Edith Gerson-Kiwi and the Making of a Sound Archive in Israel

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Introduction: Gerson-Kiwi Discovers Oriental Music

In the spring of 1948, as armed convoys traveled along the contested roads leading to Mount Scopus, Edith Gerson-Kiwi (1908–92) joined one of them carrying an exceptionally fragile collection: wax-cylinder recordings produced by her late mentor, Robert Lachmann. These irreplaceable recordings documented Jewish and Arab musical traditions from the Middle East and North Africa. Although many preserved only short musical excerpts, they retained the audible traces of communities whose traditions were already undergoing rapid transformation. Safeguarding them was therefore not merely an act of archival preservation. It was an intervention in cultural history, and in the production of knowledge.

This episode, which Gerson-Kiwi repeatedly recounted to colleagues and friends, encapsulates the tensions that shaped her career: between the preservation of sound recordings and their prescriptive deployment of music in Mandatory Palestine and Israel; between European historical musicology and comparative musicology of Oriental music; and between universalist and national frameworks of musical research. Trained in German historical musicology and Renaissance source criticism, she did not initially intend to become an ethnographer of Middle Eastern music. Her intellectual formation in Berlin, Leipzig, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Paris, and Bologna oriented her toward European historical musicology, philological precision, and music librarianship. Her immigration to Mandatory Palestine in 1935, however, transformed not only her geographical location but also her scholarly orientation, reawakened her Jewish identity, and drew her toward Zionism. In Jerusalem, she encountered musical systems shaped by *maqām*, oral transmission, improvisation, and religious ritual—phenomena that could not be adequately addressed through the historical and analytical frameworks in which she had been trained. She therefore turned to comparative musicology, the field later known as ethnomusicology, and to sound recording as both a research method and an archival practice.

This article argues that Gerson-Kiwi's contribution to the formation of sound archiving in Israel and the study of Jewish music cannot be adequately understood through the conventional categories of collector, donor, teacher, or archive custodian. Through ethnographic recording, classification, comparative analysis, teaching, instrument collecting, and institutional advocacy, she established recorded sound as a central source for the study of Jewish and Middle Eastern musical traditions in Israel. Her archive did not simply preserve musical objects; it helped constitute them as subjects of musicological knowledge by determining what would be recorded, how materials would be described, classified and compared, and how recordings would subsequently be retrieved and studied. Archive-making, in this sense, was for her a form of intellectual production.

Her work challenged a central hierarchy within European musicology by treating oral performance and recorded sound as legitimate forms of evidence rather than as secondary supplements to written notation. Influenced by Abraham Zvi Idelsohn's (1882–1938) research on Jewish Oriental music and Robert Lachmann's (1892–1939) scholarship on Oriental and Arab music, Gerson-Kiwi documented the musical traditions from the *Mizraḥ*.[1] Sound recordings enabled her to preserve microtonal intervals, timbre, improvisation, and melodic and rhythmic variation that Western notation could represent imperfectly. They also expanded the range of repertoires that could enter musicological inquiry, including women's songs, domestic repertoires, instrumental practices, and regional art music that were often marginal to text-centered and liturgically oriented Jewish music.

This methodology did not, however, place her entirely outside Orientalist studies. Earlier philological forms of Orientalist scholarship often privileged ancient texts, manuscripts, and historically authenticated sources over contemporary vernacular culture.[2] Gerson-Kiwi partly departed from this hierarchy by treating living oral traditions and recorded performances as primary sources. Nevertheless, she frequently legitimized these traditions by interpreting them as survivals of ancient musical strata. Living performance was therefore valued both as contemporary cultural practice and as evidence of an imagined historical past.

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1 Gerson-Kiwi used the terms *Mizraḥ*, "East," "Orient," and "Middle East" interchangeably. This article retains her terminology when discussing her conceptual framework but uses more specific geographical and cultural terms where possible.

2 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text*, nos. 19–20 (1988): 1–35; Aziza Khazzoom, "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (2003): 481–510; Amit Levy, *A New Orient: From German Scholarship to Middle Eastern Studies in Israel* (Waltham, MA: Tauber Center, Brandeis University, 2024).

This tension also shaped her relationship with Zionist cultural formation. She challenged Eurocentric narratives that positioned European Jewish music as normative, insisting on the importance of musical traditions cultivated by Jewish communities from the Middle East and North Africa. At the same time, she mobilized concepts of authenticity, antiquity, and continuity to advocate the incorporation of Oriental Jewish music into Israeli art music, music education and popular culture. Her work thus moved between documentation and prescription: she preserved musical practices associated with communities while also imagining selected Oriental elements as resources for the creation of a future Hebrew national music.

In her sound archives, she developed the central classification category of *masoret* (tradition), which embodied the tensions between "ancient" traditions and "invented" tradition.[3] This category facilitated cataloging, comparison, and retrieval, but it also transformed diverse, dynamic musical practices into seemingly unified classification. Its inconsistent application reveals the difficulty of stabilizing musical identities shaped by migration, multilingualism, intercultural exchange, ideologies, beliefs, and historical rupture.

This article will also claim that Gerson-Kiwi's career exposes the gendered distinction between recognized intellectual production and undervalued forms of scholarly and archival service. Long before musicology achieved institutional stability in Israeli universities, she produced recordings and catalogs, taught students, maintained recording equipment, cultivated relationships with performers, developed international scholarly networks, and repeatedly reconstructed her archive under precarious institutional and financial conditions. Nevertheless, Israeli musicologists often represented her primarily as a collector or donor of musical recordings rather than as an intellectual and founder of sound archives in Israel.

Peter Emanuel Gradenwitz (1910–2001), for example, a German-Jewish musicologist, composer, critic, and music publisher, who studied musicology in Berlin and Freiburg during the same period as Gerson-Kiwi and immigrated to British Palestine in 1936, devoted only a single paragraph to her sound archive in his 1959 book on the pioneers of Israel's emerging musical culture.[4] The musicologist Don Harran (1936–2016), who taught for several years alongside Gerson-Kiwi at the Jerusalem Music Academy, referred to her three times in the ethnomusicology chapter of his Hebrew book *Introduction to Mu-*

3 For more on "invented tradition" see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

4Peter Gradenwitz, *Music and Musicians in Israel* (Tel-Aviv: Israeli Music Publications, 1959), 14.

sicology primarily as a collector, without sustained discussion of her contribution to the development of ethnomusicology in Israel.[5]

In their 1991 overview of "Musicology in Israel 1980–1990," published in *Acta Musicologica*, Don Harran and Edwin Seroussi referred to Gerson-Kiwi twice: as the donor of her recording collection to the National Sound Archive (hereafter NSA)[6] and as a contributor to volume 5 of the journal *Yuval* (1986), dedicated to Abraham Zvi Idelsohn.[7] By comparison, the authors referred substantially more to their own work, 13 times in each case. A later bibliography of Jewish music compiled by Israel Adler and published in 1995, after Gerson-Kiwi's death, likewise listed only 13 out of her more than 100 publications,[8] without evaluating the broader significance of her work. Taken together, these accounts point to a historiographical pattern in which Gerson-Kiwi's recordings remained visible as scholarly resources while her role in creating methods and classifications received limited attention.

Margaret W. Rossiter's concept of the "Matilda Effect" provides a useful framework for interpreting this discrepancy between scholarly contribution and institutional recognition.[9] This article argues that Edith Gerson-Kiwi's work received limited acknowledgment during her lifetime and soon after her death, and that this has underestimated her intellectual legacy.

For most of her career, Gerson-Kiwi taught at the Jerusalem Conservatoire—later the Jerusalem Music Academy—the Tel-Aviv Music Teacher's Training College, and other music higher education institutions. University departments of musicology were established only in the mid-1960s, and Gerson-Kiwi joined the Department of Musicology at Tel-Aviv University for a few years before her retirement. When institutional frameworks privileged permanent university appointments and conventional forms of publication, her research, teaching, international relationships, and archival labor were not fully recognized as academic achievements. Israeli musicologists valued her recordings as sources for future research while often obscuring the intellectual decisions and sustained labor that had made those sources possible.

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5 Don Harran, *An Introduction to Musicology* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1974), 170, 208, 210.

6 The NSA was established by the musicologist Israel Adler in 1965 as a unit of the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL), then a part of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2011 the institution became the National Library of Israel (NLI), where the collection is now held.

7 Don Harran and Edwin Seroussi, "Musicology in Israel 1980–1990," *Acta Musicologica* 63 (1991): 238–68; Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "A. Z. Idelsohn: A Pioneer in Jewish Ethnomusicology," *Yuval* 5 (1986): 46–52.

8 Israel Adler, *The Study of Jewish Music: A Bibliographical Guide*, Yuval Monograph Series, vol. 10 (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1995).

9 Margaret W. Rossiter, "The Matthew Matilda Effect in Science," *Social Studies of Science* 23, no. 2 (1993): 325–41.

Describing Gerson-Kiwi as a founder therefore requires a reconsideration of what constitutes disciplinary and institutional foundation. When founding is defined exclusively as the formal establishment of musicology departments or national institutions, much of the labor that makes such institutions possible remains invisible. When it encompasses the creation of sources, methods, classifications, professional networks, and research agendas, Gerson-Kiwi emerges as a central architect of Israeli ethnomusicology and sound-archive practice.

Drawing on correspondence, institutional reports, recordings, lectures, archival inventories, publications and interviews,[10] this article traces Gerson-Kiwi's transition from European historical musicology to ethnographic sound recordings; her creation and organization of a recorded-sound archive from 1947 onward; her theoretical writing on musical systems between East and West; and the gendered historiographical processes through which her contribution was subsequently marginalized. Michel-Rolph Trouillot's account of source creation, archival assembly, narrative retrieval, and retrospective significance provides a framework for understanding how Gerson-Kiwi's work operated at multiple stages in the production of historical knowledge.[11]

Sound archives do not merely collect and preserve documents; they actively constitute their objects through a selective process of recording, duplication, description, and classification. The emergence of sound archives in Europe and North America therefore depended on the development of new technologies and institutional infrastructures.[12] As Jonathan Sterne observes, sound archives formed part of a broader anthropological commitment to preservation and were legitimized through claims of systematic documentation and scholarly inquiry.[13] Gerson-Kiwi recognized the urgency of such archival work during the period of mass immigration to Israel and pursued it from the time of her immigration to Mandatory Palestine until the final stages of her career. As an ethnomusicologist and sound archivist, she worked during a period of profound political, demographic, and cultural transformation, when the institutions of the new state and the forms and content of Israeli culture were actively being constructed. Within this historical and cultural context, recovering

10 The main sources are held at the National Library of Israel, Music Department, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078. Additional materials are held at the European Centre for Jewish Music in Hanover. Gerson-Kiwi's recorded-sound collection is preserved at the National Library of Israel. Interviews were conducted with Israel Daliyot, Eliyahu Schleifer, and Uri Aharon by the author.

11 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

12 The Vienna Phonogrammarchiv was established in 1899, followed by the Berlin Phonogrammarchiv in 1900.

13 Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 328.

her role reveals her as a foundational figure in the intellectual and institutional history of Israeli ethnomusicology and the making of a research sound archive.

From Berlin to Jerusalem: Gerson-Kiwi's Ethnomusicological Turn

Edith Gerson-Kiwi was a German-Jewish intellectual whose academic and professional trajectory was transformed by the rise of Nazism and her forced emigration to Mandatory Palestine. Born in Berlin in 1908 into an educated Jewish family, she received rigorous training in both musical performance and musicology. From 1918 to 1925, she studied piano and composition at the Stern Conservatoire. She subsequently pursued historical musicology at the Musikhochschule in Leipzig, specializing in early music while continuing her studies in harpsichord and organ.

