

## Heinrich Frauberger and the Society for the Research of Jewish Art Monuments

By Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek

In the spring of 1897, the *Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler* (Society for the Research of Jewish Art Monuments) was founded in Frankfurt/Main. The foundation stone was laid by the non-Jewish director of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Düsseldorf, Heinrich Frauberger (1845–1920). Frauberger was prompted to become active in 1895 when he was asked to help with the design of an enclosure grid for a Jewish grave and had to realize that Jewish cult and art monuments were missing from the rich collection of cultic-religious models in the Kunstgewerbemuseum /Museum of Decorative Arts Düsseldorf:

“In the central educational association in Düsseldorf there is a collection of role models that has been my pride and joy so far; well over 150,000 examples have been awarded during this time. So I was not surprised that a Jewish banker came and asked to get him a drawing for the enclosure of his parents' grave. I did not know any symbol, not even the architect. Then I remembered the sign of David. When I explained it to the architect, he exclaimed: That's an inn sign here in southern Germany! and set to work joyfully. It worked very well, but I was not left alone, especially since I have nothing at all to show for my work. All I heard from the rabbi was that there had been a Jewish exhibition in London and that a Jewish museum was to be built in Vienna. In Vienna, however, the Chief Rabbi, who is part of the administration himself, did not know anything closer. From the 1886 Anglo-Jewish church exhibition, however, I received a catalog, which is decorated with illustrations, but of extraordinary smallness. When I saw that there was nothing to be found except these and Steinschneider's notes on the writing, I seized the idea of collecting and publishing material; one volume was to deal with the architecture of the synagogues, the Jewish private houses, the schools, the baths, and to a certain extent the tombs, then the architecture inside, a second volume, a third volume cult objects for the house, a fifth volume Hebrew ornamental writing, and whatever else followed culturally, like costumes, etc. I came up with a very large sum of money and let 14 days go by. But then I went to Frankfurt and sought out a gentleman who has an open hand for all good and great things. Through his mediation I was able to examine what Jerusalem, Spain and North Africa etc. had to offer. A year later, when I presented my findings, a Central Committee was formed, surprisingly and happily for me.” (*Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunst-Denkmäler*, in: *Der Israelit* 39/38, 16.5.1898, supplement, pp. 707–708.)

The gentleman “who had an open hand for all good and great things” was the German-American banker Charles L. Hallgarten (1838–1908), who lived in Frankfurt. He provided Frauberger with the necessary funds for introductory research on Jewish art monuments. When it became clear that this was a very broad and worthwhile field of study, the *Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler* (Society for the Study of Jewish Art Monuments) was founded on Hallgarten's initiative. The Society had its headquarters in Frankfurt. In 1901 it was entered in the register of associations at the Royal District Court in Frankfurt am Main. The board of directors of the society was formed: Charles L. Hallgarten, Chairman; Dr. Hermann Baerwald, Deputy Chairman; Georg Speyer, Treasurer; attorney Julius Plotke, Secretary; City Councilor Joseph Baer, Eduard Cohen, the bookseller Simon L. Baer, the Director of the Historical Museum Frankfurt Otto Cornill, the Director of the City Library Prof. Ebrard, Justice Counselor S. Fuld, Julius Goldschmidt, Leopold Hamburger, Julius H. Jeidels, Moritz Oppenheim, Jakob L. Posen, L.

M. Ricard-Aberheimer, Philipp Schiff, Leopold Sonnemann, Hermann Cramer, the conservative municipal rabbi Dr. Markus Horowitz, and the liberal rabbi Dr. Rudolf Plaut.

Who was the chairman?

Charles Lazarus Hallgarten (1838–1908) was a German-American banker, philanthropist and social reformer. From 1851 to 1875 he lived in New York, then settled in Frankfurt and was the founder or co-founder of numerous institutions. In total, he was a member of over 40 institutions and associations. Besides being active as a patron of the arts, science and education, he was particularly concerned with the coordination and organization of social welfare institutions to overcome the fragmentation of private welfare activities.

And who were the others?

Julius Plotke, the secretary of the association, was a lawyer and communal worker (1857–1903). Having finished his studies at the gymnasium at Krotoschin and the University of Berlin, he practised law in Bockenheim from 1885 to 1888, then entered into partnership with Councilor of Justice S. Fuld in Frankfurt. Plotke was elected to the board of trustees of the Frankfurt congregation, and participated in all movements for the relief of oppressed coreligionists, being a trustee of the *Jewish Colonization Association*, of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, of the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*, and similar organizations. He wrote various articles on the condition of the Jews of Russia and Rumania.

Eduard Cohen (1838–1910) was a landscape painter of a distinguished hannoveran family who became the deputy treasurer of the Society. The brother in law of Edwin Oppler, one of the most prominent Jewish architects in 19th century Germany, was very interested in Jewish art.

Otto Cornill (1824–1907) was a painter, too, but worked also as a conservator.

Leopold Hamburger was an important collector of coins, a numismatic with strong ties to palestine and a respective focus.

Friedrich Clemens Ebrard (1850–1935) was director of Frankfurt's city library. Not only was he a trained librarian, he was also a historian. Ebrard systematically expanded the public library in Frankfurt, so that in 1914 it could serve the newly founded Frankfurt University as a university library. He was of Huguenot origin.

