



Picture left and right: Storage of ceremonial objects at the Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946. A number of objects were identified as belonging to the Jewish Historical Museum and Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam. Photo collection JHM and NACP; Picture center: Salo Baron and members of the Synagogue Council of America depositing Torah scrolls in a grave at Beth El Cemetery, Paramus, New Jersey, 13 January 1952. Photograph by Fred Stein, collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, USA.

Handbook on Judaica Provenance Research: Ceremonial Objects

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) are pleased to announce the publication of the *Handbook on Judaica Provenance Research: Ceremonial Objects*. This online *Handbook* is meant to help museum staff, researchers, auctioneers, collectors, lawyers, private persons, dealers and other interested parties to trace Judaica objects that were looted or displaced during the 20th century, especially during World War II. These objects may be found in Jewish and non-Jewish museum collections; in private collections; in Jewish institutions such as communities, synagogues, seminaries; and on the market. While some similar guides or manuals exist regarding provenance research on looted art, nothing comparable to date has existed for Judaica.

The *Handbook* covers research of two different categories: classical provenance research, which deals with tracing an object at hand to its original owner, and research which deals with establishing the location of a lost object. It consists of four parts:

- The first part provides an overview of prewar Judaica and Jewish museum collections, an overview of Nazi agencies engaged in the looting of Jewish material culture, the looting of Judaica, the dispersion of the objects after World War II and, briefly, the nationalizations of Judaica before, during and after the war.
- The second part deals with the identification of Judaica objects and is intended especially for people who are not familiar with this kind of material culture. It gives a typology of Judaica and offers tools to identify an object (origin, age, region, material, etc.).
- Part three explains how provenance and location can be established by the use of specific documentation and where this kind of documentation may be found.
- Part four offers a listing of online databases, and a bibliography of Jewish museum and exhibition catalogues as well as of other relevant literature.

The authors of the Handbook are Julie-Marthe Cohen, curator of cultural history at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam; Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, free-lance curator, consultant to Jewish museums and university lecturer, who was previously chief curator at the Jewish Museum Vienna; and Ruth Jolanda Weinberger, historian for the Claims Conference-WJRO Looted Art and Cultural Property Initiative.

The Handbook on Judaica Provenance Research: Ceremonial Objects may be found at <http://art.claimscon.org/home-new/looted-art-cultural-property-initiative/judaica/handbook-judaica-provenance-research-ceremonial-objects/>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 2009 Prague Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets resulted in the Terezin Declaration, which for the first time specifically dealt internationally with looted Judaica separately from looted art. The Prague Conference was followed by the establishment of the European Shoah Legacy Institute (ESLI), which as part of its Advisory Council appointed a Working Group on Judaica and Jewish Cultural Property chaired by Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek and with the following members: Inka Bertz, Julie-Marthe Cohen, Daniel Dratwa, Wesley Fisher, Karen Franklin, Rhoda Rosen, Hila Tene-Gilad, Photini Tomai-Constantopoulou, and Magda Veselská. Over the years that followed, many of the members of this Working Group held discussions among themselves – generally in conjunction with meetings of the Association of European Jewish Museums (AEJM) – about what would be most helpful to the field of provenance research on Judaica and what should happen concerning the restitution or other disposition of looted Judaica. One of their conclusions was the need for a handbook on Judaica provenance research.

Among the grants that the Claims Conference has provided over the years specifically in Judaica was one to help publish the book *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, edited by Julie-Marthe Cohen, with Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek [Crickadarn, 2011]. These two specialists agreed to author the *Handbook on Judaica Provenance Research: Ceremonial Objects*. They are joined by Ruth Weinberger of the Claims Conference staff, who was largely responsible for the *Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica* (<http://art.claimscon.org/home-new/looted-art-cultural-property-initiative/judaica/descriptive-catalogue-of-looted-judaica/>).

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For further information on the Claims Conference-WJRO Looted Cultural Property Project, see:
<http://art.claimscon.org/>