreams of the future were practiced. The material of the everyday, the English on the tombstones, and the marginal location of the synagogues all reminded Jews of their island context. Despite all of the incorporations of all of these various times and spaces, the synagogue compounds remained largely within the control of the Jewish community. Within this place, the Jews were able to bring order to the otherwise complicated world in which they lived.
Chapter VIII: “A Medley of Contradictions”

“our state can have no natural-born Subjects but Christian, and a natural-born Jew Christian Foreign Englishman, is such a Medley of Contradictions, that all the Rabbies (sic) in the World will never be able to reconcile them”

from William Romaine, An Answer to a Pamphlet, entitled, Considerations on the bill to permit persons ... (1753:60)

Premise A: “our state can have no natural-born Subjects but Christian”, an Englishman is Christian

Premise B: Jews are not Christians

Ergo: Jews cannot be natural-born Subjects of England thus we have Romaine’s “medley of contradictions”

William Romaine wrote these words at the height of the controversy in England over the passing of the Jew Bill of 1753 that made it possible for some Jews in England to purchase naturalization. Romaine’s argument was one that would have been understood by both supporters and antagonists to the law (Rabin 2006:167). For both groups still saw Jewishness as being outside of Englishness. Romaine, like many other English of the time, could not fully fathom the emerging modern nation-state in which place of birth could become the qualification for national subjectionhood trumping differences such as religion. Romaine’s statement echoes the words of the British Quartermaster on St. Eustatius presented at the outset of this dissertation. When Benjamin Lindo attempted to claim his Englishness (he was born in London), the British Quartermaster (unconsciously channeling Romaine) stated that Lindo’s place of birth did
not matter since he was Jewish. Thus, Jewishness and Englishness were mutually exclusive (at least to the two gentlemen being discussed but not to Benjamin Lindo).

Romaine's comments highlight a key feature of heterotopias. Within the last chapter, I discussed how the heterotopia for the Jewish community provided a chance to bring order to one part of their life within the colonial experience. However, this view failed to acknowledge that the synagogue compound was not solely within the purview of the Jews but also was part of the colonial landscape and viewed by non-Jews. Thus, I want to discuss how the synagogue was a heterotopia to the hostlands as well.

To highlight the role of the synagogue as a heterotopia to the hostland, it is worth taking a moment to explore Foucault's example of the mirror. He wrote that the heterotopia should be seen as a mirror stating that it "exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy" (1986:24). You can only see yourself through the reflection of the mirror.

Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (1986:24)

The implication is that a place is only a heterotopia if it is seen as qualitatively different from other places that surround it, as a place of "alternative ordering" (Hetherington 1997). In entering the synagogue compound, the Jews on St. Eustatius and Barbados entered a place that ordered diverse spaces and times that were nowhere else ordered on the island. The synagogue compound served as the mirror. Upon entering the synagogue
compound the Jews would “discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there” (Foucault 1986:24). By entering the synagogue compound that referenced all of the diverse places and times discussed in this dissertation, the Jews realized their difference or absence from the space of the island itself. Through the creation of that place the Jewish community became different from both the point of view of other groups on the island and the Jews themselves.28

The synagogue compound also served as a mirror for the hostland: the British and Dutch. Yet the mirror served a distinctly different role for the hostland than for the Jews and represented the opposite end of the spectrum of possible meanings that the heterotopia may have. For the Jews, the synagogue compound represented an ordering of their life. While outside the synagogue compound they were outsiders in a world structured by Protestant Christianity, within the compound’s walls they had an alternative ordering structured by their culture and religion. The synagogue reflected the illusory nature of the world outside it and affirmed a shared culture, history and religion. This was one reason why the construction of the synagogue compound was so important for community creation. On the other hand, for the Dutch and British, the synagogue compound exposed the illusory nature on which their identity was built. The presence of the Jews called into question any assumed connections between particular spaces and identities. Hence, Romaine’s inability to conceive a natural born English Jew. As long as there were only Christians in England, then it was easy to elide the idea that anybody born in England must be Christian. With the presence of the Jews, this raised the possibility that one could be born in England but not be Christian. As long as the synagogue stood out as a place of difference upon the colonial landscape, a place of

28 This is not the only way that difference is marked but the way that is being concentrated on in this study.
reflection, then it would speak to alternative possibilities of ordering the world and relating to particular spaces. For as Peter Johnson (2006:84) states: “Heterotopias draw us out of ourselves in peculiar ways; they display and inaugurate a difference and challenge the space in which we may feel at home. These emplacements exist out of step and meddle with our sense of interiority.”

**Barbados – The Conflation of Place and Space**

When the synagogue compound was formed it was on the margins of the urban center of Bridgetown. The compound was constructed in the marshy extremes near the highly volatile magazine. Furthermore, the entrance to the synagogue was off of the small pathway meant to minimize the visibility of Jews entering and leaving the compound. From the muting of space to the need for security, the synagogue and its surrounding structures were a clearly demarcated Jewish place within the island society. The legal limitations and complaints of Jewish disloyalty all suggest the ways that being Jewish was seen as being different from being British on Barbados or being Barbadian. Thus, when William Mayo drew his map of Bridgetown in 1722, he could show such precise detail to represent the entrance to the synagogue compound while not actually placing the synagogue on the landscape. The synagogue compound was a place that was not to be visible on a Barbadian space.