Hermann Baerwald was the director of the famous *Philanthropin* in Frankfurt. During his term of office, the *Philanthropin* was expanded into a nine-class secondary school.

Georg Speyer (1835–1902) was a German banker and well known Frankfurt patron. Speyer played an important role in the founding and expansion of Frankfurt University. His socio-political commitment to Wilhelmine Germany in the pre-war period is evidenced not only by his membership on the board of the *Society for the Study of Jewish Cultural Monuments*, but also by his activities in the *Association for the Defense against Anti-Semitism*, his support of an association for public kindergartens and the *Central Office for Private Welfare* in Frankfurt. His and his wife's financing of a chemotherapeutic research institute, the Paul Ehrlich Institute, is also worthy of special mention.

And who was Jacob L. Posen? He was a son of Brendina Wetzlar, the widow of Lazarus Jacob Posen, a silversmith and retailer. Under the widow Posen's stewardship, the firm became the largest supplier of Judaica in the late 19th century. Her son Jacob L. Posen joined the firm by 1880, and by 1900, the company's large staff of chasers and engravers were producing some of the finest silver in the country.

Philipp Schiff (1841–1925) was a broker and a patron.

Leopold Sonnemann (actually Saul Sonnemann, 1831–1909) was a banker, journalist, publisher, a radical democratic politician and patron of the arts, who – beyond many other activities - together with Ludwig Justi, the director of the *Städelsches Kunstinstitut*, founded the *Städelsche Museumsverein*.

Herman Hirsch Cramer (1852–1920), married to Hedwig Goldschmidt, daughter of Selig Meier Goldschmidt and Clementine Fuld, was the owner of Moritz Daniel Oppenheim's most political painting, namely „The Return of the Volunteer” and the owner of the spectacular „Mishneh Torah” manuscript, written between 1300 and 1350 in Spain/Southern France, illuminated around 1400 in Perugia on loan at the Museum of Jewish Antiquities (today in the collection of the National Library of Israel, Heb. 4° 1193).

The strict anti-zionist Frankfurt rabbi Markus Horovitz (1844–1910) completed his training as a rabbi in Újhely, Verbé and at a renowned rabbinical school in Eisenstadt with Esriel Hildesheimer. After graduating from high school, he followed his teacher Hildesheimer and studied philosophy and oriental languages at the universities of Vienna, Budapest and Berlin, obtaining his doctorate in Tübingen in 1871. His son Leo was the famous sculptor, medalist and chaser.

Reform rabbi Rudolf Plaut (1843–1914) received his rabbinical training in Hamburg and Mainz. In Leipzig he studied like his conservative colleague Horovitz philosophy and oriental languages.

It can thus be seen that the members of the society and their representatives were all highly educated, very committed, socially, Jewish religious or Jewish cultural and artistically engaged. It seems significant that they were all deeply rooted in the German-Frankfurt and Jewish communities.

Since 1900, the Society published the *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler*. In the first issue, the goals of the Society were outlined as follows:

1. collection of single sheets or collection of models;
2. the creation of a collection of books, namely illustrated works of corresponding content;
3. collection of manuscripts;
4. collection of original Jewish objects;
5. temporary exhibitions of Jewish art objects;
6. monument statistics and a Jewish art topography;
7. publication of scientific research;
8. holding of instructive lectures;
9. establishment of an information office;
10. competition. (in: *Allgemeine Israelitische Wochenschrift*, 9/48, pp.754-755).

From 1902 to 1937, the *Notizblatt der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler* was published in parallel. It was originally intended to contain the Society's annual reports, but in the course of time, scholarly publications took up more and more space. In 1928, the purpose of the Society was again explained in the *Notizblatt* (fig. 1):

“The purpose of the *Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler e. V.*:

1. to collect objects and illustrations of Jewish cult and art objects for synagogue and house and illustrations of synagogues, especially from ancient times, and especially of those which are characterized by beauty of form and technical perfection;
2. to make the collected material accessible in an appropriate manner to scientific study, artists and the public;
3. to work for the preservation of old Jewish art monuments;

4. to call for artistic endeavors to produce Jewish cultural and religious objects;” (*Notizblatt der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler XIX, 1928, supplement*)

