

SPECIAL EDITION “Siberia” – SONDERAUSGABE „Sibirien“

“From Jerusalem to Birobidzhan” – A Documentation of the Jewish Heritage in Siberia

In August 2015, the team of the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem undertook a research expedition to Siberia. Over the course of 21 days, the expedition spanned 6,000 km. Overall, the CJA team visited 16 sites in Siberia and the Russian Far East: Tomsk, Mariinsk, Achinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Kansk, Nizhneudinsk, Irkutsk, Babushkin (former Mysovsk), Kabansk, Ulan-Ude (former Verkhneudinsk), Barguzin, Petrovsk Zabaikalskii (former Petrovskii Zavod), Chita, Khabarovsk, Birobidzhan, and Vladivostok.

16 synagogues and 4 collections of ritual objects were documented alongside a survey of 11 Jewish cemeteries and numerous Jewish houses. The team consisted of Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, Dr. Vladimir Levin, Dr. Katrin Kessler (Bet Tfila, Braunschweig), Dr. Anna Berezin, and architect Zoya Arshavsky. The expedition was made possible with the generous donations of Mrs. Josephine Urban, London, and an anonymous donor.

Bet Tfila plans to publish the results of this expedition in its series of publications – presenting the little known Jewish heritage of Siberia in actual and historic photographs, descriptions and plans. The publication will be the first to present the preserved Jewish ritual buildings, tombstones and ritual objects found in this vast and remote region. Please help us with your donation to accomplish this publication project!

Erstmals erscheint aus aktuellem Anlass eine Sonderausgabe von *bet tfila.org/info*: Im August 2015 konnte sich das deutsch-israelische Team des Center for Jewish Art und der Bet Tfila – Forschungsstelle einen lange gehegten Wunsch erfüllen und das jüdische Erbe in Sibirien und im „Fernen Osten“ Russlands dokumentieren. In drei Wochen legten die fünf Wissenschaftler (Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, Dr. Vladimir Levin, Dr. Katrin Kessler, Dr. Anna Berezin und Architektin Zoya Arshavsky) auf ihrer Reise von Tomsk nach Vladivostok über 6.000 km zurück. Sie dokumentierten 16 Synagogen, elf jüdische Friedhöfe und zahlreiche Ritualobjekte jüdischer Gemeinschaften, deren Erbe in der westlichen Welt bislang weitgehend unbekannt geblieben ist.

Diese Sonderausgabe gibt einen ersten Überblick über die reichen Funde des Teams. Einige der gezeigten Synagogen wurden seit den 1990er Jahren durch jüdische Gemeinden wiederbelebt, andere stehen leer und sind vom Verfall bedroht.

Es ist geplant, die Ergebnisse der Expedition in der Schriftenreihe der Bet Tfila – Forschungsstelle zu publizieren. Dafür möchten wir Sie herzlich um Ihre finanzielle Hilfe bitten!

1 Tomsk: The Soldiers' Synagogue, window frame of the upper floor showing a Star of David.





2–3 Tomsk: *The Soldiers' Synagogue, view from southwest (2), staircase leading to the former women's section (3).*

Introduction

Jewish presence in Siberia has been sporadically recorded since the 18th century, but established Jewish settlements appeared in the region only in the early 19th century. Russian authorities prohibited Jews from settling in Siberia in 1837, after which time the Jewish population consisted mainly of those who were forcefully sent there. One type were Jews who performed crimes in the Pale of Settlement and were sentenced to a lifetime of exile in Siberia. Initially the authorities dispersed them in villages, but later there was an influx of many exiles into rapidly developing towns, where they established themselves as successful businessmen. The second type of Jewish settlers were cantonists – teenage Jewish recruits to the Russian Imperial Army in the time of Nicholas I (1827–55). They were conscripted for a 25-year long service and stationed in the towns with military garrisons. The majority of cantonists were forcefully baptized, but those who remained faithful to Judaism could practice religious rituals during their military service. After they retired, they usually stayed in the same towns and formed a significant part of the local communities.