For the British, the presence of the Jews called into question the idea of the island being solely a free Christian space. While there was a large population of non-Christians on the island, the enslaved African population, the de-humanizing practice of enslavement created a dividing line between the free Anglican elites and the enslaved African others. Jews, as free people who owned slaves, represented a different
hierarchical challenge. As was seen by the examples of both Benjamin Lindo and William Romaine, the British had a hard time conceiving of the possibility of their being someone who was both Jewish and British as well as being not white but also not enslaved. The synagogue was clearly a heterotopia of deviance, a location of alternative ordering, on the landscape. It spoke of another possibility of ordering the world and called into question any conceptions of nationality that simply highlighted physical origins. The presence of Jews on Barbados highlighted the complex ideas of space, place, and identity on the island, and their ability to make these processes seen and considered was probably one of the sources of tension between Jews and the hostland. As long as Protestant Christianity was tied with being elite and white on Barbados, the synagogue compound would continue to represent a place of alternative ordering, a place of otherness.

By 1833, this situation had changed. The majority of the Jews on the island spoke English. The tombstones were predominately in English and Hebrew as opposed to an Iberian language. The Jews were legally the same as white Christians based upon an 1831 law. All of their testimonies could be heard in court and swearing upon the Five Books of Moses was considered a legitimate form of oath taking. When the synagogue was re-opened, the audience did not just include the most prominent Jews on the island but also “the Speaker and several other members of the House of Assembly, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Judge Advocate, the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, the Treasurer, the Secretary of the Island, the Collector and the Comptroller of Customs, Sir F. Smith, commanding Royal Engineers” amongst other prominent Christian members of Barbadian society (Shilstone 1988:xxii). The practicing of many of the most
common rituals, festivals, and holidays had moved out of the synagogue compound and into the private homes of Jews on the island. The compound was no longer a place outside of the space of Barbados but was now a part of the island landscape. It did not lose its importance as being the center of the Jewish community, but it was no longer a strict marker of difference. It no longer served as the mirror and was no longer a place of “alternative ordering”, a heterotopia. It was still an important part of Jewish life, but being Jewish and Barbadian was now a distinct possibility and not two mutually exclusive ideas. The meaning of the synagogue had changed; it was no longer a place counter to the space of Barbados but rather a place within the space of the island.

Understanding how this process occurred required the exploration of the three key relationships of the diaspora. The analysis of the relationship to the hostland showed how the community began to speak English and engage in commercial activities with Gentiles. The time spent on Barbados living and interacting with non-Jewish Barbadians would have broken down many barriers. While the synagogue may have at first served as the center of both religious and social life for Jews as evidenced by the need for security and the celebration of key holidays within the synagogue compound walls, by the 19th century the synagogue compound’s role was limited largely to just religious observances. Furthermore, Jewish ownership of enslaved individuals helped ensure that they were not considered black within the developing racial ideas of the island society. Thus, before emancipation on the island could occur, Jews were legally given the same rights as other whites on the island.

Yet, simply exploring the relationships of Jews to the hostland misses a number of essential features of Jewish life on the island. Jewish loyalty to the hostland was
questioned. In part, this loyalty was linked to the economic networks of the Jews on Barbados. Many of the merchants not only feared that Jews would dominate this economic sphere but would also pass information to the enemies of the British. Indeed, many of the lateral connections of the early Jews of Barbados were commercial networks that spanned across multiple national boundaries and threatened to breakdown the mindset of the mercantilist British. The mercantilist approach of the British turned economic activity into a way of showing ones loyalty to the Crown. As long as the Jews maintained economic networks outside of the British mercantile networks, they challenged the British Crown and had their loyalties questioned. Yet over time these commercial networks became more aligned with the British networks. London became the center from which most Jewish economic activity occurred. This was because of the greater ability of the British to enforce their mercantile policies alongside the growth of London as a major economic power within the Atlantic. Furthermore, the London community became the major support structure for the Barbadian community with it being the source of key religious artifacts and supplying religious leaders. The shifting of these lateral connections helped bring the Jewish diaspora within the spaces of the British Atlantic.

Finally, the homeland relationship cannot be ignored. At first the Jews on the island truly were “Foreigners and Strangers” having been born and raised outside of England or its colonies. Most of these Jews were Sephardic and maintained connections with other Iberians (both practicing Jews and Christians). They continued to request Rabbis who could teach Spanish to the next generations and utilized Iberian inscriptions on their tombstones. Yet, Portugal and Spain were rival nations to the British within
Europe and the Atlantic. These Iberian connections helped fuel fears of distrust of the Jewish community. However, as time progressed, the more overt connections to Iberia began to wane (i.e. linguistic choice and tombstone inscriptions). This does not mean that Sephardic traditions were not still held onto, but the ones that remained were often held within Jewish rituals whose Iberian origins could not be easily identified by non-Jews. With the disappearance of these overt connections to another homeland (particularly a homeland in a rival nation), such fears of disloyalty could be eased. While the connections to the deeper homeland of Israel remained allowing easier incorporation of immigrating Ashkenazi Jews, the lack of a Jewish state helped abate fears of disloyalty.

