Samuel Weigel

Introduction to Part 3: Community, Religious Practice and Synagogue Music in Post-War Germany

Regarding Jewish religious communities, religious practice, community and the music of the synagogue are closely interwoven. For example, in synagogue services, prayers, psalms, *piyyutim* and the reading of the Torah are recited in song. Also, some congregations involve musical instruments, depending on their interpretation of the *halacha*. Usually, the *hazzan*[1] represents the link between the liturgical practice, God, and the community, who, as the prayer leader, has the necessary musical knowledge to lead the service. Likewise, many Jewish communities have their repertoire of melodies and specific ways of reciting prayers, for example certain improvisational and ornamental frameworks (*nusachot*). Thus, the affiliation of a congregation to particular religious streams of Judaism is also reflected in synagogue music.

This introduction will provide an overview of the transformations of music, religious practice, and community in Jewish congregations of post-war Germany and highlight overarching public, internal Jewish and academic discourses, such as practices of remembrance and questions of cultural heritage: Issues that will also be explored in the following contributions from a variety of perspectives. While parts one and two of this edited volume look at the tangible manifestations of Jewish religious practice, primarily through architecture and a wide variety of objects, these cannot be seen in isolation from cultural contexts and associated practices. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to the intangible dimension of Jewish life and related Jewish practices.

Transformations of music and ritual in Germany after the Shoah

Shortly after 1945 and mainly in larger German cities, surviving Jews came together for praying, often in improvised prayer rooms, with changing cantors and rabbis. Over the decades, synagogues were renovated, or newly built and community structures consolidated: Cities, such as Frankfurt am Main developed into centers of Jewish life in Germany. Despite this new beginning, the history of Jewish communities in Germany since 1945 has been marked by various disruptions, which had a decisive

1 In Liberal contexts also referred as cantor.

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influence on the composition of the communities, the rite, and denominational affiliations. In particular, several periods will be emphasized here: The immediate post-war period, the following time of consolidation, the collapse of the former USSR and the associated effects on the communities in reunified Germany.

Due to the aftermath of the Shoah and the emigration of Jewish survivors, West Ashkenazic traditions had all but disappeared from Germany, both the German Reform Judaism and the German Orthodox Judaism.[2] The post-war communities were made up mainly of Displaced Persons and survivors of the Shoah from Poland and other areas of Eastern Europe[3] who re-established the *minhag polin*,[4] especially in southern Germany.[5] With the increasing consolidation of Jewish life in Germany after the Shoah communities in larger cities were re-established as *Einheitsgemeinden nach orthodoxem Ritus* (unified communities). The *Einheitsgemeinden* held their service according to the Orthodox rite, so that Jews of all religious streams, Orthodox members in particular could attend.[6] The larger communities nowadays offer their members several prayer rooms and synagogues of various denominational affiliations. For example, the Frankfurt community maintains an Egalitarian *minyan* in addition to the Orthodox main synagogue.[7]

Besides the changing community structures, the zoning after the war also influenced further transformations regarding the communities' composition and institutionalization. In the immediate post-war period and due to newly occurring pogroms in Eastern Europe many Jews from primarily Poland and Hungary came to the US zone, favored by comparatively Liberal immigration and emigration policies. Thus,

2 Jascha Nemtsov, "Synagogenmusik im heutigen Deutschland: Alte Vorbilder, neu Tendenzen, internationaler Vergleich," in *Der eine Gott und die Vielfalt der Klänge: Sakrale Musik der drei Monotheistischen Religionen*, ed. Michael Gassmann (Stuttgart, 2013), 33–55, especially 41–43.

3 Atina Grossman, and Tamar Lewinsky, "Erster Teil: 1945–1949: Zwischenstation," in *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Michael Brenner (München, 2012), 67–152, especially 67.

4 Also known as Polish tradition and one of the two directions of Ashkenazic Judaism. The other *minhag* is called *minhag ashkenaz* and is related to areas of Western Europe, especially Germany.

