During the 1880s and early 1890s, animal-protection, veterinarian, and antisemitic societies in Saxony, and in much of Germany, lobbied for slaughterhouse reforms. They sought the licensing of slaughterers, the restriction of the abattoir (slaughterhouse) to men only, the implementation of stricter inspection procedures, and the stunning of animals into a state of unconsciousness before their slaughter. These groups called for change because they believed that the current state of affairs in the municipally run slaughterhouses posed a risk to the public’s health. In their view, the abattoir allegedly encouraged brutal behavior, attracted unsavory characters as employees, and facilitated the accumulation of contaminants from its dirty and bloody surfaces. Saxon animal protectionists also expressed concern with the traditional ways in which animals were slaughtered for food. At that time, most European butchers slaughtered conscious animals with sharp knives (Schächten), and animal protection advocates warned that such a method cruelly allowed animals to feel their own murder. The activists admonished that the slaughter of conscious animals could affect people’s behavior toward one another and lead to domestic violence, verbal abuse, and drunken scuffles. By making these demands, the animal protectionists and their supporters gradually raised questions concerning the character of German citizenry, the power of the German government, and the place of minority communities and institutions in the modern state.
In 1892, the Kingdom of Saxony acquiesced to the animal protectionists and promulgated reforms that mandated the promulgation of stricter inspection procedures, the licensing of slaughterers, the restriction of the abattoir to men only, and the stunning of animals into a state of unconsciousness before their slaughter.\footnote{Even though these slaughterhouse reforms did not necessarily target Saxon Jews, they influenced Jewish life significantly. Shehitah (kosher butchering), a subset of Judaism’s dietary laws, dictates that a conscious animal must be slaughtered by rapidly severing its trachea and esophagus with an extremely smooth knife. Because the government refused to exempt the Jewish community from its regulations despite several appeals, the passage of the abattoir reforms forced religiously observant Jews to make a choice—transgress Jewish law by stunning the animal before its slaughter, slaughter meat illegally, or procure kosher meat from another source.} The Saxon legislation remained unchanged until 1910, when the minister of the interior deemed that certain exemptions be put into place.\footnote{Although Saxony was the only state in Imperial Germany to allow a statewide ban on kosher butchering, the events there were not unique. During the 1890s and early 1900s, many German towns and states engaged in some form of debate concerning animal stunning and the Jewish method of animal slaughter (Schächtfrage), regardless of the size of their Jewish population. In almost all cases, the debates about kosher butchering began as part of a larger campaign for slaughterhouse reform. The nascent efforts by animal protectionists and their supporters to cast these laws as mandatory for all citizens, and the subsequent attempt by Jewish communities to receive exemptions, intensified the animal protection campaigns and brought them to the attention of a wider audience. By the late 1890s, the mainstream animal advocacy crusade—which had once expressed little interest in Jewish rites—now raised questions concerning the character of Jewish rituals, the rights of religious minorities, and the possibilities for state or local control over religious customs and, by extension, religious minorities. Nothing has yet been written to set out the narrative of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German debates concerning kosher butchering, and, I believe, the Schächtfrage deserves examination and studies of its own. This article uses the local, regional, and national debates to provide a window into a fragmented German society, state, and its minorities and to illuminate the complex processes of cultural, social, and political interaction that took place among them. The contradictory demands by animal protectionists concerning what regulations Jews should observe within the abattoir, the cries for religious freedoms on the part of Jews who may or may not have been re-}
ligiously observant themselves, the conflicting statements that governments issued concerning the regulation of religious minorities, and the attempt by administrative bodies at the local and regional level to use these deliberations as a way to garner power complicate our understanding of acculturation and minority integration in Germany. Furthermore, an analysis of the Schächtfrage challenges traditional assumptions about antisemitism’s primacy in shaping the interactions between German Jews and their local and state governments. By exploring the growing interest in kosher butchering among Jews and non-Jews between 1850 and 1914, this article sets out that narrative and suggests that the Schächtfrage’s widespread appeal lay in the very questions and paradoxes inherent in its debates.

The Debates, 1850–90

The origins of the German kosher butchering debates can be found in the birth of the German animal protection movement. Beginning in the late 1700s, animal-protection advocates began to call for the improved treatment of all animals, particularly horses, cats, dogs, and hunted animals. Motivated by an anthropocentric tradition, these individuals held that animals were not to be defended for their own sake but to curb man’s brutality to fellow man. Immanuel Kant most famously articulated this viewpoint in 1785 when he denied that animals had rights of their own because they allegedly lacked the facility to reason, but he advocated animal protection because he worried that a man who mistreated an animal would be encouraged to act similarly with other humans. Concerned that the targets for such brutality would be those individuals who could not defend themselves, he and other animal protectionists made parallels between animals and society’s “vulnerable,” namely women and children.

The sentimentalism of nascent animal protectionists took on an organized form in the late 1830s with the creation of the first animal advocacy society in the German states. Over the next 40 years, these societies endorsed the improved transport of animals, the teaching of animal protection in schools, and the promulgation of animal protection laws. They also endorsed other sentimentalist platforms, such as temperance campaigns and the protection of children. Portraying piety, kindness, and abstinence as ideal characteristics, the publications of these early associations expressed newfound delight and moralistic importance in nature and illustrated that brutality against animals, children, and women led to ruthlessness against all people. The animal-
protection societies’ use of sentimentalist discourses also highlighted their commonality with other middle-class associations that similarly articulated new sets of moral and social standards to dictate everyday life.¹⁰

Individual states soon adopted animal cruelty legislation, and by the time of unification in 1871 all German states except the city-state of Lübeck had legal regulations or police orders against animal brutality. Not surprisingly, these laws adopted the anthropocentric impulses of the time and targeted forms of animal cruelty that affected women and children, not necessarily forms of brutality that horribly mistreated animals. The mid-nineteenth-century legislation steered women and children away from abattoirs, cock fights, and bull-baiting, and it defined unlawful animal mistreatment as that which took place in public.¹¹

At first, German animal protection societies, like their European counterparts, expressed little interest in slaughtering practices or in kosher butchering, but this was to change gradually.¹² The shift first occurred outside of the German states. In 1855, the British Society for the Protection of Animals called for widespread slaughterhouse reform. Charging that current slaughtering practices forced animals to be aware of their own deaths, British animal protection advocates petitioned for mandatory stunning laws. Stunning practices at that time still were rudimentary, often relying on mallets or hammers to stun animals into unconsciousness. Therefore, scientists and politicians throughout England came to the defense of traditional slaughtering techniques, and the debates over stunning remained dormant in England for several decades.¹³ There was, however, a slightly different outcome when Swiss animal protectionists made similar demands that same year. In 1855, the canton of Aargau—responding to pressure from animal protection societies there—passed legislation forbidding the slaughter of conscious animals. The canton exempted the Jewish communities of Endingen and Lengnau but rescinded this privilege 10 years later when it ruled that all slaughterers, regardless of religious affiliation, were to stun their animals before killing them.¹⁴

The events in Switzerland and England had a significant impact on animal protection discourses throughout Europe and helped to bring about several changes within German animal advocacy. Interested in the abattoir as a source of brutality and evil, some German protection societies began to shift their focus away from the care of cats, horses, dogs, and hunted prey to slaughtering techniques and slaughterhouse procedures. In Berlin, Königsberg, Cologne, and Munich, animal protection societies gradually criticized the lack of stunning laws in their cities. Their calls for such reforms intensified after the 1880s, when
new stunning methods became more widely available. These included the bouterole, which covered the animal’s head but left a space through which butchers could stun it with a heavy mallet; the Bruneau’s Mask, which allowed for a slaughterer to drive a bolt or spike through the animal’s skull; and the Sigmund’s mask, which was like the Bruneau’s Mask but was connected to a revolver. Before the invention of these devices, stunning mechanisms were clumsy, difficult to utilize, and painful to the animal. Now, animal protection advocates lauded the facility of these new techniques and condemned current methods of slaughter as inhumane. These crusaders did not limit their campaign to stunning laws. They also denounced the method of transport used to carry the cattle to the abattoir and the pens that slaughterers employed to restrain their animals.15