No singular factor can be attributed to why the Jews on Barbados could become part of the social space of the island. Nor is there only one explanation how the synagogue compound can move from being viewed as a place outside of the social fabric of the island to being considered part of the diversity of Barbados. Rather it took a redefinition of all of these axes for these changes to happen for both the Jews on the island and others on the island as well. Ultimately, the synagogue did not lose its important role as a place in the Jewish diaspora on Barbados nor did it lose its role as a key structure in community maintenance and formation, but nevertheless it did change its role as demarcating difference on the island. It had become a place of Barbados as opposed to simply a place on Barbados. The synagogue compound by the 19th century no longer served as the mirror, the point of reflection, and its role as a heterotopia was gone.

St. Eustatius - Space/Place Disruption

Whereas on Barbados, I have argued that eventually there was a conflation of place with space, the narrative of the Dutch island of St. Eustatius suggests a slightly
different story. Like the Barbados community, the St. Eustatius Jews created a place on the island landscape. The four key monuments (the burial ground, synagogue, mikveh, and Cantor's house) of this community created a small core within the back alleys of the Oranjestad. Situated in an ideal place to minimize their disruption to daily Christian life, the Jews were able to practice their religious life relatively unmolested while allowing the rest of Statian society to interact with them in other spheres of life. Indeed, unlike Barbados, Jews on St. Eustatius served in government positions, signed petitions with Gentile merchants to prevent “outsiders” from encroaching upon their trade, and became burghers with relative ease.

St. Eustatius’ role as a free trade entrepôt amongst the restricted mercantile policies of the other European nations made its people look out from its shores as opposed to looking inwards. St. Eustatius’ cosmopolitan population and almost exclusively mercantile economy placed it in a far different position than many of the other plantation islands in the Caribbean. Jewish difference was minimized amongst a sea of diverse merchants who were all drawn to St. Eustatius’ shores for the same reason. Furthermore, the Jews of St. Eustatius, unlike those on Barbados, could easily keep their ties to Amsterdam. These ties were both economic and religious. In particular, St. Eustatius was a popular place for despechados to be sent. St. Eustatius, thus perhaps best represents the lateral connections that ties the Jewish diaspora together.

The Jewish community on St. Eustatius like the Nidhe Israel community created strong relationships with its multiple homelands. Their tombstones highlighted the continued use of Iberian languages. The Honen Dalim synagogue was constructed in the neo-Solomonic style used by many early modern Atlantic Jewish communities. Like
these other Jewish communities, the Jews of St. Eustatius continued many of their key religious traditions not only because of their shared history of dispersal but also to help shape their future. These relationships to the homeland, both past and future, helped bind the Jewish community together and separated the Jewish community from their island neighbors.

Unlike the British, the Dutch on St. Eustatius already had a long tradition of living with Jews. Whereas this relationship had to be actively constructed on Barbados, on St. Eustatius the Dutch could easily continue the traditions of the Netherlands where religious life was left as a private matter. Nevertheless, the synagogue represented an alternative cultural ordering, a heterotopia, to the elite Dutch on the island. While the Dutch were willing to accept a Jewish presence because of their economic potential, they had concerns over the presence of this religious other. The representation of this religious other had the potential to disrupt the island society, and similar to what was done on Barbados, the Dutch elite pushed the heterotopic synagogue to the margins of the city and out of sight.

Ultimately, when St. Eustatius fell from its unstable position of trade privilege, the majority of Jews left the island. They were not alone, as the majority of the merchants and many of the free people of the island left for greener pastures. Despite the construction of the community on the island, and the significant resources dedicated to create a Jewish place, the Jewish community never became truly connected with the island space. Unlike the dwindling Jewish community of Barbados who valiantly fought to rebuild their synagogue in 1831 despite the obvious shrinking of their numbers, the St. Eustatius community easily followed the trade winds to the next economic opportunity.
This does not mean that a communal identity was not constructed as it certainly was. The majority of Jews on St. Eustatius moved together to St. John in the Danish Virgin Islands. St. John had replaced St. Eustatius as the major trade entrepôt in the Northern Antilles. Thus, the Jews on St. Eustatius did not leave the Caribbean nor change their livelihood but simply headed to a new physical space. Despite the materiality of the place, this material never anchored the community to a space (a hallmark of a diaspora). Perhaps ironically, the Dutch form of tolerance coupled with the economic success of St. Eustatius meant that the Jews did not establish the same degree of roots to the island as was seen on Barbados.
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