5 Michael Brenner, and Norbert Frei, "Zweiter Teil: 1950–1967: Konsolidierung," in *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Michael Brenner (München, 2012), 152–287, especially 164.

6 Nemtsov, "Synagogenmusik im heutigen Deutschland," see note 2, 43–44.

7 As was found in the aforementioned associated research project, "Objects and spaces reflecting religious practice: traditions and transformations in Jewish communities in Germany after the Shoa" and within the sub-project "Music, Tradition," the researchers of the European Centre for Jewish Music (EZJM) conducted several interviews with *hazzanim* and rabbis from Berlin, Stuttgart, Frankfurt am Main, Niddatal and Cologne. Part of the results can be found in this volume's essay "Jewish Musical Heritage in Post-War Germany: Negotiating Jewish Self-Understanding through Synagogue Chant," by Sarah M. Ross. Another part will also be included in the cultural heritage platform Soundscape Synagogue. See Europäisches Zentrum für Jüdische Musik, Soundscape Synagoge, https://www.soundscape-synagoge.de/. Accessed September 20, 2021.

survivors and adherents of the pre-war German traditions mainly remained[8] in the minority in the communities of the American zone, while the majority of members cultivated the Polish tradition.[9] In northern Germany, predominantly in the British zone, the situation was entirely different. Here, Jews from Eastern European areas were mainly outnumbered.[10] The communities in the French zone were in close contact with communities in France and Switzerland. In the case of the community of Saarbrücken, many members who had previously fled to France were able to return and, with the assistance of a surviving rabbi, were able to continue the local pre-war tradition.[11]

In general, the various local traditions of the pre-war period and their liturgical music had largely disappeared from Germany after the Shoah. In consequence, synagogue music in the post-war *Einheitsgemeinden* depended strongly on the personal backgrounds of single *hazzanim*, rabbis, or community members, who led the services.[12] In some cases, there were efforts to recreate the melodies of the pre-war congregation; in others, a new local tradition was established, as I will elaborate on later. In addition to the overall transformations in local traditions, Jascha Nemtsov observes a general shift in most German communities from an Ashkenazic to a Sephardic pronunciation of prayers.[13]

From the 1960s onwards, interest in Judaism in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) moved more and more into the foreground, especially in a historical examination of the Shoah.[14] However, waves of anti-Semitic incidents increased in the following years.[15] Until the 1990s, the communities that had solidified after the war also had to contend with declining membership and an aging population.[16] Furthermore, the dichotomy between staying and leaving was still present in internal Jewish discourse, as expressed in the metaphor of the packed suitcases (*gepackte Koffer*) that had become popular.[17]

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), on the other hand, only a small number of Jewish communities existed after the division of the state. The increasing state repression and dwindling membership from the 1950s onwards intensified this

8 By the terms pre-war rite/tradition, I refer to the liturgical practice of the two major streams of Judaism represented in Germany before the Shoah: the Western Ashkenazi Orthodox and the Liberal Reform tradition.

9 Brenner, and Frei, "Zweiter Teil: 1950–1967," see note 5, 164.

10 Grossman, and Lewinsky, "Erster Teil: 1945–1949," see note 3, 126–128.

11 Grossman, and Lewinsky, "Erster Teil: 1945–1949," see note 3, 174–175.

12 Nemtsov, "Synagogenmusik im heutigen Deutschland," see note 2, 50.

13 Nemtsov, "Synagogenmusik im heutigen Deutschland," see note 2, 49.

14 Brenner, and Frei, "Zweiter Teil: 1950–1967," see note 5, 264.

15 Brenner, and Frei, "Zweiter Teil: 1950–1967," see note 5, 274 on.

16 Karen Körber, "Zäsur, Wandel oder Neubeginn? Russischsprachige Juden in Deutschland zwischen Recht, Repräsentation und Realität," in *Russisch-jüdische Gegenwart in Deutschland*, ed. Karen Körber (Göttingen, 2015), 13–36, especially 29.

