

Andrew Buckser

To Be or Not To Be: Modernity and Community among the Jews of Denmark

For at least the past century, Danish Jews have been worried about their community's longterm survival, as intermarriage and immersion in Danish culture seem to draw members away from Judaism. Despite these trends, they have maintained a strikingly active and engaged religious and cultural community. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among Danish Jews, this article suggests reasons for this group's persistent vitality. It suggests that Jewish identity provides a valuable resource in contemporary Denmark, where modern social processes have made individual identity ever more fragile and uncertain. Like other ethnic identities, Jewishness offers a sense of self that seems more firmly rooted than traditional classifications like class and occupation. In addition, Jewishness involves an openness to diversity and an institutional infrastructure that few other ethnicities possess. As a result, Jews can embrace changes and internal disagreements that would shatter most religious or ethnic communities. The article concludes that the Danish Jewish community is stronger and its future less precarious than many of its members believe.

Karen Lisa Goldschmidt Salamon

"If you've been a wrestler, it's become part of your nature"

- Hakoah-wrestler Simon Kurland's story about a journey from Nørrebro, Denmark to Höganäs, Sweden in 1943.

The article is based on an interview with Simon Kurland, born 1923. His narrative recollects the period of the German occupation of Denmark and illustrates the situation of a young Jewish skilled worker and prize winning athletic wrestler suddenly turned refugee. Simon Kurland was a member of the Danish-Jewish athletic association Hakoah, which was founded in 1924. Kurland's two older brothers were both successful wrestlers, one of them being an Olympic winner of silver in Los Angeles 1932. For the following Olympic games he was also selected to represent Denmark, but declined due to the Nazi policies. During these same years, a very active group of young Jewish wrestlers regularly exercised together in Hakoah and became one of Denmark's leading athletic teams. They were all of immigrant background, lived in the same neighbourhood of Copenhagen, and were skilled workers - generally working as artisans or independent shopkeepers. The celebrity of Kurland's older brother and the general fame of the club created a special context for the escape of the young wrestlers. In 1943, Simon Kurland was notified of the intentions of the Nazi occupational forces to deport all Jews by a colleague, who was, himself, a member of the Nazi party. It is highly likely that the Nazi knew about the Kurland family and their renown as elite wrestlers. (Being a wrestler generally served Kurland in relation to people who expressed denigrating views of Jews). Kurland and other young wrestlers tried to find ways of escaping to Sweden, partly by contacting acquaintances in the athletic world. After several dramatic attempts they paid all their savings and were transported to the

small Swedish coastal town of Höganäs by fishing boat. Soon after their arrival, they were received warmly by Swedish wrestling club members, and were invited to stay in private homes. Throughout the following one and a half years, Simon Kurland was helped into new jobs and invited to wrestle in several Swedish cities via his network of local wrestlers. His narrative vividly describes small-town Sweden of that time and the reactions of a young Copenhagen skilled worker on meeting the power structures and hierarchy of provincial society.

Karin Sandvad

SJUF (Scandinavian Jewish Youth Association) as shadkhn

SJUF was founded 3 July 1919. The initiative came from the Norwegian-Jewish youth association “Israelitisk Ungdomsforening.” At the founding general assembly, which took place in Copenhagen, seven Jewish youth associations from Denmark, Norway and Sweden participated. The purpose was to “allow Jewish youth to congregate and infuse it with an increasing enthusiasm for Jewish life and teachings.” SJUF conventions were held annually with the exception of a few years and not during 1940-45, of course. Usually there was an important theme and a keynote Jewish speaker. Another purpose of SJUF was to counter the “increasing numbers of mixed marriages” and this SJUF did since the conventions led to a rich social life where the seeds of many inter-Scandinavian Jewish marriages were planted.

Kaare Bing

From Christian V’s Norwegian Law to 2000

The Norwegian constitution of 1814 says that: “Jews may not enter the Kingdom”. This meant that Jews did not come to reside in Norway until the constitution was changed in 1851 - after prolonged resistance, which the poet Henrik Wergeland attempted to fight.

