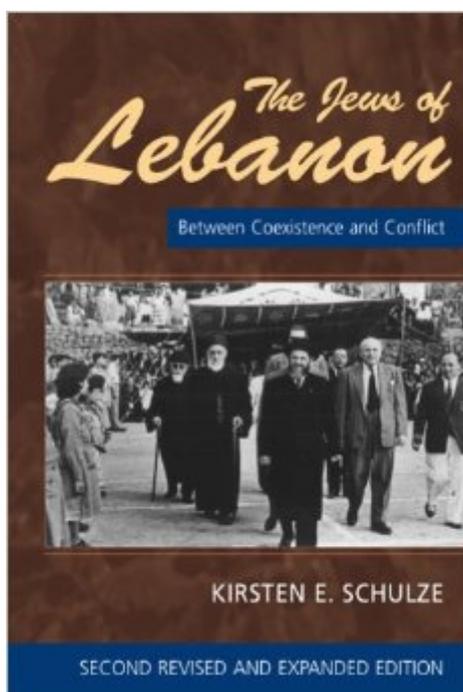


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The Jews Of Lebanon: Between Coexistence And Conflict



Synopsis

This is the first book to tell the story of the Jews of Lebanon in the twentieth century. It challenges the prevailing view that Jews everywhere in the Middle East were second-class citizens, and were persecuted after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The Jews of Lebanon were just one of Lebanon's 23 minorities with the same rights and privileges, and subject to the same political tensions. The author discusses the Jewish presence in Lebanon under Ottoman Rule; Lebanese Jews under the French mandate; Lebanese Jewish identity after the establishment of the State of Israel; the increase of the community through Syrian refugees; the Jews' position in the first civil war; the beginning of their exodus; the virtual extinction of the Jewish community as a result of the prolonged second civil war and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon; and finally the community's memory of their Lebanese past.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Sussex Academic Press; 2nd Revised, Expanded ed. edition (January 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1845190572

ISBN-13: 978-1845190576

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,721,739 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #139 in [Books > History >](#)

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Customer Reviews

In the winter of 1999, I was with a friend in one of Sodeco Square's movie theaters, watching "The Confession," starring Ben Kingsley and Alec Baldwin. When the movie was over, we left disappointed because of the massacre perpetrated by the censors against the movie. And we were not alone. Collective sighs could be heard from the audience every time an edited-out scene was announced by the appalling noise that accompanies the cut. My friend and I could not understand why some scenes were taken out. The movie was about a man (Kingsley) who killed a doctor and a nurse in revenge for their causing of his only son's death through negligence. Then he turned himself in and insisted on pleading guilty even if that led to his execution. We did not expect from

the context that the edited-out scenes were of the sexual nature that the censors believe we are too immature to see. But when I saw the same movie on a satellite movie channel, I noticed that the scenes in question included quotes from the Torah by Kingsley to his attorney (Baldwin), then to the judges and jury, to explain why his love for his only son was a part of his duties as a religious Jew. Then I said to myself: "Is the Torah banned here, though it is recognized as sacred by both Christians and Muslims?" Since then, Lebanese censors have stripped all films of any scenes related to Jews or Judaism. I do not mean "only" the scenes that may draw the sympathy of viewers for the victims of the Holocaust. But even if I accept, for the sake of argument, that cutting out scenes related to the Holocaust can be somehow justified, why have Jews and their religion become a taboo? I have the right to ask this question in Lebanon because in this country Judaism is one of the 18 officially recognized sects.

I have not yet read this book, and may never do so unless I can find a copy for a more reasonable price. I do not understand why books about Lebanon (with a few exceptions) are so hard to find and/or so incredibly expensive. I am an Irishman (my ancestral village is in that part of Ireland which is still under British occupation...), and a student of history, so for obvious reasons I find Lebanese History fascinating. I also believe that the decision of the U.N. to send Irish troops to Lebanon as peacekeepers was far from accidental... In the Detroit area are many Lebanese; and of the handful of Lebanese men with whom I have had more than a nodding acquaintance two are Muslim, one a Maronite, one a Druse, one a Jew, and for the rest I am unaware of their religious background. Three of them, oddly enough, came from Sidon- one gentleman had even been the Governor of that city at one time. Obviously, they all have had wildly differing perspectives on the recent History of their native land. One of these men, who owns a business down the street from my house, is the only person I have ever met who actually reads as much as I do. We occasionally loan each other books, and discuss them; he has been quite helpful in explaining various aspects of Lebanese History and culture, but that only goes so far. More, and more easily accessible books on the subject would help a great deal. I hope I can get a copy of this book- the Lebanese Jew I knew was a fairly tragic individual. Culturally, he was for all intents and purposes (his native language was Arabic, etc.) an Arab- but he was a Jew. He hated Israel (and Syria for that matter...) both for what it had done to his country, and for causing the anti-Jewish backlash which directly resulted in his leaving- but he was a Jew.

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