After graduating from the Musikhochschule in 1930 with a diploma in piano, Gerson-Kiwi spent the following year in Paris, where she studied harpsichord with Wanda Landowska (1879–1959) at the École de Musique Ancienne. She then returned to Germany and attended the University of Freiburg, studying music history and performance practice under Willibald Gurlitt (1889–1963). After a further period of study at the University of Leipzig, she studied at Heidelberg University, where Heinrich Besseler (1900–69) supervised her doctoral dissertation on the sixteenth-century Italian canzonetta with a focus on Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi, which she completed in 1933.[14]

Her predoctoral editions of the music of Giovanni Gastoldi and Giovanni Bassano were published in 1930 and 1931. An additional article appeared in Bärenreiter's *Colloquium Musicum* in 1932.[15] Her dissertation, however, was not immediately published because Nazi legislation severely restricted Jewish participation and advancement in German academic life. With financial support from Konrad Triltsch, she eventually published the dissertation in Würzburg in 1938.[16]

During her university studies, Gerson-Kiwi conducted research at the Berlin State Library, where she first met the librarian and musicologist Robert Lachmann. Lachmann combined his position at the library with research in comparative musicology, and his work would have a decisive influence on her

14 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Die italienische Canzonette um 1600 und ihre Beziehung zum deutschen Gesellschaftslied" (doctoral dissertation, Heidelberg University, 1933).
15 Giovanni Bassano, 7 Trios *für Violine, Viola, Viola da Gamba*, ed. Edith Kiwi, Hortus Musicus 16 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1931).
16 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, *Studien zur Geschichte des italienischen Liedmadrigals im XVI. Jahrhundert: Satzlehre und Genealogie der Kanzonetten* (Würzburg: Konrad Triltsch, 1938).

intellectual development.[17] After completing her studies in performance and musicology, she found that the political situation in Germany had effectively foreclosed her prospects for an academic career. She therefore traveled to Italy, to study librarianship and paleography in Bologna, earning a professional qualification in librarianship in 1934. While working as a librarian in Bologna, she also published a survey on the literature of the trio sonata, tracing the genre from its beginnings to Haydn and Mozart.[18]

In the spring of 1935, Edith and her parents obtained the documents required to immigrate to Palestine, then governed under the British Mandate and subject to restrictive immigration policies. They initially settled in Tel-Aviv, where she found employment as a pianist at a local bar frequented by British servicemen. The family later moved to Jerusalem, where they felt more at home within the city's community of German-Jewish immigrants. In 1936 she met and married Kurt Gerson. Confronted with a multilingual and multiethnic society encompassing secular and religious communities, she studied Hebrew and Arabic and increasingly sought to understand the cultural environment in which she now lived.

Gerson-Kiwi became aware of Robert Lachmann's presence in Jerusalem in 1936 after attending one of his public lectures, and she joined his Archive of Oriental Music.[19] Their shared German intellectual background and interdisciplinary training created a strong scholarly affinity. Under Lachmann's mentorship, she began researching the liturgical poetry and synagogue music of the Western Sephardi community, known as the *maʿaravim*. She soon became involved in Lachmann's broader research program on Oriental music, comparative musicology, and the organization and cataloging of his sound recordings of his Archive of Oriental Music.

At the archive, Gerson-Kiwi studied the writings and recordings of Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, particularly the first five volumes of his *Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz (*Thesaurus of Hebrew oriental melodies), published between 1914 and 1932. These volumes addressed the musical traditions of Jewish communities from Yemen, Babylonia, Persia-Bukhara-Dagestan, the Eastern Sephardi community, and Morocco, which he had en-

17 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, ed., *Robert Lachmann: Posthumous Works I—Zwei Aufsätze: Die Musik im Volksleben Nordafrikas; Orientalische Musik und Antike* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1974); Edith Gerson-Kiwi, ed., *Gesänge der Juden auf der Insel Djerba* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978).

18 Edith Kiwi, "The Trio Sonata from its Beginnings to Haydn and Mozart," *Zeitschrift für Hausmusik* 3 (1934): 37–63.

19 Robert Lachmann was dismissed from his position at the Berlin State Library in 1933 and immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1935. After his arrival, he established the Archive of Oriental Music next to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For more information see Ruth Katz, *The Lachmann Problem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003); Israel J. Katz, *Robert Lachmann's Letters to Henry George Farmer (from 1923 to 1938)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

countered in Jerusalem during his stay there between 1907 and 1921.[20] Idelsohn's work provided an important model for treating Jewish musical traditions as objects of systematic comparative research, based on recordings and musical transcriptions that impressed Gerson-Kiwi and inspired her work throughout her life in Israel.

Through Lachmann, she encountered the methods of German comparative musicology associated with scholars such as Carl Stumpf, Erich von Hornbostel, and Otto Abraham. The early comparative musicologists treated cross-cultural comparison, field recording, and transcription as central scientific methods for the study of non-Western musical systems. Inspired by Lachmann's *Musik des Orients*,[21] Gerson-Kiwi adopted a scholarly framework that regarded oral tradition as a locus of both authenticity and historical continuity.

In 1938 Gerson-Kiwi published a report on Lachmann's archive in *Musica Hebraica*. The report outlined the mission of the "Archive of Oriental Music at the Hebrew University." This archive's research paradigm was explicitly grounded in salvage ethnography: the systematic documentation and "scientific adaptation" of orally transmitted Near Eastern musical traditions.[22] Its language reflected the belief that musical traditions undergoing social transformation had to be recorded before they disappeared or changed beyond recognition.

This report also discussed Lachmann's documentation of women's songs in North Africa. Lachmann understood women's song repertoires as possible reservoirs of ancient musical strata preserved through women's relative separation from male public and liturgical culture. Such an interpretation drew upon cultural-isolationist theories that treated women's expressive culture as a stable and conservative domain. Although Lachmann did not manage to develop this line of inquiry in Jerusalem, Gerson-Kiwi continued to record and study Jewish Oriental women's songs from Yemenite, Bukharan, Sephardi, Indian, Kurdish, and other communities throughout her career.

Her work broadened the conventional boundaries of Jewish music scholarship. Earlier Jewish music studies had generally privileged male-dominated liturgical repertoires based on canonical Hebrew texts. Women's songs, by contrast, were frequently transmitted in Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and

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20 Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz*, 10 vols. (Leipzig, Berlin, and Jerusalem: Benjamin Harz, 1914–32).

21 Robert Lachmann, *Musik des Orients* (Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1929).

22 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "The Archive of Oriental Music at the Hebrew University," *Musica Hebraica* 1–2 (Jerusalem, 1938): 40–42. Musica Hebraica was a Jerusalem society devoted to promoting Jewish music in Palestine and abroad. Active from 1936 to 1940, it published one volume in 1938 in Hebrew, English, and German. See also Philip V. Bohlman, *The World Center for Jewish Music in Palestine, 1936–1940: Jewish Musical Life on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

other Jewish languages and were performed in domestic, occupational, and life-cycle settings. Consequently, they remained marginal in early Jewish musicology and were assigned more to the field of folklore. By documenting these repertoires as musical practices worthy of analysis, Gerson-Kiwi expanded Jewish music scholarship beyond the synagogue and formal religious ritual.

Following Idelsohn and Lachmann, Gerson-Kiwi also recorded non-Jewish Middle Eastern music. Lachmann understood "Oriental music" as a transregional phenomenon that crossed religious, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries. After arriving in Jerusalem, he incorporated Jewish Oriental musical traditions into this broader comparative framework. Gerson-Kiwi initially concentrated on Jewish Oriental communities and gradually expanded the scope of her research to include Arab and other non-Jewish traditions, using them as comparative material for the study of Jewish music.[23]

Gerson-Kiwi's transition from European historical musicology to ethnomusicology was therefore both intellectual and practical. Political and economic conditions in Mandatory Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s made sustained access to European manuscripts and research libraries difficult. By contrast, Jewish and non-Jewish Middle Eastern musical traditions were locally accessible, intellectually challenging, and transmitted primarily through oral performance rather than written notation. Their study demanded new methods of documentation, transcription, classification, and analysis. These methods gradually became central to her scholarly practice.

Following Lachmann's sudden death in 1939, Gerson-Kiwi assumed professional responsibility for preserving and organizing his archive. In doing so, she intervened in the process of selection, classification, preservation, and interpretation of musical evidence. As Philip Bohlman and Ruth F. Davis have argued, "Lachmann's archive opened the borders to the East itself, enabling Jewish musical traditions to be heard as part of a broader Oriental soundscape rather than as isolated ethnic artifacts."[24] Building upon this foundation, Gerson-Kiwi continued to renegotiate the relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish traditions, center and periphery, East and West, and Jewish diasporic culture and the emerging national culture of Israel. This intellectual reorientation would shape both her fieldwork and her efforts to establish a permanent sound archive in Israel. She also took responsibility for recording technologies

23 For more information on Gerson-Kiwi's studies with Robert Lachmann see Katz, *Robert Lachmann's Letters to Henry George Farmer*, 80–92.

24 Philip V. Bohlman and Ruth F. Davis, "Mizrakh, Jewish Music and the Journey to the East," in *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s–1940s: Portrayal of the East*, ed. Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 95–125, at 124.

and adaptation of new technologies which were developed in Europe and the USA. Figure 1 shows her operating one of the earlier gramophones.



Figure 1 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, November 1952. Private collection.

The First Sound Archive: Producing and Classifying Musical Sources, 1947–1950

As mentioned earlier, alongside her ethnomusicological research, Gerson-Kiwi taught piano, Western music history, and Oriental music at the Palestine Conservatoire of Music and Dramatic Art in Jerusalem from 1937 onward. With the support of Emil Hauser (1893–1978), the founder and director of the conservatoire, she formally established a sound archive in 1947, following nearly a decade of institutional discontinuity after Lachmann's death.[25] The archive was affiliated with Raphael Patai's (1910–96) Palestine Institute of Folklore and Ethnology and was formally named: The Phonograph Archives of the Palestine Institute of Folklore and Ethnology of the Jerusalem Conserv-

25 On Emil Hauser's role in the Palestine Conservatoire of Music and Dramatic Art see National Library of Israel, Music Department, Palestine Conservatoire Archive, MUS 0015, D and E.

atoire.[26] Its title reflected a broader effort to establish sound recording as both a scholarly repository and a pedagogical resource.

This institutional framework encouraged Gerson-Kiwi to conceptualize the music of Oriental Jewish communities as a unified cultural field extending from Morocco to Afghanistan and Yemen. She adopted this broad framework despite her explicit recognition that these communities possessed distinct histories, geographical trajectories, languages, and musical systems. The framework also demonstrates how ethnographic representation was shaped not only by scholarly categories but also by institutional and philanthropic expectations. A project framed as the preservation of a shared Oriental Jewish heritage may have appeared more coherent and attractive to American Jewish donors than one emphasizing internal diversity and historical difference.[27]

The archive's institutional basis nevertheless was unstable. The Palestine Institute of Folklore and Ethnology experienced persistent financial difficulties, and Raphael Patai emigrated to the United States in 1950; the Institute of Folklore was closed soon after his departure. Hauser had already left for the United States in 1947 to accept a violin-teaching position, after which his wife assumed his administrative responsibilities. The conservatoire was subsequently divided between the Jerusalem Music Academy and the Jerusalem Conservatoire and was eventually absorbed into these institutions before closing in 1952.[28]

Gerson-Kiwi continued her work. Like other comparative musicologists of the time, she faced technological constraints. Her early recordings were produced on acetate discs and wire tape recordings, media that imposed limitations on sound quality, duration, duplication, and preservation, and she often required technical assistance. Despite these difficulties, she sustained a regular documentation program, generally producing between one and five recording sessions per month.[29]

Equally important was her development of a systematic classification infrastructure for organizing recorded sound. Her inventory system—which was later incorporated into the NSA—was structured around five principal categories: date, masoret (tradition) or *edah* (community), performers, content, and

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26 Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D.1-50. The official English and Hebrew names of the archive vary slightly across the surviving documents.

27 See Dani Schrire, "Raphael Patai, Jewish Folklore, Comparative Folkloristics, and American Anthropology," *Journal of Folklore Research* 47, nos. 1–2 (2010): 7–43; Dani Schrire, *Collecting the Pieces of the Jewish Diaspora: Zionist Folkloristics Facing the Shoah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2018), 253.

28 National Library of Israel, Music Department, Palestine Conservatory Archive, MUS 0054 A.

29 Recording inventory for 1947–50, pp. 1–4, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.11.

recording number.[30] This inventory was supplemented by a series of interrelated card catalogs, including a chronological catalog of recording sessions, thematic catalogs of liturgical and musical categories, performer indexes, geographical indexes of *masorot* (plural: traditions), and textual indexes (see Figure 2).

The card catalogs were organized into five interconnected series. The first was a principal chronological catalog arranged according to recording date. Each card represented a physical recording such as an acetate disc or open reel and included basic information concerning the date and place of recording, the names of performers, the recorded content, item numbers, and recording session numbers.