In their campaign, supporters of these new stunning techniques pointed to three interconnected concerns: the allegedly humane character of stunning; Germany’s character as a civilized and cultured state (Kulturstaat) that should be opposed to cruelty; and the public health benefits of stunning animals before slaughter. In their view, slaughtering an unconscious animal was less bloody, faster (allegedly, shehitah took more than 10 minutes as compared to the 3–5 minutes of slaughter after stunning), and caused the animal fewer convulsions. Moreover, it supposedly resulted in healthier meat that remained fresh for a longer period of time.10 Stunning also did not force a creature to be aware of its own death. Drawing from theriocentric traditions, supporters of stunning legislation emphasized that animals could experience pain and terror and thus should be defended for their own sake.17 Animal protectionists thus emphasized the horror suffered by the animals themselves. Claiming that they “spoke on behalf of the tens of thousands of animals who were murdered each day,” they graphically described the pain “innocent creatures” experienced at the hands of their “cruel tormentors.”18 At a national meeting of animal protection societies, for example, one member beseeched his fellow activists to imagine the anguish animals experienced when the creatures died fully aware of their surroundings. “When we cut our finger we feel the pain,” he cried. “We can hardly even imagine what severe anguish the animal must feel.”19

This is not to suggest that animal protectionists dismissed earlier claims that animal cruelty could have an adverse effect on behavior. Anthropocentric concerns remained central to the debates as well. Concerned that the slaughter of conscious animals could emotionally devastate women and children or drive individuals to act brutally toward one another, animal protectionists called for the prohibition of
women and children from the abattoir and the regulation of slaughte-
ners who served as teachers. In both anthropocentric and theriocentric accounts of Schächten’s brutality, animal protection advocates threatened that the slaughter of conscious animals risked the country’s character as a Kulturstaat. Comparing Germany to other Kulturstaaten that had passed mandatory stunning laws (Switzerland, Denmark, and the Netherlands), German animal protection advocates suggested not only that Germany’s reputation was at stake but also that, if such forms of brutality existed, they could infect the entire population. This anxiety concerning Germany’s reputation as a civilized state was particularly salient to German authorities and to many middle-class citizens during and after German unification (1869–71) when they attempted to define state and society.

Between 1850 and 1890, local animal protectionists advocated slaughter reform on the basis of humanitarian, scientific, or cultural concerns, and many groups tended not to target the Jewish method of slaughter. Instead, most opponents of Schächten expressed concern with the hundreds of European butchers who used this method and not specifically (or solely) with the slaughtering practices of a Jewish minority. Some animal advocacy groups of the pre-1890 period even believed that Schächten was a humane form of slaughter and that, by decapitating the animal quickly, the butcher was avoiding causing the animal tremendous pain. This disinterest in, or acceptance of, kosher butchering could even be seen in the 1886–88 animal protection campaign to bring about stunning laws. During the 1880s, hundreds of German animal protection societies submitted petitions to the Reichstag requesting laws that would mandate the stunning of animals, the slaughtering of animals in government approved slaughterhouses only, and the licensing of slaughte-
ers. Unlike petitions introduced in future Reichstag debates, some of the petitions submitted in 1886–88 recommended the exemption of the Jewish community from state regulations; others did not mention the Jew-

ish community at all. Local abattoir practices similarly allowed for Jews to continue practicing kosher butchering despite the existence of stunning laws. Throughout the 1880s and much of the 1890s, the majority of local German communities that adopted slaughterhouse reforms exempted Jews in the legislation itself or upon appeal.

The Transformation of the Animal Protection Campaign, 1890–1914

Public and governmental opinion concerning kosher butchering began to shift over the course of the 1890s and early 1900s. In his 1904
trade journal article, the slaughterhouse director, Stier, described his change in view. “In earlier years,” he wrote, “I believed that it was preferable if the conscious animal was slaughtered and then bled. Now I know the practice of stunning is faster and painless.”26 Stier’s experience was common among local slaughterhouse directors and employees as well as among the municipal administrators that oversaw the abattoir. In the 1890s and early 1900s, German city and town councils increasingly limited or prohibited the Jewish rite. Debates about stunning reforms then tended to look at the Jewish method specifically and ask whether it was appropriate to engage in particularistic customs in the post emancipatory age. Although not all local governments endorsed a ban on slaughter without previous stunning, they gradually agreed that kosher butchering needed to be subsumed under the jurisdiction of the municipality and/or the state.27

This shift occurred at the national level as well. Kosher butchering assumed a central place in the Reichstag debates of 1899 and 1909–11.28 In addition, after 1890 the deliberations about shehitah resulted in the widespread distribution of scientific and pseudoscientific studies and surveys, the mobilization of several Jewish and non-Jewish “apolitical” associations to defend or oppose shehitah, and the formulation of religious reforms among Jews. During this period, kosher butchering also became the focus of antisemitic postcards, Jewish jokes, animal protection society newsletters, and scientific, anthropological, and medical treatises.29 As the form and content of the deliberations changed, so too did the audience. No longer limited to a small group of animal protectionists, the participants in the kosher butchering debates represented a cross section of German middle-class society: members of Germany’s mainstream political parties, veterinarians, Catholic leaders, biblical literary critics, scientists, anthropologists, dentists, and professors.30

What explained this major change? Why did a cross section of society become increasingly interested in the Jewish method of animal slaughter and why did local governments gradually force Jewish communities to observe their slaughterhouse regulations? The answers lie in the dramatic historical changes of the 1890s, including the exponential rise of chauvinistic discourses, the attempt by governmental bodies to garner control over previously unregulated spheres of behavior, and the belief by a wide spectrum of society that the public’s health was in escalating danger.
The dramatic political, social, and economic rearrangements of the 1890s encouraged many people to become increasingly interested in kosher butchering. During the 1890s, Germany experienced an economic boom, dramatic urbanization, a rise in mass consumption, changes in living conditions, and an increase in population. As the landscape transformed and became increasingly populated, German society gradually became more concerned with crime, degeneration, unemployment, and hygiene. Extra-parliamentary groups and associations voiced and manipulated these concerns. Advocating certain cultural standards and asserting German pride and identity, these groups ushered in a new period of chauvinism and patriotism that paved the way for opposition to Catholic, Socialist, Polish, and Jewish groups. The campaign against kosher butchering shared several themes with the chauvinistic impulses of the time: a concern with Jewish particularity and brutality, a desire to eradicate deviance from society, a longing to return to a “utopian” past, and an anxiety concerning political, economic, and social changes.

The kosher butchering debates attracted attention in part because they tapped into these anxieties. Some activists explicitly pointed to anti-Jewish concerns as the reason for their involvement. In their view, the call to enforce Jewry’s compliance with the stunning laws provided a platform from which they could address questions concerning Jewish particularities, integrative abilities, and civic worthiness. Moreover, the scientific character of the campaign and its widespread audience lent them an element of respectability and allowed for the normalization of chauvinistic discourse. In Potsdam, for example, industrialist and Reichstag deputy Ernst Froehlich of the antisemitic German Social Reform Party openly whipped up anti-Jewish sentiment when he introduced proposals banning kosher butchering in 1901, 1903, and 1905. In his public appearances, Froehlich emphasized Jewish hostility toward Christendom, Jewry’s propensity for cruelty, and its contemptuousness for German culture and society. He repeatedly called on “scientific experts” to prove the need for stricter regulations over the Jewish minority.