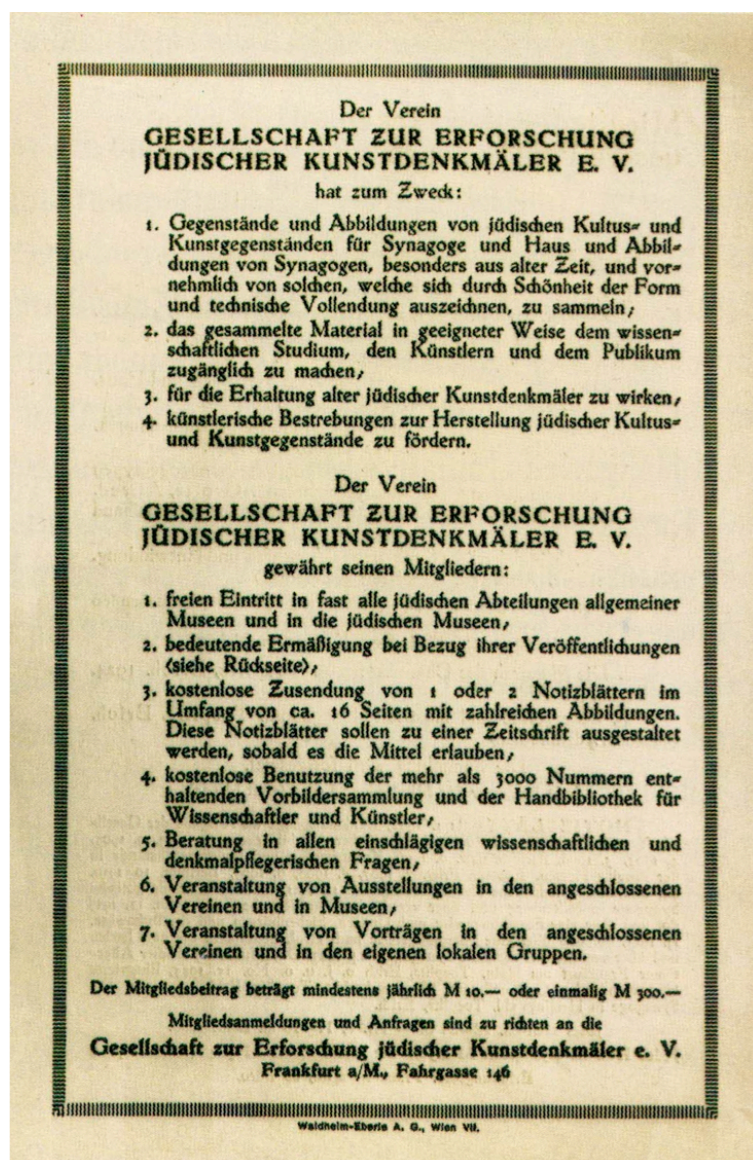


Fig. 1: *Notizblatt der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler, XIX, 1928, Beilage.*

That the Society was also serious about its conservation efforts is shown, for example, by the fact that 1,500 marks were spent on the restoration of the ritual bath, the Mikveh, in Friedberg alone until 1903. To be accepted into the Society, one could either pay a one-time membership fee of at least 300 Marks or pay at least 10 Marks annually. The association granted its members several privileges as well as advice:

1. free admission to almost all Jewish departments of general Museums and Jewish museums,
2. significant discount on the purchase of their publications,
3. free sending of 1 or 2 note sheets of about 16 pages with numerous illustrations. These notepapers should be developed into a magazine as soon as the means allow it,
4. free use of the model collection containing more than 3000 numbers and the reference library for scientists and artists,
5. advice on all relevant scientific and monument preservation issues,
6. organizing exhibitions in the affiliated associations and in museums,

7. organization of lectures in the affiliated associations and in the own local groups”  
(*Notizblatt der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler XIX, 1928, supplement*).

The materials collected by the Society were initially stored in the *Museum für Kunsthandwerk* in Düsseldorf. This is also where the Society's first exhibition took place in 1908, for which Frauberger did the scientific work: *Exhibition of Jewish Buildings and Cult Objects for Synagogue and House*. Heinrich Frauberger was also the author of the first six issues of the *Mitteilungen/notifications*:

I. Purpose and goals of the Society for the Study of Jewish Art Monuments. Frauberger, Heinrich, 1900, 38 pages, 23 ill.

II. On the construction and decoration of old synagogues. Frauberger, Heinrich, 1901, 43 pages, 44 ill.

III / IV. About old cult objects in synagogue and house. Frauberger, Heinrich, 1903, 104 pages, 151 ills. (fig. 2)

IV /VI Decorated Hebrew script and Jewish book decoration. Frauberger, Heinrich, 1909, 112 pages, 120 ill.

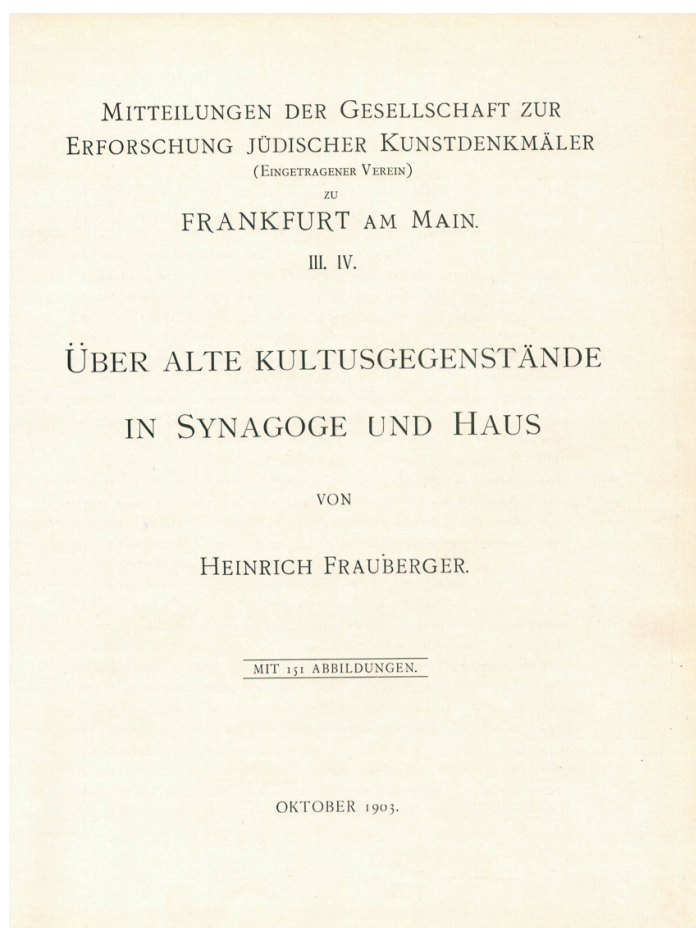


Fig. 2: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler zu Frankfurt am Main III. IV. Heinrich Frauberger, Über alte Kultusgegenstände in Synagoge und Haus, Frankfurt/Main 1903; hier: Ndr. Jerusalem 1969.*

