

## APPENDICES TO PART 2

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### A. THE WERTHEIMER HANUKKAH LAMP, BERNHARD PURIN



Figure 30: Hanukkah Lamp / Hanukkah  
Halberstadt, 1713; Silver, parcel gilt;  
Maker: Thomas Tübner  
H: 24; W: 30.7; D: 8 cm  
Courtesy of Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn, Switzerland

The history of ownership over several generations can be established for few Judaica objects. Undoubtedly, this lamp, which became the property of Austrian court factor Samson Wertheimer (1658-1724) in 1713 shortly after its creation, counts among them. Moreover, its history reveals much about Jewish family networks that stretch far beyond the era of the court factors.<sup>690</sup> At the same time, it is an example of Judaica that disappeared following looting during the Shoah but the history of which could be reconstructed decades later.

This Hanukkah lamp is part of a small group of very similar lamps that were manufactured around 1710-1715 in the workshop of the Halberstadt silversmith Thomas Tübner. Apart from this example three others have been preserved in the Jewish Museum New York and in the Israel Museum.<sup>691</sup> In the center of its backplate, which is divided into three parts, is the depiction of a Hanukkah lamp based on the Temple menorah, flanked by two

mermaids bearing crossbows and two columns crowned with flowers. The lamp is topped by an Austrian double-headed eagle. This double-headed eagle was probably added only after the acquisition of the lamp by Samson Wertheimer. It is of lesser quality than the other parts of the lamp, and unlike other mounted elements, it is not assembled with screws but with rivets. Its later addition might be connected to the privilege that Emperor Charles VI granted Samson Wertheimer to use the imperial coat of arms.<sup>692</sup> The mermaids can be interpreted as the zodiac sign of Sagittarius, which can be frequently found on Judaica objects.<sup>693</sup> Wertheimer was not born under this sign, but in Jewish tradition Sagittarius stands for the month of Kislev, in which the Hanukkah celebration takes place. To the left, the Hanukkah song “Hanerot Halalu” (We light these lights), sung during the candle lighting ceremony, is engraved in Hebrew in an arc-shaped field crowned with shells. In front of the column on the far left is the sculpted figure of a Maccabean holding in his left hand the movable shamash, the extra light used to light the candles. Three of the four figures are probably recent recasts as there was only one figure on the lamp in a photograph published in

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<sup>690</sup> Subsequent information on ownership until 1929 is based on a letter from Michael Berolzheimer to Theodor Harburger of February 19, 1929 (Leo Baeck Institute, New York, Michael Berolzheimer Collection [AR 4136], Series F sub dato) as well as on: Bernhard Purin, *Samsons Leuchter. Ein Chanukka-Leuchter aus dem Besitz der Familie Wertheimer*, Munich 2013.

<sup>691</sup> Susan L. Braunstein, *Five Centuries of Hanukkah Lamps from the Jewish Museum: A Catalogue Raisonné*, New Haven – London 2005, cat. nos. 14 and 163. As well as: *The Jewish World: 365 Days – From the Collections of the Israel Museum*, Jerusalem 2004, p. 670f, (erroneously described here as Leipzig 1799).

<sup>692</sup> Battenberg, J. Friedrich, „... Gleich anderen dero Diener einen Degen zu tragen...“: Reflexionen zum sozialen Rang der Hofjudenschaft in vormoderner Zeit,“ *Aschkenas: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 13/1 (2003), p. 101.

<sup>693</sup> Iris Fishof, *Written in the Stars: Art and Symbolism of the Zodiac*, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 130-131.

1931.<sup>694</sup> The structure of the left side is reflected in the right part of the backplate. In the field, the Hebrew blessing is engraved that is spoken when the candles are lighted. Four lions with a breast shield support the lamp's base. The eight bowl-shaped individual candlesticks are surrounded by a ribbon with floral ornamentation. Probably shortly after its creation in 1713, the lamp came into the ownership of Samson Wertheimer. The circumstances of the acquisition remain unclear; however, it might have been a gift from the Halberstadt court Jew Issachar Behrend Lehmann (1661-1730).<sup>695</sup> Wertheimer was chief rabbi of the Jews of Hungary and Moravia as well as rabbi of the then important Jewish Community Eisenstadt/Kismarton, at the time western Hungary, today capital of the Austrian federal state of Burgenland. He was active as a financier of various European courts and as shtadlan, intercessor, for the Central-European Jews at the imperial courts of Leopold I and Charles VI.<sup>696</sup> After Wertheimer's death in 1724, the lamp went to his son Wolf Simon Wertheimer (1681-1765), who besides his residence in Vienna also owned a residence in Munich as he was the, albeit unlucky, financier of the Bavarian court.<sup>697</sup> After his death, his grandson Josef Wertheimer, who had settled in Bayreuth, inherited the lamp and in turn bequeathed it to his son Philipp (around 1747-1810) who also lived in Bayreuth. The latter's wife, Ella Esther Fränkel (1751-1817), was a direct descendant of the same Bermann Fränkel (around 1645-1708) who, in the wake of the expulsion of the Viennese Jews in 1670, had brought the Viennese Memorbuch to the Klaus-Synagogue in Fürth.<sup>698</sup> After the death of Philipp Wertheimer, the lamp reached Regensburg together with his daughter Reha (around 1776-1834) who was married there to Löb Gleisdorfer (1770-1835). These court Jews' family networks continued also throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the couple's daughters: Mathilde (1801-1877) was married to Wolf Raphael Kaulla (1800-1860) in Munich, a grandson of the legendary Chaile "Madame" Kaulla (1739-1809) from Hechingen. The latter's sister, Nanette Kaula (1812-1876), was portrayed for the Gallery of Beauties of the Bavarian King Ludwig I and married the banker Salomon Heine (1803-1863). With Sophie (1810 -1862), the second daughter of Reha and Samuel Löb Gleisdorfer, who married Dr. Hermann Cohen (d. 1869), the lamp arrived in Hanover around 1835. Their daughter Ella (1843-1912) was married there to the architect Edwin Oppler (1831-1880), who designed, among other things, the synagogues of Hanover and Hamelin. In the following generation, the lamp passed to the lawyer and notary Sigmund Oppler (1873-1942) in Hanover. When in the late 1920s, Dr. Michael Berolzheimer (1866-1942), a lawyer and researcher of family history born in Fürth and living in Untergrainau near Garmisch, investigated his own family history, which is closely linked to that of the Wertheimers, he got in touch with his distant relative Sigmund Oppler, who mentioned the lamp in his possession, which according to family lore went back to Samson Wertheimer. In a 1929 letter to the Munich art historian Theodor Harburger (1887-1949), Berolzheimer called his attention to this Hanukkah lamp and reported that he had received from the family a photograph of it and the permission to publish the photograph; he inquired whether Harburger would be interested in publishing an article about the object.<sup>699</sup> By then, Berolzheimer had already compiled a genealogy of the Oppler family that confirmed

