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**Descriptive Summary**

**Identifier**  
ICU.SPCL.WACH

**Title**  
Wach, Joachim. Papers

**Date**  
1888-1988

**Size**  
5.5 linear feet (12 boxes)

**Repository**  
Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center  
University of Chicago Library  
1100 East 57th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

**Abstract**  
Joachim Wach (1898-1958) taught at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. The papers contain correspondence, manuscripts of published and unpublished works, notes and research files, course materials, and manuscripts and correspondence relating to posthumous publications.

**Information on Use**

**Access**

Series VIII contains student evaluative material is restricted for 80 years, until 2034. The remainder of the collection is open for research.

**Citation**

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Wach, Joachim. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

**Biographical Note**

An authority on the history of religions, Joachim Wach (1898-1958) taught in the Divinity School from 1945 until his death.

Wach was born in Chemnitz, Germany, descended on both sides from the Mendelssohn-Bartoldy family. After serving in the German army during World War I, he studied at the Universities of Berlin and Munich, taking his doctorate in philosophy from Leipzig in 1922. He was awarded a Th.D. from Heidelberg in 1930. Although Wach had taught at Leipzig since 1924, pressure from the Nazis forced the Saxon government to terminate his appointment in 1935, with Wach immigrating to the United States. After teaching at Brown University, Wach came to Chicago in 1945 where he served as chairman of the History of Religions Field of the Federated Theological Faculty.
Wach was brought up in a Neo-Kantian Protestant tradition, though his work matured in other directions. While he was trained in philosophy and Oriental studies, his principal grounding was in Religionswissenschaft. He devoted the bulk of his career to studying the nature, subject, and method of this science of religion. Wach’s early publications, particularly the formidable three volume Das Verstehen (1926-1933), were heavily influenced by hermeneutics, whose method and aims he had assimilated from one of his mentors, Wilhelm Dilthey. The heavily historically oriented character of Wach’s German training gave him a lifelong interest in the history of religions as a major task of Religionswissenschaft. This interest led him to a broad mastery of the major world religions -- Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism -- as well as of primitive religions. His openness to new methods for the science of religions made him receptive to Weber, Troeltsch, and the use of social science concepts in understanding religious thought and action. Wach was enthusiastic about interdisciplinary approaches to the history of religions and looked especially to sociology and anthropology for important contributions. Although much of Wach’s reputation in America stemmed largely from his Sociology of Religion (1944), Wach himself believed that sociology was but one of many disciplines which could illuminate the history of religions and the nature of religious experience.

Scope Note
Contains correspondence, manuscripts, lectures, articles, notes and research files, course materials, student notes, examinations, student recommendations, reviews of Wach’s work, bibliographical and biographical materials, reports and memoranda relating to the University of Chicago and the University’s Divinity School, and correspondence and manuscripts relating to the posthumously published work in Wach’s honor, The History of Religions: Essays on Methodology. Also includes an essay written and others collected by Joseph Kitagawa. Correspondents include Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, Rufus Jones, Roland Bainton, and others.

The collection has been organized into six series according to type of material. Since most of the pre-1935 German material is undated, it is difficult to establish the earliest date of the collection. A group of notes on Buddhism and other Oriental religions, however, help date that portion of the collection from the early 1920’s, a period when Wach was actively engaged in teaching and research on that subject.

Series I: CORRESPONDENCE
Divided into incoming and outgoing correspondence and arranged alphabetically within each category, this small body of letters dates mainly from the 1940’s and ‘50’s. It consists of both personal and professional correspondence and includes brief letters from Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, Rufus Jones, Roland Bainton, and others. The bulk of the correspondence is incoming.

Series II: WRITINGS
This series consists of drafts of, notes for, and other materials relating to published and unpublished books, articles, reviews, and lectures. Manuscripts relating to Wach's published books appear first. They have been arranged chronologically by date of publication and include: Das Verstehen, vol. I (1926), Sociology of Religion (1944); Types of Religious Experience (1951), The Comparative Study of Religion (1958), and Understanding and Believing (1968). Many of these books were compilations of previously published or publicly delivered materials; in these cases, all such material has been grouped together into the chapters which they eventually became. Among Wach's unpublished works is a full-length holograph manuscript in German titled “Freud” (1930) and a group of essays collected by Joseph Kitagawa.

Series III: RESEARCH FILES

Consisting principally of notes, drafts of miscellaneous essays, and work by others, these files have been maintained as Wach created them and according to his categories.

Series IV: COURSE MATERIALS

This series is comprised mainly of holograph lecture notes prepared by Wach himself, though occasionally there are student notes as well. With the exception of bracketed titles, these files also reflect Wach's categories and organization of material. Some class lists and examinations from Brown University as well as from Chicago will also be found in this series.

Series V: UNIVERSITY MATERIALS

M.A. and Ph. D. examinations, student recommendations, dissertation abstracts, and miscellaneous memoranda and reports relating to the University and the Divinity School have been included here.

Series VI: MISCELLANEOUS


Series VII: ADDENDA
This series contains material that was later added to the collection. It contains correspondence, newspapers clippings, research and personal notes, departmental information, manuscripts, articles, and books.

Series VIII: RESTRICTED

This series contains restricted files regarding student recommendations and assessment.

Related Resources
The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

Subject Headings

• Wach, Joachim, 1898-1955
• Bainton, Roland Herbert, 1894-
• Jones, Rufus Matthew, 1863-1948
• Kitagawa, Joseph Mitsuo, 1915-
• Niebuhr, H. Richard (Helmut Richard), 1894-1962
• Niebuhr, Reinhold, 1892-1971
• University of Chicago -- History
• University of Chicago. Divinity School
• Religion-Study and teaching
• Religions -- History

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- “The Christian Sacrifica”
- Sermon for Worldwide Communion Sunday
- Miscellaneous poems

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- Friedrich Heiler, “Introduction”
- “The Interpretation of Sacred Books”
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  • Graham Waring, “Philosophical Aspects of Recent Anglo-Catholic Thought”

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S. Hansel, Die Familie Mendelssohn, Vol. 1, 1888

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