

Aspects of modernity in the Jewish community in Sudan of the first half of the twentieth century

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ABSTRACT Since the end of the nineteenth century until after the Six Day War (1967) there was a minute Jewish community in Sudan, which held 1,000 people at its peak. Most of them arrived from the Mediterranean countries, Iraq and Yemen. Several people arrived from Europe. Most of the members resided in Khartoum. It was an immigrant community, where most members dealt with local and international commerce, or were part of the British administration. After its establishment in January 1908, it functioned as an independent community, yet clearly linked to the Jewish community in Egypt. The Jewish community in Sudan was extremely modern. I suggest an explanation for this and comment on the level of modernism of this community compared to other Jewish communities in the Orient in the first half of the twentieth century.

FROM THE END of the nineteenth century up until the Six-Day War (1967), a minute Jewish community existed in Sudan, which at its peak numbered approximately 1,000 people.¹ Most of its members came from the

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1. For a general survey of the community, see N. Ilan, 'Community Between the Niles', *Segulah* 48 (Iyar 5774 [2014]), pp. 54–60 (in Hebrew); N. Ilan and E.S. Malka, 'The Jewish Community in Sudan', in N. Ilan (ed.), *Egypt* (Series on Jewish Communities in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries; in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2008) pp. 271–86; N. Ilan, 'Sudan', in N. Stillman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010) pp. 417–19; E.S. Malka, *Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi: Jews of the Sudan* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); J.M. Oppenheim, 'Egypt and the Sudan', in R.S. Simon, M.M. Laskier and S. Requer (eds), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) pp. 409–30; G. Warburg, 'Notes on the Jewish Community in Sudan in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 24 (2001), pp. 22–6.

countries of the Mediterranean, from Iraq and from Yemen. Some came from Eastern and Western Europe. This was a community of immigrants, most of whose members were employed in retail or international trade or were part of the British administration. However, it is appropriate to view them as a community and not just a group of immigrants, since they invested their time, energy and financial resources to function as a community surrounding the synagogue they established, which served not only as a place for ritual but also as a social club for parties and other cultural activities. All the more so because those who left the community emphasize in their recollections that they felt they were part of a community, by virtue of the solidarity among its members that was expressed on joyous occasions and in moments of crisis.² At the beginning, the community was in Omdurman, next to the meeting point of the Blue Nile and the White Nile,³ and in the 1920s, as Khartoum developed as a modern city alongside it, the Jews moved to live there. Very few lived in Wad Madani and in Port Sudan.⁴

The community was officially founded on 31 January 1908, at a festive occasion attended by Rabbi Eliyahu Hazan, who served at that time as the chief rabbi of Alexandria.⁵ At this same occasion, the officers of the community were elected by 20 members with voting rights, and the community register was opened.⁶ The community had strong ties with the Jewish communities in Cairo and Alexandria, and from a linguistic and Halakhic point of view the ties were significantly closer to Alexandria.⁷ From 1906 to 1949

2. See Malka, *Jacob's Children*, pp. 55–69, 87–95.

3. On Omdurman, see R.S. Kramer, *Holy City on the Nile: Omdurman During the Mahdiyya, 1885–1898* (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener, 2011).

4. N. Ilan, *The Community Register of the Jews of Sudan* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2007) pp. 24–5. On the value of the community register as a primary source for the history of the community, see N. Ilan, 'The Community Register (*Pinkas*) – An Essential Source to the History of the Jewish Community in Sudan', in A. Ehrlich (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora* (Santa Barbara CA: ABC–CLIO, 2008); Malka, *Jacob's Children*, in the index under the listing *Pinkas*.

5. On Rabbi Hazan's journey, see B.Z. Taragan, 'The Journey in the Land of Sudan', *Hashkafah* 47 (1908) pp. 2–3; 48 (1908) p. 3; 50 (1908), pp. 2–3; 52 (1908), pp. 2–3; 53 (1908) p. 2. (in Hebrew); The article is partially reprinted in B.Z. Taragan, *History of the Jewish Community in Alexandria over the Past 40 Years – 1906–1946*. (in Hebrew; Alexandria: Leon Palumbo, 1947) pp. 24–6.

6. On the founding ceremony and opening the register, see Ilan, *The Community Register*, pp. 45–8.

7. See N. Ilan, 'Between Khartoum and Cairo, Alexandria and Jerusalem: Limits on the Autonomy of the Jewish Community in Sudan', *Mimzrach Umima'arav* 8 (2008), pp. 161–84 (in Hebrew); Ilan, *The Community Register*, pp. 26–7; A. Geva-Kleinberger, 'Between the Blue Nile and the White Nile', *Pe'amim* 91 (2002), pp. 153–64 (in Hebrew); A. Geva-Kleinberger 'Judaico-Arabic Dialects of Sudan', in W. Arnold and H. Bobzin (eds), *'Sprich doch mit deinen Knechten aramäisch, wir verstehen es!': Beiträge zur Semitistik Festschrift für Otto Jastrow zum 60 Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), pp. 181–91.



FIGURE 1 Shlomo Malka (1878–1949),
Hakham of the Sudan and its Chief
Rabbi. *Courtesy of Professor Jeff Malka.*

Rabbi Shlomo Malka served as the community rabbi and left his positive stamp on its image both by virtue of his tolerance and through the courageous way he dealt with the challenges of modernity.⁸ The community was in the decisive majority Zionist and in this area also Rabbi Malka was its leader.⁹

Over the past 20 years I have had the opportunity to meet Jews who were born in Sudan. Some of them were raised and educated there, some of them left as children. They all had mainly pleasant, good memories. Among their children and grandchildren, who did not live there, the period of stay there is perceived as mainly good, pleasant and serene. It seems to me that the reason

8. On Rabbi Malka, see N. Ilan, 'From Morocco to Sudan: Rabbi Salmon (Shlomo) Malka – Leader in Times of Change', *Pe'amim* 80 (1999), pp. 93–111 (in Hebrew); N. Ilan, 'Revolutionism and Conservatism – The Position of Rabbi Shlomo Malka on the Matter of the Status of Women', *Pe'amim* 91 (2002), pp. 123–51 (in Hebrew); N. Ilan, 'The Tolerance of Rabbi Shlomo Malka – Its Sources and Limits', in M. Orfali and E. Hazan (eds), *Progress and Tradition: Creativity, Leadership and Cultural Processes in North African Judaism* (Jerusalem and Ramat Gan: Mossad Bialik and Bar-Ilan University, 2005) pp. 16–30; N. Ilan, 'Malka, Solomon', in N. Stillman (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2010) p. 326.