Whether they were explicitly or implicitly invoked, anti-Jewish myths were central to the debates about kosher butchering. The animal protection literature consistently voiced concerns with the allegedly violent character of shehitah, thus implying that the Jews were themselves deviant and cruel. The most egregious example of this accusation was the linkage of kosher butchering with ritual murder. Radical oppo-
ponents of shehitah conflated the charge that Jews slaughtered animals in brutal ways with the medieval myth that Jews ritually murdered Christians for religious purposes. Imagining the Jewish butcher as the Jewish murderer, critics of kosher butchering compared Jewry’s alleged murder of children for the Passover service with the supposedly barbarous method in which Jews slaughtered cattle. It is interesting to note that, just as antisemites used the libel charge to condemn Jewish religious culture, they also pointed to shehitah as proof of ritual murder’s existence. In 1892, for example, police authorities arrested a local Jewish butcher of brutally murdering a child in Xanten (Rhineland). The police suspected him because he was one of the few residents in Xanten who would be capable of decapitating and bleeding a human, since he normally did so to cattle. Eight years later, another Jewish butcher was indicted after a student was killed in the West Prussian town of Konitz. A popular postcard from the Konitz affair dramatized this link. The card depicted a man restrained in chains and surrounded by 10 Jewish men (representing the quorum required by Jewish law for religious services). One man appeared to be decapitating the victim while another drained his blood into a bucket. The inscription read, “Remember 11 March 1900. On that day, the grammar school pupil Winter of Konitz was sacrificed by the shohet’s knife (Schächtmesser).” A postcard circulated after an 1899 ritual murder case (the Hilsner Affair) similarly portrayed a bound maiden surrounded by three unkempt Jewish butchers.

Fin-de-siècle concerns with sexual deviance influenced the making of these postcards, as well as other literature demanding the prohibition of kosher butchering. During a moment when social fears concerning overpopulation, degeneracy, and criminality became fused with and articulated through sexual anxieties, it is not surprising that depictions of shohtim played into stereotypes of Jews as violent, oversexed, and sexually different. The Jewish method of slaughter requires shohtim with significant strength and cattle that are constrained in some way. Antisemitic authors used these images of the powerful Jewish slaughterer and the docile victim to invoke anxieties with Jewish sexuality. Their illustrations of dewy-eyed calves bound with ropes and metal chains sent a clear message: shehitah and the Jewish employees of the abattoir presented a significant danger, possibly even to society at large. One could note that this charge was the exact opposite of the common antisemitic belief that Jewish men were emasculated and weak.

Another antisemitic myth invoked by the anti-kosher-butchering campaign concerned Jewry’s alleged bloodthirstiness. As antisemitic propaganda exaggerated the bloody character of Jewish rites and de-
scribed Jews as a “blood-thirsty” and “blood-drinking” people, the conventional animal protection campaign and the scientific community similarly propelled the alleged affinity between Jews, blood, and kosher butchering into public discourse. German veterinarians and pathologists studied the blood of slaughtered animals and the process through which cattle lost blood after their slaughter. Traditional animal rights advocates similarly expressed an interest in blood, demanding that slaughterhouse commissions promulgate laws forbidding Jews from consuming the blood of animals butchered by the Jewish method. They also insisted that kosher butchering take place in a separate space within the abattoir for fear that the blood might contaminate other meat. Many commissions eventually promulgated such laws even though they were unnecessary because Judaism itself prohibits the ingestion of this blood and requires the scrupulous inspection of the animal and its fluids for contaminants. This interest with blood was part of a larger concern in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century culture. During this period, German science and pseudo-science devoted itself to the study of blood and its pathogens; a strand of German nationalism and racism called for blood as the cornerstone for German national identity; and blood served as the basis on which the state determined eligibility for German citizenship.

As some scientists, animal protection advocates, and antisemites condemned the bloodiness of kosher butchering, others voiced concern that German Jews slaughtered more animals than they could physically consume and then profited from their rate of slaughter. There was an element of truth to their charge. In the Rhine town of Rheydt, for example, where Jews constituted only 0.8 percent of the total population, slaughterhouse records revealed that more than half of all cattle were slaughtered by the Schächten method. In Bülow, allegedly 95 percent of the meat slaughtered in the public slaughterhouses was killed according to shehitah, even though Jews constituted less than 1 percent of the population. However, the high number of cattle slaughtered according to the Jewish method can be easily explained. First, some non-Jewish butchers continued to slaughter animals with a knife without stunning them first (Schächten), a method that had been approved by some animal protection societies before the 1890s. These slaughterhouse employees preferred to eat and sell this kind of meat, believing that the slaughter of conscious animals produced a higher quality of meat that remained fresh longer. Furthermore, the high percentage of animals slaughtered by shehitah had its roots in Jewish law. Judaism’s dietary laws prohibit Jews from ingesting the sciatic nerve or the fatty portions of the animal carcass as well as animals that, upon further in-
spection, are found to have blemishes or lesions. In order to produce a sufficient amount of kosher meat for their customers, shohtim had to slaughter more cattle than non-Jewish butchers.

To many animal sentimentalists, slaughterhouse directors, and government officials, the large percentage of animals slaughtered by the Jewish method was problematic because it inferred that Jews profited from killing, a charge that played into extant stereotypes of Jews as economically shifty and driven by economic gain. According to this view, Jews sold to Christians—at a profit—what they themselves were forbidden from eating. For example, in his 1896 article concerning the income Jews earned when selling to Christians at inflated prices, Carl Sedláček, the editor of the antisemitic Generalanzeiger, charged that Jews intentionally sold the spoiled, infected meat that they themselves could not consume. According to Sedláček, when a shohet found a diseased animal, he would gleefully announce, “this is for the goyim!” The Centralverein later successfully sued Sedláček for libel. Seven years later, members of the radical Berlin animal rights movement similarly expressed outrage when they discovered that the German army served meat from cattle that had been “slaughtered ritually.” The German military was one sphere, along with the judiciary, diplomatic corps, and the higher reaches of the civil service, in which Jews were historically unable to achieve positions of influence. Concerned that Jews had chosen this sphere of influence as a method of revenge, one antisemitic reporter bitterly complained that “Jews have received their wish that German soldiers must eat kosher meat.”

Yet, even though antisemitism informed the campaign to restrict or prohibit kosher butchering, antisemitic impulses did not motivate all animal protection advocates. Promoters of mandatory stunning laws justified their participation on a number of grounds. Hoping to protect the well-being of animals, several animal protection advocates called for restrictions on Schächten as one of several components to their crusade. Georg Hilker, a teacher and active animal protection society member in Paderborn, lobbied for local stunning laws as just one part of his sentimentalist campaign. He also called for education reforms that would incorporate animal protection into school lessons on religion, math, history, or geography, and he encouraged parents to give their children toys or dolls for presents rather than dogs, horses, or cats. Whereas Hilker looked to education as justification for his involvement, others pointed to concerns with health or hygiene, intellectual interests in shehitah or Jewish customs more generally, or political disputes as rationales for their participation.