By the end of the 19th century, the Jewish population of Siberia reached almost 35,000 people (the same number of Jews lived in Vitebsk, for example). Jews constituted a significant portion of the population in many towns (from 6 to 15 %). Synagogues (mostly wooden) and cemeteries existed in the majority of Siberian towns. In the beginning of the 20th century, many communities were already so affluent that they could afford to erect spacious stone synagogues. The construction of a synagogue in the Russian Empire was not only a matter of funding, like everywhere else, but also demanded permission from the authorities, which was not easily achieved. Iu. Ostrovskii, who published a book about the Jews in Siberia in 1911, described Jewish communities, their synagogues and cemeteries thus:

“A majority of prayer houses in Siberia are of stone, spacious buildings. Though they are not radiant with beauty, Siberian Jewish communities are proud of them. Some members also love to adorn their cemeteries and erect beautiful gravestones to their deceased. This custom is well-established in Siberia.” (Iu. Ostrovskii, *Sibirskie evrei* [St. Petersburg, 1911], p. 39).

After the Revolution of 1917, the Russian Civil War of 1918–21, and the firm establishment of Soviet rule in Siberia, new developments began. On the one hand, many Jews emigrated abroad to escape Communist rule. On the other, new Jews arrived from the former Pale of Settlement, especially in the 1930s, when Stalin's industrialization policy turned some



4 Tomsk: *The Soldiers' Synagogue, upper floor (the former women's gallery, now subdivided into rooms) with original ceiling, windows and pillars.*



5–6 Tomsk: The Choral Synagogue, view from northeast (5), interior towards the Torah ark (6).

of the Siberian towns into important industrial centers. In 1928, the Birobidzhan area at the Soviet-Chinese border was proclaimed the Jewish Autonomous Region, and a substantial number of Jews settled there, engaging in agriculture.

A new influx of Jews to Siberia occurred in the 1940s. After the annexation of Western Ukraine, Western Belorussia, Moldova, Lithuania, and Latvia in 1939–40, tens of thousands of “bourgeois” Jews were exiled by the Soviet authorities to various remote regions including Siberia. With the beginning of the war between Nazi Germany and the USSR in June 1941, refugees arrived from the occupied areas as well as from the regions threatened with a similar fate, e. g., Moscow and Leningrad. Thus, the pattern of Jewish settlement in Siberia changed dramatically in the 20th century: Jews abandoned smaller towns and villages and concentrated in the large cities.

Soviet authorities conducted strict anti-religious policies. After a decade of anti-religious propaganda in the 1920s, the majority of synagogues, mosques and churches were shut down in the early 1930s. The buildings were then used for other purposes. However, the fate of churches and synagogues differed in many cases. While churches were mostly destroyed, former synagogues housed various branches of the Soviet administration. Thus, in some towns the stone synagogue remained the highest and largest building, dominating single-story wooden houses. During the Soviet period, many Jewish cemeteries were demolished (as were Christian and Muslim ones), but Jewish sections were allocated in the new municipal cemeteries.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a significant portion of Siberian Jews emigrated to Israel and the USA. At the same time Jewish communities were re-established, some of them by the initiative of local Jews, others with the help of Chabad rabbis. In those cities where the synagogue buildings

were preserved (Tomsk, Irkutsk, Vladivostok) the revived communities then took possession and reconstructed them. In the cities where the former prayer house did not survive, new synagogues were erected (Krasnoyarsk, Khabarovsk).

Tomsk (Figs. 1–7)

In Tomsk, the starting point of our expedition, Jews arrived in the first half of the 19th century as convicts and as cantonists. In the late 19th century, Tomsk was already a home to a Jewish community of 3,000 (6.4 % of its total population). There were three synagogues, a Jewish cemetery and numerous Jewish institutions. Today there are about 600 Jews and an active religious community. The community life is concentrated around the Choral Synagogue (Fig. 5). It was established in 1850 and its current building was erected in 1902. Soviet authorities closed the synagogue in 1929 and used the building to house various administrative institutions. They also removed the cupola, which emphasized the interior placement



7 Tomsk: The Choral Synagogue, Torah scrolls inside the Torah ark.



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8–9 Mariinsk: Synagogue, view from southwest (8), interior towards west (9).

of the Torah ark. In 1999, the re-established Jewish community reclaimed the building of the former synagogue. As part of a large reconstruction the community re-installed the cupola and rearranged the interior, since the original one was completely lost (Figs. 6–7).

