

Preface

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 in the course of the 20th century, especially during World War II. These objects may be found

- a) in Jewish museum and non-Jewish museum collections
- b) in private collections
- c) in Jewish institutions, such as communities, synagogues, seminaries
- d) on the market.

In this *Handbook* Judaica here refers to Jewish ritual objects (for a definition, see below [2.1]). This first part does not include manuscripts, books and archival materials that relate to Jewish culture. These will be the subject of future work. Neither does this *Handbook* deal with claims and restitution issues.

The *Handbook* covers research of two different categories: 1. Classical provenance research, which deals with tracing an object at hand to its original owner, 2. Research which deals with establishing the location of a lost object.

Provenance research forms an auxiliary subdiscipline in the academic fields of history and art history. It is dedicated to the scientific research of the origin of an object in all its respects. This comprises all changes of ownership. Ideally any former ownership of an item is known. In the case of looted ritual objects, though, establishing provenance is a major challenge. With regard to Nazi looted (and nationalized) Judaica objects, provenance research aims at establishing pre-war ownership.

The developed methodology presented in this manual applies to both categories. As the term *provenance research* does not cover the second category, the neologism “*quovadience*” seems appropriate here. After World War II, pre-war owners or their heirs may have inquired into the whereabouts of their former properties but often did not meet with any results, as those properties had disappeared. A huge number of cultural assets were sold by the “aryanizing” units to private individuals for economic recovery, others were moved around Europe to to be collected for “scientific” research by antisemitic institutes during and after the war. A part of these formerly Jewish owned cultural assets were –out of ignorance – mis- or displaced after the war by the Allies, others were declared heirless and entrusted to Jewish organisations that handed them over to Jewish institutions worldwide. Yet another part of these assets were and still are kept as trophy booty in Eastern European countries. Thus while the aim of provenance research is – in our case - to establish pre-war ownership, *quovadience research* presupposes that ownership is known and aims to establish present location.

To date a methodology for provenance research has been developed for fine arts only. In 2001 Nancy H. Yeide, Konstantin Akinsha and Amy L. Walsh published *The AAM* [American Association of Museums] *Guide to Provenance Research*. By and large our *Handbook* follows their principles, but the methods developed for fine arts cannot be applied to research on Judaica. The nature of *objets d'art* differs substantially from that of Judaica, and consequently so does the research to be carried out. For example, the uniqueness of individual paintings and sculptures differs from the serial character of Judaica objects; there are far more publications that help to identify a given painting than there are for identifying a Judaica piece; and while Nazi looting agencies often

registered works of art systematically, they did not do so regarding looted Judaica, and the same seems to be true of Allied postwar records.

In 2011 the publication *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After* appeared, giving an overview of the war and postwar history of a selected number of European Judaica collections.¹ The contributions in that volume showed the diverse range of situations in different national contexts and situations arising from specific historical and political events. While working on the book, the authors became aware of the need for appropriate tools to carry out consistent provenance and quovadiance research on collections and individual objects - tools that would be effective beyond national boundaries.

The present *Handbook* aims to elaborate a specific methodology regarding provenance and quovadiance research on Judaica objects, but at the same time, because of the specific problems in this field, researchers should be aware that they will still be challenged to be creative.

The complex nature of research on Judaica requires some or all of the following: historical and art historical knowledge, language skills, endurance, financial means, and individual and institutional willingness to cooperate with national and international partners. As to cooperation, institutions should put information regarding suspicious Judaica online to enable scholars, museum professionals, dealers, researchers, or private individuals to do provenance and quovadiance research.

This *Handbook* 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 quovadiance can be established by the use of specific documentation and where this kind of documentation may be found. Special attention is given to the online database of the Second World War documentation in the National Archives of the United States in College Park, Maryland. The given information is not exhaustive, and researchers are encouraged to turn to other publications, in particular: 1) the *Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica* (<http://art.claimscon.org/our-work/judaica/descriptive-catalogue-of-looted-judaica/>), 2) *Reconstructing the Record of Nazi Cultural Plunder: A Guide to the Dispersed Archives of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) and the Postwar Retrieval of ERR Loot* (<http://errproject.org/guide.php>), and 3) *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*.
- Part four offers a listing of online databases, and the Bibliography provides a listing of Jewish museum and exhibition catalogues as well as of other relevant literature.

This *Handbook* is only the start in developing a methodology to establish provenance and quovadiance research on Judaica and will be updated with new findings. Users are invited to contact

¹ Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (eds), *Neglected Witnesses. The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After*, Crickadarn 2011.

the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany with additional information.

The authors would like to thank for support and help:

Wesley Fisher, Marcella Ansaldi, Eva Atlan, Sabine Bergler, Sabine Dumschat, Daniela Eisenstein, Eduard Feuereis, Michal Friedlander, Vilma Gradinskaite, William Gross, Patricia Grimsted, Rainer Hofmann, David Jeselsohn, Rudolf Jelinek, Jens Kraus, Vladimir Levin, Naomi Lubrich, Ariel Muzicant, Bernhard Purin, Anna Rabin, Joanne Rosenthal, Teresa Smiechowska, Danielle Spera, Shlomit Steinberg, Zsuzsanna Toronyi, Dana Veselská, Magda Veselská, Sharon Weiser, Adrian Silverman and Tony Rodriguez.

In addition, we thank the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and its director, Vladimir Levin, as well as the Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam, the Jewish Museum Prague, the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, the Jewish Museum Vienna, the Jewish Museum London, the Jewish Museum Basel, the Jewish Museum Venice, the Jewish Museum of Franconia in Fürth and Schnaittach, and the Fränkische Schweiz Museum, Tüchersfeld.

Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, and Ruth Jolanda Weinberger