In his work on the collection of originals, photographs, drawings and reconstructions, Frauberger was particularly supported by the architect Fritz Epstein (1877–1960). The results of his research trips were published in the *Notizblätter*, including reports on synagogal buildings of various landscapes as well as on cult buildings and objects of worship in the province of Hesse (VI,

1906), on the Gothic synagogue in Miltenberg and various South German synagogues (XI, 1911), about a research trip to Hungary, Transylvania and Bukovina, (XII, 1931), as well as about a research trip to Tyrol, Styria and Istria and about some Russian synagogues (XIII, 1914).

Heinrich Frauberger, the art historian of Austrian origin, without any known personal relations with Jewish individuals, had first to inform himself about Judaism. Only thereafter was he able to deal with objects used for liturgical and ritual Jewish purposes. He served the Society for more than twenty years. His successor was Erich Toeplitz who managed the Society and its collections until the forced end.

After Frauberger had familiarized himself with Judaica objects and with Hebraica, he started to collect photos of objects. His description of a Torah curtain in Mainz proves his devoted involvement into Jewish iconography:

„A very elaborate old curtain with valance from the 17th century is in the possession of the Mainz community [...]. On an orange-yellow background, it displays two columns decorated with arabesques in the most delicate gold embroidery and entwined with sewed-on leaves that end above in a vase filled with flowers. Beneath a crown in a middle field is Mount Sinai with two olive trees with fruits, which symbolically allude to the written and oral teaching, bounded by a fence that Moses was supposed to build around the mountain upon God's command before obtaining the Law. The red sky lit up by lightning and the earth darkened by clouds are skillfully indicated by colors. Depicted above, on the valance from red velvet, are three crowns in relief embroidery decorated with colorful stones. Designated by their initial letters are the crown of the teachings on the right side, the crown of the kingdom on the left side, and the crown of the priesthood in the middle. Beneath, also designated by initials, are five images with utensils from the Temple in Jerusalem; from right to left: the seven-branched candelabrum, the washing basin, the Tablets of the Covenant, the sacrificial altar, and the showbread table.”

Not only concentrated he on objects from the German speaking lands, but also beyond those borders. As an art historian he was not an exception and also focused on Italian Jewish art (fig. 3).

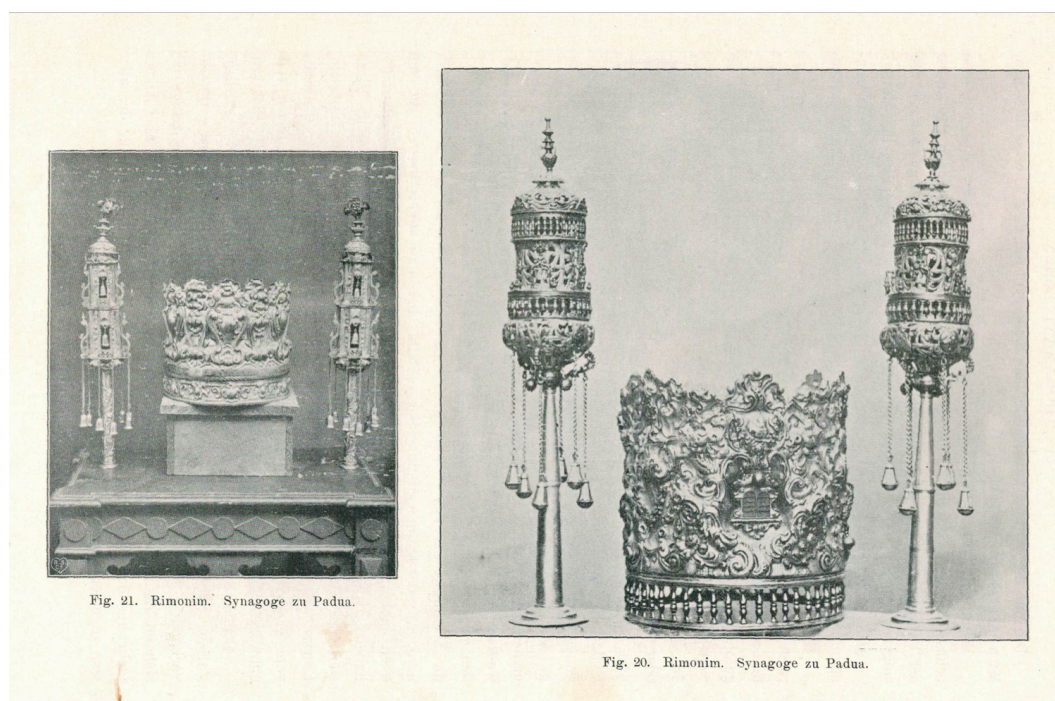


Fig. 21. Rimonim. Synagoge zu Padua.