The second catalog was organized by religious context in alphabetical order, bringing together recordings of the same context performed by different performers of different masorot. Its textual sources included the Bible, the *Siddur* (the prayer book for weekdays, Shabbat, and festivals), the *Mahzor* (the prayer book for the High Holidays and the three pilgrimage festivals—Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot), *piyyutim*, paraliturgical texts such as *zmirot* for Shabbat and festivals, and a small number of non-Jewish liturgical texts. This catalog was designed for comparative research. The third catalog indexed performers alphabetically by surname and included, when available, address, place of birth, profession, musical activities, date of immigration, and place of recording. The fourth card catalog indexed masorot alphabetically according to geographical origin, city, country, or broader tradition, such as Ashkenaz. The fifth indexed texts alphabetically by incipit.[31]

This classification reveals crucial ethnomusicological and archival dimensions of her work. The concept of masoret functioned as the central organizing principle of the archive and mediated between emic and etic perspectives. While performers often understood their renditions as authentic expressions of an ancient tradition, Gerson-Kiwi's comparative framework identified these performances as historically contingent, shaped by processes of migration, adaptation, and intercultural exchange. The archive thus did not merely document musical traditions; it actively constructed them as objects of knowledge through processes of selection, classification, and comparison.

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30 Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 H.1. Gerson-Kiwi's recordings are held in the NSA at the National Library of Israel and can be located in the library's online catalog under her name: www.Nli.org.il.

31 Index cards, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 H (1–3); copies of index cards, MUS 0078 I.1.02, MUS 0078 I.1.07, and MUS 0078 I.1.09.

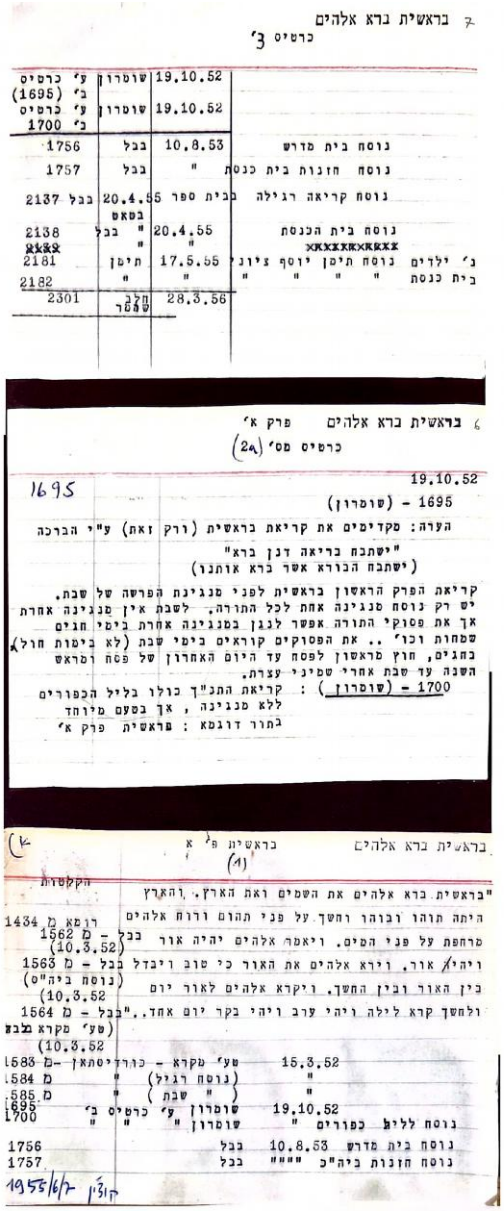


Figure 2 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, index cards of texts and recordings. National Library of Israel, Music Department, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 H.1.

The recording inventory from 1947–50 illustrates both the scope and the limitations of this approach (see Figure 3). Most recordings were conducted under studio conditions in Jerusalem and focused primarily on vocal liturgical and paraliturgical repertoires performed by individual singers or small unaccompanied ensembles. Non-Jewish traditions were included but were often categorized in generalized terms such as "Arabic" or "Christian," reflecting both the priorities and the constraints of the archive. Table 1 summarizes selected entries from the 1947–50 inventory.

Table 1 Summary of selected entries from the 1947–50 inventory

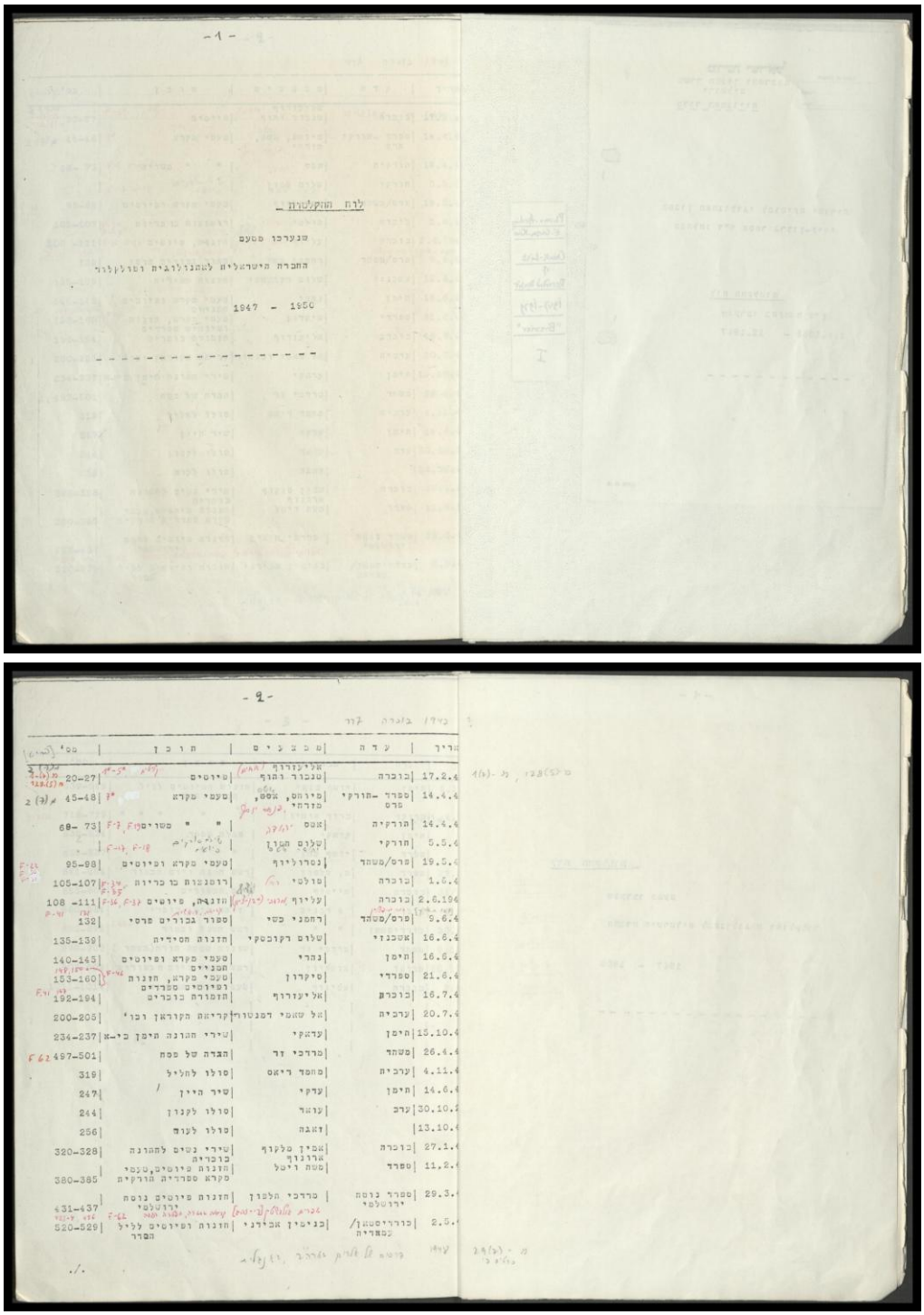
Date	Tradition/community	Performer	Content
17 Feb. 1947	Bukhara	Eliazarof brothers	Tanbur, drum, piyyutim
1 June 1947	Bukhara	Rachel Polty	Romances
20 July 1947	Arab	El-Shami Dementori	Qur'anic chanting
15 Oct. 1947	Yemen	Yechiel Adaki	Wedding songs
27 Jan. 1948	Bukhara	Malkof Aronof and Amin	Women's wedding songs
2 May 1948	Kurdistan/Amadiya	Binyamin Avidani	Cantillation and Passover piyyutim
10 Oct. 1949	Morocco	Barukh Ohayon	Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
7 Apr. 1950	Bukhara	Aminof	Masoretic accents

Source: National Library of Israel, Music Department, Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.11, pp. 1–3.

The archive captured a rich soundscape of Jewish musical traditions as recalled and practiced by the new Jewish immigrants, alongside local Arab music. It also documented emerging hybrid musical practices. The Jerusalem Sephardi tradition, for example, which emerged in the early twentieth century, was based on musical elements from Iraqi, Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish Jewish liturgical traditions in Jerusalem. Gerson-Kiwi applied this new hybrid masoret inconsistently: the *masoret* of the same performer was classified as "Persian," "Iraqi," or "Jerusalem-Sephardic" in different recording sessions.

The chronology of the recording sessions further reflects the historical conditions under which Gerson-Kiwi conducted her work. Despite the outbreak of Israel's War of Independence in late 1947, she maintained a regular recording schedule until mid-1948, after which her recording activity was temporarily interrupted. Her persistence with recording during political instability and wartime danger shows her deep belief in the salvage mission of musical traditions.

Yet the institutional framework supporting her work proved fragile. The conservatoire was unable to sustain the archive during a period of rapid demographic, cultural, and political transformation, and inner tensions between the conservatoire's teachers and director caused its division into two institutions and its termination in 1952. The Palestine Institute of Folklore and Ethnology was dissolved after Raphael Patai left for the USA, and Gerson-Kiwi was seeking a new institutional framework and intellectual support for her sound collection and research.



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לדת והקלטות -

שנערכו מטעם

החברה הישראלית למוסיקולוגיה ועמ"לורי

1947 - 1950

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-2-

מס'	תוכן	מבצעים	עדה	תאריך
20-27	פיוטים	אליקנדרוף [illegible] טנבור ונגוף	בוכרה	17.2.4
48-49	טעמי מקרא	פירחס, אסס, מדרחי	ספרד -תורקי פרס	14.4.4
68- 73	" " משוריס	אסס	תורקיה	14.4.4
		שלום חנון	תורקי	5.5.4
88-98	טעמי מקרא ופיוטים	נסרוליוף	פרס/משחר	19.5.4
105-107	רומנסות בו כריות	סולטי	בוכרה	1.6.4
108 -111	חזנות, פיוטים	עלירף	בוכרה	2.6.194
132	ספור גבורים פרסי	רחמני כשי	פרס/משחר	5.6.4
135-139	חזנות חסידית	שלום רקובסקי	אשכנזי	16.6.4
140-145	טעמי מקרא ופיוטים מסכיים	נהרי	תימן	16.6.4
153-160	טעמי מקרא, חזנות ופיוטים ספרדים	סיקרון	ספרדי	21.6.4
192-194	חזמורת בכורים	אליעזרוף	בוכרה	16.7.4
200-205	קריאת התורה וכו'	אל שאפי דפנטור	ערבית	20.7.4
234-237	שירי חגונה תימן כי-א	עדאקי	תימן	15.10.4
497-501	הגדה של פסח	מרדכי זר	משחר	26.4.4
319	סולו לחליל	מחמד ריאס	ערבית	4.11.4
247	שיר היין	עדקי	תימן	14.6.4
244	סולו לקנון	עושר	ערב	30.10.4
256	סולו לעוד	זאבה		13.10.4
320-328	שירי נשים לחגונה בוכריה	אסתר מלקוף ארונוף	בוכרה	27.1.4
380-385	חזנות פיוטים, טעמי מקרא ספרדית תורקית	משה ריכל	ספרד	11.2.4
431-437	חזנות פיוטים נוסח ירושלמי	מרדכי הלפון	ספרד נוסח ירושלמי	29.3.4
520-529	חזנות ופיוטים לליל הסדר	כנימין אכיזרי	כורדיסטאן/ ספרדית	2.5.4

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Figure 3 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, recording inventory 1947–48, cover page and first page. National Library of Israel, Music Department, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.11, pp. 1, 2.