From a historic, artistic and emotional standpoint the former Soldiers' Synagogue was the highlight of our visit to Tomsk (Figs. 1–4). It was built from wood in 1907, converted into an apartment house in 1931, and currently stands neglected and almost abandoned (Fig. 2). The only remaining tenant in the building met the CJA researchers with an ax in his hand and initially refused to let us in. With the help of a local architect who studied the building, Liubov Matskevich, we were able to enter and document the interior. Although the building was divided into two large “communal apartments,” each housing a dozen families, its interior preserved many original features: moldings, doorposts and wooden columns, which supported the women’s gallery (Figs. 3–4). On the exterior, wooden window decorations with curved Stars of David are almost completely intact (Fig. 1).

While the old Jewish cemetery was demolished in 1951, the Jewish section of the municipal cemetery could be surveyed.

The earliest tombstones in the section date back to 1942, marking the graves of Jewish soldiers who passed away in military hospitals during WW II. The majority of those graves had only tin plaques, which disappeared over the course of time. Many headstones from the 1950s have long epitaphs in Hebrew and Jewish symbols. These mark the graves of the Jews exiled by Stalin to Siberia from the areas annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, including Lithuania, Bessarabia (Moldova), and Bukovina.

Mariinsk (Figs. 8–11)

From Tomsk, the expedition travelled 220 km, partly on dirt-roads, to Mariinsk. In the late 19th century, it was a fast developing town serving nearby gold mines. There, exiled Jewish convicts turned into respectable merchants who dominated the local trade. While Jews constituted only 10 % of the total population, in 1908 they accounted for 76 % of Mariinsk merchants. Thus, several dozen large brick houses which belonged to Jewish merchants stand along the central street of the town. According to the 2010 census, no Jews remain in Mariinsk.

10–11 Mariinsk: Synagogue, interior towards east (10) and former entrance to the women’s gallery on the upper floor (11).



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12–14 Kansk: Synagogue, view from southwest (12), window frame (13) and northeastern part of the building, destroyed by fire (14).

The synagogue was built on the main street between 1894 and 1896 (Fig. 8). Closed by the Soviet authorities, it served as a sports club and later as a post office. Originally the brick synagogue had a dome above its prayer hall, but it was demolished during the Soviet era. All other features of the building are still intact: attic walls with Stars of David emphasizing the entrances to the synagogue in the western part of the building, the apse in the east where the Torah ark stood and plaster frames on the walls of the prayer hall between the windows (Fig. 10). Currently the building is abandoned and is quickly deteriorating. The interior bears signs of recent fires, and piles of syringes testify to the local drug-addicts who settled there. The rabbi's house situated nearby is used today as an office building.

Besides the synagogue and Jewish houses, the expedition surveyed Jewish tombstones in the midst of non-Jewish graves in a cemetery situated in a forest. Many tombstones from the 1940s to 1960s bear a depiction of a Star of David and the first two letters of the traditional Hebrew epitaph, א.ב, meaning “here is buried.”

Kansk (Figs. 12–17)

A major discovery of our expedition was the synagogue in Kansk, situated 590 km to the east from Mariïnsk. The impressive wooden synagogue was erected in 1895, and in the 1930s it was converted into an apartment house and lost its prominent dome. At the moment the building is abandoned. It bears traces of fire and the eastern, northern and southern façades are partly dismantled by locals, who use it as a source of firewood. Some carved window decorations are still intact (Figs. 12–13). However, it is likely that our team was the last to see and document this synagogue, since this extraordinary building might not survive the coming winter.