Fig. 20. Rimonim. Synagoge zu Padua.

Fig. 3: Italian Torah-ornaments, in: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkaler zu Frankfurt am Main III. IV. Heinrich Frauberger, Über alte Kultusgegenstände in Synagoge und Haus, Frankfurt/Main 1903; here: Reprint Jerusalem 1969, p. 24.*

Frauberger's 1903 publication laid some important foundations for the identification of Judaica objects and their attribution. Today, some of these prove to be false identifications and ascriptions, but over 120 years they have become so established that collectors and museums are still not deterred from misidentifying them or even from making new acquisitions.

One of those traditional misinterpretations is probably the acceptance of everything showing up with eight lights being Hanukkiot. The longest time there was no closer look taken to the material and aesthetic gap between backplates and the light strips. Evidently many Hanukkiot were produced when Judaica collections came into being and material was collected without any Jewish dimension, on the contrary with mythological or pagan iconography and this material was combined with newly cast light bars. As e.g. fig. 4.

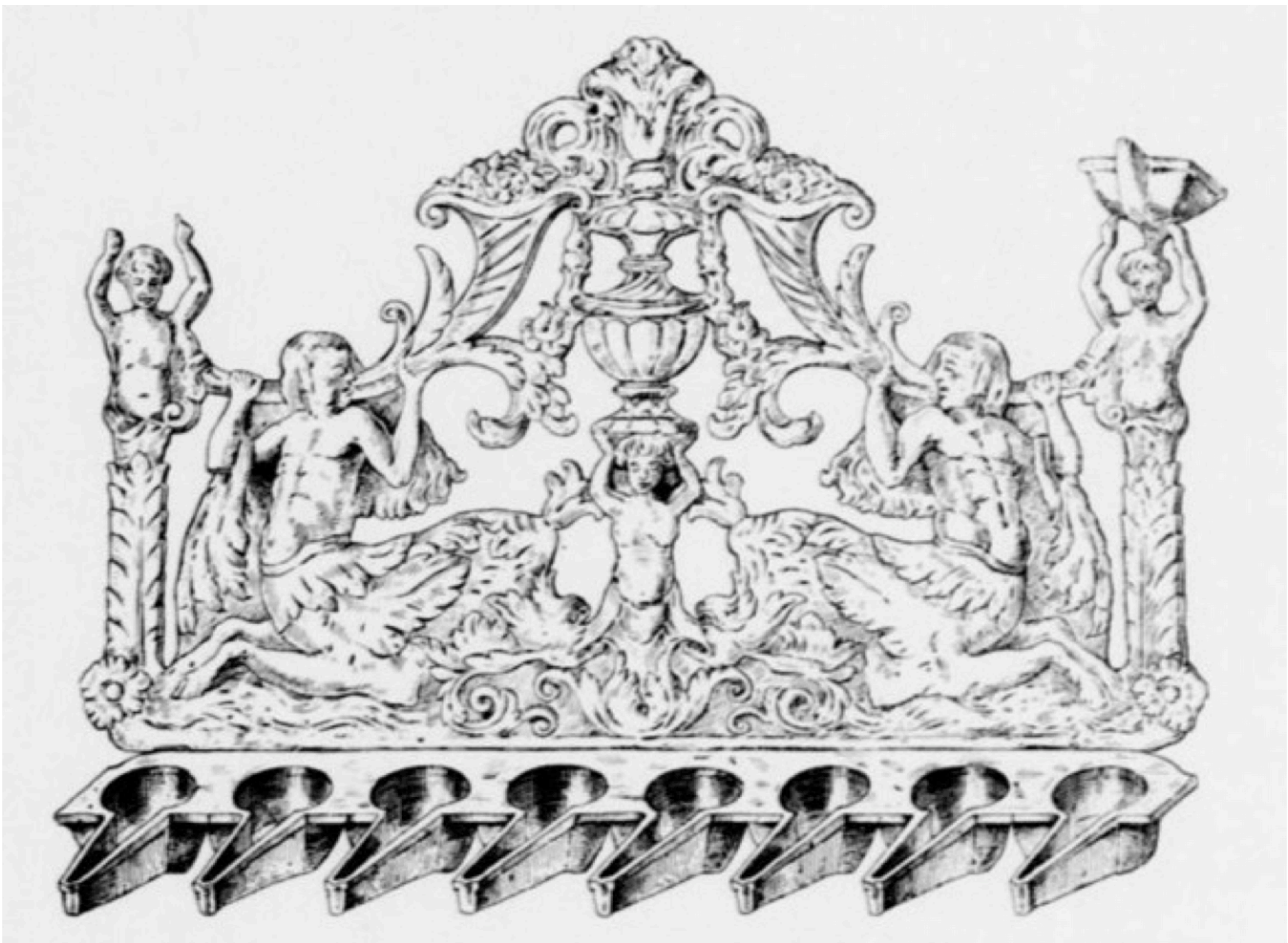


Fig. 4: „Italian Hanukkah lamp”, in: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler zu Frankfurt am Main III. IV. Heinrich Frauberger, Über alte Kultusgegenstände in Synagoge und Haus, Frankfurt/Main 1903; here: Reprint Jerusalem 1969, p. 45.*

There have also been numerous misinterpretations – willingly or unwillingly - since the 19th century in the field of spice boxes for the Havdalah. One object that was and is often referred to as a Bsamim object was/is originally a holder for toothpicks or also or for a fragrant, respectively an olfactory container (fig. 5). Frauberger wrote: „Among the frequently occurring shapes are besamim boxes in the form of fruits [...]. From a wider, differently designed foot ascends a branch with a fruit (quince, pear, apple) among leaves, which can be twisted off easily to be filled with spices and which emits via small openings a pleasant aroma. Pieces symbolically arranged and in good taste belonging in this group are extant.”