Moreover, participants in the kosher butchering debates often acted
in ways that were unexpected to their contemporaries. There was, for example, a small group of Jews who promoted the universal stunning laws.\textsuperscript{56} In addition, a fair number of animal protection societies voted against the animal society petitions of 1906 and 1910. Concerned that a national mandatory stunning law would clash with the concept of religious freedom, they allied themselves with the individuals whose very practices they openly opposed.\textsuperscript{57} There were other such cases as well. During the 1898–99 Reichstag debates, for example, Leonard Hoffman, an outspoken opponent of shehitah and a member of the conservative Volkspartei, rejected the animal protectionist request to ban kosher butchering. He did so because he refused to endorse legislation that specifically targeted a minority.\textsuperscript{58}

**Regulatory Impulses and Religious Tolerance**

Regulatory impulses also shaped the kosher butchering debates of 1890–1914. During this period, local, regional, and state authorities maneuvered to position themselves as guarantors of social stability.\textsuperscript{59} Governments created welfare legislation and social insurance, intensified their expansionist efforts, turned to medicine for assistance, and devised new social policies and models for constructing an ordered society.

It was in this milieu that the slaughterhouse reforms took place. The abattoir regulations were part of the impetus by government and science to control a violent space, move it to the city’s edge, and regulate its employees and practices. In their efforts to protect the public’s health, all levels of government claimed some form of jurisdiction over the abattoir. Whereas local town councils and magistrates managed slaughterhouses just as they did other municipal institutions, state governments claimed ultimate jurisdiction over issues concerning trade, the licensing of public employees, and the crafting of health regulations. As animal protectionists called for Jewry’s compliance with the stunning laws or the promulgation of strict reforms of the rite, they turned to all levels of government agencies, claiming that intervention was a protectionist measure for the public good.

Most of the deliberations took place locally. Under the guise of service and protection, local slaughterhouse commissions, magistrates, town councils, and mayors reformed shehitah, dramatically restricted it, and/or encouraged its prohibition. Yet, though hundreds of towns debated possible bans, only 22 prohibited Jews from slaughtering animals according to the Jewish method. Instead, a majority of towns instituted laws that restricted the Jewish rite in a way that did not change
the practice completely. These regulations prohibited non-Jews from practicing shehitah, mandated the licensing of shohtim, restricted the times when kosher butchering could be performed, limited the number of cattle that could be killed, and demanded improvements in the ways in which animals were restrained before slaughter. The majority of prohibitions on kosher butchering took place in Prussia, though there were others in Bavaria, Hesse, and Saxony.

The promulgation of these mandatory stunning laws and reforms of kosher butchering prompted supporters and opponents of the legislation to raise two questions. Was it appropriate for government to mandate compliance even if it would force the transgression of private religious traditions? And, in the same vein, was it fitting for a religious minority to receive an exemption from normative laws even if these laws protected society’s members from harm? These questions were compelling in the post-emancipatory age when religious institutions had diminished in authority; when Jews, who were now citizens of the state, had generally conformed to the social standards around them; and when government officials and active communal leaders struggled over the powers of local, regional, and national authorities to intervene in what previously had been autonomous affairs.

Finding a legal response to these queries was made more difficult by the fact that the German state did not have a legacy of religious tolerance, demonstrated clearly by the experience of the Kulturkampf, the state-sponsored anti-Catholic campaign of the 1860s and 1870s. The constitution that united Germany in 1871 only promised that religious differences could not be used to justify inequality. It did not promise civil rights to its citizens and stipulated that “the Christian religion shall form the basis of all institutions of the state concerned with religious practice (Article 14).”

Some supporters of mandatory stunning laws seized on this murky tradition of religious tolerance to justify a rejection of Jewry’s right to practice its religious customs. In their opinion, if slaughterhouse commissions desired their butchers to stun all animals before slaughter, then kosher butchering should be banned. During the Reichstag debates of 1898–99, for example, Conservative Reichstag deputy George Oertel endorsed a national prohibition of kosher butchering. According to Oertel, religious protection mocked the valued notion of assimilability within the new German state. In his view, Jews did not deserve an exemption because, as citizens, they were required to follow the laws of society and state. Other advocates for kosher butchering’s prohibition, moreover, argued that the rite’s brutality called for the government to overlook its supposed tradition of tolerance and mandate the
compliance of new abattoir regulations. Emphasizing the brutality and public health risks inherent in Schächten, they called for conformity and not religious particularity to shape governmental reform.63

Not all individuals called for a ban on shehitah. Supporters of the Jewish community encouraged the government to allow for an exemption for the Jewish community on the basis of religious freedom. This viewpoint attracted individuals from across the political spectrum. Rabbi Ludwig Philippson, the founder of Der Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums, warned that a ban on kosher butchering would force all of society to “bid adieu to religious freedoms and the pursuit of individual conscience,”64 and Conservative Reichstag deputy Johannes Hoeffel (1850–1939) rejected the Schächtverbot for similar reasons. To Hoeffel, a ban on kosher butchering unfairly targeted a religious minority and therefore could not be endorsed.65

The murkiness of the constitutional dilemma was made clear in 1887. That year, the leader of the Catholic Center Party, Ludwig Windthorst, recommended a change in the wording of the proposed animal protection amendment that would punish cruel forms of slaughter but explicitly exempt any religious practices from its purview.66 The Center Party’s proposal was not surprising. When Windthorst recommended his change to the animal protection bill, he and his coreligionists had encountered almost two decades of anti-Catholic animus and legislation. Possibly concerned that a prohibition of shehitah would result in renewed attention to any religious ritual or custom that was outside of the Protestant norm, Windthorst demanded that religious tolerance dictate the Reichstag’s consideration of the animal protection question. Other Reichstag deputies did not agree fully. They overwhelmingly supported the introduction of animal protection laws but would neither advocate the creation of legislation that would protect religious observances nor endorse animal protection laws that would have a significant impact on a religious minority. After much deliberation, the Reichstag rejected the animal advocacy petition and Windthorst’s proposal as well. These debates shaped and deadlocked future deliberations concerning kosher butchering. With no legislation coming from the Reichstag, it was left to individual state governments and municipalities to determine whether or not it was appropriate for governments to enforce Jewish communal compliance to stunning laws.

By 1914, there was little uniformity across Germany. Within Prussia and Bavaria, most elected and appointed leaders—with the exception of town council members or magistrates—were unwilling to throw away the concept of religious tolerance. While they upheld local rights to institute slaughterhouse reform, they demanded that some kind of
exception be made for Jewish communities, even if it meant restrictions. Ministries of the interior and education tended to be most sympathetic toward Jewish pleas for exemptions, whereas state courts often were the most conservative in their rulings. The case became further complicated in 1906 when the Prussian government declared that shehitah was a form of trade and, as such, fell under the auspices of the state, not the police who regulated animal protection. Soon after the ruling, district presidents in Silesia repealed the previous prohibitions on kosher butchering there.67

Struggles for Internal Control

As governments struggled to determine some kind of balance between regulation for the “public good” and protection of religious difference, they also used the debates about kosher butchering to expand their own power base. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German towns were administered according to a system of representative government that had been established in Prussia in 1808. Local administrations were composed of an executive council (known as the Magistrat in East Prussia and Bavaria and elsewhere as the Senat or Kollege), responsible for the execution of all imperial, state, and local laws; the Mayor (or Mayors) who chaired the executive body; and the town council, a representative unit that had the ability to pass laws but only upon the recommendation and approval of the executive.68 German town councils ratified legislation, but magistrates executed or overturned them. Similarly, though town councils had ultimate power in the spheres of finance, elections, the contracting of loans, and the use and disposal of public property, executive councils were responsible for all municipal institutions and enterprises. As the responsibilities of municipalities increased, town councils and magistrates attempted to expand their spheres of authority.