9. Malka, *Jacob's Children*, pp. 44, 70–75.

for this is twofold: (a) life there really was like this; (b) the departure from Sudan took place in a comfortable manner and with a feeling of control over the situation. None of them had dismal and certainly not traumatic memories of the departure. The process of departure of the Jews of Sudan from their country was different from everything we are familiar with from other countries around the Mediterranean and to the east. It was a slow process in which the members of the community could arrange themselves new, good homes in advance (mainly London, Geneva and the New York area, or voluntary emigration to Israel), close up their businesses calmly, take their property or its monetary value with them, and say friendly goodbyes to the local residents.¹⁰ The dismantling of the Jewish community in Egypt took place in a completely different manner, because of the hostile relationship between Egypt and the State of Israel at the time of its formation.¹¹

Modernity has several clearly defining characteristics and foremost among them is the idea of the superiority of instrumental wisdom in public and private life and its control through bureaucracy. The capitalist order derives from instrumental wisdom and aims for optimal utilization of production capability, the release of time from the constraints of space by means of technological development, strengthening of the individual dimension, delayed gratification, and increased secularization – to the point of the (incorrect) identification of modernity with secularization.¹² Imperialism and colonialism

10. An outstanding example is the letter that the director of the Office of Industry and Commerce, Ibrahim Uthman Ishak, sent to David Malka, the youngest son of Rabbi Malka, who in those days managed a building materials factory in Khartoum, in which he wrote, inter alia, 'Now that you have finally decided to immigrate to America I wish to say how sorry many of your friends – amongst whom I consider myself one of the most intimate – will be at your departure. You and your wife have earned for yourselves the deep love, admiration and respect of the whole of Khartoum Society and your departure will be a great loss for them.' See a copy of this letter in Ilan and Malka, 'The Jewish Community in Sudan', p. 275. On the entire matter, see N. Ilan, 'Thus the Jewish Community in Sudan Ended', *Kivunim Hadashim* 21 (2010), pp. 213–20 (in Hebrew).

11. J. Beinín, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1998), especially pp. 129–205. Beinín's book is not without problems – see the criticism in Hagar Hillel, 'The Judeo-Egyptian Diaspora – Challenging the Nationalist Narrative', *Pe'amim* 94–5 (2003) pp. 221–33; R. Kimche, 'Israel and the Death Knell of Egyptian Jewry, 1967–1970', *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 11:2 (2017), pp. 217–26; P. Mendes, 'Voluntary Departure or Expulsion: The Jewish Exodus from Modern Egypt, 1948–1967', *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 19 (2005), pp. 134–46; O. Yerushalmi, *The Five Long Minutes: Jews of Egypt 1967–1970, Arrest & Displacement* (Tel Aviv: Achiasaf, 2017).

12. See D. Gurewitz and D. Arav, 'Modernity, Modernism', in *Encyclopedia of Ideas: Culture, Thought, Communications* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hotza'at Bavel, 2012) pp. 569–75; A. Edgar, 'Modernism', in A. Edgar and P. Sedgwick (eds), *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 1999)

derived directly from the perception of European superiority. The Europeans perceived themselves as more enlightened than the inhabitants of Africa and Asia, and when they conquered territories there they presented it as a process that was intended to herald enlightenment for those who dwelled in darkness. These values were all expressed in the attribution of ultimate value to formal education and in accordance with this in a change in occupations, an increase in the age of marriage in contrast to what had been widespread in traditional communities, and in marriage out of love and not only as a result of an agreement between parents, in the creation of a culture of leisure and in a change in attitudes towards women and women's status.

In recent years there has been an increasing recognition that it is no longer appropriate to speak of modernity as a phenomenon with one character, but rather of modernities – that is, diverse approaches to and appearances of modernity. It is recognized that the experience of modernity outside of Western Europe was more complex than colonial or post-colonial actions.¹³ Talal Asad has noted that juxtaposing the 'traditional' and the 'modern' position is overly simplistic and erroneous, as it presents the traditional approach as unchanging.¹⁴ He has further warned against the binary thinking that has been adopted by scholars of the Middle East and anthropologists.¹⁵ Eve Trout Powell also criticized the binary approach taken by Edward Said, finding it to be weak. Precisely the events in Egypt and Egypt's dominance over Sudan provided the context for her discussion of the 'colonized colonizer'.¹⁶

Sudan was controlled by Egypt for many years in the nineteenth century. Egypt left its stamp on the economy and society, especially urban society. From the time that the British conquered Sudan in 1898, the British influence, which had been active in Egypt before it was conquered by the British in 1882

pp. 244–6; Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), esp. pp. 53–63, 112–23, 173–84; A. Touraine, *Critique of Modernity* (trans. David Macey; Blackwell: Oxford and Cambridge MA, 1995) pp. 1–6, 10–11, 254–5; C. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) pp. 5, 101–3; C. Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Shalem, 2011) pp. 8, 33–5, and the introduction by Eliezer Malkiel to the Hebrew edition.

13. T. Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) pp. 217–18; K.D. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 11–17.

14. Asad, *Formations of the secular*, pp. 221–2.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

16. E.M. Trout Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 8–12.

and increased following the conquest, became more powerful in Sudan as well.¹⁷ In the Jewish community of Sudan, a Middle Eastern Jewish modernity materialized, one that was clearly influenced by developments in Egypt that extended into Sudan and by steps taken by the British colonizers. Egypt and its Jews are therefore a useful reference point for exposing the unique features of the tiny Jewish community in Sudan, mainly in the first half of the twentieth century, as social, economic and cultural processes that took place in Egypt in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century are a vital reference point for understanding processes that took place later in Sudan.

A critical examination using the characteristics listed above shows that the Jewish community in Sudan was a very modern community. In what follows I present data that supports this, I suggest an explanation for these findings and I comment on the nature of modernity in this community in comparison to other Muslim and Jewish communities in the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century.

Modernization trends in Egypt and its surroundings

There were significant differences between French and British colonies, between East and West Africa, and between the Jews in these countries and the Lebanese and Syrians.¹⁸ The Jewish community in Egypt in the modern era was a community of immigrants, and this fact has significant meaning for understanding the processes that took place in the community and understanding the consciousness of its members. Its world was a heterogeneous space, nationally and culturally, founded on content and ideas that were adopted from the Ottoman Empire, from Western Europe and from Mediterranean countries.¹⁹ They developed a bourgeois self-image, itself a

17. Useful background on the British and Egyptian interests can be found in P.M. Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan From the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961); P.M. Holt and M.W. Daly, *A History of the Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).