The CJA team also surveyed the Jewish section in the local cemetery (Figs. 15–17). Jewish tombstones were covered with dog-rose bushes and it took us considerable time to find them. The most impressive gravestone in the cemetery is the monument of Isaac Shepshelevich from 1900: a stone base decorated with Tablets of the Law and surmounted by a black marble column (Fig. 15). The motif of the Tablets of the Law was very common in pre-revolutionary graves in the Kansk cemetery. Among the tombstones from the Soviet period there are many with Hebrew epitaphs and Stars of David.

15–17 Kansk: Jewish cemetery.





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18–19 Nizhneudinsk: Synagogue, view from west (18) and former entrance to the synagogue (19).

Nizhneudinsk (Figs. 18–19)

The small town of Nizhneudinsk is 300 km to the southeast of Kansk. In its main thoroughfare, the CJA team found an impressive brick synagogue inaugurated on 15 May, 1914, two months before the outbreak of WW I. Even today it is one of the largest and tallest buildings in the town. Like other synagogues in the Soviet Union, it was closed in the 1920s and converted into an administrative building. Nowadays it houses the local branch of the Federal Investigation Committee – the closest Russian equivalent to the FBI. Nonetheless we were allowed to enter the building and to document the remnants of its interior decorations (Fig. 19).

Irkutsk (Figs. 20–24)

After travelling 520 km from Nizhneudinsk, the expedition arrived in Irkutsk, situated by the Angara River, not far from Lake Baikal. Irkutsk has been the largest city and the administrative center of eastern Siberia since the 18th century and therefore it is not surprising that it had a substantial and flourishing Jewish community. By the end of the 19th century there were 3,600 Jews, comprising 7.5 % of the city's population.

The Irkutsk Synagogue is the oldest preserved Jewish ritual building in Siberia. It was erected in the late 1870s and in 1881 it was crowned with a dome (Fig. 23). The façades were decorated with Neo-Romanesque and Neo-Classical elements; the women's section in the interior was supported by iron columns. The Soviet authorities closed the synagogue in 1932, but returned it to the community in 1947. Thus, it was a rare example of a synagogue which was active during most of the Soviet period.

In 2004, the building was burnt and renovated afterwards. Some of the ritual objects from the synagogue were transferred to the Sibiriakov Museum of Irkutsk Urban History, where they were documented by the CJA team (Fig. 24).

The Jewish cemetery in Irkutsk is remarkable for being the largest and most well preserved cemetery in the region. Pre-revolutionary tombstones reflect the wealth of the local Jews, their adherence to the Jewish tradition, as well as their significant acculturation into the Russian society (Figs. 20–22).

20–22 Irkutsk: Jewish cemetery.



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23–24 Irkutsk: Synagogue, view from west (23) and Dr. Levin explaining the function of the parokhet to the curator of the Sibriakov Museum of Irkutsk Urban History (24).

Ulan Ude (Figs. 25–30)

Ulan Ude (Verkhneudinsk before 1934) is the capital of the Republic of Buryatia. In 1897, 900 Jews lived there – 11 % of the population. The synagogue was erected in the 1880s and, like other Siberian synagogues, had a cupola above the main entrance. It was closed down in 1930 and the Technological University of Buryatia occupies the building today (Figs. 29–30). The university was the only institution which did not allow our expedition to document its building. Therefore we could only photograph it and take basic measurements from outside.

When the synagogue was closed in 1930, all objects which the authorities found inside were transferred to the M. Khangalov Museum of the History of Buryatia. Contrary to the university, the workers at the museum accepted us warmly and showed us their complete Jewish collection. Among dozens of ritual objects kept in the museum the most outstanding are two stands for Torah scrolls (Fig. 25), a miniature Torah scroll, 10 cm high, written on exceptionally thin parchment (Fig. 28), and a wooden carved Torah pointer with the inscription “Yosef Lifshitz, Siberia, 1915” (Fig. 26). An almost identical pointer

bearing the date 1916 and the word “Siberia,” but another donor’s name, was documented by the CJA researchers in 1995, in the collection of the Lviv Museum of Ethnography and Crafts in Ukraine (see <http://cja.huji.ac.il>).