The local deliberations about shehitah acted as a site in which these bodies struggled for control over previously unregulated spheres. Drawing from the competing discourses of cruelty, difference, religious tolerance, and animal protection, local communal agencies clashed over whether kosher butchering should be regulated (or protected), if the Jewish community deserved an exemption from the extant legislation, and who had the authority to intervene.69 However, though shehitah became a site for local power struggles, the allegiances and positioning of government agencies followed no clear path. In some cases, the executive councils promoted mandatory stunning laws while
the town councils urged for exceptions. In Soest, Küstrin, Sorau, and Hanau, for example, local magistrates endorsed prohibitions on kosher butchering without the previous approval of their town councils. Because the magistrates had the ultimate authority to execute local law, the town councils then appealed to the Prussian government to have the mandatory stunning laws overturned. In other cases, town councils recommended mandatory stunning laws that the magistrates overturned and the town councils tried to reinstate. The fact that town councils in Prussia had the least opportunity to be representative can explain the high number of internal conflicts there. Berlin, for example, should have had a council of 300 with its population of over 2 million, but it had only 144 members in its council. The municipal ordinance for the Rhine province had an even lower ratio. These local town councils thus attempted to gain control within their municipalities by using the debates concerning the Jewish minority.

The Defense of Kosher Butchering

The defenses of kosher butchering were similarly complicated. Whether or not they ate kosher meat at home, Jewish supporters of shehitah requested that Jews be allowed an exemption to slaughterhouse laws on the basis of religious tolerance and the rite’s worthiness. However, the demands for religious privileges and exceptional treatment made Jewish leaders uncomfortable. Ironically, the request for an exemption on the basis of religious tolerance publicized the very existence of Jewish particularities, something that Jews increasingly were hesitant to highlight. Whereas the shehitah defense literature from the 1870s and 1880s emphasized the rite’s religious value, the literature from the 1890s and onward did not.

To downplay Jewish difference, defenses of shehitah affirmed Jewish assimilability. Their campaigns emphasized the allegedly humane and hygienic character of kosher butchering and asserted that the rite would enhance the public good. According to their books, articles, petitions, and letters, meat from ritually slaughtered animals tended to remain fresh longer, was free of contagions, and tasted better. Furthermore, because blood carried the dreaded syphilis and tubercular pathogens, it was supposedly preferable that all animals be bled after their slaughter. Finally, because the slaughter required by shehitah was so rapid, it allegedly caused the animals little pain. The suggestion implicit in their publications was clear. Jews did not eat ritually slaughtered meat because of their religious orientation; they did so because
they are good, rational, moral individuals. In their meetings and private correspondence, Jewish leaders increasingly encouraged one another to emphasize the ritual’s universal character over its religious significance.

Furthermore, supporters of kosher butchering accused animal protectionists and stunning advocates of knowingly spreading falsehoods about shehitah. Fashioning themselves as the bearers of truth, Jewish leaders and their proponents dismissed the agitation against kosher butchering as “garbage,” “revealed” the antisemitic motivations behind the anti-kosher-butchering campaign, and described animal protection societies as “the enemies of the Jews.” In so doing, they cast themselves as respectable and their opponents as the ones who were deviant.

In crafting their strategies, Jewish leaders revealed a sophisticated understanding of the political milieu, broadening their efforts beyond traditional practices of shoftlamut (traditional requests for intervention from state and other influential non-Jewish authorities). Opponents of the mandatory stunning laws distributed letters, leaflets, and petitions, reported on what they feared were “dangerous” non-Jewish organizations, tracked the activities of diverse animal protection, veterinary, butcher, and conservative associations, funded experiments to verify kosher butchering’s benefits, and produced volumes of letters documenting shehitah’s hygienic and humane nature. They also distributed questionnaires to Jewish and non-Jewish butchers and veterinarians, published responses to specific inflammatory books, and lobbied important non-Jewish officials. In their defense of kosher butchering, Jewish leaders created new infrastructural and organizational developments within the Jewish community by forming new defense organizations and a complicated fundraising network. Jewish leaders also defended shehitah by improving it. They created stricter licensing laws for shehitah, improved the pens used for shackling animals, and put stronger inspection procedures into place.

Shehitah defense would provide Jewish leaders with unlikely bedfellows. Even though German Catholics were traditionally motivated by anti-Jewish animus in a number of political, social, and cultural settings, the Catholic Center Party consistently supported the Jewish community’s right to practice kosher butchering. Claiming that they wanted to “protect the ancient tenets of the religion of our Jewish citizens,” Windthorst and his successors—and not Liberal Reichstag deputies—defended Jewish slaughtering rights with speeches about religious tolerance. Until 1908, Jewish leaders uniformly welcomed the Center Party’s assistance; after 1908, they increasingly voiced concern with the Center Party’s framing their defense around the religious nature of
kosher butchering.\textsuperscript{85} Although Jewish leaders were uneasy with making themselves distinct, perhaps it was easier for Catholic Center Party leaders to highlight Jewish—rather than Catholic—particularities while requesting assurances for religious protection.\textsuperscript{86} Furthermore, just as some scientists condemned kosher butchering, others inverted the criticism lodged against the rite to accent kosher butchering’s hygienic character.\textsuperscript{87} According to several biological, veterinary, behavioral, and social scientists, kosher meat was free of contagions, stayed fresh longer, and had a preferred taste and smell.\textsuperscript{88} Furthermore, they tried to prove that slaughter combined with stunning was an unmerciful form of killing. According to this view, stunning damaged the brain and nervous system but did not result in death. To believe otherwise, wrote Russian scientist I. Dembo, “can only be the outcome of an utter ignorance of the elementary laws of physiology and physiological chemistry.”\textsuperscript{89} Science remained an ally—and an enemy—of kosher butchering throughout this period and on through the 1920s and early 1930s.\textsuperscript{90}

**Conclusion**

In its report to the Bremen Senate in 1907, the independent city-state’s slaughterhouse commission described shehitah as a topic that had been so widely discussed, published, and debated that the issue had come close to being exhausted. Asserting that “we, as Christians, take our religion quite seriously,” commission members beseeched the Senate to consider whether a set of animal protection laws whose purpose was to combat kosher butchering’s cruelty outweighed the rite’s religious importance to Jews. The Bremen debates, like other contemporary deliberations concerning kosher slaughter, involved a wide cross section of Bremen society—veterinarians, slaughterhouse directors, known antisemites, dentists, Jewish leaders, shohtim, and non-Jewish butchers. Defense and opposition both questioned whether the much-espoused ideology of religious protection/tolerance warranted nonintervention in Jewish religious affairs, and the debates, like elsewhere, were shaped by a variety of interconnecting discourses concerning state and city growth, antisemitism, animal protection, and humanitarianism. After prolonged discussion, the executive council rejected the proposed prohibition and allowed for an exemption on the grounds of religious tolerance.\textsuperscript{91} Yet, even though Bremen did not institute a ban on kosher butchering, the debates physically changed the landscape and practices of the abattoirs there.
Like in the rest of Germany, the slaughterhouse became a place in which Jewish slaughterers were increasingly distanced from their non-Jewish colleagues and were increasingly regulated by the state.  