18. A. Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (London: Hurst, 2014), pp. 91–7. He mainly discusses the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the period in which the background included the Dreyfus Trial and the waves of anti-Semitism that accompanied it.

19. D. Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews Of Egypt: An Imagined Bourgeoisie, 1880s–1950s* (Routledge: London and New York, 2015), p. 1.

characteristic of modernity.²⁰ Joel Beinin characterized the Jews of Egypt in the modern period: ‘The Jews of Egypt were always already a heterogeneous community of cosmopolitan hybrids.’²¹ Many of the community members were involved in retail and wholesale commerce, banking, law, insurance, journalism and medicine. They had command of several European languages (mainly English, French and Italian), and benefited, even if passively, from colonialism.²² Beinin even adopted the term ‘colonial capitalism’.²³

The situation of the Greek immigrants in Egypt was similar. Among them were wealthy individuals who had a significant impact on the development of the economy and culture in Egypt, and they were initially harmed by the transition from a colonial economy to a nationalized economy during the 1940s, and even more so following the 1952 revolution led by the Free Officers Movement. Studies by Dalachanis and Abdulhaq clarify the similarity between these two communities.²⁴

Sources

So far as I know, a comprehensive monograph on the lives of Jews in Sudan during the first half of the twentieth century has not yet been written. The foundational work about the history of the community is the book *Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi: Jews of the Sudan*, by Eli Malka, who was not and did not purport to be a professional historian. There is a lot of beneficial information in the book; I was able to verify many of the details and the book is rich in insights. Yet it is the story of one member of the community from among the main spokespeople, weaving together the history of the community with his own personal story. Professor Robert Kramer, an important social historian from St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin,

20. Ibid., p. 7.

21. Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, p. 6.

22. Ibid., pp. 20, 77, 88, 244.

23. Ibid., pp. 249–59. See also the brief and useful survey in J. Beinin, *Workers and Thieves: Labor Movements and Popular Uprising in Tunisia and Egypt* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), pp. 10–12.

24. N. Abdulhaq, *Jewish and Greek Communities in Egypt: Entrepreneurship and Business before Nasser* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016); A. Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt: Diaspora Politics and Emigration 1937–1962* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017). The name of Abdulhaq's book testifies to the significant similarity found in the two communities. Dalachanis's description is less explicit, but searching his index under ‘Greek Jews in Egypt’ and ‘Jewish community in Egypt’ reveals that similar and sometimes even identical processes took place in the two communities.

authored some important articles about the complex and fluid identity of the members of the Bassiouni family, who were forced to convert to Islam in the time of the Mahdi (1885–98) – that is, before the establishment of the community. The father of the family, Ben-Zion Koshti, later served as the first president of the community.²⁵ Previous studies have discussed various aspects of Rabbi Shlomo Malka and his literary works,²⁶ and also the process of the community’s dissolution²⁷ and the remnants of the Jewish cemetery in Khartoum and their significance.²⁸ The exposition I present below is the fruit of an interest of twenty years in this fascinating community. However, it should be considered as preliminary and even perhaps only as a reference point, for its foundation is, at least in my opinion, only partial, random and inadequate.

Modern characteristics of the Jewish community in Sudan

Occupations of the community members

From the first arrival of the Jews in Sudan towards the end of the nineteenth century, they were employed in commerce and in import–export.²⁹ Even Rabbi Malka understood early on after his arrival in Sudan that he could not support himself only in the traditional arts of a rabbi (as a *hazzan*, teacher, ritual slaughterer and *mohel*) and acquired for himself a plant that produced sesame oil and a macaroni factory.³⁰ As time went on, the businesses developed, the occupations became more varied and the integration into the

25. R.S. Kramer, ‘The Death of Bassiouni: A Case of Complex Identity in the Sudan’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 49:1 (2015), pp. 95–107; R.S. Kramer, ‘Jewish-Muslims or Muslim-Jews? Negotiated Identity in Sudanese History’, Seventh International Sudan Studies Conference, April 2006; R.S. Kramer, ‘Muslim or Muslimani? Christian–Muslim Relations in a Nineteenth Century “Islamist City”’, Third International Colloquium, Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, Northwestern University, 23 May 2003. On the experience of forced conversion and its stamp on the history of the community, see J. Leibovitz, ‘Les Juifs au Soudan: Du Mahométisme du Mahdi au libéralisme de nos jours’, *Archives Israélites* 121–4 (5 November 1935); N. Ilan, ‘The Forced Conversion of the Jews of Sudan and its Impact on the Community’, in A. Elkayam and Y. Kaplan (eds), *Conceal the Outcasts: Jews with Hidden Identities* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2016), pp. 317–28; Ilan, *The Community Register*, pp. 47–8; Malka, *Jacob’s Children*, pp. 16, 19–20, 31, 34–5, 56.

26. In addition to the references cited above, see N. Ilan, ‘Rabbi Solomon Malka’s Commentary on the Song of Songs’, *Studies in Arabic and Islamic Culture* 2 (2006), pp. 33–56.

27. Ilan, ‘Thus the Jewish Community in Sudan Ended’.

28. N. Ilan and H. Motzen, ‘The Remnants of the Jewish Cemetery in Khartoum’, *Pe’amim* 141 (2005), pp. 139–84 (in Hebrew).

29. Malka, *Jacob’s Children*, pp. 19, 25, 51–3, 56–64.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

mechanisms of British rule in Sudan were strengthened, in banking, insurance businesses, the postal service, in shipping, in engineering services and in the food industry.³¹ The first optician in Khartoum was Morris Goldenberg, who came from Cairo.³² Liza Weiss, a Jewish refugee from Germany, was a photographer.³³ A refugee couple from Germany, Jimmy and Toni Cain, established the only music hall and cabaret in Khartoum.³⁴ These examples represent the varied modern occupations of the Jews of Sudan. There is nothing surprising or exceptional about these occupations. Jews were active in these occupations elsewhere in the Middle East, as were Syrians, Lebanese, Armenians and Greeks.³⁵

Some issues of marriage according to the Community Register

The agreements for arranged marriages and the *ketubot* (marriage contracts) documented in the register open a window on the economic situation of the marriage partners and their parents, and provide hints about the customs that took place around weddings. In some of the arranged marriage agreements, a specific sum was allocated for acquiring an apartment or a shop, and these sums can serve as a reference point for assessing the value of the properties, on the one hand, and the marriage contract, on the other.³⁶ In some of the arranged marriage agreements, various items are listed that the parents of the bride (in the decisive majority of the documents, the father) commit to

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–4.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Some examples: D. Arad, 'The Jews in Local Economy', Y. Ben-Naeh (ed.), *Turkey* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and Hebrew University, 2009), pp. 41–56; U.M. Kupferschmidt, 'Economy', in N. Ilan (ed.), *Egypt* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and Hebrew University, 2008), pp. 49–66; T. Lecker-Darvish, 'Economy', in H. Saadoun (ed.), *Iraq* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and Hebrew University, 2002), pp. 39–49; O.C. Meron, 'Economy', in E. Ginio (ed.) *Greece* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and Hebrew University, 2014), pp. 93–116; D. Tsadik, 'The Jews in the Local Economy', in H. Saadoun (ed.) *Iran* (Volumes from Jewish Communities in the East in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries series; in Hebrew: Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and Hebrew University, 2005), pp. 41–54.