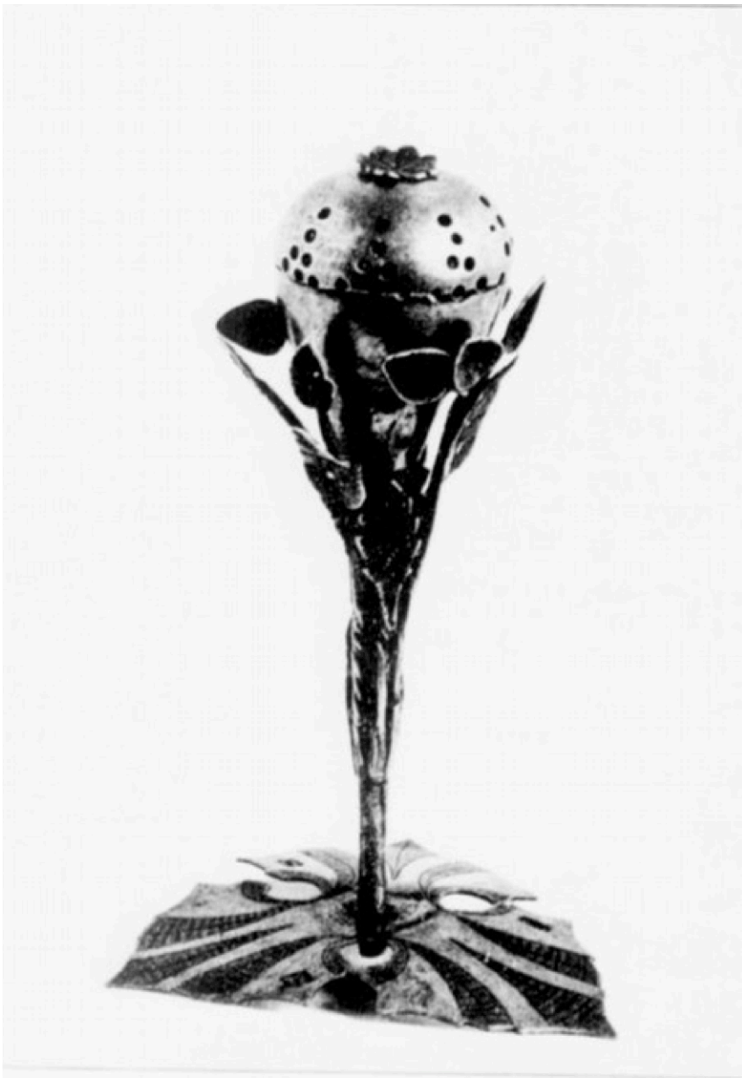


Fig. 5: „Pear-shaped Besamim-container”, in: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkaler zu Frankfurt am Main III. IV. Heinrich Frauberger, Über alte Kultusgegenstände in Synagoge und Haus, Frankfurt/Main 1903; here: Reprint Jerusalem 1969, p. 52.*

Also spice containers for storing different spices were designated as being Bsamim containers. Nobody seems to have noticed that an object like depicted in fig. 6 is far less suitable for the ceremony of the *Hawdalah* than Frauberger himself or what he has been told. In reality, everyone would have had to contradict his paragraph: „A box as represented in Fig. 74 is very rare; it is an extremely interesting piece not only because of its overall shape, its decoration, but also because of its construction and arrangement of the six small spice containers. The actual spherical container rests on a round, slightly tapered foot and concludes with a rosette-like lid with clasped rings. The comparison of the utensil’s main part with an orange seems to me appropriately chosen. Like the individual parts of an orange, also here, the six small spice containers forming the body are arranged in a way so that they become a sphere when folded up. The core of this sphere is a hexagonal, vertically upright prism; on its side, upon closing, each of the inward lying surfaces of the small spice containers with the button located here latches into the respective indentations of the center piece. Here, the spice containers’ side walls display as decoration alternating engravings of a mask as crescent moon and half of the French fleur-de-lis. These sides as well as the small surface leaning against the core, which constitutes the sliding lid with the spice name, are fire-gilt. When folding up the individual parts toward the fixed core—which is enabled by the hinges on the lower edge—then by screwing down the concluding rosette—which is running on the upper end in