Although the Bremen Senate members were concerned that the Schächtfrage had been so thoroughly discussed by them and their compatriots that they had come close to exhausting it, little of today’s scholarship has paid attention to the German debates concerning kosher butchering or has examined the ways in which an analysis of the deliberations speaks to larger issues in Jewish or European historiography. At its core, the Schächtfrage had fundamental questions concerning the power and limits of the state, the character of its citizenry, the possibilities for religious freedom, and the place of religious communities in the modern state. In each case, participants considered who within the state or community was to hold the locus of power and on what grounds and with what losses that appropriation of power would take place. The dozens of laws concerning shehitah that were promulgated between 1890 and 1914 marked a shift in governmental policy toward minorities. As part of a governmental attempt to solve society’s “social problems,” protect the public’s health, and delineate jurisdiction over a religious minority, the regulations illuminate the ways in which state and municipal administrations moved from protecting difference to intervening in previously autonomous affairs. This shift toward homogenization was part of a larger trend within the German state in the aftermath of unification and emancipation.  

By endorsing the homogenization of German societies, supporters of mandatory stunning laws kept discussions about Jewish deviance afloat. In postcards, antisemitic cartoons, jokes, and leaflets, advocates for mandatory stunning laws increasingly pointed to Jewish particularities. The presence of such discourses in the Schächtfrage encouraged a wider segment of the population to become interested in the Jewish rite. In some cases, participants in the debates, who themselves had not been aligned with conservative causes, came to support conservative objectives. Thus, the Schächtfrage suggests many ways in which Germans knowingly and unwittingly propelled antisemitism into the public arena throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.  

Yet the history of animal protection raises two paradoxes concerning the antisemitic impulses of the nineteenth century. First, at the moment that Jews experienced their emancipatory rights (1871), the animal protection movement expressed little interest in the Jewish method of slaughter. During the 1870s, many animal protection advocates—like their compatriots more generally—focused their attentions outside of the Jewish community. This period witnessed a state-sponsored cam-
campaign against Catholics, not Jews. Only when Catholic persecution ceased did Jews (and socialists) become objects of state and social discrimination. It was after the conclusion of the Kulturkampf that local governments and animal protection societies shifted their gaze specifically to the Jewish method of slaughter.

Furthermore, an analysis of the Schächtfrage suggests that antisemitism is not a sufficient explanation for the events that took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While antisemites happily latched onto the campaign concerning kosher butchering for their own purposes, many animal protection advocates distanced themselves from explicit anti-Jewish thinking, even if they might have believed privately in anti-Jewish stereotypes or myths. Other animal protectionists endorsed kosher butchering because they believed that it produced a healthier quality of meat or because they did not believe that religious particularities deserved punishment. The strange contradictory allegiances that were created by the Schächtfrage suggest that, though antisemitism was crucial to the narrative of the kosher butchering debates, it alone does not explain the popularity of the deliberations.

The Schächtfrage’s popularity can be explained because the debates were part of larger historical phenomena and were themselves influential forces in determining those events and trends. Imperial Germany functioned as a multiethnic and multiconfessional entity, and the debates concerning kosher butchering highlight the processes of cultural, social, and political interaction that took place within it.

Notes

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The shehitah debates continued through the Weimar period and resumed after World War II.

Despite the ubiquity of the kosher butchering debates, historians of German-Jewry have expressed little interest in them. Sander Gilman’s study of Kafka, Richard Levy’s examination of Germany’s antisemitic parties in the 1890s, John Efron’s analysis of German Jews and medicine, and Dorothee Brantz’s recently published study of the Reichstag debates provide welcome exceptions to the existing scholarship. They discuss the kosher butchering debates within their larger studies (even if, in Levy’s case, quite briefly), place the deliberations within Germany’s history of medicine and/or antisemitism, and limit their examinations to published sources only. Brantz’s article appeared after I submitted this article for publication. Interestingly, her analysis of the Reichstag debates supports my findings and only emphasizes the need to examine the local deliberations and the Jewish communal responses to them. See Sander L. Gilman, Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient (New York, 1996); Richard S. Levy, The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany (New Haven, Conn., 1975); John M. Efron, Medicine and the German Jews: A History (New Haven, Conn., 2001); and Dorothee Brantz, “Stunning Bodies: Animal Slaughter, Judaism, and the Meaning of Humanity in Imperial Germany,” Central European History 35, no. 2.
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7 Membership in these organizations consisted of middle-class clergy, civil servants, policemen, town councilmen, medical and veterinary doctors, teachers, and lawyers. See “Aus den Statuten des Berliner Tierschutz-Vereins,” Berliner Tierschutz-Verein (hereafter BTV) 39 (1888–92): 2; Hermann Stenz, Dem Andenken Hans und Neta Beringer’s (Berlin, 1903); and Vereins gegen Thierquälerei zu Königsberg, Schutz des Schlachtsiehes (Königsberg, 1873); and Wegener, “Das Neue Testament und der Tierschutz,” in Kalender 1896, Deutschen Thierschutz-Verein zu Berlin, ed. (Berlin, 1896), 41–42.

8 See, e.g., Georg Hilker, Der Lehrer, die Schule und die Tierschutzsache (Paderborn, 1898); Vereins gegen Thierquälerei zu Königsberg, III Schutz des Schlachtsiehes (Königsberg, 1873); and Wegener, “Das Neue Testament und der Tierschutz,” in Kalender 1896, Deutschen Thierschutz-Verein zu Berlin, ed. (Berlin, 1896), 41–42.


12 The animal protection society of Munich, however, targeted kosher butchering from its inception. See J. J. Zagler, Pflichten gegen den Thiere (Munich, 1844), Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter BH) MA59906; J. J. Zagler, Bericht des Münchener Vereins gegen Thierquälerei für das Jahr 1843, BH MA 59906; and 1852 Report of the Munich Tier- schutzverein, BH MA 59906.
15 Because the slaughter of a conscious animal relies on that creature remaining in one place, butchers chained their animals into pens that held the bovine creatures on their sides and tipped them upside down. This process was referred to as shackling, or Niederlegen, and was the focus of much of the animal protection literature. Leipzig Jewish community letters to and from H. Hermann Maeyer, 1863, CAHJP GA II 1507; Karl Damman, Gutachten über das jüdische Schlachtverfahren (Hannover, 1886); Gerlach, “Über das Schächten,” Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums 16 (1867): 93–100.
16 Judicial Ruling of Dr. A. Mohr of Hamburg (May 10, 1878), CAHJP AHW 566 37–40; letter from the medical examiner to the Minister of Interior, Baden, Apr. 6, 1881, NSBCJ 75BKa124 6; statement by the Police Authorities and Magistrate of Erfurt, May 31, 1881, NSBCJ 75AEr1 97 1; August Müller, Bericht über die Thätigkeit des Vereins gegen Thierquälerei zu Königsberg (Königsberg, 1873); Vereins gegen Thierquälerei zu Königsberg, 4 & 5 Bericht, “Zur Schächtfrage,” Die jüdische Presse (hereafter JP) 30 (1886): 287; “Berlin, 20 August,” JP 34 (1886): 330; “Die Petition der Thierschutzvereine im
17 Before the 1880s, the belief that animals warranted protection because they had their own intrinsic value was unpopular but not absent from debate. Rather, a small group of antivivisectionists who followed Arthur Schopenhauer, the German philosopher of pessimism, advocated such a theriocentric position. The English utilitarian philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham, an unlikely philosophical bedfellow to Schopenhauer, had first articulated this belief in 1789. See Jeremy Bentham, "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789)," in The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham, J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart, eds., vol. 2 (London, 1968), 11–12.


20 See, e.g., Hillker, Der Lehrer. Also see Philipp Klenk, Tierschutz in Schule und Gemeinde (Berlin, 1907).

21 Petition of the German Animal Protection Association, 1887, CAJP GA II/166. The laws and the punishments for breaking them varied. In England, a fine of five pounds punished some kinds of animal cruelty. In the Netherlands, those who tormented animals were punished with a three-month prison sentence or a significant fine. Only in Switzerland was kosher butchering specifically illegal.