36. Data on the value of immovable property are found in six documents: Document 18 (2 July 1911) – 150 BP (= British pounds) Cost of a house in Omdurman (value of the property) and 250 BP for building it; Document 36 (1 December 1918) – a house in Omdurman worth 400 EP (= Egyptian pounds); Document 52 (26 April 1924) – property in Khartoum Bahri worth 100 Egyptian guineas; Document 63 – a shop worth 100 guineas (29 October 1925); Document 64 (15 November 1925) – House in Khartoum worth 400 Egyptian guineas; Document 74 (18 August 1929) – House in Khartoum worth 300 Egyptian guineas.

providing their daughter, mostly in standard language,³⁷ but in some cases other items are added, such as depositing a sum of funds in an account in the woman's name,³⁸ purchasing stock certificates in the bride's name,³⁹ depositing post-dated certificates of the dowry funds in advance with the family of the groom,⁴⁰ providing gems to the bride as part of her dowry⁴¹ and using part of the dowry as a loan kept by the father of the bride in exchange for monthly interest paid to the couple.⁴² These conditions testify to the economic wherewithal of the parties and the methods of investment that were considered profitable in Khartoum during this period.

In some of the marriage certificates and in a very few of the arranged marriage agreements, the age of the couple is noted. This is a useful statistic showing that (a) in most cases (but not always) the men were a few years older than their wives; (b) the average age of the marrying parties was in their mid-twenties and older – that is, after the groom had become economically established and could support an independent family unit. This delaying of marriage is a clear sign of a modern community, differing from traditional communities in which the marriage age is lower. This indicator was valid for all Jewish communities, Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi, in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas.

One of the most burning social and economic issues in Egypt in the 1930s and 1940s was the high *mohar* (dota) that young men were required to pay for their brides, an economic burden that caused many of them to delay marriage or to live with their girlfriends without an official marriage ceremony, despite the wishes of many parents and representatives of the religious institutions. There were also political aspects of this issue in the struggle against the British.⁴³ The issue also reverberated in Sudan, as can

37. Almost always a sum of money was set that the father of the bride or her brothers (if the father was deceased) promised to give her in cash, and in most instances an additional sum was noted for clothes, jewellery and furniture.

38. Document 16 (6 April 1911).

39. Document 63 (29 October 1925).

40. Document 83 (19 February 1933).

41. Document 72 ('precious gems'), 38, 44, 57, 74 ('crystal'). It may be assumed that in some of the engagement agreements and marriage certificates which adopt general language regarding jewellery and gold ornaments, it was used intentionally, and the bride also received gems and crystal.

42. Document 105 (27 April 1940).

43. See, for example, H. Kholoussy, 'The Nationalization of Marriage in Monarchical Egypt', in A. Goldschmidt, A.J. Johnson and B.A. Salmoni (eds), *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919–1952* (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), pp. 317–50; her central claim is that the Egyptian government enacted marriage laws in order to take a more active part in creating a

be seen in the articles of Rabbi Shlomo Malka on the subject in the Arabic Jewish newspaper *El-Shams* (The Sun), published in Cairo from 1934 to 1948.⁴⁴

On the status of women

Even though the community register is based on legal documents in fixed, meticulous language, within it there can be found reverberations of changes that took place in the status of women in the Jewish community in Sudan.⁴⁵ First of all, it is clear that the majority of women, certainly from the 1920s on, knew how to read and write. This matter becomes clear from their signatures on copies of marriage certificates, in contrast to the situation in the first years of the register's existence, in which we find several marriage certificates on which a man signed in the name of the woman, and it is most likely that this derived from the lack of literacy skills among these women.⁴⁶ The divorce conditions between Yosef Elkayam and his wife Roza are instructive in the context discussed here. Among other matters, the two agreed that:

the wife Roza may live independently and may occupy herself in business and support herself, and her husband Yosef may not prevent her and may not make any claim against her from now until one year has passed ... the wife also accepts that the business or work that she will do will be in the city of Khartoum...⁴⁷

This document shows a woman who received permission from the rabbis to live for several months (up to a year) independent from her husband and to work to support herself without being divorced. The fact of this decision testifies to her ability to support herself by her own labours – both from the point of view of her acceptance in the community and from the point of

nationalist, nuclear, modern family (p. 319). She also discusses marriage of minors, deterrence against divorce, and the clear direction towards monogamy. See also idem, 'Internationalizing Interwar Egypt's Bachelor Tax Proposal: The Emasculation of the State and Its Single Sons', in H. Rizzo (ed.), *Masculinities in Egypt and the Arab World* (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2014), pp. 13, 26–7.

44. On this newspaper, see V. Nahmias, 'Al shams – A Jewish Newspaper in Egypt, 1934–1948', *Pe'amim* 16 (1983), pp. 129–41 (in Hebrew). Rabbi Malka's articles were published in issues 240 (5 May 1939), p. 2, 330 (24 January 1941), p. 3, and continuing in 331 (31 January 1941), p. 2, 367 (17 October 1941), p. 2. He also wrote about family planning as a social problem in issue 248 (30 June 1939), p. 2, and about relationships between boys and girls in issue 482 (10 March 1944), p. 4.

45. For a wider discussion of this issue see, Ilan, 'Revolutionism and Conservatism'.

46. Documents 4, 5, 6, 13 and 16, from the first years of the community.

47. Document 9 (18 August 1909).

view of her skills that enabled her to support herself without relying on her husband. The condition that she must work in Khartoum may have derived from their wish that she and her actions be supervised. Alternatively, from a concern for her and from a recognition that if she wished to continue to live in a Jewish community in those days (1909), there was no place in Sudan other than Khartoum with a functioning Jewish community.⁴⁸

In some of the arranged marriage and engagement agreements there was an explicit condition that part of the dowry would be invested in a property that was registered in the name of the bride and would continue to be registered thus even after her marriage,⁴⁹ or that it would be deposited in a bank account in her name;⁵⁰ and in one instance the two conditions appear as one in an arranged marriage agreement.⁵¹ These conditions can be interpreted in two contradictory ways: on the one hand they testify to egalitarian treatment of women as property owners, while preserving their economic independence even after marriage; but on the other hand perhaps they show precisely the weakness of women's status, such that sometimes parents were diligent to ensure their daughter had an economic 'anchor', without which she was liable to face difficulty in supporting herself at a time of crisis in her marriage.