vertical threads—it is possible to hold the body together through pressing down. Rosette and foot display chased scale d.cor, which is pleasantly animated at the foot by small spheres that are arranged directly under the middle part of the smaller hinges so that they serve the folded down spice boxes as point of support. It should be mentioned here that at the foot, both the lowest plate as well as the foot itself can be unscrewed beneath the sphere's body. In the first case, one obtains a container, in the latter, an upright pin with a hammered spoon-like end; this small spoon serves to extract spice from the container. The sphere's surface seems accomplished in its d.cor. It is adorned with three most delicately worked female figures whose position and attributes point to Justitia, Fortitudo, and Temperantia. The figures are characterized by abundant framing, hanging fruits individually depicted. The composition reminds of the Augsburg and Nuremberg master goldsmiths of the 16th century. It is not uncommon in the art trade to find quaint medallions or small boxes, sometimes in the shape of acorns, small apples, pears, oranges, sometimes in the shape of lidded vases, little lanterns, little bottles, or heart-shaped, from silver, with filigree, engraved, etched, chased, in enamel, which also feature three, four, or six interior compartments; these are besamim boxes worn by women as jewelry, allegedly by weak women on the so-called long day to get refreshed and invigorated by the aroma when the long fast becomes inconvenient.” Actually he contradicts himself in identifying this as a Bsamim container. He seems to be mixing up a kind of olfactory container on the one hand, and perfume containers on the other with Bsamim containers. One wonders whether he created the confusion himself or whether his informants and referees were the ones who created the confusion.

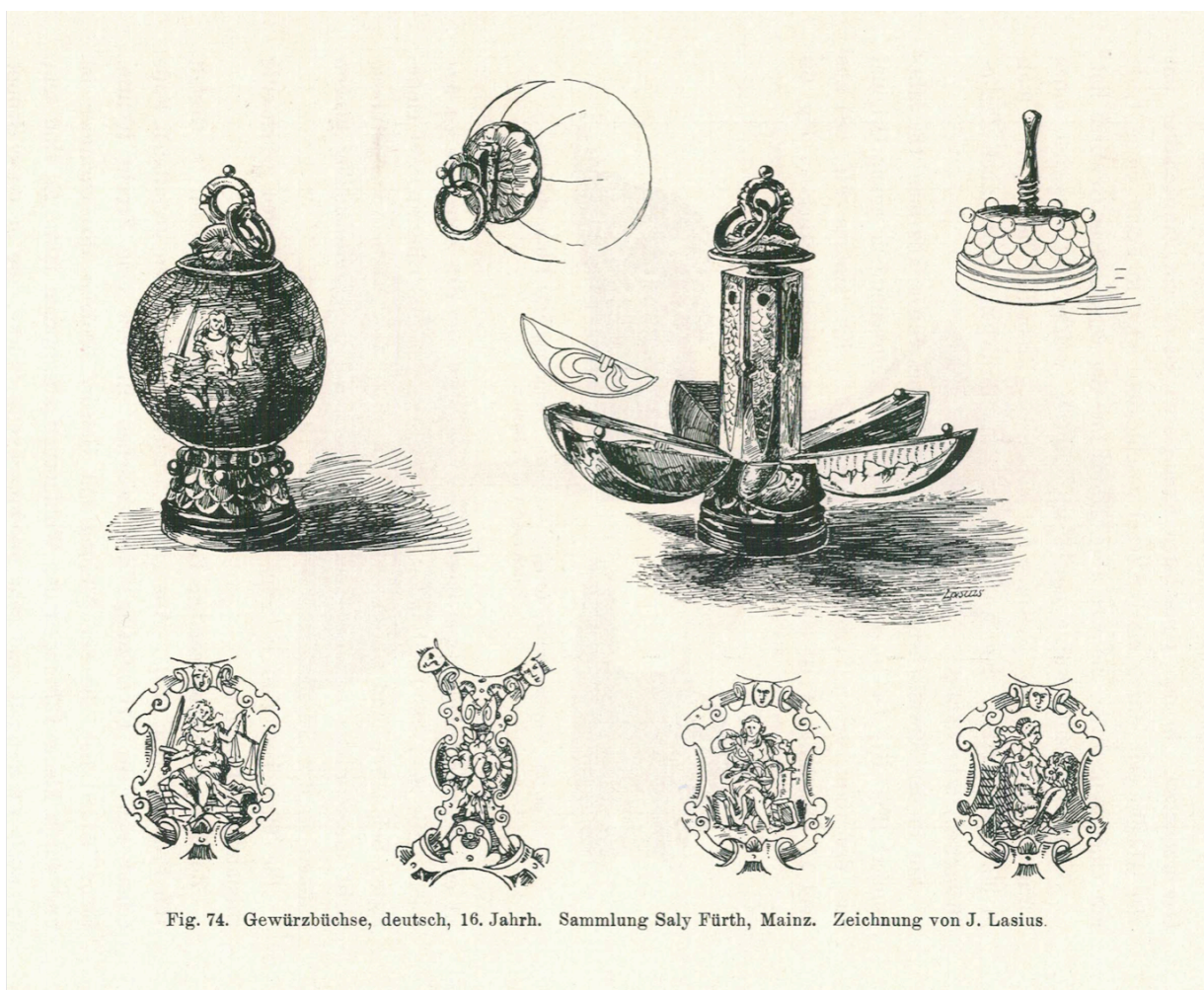


Fig. 74. Gewürzbüchse, deutsch, 16. Jahrh. Sammlung Saly Fürth, Mainz. Zeichnung von J. Lasius.