The Sound Archive as a National Project, 1950–1952

On September 1, 1950, Gerson-Kiwi officially reestablished the sound archive under the name Ethnological Institute for Jewish Music within the Music Section of the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, assuming its directorship.[32] The section, led by Frank Peleg (Pollack) (1910–68), provided initial institutional support, including the acquisition of an open-reel recording machine, which Peleg purchased abroad. The open-reel tape enabled a shift from studio-based documentation to fieldwork recordings in multiple sites, thereby aligning Gerson-Kiwi's practice with emergent ethnographic methodologies of the new field of ethnomusicology which was developed after World War II in Europe and the USA.

Even before her official position at the Ministry of Education and Culture was defined, Gerson-Kiwi was invited by the Vatican in Rome to participate in the International Congress for Music Research, held between May 25 and 31, 1950. Her participation was supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, and by the Department of International Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By this point, she was already known as an expert in Oriental music, and she was invited to take part in the discussion sessions on Oriental liturgical music. Upon her return, she submitted an enthusiastic report to the directors of her new governmental offices expressing her satisfaction at fulfilling a national mission and presenting her understanding of Oriental music (see Figure 4).[33] This is how she describes her intervention:

> My own lecture—the last in the order of the program and, in terms of its content, also its concluding one—grew out of a critique of the prevailing research methods, which remained purely philological. It proposed a new path: to bring the study of this material into closer dialogue with the methods of modern musical ethnology. Such an approach entailed a fundamental renewal of the methods used to investigate the pre-Gregorian period. This period, I argued, could be understood in relation to Oriental musical forms precisely because its [musical] tradition, like most Oriental musical traditions, had been transmitted orally . . . The presentation of a series of phonograms—some of them already drawn from the new collection being assembled under the auspices of the Music Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture—provided a vivid sound demonstration. Through the recordings of traditional Oriental performers, it revealed the extent to which melodies and forms in Jewish Oriental liturgy paralleled those of Catholic chant. For most of those present, and especially for representatives of the Eastern churches, this was their first encounter with the source from which their own tradition had emerged. It was, for them, a profound surprise to see themselves reflected in an unfamiliar mir-

32 Protocol of the first meeting of the Music Section of the Ministry of Education, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 F.1, p. 4.
33 Conference program and reports, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 G 001.

> ror. The lecture was received with enthusiasm and had a direct influence on the general assembly convened in its wake. . . .[34]

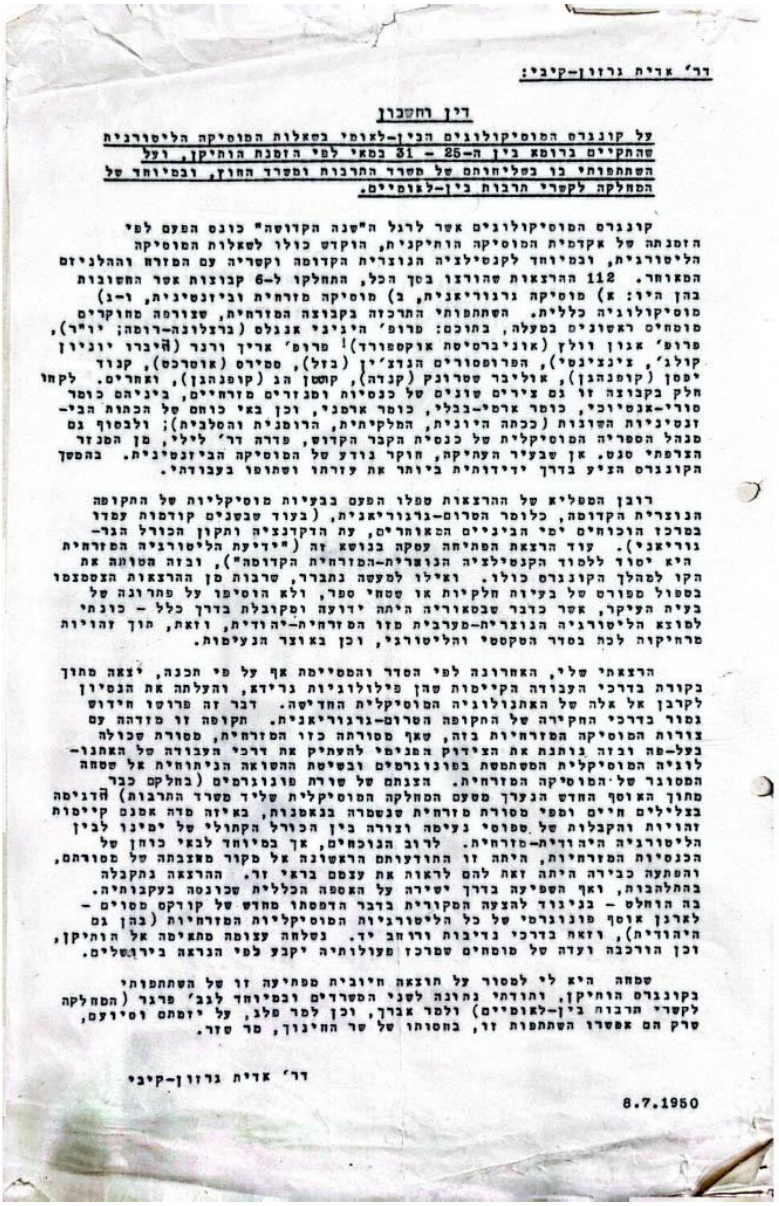
At the ministry, Gerson-Kiwi articulated a dual mission: the systematic documentation of Jewish musical traditions and their integration into the pedagogical and cultural infrastructure of the nascent state. In a letter dated March 14, 1951,[35] she emphasized the transfer of her personal archive to the ministry alongside an urgent call to document musical practices among newly arrived immigrants in the *maʿabarot* (immigrant transit camps). These musical traditions, she argued, were undergoing rapid change and faced imminent loss under conditions of relocation of Jewish communities. The archive thus functioned as a repository of the past, an instrument for the construction of future national culture, and a tool for creating international exchange.

Her recording activities during this period, as documented in her inventory,[36] expanded significantly, in both scale and ethnographic scope, especially regarding Jewish traditions. While continuing her earlier work among Bukharan, Persian, and Yemenite Jewish communities, she incorporated repertoires of additional groups, including Moroccan, Iraqi, Egyptian, and Caucasian communities, as well as non-Jewish groups such as Druze and Circassians. This expansion was conducted to produce a comprehensive sonic mapping of the state's heterogeneous population, thereby intervening in broader debates on cultural representation and national identity.

Despite these achievements and her international reputation, Gerson-Kiwi's work at the ministry was marked by persistent institutional tensions. Her ethnographic methods, particularly the need for fieldwork, travel, and extended engagement with performers, conflicted with bureaucratic expectations of office-based labor. Administrative authorities often failed to recognize the methodological requirements of ethnomusicological research, leading to ongoing disputes over her work. In response, Gerson-Kiwi repeatedly submitted detailed reports outlining the scholarly and national significance of her work, emphasizing its urgency within the context of rapid social transformation, and creating an international awareness of the new state's diverse musical culture. She also maintained a detailed inventory of the equipment and material she purchased and used as required by governmental agencies,[37] and a daily diary

34 National Library of Israel, Music Department, conference report in the conference folder MUS 0078 G.001. Translation by the author.
35 Letter from Gerson-Kiwi to Moshe Avigdor Shulvass, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D0046.
36 Inventory of recordings, 1950–1952, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.1.11, pp. 4–7.
37 Recording materials and equipment, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.39.

of her activities beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 11:00 p.m. (see Figure 5).[38]



דר' אדית גרזון-קיבי:

דין וחשבון

על קונגרס המוסיקולוגים הבין-לאומי בשאלות המוסיקה הליטורגית שהתקיים ברומא בין ה-25 - 31 במאי לפי הזמנת הוותיקן, ועל השתתפותי בו בשליחותם של משרד החרבות ומשרד החוץ, ובשיתוף של המחלקה לקשרי תרבות בין-לאומיים.

קונגרס המוסיקולוגים אשר לרגל ה"שנה הקדושה" כונס הפעם לפי הזמנה של אקדמית המוסיקה הוותיקנית, הוקדש כולו לשאלות המוסיקה הליטורגית, ובמיוחד לקנסילציה הנוצרית הקדומה וקשריה עם המזרח וההלניזם המאוחר. 112 ההרצאות שהורצו בשך הכל, התחלקו ל-6 קבוצות אשר החשובות בהן היו: א) מוסיקה גרגוריאנית, ב) מוסיקה מזרחית וביזנטינית, ו-ג) מוסיקולוגיה כללית. השתתפותי התרכזה בקבוצה המזרחית, שנדונה מחוקרים מומחים ראשונים בשלה, בתוכם: פרופ' היניבי אנגלס (ברצלונה-רומה; יו"ר), פרופ' אגון וולץ (אוניברסיטת אוקספורד)! פרופ' אריך ורנר (הי"ו יוניון קולג', צינצינטי), הפרופסורים הנדז'ין (בזל), ספירס (אוסרכס), קנוד יסטן (קופנהגן), אוליבר סטרונק (קנדה), קסטן הג (קופנהגן), ואחרים. לקחו חלק בקבוצה זו גם צירים שונים של כנסיות ומנזרים מזרחיים, ביניהם כומר סורי-אנטיוכי, כומר ארמי-בבלי, כומר ארמני, וכן באי כוחם של הכנסיה הביזנטינית השונות (ככנסיה היונית, המלקיתית, הרוסית והסלבית); ולבסוף גם מנהל הספריה המוסיקלית של כנסיית הקבר הקדוש, פדרה דר' לילי, מן הסנזר הפרנסי שגם. אן שבעיר העתיקה, חוקר נודע של המוסיקה הביזנטינית. בהשתן הקונגרס הציע בדרך ידידותית ביותר את עזרתו ושתופו בעבודתי.

רובן המשלית של ההרצאות שפלו הפעם בבעיות מוסיקליות של התקופה הנוצרית הקדומה, כלומר הסרום-גרגוריאנית, (בעוד שבשנים קודמות עמדו במרכז הוכוחים יפי הביניים המאוחרים, עת הדקדנציה ותקון הכורל הגרגוריאני). עוד הרצאת המחיצה עסקה בנושא זה ("ירושת הליטורגיה המזרחית היא יסוד ללמוד הקנסילציה הנוצרית-המזרחית הקדומה"), ובזה מסתה את הקו למהלך הקונגרס כולו. ואילו למעשה נתברר, שרבות מן ההרצאות הנסמכו בעיקר, אשר כדבר שבסאוריה היתה ידועה ומקובלת בדרך כלל - כוונתי לפוצא הליטורגיה הנוצרית-מערבית מזו המזרחית-יהודית, וזאת, תוך זהויות מרחיקות לכת בסדר הפסוקי והליטורגי, וכן באוצר הנעימות.

הרצאתי שלי, האחרונה לפי הסדר והמסיימת אף על פי תכנה, יצאה מתוך בקורת בדרכי העבודה הקיימות שהן פילולוגיות גרידא, והעלתה את הנסיון לקרבן אל אלה של האתנולוגיה המוסיקלית החדישה. דבר זה פרושו חידוש נסור בדרכי החקירה של התקופה הסרום-גרגוריאנית. תקופה זו מזדהה עם צורות המוסיקה המזרחיות בזה, שאף מסורתה כזו המזרחית, מסורת שכולה בעל-פה ובזה נותנת את הצידוק המניפי להעתיק את דרכי העבודה של האתנולוגיה המוסיקלית המשתמשת בפונוגרפים ובשיטת ההשוואה הניתוחית אל מסתה המסורת של המוסיקה המזרחית. הצוחם של שורת מונוגרפים (בחלקם כבר מחוץ האוסף החדש הנערך מטעם המחלקה המוסיקלית שליד משרד התרבות) מזגיסה בצלילים חיים ומפי מסורת מזרחית שנשמרה בנאמנות, באיזה מדה אמנם קיימות זהויות והקבלות של מסורי נעימה וצורה בין הכורל הקתולי של ימינו לבין הליטורגיה היהודית-מזרחית. לרוב הנוכחים, אך במיוחד לבני כוחן של הכנסיות המזרחיות, היתה זו ההודעתם הראשונה אל מקור מאצבתה של מסורתם, והפתיעה כבירה היתה זאת להם לראות את עצמם בראי זר. ההרצאה נתקבלה בהתלהבות, ואך השפיעה בדרך ישירה על האספה הכללית שכונסה בעקבותיה. בה הוחלט - בניגוד להצעה המקורית בדבר הדפסתו מחדש של קורקס מסוים - לארגן אוסף פונוגרפי של כל הליטורגיות המוסיקליות המזרחיות (בהן גם היהודית), וזאת בדרכי נדיבות ורוחב יד. נשלחה עצומה מתאימה אל הוותיקן, וכן הורכבה ועדה של מומחים שמרכז מעולותיה יקבע לפי הנראה בירושלים.