Barguzin (Figs. 31–32)

After driving 320 km, half the distance on dirt-roads, the expedition arrived in Barguzin, a village in the beautiful Barguzin valley. Unfortunately, we were not able to enjoy spectacular views since the air was full of smoke, originating from large forest fires that struck the region in July/August 2015. We even saw in some places burning trees on both sides of the road.

Barguzin was once home to a wealthy Jewish community of 500 people (33 % of the total population). The Novomeiski family from Barguzin, who became rich from developing salt production and headed the Zionist movement in Siberia in the early 20th century, were the founders of the Palestine Potash Company in 1936 (now The Dead Sea Works).

25–28 Ulan Ude: Documentation at the M. Khangalov Museum of the History of Buryatia: one of the two stands for a Torah scroll (25), a wooden carved Torah pointer with the inscription “Yosef Lifshitz, Siberia, 1915” (26), Prof. Cohen-Mushlin during the documentation (27) and a tiny Torah scroll (28).



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29–30 Ulan Ude: Synagogue, presently used by the Technical University, view from northwest (29) and eastern façade (30).

All that remained from this prominent community is the Jewish section in the local cemetery. Traditional tombstones with Hebrew epitaphs surround the impressive graves of the Novomeiski and other prominent families; some of the monuments were produced in Irkutsk. The most interesting feature in this cemetery is wooden shells covering some graves (Fig. 32). As we learned in the museum of local wooden architecture, such shells were erected in order to protect the graves from wild animals which were likely to dig out and eat the corpse. A local teacher, Tatyana Fillipova, who runs a school museum where a few remaining Jewish objects are kept, took the initiative to clean the cemetery and to record all existing graves.

Chita (Figs. 33–34)

Chita, about 500 km to the east of Ulan Ude, is the main city in Siberia's Trans-Baikal region. Once it was a substantial Jewish center, but now only 146 Jews are living in the city. Only one tombstone has remained from its Jewish cemetery, but the exterior of the large and impressive synagogue is almost completely preserved. The synagogue was built in 1907 in a

style incorporating many Neo-Moorish elements (Fig. 33). It was not only covered by a large dome, but also had small towers flanking the entrance. After its closure in the 1930s the building was turned into a military hospital and its interior was divided into four floors. Now it houses the regional Administration of Prisons while several rooms in the basement were transferred to the local Jewish community.

The only historical Jewish object kept in the Chita's Pushkin Library is a Torah scroll. According to some publications, it was commissioned to commemorate the coronation of the last Russian Tsar, Nicolas II, in 1894. Our documentation, however, discovered, that the only preserved original stave of the scroll bears an inscription in square Hebrew letters, made by the scribe who produced the scroll (Fig. 34). The inscription reads: "This Torah scroll belongs to Mordechai son of Tzvi Ripman." Thus, one may conclude that the scroll was commissioned by a private person and not by the community.

31–32 Barguzin: Jewish cemetery, tomb of Avraham Yakov Dubnikov (1909, Fig. 31 on the left, a similar pyramidal monument topped with a cross was found in the Christian part of the cemetery) and a wooden shell to protect the graves from wild animals (32).



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33–34 Chita: Synagogue, view from northeast (33) and Torah scroll at the Pushkin Library (34).

Khabarovsk (Figs. 35–37)

In Khabarovsk, the largest city of the Russian Far East, 2,000 km east of Chita, the expedition documented Jewish objects in the N. I. Grodenkov Museum of the Khabarovsk Region, surveyed the Jewish section in the municipal cemetery, and visited the active synagogue.

The museum has a small collection of Jewish ritual objects probably originating from the Khabarovsk Synagogue, which was built in 1905, closed in 1926, and subsequently demolished.