17 Körber, "Zäsur, Wandel oder Neubeginn?," see note 16, 13.

effect. In part, this led to fundamental difficulties in holding services, with the result that the number of members required for a minyan was temporarily lowered.[18] Additionally, support was sought from cantors from the FRG, such as Estrongo Nachama.[19] As a consequence of a general shortage of cantors, the office of chief cantor of the Jewish communities in the GDR was created in the 1960s and was held by Werner Sander. Due to the circumstances and decreasing possibilities of holding services religious practice in the communities also receded into the background. Partly, the *hazzanim* held the services according to Orthodox rite. In several cases also an organ or harmonium was added, referring to the Liberal tradition.[20] In particular, the German-Jewish Reform tradition experienced high popularity in concert form through the *Leipziger Synagogalchor* led by Werner Sander – especially among non-Jewish audiences.[21]

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union led to a massive increase in the number of members in Germany's Jewish communities. Against the background of the so-called *Kontingentflüchtlingsgesetz* (Law on measures for refugees admitted in the context of humanitarian aid operations[22]), Jews from Eastern Europe were able to emigrate to the FRG. However, the overall process bore several conflicts: On the one hand, stereotypes of the refugees were established in public discourse; on the other hand, their integration also led to tensions in the communities.

In the Soviet Union, living Judaism in a *halachic* sense was made difficult in many ways. For example, in the context of issuing identity cards in the Soviet Union, being Jewish was considered by the authorities to be a purely ethnic-national construct. Resulting from this, many Jews from the affected parts of Eastern Europe brought a secular understanding of Judaism to Germany. Thus, in the 1990s, there was a clash between two different understandings of Jewishness, which continue to cause conflict in German communities today: On the one hand, post-war German Jews with a religious understanding of Judaism and, on the other, Soviet Jews who had had little contact with religious practice.[23]

18 Melanie Eulitz, "Die jüdisch-Liberale Bewegung in Deutschland nach 1990," in *Russisch-jüdische Gegenwart in Deutschland*, ed. Karen Körber (Göttingen, 2015), 37–59, especially 42.

19 Esther Slevogt, *Die Synagoge Pestalozzistrasse: 'Deinem Hause gebühret Heiligkeit, Ewiger, für alle Zeiten,'* Jüdische Miniaturen 127 (Berlin, 2012), 105–106.

20 Eulitz, "Die jüdisch-Liberale Bewegung in Deutschland nach 1990," see note 18, 42–43.

21 Tina Frühauf, *Werner Sander: 'Den Frieden endgültig zu festigen': Ein großer Vertreter der jüdischen Musik in der DDR,* Jüdische Miniaturen 213 (Berlin, 2017), 76–77.

22 Bundesgesetzblatt, "Gesetz über Maßnahmen für im Rahmen humanitärer Hilfsaktionen aufgenommene Flüchtlinge vom 22. Juli 1980," *Bundesgesetzblatt* 1.41 (1980): 1057–1058, http://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl180s1057.pdf. Accessed September 20, 2021.

23 Yfaat Weiss, and Lena Gorelik, "Die russisch-jüdische Zuwanderung," in *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Michael Brenner (München, 2012), 295–375, especially 386–388.

As a result of the 1990s, the German congregations had to meet the demands of their new members. Consequently, social support services were created, but the language barriers between members, in particular, posed a problem.[24] In addition, the increase in membership had another significant effect, from which Liberal Judaism in Germany notably benefited. The rising membership numbers enabled congregants interested in Liberal Judaism to seperate themselves from the *Einheitsgemeinden*. Consequently, many new Jewish congregations were founded, especially in the 1990s, which maintain a Liberal rite.[25] Despite the increase in membership in the 1990s, many communities struggle nowadays with declining numbers due to progressive aging.[26]