48. On this entire matter, see Ilan, *The Community Register*, p. 26.

49. Document 18: In the arranged marriage of Rachel daughter of Khidr Daoud with Herman Bralenstein 'Senior Khidr Daoud will be obligated to give his daughter in her dowry a total of 500 English pounds ... and 150 of the British pounds mentioned above will be a home that he has in the city of Omdurman in the 4th quarter, 200 of the sum mentioned will be for the purposes of building this house ... the engaged man accepts that the house will be registered in the government registry in the name of the wife...'. In the end, the two did not marry each other, and from the community register we see that the young man married another young woman about two and a half years later, and this young lady married only more than six years later. In her marriage certificate (Document 36) it is written that 'The house and the livestock in her name in the register of Omdurman number 741, quarter 3, neighbourhood 4, in the sum of 400 Egyptian pounds. And the livestock will stay in her name also after the marriage.' Thus also in the conditions of the marriage arrangement of Esther Baruch with David Ben Faraj Yeshuah Daoud (Document 64): 'A. Since the engaged girl Esther Ezra is still a minor and since her dear guardian uncle Saleh Baruch, may God bless and keep him, and her mother Mrs Rachel Ezra agreed to give her in her dowry a sum of 540 Egyptian guineas, from which 400 Egyptian guineas will be taken for a house in the city of Khartoum, it will be written in the name of the engaged girl Esther Ezra and the house will be in the new name by which she is called after her marriage which will be Esther Daoud Faraj...'

50. Thus in the engagement of Lea, daughter of Boris Kanzer with Leon Mannifker (Document 16): 'The bride will put into her marriage agreement a sum of 100 Egyptian guineas in cash on the condition that this sum will be placed in the bank in the name of the bride.'

51. In the marriage arrangement of Nazima (!) Aboudi with Saleh Sasson her groom (Document 63): 'The father of the girl Yosef Aboudi accepted upon himself to give his daughter a dowry of 150 Egyptian guineas in cash: with 50 Egyptian guineas he will buy certificates in the mortgage bank and 100 guineas will be placed in the hands of the husband, the price of his shop which Mr Saleh Sasson has agreed to register in the government registry in the name of the engaged girl, Nazima...'

In the arranged marriage conditions of Rachel Aelyon with Edgar Ben Rubi, the mother of the bride committed to ‘bring her the piano that she has at home’ and this indeed happened, as was explicitly noted in her marriage certificate.⁵² Aside from the charm of the story, this fact accords with the general impression that the Jews of Khartoum were among the economic and cultural elite, as intended by the British, and the piano was part of this cultural landscape.

Thus it was also in the family of Rabbi Malka. His eldest daughter, Esther, taught piano after being certified for this by the Church Missionary Society.⁵³ His daughter Rachel was the first woman in Khartoum who drove a car.⁵⁴ Their sister Sarah was an outstanding basketball player in high school.⁵⁵ Their youngest sister Victorine was a professional musician and a talented artist.⁵⁶ Esther Levy, the daughter of Ben-Zion Koshti, the first president of the community, was the first Jewish woman who worked as a teacher and educator in the teacher training college in Khartoum and even wrote two books on education with a local English professor. She studied art and drawing at Bezalel College in Jerusalem, and by virtue of her guidance the Jewish women in Khartoum were able to be seamstresses for the Mahdi women. The point being, they had close access to the Mahdi’s family, who were the ‘elites of the elites’ in northern Sudan. The fact that some Jewish women had access to a family considered ‘holy’ and possessors of *baraka* would have sharply elevated the Jewish women’s status in the eyes of many Sudanese. Also, being a seamstress or tailor to the Mahdi’s and Khalifa’s families was considered an honour and a privilege, and was often a hereditary position.⁵⁷ Among her other accomplishments, she was the first principal of the school for girls in Khartoum in the 1930s.⁵⁸

Rabbi Malka’s works

The main arena in which Rabbi Shlomo Malka chose to express himself in writing was the newspaper *El-Shams*, which was published in Cairo from

52. Document 73 (marriage arrangement), 87 (marriage certificate).

53. D.S. Malka, *From Generation to Generation: A Legacy of Faith and Tolerance* (North Bergen NJ: Book Mart Press, 1999), p. 166.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

56. See note 44 above.

57. Ilan, ‘The Forced Conversion of the Jews of Sudan’, p. 324, note 24; Malka, *Jacob’s Children*, p. 26.

58. Kramer, ‘The death of Bassiouni’, p. 102.

1934 until May 1948, and in which he published approximately two hundred articles.⁵⁹ This is a fact of great significance. Rabbi Malka was educated in traditional Jewish learning institutions (*yeshivot*) in Morocco, and from the time he emigrated to Palestine he continued to study in *yeshivot* until he was certified as a rabbi and a religious judge. The languages he knew were thus Moroccan Judeo-Arabic, Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic. The ‘bookshelf’ on which he was raised was a traditional bookshelf on which were mainly books of Jewish law (Halakha) and commentaries. His decision to write in a newspaper that appeared in Egypt thus involved acquiring a new language – standard modern Arabic, including the Arabic alphabet, and adapting the capability for expression in it.⁶⁰ He had to adapt himself to a very different way of expression than he was used to, for newspaper writing, even writing opinions and not news, is very different from rabbinic writing, even if they have a deep, vital link.⁶¹ Thus this was really a strategic decision of Rabbi Malka, whose significance is that his imagined audience were not yeshiva students and not even those who came to the synagogue in Khartoum, but rather a much wider audience, mainly outside of Sudan, whose connection to maintaining the commandments and to a traditional way of life was precarious, vague and mainly non-binding. Through his actions, Rabbi Malka declared that the intended audience he aimed to influence was much broader and more diverse than the membership of the community in Khartoum.⁶²

Rabbi Malka was not exceptional in his approach; rather, he was well integrated into the trend that characterized many rabbis in Islamic countries in the first half of the twentieth century. Since they were not exposed to the reforms in Western Europe in the first half of the eighteenth century, they did not need to develop ‘immunity’ against it in the image of European Jewish orthodoxy and ultra-orthodoxy. While many rabbis in Europe saw modernity as a threat, the rabbis of the east and the Islamic countries mainly related to it as a challenge.⁶³ This was the approach of Rabbi Malka in Sudan.