The most interesting object found in the museum is a Torah mantle, which beside traditional decorations has an embroidered inscription in Russian, reading: “The 124th Voronezh Infantry Regiment” (Fig. 37). It is well known that the Jewish soldiers of the Russian Imperial Army commissioned and kept Torah scrolls. In some cases these scrolls were kept together with the regiment colors.

The 124th Voronezh Infantry Regiment participated in the Russian-Japanese War of 1904–05, and it is possible that the Torah scroll, commissioned by its Jewish soldiers, was left in

the Khabarovsk Synagogue after the war. After the closure of the synagogue by the Soviet authorities, it was transferred to the museum.

The modern synagogue of Khabarovsk was built in 2000 and is comprised of a spacious prayer hall with facilities for communal activities (Figs. 35–36).

The Jewish section in the large municipal cemetery is not especially interesting historically and artistically: the typical Soviet headstones have little which reflects the Jewish ethnicity of the deceased.

Birobidzhan (Figs. 38–42)

Birobidzhan, named after two rivers, Bira and Bidzhan, was established in 1928 as the center of the Jewish Autonomous Region. The creation of the Jewish Autonomous Region was an initiative of the Soviet government, an alternative to the Zionist project, which Soviet Communists considered utopian. Still the Jewish Autonomous Region was meant for the same purpose: to transform Jews into territorial people who

35–37 Khabarovsk: Synagogue, view from west (35), interior towards the Torah ark (36) and Torah mantle found in the local museum (37).



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38–39 Birobidzhan: Beit Tshuva Synagogue, view from northwest (38) and the amud in the prayer hall (39).

engage in agriculture in their homeland and freely develop their national culture, in its Soviet, Yiddish-based variant.

Although about 18,000 Jews arrived in the region from the western areas of the USSR and even from other countries in the late 1920s and the 1930s, the Birobidzhan project was a fiasco. Jews never constituted a majority in the Jewish Autonomous Region. According to the last Russian census of 2010, there were 1,418 Jews in the city of Birobidzhan, comprising only 1.9 % of its total population.

As stated above, religion had no place in the new Soviet society. Therefore there was no official synagogue in Birobidzhan during the 1930s. Only in 1947 did a group of elderly Jews succeed in getting permission to establish a prayer house. The first synagogue burnt down in 1956 and was replaced by a new one. After several fires the building was falling to pieces and in 1986 the city authorities gave the community another wooden building to serve as the synagogue.

Since 1996 this synagogue is known as Beit Tshuva. In 1998, the adherents of Chabad established a new religious community in the city under the name Freid. This community erected a communal center in 2000 and a synagogue nearby

in 2004. The Beit Tshuva Synagogue was thoroughly documented by the CJA team (Figs. 38–41). Its ritual objects – two Torah arks, an amud, and a parokhet – were produced in 1956 for the inauguration of the new synagogue. They were made by a non-professional artisan and probably represent the last examples of Eastern European Jewish folk art: see, for example, the pair of lions which decorate the Torah ark. The synagogue has a rich collection of books, many of them with stamps of synagogues and private persons from Eastern Europe. The prayer direction in the Beit Tshuva Synagogue is towards the west, i. e., Jerusalem. However, this orientation might have been unintentional.

The new Chabad synagogue and communal center Freid were also surveyed. The synagogue includes a small Jewish museum, where other objects from the 1956 synagogue were found. The team also documented the collection of Jewish objects in the Regional Museum. All of them were brought to the museum from the Ukrainian town Sharhorod in the early 1990s. Among these objects there is a Torah finial produced in Vienna, bearing a Hungarian dedicatory inscription from 1924.

40–41 Birobidzhan: Beit Tshuva Synagogue, Torah ark (40) and detail of the western façade (41).





42 Birobidzhan: Entrance to the city.

The CJA team also surveyed Jewish tombstones in the old cemetery. Since Birobidzhan was a new Soviet city and the center of the Jewish Autonomous Region, the authorities never allowed for the establishment of a Jewish cemetery. Thus, Jewish tombstones are dispersed among non-Jewish graves, and only a small minority have Jewish symbols or epitaphs in Hebrew or Yiddish.