Especially in the first decades after the end of the war, many Jewish communities had no permanent cantors. For a long time, training centers did not exist in Germany, so the congregations depended on support from abroad.[27] The cantors of the post-war period oscillated between emigration countries and Germany and were regularly engaged for the High Holidays. However, a specific cantorate, as Tina Frühauf notes in her monograph *Transcending Dystopia: Music, Mobility and the Jewish Community in Germany, 1945–1989*, did not emerge in post-war Germany. As she sums up, the cantors' influence on the communities is of high importance. Thus, along with the cantors, musical repertoire, aesthetics, and liturgical practice moved from congregation to congregation, which also played an essential role in consolidating a denominational identity.[28]

In the course of the research related to this volume, two poles have emerged that are of particular relevance for the orientation of religious practice in post-war Germany up to the present day: The recommencement and the revitalization of pre-war traditions. Two Jewish communities researched as part of the project, in which context his publication was published, show how different the engagement with the pre-war tradition can be.

In keeping with the spirit of revitalization, the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue of Berlin's Jewish Community offers its members services in the German-Jewish Reform tradition. Thus, the repertoire consists almost entirely of liturgical compositions by Louis Lewandowski, which is recited with the support of a mixed synagogue choir and organ accompaniment. This form of service not only refers to the Liberal practice of pre-war services there but it also references another local historical legacy: Louis Lewandowski, one of the most influential composers of the German-Jewish Reform

24 Körber, "Zäsur, Wandel oder Neubeginn?," see note 16, 29.

25 Eulitz, "Die jüdisch-Liberale Bewegung in Deutschland nach 1990," see note 20, 51.

26 Karen Körber, "Einleitung," in Karen Körber, ed., *Russisch-jüdische Gegenwart in Deutschland* (Göttingen, 2015), 7–12, especially 8.

27 Tina Frühauf, *Transcending Dystopia: Music, Mobility, and the Jewish Community in Germany, 1945–1989* (New York, 2021), 146–147.

28 Frühauf, *Transcending Dystopia*, see note 27, 154.

tradition. The Frankfurt am Main community in the Westend Synagogue shows a different perspective: One that involves a break with the pre-war tradition, entirely in the sense of a new beginning. After the war, the synagogue services in the Westend were adapted to suit the Polish majority, meaning a break with the German-Jewish Reform tradition from the pre-war period. The current cantor of the congregation continues the tradition established after the war but also implements melodies from the North American Modern Orthodox tradition to meet the changing needs of the congregation members.[29]

Interviews with cantors from other Jewish congregations have shown the different ways of dealing with the past. These depend on a wide variety of factors, such as overarching socio-political developments and interests, demographic and structural changes within the community, and the personal interests of the cantors, rabbis, or the community council.

Intangible dimensions of Jewish life after the Shoah in Germany

Within academic contexts, the immaterial dimensions of Jewish life after the Shoah are researched and discussed in different ways. While the other two parts of this volume focus on the history and material heritage of German Jews after the Shoah, this part also refers to two overarching discourses regarding Jewish cultural practices in Germany. One of the two discourses I will shortly elaborate on is the *Erinnerungskultur* (remembrance culture) regarding the Shoah and post-war Judaism in Germany. Additionally, this introduction will look at the connected concept of (Jewish) cultural heritage, which also plays a significant role in identity formation and representation of Jewish life in Germany.

The term *Erinnerungskultur* has various meanings[30] and is used by the Aleida Assmann to refer to practices of remembrance that are characterized by a "Pluralisierung und Intensivierung der Zugänge zur Vergangenheit"[31] (pluralization and intensification of access to the past). These can have an identity-forming effect and fulfill ethical functions, such as coping with (state) violent crimes.[32] With the historical examination of the Shoah, specific remembrance practices have emerged in Germany and Europe, which are supported and mobilized primarily by memorial sites and events, Jewish museums, and political discourses. Regarding the atrocities of the

29 Personal interview with I.A. in Berlin, June 2021; with Y.R. in Frankfurt am Main, June 2021.

30 Aleida Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur: Eine Intervention*, 3rd edition (München, 2020 [2013]), 30.