59. Nahmias, ‘Al-Shams – Jewish newspaper in Egypt, 1934–1948’.

60. N. Ilan, ‘Post-Assimilation Judeo-Arabic’, in A. Ettinger and D. Bar-Ma’oz (eds), *Mitiv Yosef: Jubilee Volume in Honor of Yosef Tobi*, vol. 3 (In Hebrew; Haifa: Center for the Study of Jewish Culture in Spain and Islamic Countries, University of Haifa, 2011), pp. 250–65.

61. Over 20 years ago, Professor Menachem Blondheim showed how the Jewish press fulfilled a function similar to the traditional sermon; see M. Blondheim, ‘Media and Cultures in Transition: From the Traditional Sermon to the Jewish Press’, *Kesher* 21 (1997), pp. 63–79 (in Hebrew).

62. I discuss this at length in Ilan, ‘From Morocco to Sudan’, pp. 101–8.

63. Zvi Zohar has been writing on this topic for decades; see, for example, Z. Zohar, ‘Halakhic

In his articles there are two broad thematic divisions: sermons on the weekly Torah portions⁶⁴ and commentary on the Song of Songs.⁶⁵ In addition to these, Rabbi Malka's articles focused on five main topics: Surveys of the Sages of Israel, Philosophy and Research, the Jewish Calendar and Jewish Holidays, Current Issues,⁶⁶ and Ethical Matters. It is therefore clearly evident that Rabbi Malka perceived himself as a rabbi who was continuing the tradition of his forefathers from the perspective of the contents of his messages, and at the same time was attentive to the needs of his time and ways of facing them.

*Class photograph*⁶⁷

I have a class photograph of the students at the British Unity High School for Girls in Khartoum, which was taken in the spring of 1948 (FIGURE 2). Even from this photograph it is possible to learn something about the modern character of the Jewish community in Sudan.⁶⁸

It is a black-and-white photograph; a posed picture, as is usual in class photographs. The furnishings are made of wood: the floor, the chairs and

Responses of Syrian and Egyptian Rabbinical Authorities to Social and Technological Change', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986), pp. 18–51; 'Sephardic Rabbinic Responses to Modernity: Some Central Characteristics', in S. Deshen and W.P. Zenner (eds), *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 46–80; 'Sephardic Religious Thought in Israel: Aspects of the Theology of Rabbi Haim David HaLevi', in K. Avruch and W.P. Zenner (eds), *Critical Essays on Israeli Society, Religion, and Government* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 115–36; 'Religion: Rabbinic Tradition and the Response to Modernity', in R. Spector Simon, M.M. Laskier, and S. Reguer (eds), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 65–84; 'On European Jewish Orthodoxy, Sephardic Tradition, and the Shas Movement', in E. Ben-Rafael, T. Gergely, and Y. Gorny (eds), *Jewry between Tradition and Secularism: Europe and Israel Compared* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 133–50; 'The Sephardic Halakhic Tradition in the Twentieth Century', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 22 (2008), pp. 119–49; 'What All Jews Can Learn from Great Sephardic Rabbis of Recent Centuries', *Conversations* 13 (2012), pp. 26–38; 21 (2015), pp. 33–46.

64. These were published in Cairo at the beginning of 1949, shortly before his death (he passed away on the 5th of Nisan 5709, 4 April 1949), as a book entitled *Al-Mukhtār fi Tafsīr al-Tawrah* (A Selection of Commentaries on the Torah; in Arabic). I have a copy in which is an inscription in his handwriting in Arabic to his grandson, Albert Braunstein; the date is 23 February 1949.

65. See note 8 above.

66. Here is a list of the topics: Marriage, Social Diseases and Religious Treatment of Them, Planned Births, Nazi Germany, Support for the Allied Armies, The End of Hitler, Support for Hebrew University, The Distress of Rabbis in Egypt, Family Purity, Educating Youth – the Responsibility of Mothers for their Children, Relationships between Boys and Girls. See also note 43 above.

67. N. Ilan, 'Class Photo', *Pe'amim* 150–152 (2017), pp. 115–27.

68. The school was the primary factor in shaping social image in Egypt; see Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews Of Egypt*, p. 9. Education, gender and family influenced the social approaches; *ibid.*, p. 11.

part of the stylized wall that is on the right of the photograph. In the back is a heavy screen, which is gathered together in the middle at the left side, and behind it is a carved wall. Since this is a photo of eight students only, it would have been possible to arrange them in two rows and to photograph their whole bodies and not only their faces. The camera stood underneath the eyeline of the figures in the bottom row, so that the direction of the photograph is from bottom to top, a known technique that was intended to increase the stature of the young women being photographed. All the figures in the photograph are looking directly at the photographer with their mouths closed. Only one (Cleo) smiles a restrained smile.

The photograph was taken at the end of 11th grade: that is, one year before the eight students finished their studies at the institution.⁶⁹ In the top row (from right to left): Anahid (an Armenian Christian), Irene (a Coptic Christian), Cleo(patra)⁷⁰ (a Greek Christian), Margot Ashkenazi (a Jew).⁷¹ In the bottom row (from right to left): Mary (a Greek Christian), Madeline (a Coptic Christian), Mrs Williams (the English and French teacher), Mrs Junor (the School principal),⁷² Fatima (a Muslim), Su'ad (a Muslim).⁷³ Anahid, Irene,

69. Interview with Mrs Miriam (Margot) Turgeman (née Ashkenazi) in her home in Jerusalem, 5 January 2016.

70. About ten years ago she was identified as Dasfina. The day after the interview, 6 January 2016, I spoke again with Mrs Turgeman. She was aware of the different identification. She said that the first identification had been in error, and stated clearly that the name of the student was Cleo, a short form of Cleopatra.