Preliminary Results

The Center for Jewish Art's expedition resulted in the documentation and survey of Siberian Jewish heritage in various states: active synagogues, former synagogues serving other purposes, abandoned synagogues in danger of collapse; well preserved and half-destroyed Jewish cemeteries; as well as ritual objects used in synagogues or stored in museums. We hope that our expedition not only documented Jewish buildings, tombstones and objects, but also contributed to raising awareness among locals about the value of Jewish heritage and the need to preserve it as part of their own culture.

For some of us it was the first expedition to an area not affected by the Holocaust. Nonetheless, the state of preservation of Jewish heritage in Siberia does not differ significantly from the western areas of the former Soviet Union (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia). The only significant difference is the absence of mass graves and Holocaust monuments. All other typical features are present: the massive destruction of synagogues and cemeteries during the Soviet era, the adaptation of synagogues' buildings to other purposes accompanied

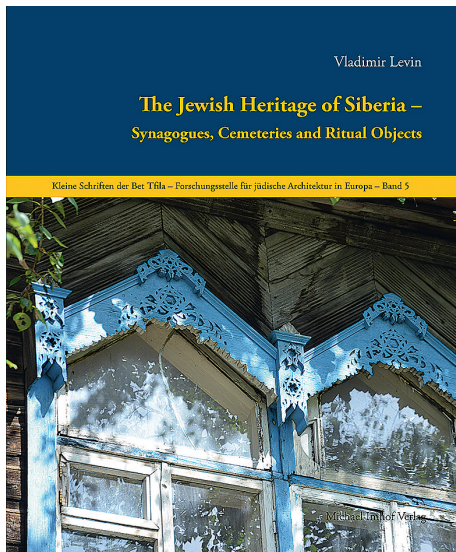
by reconstruction, and the presence of general neglect and dilapidation. The synagogues returned to the Jewish communities were radically reconstructed, and their interiors resemble present-day synagogues in Israel and the USA.

Siberian Jewish heritage presents an interesting and important example of the convergence of traditions brought from Eastern Europe, fashions borrowed from the capital cities of the Russian Empire, St. Petersburg and Moscow, and local features characteristic of Russian architecture in Siberia. The Jews of Siberia adhered to Judaism and a religious way of life, but within a Russian environment, which strongly influenced them, even more than their relatives and co-religionists in the Pale of Settlement or in the European Russia beyond the Pale. The dualism of the preservation of traditions and a high level of acculturation was reflected in the synagogue architecture and the cemeteries. The attempts to express Jewish identity during the Soviet period and growing assimilation are especially visible in the tombstones. Jewish symbols and Hebrew epitaphs gave way to Soviet symbols and monolingual Russian inscriptions. The revival of Jewish life in the post-Soviet era finds its expression in the construction of new synagogues and the reappearance of Jewish symbols in the cemeteries.

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We thank Willi Mendelsohn for the revision of the English text.

43 Mariinsk: The team together with representatives of the "Historical Mariinsk" Museum in front of the former synagogue.



The Jewish Heritage of Siberia – Synagogues, Cemeteries and Ritual Objects

with many photographs, documentation plans, historic depictions and descriptions, ca. 160 pages

Bet Tfila plans to publish the results of this expedition in its series of publications – presenting the little known Jewish heritage of Siberia. The publication will be the very first to present the preserved Jewish ritual buildings, tombstones and ritual objects found in this vast and remote region. We hope to cover the needed sum by a crowdfunding.

Bet Tfila plant die Veröffentlichung der Ergebnisse der Sibirien-Expedition in ihrer Kleinen Schriftenreihe. Diese Publikation wird erstmals das reiche jüdische Erbe Sibiriens, seine zahlreichen Synagogen, Friedhöfe und jüdische Ritualobjekte vorstellen. Wir hoffen mit Ihrer Hilfe dieses Buchprojekt realisieren zu können.

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