שמחה היא לי למסור על תוצאה חיובית מפתיעה זו של השתתפותי בקונגרס הוותיקן, ותודתי נתונה לשני המשרדים ובמיוחד לגב' פרגר (המחלקה לקשרי תרבות בין-לאומיים) ולמר אברך, וכן למר פלג, על יזמתם וסיועם, שרק הם אפשרו השתתפות זו, במסותו של שר החינוך, מר שזר.

דר' אדית גרזון-קיבי

8.7.1950

Figure 4 Edith Gerson-Kiwi's report on the International Congress for Music Research, July 8, 1950. National Library of Israel, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 G.1.

These tensions were further intensified by ideological and social opposition. Jewish Orthodox communities challenged her authority as a secular Ashkenazi woman documenting Oriental Jewish liturgical tradition, thereby exposing the gendered and cultural politics of ethnographic practice. Simultane-

38 Working diaries, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 A.1–8.

ously, the Ministry of Education and Culture formalized a division between "Oriental" and "Ashkenazi" Jewish music through the appointment of Ephraim Di-Zahav (Goldstein) as adviser for European traditions while assigning Gerson-Kiwi responsibility for Oriental music. This administrative division reflected and reinforced a broader cultural bifurcation that would persist in Israeli musical institutions for decades. Di-Zahav served as an adviser and a liaison between the ministry and Gerson-Kiwi when other ministries requested field recordings of communities that were not documented or special musical events.[39]

Gerson-Kiwi's work intersected with parallel developments in Israeli folklore and dance research. In 1951 she collaborated with dance ethnologist Gurit Kadman (formerly Gert Kaufman, 1897–1987) in the third Dalia Dance Gatherings,[40] recording and filming traditional dance performances presented there. Gerson-Kiwi recorded the dance groups representing Yemenite, Kurdish, Bukharan, Circassian, and Druze communities. Following this collaboration, the two scholars participated in the 1951 meeting of the International Folk Music Council (IFMC, later the ICTM), in Opatija, Yugoslavia (now in Croatia), between September 8 and 14, where they presented two lectures on their ethnographic activities in music and dance in Israel.[41]

This was Gerson-Kiwi's second participation in the IFMC, which was established in 1947. She had previously attended the organization's second conference in Venice, in 1949, representing Israel for the first time within this emerging international framework.[42] In the following years, the IFMC became one of the principal organizations shaping the development of comparative musicology and ethnomusicology in the world. Throughout her career, Gerson-Kiwi participated regularly in both the council's general conferences and its specialized study groups, introducing the musical traditions of Middle Eastern Jewish and non-Jewish communities in Israel to international scholarly audiences. Through these activities, she gained recognition as a pioneering Israeli ethnomusicologist of Oriental music. Her international standing enabled her later to play a central role in organizing the ICTM conference held in Israel in 1963, an event that contributed significantly to the institutionalization of ethnomusicology and musicology in Israel, including the establishment of the NSA in Jerusalem (1965), the musicology department at the Hebrew University (1965), and the musicology department at Tel-Aviv University (1966).

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39 Letters from Di-Zahav to Gerson-Kiwi, Israel State Archives, Ministry of Education and Culture, Music Section, general file 1950–51, 769/12.

40 The Dalia Dance events took place only five times, in 1944, 1947, 1951, 1958, and 1968.

41 IFMC 1951 conference program and presentations, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 G.002.

42 Correspondence with the organizers of the conference, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D.546.

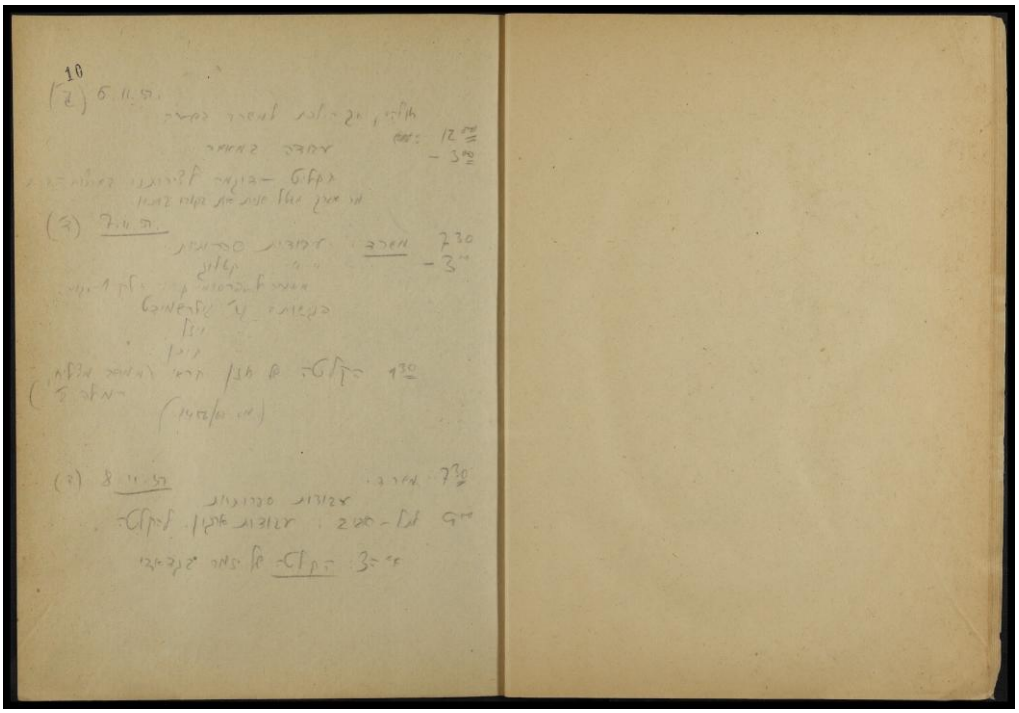


Figure 5 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, diary notebook from November 5 and 7, 1951, submitted to the Ministry of Education and Culture. National Library of Israel, Music Department, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 A.1.1.

As her international recognition broadened, her Israeli activities became entangled in institutional struggles over authority and access to state resources. Folklorist organizations such as Yeda-Am (established in 1942), led by Yom-Tov Levinsky and Gitsel Kressel, sought to subsume musical research within a broader folkloristic framework, while simultaneously opposing state support for Gerson-Kiwi's independent institute. This conflict shows the unsettled institutional landscape of cultural documentation in the early state, in which disciplinary boundaries and authority structures remained fluid.[43]

Parallel tensions emerged within the academic sphere, particularly in relation to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (established 1925). Shlomo-Dov Goitein (1900–85), the head of the Department of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University, expressed reservations regarding the Ministry of Education's initiative to establish an independent sound archive specializing in Oriental music, viewing it as an encroachment on academic authority over the study of Oriental history and culture (see Figure 6).[44] His objections were rooted not

43 For the history of Yeda-Am see Schrire, *Collecting the Pieces of the Jewish Diaspora*, 52–98.

44 Letter from S. D. Goitein to the head of the Music Section of the Ministry of Education and Culture, April 4, 1950, Israel State Archives, Ministry of Education, Gerson-Kiwi file 769/19.

only in concerns over institutional borders, but also in competing scholarly approaches to the study of Oriental Jewish communities. While Goitein's work was grounded in philological and historical methodologies, Gerson-Kiwi's project foregrounded performance and recordings as primary sources of knowledge. This methodological divergence further underscores the contested status of ethnomusicology as an academic discipline in the new state-sponsored institutions.

By 1952, these institutional and personal conflicts culminated in Gerson-Kiwi's dismissal from her position at the ministry. Her subsequent appeal to the Government Workers' Union reveals both her personal commitment and the marginal institutional status of music documentation and research. Once again, her sponsor Frank Peleg left the ministry in 1952 to take another music position in Haifa, and Gerson-Kiwi was left without professional backing.

In a letter of April 1953 following her dismissal, Gerson-Kiwi framed the closure of the institute not as a personal loss, but as a threat to the preservation and study of Jewish musical traditions in Israel. Rather than emphasizing her own professional displacement, she defended the broader institutional and scholarly significance of the Ethnological Institute for Jewish Music. She wrote:

> After receiving a layoff notice I appeal to you regarding the cancelation of the Ethnological Institute for Jewish Music. I laid out the reasons for the need for the Institute's existence in several detailed memos, and the recent one from 19.5.1952 sent to Prof. Riger and Mr. Ardon (of the Art Center at the Ministry of Education) and I am asking you to review the description of the Institute's work. I would like to repeat and say that this institute was unique in the Israeli government and a central place for collecting and research of musical folklore of our communities. The institute received full recognition from researchers in Israel and outside Israel.[45]

Gerson-Kiwi's emphasis on archival consolidation, international scholarly collaboration, and the dissemination of research through both academic and popular lectures and publications reflects the broader postwar professionalization of ethnomusicology which she was leading in Israel.[46]

Between 1947 and 1953, she recorded the Romanian-born Jewish musician Simha Rashkovsky, documenting Eastern European repertoire that included Yiddish songs, *nigunim* (tunes for Jewish occasions), and klezmer instrumental tunes. Her archival inventory classified Rashkovsky's recordings

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45 Letter from Gerson-Kiwi to the Government Workers' Union, April 1, 1953, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D.1939. Translated by the author.

46 Anthony Seeger, "The Role of Sound Archives in Ethnomusicology Today," *Ethnomusicology* 30, no. 2 (1986): 261–76; Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "The Ethnomusicologist, Ethnographic Method, and the Transmission of Tradition," in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*, ed. Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 189–204.

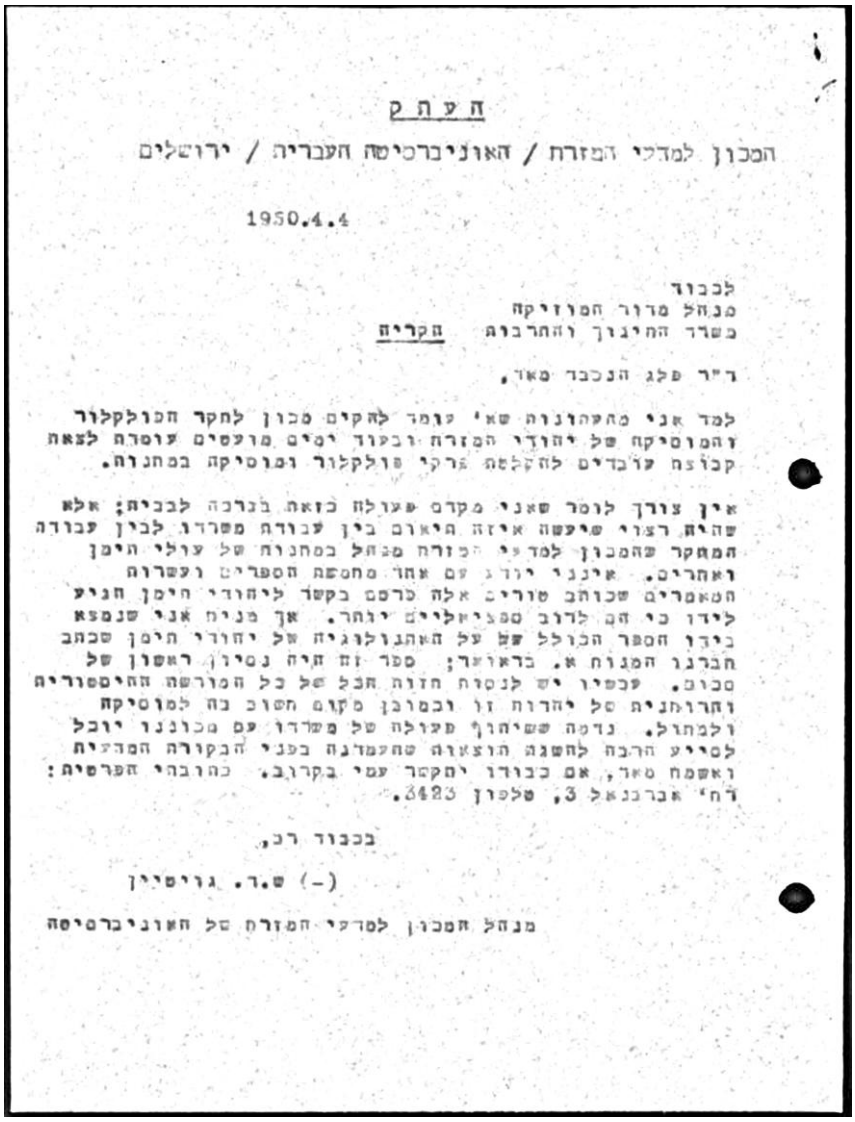
inconsistently: "Ashkenazi" or "Eastern Ashkenazi," "Romanian," "Moldovan," or "Russian." These shifting classifications expose the unsettled attempts to define Jewish musical traditions according to national, geographical categories, and probably also her comparatively limited interest in Ashkenazi Jewish music.