71. Margot (Miriam) Ashkenazi was born on 26 November 1931, in the city of Wad Madani, located on the bank of the Blue Nile, about 175 kilometres south of Khartoum; see Ilan, *The Community Register*, map on page 8. Her parents were Samuel (ben) Avraham Ashkenazi and Sarina (bat) Avraham Ades. Her father was born in Lebanon. Her grandfather, her father's father, was born in Vienna and was a tailor. When he emigrated to Lebanon he was nicknamed 'the Ashkenazi' by the local Jews, and the nickname became the family name. Her father arrived in Sudan from Egypt in 1926. On the 24th of Kislev 5688, 18 December 1927, her parents were married in Wad Madani; see Ilan, *The Community Register*, pp. 70–71. When she was three and a half years old (!) her father sent her, accompanied by her sister, who was two years older, to study in a boarding school run by nuns in Khartoum. There were other Jewish girls there with them. At the boarding school they learned English, French, Arabic and Italian. At the age of 5, she could already read and write in Arabic and in English. Margot spent eight years there. In the meantime, her mother moved to Khartoum and her father followed after her. From the age of 11 she continued to study in a school run by nuns (Sisters' school), but not as a boarding student. For the last three years (grades 10–12) she studied at the Unity High School, a private institution under the auspices of the British government. Her father hoped that she would study pharmacy in university, but she became a statistician in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Margot went to Israel with her mother in 1954 when she was 23 years old to participate in one of her uncle's weddings, and at that time both of them decided to remain in Israel.

72. Both were British in origin.

73. At the time she gave me the photograph about a decade ago, Mrs Turgeman noted that this was Aziza. In the interview, she called her Su'ad, and when I asked her again regarding the



FIGURE 2 Diploma class, eleventh grade, of the British Unity High School for Girls, Khartoum, Sudan in spring of 1948. *Courtesy of Ashkenazi family, Jerusalem.*

Cleo, Margot and Mary are light-skinned, Madeline and Su'ad (Aziza) have brown skin but have very different facial features, which testify to different ethnic backgrounds (Madeline is Egyptian or Sudanese and Su'ad is Indian),⁷⁴ and Fatima is black with clearly African facial features. The students' hair is combed and loose, except for Fatima whose hair is put up. The principal and teacher have their hair up. Their hairstyles are more conservative and suited to their age and station.

The students and the principal wear modern, white sandals, flat or with a small heel. Cleo and Margot's sandals are visible behind the chairs of the teacher and Fatima, and thus it is clear that they and their two classmates in the same row were photographed standing. Only the teacher wears black shoes. The principal and the teacher rest their left hands on their right hands. All the students wear elegantly designed white dresses with short sleeves. Four

identification, she said decisively that her name was indeed Su'ad. Su'ad was born in Sudan. Her father was a wholesale dealer in fuel on behalf of the British.

74. In the interview Mrs Turgeman insisted that Su'ad was a local Sudanese and not of Indian descent, despite her facial features.

of them have very short sleeves (Anahid, Irene, Cleo and Madeline). Half of the dresses hug the neck tightly and half of them are open a little at the neck in a small triangle. Madeline is the only one who wears a cross around her neck.⁷⁵ At least two of the students (Mary and Fatima; it is impossible to tell with the others) are wearing a watch on their left hand, and so is the principal. The students hold in their hands a rolled certificate – the right hand holds the bottom of the certificate and the left hand hugs the upper part. It is possible to discern on each of them the symbol of the school on the upper part of the certificate, and it is clear that this detail is part of the staging of the event. With no title on the photograph, the symbol serves to identify the institution. Those sitting in the front row close their knees tightly and cross their feet together. All the figures are upright, a position that expresses discipline and control by the institution, and at the same time also expresses the status and self-confidence of the students.

It is clear that the school administration accepted students not on the basis of their faith, and that skin colour and ethnic background were not a barrier to students who wished to learn there. The Christians were a minority in Khartoum. The relative majority of Christian students apparently reflects the preference for British education among their parents, even if they themselves were not subjects of the empire, as their religious background hints.

It is easy to imagine that communication between the students took place in Arabic, in the local dialect; if so, the students spoke three languages – one local (Arabic) and two Western European (English and French). But in truth they also learned Italian, in which case they would have spoken four languages.⁷⁶ Margot also knew Hebrew at a limited level. The honoured status of English, French and Italian fits well with the British presence in Sudan in those days and with the imperialist, colonialist approach, which saw the countries of Western Europe as the cultural centre and not only the centre of government. It is thus no wonder that the dress of the principal, the teacher and the graduates is in accordance with fashions in Paris, Rome and London in those days. Margot remembers the studies as a good and pleasant

75. Clothing is a clear expression of identity and cultural perspective. On clothing as an expression of modernity in Egypt in the twentieth century, see N.Y. Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. 2–4, 57–65.

76. Interview (n. 69, above).

experience. She especially enjoyed studying French; at the graduation party she chose to give a speech in that language.⁷⁷

The education system was a central means, though not the only one, for inculcating the colonial rulers' culture, and the reason for this is clear: thus it was certainly possible to influence the younger generation, and through this also to influence the present generation, the parents. This principle applies to every country that was conquered by European nations. Colonial education was intended not to Christianize the locals nor to inculcate British culture but rather to cultivate an educated elite that would serve as mediators between the locals and the foreign rulers.⁷⁸ This was also the case in Sudan.⁷⁹

The education system in Sudan developed slowly from the beginning of the twentieth century, just after Sudan was conquered by the British. Education for boys preceded education for girls.⁸⁰ Alongside schools that were established and run by locals, schools were also established by foreigners.⁸¹ The commencement of Western influence on the educational system took place only after the Condominium Agreement.⁸² The curriculum was intended to train civil servants and not to provide a liberal education. Only after the Second World War did the curriculum change substantially.⁸³

The Unity High School for girls, founded in 1928 by the Church Missionary Society, was an extension of a parent institution in Cambridge. The school was exceptional in that it educated for unity and did not engage in

77. Interview (n. 69, above). Prof. Kramer wrote to me on 1 January 2017 that he remembers the Bassiounis telling him, c.1986, that they had always spoken French or English at home, and indeed their French and English were flawless. They could switch from Sudanese Arabic to English to French without a pause. He also heard them speak a Syrian Arabic dialect. He suspects that this was fairly common among Sudan's Jews, especially the ones who also studied in Beirut.

78. See, for example, O.M. Kobo, *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms* (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2012) pp. 12–13, 175, 241, 323–5.

79. 'Education', in R.A. Lobban, R.S. Kramer and C. Fluehr-Lobban, *Historical Dictionary of the Sudan* (Lanham MD and London: Scarecrow Press, 2002), pp. 84–5; L. Sandell, *English Language in Sudan: A History of its Teachings and Politics* (London: Ithaca Press, 1982), pp. 11–33.

80. Holt, *Modern History*, p. 202; I. Beasley, *Before the Wind Changed: People, Places and Education in the Sudan* (ed. J. Starkey; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 342–80; M.O. Beshir, *Educational Development in the Sudan 1898–1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 45–50, 69, 84–5; R.O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 47; M.W. Daly, *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1934–1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 104–14, 193–8. In Egypt, too, education for girls developed after education for boys and more slowly. An important discussion of the entire topic is found in H. Morrison, *Childhood and Colonial Modernity in Egypt* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 12–21, 85–98.