The years following 1851 saw a slow Jewish growth in the Norwegian population especially around the capital, Oslo, and the large city of Trondheim where Jewish centers were established, with synagogues and communal life. The European anti-Semitism of the 1930s also reached Norway where the ground was fertile for this movement. During the war the conditions for Jews deteriorated rapidly and the catastrophe came in 1942 when the Germans deported 758 Norwegian Jews to Auschwitz - only 28 returned home.

Over 50 years passed before Norway realized the extent of the catastrophe and at government level (through the Skarpnes committee) different kinds of restitution were made to Norwegian Jews and their institutions.

Ida Marie Høeg

Jewish Family Life in Norway - Modern Ways of Traditional Living

Jewish family life has undergone great structural changes during the almost 150 years that Jewish families have lived in Norway. From the time in 1860 when the first family settled in Drammen till today, the Second World War, which halved the Jewish population, has been the most significant factor negatively influencing the continuity of Jewish family life. Other structural factors have been fewer siblings and that mixed marriages and divorce have become more common. Although the Jewish family has undergone great changes during the last generations and has become more like other families, it is still the most significant component of Jewish identity. The article is based on a study of interviews in the fall 1992 with 18 Norwegian Jews between 25 and 50 years old and living in Oslo and Trondheim. The study shows that Jewish social life takes place first and foremost through the family and to a lesser extent through Jewish friends and Jewish organisations. In their own homes Norwegian Jews choose to let Jewish traditions influence their family life in some ways. Even though new ways of life such as mixed marriages and cohabitation with non-Jews have made it more difficult to preserve Jewish values and become involved in Jewish activities, Norwegian Jews have managed to create Jewish homes, to give their children a Jewish upbringing and to carry on some of their rituals according to the orthodox tradition.

Eva-Maria Jansson

A journey through Sweden

Swedish Jewish life has existed outside Stockholm since around 1770 when the first Swedish synagogue was founded in the porto franco port Marstrand. During the period 1782-1838 the so-called "Jewish Law" (with the exception of Stockholm) regulated Jewish settlement in Göteborg, Norrköping and Karlskrona. During the middle of the 1800s gradual deregulation took place and in 1873 settlement became free; however, membership of a Jewish congregation was still required. In the beginning of the 1900s around twenty more or less independent congregations existed but several of them only for a short period of time as is made clear by a series of articles published in 1925 in the SJUF magazine Israeliten. The articles were based on Vilhelm Jacobowsky's travels to the different Jewish congregations two years earlier. As people gradually moved to the three biggest cities and assimilation increased, the number of congregations today has been reduced to Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö but services and other activities take place more or less regularly in several other places.

Lena Bergren

Aspects of the History of Swedish Anti-Semitism

This article discusses possible subdivisions within what has been labelled Propagandistic Anti-Semitism in interwar Sweden. The term Propagandistic Anti-Semitism denotes a specific form of anti-Semitism where negative sentiments towards Jews are central to the proponent's world-view, which contains more or less elaborately expressed elements of conspiracy theory. Anti-Jewish sentiments are openly and consciously

articulated and conveyed in a propagandistic fashion, and mythological legitimation is equalled with or put before more rationalist arguments in favor of the anti-Semitic world-view. In the article, it is suggested that the Propagandistic Anti-Semitism in interwar Sweden can be subdivided into three different variants, each with its specific group of proponents and ideological context. The first variant can be labelled racial anti-Semitism, and the proponents of this type saw the Jews first and foremost as a racial, biological threat. Further, "the Jewish Question" was, and had to be, part of a wider racist context, and among its proponents a high percentage of left-wing Nazis can be distinguished. The second variant that can be discerned is Völkisch Anti-Semitism, which perceived the Jewish threat first and foremost as a cultural and religious threat, thus giving this type an air of traditionalism. Among its main proponents were, consequently, many ultra-nationalist but non-Nazi anti-democrats. The third variant can be labelled All-embracing Anti-Semitism, and where anti-Semitism in some ways can be seen as a means to an end in the other two types, it here becomes an end in itself. A consequence of this is that this variant of Propagandistic Anti-Semitism transcended all kinds of wider ideological contexts. This type was also the crudest in tone, and its proponents, though few, high-pitched and extremely violent in their rhetoric.