22 There were, of course, several exceptions. See, e.g., C. Bauerker, Das Rituelle Schächtens der Israeliten im Lichte der Wissenschaft. Ein Vortrag Gehalten im Wissenschaftlich-Literarischen Verein zu Kaiserslautern am. 5 Dezember 1881 (Kaiserslautern, 1882), 2–3.

23 See, e.g., E. Rothbarth, 50 Jahre Kölner Tierschutzvereine (Kiel, 1922).

24 Still, there were petitions that did mention the Jewish community explicitly, particularly those from animal protection groups in Berlin and Munich. See the different viewpoints expressed in Aus den Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags über das Schächten (18. Mai 1887, 25. April 1899, und 9. Mai 1899) (Berlin, 1909); petition from the German Animal Protection Association, 1886, CAJP GA II/721; “Abermals das Schächten,” AZdJ 29 (1886): 452–53; “Die Petitionen für die fernere Freiheit des rituellen Schächtens,” AZdJ 49 (1886): 771–72; “Die Schechitah-Angelegenheit vor dem deutschen Reichstage” Der Israelit 45/46 (1886).


Judd, “German Jewish Rituals, Bodies, and Citizenship,” chap. 4.

The latter debates considered an amendment promising national protection of the religious practice.


As middle-class professionals interested in science and medicine, it is not too surprising that many dentists expressed interest in shehitah.

For an excellent overview of these many changes, see David Blackbourn, The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918 (New York, 1998), 351–99.


There were, of course, important exceptions. See Thrd. Linz, “Der Thierschutz in den öffentlichen Schlachthäusern,” Ibis 28 (1899): 68–69; Pastor Brandes’ testimony during the 1906 animal protection society meeting, in 1906 Minutes, NSBCJ 75 CVe1 344 156; and “Chemnitz,” IDR 3 (1907): 188. Jewish emancipation in Germany took place in 1869–71 with unification.


39 Peter Pulzer also refers to the postcard, though he overlooks the centrality of shehitah to it; see his “The Response to Anti- semitism,” in Meyer, ed., German Jewish History in Modern Times, 252–80.

40 The reader would have known that they were butchers because the card labeled them as such. It is interesting to note that the man indicted was not a butcher but a cobbler.

41 On this, see Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1990); John C. Fout, ed., Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe (Chicago, 1992); Jeffrey Weeks, Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800, 2d ed. (London, 1989); and Jeffrey Weeks, Sexual-


44 On Jewish physicians who defended kosher butchering, see Efron, Medicine and the German Jews, and Judd, “German Jewish Rituals, Bodies, and Citizenship,” chap. 6.

45 See the scientific and pseudoscientific studies cited by Karl Mittermaier, Das Schlachten geschildert und erläutert auf Grund zahlreicher neuerer Gutachten (Heidelberg, 1902); and Karl Mittermaier, “Die Schächtfrage,” BTV 91 and 92 (1888–92): 1 and 1–2, respectively.

46 Saxon 1910 ruling about shehitah, SHD MDI 16178 12; Police Order, 1910, NSBCJ 75CVE1 344 445; “Das Schächten im Schlachthof,” General Anzeigen, Nov. 14, 1911, NSBCJ 75CVE1 341 nr. 13; “Eine neue Polizeiverordnung über das Schächten,” Deutsche Tageszeitung, Dec. 13, 1910, NSBCJ 75CVE1344 423; “Mit der Schlachtmethode,” Norddeutschen Allgemeinen Zeitung, Apr. 22, 1909, NSBCJ 75CVE1 nr. 159; “Ueber das Schächt-Urtheil des Oberverwaltungsgerichts,” IDR (1901): 141–54. The popular consumption of blood sausage in parts of Germany also points to the contradictory nature of the animal sentimentalists’ claims. This contradiction was exaggerated by the additional fact that the Christian sacrament calls for one to drink Jesus’ blood in the form of wine. Christian theologians were not ignorant of these connections. In his article defending the Jewish rite, Pastor Willy Staerk called for Christians to recognize the blood-centeredness of their own tradition. See Willy Staerk, “Der Streit ums ‘Schächten,’” Der Protestant, June 10, 1988, pp. 419–21.

47 “Bütow, i.P.,” IDR 5 (1898): 270–71; “Schächten,” Deutsche Tageszeitung, May 6, 1898; “Die Schächfrage in Rheydt,” Der Israelit, May 6, 1897, pp. 691–92; “Die ortsstatutarischen Bestimmungen der Stadt Rheydt über die Einschränkung des Schächtens auf dem gemeinsamen öffentlichen Schlachthofe von Rheydt und Odenkirchen: I, II, & III,” IDR 8, 9, and 10 (1898): 363–70, 438–45, and 504–5, respectively. In 1898 alone, three town councils in Prussia—Soest (Westphalia), Rheydt (Rhineland), and Bütow (Pomerania)—passed dramatic restrictions on shehitah because the majority of cattle slaughtered in their abattoirs were killed without previous stunning, allegedly for Jewish consumption. See “Korrespondenzen, Soest,” IDR 4 (1898): 222–23, and “Doppelte Schlachtgebühr fürs Schächten,” Rundschau auf dem Gebiete der

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50 Animal sentimentalists voiced this charge with greater frequency during and after the Reichstag debates of 1898–99. See Reichstag transcript, 1899, CAHJP TD 475, 1–2.


55 Hilker, Der Lehrer, die Schule und die Tierschutzsache.

56 See, e.g., the much-contested Jacob Stern, Das Schächten: Streitschrift gegen den jüdischen Schlacht- ritus, Ein Mahnwort an die deutschen Tierschutzverein von einem Juden (Leipzig, 1891).

57 The local chapters that voted against a national prohibition in 1906 were AltGlienicke, Altona, Augsburg, Blankenburg, Breslau, Brunswick, Burgdorf, Casel, Charlottenburg, Darm-
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58 Reichstag transcript, 1899, CAHJP TD 475, 8.


62 Transcript of 1899 Reichstag debates, CAHJP TD /475, 1–2.

63 This may have been a political ploy, but, as this article will soon show, animal sentimentalists did express moments of legitimate sympathy toward Germany’s Jews.


65 Transcript of 1899 Reichstag debates, CAHJP TD /475, 7.


67 Letter to Rabbi Goldmann (Oppeln) from the Centralverein, Feb. 21, 1914, NSBCJ 75Dco1 29 69; letter from Goldmann to his rabbinical colleagues, Feb. 22, 1914, NSBCJ 75Dco1 29 70; Re-

68 Although each local administration was not identical in structure, scope, or character, they shared enough similarities that they can be examined as a group. See, e.g., the different systems described in Theodor Ilgen, “Organisation der staatlichen Verwaltung und der Selbstverwaltung,” in Die Rheinprovinz 1815–1915: Hundert Jahre preußischer Herrschaft am Rhein, Joseph Hansen, ed., vol. 1, (Bonn, 1917), 87–148, and Wolfgang Hofmann, “Preußische Stadtverordnetenversammlungen als Repräsentativ-Organe,” in Reulecke, ed., Die deutsche Stadt im Industriezeitalter, 31–55.

69 See Judd, “German Jewish Rituals, Bodies, and Citizenship,” chap. 4.


Lothar Gall, ed. (Munich, 1990), 97–169.