31 Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*, see note 30, 32.

32 Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*, see note 30, 32.

Shoah, that way of remembering Judaism in Germany before 1945 represents an important step in historical examination and the prevention of antisemitism. Yet, in academic discourse, some positions see problems in representing the Jewish present in the German memorial landscape. At the center of these criticisms is the observation that Jewish life in Germany is predominantly researched and represented by non-Jewish actors, as Ruth Ellen Gruber and Y. Michal Bodemann are stating.[33] Following this critique, the absence of Jewish actors involved in public acts of remembrance leads to a portrayal of Jewish culture fed by the museum and the creation of an imagined or "virtual" Judaism,[34] as Gruber depicts it. Furthermore, as Bodemann describes concerning the Shoah, the *Erinnerungskultur* also serves political functions, such as a guarantor of democracy in the FDR[35] or in constructing a specific image of Judaism in Germany, an image with which the majority of the German public can identify but disregards Judaism's present heterogeneity.[36] Based on the memorial site at Flossenbürg, Timo Saalmann's contribution in this volume looks at recent changes in the practice of remembrance that involve Jewish survivors to a greater extent.

The term cultural heritage is often used in political discourses in the context of safeguarding the tangible dimension of heritage, particularly monuments and artifacts.[37] For a few decades, UNESCO[38] and several cultural heritage initiatives have emphasized safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. However, in the context of Jewish cultural heritage in Germany, there is also a tendency to refer mainly to tangible manifestations, while the engagement with intangible Jewish heritage through cultural heritage initiatives is mostly neglected.[39] Sarah M. Ross, against the background of various definitions of Jewish cultural heritage, distinguishes primarily between two

33 Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2002), 10–11.

34 Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, see note 33, 21.

35 Y. Michal Bodemann, "The State in the Construction of Ethnicity and Ideological Labor: The Case of German Jewry," *Critical Sociology* 17.3 (1990): 35–46, especially 41.

36 Y. Michal Bodemann, "Reconstructions of History: From Jewish Memory to Nationalized Commemoration of Kristallnacht in Germany," in *Jews, Germans, Memory. Reconstructions of Jewish Life in Germany*, ed. Y. Michal Bodemann (Ann Arbor, 1996), 179–226, especially 209.

37 Janet Blake, "UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage: The implications of community involvement in 'safeguarding'," in *Intangible Heritage: Key Issues in Cultural Heritage*, ed. Laura Jane Smith, and Natsuko Akagawa (Oxford and New York, 2009), 45–73, especially 46.

38 UNESCO, *Basic Text of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2020 Edition* (Paris, 2020), 5, https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/2003_Convention_Basic_Texts-_2020_version-EN.pdf. Accessed September 20, 2021.

39 Regina Randhofer, "Wiedergeburt, nicht Erbe. Überlegungen zum jüdischen Kulturerbe am Beispiel der Lieder der Sefarden," in *Jüdisches Kulturerbe MUSIK – Divergenzen und Zeitlichkeit: Überlegungen zu einer kulturellen Nachhaltigkeit aus Sicht der Jüdischen Musikstudien*, ed. Sarah M. Ross (Berlin/Bern/Brussels/New York/Oxford/Warsaw/Vienna, 2021), 73–87, especially 75–76.

terms: *Jüdisches Kulturerbe* (Jewish cultural heritage)[40] and Jewish heritage. *Jüdisches Kulturerbe* describes the past-oriented practice of researching and presenting Judaism, which non-Jewish actors in Germany primarily cultivate. In contrast, the term Jewish heritage, especially in English-speaking parts of the world, refers to the totality of expressions of Jewish life, including aspects such as ritual or music.[41] In this sense, she argues for a concept of cultural heritage and cultural sustainability that focuses more on the future and considers the processes of transmitting and preserving Jewish life in the present.[42]

Thus, the individual contributions of this part of the publication tangent in different ways to the discourses mentioned above on remembrance culture and cultural heritage. The spectrum ranges from changes in remembrance practice at a memorial site (Saalman) to the continuation of the cultural heritage of the German-Jewish Reform tradition using the example of synagogue organs (Frühauf) to identity-finding processes in Jewish communities, especially concerning cultural heritage and local *nusachot* (Ross).

