



The Jewish Community of Cuba: Memory and History

MARGALIT BEJARANO

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THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CUBA: MEMORY AND HISTORY combines the fruits of academic research with the personal reminiscences of protagonists, creating a collective narrative of Cuban Jews, particularly those who migrated to Miami, on their historical experience prior to the Castro revolution. Through childhood memories in small towns in Poland and Turkey, the reader discovers the circumstances that motivated the migration of Jews to Cuba, and is acquainted with the difficult trajectory of their adaptation to a new environment.

The book recounts the version of Cuban Jews to the tragic voyage of the SS St. Louis, but at the same time it points out the destiny of thousands of Jewish refugees who had found in Cuba a shelter from the Nazi inferno.

The book describes the rich and colorful Jewish institutional life, that covered all the social and cultural aspects. Protagonists, however, were not part of a uniform and homogenous community, as reflected in their testimonies on social and cultural life, political divisions and internal conflicts.

The reader will find new oral documentation on the attitude of Cuban politicians towards the establishment of the State of Israel, and on the participation of young Cuban Jews in its War of Independence.

The last chapter brings the memory of the lost Cuban paradise. Oral histories reflect the communal flourishing of the 1950s, the economic prosperity, the professional and social achievements but also the trauma of the Castro revolution, that motivated their second exodus. Though interviewees tend to idealize the pre-Castro era, their testimonies reflect the problematic of their marginality in the Cuban society, and the dilemma of dual identity that confronted the second generation.

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