Fig. 6: „German spice container”, in: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkaler zu Frankfurt am Main III. IV. Heinrich Frauberger, Über alte Kultusgegenstände in Synagoge und Haus, Frankfurt/Main 1903; here: Reprint Jerusalem 1969, p. 54.*

A further example of a so-called Judaica object which was/is to be found in many early Jewish museum collections is the lamp fig. 7. Frauberger wrote: „In Italy, candelabrum for oil have survived into the 19th century, with five or more closed oil receptacles and equipped with scissors and small pliers, for the lamp’s maintenance, suspended from chains [...]” A piece like this one is to be found e.g. in the collection of the old Jewish museum Vienna. There’s nothing that indicates it to be „Jewish”.

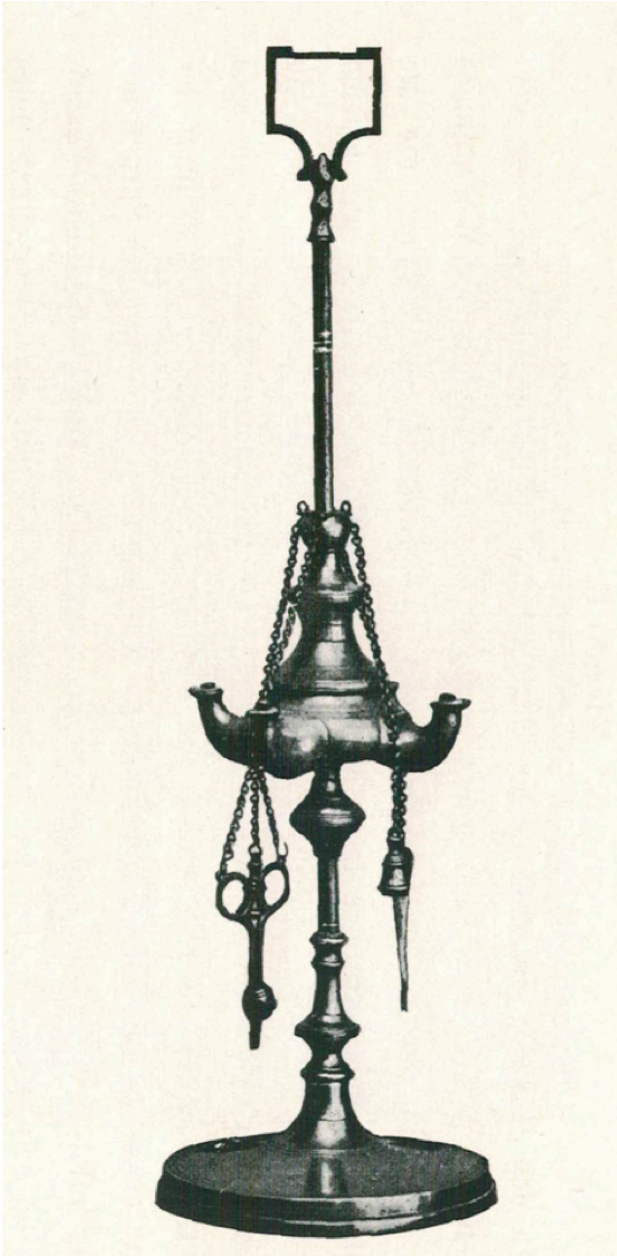


Fig. 7: „Italian candelabra”, in: *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft zur Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler zu Frankfurt am Main III. IV. Heinrich Frauberger, Über alte Kultusgegenstände in Synagoge und Haus, Frankfurt/Main 1903; here: Reprint Jerusalem 1969, p. 72.*

The few examples given show, that a good art historian, with zeal, empathy, and the goal of helping a minority to build a museum of their own, has done essential groundwork for the research of Jewish art, but at the same time has unconsciously contributed to the breeding ground for misinterpretations, imitations, and forgeries. It would be desirable that someone among the young researchers would subject his work to a rigorous analysis and point out the mistakes he made in good faith.

To conclude the initial storyline: In 1908 the founder of the society, Charles Hallgarten, died. His successor as chairman was the art dealer Julius Goldschmidt (1858–1932), member of the board of directors of the Antiques Trade Germany and advisor to the Frankfurt and Paris Rothschilds on art and antiques issues. In 1908 the founder of the society, Charles Hallgarten, died. His successor as chairman was the art dealer Julius Goldschmidt (1858–1932), member of the board of directors of the Antiques Trade Germany and advisor to the Frankfurt and Paris Rothschilds on art and antiques. Julius Goldschmidt (1858–1932) and Sally Fuld (1836–1882) were co-owners of the renowned Frankfurt antiques and art dealer J. & S. Goldschmidt, founded in the mid-19th century, which later had branches in Berlin, Paris, and New York. The business had been founded by Julius' uncle Selig. In order to establish knowledge about dealers and their networks it should be stressed that Julius Goldschmidt followed in the footsteps of his uncle Selig, whose connection to Mayer Carl and Wilhelm Carl von Rothschild made Frankfurt am Main a significant international place for the art trade. And it should be stressed again that Julius Goldschmidt was the confidant of the German and foreign Rothschild families and was always asked for advice by the Rothschild establishment.

Thus, Julius Goldschmidt should be researched in a new light – especially within the network of the antiquity dealers of his time.