The contributions

The following contributions are devoted to transformations in liturgical(-musical) practice from different perspectives. From the history of synagogue organs in post-war Germany, these range thematically through changes in ritual and linked identity-finding processes to the significance of the Kaddish recitation in a memorial site.

Especially in the German-Jewish Reform tradition, the Shoah caused a massive rupture. In her contribution "A Relic of the Past? The Organ and the Jewish Communities in Post-War Germany," **Tina Frühauf** precisely investigates this rupture in the history of Jewish communities in Germany by examining the changing role of synagogue organs. Within the framework of her research, she refers specifically to the history of the organ in Frankfurt's Westend Synagogue and looks at other communities based on interviews, archival material, and various iconographic representations. Furthermore, she shows what role organs played in the service as a vehicle for acculturation efforts, from pre-war Germany until the late 1990s. Finally, she notes that due to various factors, including changes in ritual, they now only lead to a shadowy existence in Jewish communities – both in the FRG and the GDR. Thus, starting from the tangible

40 Sarah M. Ross, "'Jüdisches Kulturerbe' vis-á-vis 'Jewish heritage:' Einleitende Überlegungen zur Idee einer kulturellen Nachhaltigkeit in den jüdischen Musikstudien," in *Jüdisches Kulturerbe MUSIK – Divergenzen und Zeitlichkeit: Überlegungen zu einer kulturellen Nachhaltigkeit aus Sicht der Jüdischen Musikstudien*, ed. Sarah M. Ross (Berlin/Bern/Brussels/New York/Oxford/Warsaw/Vienna, 2021), 1–39, especially 22.

41 Ross, 'Jüdisches Kulturerbe' vis-á-vis 'Jewish heritage,' see note 40, 22.

42 Ross, 'Jüdisches Kulturerbe' vis-á-vis 'Jewish heritage,' see note 40, 35–36.

representatives of the German-Jewish Reform tradition, Frühauf's contribution provides an insight into the transformations of the music of the synagogue from 1945 to 1989 in divided post-war Germany.

The following two essays also deal with Jewish cultural heritage and remembrance culture, albeit from different perspectives. First, **Sarah M. Ross'** article "Jewish Musical Heritage in Post-War Germany: Negotiating Jewish Self-Understanding through Synagogue Chant" sheds light on the complex negotiation processes of belonging within Jewish communities and how these are reflected at the level of liturgy and synagogue music. Her research bridges the gap between liturgical-musical practice and the broader discourses around Jewish intangible cultural heritage in Germany, which influence the search for Jewish identities in complex ways.

Timo Saalmann devotes his essay "Kaddish in Flossenbürg. On the Genesis of the Memorials to Jewish Victims of the Concentration Camp" to how the memorial site of the former concentration camp Flossenbürg in Bavaria deals with remembering the victims of the Shoah. Starting with the construction of the Jewish Memorial Stones in 1949/50 and 1985, he looks at the history of the Flossenbürg Memorial and its relationship to linked cultures of remembrance. Then, beginning with a restructuring of the memorial in 1995, Saalmann describes certain transformations in remembering the past: away from a Christian-influenced culture of remembrance that commemorates nationally defined groups of victims, towards that of a prayer and memorial site for former Jewish prisoners from Flossenbürg. In this respect, Saalmann emphasizes the changing role of the Kaddish prayer in commemorative events at Flossenbürg.