Rashkovsky's recordings were later published under Gerson-Kiwi's name in the periodical *Yeda Am* in 1954. However, the transcriptions of the lyrics were written by the folklorist Yosef Cohen-Zedek (lyrics) and the musical notation by the musicologist Eliyahu Schleifer, who subsequently became Gerson-Kiwi's assistant. Significantly, the publication contained little extended analytical commentary, reflecting a folkloristic orientation that privileged collection and publication of texts and musical notation over interpretive analysis. By contrast, Gerson-Kiwi increasingly directed her own scholarship toward the musical traditions of Middle Eastern Jewish communities, which she regarded as central both to her scholarly goals and to the broader cultural reconfiguration of Israeli culture.[47]

The Sound Archive as an Academic Research Unit, 1953–1959

Following her dismissal, Gerson-Kiwi secured the transfer of her archive to the Hebrew University Department of Oriental Studies with the support of the Minister of Education Ben-Zion Dinur. The department, still headed by Shlomo-Dov Goitein, agreed to house the Archive of Oriental and Jewish Music and appoint Gerson-Kiwi as a research fellow, while the Ministry of Education continued to provide financial support. This hybrid institutional arrangement effectively reconstructed the archive within an academic framework while preserving state involvement in its operation. It also echoed an earlier precedent established at the Hebrew University in the mid-1930s, when Robert Lachmann held a temporary research appointment as the head of the Archive of Oriental Music through external donors and his personal resources rather than through the university itself.

47 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Transcription of Four Folksongs by Simha Rashkovsky," *Yeda Am* 2, no. 1 (1954): 76–78; musical notation, 269–72.



העתק

הסכון למדעי המזרח / האוניברסיטה העברית / ירושלים

1950.4.4

לכבוד
מנהל מדור המוזיקה
במשרד החינוך והתרבות
הקריה

ד"ר פלג הנכבד שלום,

למד אני מהעתונות שאי עומד להקים סכון לחקר הפולקלור והמוסיקה של יהודי המזרח ובעוד ימים מועטים עומדת לצאת קבוצת עובדים להקלטת ארקי פולקלור ומוסיקה בפתנות.

אין צורך לומר שאני מקדם שמחה כזאת בנרכה לבכיה; אלא שהיה רצוי שיעשה איזה היאום בין עבודת משרדו לבין עבודה המחקר שהסכון למדעי המזרח מנהל במחנות של עולי הימן ואחרים. אינני יודע עם אחר מחמשת הספרים ועשרות המאמרים שכותב מורים אלה כרסם בקשר ליהודי הימן חניץ לידו כי הם לרוב ספניאלים יותר. אך פניתי אני שנמצא בידו הספר הכולל שם על האתנולוגיה של יהודי הימן שכתב חברנו המנוח א. כראואר; ספר זה תיה נסיון ראשון של סכום. עכשיו יש לנסות חזות חבל של כל המורשה החיספורית והרוחנית של יהדות זו וכסוכן מקום חשוב נה למוסיקה ולמחול. נדמה ששיתוף פעולה של משרדו עם מכוננו יוכל לסייע הרבה להשגת הוצאות שהעמדנה בפני הבקורת המדעית ואשמח מאד, אם כבודו יתקבר עמי בקרוב. כתובתי הפרטית: רח' אברבנאל 3, טלפון 3423.

בכבוד רב,

(-) ש.ד. גוייטין

מנהל הסכון למדעי המזרח של האוניברסיטה

Figure 6. Letter from S. D. Goitein to [Frank Peleg], director of the Music Section of the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, April 4, 1950. Israel State Archives, Ministry of Education, Edith Gerson-Kiwi file.

In 1953 Gerson-Kiwi was appointed as a researcher and the head of the Archive of Jewish and Oriental Music next to the Hebrew University. Yet her continued reliance on funding from the Ministry of Education, rather than from the university, continued the marginality of ethnomusicology within academic structures during the early decades of the state. At the Hebrew University, she played a foundational role in introducing ethnomusicology to students and the work of a research sound archive.

In a retrospective report to the Hebrew University summarizing her activities, she marked 1955 as a turning point when formal lectures and study

groups in ethnomusicology were conducted at the university.[48] She also mentioned the production of approximately 3,000 new field recordings of Jewish Oriental music. These recordings encompassed repertoires from more than a dozen Jewish communities, including Yemenite, Persian, Iraqi, Moroccan, Indian, Turkish, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Caucasian, Egyptian, and various North African traditions, alongside the musical practice of groups such as Muslim, Samaritan, Karaite, and Sabbatian communities.

Gerson-Kiwi's activities extended beyond sound recording to include ethnographic film production and the establishment of a collection of Oriental musical instruments.[49] Her principal research interests encompassed biblical and post-biblical musical sources, methodologies of sound recording and transcription, the sociological and musical characteristics of Oriental musicians, the migration of folk instruments, structural features of Jewish folk song, and related topics. These activities positioned the archive as a multidisciplinary research center for ethnomusicology, anthropology, folklore, and Oriental studies.

The same report, addressed in part to American donors of the Hebrew University under the title "Preserving the Music of the Oriental Jews," further reveals the practical framework of her advocacy. As she had done earlier, she defined a singular category of Oriental Jewish music, implicitly contrasted with its Ashkenazi counterpart, and presented it as a means of bridging cultural differences between Jewish immigrants from East and West while contributing to the creation of a new national culture.

In her recording inventory at the Institute for Research of Jewish and Oriental Music next to the Hebrew University between 1955 and 1959, Gerson-Kiwi listed an extensive range of Jewish and non-Jewish traditions, including Arab, Armenian, Ethiopian, and Samaritan musical repertoires, alongside Persian Jewish and classical music. Her intensive documentation of Persian Jewish musicians, including collaborations with performers such as Shlomo Orfanian, Ezra Ben-Kadar, and Yossef Yizdi, who performed both Jewish and non-Jewish Persian music, demonstrates her understanding of Jewish music as an integrated part of a broader regional musical system.[50]

In 1955 she conducted extensive recordings with the Persian Jewish violinist Netzer Saluki (1934–2008), documenting sections from the *radif*, the canonical repertoire of Persian classical music. Born in Rasht, he had immigrated to Israel in 1950 and adopted the name Amnon Netzer, and he became a

48 Hebrew University of Jerusalem Archive, Edith Gerson-Kiwi file. See also Schrire, *Collecting the Pieces of the Jewish Diaspora*, 252.
49 The musical instruments can be seen at the Jerusalem Music Academy and at Tel-Aviv Music Library.
50 Recording inventory, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.11, pp. 13–14.

prominent scholar of Persian history and culture. Between April 18 and July 20, 1956, and again between November 20, 1956 and April 2, 1957, Gerson-Kiwi conducted 24 recording sessions with Netzer, producing 34 magnetic tapes devoted to various *dastgāh* systems of Persian classical tradition. These recordings reflect her preference for sustained and systematic documentation of individual performers and repertoires.[51] She would continue to record and study Persian music later during a visit in Persia.[52]

Like that of other sound archives, the archive's technical history is also the history of recording machines and formats, including instantaneous records, magnetic tapes, compact cassettes, and other media that were transferred across formats, thereby creating an additional layer of archival complexity. While these practices ensured the preservation and circulation of recordings, they also generated problems of duplication, cataloging, and archival coherence. These material conditions of recording and preservation constitute an integral part of sound archive's work, shaping the accessibility, organization, and perceived authenticity of its contents.

In 1959 and 1960 the Ministry of Education gradually terminated its financial support for the Archive of Jewish and Oriental Music next to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Shlomo-Dov Goitein had emigrated to the United States in 1957, and Gerson-Kiwi once again lost an important source of personal and academic support. She wrote several letters pleading for continued governmental funding, outlining the archive's mission, history, holdings, and plans for expanding ethnographic fieldwork among Oriental Jewish communities, but these appeals were unsuccessful.[53]

In the concluding section of her appeal, Gerson-Kiwi articulated a broader vision for the sound archive as both a national and international institution. She noted growing dissatisfaction among Oriental Jewish communities regarding the dilution of their traditional musical practices and emphasized the responsibility of scholarly institutions to represent and sustain these living traditions. Drawing on Israel's geographical and cultural contexts, she proposed that the sound archive should serve as a bridge between Jewish Oriental music and the non-Jewish Oriental musical cultures which were historically connected, and between the diasporic cultures and the new Israeli musical culture, which was formed on Western musical system. She continued to believe that Jewish music was embedded within the musical cultures of the Orient.

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51 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, *The Persian Doctrine of Dastgāh-Composition: A Phenomenological Study in the Musical Modes* (Tel-Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1963).

52 On the Persian recording see Edwin Seroussi and Stefanie Mockert, Jewish Music Research Centre, http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/en/project/25133 (2026).

53 Letter from Gerson-Kiwi to Nathan Andre Chouraqui, Jerusalem, November 20, 1960, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D.856.

Independent Scholarship and Institutional Consolidation, 1960–1973

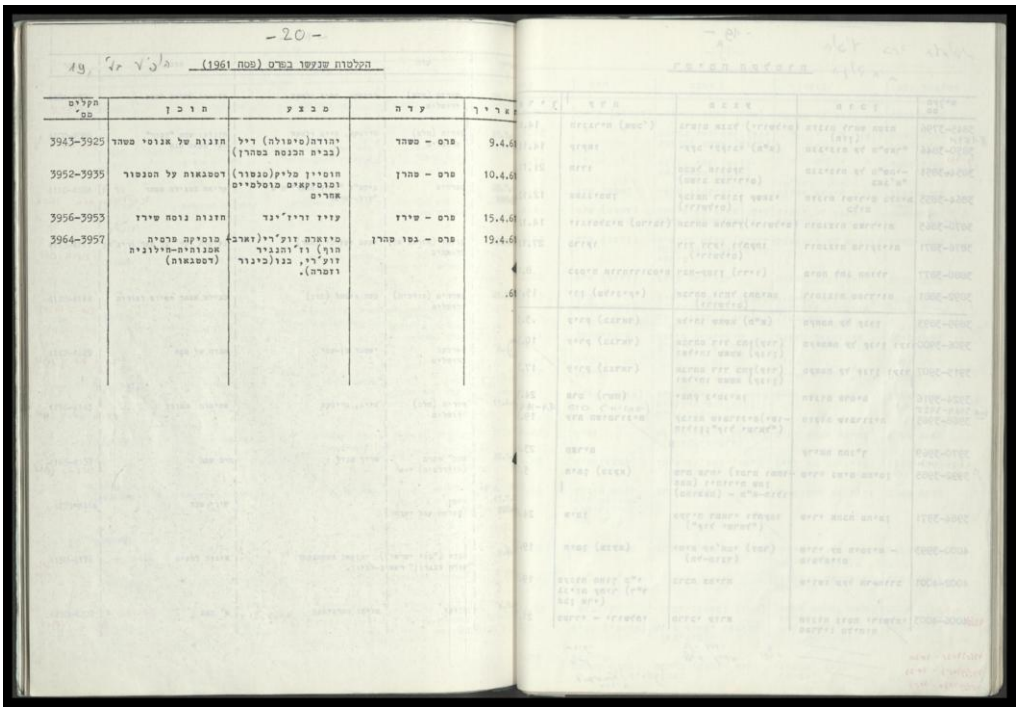
Following her departure from formal institutional affiliation, Gerson-Kiwi continued her work as an independent ethnomusicologist, operating from a studio in a Jerusalem apartment owned by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and using her private address when signing her letters.[54]

Despite the lack of institutional support, she participated in the International Music Council and the ICTM in Tehran, where she represented the State of Israel. Accompanied by Yeshayahu Shapira of the Kol Israel broadcasting service, whose mission was to promote "authentic" and "folk" music, she arrived in Teheran in April 1961. In addition to attending the conference, she conducted recordings in Tehran and Shiraz between April 4 and 20, 1961. These included Jewish liturgical music, Persian classical music, and cantillation repertoires. Through these recordings, she sought to situate Jewish musical practices within a broader regional and cultural environment, extending the approach she had adopted from her mentor Robert Lachmann.

