

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

Personal details

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Statement of interest

I am currently researching the biography of Dr. Fritz (Frederico) Pinkuss, who was educated at the *Jewish Theological Seminary* in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) and the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin (Germany). He succeeded his uncle as district rabbi of Heidelberg and worked for interfaith cooperation and the promotion of Jewish education and higher learning. In 1936, he fled with his family to Brazil and co-founded a Jewish community in the metropolis of São Paulo: the Congregação Israelita Paulista (CIP).

The WAG Scholars' Working Group on German Rabbis after 1933 at the LMU Munich is therefore an opportunity to get to know other biographical projects, to discuss problems of source material, accessibility and languages, and to examine the impact of religion on processes such as forced migration, exile and reconciliation. By comparing experiences in different political, cultural and linguistic environments, the WAG Scholars' Working Group also provides a platform to explore the global and intergenerational impact of National Socialism on former German rabbis, their teaching and their legacy.

Project Outline

The book project raises questions about the self-image of German Jewish rabbis, their concept of national identity, social obligation and religious modernisation. In addition to his religious education at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau and the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, the project focuses therefore on his time as district Rabbi of Heidelberg. The study examines his experiences in Nazi Germany, such as the persecution of his family and community, but also the expressions of solidarity, for example by Hermann Maas, a Protestant clergyman and pioneer of Christian-Jewish dialogue.

The biographical study also takes into account Pinkuss's years in Brazil: not only his ideas about rebuilding a German-speaking community in São Paulo, but also his social and political involvement in Brazilian society. Against the background of the emerging military dictatorship, his life and work as an admonisher for justice and peace is of particular interest. In addition, his commitment as a "Brazilian and European" to support new relations between Germans and Jews after the Holocaust establishes a link to his original homeland, Germany, after 1945, and in so doing, is also one aspect in the book.

Thus, the biographical study, which brings together a diverse set of archival material, focuses on a life that illustrates German-Jewish emigration to South America and reveals the global dimension of Nazism, but also the formative and vital power of German Jewry before and after 1945.

Presentation

Dr. Fritz Pinkuss: Modernizer – Educator – Religious Leader

Short Bio

Björn Siegel is currently deputy director of the IGdJ (Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden) and his research projects focus on Jewish philanthropy, migration and naval history. He is also co-initiator of the [Podcast Jüdische Geschichte Kompakt](#) (“Jewish History Compact”) of the IGdJ and Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum (MMZ). He studied Modern and Eastern European History as well as Religious Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich (LMU) and graduated with an M. A.

As a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship holder, he spent a year studying abroad at Tel Aviv University/Lowy School for Overseas Students (Israel). He received the Leo Baeck Scholarship of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (*Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes*) and completed his doctoral studies at the Chair of Jewish History and Culture at the LMU. In 2008, he completed his doctorate and went to the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow (2008/09). Since 2010, he has been working at the IGdJ, taking a leave of absence from 2013 to 2015 for a research stay at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, D. C. / USA) and to pursue work as a DAAD specialist lecturer at the University of Sussex (UK).

- ‘We were refugees and carried a special burden’. Emotions, Brazilian Politics and the German Jewish Émigré Circle in São Paulo, 1933–1957, in: *European Judaism* 54 (2021), Nr. 1, S. 27–44.
- ‘Noch ist unsere Hoffnung nicht dahin!’ Fritz Pinkuss’ View on Germans, Jews and the Universal Values of History, in: Gideon Reuveni/ Diana Franklin (Hrsg.), *The Future of the German-Jewish Past: Memory and the Question of Antisemitism*, West Lafayette 2020, S. 1–9.