

WAG Scholars' Working Group on German Rabbis after 1933 at LMU München

Personal details

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Statement of interest

In my dissertation „Aschkenas in Jerusalem – die religiösen Institutionen der Einwanderer aus Deutschland im Jerusalemer Stadtviertel Rechavia 1933-2004“, I dealt with four synagogues that were built by immigrants from the 4th Aliyah after 1933. I am currently preparing an article on two rabbis and their exile communities, which I reported on at the conference in Fürth in spring 2024: It is about the Orthodox rabbi Isak Unna and his synagogue “Binjan Zion”, where mainly members of former “community Orthodox” synagogues, mostly from southern Germany, held their prayers. I also look at Rabbi Kurt Wilhelm and the synagogue community he founded, “Emet ve-Emuna”, which became the center of liberal immigrants from Central Europe. I am interested in the cultural transfer that was attempted in both cases, each in its own way: In terms of worship, education, and the political orientation of the two synagogues, there is a clear link to the German tradition.

The WAG Scholars Working Group on German Rabbis after 1933 gives me the opportunity to share my knowledge of Unna, Wilhelm and a whole circle of rabbis and scholars in Jerusalem and other cities in Palestine and later Israel, to discuss my book “Aschkenas in Jerusalem” and to make it accessible to a wider academic public. In addition, I would like to network with colleagues who also deal with the German-Jewish rabbinic “diaspora”.

Project Outline

My PhD-thesis „Aschkenas in Jerusalem – die religiösen Institutionen der Einwanderer aus Deutschland im Jerusalemer Stadtviertel Rechavia 1933-2004“ deals with strategies of German-Jewish immigrants in Jerusalem in the 1930s to rebuild their religious traditions brought from Germany – and thereby rescue the rich heritage of Aschkenas from the destruction by the Nazis. The immigrants tried to reach this by founding new synagogues or educational institutions with religious background. Although they came from different ideological backgrounds – some of them were rooted in different wings of German Orthodoxy, some of them were adherents of Liberal Judaism – with these institutions they all tried to contribute to the constitution of the Land of Israel. In the struggle for the establishment of their synagogues and school's manifold religious-political interrelations and conflicts from the 19th and early 20th centuries showed up which had been taken in the symbolic package of the immigrants to Jerusalem. These conflicts – combined with the lacking willingness to integrate the German Jewish cultural artefacts into the religious life of the Jischuv – made the development of most of the immigrant institutions nearly impossible. However, especially the orthodox educational institutions managed to hold their ground – a phenomenon which I analyzed in my thesis.

Presentation

GERMAN RABBIS IN EXILE IN JERUSALEM. Lecture, given on the Conference „German Refugee Rabbis and German–Jewish Cultural Heritage: Towards a Global Comparative Perspective“, Fürth, 20.-22. May 2024.

Short Bio

Dr. Christian Kraft has been a teacher of history and ethics / philosophy at the Hans-Küng-Gemeinschaftsschule Tübingen since 2022. He studied Modern and Contemporary History and Philosophy at the Humboldt University Berlin and the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg. From 2006 to 2012, he wrote his dissertation “Aschkenas in Jerusalem” at the Chair of Jewish History at LMU Munich under the supervision of Professor Michael Brenner. He was also an educational assistant at the Max Mannheimer Study Center Dachau from 2008 to 2016, worked as a consultant for the Museum Education Center Munich from 2007 to 2016 and for the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site from 2009 to the present.

His most recent publications include:

- ASCHKENAS IN JERUSALEM – die religiösen Institutionen der Einwanderer aus Deutschland im Jerusalemer Stadtviertel Rechavia 1933-2004. Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht) 2014.
- KRIEGSLANDSCHAFT‘ – Die Einflüsse der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls auf das Frühwerk Kurt Lewins, in: Dirk Paul Bogner (Hrsg.): Kurt Lewin Reloaded. Wiesbaden (Springer Nature) 2021, S. 34-46.
- RELIGIÖSE ERNEUERUNG ODER AUSTRITT? Die Einwanderer aus Deutschland als Schöpfer einer neuen religiösen Kultur in Haifa, in: Anja Siegemund (Hrsg.): Deutsche und zentraleuropäische Juden in Palästina und Israel. Kulturtransfers, Lebenswelten, Identitäten. Beispiele aus Haifa. Berlin (Neofelis) 2016, S. 118-141.
- DIE SYNAGOGEN BINJAN ZION UND CHOREW – Der Konflikt zweier deutscher Einwanderergemeinden in Jerusalem, in: José Brunner (Hrsg.): Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte 41 (2013). Deutsche(s) in Palästina und Israel. Alltag, Kultur, Politik. Göttingen (Wallstein) 2013, S. 97-128.
- ASCHKENAS IN JERUSALEM. Zwei ‚deutsche‘ Synagogengemeinden im Jerusalemer Stadtviertel Rechavia, in: Lehrstuhl für Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur an der LMU München (Hrsg.): Münchner Beiträge zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur 1 (2009), Deutschland in Israel, Israel in Deutschland. München (Mazzetti & Mazzetti) 2009, S. 45-59.