During her trip to Iran, Gerson-Kiwi documented a range of Persian Jewish and classical musical traditions, which she listed systematically in her inventory (see Figure 7):

9 April 1961 - Persia/Mashhad- Sefullah Dill - Liturgical music of Anusey Mashhad in Geulah Synagogue, Tehran
10 April 1961 - Persia/Tehran - Melik Hussein - Demonstrations of *dastgāh* on santur
15 April 1961 - Persia/Shiraz - Zarizind Aziz - Liturgy
19 April 1961 - Persia/Tehran Ghetto - Zo'ari Mizara and Zo'ari Ziohnagid - Persian art music and *dastgāh* repertoire[55]

54 Her address was: Ramban St. no. 33, Jerusalem. For letters from the 1960s see Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D.445, D.668, D.884, D.891, and more.
55 Recording inventory of the Persian recordings produced in Persia, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.1.11, p. 20.


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הקלטות שנעשו בפרס (פסח 1961)

מקלדת	תוכן	מבצע	עדה	תאריך
3943-3925	חזנות של אנוסי משהד	יהודה(סיטולה) דייל (בבית הכנסת בטהרן)	פרס – משהד	9.4.61
3952-3935	דסטגאות על הסנטור	חוסיין מליק(סנטור) וכוסיקאים מוסלמיים אחרים	פרס – טהרן	10.4.61
3956-3953	חזנות נוסח שירז	עזיז זריז'יאנד	פרס – שירז	15.4.61
3964-3957	מוסיקה מרסית אמנותית-חילונית (דסטגאות)	סיזארה זוק'רי(זאבי) הון) וז'והנגיר זוק'רי, בנו(כינור ונגרה).	פרס – גפו טהרן	19.4.61

Figure 7 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, inventory of recordings conducted in Persia, 1961. Source: National Library of Israel, Music Department, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.1.11, p. 20.

In Iran, Gerson-Kiwi received technical assistance from the ethnomusicologist Peter Crossley-Holland (1916–2001), who participated in the conference as a BBC producer. With his help and his access to a portable Nagra reel-to-reel recording device, she was able to produce high-quality field recordings in several locations. This technological mediation was a part of postwar ethnomusicology in which portability, immediacy, and sonic fidelity increasingly supported archival and scholarly work.

Following this trip and recordings, Gerson-Kiwi published a monograph, *The Persian Doctrine of Dastgāh-Composition* (1963), published by the Israel Music Institute (IMI), then directed by one of her former students. This ethnomusicological publication by an institution whose original mandate centered on works by Israeli composers demonstrates the importance of Gerson-Kiwi's personal and professional networks within musical institutions.[56]

This monograph is a significant Israeli ethnomusicological engagement with Persian classical music not merely as ethnographic material but as a theoretical framework of Oriental music. In producing this, Gerson-Kiwi positioned Persian music as the historical and theoretical framework of the *maqām* system. She explicitly rejected reliance on theoretical models and privileged

56 IMI was established in 1961. Its first director was Wili Elias, a former student of Gerson-Kiwi.

the analysis of sound produced in performance; she wanted "the phenomena of sound production and sound combination to speak freely," as she states in the introduction to her 1963 publication.

Gerson-Kiwi continued to conduct fieldwork recordings throughout the 1960s. She recorded Syrian-Jewish cantillation, Jerusalem Sephardic traditions, Indian Jewish communities (Bene-Israel and Cochin), and North African repertoires, demonstrating both the breadth of her ethnographic engagement and her continued commitment to documenting living musical practices.

At the same time, she was engaged with obtaining recordings produced by other scholars and institutions, including the Kol Israel broadcasting authority, and colleagues from around the world. In doing so, she took the role of a curator of a sound archive, in which knowledge production emerges through aggregation, comparison, and recontextualization. The archive thus became not merely a collection of sounds but a site of negotiation in which questions of authenticity, representation, ownership and scholarly authority were continuously reconfigured.

Her work and reputation made her a central academic adviser in the planning of the international conference "East and West in Music," held in Jerusalem in 1963. The conference, which was organized by the IFMC, UNESCO, and the Jewish National and University Library, brought to Israel several world-famous scholars and musicians. "East and West in Music" was also the 16th annual meeting of the IFMC, and the only one that took place in Israel. Among the participants were the ethnomusicologists George List, Kwabena Nketia, the composers Milton Babbitt and George Rochberg, and others.[57]

The Israeli conference that took place in Beit Daniel in Zikhron Yaʿakov in 1962 brought together composers, musicologists, performers, and folklorists to address the challenge of constructing a national Israeli musical culture. A central axis of debate concerned the role of Oriental musical traditions in shaping Israeli art music. Most participants had been trained primarily in Western theoretical, compositional, and performance practices, reflecting the more broadly Eurocentric orientation of Israeli musical institutions at the time. Suhil Radwan, the only Arab composer-performer in attendance, argued forcefully for the integration of Arabic musical traditions into Israeli art music, maintaining that such engagement would enrich the emerging musical culture of Israel. He rejected the elevation of Yemenite Jewish music as the primary Oriental

57 Program and list of committee members of the International Conference East and West in Music, Jerusalem, August 5–12, 1963, organized by the National Council of Culture and Art, the International Music Council of UNESCO, and the International Folk Music Council, at the National Library of Israel. See also Gerson-Kiwi's correspondence on organizing the conference, MUS 0078 D.432, D.455, D.486, D.481, D.508, D.519, D.523, D.535, D.606, D.623.

source, emphasizing its structural divergence from neighboring Arabic traditions:[58]

> Yemen is far away from Israel, more than other Oriental countries where Jews lived, such as Iraq . . . In Yemen, the *maqam* is not used as we understand it, and the microtonal interval does not exist. Therefore, we should integrate the music of our neighboring countries and first and foremost Arabic music.[59]

In her response, Gerson-Kiwi emphasized the need to distinguish between specific geographical, cultural, and historical contexts. She maintained that the musical cultures of the Near East—particularly those of Syria, Iraq, and Persia—provided the most relevant contextual framework for the development of Israeli music. Any synthesis with Western compositional principles, she insisted, had to acknowledge the long-term organic integration of these traditions and be grounded in systematic research of authentic musical sources.[60]

Following these conferences, institutional support for musicological research in Israel expanded significantly. Departments of musicology were founded at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1965 and Tel-Aviv University in 1966, while the NSA opened at the Jewish National and University Library (later the National Library of Israel) in 1965. These developments marked the institutional professionalization of Israeli musicology and the incorporation of historical and ethnomusicological research into a national scholarly infrastructure.

Gerson-Kiwi joined the faculty of Tel-Aviv University in 1966, where she taught until her retirement in 1973. She continued to teach at the Jerusalem Music Academy and the Tel-Aviv Music Teacher's Seminary and served as a guest lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1970 she was awarded the Engel Prize in recognition of her pioneering research and her work preserving Jewish musical traditions.[61]

When Israel Adler (1925–2009), founder and director of the NSA, sought to incorporate Gerson-Kiwi's private collection into the emerging national sound archive repository, she initially resisted. She emphasized both her intellectual investment in the archive and the fact that she had personally financed much of its development. Her hesitation reflected concerns about ownership as

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58 The proceedings of the 1962 conference were published six years later: Michal Smoira-Roll, ed., *Yesodot mizraḥiyim u-ma'araviyim ba-musiqah be-Yisrael* [Eastern and Western Foundations in Music in Israel], Israel Music Institute, 1968, at the National Library of Israel. Translation by the author.

59 Ibid., 56.

60 Ibid., 58.

61 The Musicology Department at the Hebrew University was established by Alexander Ringer of the USA, and the Musicology Department at Tel-Aviv University was established by Eric Werner of the USA. The NSA was established by Israel Adler, who studied in France and returned to Israel in 1964.

well as a broader tension between her position as an independent scholar and the institutional consolidation of cultural heritage during the early years of the State of Israel. It also reflected her frustration with the Hebrew University, which had provided little support for her work between 1953 and 1958 and had never formally clarified the archive's status or future.

In 1966 plans were initiated for the establishment of the Tel-Aviv Museum of the Diaspora, later known as Beit Hatfutsot (today Anu Museum), on the campus of Tel-Aviv University. Having received a teaching appointment at Tel-Aviv University, Gerson-Kiwi offered her collection of Jewish music recordings to the future museum. She described it as a private archive created in response to the mass immigration of Jews from Middle Eastern and North African communities. As she had explained before, these musical traditions must be documented and preserved before they disappear. She further maintained that, despite the establishment of the NSA at the Hebrew University, her collection had officially remained "without ownership."[62]

While Gerson-Kiwi was considering transferring her collection to Tel-Aviv University, Adler, as the founder of both the NSA and the Jewish Music Research Centre, approached the Hebrew University in order to resolve its uncertain legal and institutional status. The dispute concerned both the recordings and the audiovisual equipment, which had been purchased partly by the Hebrew University and partly by Gerson-Kiwi, and which were stored in a university-owned apartment.[63] Following prolonged negotiations, Gerson-Kiwi eventually agreed to transfer the collection to the NSA. She was initially employed by the Jewish Music Research Centre to catalog Robert Lachmann's collection. Only toward the end of the 1970s, however, did she agree to deposit her own field recordings and documentation in the NSA.

Gerson-Kiwi continued to document musicians and cultural events. She made further recordings of the Iraqi musician Ezra Aharon, born Azuri Sh'ashu'a and known by the Arabic stage name Azuri Efendi (1903–95). She had first encountered his work through Lachmann's archive and continued to study Arabic music theory with him. She also extensively recorded the blind musician Nehemia Huja, whose repertoire included the music of Kurdistan's Jewish communities. From 1947 to 1980 she used the same notebook and maintained a consistent system for cataloging her recordings.[64] In addition, she

62 Letter to Ben-Zion Katz, rector of Tel-Aviv University and director of the board of directors of Beit Hatfutsot, November 27, 1966, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 D.1191.
63 Letter from Israel Adler to the director of the library, July 31, 1966, National Library of Israel, Music Department, Archive of the Jewish Music Research Centre, MUS 390 A 1.
64 Recording inventory, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.1.11, 86 typewritten pages. For her detailed handwritten inventory of recordings made between 1952 and 1955 see MUS 0078 I.1.04. Partial inventories are available also in MUS 0078 I.1.12 and MUS 0078 I.1.13. See also Figures 3 and 7.

continued to develop her international profile through conferences, publications, lectures, and recordings.[65]

Field Recordings 1973–1983

After her retirement from teaching in 1973, Gerson-Kiwi continued to record and research. Her 1973 inventory of compact cassette recordings starts with recordings from a "Seminar of Moroccan Jewish Culture" held in the Jerusalem Forest. In July of that year, she traveled to Bayonne, France, to record the remnants of the Portuguese Jewish musical tradition. The following month she continued to Madrid, Spain, where she recorded at the central synagogue, and a few days later she documented Andalusian music in Granada. In September 1974 she returned to Israel and recorded a seminar dedicated to Bukharan Jewish traditions, also held in the Jerusalem Forest.

Her recording activity continued intensively throughout the decade. In September 1974 she prepared recordings of Jewish, Arabic, and Armenian music for a German broadcasting station in Cologne. In 1975 she documented a seminar on Yemenite Jewish culture held in the Jerusalem Forest between March 2 and 11, 1975, including wedding songs, women's songs, cantillation, and piyyutim. She also continued to record Ezra Aharon, Jewish women from Kurdistan performing dirges, and additional repertoires. In 1976 she recorded traditional Jewish, Samaritan, Armenian, and Arabic music for a film produced by Vigert. Later that year, in November, she joined her students from Tel-Aviv University in documenting Kurdish Jews in the Beit Shean Valley. In 1977 she recorded Cochin Jewish music in Ramat Eliyahu near Rishon LeZion, and in 1978 she continued to document Cochin Jewish women's songs alongside recordings of individual performers.