<sup>694</sup> Elisabeth Moses, *Jüdische Kunst und Kulturdenkmäler in den Rheinlanden*, Düsseldorf 1931, p. 161.

<sup>695</sup> Cf.: Notes on this group of lamps and on the gift-giving practice among Jewish court factors in Vivian B. Mann, "A Court Jew's Silver Cup," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, vol. 43 (2008), p. 31-140, p. 137-138. The assumption already held by Berolzheimer and adopted by Mann that this could be a gift from Lehmann to Wertheimer on the occasion of the coronation of Emperor Charles VI in December 1711 can, however, not be sustained by the date letter for 1713 (cf. fn. 1).

<sup>696</sup> Vivian B. Mann, Richard I. Cohen, *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds*, New York 1997, cat. no. 129.

<sup>697</sup> Bernhard Purin, „Juden als geduldete Geldgeber im 18. Jahrhundert,“ idem (ed), *Stadt ohne Juden. Die Nachtseite der Münchner Stadtgeschichte*, Munich 2008, p. 30f.

<sup>698</sup> Bernhard Purin, "Wiener Memorbuch der Früher Klaus-Synagoge," Bernhard Purin (ed.), *Buch der Erinnerung. Das Wiener Memorbuch der Früher Klaus-Synagoge*, Fürth 1999, pp. 47-54.

<sup>699</sup> Letter from Michael Berolzheimer to Theodor Harburger, January 23, 1929, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, Michael Berolzheimer Collection (AR 4136), Series F sub dato.

Samson Wertheimer as a direct ancestor.<sup>700</sup> This genealogical research made it not only possible to reconstruct in 1929 an unbroken ownership history of the lamp: More than eighty years later, this work would become critical for the resolution of a case of looted art. During the Nazi period, part of the family managed to emigrate to the USA; Sigmund Oppler and his wife Lily failed to continue their journey from Amsterdam, their place of exile, to the USA. Ahead of their imminent deportation, they committed suicide in Amsterdam in September 1942.<sup>701</sup>

There is no trace of the lamp in the wake of 1938. Whether it was confiscated as “Jews’ silver” or taken from the family in any other way can no longer be determined.

Yet, in the 1950s, it arrived together with 37 other Judaica objects at the New York Central Synagogue as a gift from Morris Troper (1892-1963).<sup>702</sup> Morris Troper, a lawyer in New York, had been involved with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) since the 1920s and became its European representative.<sup>703</sup> It remains unclear how the Wertheimer-Oppler Hanukkah lamp came into his possession. When in 2006, the Central Synagogue took the lamp to a Judaica auction in New York,<sup>704</sup> it could be identified as belonging to the Oppler family thanks to the documents in the estate of Michael Berolzheimer. The lamp was withdrawn from the auction and restituted in 2007 to the Oppler heirs in Washington DC. They in turn again brought it to a Sotheby’s Judaica auction in 2010; from there it entered the Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn Collection, Switzerland.<sup>705</sup>

Bernhard Purin is the Director of the Jewish Museum in Munich.

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<sup>700</sup> The ancestral line can be found in a letter from Michael Berolzheimer to Theodor Harburger, February 19, 1929, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, Michael Berolzheimer Collection (AR 4136), Series F sub dato.

<sup>701</sup> Cf. <http://www.joodsmonument.nl/page/559930> (retrieved February 18, 2014).

<sup>702</sup> “War and Remembrance,” *The New York Times*, 7 February 1997.

<sup>703</sup> *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 65 (1964), p. 438.

<sup>704</sup> Sotheby’s New York, *Important Judaica*, December 13, 2006, Lot 53.

<sup>705</sup> Sotheby’s New York, *Important Judaica*, December 15, 2010, Lot 26. S. See also Bernhard Purin, „Im Zeichen des Schützen. Ein Chanukka-Leuchter aus Halberstadt bei Sotheby’s, New York,“ *Kunst und Auktionen*, 38/ 23 (3 December 010), pp. 5-6.