Svante Lundgren

The Jews in Today's Finland

Since it was first established the Jewish community in Finland has always been very small. At the moment there are not more than 1,500 Jews in the country, in two synagogue communities: Helsinki (with 85% of all Finnish Jews) and Turku. Both communities follow Orthodox ritual and there is a rabbi in Helsinki. The community is Ashkenazi and most of its members originate from the Russian Jewish ex-soldiers that settled in the country in the 19th century. The Jews are well integrated and highly educated, they are influenced by modern secularism: a majority does not attend synagogue regularly and does not keep kosher. There is, on the other hand, quite strong support for the official policy of the synagogue, that is, for keeping it Orthodox, and Jewish festivals are widely celebrated. Mixed marriages are extremely frequent. The Jewish community was early influenced by Zionism and has always had close relations to Israel.

Daniel Weintraub

The many languages of the Finnish Jews

The article is a condensed history of language use amongst Jews in Finland as an expression of their situation in a country geopolitically caught up between Sweden and Russia. It is thus both a short introduction to the history of Finland, to Jewish immigration to Finland and to language use in Finland. After a general discussion of the history of legal, political and economic preconditions for Jewish immigration to Finland, the social situation of Jews under Russian rule and later independent Finland is sketched out. For centuries, Jews have situated themselves in the changing multi-lingual landscape in various ways. The linguistic history of the author's own family serves as an example of this: The author's paternal great-great-grandfather immigrated to Finland as one of the many Jewish, Yiddish-speaking soldiers from Poland or the Baltic areas forced into military service to the Russian czar. In spite of a law preventing Jewish settlement in Finland, these conscripted soldiers were allowed to settle with their wives, as they were legally defined as soldiers rather than as Jews. The first generation thus spoke Russian and

Yiddish. Finnish law had restricted the professions Jews were allowed to take up (generally in the trades). Accordingly, Jews came to speak the languages most used in local trade where they worked. Swedish, with its many Germanic words, was generally preferred to Finnish. Swedish had remained the language of law and bureaucracy also after the end of the Swedish reign in 1809. Thus, the second generation - the great-grandfather of the author - spoke Yiddish and Swedish at home. His son, too, had Swedish as his mother tongue, but also mastered Yiddish, Russian, Finnish and even Hebrew. Whereas 81,6% of the Finnish Jews had Yiddish as their mother tongue in 1880, only 7,3% did so in 1930. With Finnish independence, Finnish grew in importance - also to the Jews. In 1927 they collected money to fund the translation of the Finnish national epos Kalevala into Hebrew! At the same time cooperation with the other Nordic Jewish communities caught on, in particular with Sweden. It was common to intermarry with Swedish Jews. During the Winter War the Finnish Jews fought in both Swedish- and Finnish-speaking units. Quite often the multilingual Jews served as interpreters, e.g. between Finns and Germans. The father of the author had Swedish as his mother tongue, but studied in Finnish - and married a Finnish-speaker. Today Swedish is disappearing as a language amongst the Jews. The author himself has Finnish as his mother tongue, but has written the article in Swedish! Finnish immigration policy has generally been restrictive, and migration has mainly taken place within the Finnish-speaking area. Only in recent years have Russian and Israeli Jews immigrated to Finland, and this has also had its linguistic impact. The community paper of Helsingfors prints articles in Finnish, Swedish, English, Yiddish and Russian!

The author concludes the article with a linguistic portrait of the Jewish School in Helsinki, which was founded as a Swedish-speaking school in 1918 and adopted the Finnish language around 1930 - after a debate documented in the article. In the school year of 2002-2003 the school had 101 students speaking nine different mother tongues. The majority had Hebrew as their mother tongue, less had Finnish, Swedish and Russian. All tended to know Hebrew and Finnish. The most common languages within the Jewish community of Finland today are Finnish and English.

Tapani Harviainen

Johan da Costa, Court Jester of Peter the Great - the First Jew in Finland?

In appreciation of his various merits Czar Peter the Great granted his court jester Johan / Jan da Costa / d'Akosta / Lakosta (ca. 1665 Salé, Morocco, 1740 St. Petersburg) the honorary title of "The King of Samoyeds" and presented him with a gift of four islands (Lavansaari/Lövsjär, Seiskari/Seitsjär, Suursaari/Hogland and Tytärsaari/Tytersjär) in the Finnish Gulf in 1718. According to tales recounted by the Finnish population living on those islands until World War II, this Spanish Blackhead used to sail from his manor house, built on Lavansaari to collect illegal taxes. When his ship landed at an island, the young maidens ran to the forest, and those who remained in the villages, soon put on the head coverings of married women, to save themselves from the Blackhead.. However, the (Sephardi) Jewishness of Johan da Costa does not appear in any tale. A number of Russian collections of anecdotes add interesting features to the picture of da Costa; an important source is the short biography written by Antonio Nuñez Ribeiro Sanches.

Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson

Annals of Icelandic-Jewish relations 1625-2003

The article provides an outline of the history of the Jews in Iceland. Jews were only occasional visitors in Iceland from the 17th century onwards. A permanent settlement in this outpost of the habitable world, where a stray homogeneous population of somewhat xenophobic descendants of saga heroes survived under extreme conditions, was never a feasible option for any foreign visitor in their right mind. Until the 1930s, the Holy Scripture as well as the most recent European trends in anti-Semitism were almost the only knowledge the Icelanders had about the Jews. Jews were known to the Icelanders, in positive terms as *gyðingar*, or *júðar* if the discussion was hateful. Jews in the flesh materialised as the occasional visitor or merchant and as Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany in the 1930s. Most of the Jewish refugees moved on to other countries and a few of them were even expelled or deported back to the countries they came from. The article provides a few examples of the very negative treatment of Jewish refugees and the strict immigration policy towards Jews in particular. A young Jew, Alfred Kempner, was expelled to Copenhagen in 1938. The Icelandic authorities notified their Danish colleagues that the Icelandic authorities were willing to carry all costs for his further deportation to Germany if Denmark was not interested in keeping him. The very few Jews who stayed on in Iceland, were an extremely heterogeneous group. Only a few of the families that were allowed to stay practised their religion. They did so together with Jewish servicemen in the British and American forces, who protected Iceland during WWII. In the post-war period Jews living in Iceland remained an isolated group. Jewish services only took place at the US Nato base in Keflavík. Most of the Jews who immigrated to Iceland after the war, realised that most Icelanders in their attitude towards Jews did not show any consideration for, nor interest in, the sufferings some of them had gone through during WWII. Members of the pre-war Icelandic Nazi party had become high ranking officials, war criminals found safe haven in Iceland and an eccentric, social democratic politician even engaged in the publication of an extreme anti-Semitic journal and in the publishing of the anti-Semitic hoax "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in Icelandic. Possibly due to anti-Jewish sentiments, some Jews in Iceland tried to hide their Jewish background from their children altogether. Today there is a small, but proud group of Jews in Iceland, mostly immigrants married to Icelanders, who gather regularly in Reykjavík on Jewish Holidays.

Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson

Jews in Greenland

Although Greenland has been a part of the Kingdom of Denmark for nearly 300 years and a self-governing overseas part of Denmark since 1979, the Jews of Denmark or other countries never found the urge to settle in this beautiful but yet very harsh and cold part of the habitable world. The article is an account of the rather accidental encounter between Jews and Greenland. We know very little about Jews in Greenland before the 20th century. Jews in Holland and Germany were definitely engaged in the Greenland trade. It is however unlikely that many Jewish seamen visited the Greenland trading posts. In 1930 German-born meteorologist, Fritz Loewe had an extreme encounter with the elements in Greenland as a member of a team of scientists under the leadership of the world-famous geologist Alfred Wegener. Dr. Loewe survived the winter of 1930-31 in an igloo on the Greenland central ice sheet, recovering from the amputation of all of his toes, lost to gangrene. His friend Wegener and some other members of his team lost their lives. Nurse Rita Scheftelowitz' stay in Greenland in 1955-56 was much more pleasant. She was visited by Jewish

journalist and globetrotter Alfred Joachim Fischer and his wife in 1955. Jewish life in Greenland has been limited to the activities of the northernmost minjan of the world at the US airforce base in Thule. Sixty-eight Jewish servicemen in Thule gathered for the first time for Seder during Pesach of 1955. This was mainly due to the efforts of Lieutenant Maurice Burk. Today Mr. Burk of Kenner, Louisiana, has a vivid recollection of his stay in the perpetual darkness of Thule, which was lightened up by the celebration of Jewish holidays as well as the visit of Bob Hope and his team of entertainers to the base in December 1955.