The compact cassette format clearly facilitated this phase of Gerson-Kiwi's fieldwork. Its portability enabled her to continue recording across a wide range of sites, communities, and performance contexts, both in Israel and abroad. Gerson-Kiwi thus continued her inventory in the same documentary logic that had guided her recording practice since 1947, even as the technological medium changed. She initially designated discs with the letter "F," then classified reel-to-reel tapes according to their diameter—three, five, or seven inches—and labeled cassettes "X."[66]

65 Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, conferences, MUS 0078 G 1-33-38.
66 Recording inventory, Edith Gerson-Kiwi Archive, MUS 0078 I.1.11, 86 typewritten pages.

Writing, Scholarship, and the Politics of Musical Tradition

Gerson-Kiwi's fieldwork and recordings formed the basis for a wide range of scholarly and public activities, including academic articles, popular essays, radio broadcasts, and lectures in which she incorporated recorded examples. All her activities formed an integrated cultural and intellectual project.

Her theoretical reflections are articulated most clearly in "The Musician in Society: East and West" (1973),[67] which builds upon earlier Hebrew essays from the 1940s.[68] In this work, Gerson-Kiwi constructs a comparative model contrasting Western and Oriental music. Western music, in her formulation, privileged stylistic innovation, technical experimentation, notation, and a clear differentiation of professional roles such as composer, conductor, performer, and virtuoso. Oriental music, by contrast, was based on modal frameworks, improvisation, oral transmission, audience participation, and the integration of music into ritual and social functions. In this model, the Oriental musician appeared not only as a performer but as a figure who combined compositional skill, improvisation, and technical mastery. Each performance was therefore different yet remained within a traditional framework. Major changes, she argued, occur primarily in response to historical disruptions such as conquest, oppression, or national upheaval. In her formulation, the Oriental musician functions as a mediator between heaven and earth, a characterization that resonated with Robert Lachmann's aesthetic conclusions in *Musik des Orients* (1929).

Gerson-Kiwi's concern with oral transmission and musical transformation also shaped her studies of instruments and vocal traditions. In her 1952 article "Migrations and Mutations of Oriental Folk Instruments," she emphasized the mobility of instruments as a catalyst for musical change.[69] She later extended similar questions to vocal polyphony in "Vocal Folk Polyphonies of the Western Orient in Jewish Traditions" (1968), comparing Yemenite, Samaritan, and Greek-Sephardic synagogue traditions with Western and non-Western polyphonic practices. In these studies, heterophony functioned not merely as a musical phenomenon, but as a form of collective musical communication, worship, and sacred meaning.[70]

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67 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "The Musician in Society: East and West," *Cultures* 1 (1973): 165–94.
68 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "*Naganei ha-mizraḥ, mahutam ve-hitpaṭḥutam*," *Edot* 1 (1945): 227–33.
69 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Migrations and Mutations of Oriental Folk Instruments," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 4 (1952): 16–19.
70 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Vocal Folk Polyphonies of the Western Orient in Jewish Traditions," *Yuval* 1 (1968): 169–93.

Her Zionist orientation is expressed most explicitly in her 1955 essay "The Israeli Village with Its Instruments and Orchestras."[71] Here, Gerson-Kiwi moved from documentation to prescription. She argued that while Hebrew song had already developed as a recognizable national genre, Israeli instrumental folk music still lacked a distinct national character. This absence, in her view, created an opportunity to construct a new instrumental culture rooted in village life, collective creativity, biblical memory, and regional Near Eastern sound. She proposed ensembles combining instruments such as the *ʿūd*, *nāy*, plucked strings, Middle Eastern percussion, and reconstructed biblical instruments. Rather than relying on Western polyphony, she favored improvisation, modal structures, and what she termed "trotophonia," a poly-melodic texture organized around a shared melodic nucleus. Significantly, she did not regard Arabic music as foreign to Israeli culture, but as part of a shared regional heritage that could be reinterpreted within a Hebrew national culture.

The selection of instruments thus became a symbolic vehicle for articulating cultural belonging and territorial attachment. Her proposal illustrates what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger termed the "invention of tradition," the selective appropriation and aesthetic reframing of historical elements for nationalistic purposes.[72]

This vision has been critically reassessed by later scholars. Shai Burstyn, for example, argues that Gerson-Kiwi's writings reveal a gap between prescriptive ideology and social reality in early Israeli society.[73] Her project may therefore be understood as part of the broader aestheticization of nationalism: the selective appropriation and reframing of historical and regional elements to produce a coherent national culture.

Later developments in *muzika mizrahit* (Oriental music) complicate this critique. Although Gerson-Kiwi's vision did not materialize institutionally, popular musical culture in the 1970s and 1980s produced a kind of hybrid synthesis similar to the one she had anticipated, combining Near Eastern modal and rhythmic structures with Western popular forms.

Gerson-Kiwi's reports on musicology in Israel further reveal the national dimensions of her thought. In her 1958 report on "Musicology in Israel" in *Acta Musicologica*,[74] she presented Israel not as a peripheral site of musical scholarship, but as a crucial space for rethinking the relationship between musicology, ethnomusicology, and nation-building. She identified two major

71 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "The Israeli Village with Its Instruments and Orchestras," *Ofakim* 29–30 (1955): 41–43.
72 Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.
73 Shai Burstyn, "The Ethnomusicologist as Inventor of Musical Tradition," *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 13 (2015–16): 124–40, https://min-ad.org.il/min-ad/article/view/119.
74 Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Musicology in Israel," *Acta Musicologica* 30 (1958): 17–26.

tasks for the field: the systematic study of oral musical traditions among Oriental Jewish communities and the broader Near East, and the historical study of Jewish music through literary and musical sources. She also emphasized the urgent need for establishing academic departments and institutional frameworks to conduct and support musicological research.

She situated her own work in a historical moment: the "discovery" of Jewish Oriental music as a central subject for Jewish musicology. She acknowledged the substantial contribution of scholarship in Eastern archeology, Jewish studies, and comparative musicology to the study of Jewish music history. Theoretically, Gerson-Kiwi positioned herself within a transitional epistemological framework that moved from what Robert Lachmann termed "timeless ethnic-oral traditions" toward "historically defined musical traditions."[75] Rejecting theological, speculative, or purely philological approaches, she advocated that the study of Jewish music be grounded in empirical fieldwork, sound recordings, and analytical engagement with musical performance. As in most of her writings, she honored the pioneering work of Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, who created the field of Jewish ethnomusicology.

Her later 1981 report, co-authored with Amnon Shiloah (1928–2014), "Musicology in Israel, 1960–1980" published in *Acta Musicologica*, documented the transfer of nearly 10,000 recordings from her collection to the NSA, including Jewish, Arab, and Oriental Christian traditions.[76] She believed that the archive is a lasting document of musical interactions between Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities living in the region. Yet in this report, as elsewhere, she continued to present herself as a successor to Abraham Zvi Idelsohn and Robert Lachmann rather than as a founder in her own right. This rhetoric of modesty is revealing. It reflects both disciplinary deference and the gendered hierarchies of Israeli academia, in which her foundational work was often absorbed into institutions without being fully attributed to her as an intellectual architect.

Gerson-Kiwi's scholarly vision extended beyond sound recordings to include the collection and study of musical instruments. She regarded instruments such as the *'ud*, *kamanja*, *rebab*, and *nāy* not as antiquarian objects, but as essential tools for ethnomusicological research and pedagogy. For her, the study of instrument construction, performance technique, and musical context was necessary for understanding musical systems as socially embedded practices.[77] This perspective encapsulates her broader methodological commit-

75 Robert Lachmann, *Musik des Orients* (Breslau: F. Hirt, 1929).
76 Amnon Shiloah and Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Musicology in Israel, 1960–1980," *Acta Musicologica* 53 (1981): 200–16.
77 Ibid., 205.

ment: ethnomusicology had to move beyond textual analysis and engage with the material instruments of sound production, and with recorded sound.

Similarly, her commercial ethnographic recordings, including *Folk Music of Palestine* for the Ethnic Folkways Library (1947, 2nd ed. 1951), extended her archival mission beyond academic study. These recordings functioned both as acts of preservation and as interventions in the cultural presentation of Israeli music as a part of a wider Near Eastern musical culture. Taken together, Gerson-Kiwi's writings, recordings, and archival work reveal a scholar whose intellectual work moved continuously between research, preservation, pedagogy, public dissemination, national formation, and international representation. Her archival and scholarly practice was never merely documentary; it formed the basis of interpretation and future research.

Conclusion: Voicing Gerson-Kiwi's Legacy

Edith Gerson-Kiwi's contribution to Israeli musicology cannot be understood adequately through the conventional categories of collector, donor, teacher, or archive custodian. Her work encompassed the creation of musical sources, the development of classification systems, the formation of research agendas, the training of students, and the construction of national and international scholarly networks. Taken together, these activities helped establish the methodological and curatorial foundations of Israeli ethnomusicology and sound archiving.

By treating recorded performance as primary evidence, Gerson-Kiwi expanded the scope of Jewish musicology beyond canonical texts, written sources, and European repertoires. Her recordings preserved modal systems, timbre, ornamentation, improvisation, and polyphony. They also brought women's songs, domestic repertoires, instrumental practices, and regional art music into a field long dominated by male liturgical and textual traditions. Recorded sound thus enabled not only the preservation of musical practices but also an expansion of what could count as legitimate musicological evidence.

Her work nevertheless remained shaped by Orientalist and nationalist frameworks. Contemporary oral traditions were studied as living practices, but they were also frequently interpreted as survivals of antiquity. Oriental Jewish and regional musical traditions were defended against Eurocentric marginalization, yet selected elements could simultaneously be reframed as resources for the construction of Israeli national culture. These tensions do not diminish Gerson-Kiwi's significance. Rather, they reveal the intellectual and political conditions within which Israeli ethnomusicology emerged and the competing ideas embedded in its foundational categories.

The archival procedures and systematic order of Gerson-Kiwi's archive illuminate the tension between documentation and construction. Classification made comparison, preservation, and retrieval possible, while at the same time stabilizing musical practices at a specific moment of the performers who were affected by their migration, acculturation, and cultural exchange. The inconsistencies within the archive therefore expose the mismatch between archival order and the fluidity of performances of traditional music. In Michel-Rolph Trouillot's terms, archives do not merely store neutral documents: through processes of selection, recording, description, duplication, and transfer, they participate in the production of historical knowledge.[78] Gerson-Kiwi's archive was consequently not only a repository of sources but also an intellectual system that shaped how those sources could be understood.

Seen in this light, many of her activities commonly classified as scholarly service—recording, cataloging, maintaining equipment, cultivating relationships with performers, copying recordings, corresponding with scholars, and negotiating institutional support—were acts of knowledge production. They determined which traditions could be heard and which were silenced. The distinction between scholarship and service obscured the intellectual character of this labor and made it easier for later institutions to absorb its products without fully acknowledging the scholarly agency that had created them.

Gerson-Kiwi's case is therefore not one of complete erasure. She published extensively, taught generations of students, received professional honors, and participated in major international scholarly organizations. The issue is instead one of disproportionate attribution. Once her recording collection entered the NSA, she could be remembered primarily as one donor among many, while receding from view as the architect of the methods, categories, scholarly relationships, and research practices through which that collection had been created. The preservation of her recordings did not necessarily ensure the preservation of her intellectual authorship.

Recognizing Gerson-Kiwi as a founder consequently changes the narrative of Israeli ethnomusicology. It shifts attention away from the moment at which university departments and national institutions were formally established, toward the longer processes of source creation, methodological experimentation, teaching, classification, networking, and archival labor that made those institutions possible. Gerson-Kiwi did not simply preserve musical memory for the institutions that followed her. She helped determine what could become a musical source, how it could be classified, compared and retrieved, and what kind of questions could be asked of it.

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78 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26.

Gerson-Kiwi's archival practice was therefore not ancillary to her musicological scholarship; it was one of its principal forms. To restore her voice to the history of Israeli musicology is not simply to recover an overlooked individual contribution. It is to recognize that the making of an archive is itself an act of interpretation, that preservation can constitute knowledge, and that disciplinary foundations are built not only through institutions and publications but also through intellectual labor that determines what can be heard, preserved, and known.