81. *The Sudan: A Record of Progress 1898–1947* (Khartoum: The Sudan Government, 1947), pp. 19–20; on the education of girls, see p. 25.

82. Holt, *Modern History*, p. 194.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–5; Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, p. 125.

missionary activities, and therefore the curriculum was mainly secular in character. Its objective was to widen the students' horizons and to teach them concepts of freedom.⁸⁴ In accordance with this, the students took matriculation exams administered by the school in Cambridge, and received their graduation certificates from there at the end of their studies. The entire teaching staff of the school were women who came from England, from Scotland and from Ireland. The students wore uniforms, as was accepted in those days. Sport was encouraged in the school and the students played tennis and basketball.⁸⁵ The relationships between the students were excellent.⁸⁶ The small number of students testify that high-school studies for girls in a quality institution in Khartoum in the 1940s were not a given.⁸⁷ On the other hand, a class with eight students could not have been economically viable. It must therefore be assumed that the considerations in operating an unprofitable educational institution were ideological and not economic, and they integrated well with the sense of mission of the British government, as part of the message of modernization and the systematic effort to instil it at least in Khartoum, the capital.

The composition of the graduating class shows something about the educational perspective of their parents. The Muslim and Jewish parents of the graduates apparently believed that the quality of education that the school was able to provide was more important than any other consideration, and therefore chose to send their daughters to an institution with a clearly British character. The cost of tuition was especially low: twice a year the parents paid £2 (sterling) in book loan fees.⁸⁸ It can also be assumed that the choice of a modern and European educational institution reflects the stance of the parents on the question of modernization and the trend towards westernization. At the head of this approach among the Jews of Sudan was, as stated, Rabbi Shlomo Malka, the spiritual leader of the community from 1906 to 1949.

In the years 1954, 1957 and 1963 there were five marriages in the community; in the rest of the years there were fewer, and sometime a year went

84. Beshir, *Educational Development*, p. 86. Beasley, *Before the Wind Changed*, devotes a special section to this institution; see pp. 370–72.

85. Interview (n. 69, above).

86. Interview (n. 69, above).

87. In 12th grade, two additional students joined the class; interview (n. 69, above).

88. Interview (n. 69, above).

by with no marriage taking place.⁸⁹ The significance of this finding is that the birth rate in the community was too small to enable the operation of an autonomous educational system, one of the clear characteristics of Jewish communities in most of the Diaspora. But this negative figure exposes a small part of the very modern image of the Jewish community in Khartoum. And with this, Jewish identity was strong among the decisive majority of the young people in the community in the 1930s and 1940s. The young people felt part of the community even though they were educated in general educational institutions and even if there was not strict and full observance of the commandments in their homes.

To estimate the full significance of the class photograph, the observer must see class photographs from the rest of the high schools in Khartoum for the same year, to pay attention to the presence and absence of girls in them, and to place by their side 'class photographs' of the youthful residents of Khartoum who did not go to high school at all that year. In this way it can be clarified whether and how much the class photograph is characteristic of high-school students in Khartoum in 1948 or whether it represents only the students documented in it.

How was the Jewish community of Sudan modern?

The Jews of Egypt perceived themselves and were perceived by others not as oriental and not as European but rather as bearers of a complex identity.⁹⁰ Jacqueline Kahanoff proudly calls this 'Levantinism'.⁹¹ The Jews of Sudan perceived themselves similarly; we may conjecture due to the inspiration and unconscious influence of the Egyptian Jewish community.

The arrival of the Jews in Sudan mainly due to economic considerations and the occupations they chose for themselves reflect their identification with British colonialism and with the economic opportunities embedded therein.⁹² They were able to take advantage of technological development.

89. See Ilan, *The Community Register*, p. 19.

90. Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt*, p. 43.

91. D.A. Starr and S. Somekh (eds), *Mongrels or Marvels: The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2011). See also R. Snir, 'Arabness, Egyptianness, Zionism, and Cosmopolitanism: The Arabic Cultural and Journalistic Activities of Egyptian Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Orientalia Suecana* LV (2006), pp. 133–64.

92. A. Bar-Levav, 'Secularization among Jews in Islamic Countries', in A. Bar-Levav, R. Margolin

Their lives were a dynamic fusion of respect for the traditions of their ancestors, selective adoption of parts of it and at the same time internalization of secular foundations in their lives, mainly in the practical sphere and less out of abstract philosophical study. Because the great majority of the community members were not Ashkenazim, they adopted an integrating and non-dichotomous approach to the question of their identity. Their secularity was not anti-religious like that which developed in Europe.⁹³ The natural reference group in their eyes was the British and not the locals, and it is thus no wonder that they looked like them and tried to live like them and with them. Thus they sent their sons and daughters to study in the best British educational institutions in Khartoum, and their children completely internalized the values of modernity in their way of life. The clearest expression of this, it seems to me, is the issue of the status of women, as I showed above.

Indeed, this is how things were among the Jewish elites in other communities, such as Egypt and Lebanon, and in some of the urban Jewish communities in North Africa, in Iraq, in Greece and in Turkey. The uniqueness of the Jewish community in Sudan is that it was a very young community, minute and far from recognized centres. The few who dared to distance themselves this far were full of energy and capability. They served as a support group for one another, and in large measure as internal sources of inspiration. In the long-standing communities I listed above there were rich and poor, educated and unschooled, traditionalists and conservatives alongside moderns. Thus was the case also in the Jewish community in Egypt, which was, as I have noted, a community of immigrants. In contrast to all these, the Jewish community in Sudan was only modern, and in this it was unique in contrast to all other communities, even in Egypt. As in the communities of Cairo and Alexandria, in the Jewish community in Khartoum members cleaved to symbols of British culture and at the same time preserved their Jewish and Middle Eastern identity. They thus shaped a unique example of non-European modernity, based on a complex identity that neither rejected nor denied traditional components but rather wove them together with modern components, creating a proud and impressive Levantine identity.

and S. Feiner (eds), *Secularization in Jewish Culture*, vol. 1 (Ra'anana: The Open University, 2012), pp. 295–342, esp. pp. 298–300, 304, 307–8.

93. See Z. Zohar, *Luminous Face of the East: Jewish Law and Thought among Sages in the Middle East* (in Hebrew; B'nei Brak: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2006) pp. 353–64, 437–8.