73 A more detailed study of the political responses to the Schächfrage can be found in Robin Judd, “Jewish Political Behaviour and the Schächfrage, 1880–1914,” in Toward Normality? Acculturation and Modern German Jewry, Rainer Liedtke and David Rechter, eds. (Tübingen, 2003), 251–69.

74 Letter and petition from the Berlin Jewish Community, June 21, 1886, CAHJP DA/648; letter and petition from the Berlin Jewish Community, Jan. 10, 1887, CAHJP GA II/166; Engelbert, Das Schächten und die Bouterole, 4; “Die Petitionen für die fernere Freiheit des rituellen Schächten,” AZdJ 49 (1886): 771–72.

75 See, e.g., letter from Rabbi Kobak to the Jewish Community of Bamberg, July 2, 1871, CAHJP VBIII, 11 (2); letter defending shehitah (Jan. 10, 1887) drafted by the Berlin Jewish Community, CAHJP GA II/166; letter defending shehitah (Mar. 1887) drafted by Esriel Hildesheimer, CAHJP GA II/166; letter defending shehitah (Oct. 5, 1886) from the Rabbis of Berlin, NSBCJ 75AEr1 97 18, 1886; “Ueber das ‘Schachten,’” AZdJ 12 (1876): 191–93; M. Benjamin, Egeret Mordechai: Das Schächtfach (Leipzig, 1874); Engelbert, Das Schächten und die Bouterole, Vorstande der Freien Vereinigung für die Interessen des orthodoxen Judenthums, Auszüge aus den Gutachten der hervorragendsten Physiologen und Vet-
erinärzte über das “Schachten” (Frankfurt am Main, 1887); M. Kayserling, “Ist Schachten Thierquälerei?” AZdJ 17 (1876): 332–35; J. Klingenstein, “Die Schächter-Angelgenheit zu Wiesbaden,” Jüdische Volkszeitung 9 (1875): 65–68; Ludwig Philippson, “Die Schächfrage,” AZd 4 (1875): 49–50; S. Pucher, Mitgefühl mit den Thieren eine heilige Pflicht der jüdischen Religion: Eine Wort an seine Glaubensgenossen (Mitau, 1876); Israel Michel Rabbinowicz, Die thalidischen Prinzipien des Schächchens und die Medienc des Thalmuds, verglichen mit Hippocrates und der modernen Wissenschaft, trans. S. M. (Trier, 1881). This is not to suggest that these texts overlooked shehitah’s alleged hygienic or humane attributes.

76 On this, see Judd, “German Jewish Rituals, Bodies, and Citizenship,” chaps. 3–6.


Thätigkeit der Antisemiten," Antisemiten-Spiegel (Danzig, 1900), 30–37; Leopold Hamburg, Herr Otto Hartmann in Köln und sein Kampf gegen die Schlachtweise der Israeliten: Den verehrten Mitgliedern der Tier-
schutzverein gewidmet von einem Collegen (Frankfurt a.M., 1889); Alphonse Levy, "Umschau," IDR 6/7 (1899): 351–52; Alphonse Levy, "Antisemitischer Thier-

1914 (Ann Arbor, 1975); and Ismar Schorsch, Jewish Reac-
tions to German Anti-Semitism (New York, 1972).

80 Statement from the Posen Jewish community, Oct. 30, 1906, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 9; letter (Königsberg), Jan. 2, 1911, CAHJP KN/II/E/III/e 285; letter to the community of Königs-
berg from the Vienna Jewish community, Jan. 1912, CAHJP KN/II/E/III/3.

81 Albert Währer, Schlachtmachine (1900), NSBCJ 75Aer1 96 65; S. Goldberg, Deutsches Reichspatent für stofffreies Niederlegen von Gross-
vieh jeder Art zu Schlacht- und Oper-
ationszwecken, 1905, NSBCJ 75 Cge1 893 95–96; letter from the Verband to Robert Drucker about Niederlegen, Apr. 21, 1907, NSBCJ 75Cve1 350 14; let-
ter from Julius Bier to Rabbi Cohn, Apr. 27, 1907, NSBCJ 75Dco1 28 217; letter to the Ver-
band, June 24, 1907, NSBCJ 75Cve1344 159–60; letter from L. Rosenak to the Bremen Jew-
ish community, 1908, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 389; Hugo Silber-
bach, Neue! Niederlegeraapparat Neu!, 1914, NSBCJ 75Dco1 29 112–13; Schwarzenberg & Co., Beschreibung!, 1914, NSBCJ 75Dco1 29 116. See also "Halberstadt, 2. Februar," IDR 2 (1905): 100–101, and "Korre-
spondenzen, Oldenburg," IDR 10 (1906): 609.


83 A second unlikely bedfellow could be found in conservatives who had voiced anti-Jewish ani-
mus in the past but believed in shehitah’s humanitarian charac-
ter. Most interesting was Christoph Willners von Tiedemann, of the German Reich Party, who, though he had articulated anti-
semitic concerns elsewhere, sup-
ported the method of animal slaughte without stunning be-
cause he believed it to produce a better quality of meat. He there-
fore rejected the animal protec-
tionists’ campaign during the

84 Aus den Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags über das Schächtien, 3.

85 In 1908, Center Party deputy Adolf Gröber proposed a bill that recommended the reform of the state’s penal code and the prohibition of any regulation that interfered with a community’s religious laws (specifically those concerning slaughter). Gröber’s bill essentially would have banned the possibility of a Schächtverbot. Jewish defense activists expressed ambivalence over the proposed amendment. Although they supported the bill’s intentions, they justifiably worried that it would stir up a tremendous amount of antishehitah agitation and were uncomfortable with Gröber’s description of kosher butchering as a religious custom that was legally binding for all Jews. See statement by M. Loewenthal, Dec. 1909, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 44–49, and Graef, 1911 Speech, NSBCJ 75Dec1 29 1–8. See also “Die Strafgesetznovelle (Schächtparagraph),” DIZ 49 (1911): 19; “Zur Schächtedebatte im Reichstage,” DIZ 3 (1911): 1–2; F. Rosenthal, “Zu dem Antrage Gröber,” Lehrerheim 52 (1910): 515–16; and V., “Die Schächfrage im Reichstag,” Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt, Jan. 20, 1911, pp. 23–24.

86 The fact that Germany’s persecuted Catholics championed individual and civil rights prompted Margaret Anderson to declare that the Catholics were Germany’s true liberals—though, as Noel Cary has shown, the Center Party provided liberal policies with Christian rationales. See Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Windthorst: A Political Biography (Oxford, 1981), and Noel D. Cary, The Path to Christian Democracy: German Catholics and the Party System from Windthorst to Adenauer (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).


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92 Ibid. In some communities, like that of Erfurt, slaughterhouse directors posted notices on abattoir doors denouncing the practices of specific shohtim who continued to refrain from stunning. See statement by the First Mayor (Erfurt), Feb. 18, 1891, NSBCJ 75aEr1 96 24.

93 For example, though Liberal deputies of the 1880s supported the Jewish community’s right to practice kosher butchering, by the late 1890s a new generation of Liberal party members expressed ambivalence about the rite. By 1910, Liberals were more explicit about their unease with the Jewish rite and about extending privileges to Jews based on their religious needs. See Reichstag transcript, 1899, CAHJP TD 475, 7, and Back, Schachten oder Betäuben?—eine Bedürfnisfrage. This shift may have been part of a larger phenomenon that Robert Wistrich has examined—namely, the antisemitic impulses of the Left. See Robert Wistrich, “Radical Antisemitism in France and Germany (1840–1880),” Modern Judaism 15 (1995): 100–135.

94 Minutes of the 1906 German Animal Protection Society Meeting, NSBCJ 75Cve1 344 154.